

all right welcome to
my first solo video
for uploading onto bitshoot and um
that other one youtube i think it's
called
so on my subscribe star channel
i asked for people to ask questions and
i would answer them and so i got about
20 questions
and finally i'm feeling up for uh
answering them because uh this winter
i've been having low batteries
so i've been feeling kind of run down
but i'm feeling up for it tonight so
first question uh there's like a whole
slew of questions from

somebody called m-y-w-l-a-m

i don't know how to pronounce it but the

first question is why

is breath meditation so often taught in

a way that is entirely inconsistent

with the anapanasati sutta it is almost

as if some of the techniques taught have

nothing

whatsoever to do with the anapanasati

sutta

so the anapanasati sutta is

a discourse in the pali texts

giving instructions on how to do

meditation on the breath

it's the discourse on mindfulness of

breathing

and uh it is true that a lot of the

famous meditation techniques
do not adhere strictly to the
instructions given in that sutra for
example some meditation techniques
have people essentially hyperventilating
it's like they're doing holotropic
breath work or something like stan
groff would call it uh despite the fact
that the sutra says that you should be
calming your body
instead of hyperventilating and then of
course the mahasi method has
people focusing on their their belly
like their
their diaphragm or their abdomen as it
gets bigger and smaller when they're

breathing instead of

being mindful of the sensation of touch

of the nose

but really i mean it's not absolutely

necessary

to adhere strictly to the anapana sati

suta as long as it works i mean that's

really the the main thing

so long as it works so if being mindful

of your abdomen going in and out

works as well or maybe even better for

some people than

being mindful of the touch of air at

your nostrils then

you might as well go for it although the

hyperventilating part i'm

kind of skeptical of but really i mean

it's the usefulness

of it that is more important than how

strictly it adheres to the poly texts

so if it works go with it and uh

uh for example the mahasi method the

mahasi belly meditation

does get people at least to an

intermediate level of meditation

so it's not all bad

okay next question what is meant in the

anapanasati sutta by establishing

mindfulness before oneself

that's actually a good question not that

any of the other ones are bad ones but

that is a good question

and um it's also in the saudi patana

suta it says

you should establish mindfulness before
yourself

and you've got these different theories
of people taking it literally like

they're saying oh it means that you

should establish your mindfulness

right at the end of your nose or right

at the third eye between your

between your eyebrows or something but i
think

establishing anything before yourself is

like uh a figure of speech in ancient

indian languages like pali

like uh in the uh sutani pata i don't

remember the word but there's a word

meaning to sep

something before you to set something in front

and that means to prefer that or to favor that and i assume that's what it means here it's like with regard to establishing mindfulness before yourself as you're just putting mindfulness in front you're setting that

foremost that's the most important thing that's what you're attending to so i i assume it's just a figure of speech that

you're just uh making mindfulness your priority

okay next question do you teach meditation or do you think it is

somewhat irrelevant

as do some well-known scholar monks well

i don't think that meditation is

irrelevant i think it's

uh very important and uh

i have given um guidance

to people with regard to meditation so

i do i do teach meditation although um

i mean it's like one size does not fit

all like there are meditation in

structures

like in the mahasi tradition where they

just teach the same meditation

method to every single person who comes

there and it's like a doctor who gives

the same medicine to every patient

and if the patient doesn't get better

the patient gets scolded for not being
sick properly or some such

so um yeah it's like different
meditation techniques work better for
different people so

um a good meditation instructor would
have more than just one medicine to hand
out

so anyway the question is yes i do teach
meditation sometimes

under certain circumstances and i do not
think it is irrelevant

next question do you think meditation is
the best

way to stimulate opioid release
or do you think other methods or

substances are better especially as they
are easier and faster acting
well i mean if that's your purpose is to
stimulate opioid release and i suppose
um the thing to do would be to uh
i don't know take opioids or uh take
some kind of uh
drug that would cause opioid release
there are people that meditate as a
substitute for narcotics but
that's really not the purpose of
meditation so
yeah there are there are ways of
releasing opioids that would be like
endorphins or something right
um yeah there are better ways of doing
that and uh

certain drugs would do it but um
yeah it's like the the purpose of
meditation is to be more awake and not
to uh

be narcotized so

yeah or even to experience euphoria i
mean the purpose of meditation isn't
euphoria either

next question what is the likelihood
that the anapanasati

instructions come from the buddha are
there any meditation instructions that
can

definitely be said to be from the buddha
oh

that depends on who you talk to i'm i'm

very skeptical

and um so my answer would be very

different from

say an asian traditionalist conservative

monk who just

believes all of it you know it'd be like

asking a medieval christian what parts

of the bible do you think are true i

mean

they just say all of it regard to me

there's no absolute guarantees with

regard to anything

so the likelihood that the anapanasati

instructions come from the buddha um

yeah i i don't really know i really

can't say

with regard to meditation instructions

that can be definitely be said to be
from the buddha well
almost certainly at the very least he
would be encouraging
mindfulness all the time you know like
the repeated
admonishments that you know when a monk
stretches forth his arm he does it
mindfully when he pulls his arm back and
he does it mindfully when he turns his
head he turns his head mindfully
just all postures you know when you're
eating when you're lying down to sleep
just everything that you do you should
do that mindfully
with regard to actually sitting

cross-legged with your eyes closed

what instructions he gave

i assume he would be teaching something

like

jhana for some monks which

we'll get to directly because there are

some questions about jonah coming right

up in fact the next one

so i think i'll just go to the next

question what is your view of the jhanas

important or irrelevant

this is kind of a trick question because

the description of the four genres

in the text is almost invariably

just this formula this just repeated

verbatim

every single place that it's mentioned

and the formula is
not descriptive and exact and precise
enough
that the definition of the genres is
is uncontroversial so the definition of
the genres is almost worthless because
it's not
it's not so clear-cut that everyone
agrees on what it means
so um personally i think that
jhana originally just meant meditation
and that the four genres were
originally four stages of meditation
like first jhana
you're still thinking so that would be
like even what the christian

contemplatives would call meditation
where you still have like an
object that you're concentrating on you
know it could be
whatever the breath or um or like a
mantra or something like that
so long as you're labeling i mean if so
long as you're still thinking
and then um second jhana and third jhana
and fourth john
you're gradually um making your minds
more and more subtle
so it's just the different stages of
getting to fourth genre in which your
mind is just
completely still and
clear and peaceful and there's no mental

states no discrete mental states going
on at all your mind is just like um
i don't want to say blank but it's like
a mirror or it's like glass
that would be like fourth jhana and it's
just the different stages
of meditation it's like one stage is
you're thinking the next stage is
uh i think it's um your
your mental feelings like your emotional
feelings fade out but you still have
physical
feelings and then in the next stage
above that even the physical feelings
fade out
and then it's like uh eventually you're

just um

just completely clear no no distinct

mental states going on

so um let's see where is the question

here is it important or irrelevant yeah

it's very important because

traditionally and i think this is kind

of the way it is it's like the purpose

of meditation is to

make your mind um as clear and awake

and also as simple and still as possible

all at the same time so if it's simple

and still but you're not awake then

you're just unconscious

but if you're awake and your mind isn't

simple and still then you can be just

all agitated like if you drank too much

coffee or something

so the point is to get your mind as

awake as possible

and to be thinking as little as possible

because the whole purpose

of meditation i mean ultimately not just

as a

you know stress relief or a substitute

for narcotics or whatever

is to penetrate samsara and

uh experience ultimate reality so you're

trying to

see through the uh the shadows

flickering on the walls of plato's cave

and it's easier to do that if you've

stilled

the shadows so that there aren't any
shadows you know it's easier
for you to see through the illusion if
you're not being distracted by the
illusion because you've got
the illusion so simplified that there's
it's just devoid of content
and then you can see through that more
easily and you have the flash of insight
or a liberating insight i should say
so um yeah it's it's important
and the genres
based on my own understanding is
originally probably just
four levels of meditation with fourth
jhana being the highest one
next question what is absorption well

that's what

jhana is often translated as into

english is absorption

so it would be uh

like a contemplative state an advanced

contemplative state

especially the higher the higher

jaundice the the first genre i do not

consider to be

a superhuman mental state but um

um apparently scholar monks

who didn't meditate much really didn't

know how to interpret it

and they've got these strange

interpretations where

all four genres any of the four genres

are considered to be
udri manusa dhamma or superhuman mental
states and
even in the mahasaripatana sutta this
right concentration
is defined as the four jhanas so
i mean if you can take all that
seriously then right concentration would
be a superhuman mental state which uh
i i personally kind of doubt
so i'm not sure if i actually answered
that one very well but uh
next question according to the wiisutti
magga only one
in one million can reach absorption do
you agree with this
and given the odds do you think there is

a better way for someone to spend their
time um

if you're able to reach absorption let's
say you're able to

get into an advanced jhana state then

yeah you should go for it because your

your the odds of you becoming

enlightened are much greater

the the more uh just awake

and simple you can get your mind and

like for the jhana is just maximum

awake and simple so if you can if you

can do that that's great you should you

should definitely do that but um

it could be true that only one in a

million approximately can reach like

fourth genre or

like a really advanced like what what

the uh the catholics would call

high contemplation um

but i mean if you're able to do it then

you should do it but if if you keep

trying and trying and trying and you

can't

then yeah maybe you should stop beating

your head against the brick wall and try

something that actually does

work for you and um there's one

statement by saint john of the cross who

was a meditation master i think he was a

master of fourth jhana even though he

was a

christian um there's this one part

where in in one of his books i think
it's the ascent of mount carmel where he
says that

if you get contemplation and then lose
it and then get it and lose it and get
it and lose it

kind of like godika in the in the
polytechs where he would get janna and
then lose it and get it again and then
lose it again

according to saint john of the cross
then it's just god has other plans for
you that

you're just not intended or cut out
to be an adept at contemplation and uh
unfortunately for me that's uh that's

more or less the situation i found
myself in where my
my uh samadhi or my concentration would
come and go and come and go and come and
go
so

ah next question what is karma
that's a good question too and it's it's
a really it's one that i get a lot
even like um on sundays
uh little burmese kids will ask me
questions

and that's like a common one that i get
is what is karma
and essentially what karma is
i mean just going with the sutas at
first according to the sutas karma is

chiduna which is volition

there's a famous statement

which means monks i say karma is

volition

and so volition isn't necessarily the

best

interpretation or the best translation

of of chitana it could be something more

like

will like schopenhauer's will and that

really

is kind of a nice analogy for people

familiar with western

philosophy because according to

schopenhauer will is just this force

that it just craves its own existence

craves itself perpetuation

and um you know it's just the force that

drives us all through life and that's

pretty much what karma is too

so karma is like the uh the motive force

of your mind of your mental states not

just your consciousness but

uh like the flow of mental states

is is your karma and if you're not awake

enough and most of us

aren't then that is also just the force

of habit that drives you through life

and makes your decisions for you and

just has you

just sort of going through the motions

like a meat puppet

that's that's karma also but um

everything that you do every decision
that you make

every volitional act um

you know it changes the flow a little

bit you know it reinforces it or

moves it slightly in a different

direction and so

um you know good karma is leading you

um towards um you know

higher consciousness and fewer desires

and uh

you know simplicity and clarity that

sort of thing

and uh bad karma is just what takes you

farther away from that

so with regard to what is karma karma is

like will

it's just the the motive it's like the
the momentum

of your mental states next question

how can there be karma if there is no
self

uh that's that's kind of a trick

question because um

in a way i mean especially if you're
going totally radical like the mahayana
buddhists i mean

if there's no self there's no anything
really

nothing distinct and discreet that has
any kind of self-existence

but um with regard to the terravodn
approach um

karma is just i mean it's sort of like a
flame you know it's just um
it's different from one moment to the
next it's like a process it's a flow
it's it's just energetic it's not just
this substance or a thing
and so it just exists on its own and
when the conditions that cause that
karma to exist
um cease to exist then the karma itself
ceases to exist
so it's sort of like a again like a like
a flame where
um anyone who's a boy scout knows the
the fire triangle and you've got to have
heat fuel and oxygen and uh so long as

those conditions are there

the fire will be there and it's it's

sort of the way karma works too if

you've got the conditions

then it's it's going to be there and

it's not a self partly because we don't

really

um control it i mean going with the

anatella

you can't say let it be this way let it

not be that way and have it happen which

is a sign of no self

but also it isn't the self because it

doesn't have

its own uh self existence you know it's

not an

absolute existence it just exists

because

other things exist that uh cause it to
exist

so um yeah it doesn't it's not like a
soul that just

exists like distinctly regardless of
everything else in the universe

okay next question do you see terra vada
buddhism changing in order to
accommodate western culture

for example ajahn sona at perkin is now
doing

online retreats and offers online
upasaka training likewise

who has an online presence via syriam
siri mangalo

and who has an online calendar where you can

book meditation sessions with him he also offers a series of at home retreats that culminate in becoming a teacher
okay so um the first line is the question

do you see terra vada buddhism changing in order to accommodate western culture and yeah it's already happening i mean it just has to happen

you've got two kinds of or maybe three kinds of theravada

in america now first you've got ethnic theravada which is still

practicing traditional asian buddhism as well as you can in america

and the americans don't have much to do
with that

then there's like western monastic
buddhism which is

trying to follow the rules more or less
although even they aren't following the
rules

very strictly like uh wearing the the
snow suits and

the arctic expedition gear and all that
even if it's not

very cold or

i mean just money i mean it's almost
impossible it's

virtually impossible to follow the rules
of monastic discipline strictly

um in the west especially with regard to
to money and that sort and that sort of
thing so

yeah i think that theravada buddhism is
going to have to change

and uh um there's a good chance that uh
what it's going to change into

isn't theravada anymore and people
should just be honest about that

like like the the third kind of buddhism
that i didn't get to is like the elite
buddhism which is like the

the left-wing social justice buddhism

where they're talking more about

white guilt and gay rights and climate
change and all that

more than they're talking about go to

mabuda so i mean that's

i mean that can hardly even be called

terabyte of buddhism anymore

it is something else and there's nothing

necessarily wrong with

buddhism changing into something other

than

theravada in the west because terra vada

literally was designed

to fit um the ancient ganges valley in

like the fifth century bc

and all the rules of monastic discipline

especially

are geared right for this this iron age

indian culture that just does not fit

america

so yeah there's going to have to be
changes made and there could be
still strict strictly practicing monks
but they're going to be
um definitely a very small minority
and regular people that want to practice
theravada
or just like some kind of legit form of
buddhism
um yeah i mean you just you have no
choice but to
accommodate western culture to some
degree i mean you carry around western
culture
in your own head you know even if you um
outwardly imitate like an iron age
indian of like an iron age indian

ascetic of the ganges valley

still you're going to be remembering you

know like rock and roll

and all this stuff that didn't exist

back then you're still going to think

like a modern western person so

yeah that is the big question is uh it's

it has to change and it is changing

whether we want it to or not and uh

you the main point is just try to save

the main essence of it while at the same

time uh

making the necessary changes that it

will fit

western culture and won't just be this

weird

tropical potted plant that has to be kept in a special protected greenhouse environment was people coming and taking care of it instead of just living naturally outdoors so yeah that is that is the big question so i answered that question kind of with another question next question do you see a time in the west when those that support theravada buddhism will somehow be integrated into the sangha and not be left as estranged outsiders mahayana buddhism has many different ways of integrating lay people into their organizations

luposica training courses and teacher
training courses

illustrating somewhat changing
relationship already it could be argued
so um the question seems to be uh
is there a time will there be a time
when

laypeople are integrated into the sangha
and and that's really not the way
buddhism started you know like original
buddhism

the the actual buddhists were the
ascetics

living out in the forest and the lay
people

were just like the the fans supporting

their favorite team buddhism was like a
spectator sport

um so if you really wanted to be a
serious buddhist you

renounce the world and and go forth into
the homeless life

and um in the west people don't like
that because um

you know uh in the west people don't
like class stratification and

uh um like people

at a higher level than them and uh

like bowing to monks and that sort of
thing is uh

they it meets with a fair amount of
resistance

in the west so

um into with laypeople being integrated
into the sangha it's

the best i can i can do would be like a
a compromise the best i could think of
would be a compromise where you have
sort of like quasi monks

you've got lay people living a simple
life maybe in some relative poverty
you know maybe wearing like a simple
kind of uniform

i don't know what it'd be army surplus
or uh gray sweats or something

and um yeah so there'd be like a

um a compromise just sort of like an
intermediate state between

a monk which doesn't really fit western

culture if he's following the rules
correctly

and just like a completely you know no
no holds barred lay person with
everything optional

so yeah i mean there could be some kind
of

system set up i i was calling it nava
cavada for a while

it's like it's not terra vada which is
the doctrine of the elders it would be
nama cavada the doctrine of the
newcomers because that's

that's essentially us we are the
newcomers and so

um you'd need wise people or
one wise person at least to come up with

like a really

uh a valid system that uh really does

reflect the teachings of buddha while at

the same time

maybe allowing people to handle a little

bit of money

for example feed themselves that kind of

thing

but it is tricky i mean if you really

want to practice buddhism

very strictly according to the ancient

texts then your best

bet is to go to some place like burma

and head for the forest

okay next question what were the top

three cave

experiences i had yeah

that's uh top three cave experiences

i'm not exactly sure what the questioner
would consider

to be a top cave experience

i don't know if you want some kind of uh

like uproar and excitement or

ghosts and witchcraft or uh just deep

meditative states

but um i guess uh

i'll i'll just answer the the first

the first two top cave experiences would

just be like

insightful ones ones that really stood

out because they kind of helped me in my

my spiritual practice and uh both of

them happened

in uh the main cave where i lived in
fact it's the the main place where i've
lived it's the one place i've lived
longer than any other place in my life
as far as i know
it was uh called
which was uh in northwestern burma
there's a very deluxe cave
had it went about 50 feet into the side
of this hill
with this uh corridor for walking
meditation had like four rooms
little storage rooms and everything it
was really nice
but um
upper burma gets just blazing blazing

hot

and sometimes even the monsoon season is
just a bust and there's hardly any rain
at all

it's just semi desert there and um
there were times when just being hot
all the time not being able to stop
sweating

not being able to feel comfortable
you know ever you know for just days and
days and days

um you know it would just kind of start
wearing me down plus there's just other
stresses to add to that just you know
being alone not being able to talk to
anybody and

uh you know just all of the

self-restraint

required to be a conscientious monk um
you know it's just it just makes like a
strain

on the system and uh one time

i was just it was just blazing hot and
i was just fed up and i just essentially
threw a conniption i was just like
yelling and cussing and slamming things
and while i was yelling and cussing and
slamming things there was like this

click and suddenly it was like

i had like two minds at the same time
one mind was just going through the
motions

of you know throwing in the connection

and just you know cussing and slamming
things

but the other level of my mind the other
mind or whatever

was just watching that just not getting
involved at all

just just watching and it was it was
like being an actor all of a sudden

instead of just being pissed off and fed
up and throwing a fit

i was like an actor playing the role of
being pissed off and fed up and throwing
a fit

where it's like you know an actor

can be like you know they're they're

like playing king lear on a stage you

know they're king lear who's just going

mad with grief and the storm and
everything

and at the same time that they're really
feeling that you know they're really
belting out the lines and everything at
the same time they know where the
audience is and they know

their center of gravity their their
balance and how much slobber they have
in their mouth and all that kind of
stuff too and it's like the the actors
stuff you have to know at the same time
as your your like raging storm is king
lear

so it was kind of that kind of state and
it was for me it was really an insight

that

first of all that that kind of

consciousness is always there really we

just don't notice it

that's one of the reasons why you

meditate is so you can notice that

better

and um also just the the very fact that

it is possible to just throw a fit

mindfully um i was telling a

burmese monk who was actually a mahasi

sotapanna

although he realized that he wasn't one

but he was declared a sodapana by

upandira himself and he didn't believe

that

you can throw a fit mindfully but uh

i've done it more than once excuse me
okay so that was uh one of the top three
cave experiences the next one is just a
similar one it is even just uh
seemingly more mundane was um one thing
that's absolutely necessary living in uh
central burma
or upper upper burma is you need a sweat
rag
like uh like this you always gotta have
this this is the absolutely necessary if
you live in central burma you've got to
have one of these
and the main reason for it of course is
just wiping the sweat off yourself you
know you're just drenched in sweat all

the time

or if there's flies i mean you can you

can do this kind of business and

and then after you take a shower or take

a bath

i mean this is enough to dry off your

body especially if you don't have

hair on your head and uh it just has all

kinds of purposes you know you can even

wipe your mouth or whatever it's called

the muka punch in poly which is the

mouth wiper or the face wiper so anyway

um mine had just worn out you know it's

just all thread bearing ragged and

everything so i was going to get a new

one

and so i had went into the storage room

and in the deluxe cave

and had the selection narrowed down to

two of them there was a yellow one and

an orange one and i was just standing

there

trying to decide which one i was going

to take and there was no obvious reason

to take one over the other

and so i was just kind of like in the

quandary like what burden's ass you know

the donkey that's just like

stuck between two piles of hay you know

it's like there's two piles of hay

just exactly the same distance away from

it so it just can't decide which one to

go to

it was kind of like that and then all of
a sudden it just clicked i'll take the
orange one

and i was mindful enough at the time
that i realized i was like i didn't know
that i made that decision until i just
made it it just came into my mind of its
own

you know and so um it really got me
thinking about

you know free will how free will could
work and uh

like you really don't know what you're
going to choose

until you find yourself choosing it so
um you know you're just as surprised at
your own decisions as anybody else

and most people don't notice that
because now usually
there's an obvious reason for choosing
one way or the other and so you just
choose the obvious reason but if you're
just
in this state where there's no obvious
reason you know you can wear the red
shirt or the blue shirt or whatever and
there's no obvious reason to pick one
over the other
and you're being mindful at the time
then you can just watch the decision
process just arise and with you just
kind of
observing it you know not even really

participating

so um yeah that's like an insight into

no self

and uh and volition and uh karma and

that sort of thing like uh

we were talking about a little bit

earlier so

there's that and then i guess it says

see please include something with

animals

if possible so um

yeah so my third top three cave

experience i'll just

i'll just uh ex tell about my very first

cave experience

the very first night i spent in a cave

which was in thailand

and it was before i got to burma and
i went to visit a monk named uwetheriza
who was like legendary he was just
super uh ascetic you know he was like
absolutely strict in following the rules
and he practiced all of the
tongues as strictly as he could he was
he was like a buddhist rambo or
something

and so he was sort of set up to me as
like the shining example of how i ought
to be so he was kind of like my role
model

and he did me the honor of when we went
to visit him
um at his cave or on the hill where his

cave was

he uh he uh asked me if i would like to
spend the night

in a cave near his cave and um

so i said sure yeah that's great the
other monks that were that were in the
party just stayed in this

kind of deluxe um cave down below that
had like

linoleum on the floor and a clock on the
wall and everything was this big

fancy cave for visitors i think

but uh ooh wait there is this cave um
it was just like this pitch black hole
and

um he thought it was he thought it was
great but he couldn't he couldn't keep

anything he couldn't keep soap he
couldn't keep a book or anything because
the rats would chew it all up
and so i was still wearing thick wool
robes from america
i just i was just new to the tropics and
uh so i'm already
just like wearing an oven and he tells
me that when i go into the cave
i need to cover myself from head to foot
just completely cover my entire body
otherwise the rats will bite me
and um sure enough it was nighttime
i'm like climbing down we stayed up
really late talking
and then i go down into this cave and

there's like a whip tail scorpion on the wall and

and just full of mosquitoes and

sure enough after i i got down there on the

on the floor of the cave and uh covered myself

up i could hear the the rats coming and they

chewed up my bowl bag they were chewing on my trying to get into my bowl

all night long and they chewed up my sandals and

chewed up uh a few other things

and that was that was my first night i didn't get much sleep at all that night i'm so good we didn't even get to bed

until probably

you know two or three in the morning or

i didn't and then uh

just just that just uh mosquitoes and

sweat and just rats all over me and uh

yeah i don't know if that would be

called of the top three but it

definitely stands out and

it did have animals because it was uh

mosquitoes

rats and uh a large white tail scorpion

on the wall

probably some spiders too

okay next question i have heard that the

buddha is reputed to have said

that on the balance of probabilities he

thought god did not exist

is that the buddhist view if so how can

it be explained

that the universe cosmos is moral

one must have a moral universe cosmos or

one

cannot have karma or at least as it is

generally understood

okay well yeah the the buddha and um

i think probably most of the samanas the

philosophers of ancient india the ones

that weren't brahmanas

um yeah they did not they did not posit

the existence of a creator god

you know a capital g absolute

god you know there would be lesser gods

that were just beings that were higher

than us

you know they they had more power and
maybe

maybe more intelligence and um they'd
live longer and that sort of thing it'd
be

a finer vibration than us but uh the
absolute

being the deity the capital g god

um yeah it just was not considered
to exist in ancient india and

so how can it be explained that the
universe is moral well that's just
because

morality is simply a matter of

improving the quality of your mind it's

like raising or lowering your vibration
or getting you closer to enlightenment
or farther away from enlightenment
getting you closer
to having a clear and subtle enough mind
that you can penetrate to ultimate
reality so the closer you get to that
the more
moral it is so it really doesn't have
anything to do with
a god decreeing that this is good and
this is bad it's just whatever makes
your mind
clear and and peaceful and simple
and alert is good just by definition
that is the definition of
good essentially is just what raises the

vibration of your consciousness

and what is bad is what lowers the

vibration of your consciousness

and generally what is good is what makes

you happy in the long run

and what is bad is what makes you

unhappy in the long run but it's just

the quality of your own mind through

your own mental actions

you know it's like the the morale the

moral aspect of it is just built right

in it's just uh

whether you're happy or not

um so i think i i hope i answered that

question

next question do you believe karma

exists

or do you take the view that the concept
was inserted into the philosophy
to give it a moral grounding rather like
nietzsche

inserted the concept of eternal
recurrence in order to give

his perspective a moral basis well yeah

i mean karma does exist because

i mean if volition or will

exists then karma exists because karma
is volition or will

so i mean you can uh take that as you
please

if if you think uh volition or will
exists

then karma exists because that's what

karma is

and uh yeah it's just it's just very
ancient in indian philosophy it goes way
way back

long before the buddhist time so that's
something that

i mean to some degree culturally and
philosophically he kind of inherited the
concept although

um he refined the idea

to making karma essentially a mental
state

that was sort of a buddhist innovation
because a lot of people thought karma
was like a physical substance or
something like that

that sticks to your soul like the james

i think believe that

that karma is like this sticky substance

that sticks to your soul and weighs it

down

so you have to work off your karma so

that your soul or your

jiva can rise up into heaven but with

with the buddha he

uh just made it psychological

next question what path would you

suggest a layperson

follow if they wish to become a serious

practitioner

meditation abhidhamma a flow chart would

be helpful

well if you want to be a serious

practitioner i mean if you want to be
totally serious then you become a monk
and not even a monk in america or in
some cushy
comfortable meditation center you really
become a monk and just head for the
jungle
or the desert and you know just some
wilderness and really
practice as strictly as you can but if
you want to be
a serious layperson in the west which is
completely understandable
then uh well bare minimum would be uh
five precepts
you know don't don't kill don't steal

don't buy don't

have a sensual misconduct and don't take
wine

ale or other intoxicants which cause
cloudedness of mind

or heatlessness and definitely

meditate or at least be mindful even if
you're not sitting cross-legged

be mindful just walk mindfully do kind
of walking meditation or have like a
little mantra

that uh you can have going if you're
doing just some

menial rep repetitive task you know

which includes walking you just uh you

can you can meditate while doing that

meditate while going up and down the

stairs meditate while sitting on the
toilet or brushing your teeth or
or anything really i mean that's really
like i said earlier that's
probably the meditation advice that i
would consider
most likely to originate from the
historical buddha himself
is just being mindful as possible of
every activity and i think the
mindfulness question is
farther down somebody else asks that so
we'll get to that but with regard to
abhidhamma the less you know
the better because the less you know the
less you have to

unlearn because abhidharma really is
it's like a um an ancient commentary
that got incorporated into the
scriptures

but uh very little of it in my opinion
originated with uh the buddha it's it's
sort of like the wii suite maga or
something but it's older so

it's so old that it got included into
the

into the polytechs or the the scriptures
the topitica

and uh it's um yeah it's just kind of
going in the wrong direction it's trying
to intellectualize reality

it's trying to understand reality
intellectually and

you're never going to understand reality
intellectually

you can get sort of a good like
a model a paradigm that pretty much
works

but that's not going to be reality you
know you're going to understand
the the patterns of the flickering
shadows on plato's cave

but you're never going to really
understand what it's like outside of the
cave until you

just break the chains and go out

so um there are other things you can do
like uh eat less read less talk less
sleep less

go barefoot a lot you have to be more
mindful if you're walking around
barefoot especially outside
um yeah just uh and and study you know
try to try to uh
like read um translations of
polytechnics good translations or if
there's wise teachers
that you trust you know you can
read their books or watch their videos
or whatever it is
okay next question what is an anagarika
and how does that differ from
an upasaka how does someone become one
and anagarika literally anagarika means
homeless one
so an anagaraka would be an unordained

renuncian wanderer and
they would roughly correspond to what's
called a potudo in uh
in burmese um i'm not sure what they're
called in thailand like a pacao or
something like that
so they would be sort of like uh like
junior junior monk whereas an upasaka is
a supporter a lay supporter of
monks in addition to keeping five
precepts and so forth they also
are supporting monks and if you want to
be a serious practitioner i mean that's
something i should have mentioned
is really a lot of westerners really
don't see the point but uh

if you cannot really
you know really renounce the world then
at least you're helping
by uh you know you're supporting
somebody else who is giving it a shot
and that was uh like like i said
originally that's what buddhist lady
people were is mainly they were just the
supporters they were like the base camp
you know they couldn't do it themselves
so they were going to earn merit by
being generous and helping others
to really go for enlightenment and that
increases the amount of enlightenment in
the world also
so that's good but i kind of backed up
on that one let's see

so an anagarika would be like
a low-level unordained renunciant
wanderer and they usually wear white i
think at least traditionally
and upasaka is just a layperson who is a
supporter of monks
okay how does one become one um
i would assume uh i mean there are
ceremonies and like like official ways
of becoming an anagarika
in uh in burma probably thailand also
with regard to uh
being an upasaka i think all you got to
do is just
be a devout believing buddhist and
support support the sangha and

even in anagarika i don't think you'd
necessarily have to uh

be declared one by a senior monk or
anything like that

so next question do you see online
upasaka training becoming common in the
west

uh maybe i really don't know that much
about it

um i'm really uh very much of a newcomer
to like uh

zoom buddhism so um

yeah that one is uh yeah it wouldn't

surprise me it seems like it's

becoming more common now so yeah i'll

just say yes

next question and this is the last one

from the person whose name i can't
pronounce

do you regret returning to the west

do you foresee a time when you may

return to the wilds of burma

um no i do not regret returning to the
west in fact

from the buddhist point of view regret
is

always bad karma it always just makes
things

worse it always takes you farther away
from enlightenment

overall even though there might be
certain advantages to regret you know
it's like if you do something and you

feel really shitty after doing it it may
you know inspire you not to do it again
something like that

but overall i mean you can just if you
have any wisdom you can just see that
you shouldn't do it again and

just that's that should be good enough
you can do it without the regret

so that's something i've really taken to
heart i'm almost

immune to regret so

um you just uh you fall down you just
get up brush yourself off and continue
moving forwards but no i do not regret
returning to the west it was

i was i'd been wanting to return to the
west for a long time

and uh you know every place has got its
good points and his bad points

in some ways burma is far superior
especially if you want to be like a
strictly practicing monk

yeah burma burma works better because
the whole culture

is uh compatible with that

and um see i do not foresee a time
when i may return to the wilds of burma
because i'm i'm just uh getting too old
for that like

what danny glover said in uh lethal
weapon you know i'm getting too
over that this yeah that's uh

yeah it's like i'm getting uh in my in

my old age

i'm becoming less gung-ho about uh just
radical asceticism and just pushing
myself to the limit of what i'm able to
stand

and uh also i'm just more sensitive to
extremes of weather getting sick more
often that kind of thing

so it's time to take it a little easier
and

yeah i have no intention of going back
to asia unless it's just for a
visit or a vacation or something

okay next question is from

uh dog breath mr breath

how does mahatera panyabasa

define mindfulness and enlightenment

so that's two questions how do i define
mindfulness

um that's a good question really it's
just

awareness i think mindfulness is just
awareness just uh being

undistractedly aware of something

and uh the highest mindfulness is you're
not even

uh undistractedly aware of some thing
because it's just

the awareness just kind of wide open it
becomes almost paradoxical because
you've got

awareness just kind of of itself because
you've pretty much cleared your mind of

all mental states

all this all discrete mental states so

the perfection of mindfulness would be

uh

just kind of uh

paradoxical mindfulness like

consciousness of itself or something

but as a general rule mindfulness which

is all according to abidama that i

already dissed

it's always there i mean you've always

got some degree of mindfulness it's just

whether it's it

you know high quality or low quality

mindfulness

um but it's it's essentially just

awareness like um

tom poulos seattle who is the uh the
founder of the tradition which i was
ordained he said uh

cd is a feat which means mindfulness
is just knowledge it's knowing which is
uh

essentially awareness and next question
what is enlightenment um

my own interpretation of enlightenment i
will tell you

um later because first i'll just give
you the the standard orthodox

you know right out of the text

enlightenment is just the cessation of
suffering

whereas the cessation of greed hatred

and delusion you know the three poisons
or the three fires

that would be enlightenment or you know
the attainment of nirvana

with with uh my my explanation of
enlightenment would be

uh penetration of the illusion to
ultimate reality it's like awareness of
ultimate reality i assume full
absolute enlightenment would be you
would be fully aware of the ultimate
reality

all the time so i mean you'd still be in
the in the matrix but at least you would
know

that you're in the matrix

okay next question from chaplin

i have it typed chapin but i'm pretty
sure it's chaplin

okay what do you view as the most
helpful

timeless masculine and ascetic teaching
of the buddha

for men living in today's post-modern
west

how can these foundational teachings
help

create stronger more stable men and
healthier families

and culture in the west well that is
what is needed and if if buddhism could
meet that

need it would become a lot more popular

instead of uh

emphasizing wimpyness which is pretty

much what it does

nowadays if it emphasized strength is

what it used to do

then uh yeah i think it could really

maybe not go

mainstream so much but at least become

much more popular than it is

so in order to make people stronger and

tougher including just having a stronger

tougher mind which is really

one of the main points of being a monk

is just cultivating you know

toughness of mind just so that you can

endure

just about anything that the universe

throws at you and still maintain
equanimity

now it's kind of what a lot of
asceticism is for it's just it teaches
you how you can be

serene and happy even if you're your
stomach is empty and you're drenched in
sweat and you've got no friends and no
family and no money

and you're sleeping on the ground under
a tree and everything but still you can
be happy

and i've learned that from my own
personal experience it is possible
to be happy under circumstances like
that but uh the average

uh guy living in a house with a family
isn't going to be doing that much except
maybe like a forest retreat or something
every once in a while so uh

let's see how to

uh have a tougher mind i think uh

keeping in mind

like the first two noble truths that uh
suffering of some sort to some degree
is just inevitable so long as you exist
in this world

um you're never going to have everything
going your way there's always going to
be

just problems and uh friction and
everything

and the second noble truth should also

be born in mind which is that
uh all suffering is caused by
craving an attachment and attachment
essentially means just insisting on
things being a certain way
so just teaching men
and women and to some degree children
that you know whenever whenever you're
suffering whenever you're unhappy it's
it's
essentially from a buddhist point of
view always self-inflicted
and to some degree always unnecessary
because it's volitional
it's it's caused by your own refusal to
accept the situation

and some situations i have to admit are
very hard to accept like a toothache
for example but really it still is
volitional even though
sometimes the volition may seem to be
hardwired
accepting the inevitability of death
would be another way of toughening
oneself up
just reminding yourself it's considered
to be one of the great protectors in
buddhism just remind yourself
from time to time that you really are
going to die
that everything that has a beginning
also has an end
but getting more towards like the more

obviously tough

stuff um yeah just austerity i mean

um buddhism really has a lot to say

about just disdain for unnecessary

comforts

you know wallowing in luxury just makes

you soft and weak and flabby

so um yeah just a little bit of

minimalism

and a certain disdain for comfort

let alone luxury i think that would be

very helpful

and austerity is really it's um

it's a way of expressing masculinity

like um

in william james's classic

book the varieties of religious
experience he was talking about how
in the west especially masculinity is
expressed through like
aggression you know it's like the
soldier is considered to be the most
macho guy but there
is like a peaceful non-violent way of
expressing one's masculinity and that is
just through uh
austerity and just fearlessness
just um to cultivate fearlessness
is really um you can call that the
divine masculine or an aspect of the
divine masculine
and that was the last question so
and looks like we're almost an hour long

so

yeah if anybody uh has any more

questions then

you feel free to include them in the

comments

on my subscribe star page or

um in the bit shoot comments or on the

comments of that other one i think it's

like youtube so um

yeah and then if uh enough people uh

like it

and ask questions then i can do this

again

so be happy everybody and i think i'm

done

all righty hello and welcome to the
second episode of question and answer
and uh hopefully the uh the sound will
be a little better this time or at least
no worse because it's raining outside
and it's loud on this trailer
so i'll start answering questions
first question is from sakia puta which
maybe means it's from a monk son of the
sakians
uh and uh he asks would you care to
elaborate on your criticism of venerable
nyanovira
okay venerablenyanovira was an english
monk
who was ordained in sri lanka like back

around 1950

and committed suicide in 1965 due to a

very

distracting health issue

and yeah one of the very first

blog posts i ever wrote years and years

ago was about nyanovira

criticizing some of his beliefs

and so um first off

i think he made a serious mistake in

that he considered

all of the core texts to be absolutely

infallible

and the core texts are considered to be

the oldest

theravada buddhist texts which are the

first four

books of winia and the first four

nikayas

of the suta pirika and the first several

books

of the kudakanikaya so he rejected

like most of the kudaka nikaya and

all of the abhidhammapitika and a few

other books

and he really didn't have any uh i mean

he didn't put forth any

evidence that that it was all infallible

the the core texts

and he just took that as a kind of axiom

it wasn't really self-evident at all

especially with

all the talking animals and

fire-breathing dragons and the flat
earth floating on water and all that
so um he just sort of arbitrarily
came up with this idea that the core
texts
were absolutely infallible and then he
based this hyper intellectual
uh system this interpretation of dhamma
largely influenced by existentialism
like modern european existentialism
and uh apparently he believed himself to
have become an arya
while essentially hammering out his
point of view
intellectually so um
yeah i think there's a good chance he
was mistaken in that regard

and he was uh very hyper intellectual
kind of intellectually arrogant
intolerant of other people's point of
views i mean
he just sincerely believed anyone who
disagreed with him on dhamma
was just flat out wrong and
also maybe most importantly of all maybe
even more important than his uh
interpretation of the text was his
belief that mysticism is just
absolute [__] and we'll get
to get back to mysticism a little later
but uh
yeah i really think that the buddha
himself was a mystic so

um just a purely rationalistic

intellectual approach to dhamma

is not going to get you very far in my

opinion

and that's what venerable nyamabiru was

doing and he's got lots of followers now

relatively speaking so um next question

from bodhisattva969

do you think it is possible and

important to create a right wing or

conservative buddhism

as an antipole to feminized western

buddhism

and then he continues uh saying in some

buddhist groups you just think the

people really need help because they are

mentally ill and see buddhism just as a

self-help group

i think if somebody hears or reads what
they're talking about in these groups

nobody wants to have to do

anything with buddhism

with regard to it being possible and

important to create

a conservative traditionalist kind of

buddhism in the west

sure i think it's possible and it could

be important if you think

buddhism or dhamma in the west is

important then that would be important

so um yes it is possible and

i am making my own little contributions

to that just by

doing stuff like this so

um yeah there's there's going to be more

questions along those lines so

and the main question just do i think

it's impossible and important and so the

answer to that is

yes and probably yes

next from in manus

alias frank inman who

asks very long questions

next uh cece what role

does the laity householder play in the

conditioning of the world by which

beings

arise prime for renunciation in other

words how do particular peoples and

their cultures make the world

suitable for the continuance or rising
of the buddha sasana

in what ways do laity householders cause
deterioration degeneration in the buddha
sasana

i ask so as to help the buddhist asana
to the best of my ability as a layman
um well i mean buddhism

arises from its culture and the culture
is mostly lay people

so obviously lay people are going to be
setting the stage

and it's mainly lay people

and like kings or politicians or

whatever the people in charge especially
that are determining um

the beliefs of the people and the
direction that the culture goes and all
that

so sure in that respect definitely
just the beliefs and attitudes of the
people

are going to very heavily condition
um the state of dhamma and the state of
any kind

of uh spiritual renunciation that's
going on

also um i've read that

like spiritual renunciation increases
when

things are really shitty so when lay
people

and the kings especially are just

messing things up

then uh the the culture or the

civilization

uh starts reaching a kind of a crisis

point and more and more people are just

going to bail out

in despair of uh worldly existence

so there's there's that aspect to it too

but um yeah i mean it's uh

this delay people that support the monks

the the renunciants

especially like a strict buddhist

renunciant

isn't even allowed to feed himself so he

has to be fed by uh

the lay people supported by the lay

people

so next question as the lotus starts
in the muck and the mud so does the
noble disciple begin from the womb and
from the world of his people who are of
particular ways and cultures and given
to various worldly passions

elaborate please um

well the lotus simile is really
common in the really ancient texts and
uh

the main point of it is that you've got
this beauty arising from the mud
and the mud doesn't stick to the lotus
at all it's like the
the lotus has like a non-stick surface
so water and mud and

stuff like that just doesn't stick to it
at all

and in the text it's referring to the
monk having a mind

that's like that or a spirit that's like
that nothing sticks to it like no kind
of defilements

you know like any kind of mental muck
doesn't stick to it

so that's the main point of the uh the
lotus

and um let's see what see the noble
disciple begin from the womb and from
the world of his people who are
particular ways cultures

um yeah i mean eventually you just reach

the stage of purity where
the conditioned environment really
i mean it always has conditioning
effects and all that but it just doesn't
stick

you don't identify with it it doesn't
really influence you deeply
it's just all external it's just all
external stuff

in fact in the oldest text even your own
thoughts are considered to be external
to you

but that's uh that's like a whole show
trying to explain that one

next question from frank do you think
a wheel turning monarch is needed to
realign the laity householders in

ancient days the king would
instill order and look after the realm
of men is there
truth to this is such a thing necessary
or perhaps i should ask do you think we
need leadership
from or for the laity who can
re-establish or maintain various customs
which could optimize our support for the
beku sangha
um well a wheel turning monarch
pretty much is it's not really necessary
because i doubt that there has ever
really
been one maybe ashoka would come as
close

as there has been one but he certainly
wasn't king of the whole world like a
wheel-turning monarch is supposed to be
he was uh he didn't even

conquer or rule the entirety of india
although he did rule most of it so um
yeah i mean uh the people who are in
high places

like uh like the rush song um yeah they
are the most important with regard to
influencing public opinion and all that
and just the attitudes and all that but
um

uh yeah i don't i don't know uh to what
extent nowadays in the west there's
going to be much
of a turning towards dhamma unless it's

just uh

in in a state of crisis and despair

so otherwise you're just going to have

like fringe group

you know this buddhist people around the

edges of society

or maybe even in the midst of society

except with their

spiritual beliefs being on the edges who

are just doing the best they can it's

just

doing what they can to support dhamma

so yeah organizing a mass movement

that's big thinking

but who is going to do that i have no

idea

next question perhaps we can form an
order of sorts for lay householders who
can keep the fires of older traditions
going

our highest veneration being the
renunciant monks and or

ascetics but as householders not quite
ready for some of us

feel a duty to at least help keep
suitable conditions for those who can
really go for it do you think such an
initiative would help

um sure i mean monks can't exist without
the support of laypeople so um if there
are buddhists who really
want monks or just like really advanced
practitioners

then um that's like been one of the main purposes

of a buddhist lay person from the very beginning is to support

the heavy hitters or the people that are really dedicating their lives

to uh really going for it

so um yeah i mean some sort of

order um yeah i've considered that i've talked about that sort of thing

um because like full

ordination in the west is very different from full ordination in

asia and that's another question that's

lower down on the list here

so i'll get into that later but um

yeah i mean um especially in the west
a monk has to receive more support than
he does in asia
from people who have less cultural
conditioning
supporting them supporting monks
so it is kind of a difficult
situation in the west partly just
because we're not living in a buddhist
culture

okay next question it is said all the
buddhists taught the four
right efforts to develop wholesome
states to maintain wholesome states to
abandon unwholesome states and to
prevent the arising of unwholesome
states

this seems to conflict greatly with what
many modern secular spiritual
teachers teach in that many say we
should not
judge but if we do not judge them we are
not discerning and if we are not
discerning
and to me it would seem that we are not
using our mindfulness properly for our
long-term welfare and benefit also this
teaching seems to me to parallel various
alchemical teachings of various western
hermetic schools that involve
purification of various things
just as we can distill water from foul
mixtures with heat

so too can we distill good mental states
with mindfulness and right effort again
this all to me seems to fly in the face
of the modern degenerate teachers of
this age

could you perhaps elaborate on this
specifically right effort and how do
judgment discernment and mindfulness
factor

in um well with regard to right efforts
you're essentially just trying to
increase

um the amount of kusala or skillful
mental states

ethical mental states and decrease the
amount of unethical ones

which is just getting you closer to

enlightenment increasing your wisdom and
all that

and you have to use mindfulness just so
that you'll be aware of what kind of
state you're in

and the judgment and discernment um

yeah i mean you have to exercise that to
make decisions and

the more wise your judgment and

discernment are going to be and the more
mindful you are the more likely

you're going to make good and the right
decisions

so the for right efforts yeah it's

fairly straightforward just

any good habits you've got you try to

maintain and strengthen them
and any good habits you don't got you
try to establish them in any bad habits
you've got you try to get rid of them
and then you try to make sure you don't
get any new bad habits
which is uh mainly just purifying and
simplifying yourself
and you use the mindfulness and
discernment
as tools to accomplish that
okay next question from nardi
how do you interpret the mindfulness of
inside and outside of body
sensation mind and objects of mind in
the saripatana sutta
that's a good question and the way i

understand it

is you can be mindful sort of

vicariously watching somebody else

you know you're mindful of their

movements and their speaking

and that sort of thing so with regard to

outside of the body

um that is my interpretation of it

and i think that may be the orthodox

interpretation also like if you're

mindful of

of um of like bodily movements for

example then um

you can be mindful of your own bodily

movements or you can be

observing somebody else and in a way

kind of putting yourself in their place
and being mindful

through them vicariously

yeah that's my my best understanding of
that of that one

next question from average dud possibly
average dude but uh it's spelled average
dad

do nipa pancha concept would reconcile
mahayana non-dualism

by the way where can i study this
concept further

okay nippa pancha is a synonym for
nirvana and literally it means something
like non-diversification

um so it's like

yeah non-diversity and

yeah that concept goes way way back to
the

to the most ancient text it was more
important in the most ancient texts
than it came to be later on like some
versions of

uh padicha samupada or dependent core
rising

start with papancha as the beginning you
know that's the beginning of the whole
cycle of birth and death and suffering
is this mental diversification where
you're distinguishing this from that
which is like the opposite of mysticism
you know instead of like a holistic just
awareness of just the consciousness

itself

or whatever you're you're like

discerning this from that

and you're creating the ten thousand

things you know it's like in

the dow teaching it's like you know

first you have the dow from the dow

comes the one from the one comes the two

and then from the two comes the ten

thousand things something like that

so um yeah it goes all the way back and

then teravata became more analytic

and intellectual and kind of veered away

from the mysticism whereas mahayana was

trying to get

back to these early teachings and so

if you want to study the concept further

um probably the best

book on the subject is concept and

reality by bikunyananda which is uh

published by the the buddhist

publication society

and that's the whole con the whole thing

the whole book

is him discussing using ancient

polytechnics

the meaning of the word papancha and

nipah pancha is just the opposite of

pancha so nipah pancha is nirvana and

papancha

is the samsaric 10 000 things it's the

matrix that we live on it's

the flickering shadows on the walls of

plato's cave

but also in addition to concept and
reality

i'm just reading the ataka waga of the
sutoni pata

or there are certain old sutas

just throughout the um

like uh in the samyut nikaya there are
some ones called the cosmologist

i think in bhikkhu bodhi's translation
he calls it the cosmologist

or the diga nakasuta of the majimenikaya

or the saka patnasuta of

of the digini kaya the central part of
that

is considered to be very like archaic
archaic buddhism older than sort of the

finished

uh orthodox system and so it's to some degree it's unorthodox and it puts more emphasis on

just uh non-intellectuality as a way of getting enlightened

whereas later on theravada buddhism became known as

which is the uh the doctrine of analysis and became just

very hyper intellectual in a different way from yanovira who is also

in my opinion making the mistake of taking a hyper intellectual approach to domo

okay next question also by average dud

does the perennial philosophy manifest
in the buddhist teachings in the
perennial philosophy
that's what aldous huxley called it and
it's mysticism essentially
and it's kind of a trick question i mean
in a way
buddhism definitely was mystical to
begin with
but the mystical philosophy usually
refers to mysticism in the terms
in terms of like god or some sort of
absolute
and the absolute is so absolute
it transcends duality it transcends the
papancha or
the differentiation between is and isn't

or existence and non-existence
like in old buddhist texts even
existence and non-existence are
considered just be mental states they're
conditioned mental states
and so they're ultimately based on
delusion

so um most mystical
philosophies or spiritual systems
will um i mean they'll talk about the
absolute

as this it or or even he like
like in a theistic mysticism you know
those call it god
whereas buddhism um goes with isn't i
mean you have to choose is or isn't

because that's just the way languages
are

and both are a mistake i mean it's like
the absolute transcends

is and isn't but most mystical schools
choose

is and then call it god or

tao or whatever whereas in buddhism

the buddha for reasons of his own

possibly

because of the the culture going back to

the indus valley civilization in

northern india

he just went with isn't because he

considered that to be

um less likely to result

in serious mistakes and clinging or

you're clinging to this absolute that
you have this idea
in your mind and then it just becomes
like an obstacle because you're clinging
to this concept in your mind
instead of just experiencing the reality
of it

so in buddhism they just don't talk
about it much or at least in tarabata
buddhism early

like archaic buddhism um they
they kind of talked around it and
mahayana kind of talks around it
sometimes too

but the the idea goes all the way back
to the earliest buddhism

okay now questions from

m-y-w-l-a-m and i've been told that that

is an acronym which

means make your whole life a meditation

so

first question from my willam are there

any enlightened teachers today

if so who and how would an ordinary

householder

know it well that's a trick question

because um

enlightened teachers i mean the only way

you could know that somebody else is

enlightened is if you're enlightened too

so a lot of i mean most teachers who

claim to be enlightened

or are claimed to be enlightened uh very

probably aren't

but then again i mean you get into the
whole um

it's it's like samsara is so so messed
up we're living in a world that's that's
ultimately based on delusion and so in a
way you could say that

an enlightened being really doesn't
exist

anyway i mean in reality there's no
being because there's no self

anyhow and enlightenment kind of neither
exists nor doesn't exist

or neither both nor neither and so the
whole thing becomes like a trick
question

although um in some paradoxical way i
assume

there are beings who could be considered
enlightened and who they are nowadays
i don't know it's like for a long time
my favorite guess

would be paul lowe who's an englishman
who lives in australia now and is very
old

but um i mean there could be you know
monks living in alone out in the woods
somewhere that nobody's ever heard of
or uh yeah who knows i mean like there
are people nowadays like eckhart tolle
you know he's considered to be
enlightened

i think he goes around telling people or

at least he used to
that he was enlightened so um yeah cases
like that it's really hard to say
and so long as you're not enlightened
you'll you'll never be able to tell
although
you can kind of uh weed out some of the
obvious ones that aren't enlightened you
know it's like if somebody's just
like uh just behaving really badly just
getting drunk and
yelling and beating people up or
whatever you know like stealing and
killing and all that then uh
yeah it's a good chance they're not
enlightened i mean if they're obviously

behaving in foolish ways

but uh even then sometimes it's hard to

tell because sometimes an enlightened

being can act in ways that uh

are just uh inexplicable like

uh neem karoli baba in india back in the

20th century

he did all kinds of uh rascally stuff

and

nevertheless he was extremely advanced

so

um yeah again i really don't know um

who the enlightened teachers would be

today

okay next question if there aren't many

enlightened buddhists today why what can

be done to resolve this overall lack of

attainment

uh well i doubt that there have ever

been very many enlightened people

um i mean you you read the the buddhist

texts and you know the buddha is giving

a talk to thousands of people and they

all become enlightened

or something but um uh yeah i mean that

could just be uh

stereotypical indian exaggerations

so it may be i mean there's a good

chance in the buddhist time there

that a lot of his disciples didn't get

enlightened assuming that enlightenment

really even means anything in a psalm

sorry context

but uh we're just not living in an
enlightened age right now i mean
india was just a miraculously spiritual
culture in the buddhist time it was just
very

like uh

the whole lifestyle

it was always acknowledging that there
was like a higher level of reality
and people were really took that
seriously and to some degree still in
india they take that seriously

but uh nowadays in the west especially
it's just

scientific materialism it's just uh the
flickering shadows on the walls of
plato's cave are the ultimate reality

and

uh anything beyond that is

make believe or something so what can be

done to resolve this overall lack of

attainment well you can become

enlightened

i mean you just do it yourself think

globally but act locally and

so you just do the best you can you mind

your own garden essentially

but also like buddhism it has

degenerated in that

people really cling to dogmas and

traditions and rituals and that sort of

thing they need that sort of thing

and in a way that gets in the way

especially if you cling to that
thinking that that's going to get you
enlightened
you know it's like para masa clinging to
morality and observances it's it's a
hindrance and
when the enlightened teacher is gone and
really what you've got left
of the system is mainly just
recorded teachings then you just got
word i mean it's the
the words are no longer alive they're
just printed in books
and uh if they just get parroted by
monks that really aren't following the
teachings then it's just
you know it's just has very limited

benefit

uh okay let's see

oh and another thing that can uh uh

increase the overall lack of attainment

is again if the [_] hits the fan

and uh we wind up in very liminal

uh turmoil crisis kind of a situation

which will then turn people away from

the world in despair and towards

something higher

okay next question what is the orthodox

definition perspective of what a

bodhisattva

is okay well from the uh

in terrible buddhism it's called the

bodhisattva with no v

and there's a good chance i wrote an
article about this a long time ago about
how buddhist might even be a
mistranslation

into sanskrit little pali word in the
pali words bodhisattva

and bodhi means enlightenment and
satva like in mahayana means being so a
bodhisattva is an enlightenment being
but it's kind of ironic calling them an
enlightenment being when what a

bodhisattva is doing is
putting off enlightenment indefinitely
so um i think the sata

in pali was a past participle i think
it's the verb sajidi

which means to be bound for to be

attached to

something like that so originally the

bodhisattva

was someone who was bound for

enlightenment someone who was destined

to become a buddha especially

so um yeah that's in terrible buddhism

is someone who is destined to become a

fully enlightened buddha

okay next question where does the

bodhisattva concept come from

um yeah i think i've pretty much already

answered that one

but it really it was originally um

as a being who was destined for

enlightenment like in the old text and i

think there's a question down here

let's see yeah in the small amount of
text that could be
attributed to the historical buddha does
the bodhisattva concept appear
um the really most ancient ones i don't
remember it but
it is definitely in like the core
attacks
like in the sutta it's where the buddha
is talking about when he was a
bodhisattva
which just meant before he became
enlightened you know before
um you know his evening under the under
the bodhi tree on the full moon of may
so um yeah he was just the person

destined to become the buddha at that point because he wasn't the buddha yet all right next question i have read one text that said the buddha became a bodhisattva after his enlightenment is this the orthodox view of what a bodhisattva is as opposed to mahayana buddhism

which defines a bodhisattva as someone prior to another

no no i don't i don't see how that would be possible that you become a bodhisattva

after you become a lion since in mahayana buddhism

um you know you're a bodhisattva someone

who puts off enlightenment and in
terra vada buddhism a bodhisattva is
someone who is
destined to become
a buddha and generally in order to
officially be a bodhisattva
you have to receive i think in burmese
it's called a bayade where
some buddha a fully enlightened buddha
has to
declare that it has to like prophesy
that you will become a buddha in some
future life
like um our our buddha gautama
um he received his biate from deepankara
buddha like 28 buddhas ago you know like
a zillion gajillion years ago and

there are certain other um

qualifications i think you're supposed

to have

mastered the jannas or something before

you can become a bodhisattva that sort

of thing

but it is like an easy out for like some

monks that really don't want to try for

enlightenment

they'll just say well i'm a bodhisattva

and i'm just perfecting my parame so

that i can become a fully enlightened

buddha in some future life

which really was not what the buddha was

teaching but

takes all kinds okay let's see next

question

given the earliest teaching suggests an

itinerant lifestyle do you think there

is any benefit

in terraforming monasteries closing

during the spring to fall months

so that the monks can adopt such a

lifestyle

would this shake up be invigorating for

practice

one problem with that is that

technically

summertime is the rain's retreat the

monsoon season

in tropical asia like northern india

just happens to be summer time here

which is the best time for a monk to

live

outside and it's against the rules

for a monk to be traveling around or or

living outside

during the reigns retreat so that's just

another way that um

the uh that tarabata buddhism and the

rules of monastic discipline don't fit

the temperate zone

west very well so

um some some monasteries that do have

like winter retreats or something where

they just don't accept visitors for a

month or more

just so the monks can not be distracted

so much

but i do think that that was one of the
main

important points of being a monk in the
buddhist time that is now

lost for most monks is that you wander
around

you throw yourself at the mercy of the
universe you don't know where your next
meal is coming from you don't know where
you're going to sleep that night

and um it definitely forces you to sink
or swim

and nowadays with monks living easy
lives and comfortable meditation centers
and so forth

that um they don't receive those
challenges and they can just

kind of stagnate and and fail to make
progress

just because of no real challenges so
let's see see if i've answered this one
um

yeah i think i think i answered that i'm
fairly sure

fairly sure i answered that question so
i'll move to the next one

life is suffering is a thought why
attach to or identify with that thought
and not

others this is especially relevant if
one is practicing a form of meditation
where one just watches his thoughts
and arise and pass away the opposite

thought is life is wonderful

but again that is just a thought so

wouldn't it be more truthful

to just say life is well i mean just

saying life is would be a tautology

you'd just be stating the obvious and it

would be rather pointless

life is suffering is something that you

contemplate

as a way of inspiring you to practice

because if

everything is wonderful then you don't

really need to

to improve the situation you don't need

to purify yourself or anything

because everything is already wonderful

so

life is suffering is it's just uh
a belief that has been carried through
india since prehistoric times you know
since the indus valley civilization
and uh the uh the sramana traditions
especially
in india the non-vedic traditions um
they're pretty much based on the idea
that the world
is not a really good place to be
and so you should be trying to go beyond
it or transcend it
so in that sense it is sort of skillful
means it's just a way of inspiring you
to practice more
okay next question orthodox theravada

buddhism

appears from the outside to have become

very systematized formulaic

ritualistic chanting cultural festival

days etcetera

would you agree with this statement yes

isn't this

contrary to the teachings of buddha to

some degree

yeah do you see a way that orthodox

terror of

buddhism could ever move away from the

systematization

um there could be movements within

theravada

that just don't care about abhidhamma in

the commentaries for example

and really put more emphasis on
meditation and there are some
um there's like the the sri lankan
forest tradition that got
set up i think it was back in the 70s or
thereabouts that
is sort of like that and just other
teachers you know
different teachers will have different
emphases
so um yeah but but with regard to
orthodox theravada buddhism
um yeah you're not going to be able to
change the fundamental principles of
orthodox terrible buddhism because it's
already

that's just the way it is i mean that's
the way it's set up with the
the great councils and everything so if
you wanted something
way more streamlined without all of the
bells and whistles and the bowing and
the
gongs and incense and all that then uh
yeah you
pretty much have to uh start up a new
kind of buddhism
which uh is possible because theravada
you know it's not 100 pure authentic
original buddhism i'm sorry to say
so um yeah keep what's good and uh
i mean you don't really need um you know
the

the rituals and the chanting i mean some
of it is necessary

you know like um you know the monks have
to do

uh official acts of the sangha that sort
of thing where there's a certain amount
of ritual

and chanting involved but um

yeah to some degree it's just inevitable
and unavoidable

okay next question do burmese

monks in the west still search through
the ashes of deceased monks or teachers
in search of relics

or has this cultural aspect been left

behind i don't know what they do in the

west i

i really have never been around a monk

who was cremated

in in the west so whether they go

through their ashes afterwards i don't

really know

but um the next question

the burmese monks uh in burma still

search through the ashes of deceased

monks or teachers in search of relics

yeah yeah

they do in burma they'll search through

the ashes of a monk to see if there's

like the little

little balls or any other kind of uh

relics that they can make and salvage

and if it was a really holy monk

and um even if there's no balls
or you know like the the standard kind
of relics then they'll
they'll just take the pieces of bone
like usually
they'll put the fire out before
everything is burned up just
just so that they'll have some some
bones and they can use that as relics
so they do it in they do it in asia
still but i i really
can't say about america whether it be
legal or whatever i don't know
okay next question venerable ponyboss's
blog has a
header picture picture of a monk who has

set

fire to himself as far as is known the

buddha didn't set fire to himself so

when and where did the idea of setting

fire to oneself come from

i have no idea i really don't know

although uh

i think it was back around 2017 there

was like a like an epidemic of it there

was more than 100 tibetan monks had

immolated themselves

and uh i guess the mahayana monks like

in vietnam did it sometimes because the

one in

the picture was vietnamese

so how it started i have no idea i don't

think there's any mention of it

in the uh the poly text is it considered
good merit to set fire to oneself um
no technically um it's against the rules
to commit suicide like for a buddhist
monk to commit suicide is technically
against the rules it's not as bad as
murder i mean
literally you're killing you're killing
a human being but
you're since you're killing yourself
it's uh it's considered to be a minor
rule but still
um the buddha advised against it
there are there have been cases of monks
like godika in the godika suta of the
samyut nitaya

who committed suicide and as he was
dying he became enlightened
so there are kind of uh um
all alternative outcomes i guess you
know it's not necessarily
bad but as a general rule yeah you
shouldn't commit suicide
if you're if you're a good buddhist what
is the point of self-immolation
i think is to get attention it's to make
a statement
you know it's like uh the one the famous
one in vietnam was uh protesting
you know he was just getting attention
for his cause
trying to make uh trying to make a
difference and uh

i think maybe he did next question i

have read that

some who have attempted self-immolation

failed of those who have failed have any

of them tried again

uh i have no idea maybe probably

but uh yeah i can't really say has

venerable ponyo bossa mahatera ever

considered self-immolation oh this is a

good one

um i haven't really considered it really

seriously although i used to joke about

it

when i was living in bellingham when i

first came back to america you know i

was like

venerated as a saint in burma you know
just like

hundreds of people you know bowing down
to me and literally worshipping me and
everything i was sort of like colonel
kurtz without the uh

the heads on poles and then i come back
to america

and even the buddhists are like who is
this guy and who the hell does he think
he is

just because of the just the radical
night and day difference of buddhism
in asia and buddhism in the west so
sometimes i would just joke to people
some of my supporters
you know if you see me walking towards

the dharma hall with a five gallon can
of gasoline stay away from the dharma
hall that day

because uh yeah i'll be immolating
myself on the front porch in protest or
something but

um it was just joking i wasn't really
going to do it but i have uh

in a way you kind of consider it in
order to make a joke of it

next question how is such a deep level
of trance achieved that one can attempt
to self-immolate

by focusing on breast breathing in and
out

um yeah it's hard for me to say

considering that i've never emulated
myself

but uh i've been i assume that you're
going to be in

more or less of a level of trance just
just before you do that i mean it's
going to be very

intense moment you know you're going to
be in an altered state of consciousness
just right off the get-go

and um yeah i mean if a monk knows how
to go into the trance state

then he can do that although he's going
to have to be pouring the gas on himself
and

striking the match and all that i've
been told that

after the first few seconds then it's
like your nerve endings on your skin are
all destroyed anyway so
um yeah you don't really feel very much
after

after it starts at first so
um yeah i really can't say about the
actual mental states of a person who's
immolating themselves because i really
have no firsthand experience
or even secondhand experience i can't
remember reading anybody saying what it
was like

next question do monks practice
different meditations than the lay
practitioners who are traditionally

given meditation on the breath or
thought watching and let's see is it
acceptable from the orthodox perspective
that the laity practice these
meditations

um well yeah i mean lay people generally
they practice elementary level
meditation and there's lots of different
kinds of meditation

that most lay people have never heard of
and uh probably even most monks i mean
they may have read about it a little bit
but they don't really practice it i mean
contemplating

decomposing corpses is pretty much out
of fashion now

there's not much of that going on even

though of the 40 standard meditation
techniques

10 of them are the meditations on
decomposing corpses

and like there there are some kind of
meditations that are relatively common
for monks but not so common for lay
people

like meditation on the 32 parts of the
body for example

so um yeah a good teacher will have
monks practicing different kinds of
meditation like the 32 parts of the body
meditation

is supposed to be a good one for
reducing lust

in young monks or you know like the
repulsiveness of food

is good for people that have attachment
to food or some of the casino
meditations that almost no lay people
practice

um there are some monks that are doing
casino meditation

which is more of a hypnotic device it's
like somehow

you go into deep trance states with that

so yeah i mean it's not against the

rules or anything for lay people to be
practicing these little known

esoteric kind of meditation techniques

it's just that uh

for the most part um they don't know how

to do it most of them have never even
heard of it

so in a way it's sort of like it's not
as bad as roman catholicism where

in order to practice catholic

meditations you pretty much have to be
ordained into a contemplative

uh order of of catholicism so i mean

it's it's more open than that but and

there i'm sure there are some lay people

that have done casinos and the 32 parts
of the body

and like the four elements and all that

but um

for the most part they just do the the

kindergarten level stuff

like the really elementary stuff let's
see

what are the main differences between
being a monk in burma and a monk
in the west oh i could talk for an hour
on that one i've already talked about it
a little bit

you know the night and day aspect of it
because really i mean it's very very
different

um being a monk in burma i mean it's
like

it's a buddhist culture and the people
are taught from the time that they're
toddlers that monks are like super human
beings you know the word for human being
is not used for a monk and so

they're just exalted beings and uh it's almost to the point where they can do no wrong

which is uh getting back to some of the questions up above about the

the influence of laypeople on on like the spiritual

um the spiritual tone of a society

um i've i've found in burma that the places where the ma

or the lay people are the most devout tend to have the sloppiest monks

because the monks know they can get away with anything and then the lay people are afraid to criticize them and you're just going to have respect for them

anyway so it's good for the lay people
to have a certain amount of skepticism
and like

you know they'll be calling out the the
really bad monks

so in a way that's good but it doesn't
happen enough in burma and

it's uh maybe is in excess in the west

but the main differences between being a
monk in burma and a monk in the west i
mean

uh in burma a monk can just wander

around and sleep under trees you know

there's no electric bills i mean

he can live for free and he can just
wander around

and uh you know just take a bath in in

the river

or or or wherever and um

this the whole the whole society is just
kind of set up and the rules of monastic
discipline are set up for northern india
and burma is very similar to northern
india with regard to climate
and with regard to flora and fauna and
even with regard to the lifestyles of
the villagers you know it's like the
the village guy goes out in the morning
with this team of bullocks to plow the
fields and the girl takes the clay pot
bounced on her head down to the river
to get water for the hut and all that
so terabyte of buddhism fits burma

really well whereas it's like this alien
foreign import into the west and then it
just gets completely
mutated almost beyond all recognition
and so um yeah there's just major
differences

uh i could go on and on but i think i'll
just move on to the next question if
if uh anyone's really interested in just
uh a breakdown i think i did a video
with brian roo a long time ago
just talking about the differences
between being a monk
in the west and in the east but i can
talk about it some more because it is
kind of a burning issue
and it's uh it's more of a burning issue

for me than for

for lay people because uh i'm the monk

who's trying to

to live in the west and uh yeah i mean

it's just a foreign

it's just this foreign world where uh a

monk

in asia is like like a philodendron

plant that can just grow

in the jungle or whatever you know it

lives naturally and the rain falls on it

and it

derives its nutrients from the soil and

everything whereas

a monk in the west is like that same

kind of philodendron plant but it has to

live

indoors like in a greenhouse in a
protected environment with people taking
care of it

so it's just sort of this artificial
transplant

that doesn't work all that great in most
cases

there are some monks that get along fine
in the west because maybe they just like
hanging out with

with western people or else they've just
got this comfortable

like cloistered kind of meditation place
where they can just be quiet and it's
not so different from living

in in asia just you know they're just

living in a cabin all by themselves
with people bringing them food or
something that kind of thing could work
too i suppose
but um as a general rule it is very
different mainly just because of the
the weather and and even more
importantly it's the the whole cultural
issue of
the west just is not based on indian
culture and um it's not a buddhist it's
not a buddhist society
so yeah it's it's night and day
are the differences between uh being a
monk in the west
and in in the east okay next

question are there many buddhists in
burma who live in caves
trees or close to nature or are most of
them situated in monasteries
most of them are situated in monasteries
there's a more of a
forest tradition in thailand and i think
now in sri lanka also than in burma
the uh the burmese monks
are well known for scholarship and
meditation
but the the wandering around in forests
and
the asceticism is more of a tie thing
so um yeah the uh burmese monks tend to
be pretty wimpy and they don't like
uh really roughing it

so um i was fortunate to be ordained in
one of the few

ascetic forest traditions in burma the
tompulu tradition

okay next question do you speak burmese

how much hope he

was in adult adoptee

enough to get by um okay next question

have you considered or are you

interested in online teaching

such as siri mangalo i ask this question

as it may help in attaining your goal of

independent living in the west

um online teaching well in a way i'm

kind of doing that now

um i do i have done like skype calls

with people

that have questions they want to ask me

that sort of thing

so in a way i kind of already am

although with regard to like

zoom retreats or something yeah i

think that's getting so

kind of artificial that uh

yeah i mean if siri mongolo is doing it

then been good for him and more power to

him and everything but

i think uh yeah with regard to zoom

buddhism um you know i can do it a

little bit

but um i'm not i have no interest in uh

like leading a virtual

retreat on the internet i'd rather do a

retreat in real life

um okay i guess i answered that one

next question how closely do you follow
the winner now

um not as not nearly as closely as i
used to

it may still be that i am the strictest
one of the two strictest monks here
anyway

and that's kind of sad really but um
like i might i'm one of the only monks
here that doesn't eat that doesn't eat
dinner so and um

yeah i've been trying to follow the
rules there have been times i mean for
most of my existence as a monk i was

just like famously strict you know just
a hard ass you know maybe even almost
like fanatical
in in being so strict and um
like the only rule that i've i've broken
from the beginning with with with uh
without compunction
is uh i look into a mirror when i shave
that's like the one rule that i've
always broken just because
there's a thai book on monastic
discipline where the thai sangha raja
said it's okay
and um he didn't really have the
authority to say it's okay to break the
rule but uh it was good enough for me at
the time because it's really

inconvenient trying to shave without
looking into a mirror

um but yeah i don't i don't follow it
nearly as strictly and

one of the reasons for that is the whole
difference between

living as a monk in in burma or

like asia and in america because for
example the money rules

i mean it's just almost impossible

to follow the money rule strictly the

the rules against a monk handling money
are so strict

that i'm not not only am i not allowed
to handle it myself

i'm not even allowed to consent to

somebody else handling it for me

which means that all even the strict
so-called exemplary monks in the west
they're all breaking the same rule i
mean they might as well be handling it
themselves because it's the same rule
strictly speaking um i mean not
handling's probably better at least
you're kind of following the spirit a
little better

so um

yeah so i mean with regard to money i'm
not i'm not like going and buying stuff
or anything but

uh um like there's a donation

jar in just at the other end of this
trailer that i'm sitting in

on my behalf and i'm not protesting
against that you know people
um people just come in and drop off
money

and uh i'll just pick up the envelopes
and stuff them into the

into the donation jar i really have no
idea how much money is in there

but um yeah yeah there are certain rules
that i've started fudging on

especially since coming back to america
this time so i'm not nearly as strict as
i used to be

and finally the last question from
chaplin what are the best ways for
people with children

and families to incorporate mindfulness
and general buddhist philosophy
into their everyday lives so as to
create healthier
and stronger family environment i'm
thinking of small daily rituals that can
become
easy habitual practice long term well
that's a good question
and i think the best ways for people
with children and families especially
is just to uh just try to follow the
like the five precepts and take it
seriously and uh
um i mean children learn more through
imitation
than than through uh you know what what

they're told

so i mean if your parents are telling
you don't lie but then they're lying all
the time and kids are just going to
learn

that when they grow up they tell their
kids don't lie well they lie all the
time

so i mean yeah you just take it
seriously and then that just
kind of spreads to the children through
osmosis you know kids do learn
a lot of their religiosity through their
childhood and their parents
so um so long as the the parents
are really practicing buddhists like

sincere practicing buddhists the kids
are going to pick up on that and that's
probably the best way
to teach the kids although
in burma i mean i i spent
more than 20 years in burma and you know
that's exactly what they're doing in
burma it's like the kids from the time
that they're
babies practically they're just growing
up buddhists
and they're watching their parents and
they're watching grandma and all that
just
doing their chanting and their beads and
then making the offerings
and uh you know a lot of mothers i was

kind of a famous monk in burma at the
time and a lot of mothers you know they
want their little kids to earn merit by
offering

by putting having their little kid put
food into my bowl

so i've got this this little kid with
just wide eyes like holding this banana
or something

and he really doesn't know what he's
doing it's just like mama wants me to do
this you know and it's like this really
serious thing you know he's really
taking it serious and he's got
the eyes wide open and puts the banana
in the bowl and then he kind of backs

off because it's all done you know it's
like uh

mission accomplished and um you know
they learn how to do simple chanting
they learn how to take the five precepts
and learn how to bow to monks and that
sort of thing

and uh to what extent that would
translate into the west

i'm not exactly sure but um i mean if
there were

enough like serious traditionalist
conservative western theravada buddhists
in the west they could have
um you know like uh like
groups you know they didn't have like a
dharma center and then the kids could go

and there'd be like a place where the
kids could play
while the parents are meditating or
something forcing your kids to meditate
is not so good because nowadays you
punish children by making them sit still
so um maybe if you're good with kids
and you can do like a guided meditation
you know where
you're just telling them to imagine you
know they're getting bigger and bigger
and the whole world is inside them you
know and this kind of thing
then that can work too but uh
first and foremost the best way to teach
your kids and to have like a

dharma oriented family is just for the
parents to sincerely practice
dharma as well as they can and that will
just
rub off on the children and they will
imitate that
that's the best i can think of but i
have
a relatively limited experience
in the family life so it may be that
somebody else could give better advice
on that one
and again that was the last question
so anybody that has questions anybody
that likes this kind of thing you're
welcome to uh
to leave questions um

under the announcements on on subscribe
star on my subscribe star page

or um uh underneath uh like the youtube
video

or whatever like that and uh you're all
welcome to

uh sign up for the subscribe star you
don't have to necessarily pay anything
there is like a free tier where you get
all the same um content as everybody
else because i don't like to put things
behind paywalls

and um be happy have a nice day i hope
you could hear this because it's like
raining really hard and there's there's
like rain on the roof

all the time so uh yes

goodbye

All right, hello and welcome to the third installment of questions and answers. I am Panya Bodhi Bhikkhu.

And um I've started this as a way of answering questions mainly from my supporters on SubscribeStar, although also I'm taking questions in the comment sections um under the YouTube video and the BitChute video.

Although if I have to do any triage and uh cut them short then uh um my SubscribeStar subscribers get uh first pop so to speak.

And um I almost apologize for going

shirtless on this one, but um

I've I've got this heater that has two settings, too hot and too cold or just too hot and off.

So um

yeah, I'm I'm thermoregulating is what I'm doing. I'm not trying to show off or anything.

So um

I guess I can just say anybody that has questions about Buddhism or Burma or monasticism,

Theravada philosophy, that kind of thing,

um feel free to uh

submit your questions um either on the SubscribeStar channel,

which will have the link below or uh
just in the in the comments,
if you please.

So first question from Friend of Crows.

You mentioned in a video you had a monk
friend who was declared a stream enterer
by U Pandita and then later decided
himself that he wasn't. Is that
something you can elaborate on?

Um yeah, I have a friend in Burma who
was um

declared a sotapanna or an Arya at
Panditarama by U Pandita himself.

And um

uh apparently in the Mahasi tradition if
you finish the course, if you have all

the experiences you're supposed to experience, then you are considered to be an Arya.

Um at least uh a lot of Sayadaws, a lot of the instructors will consider you an Arya. So that's what happened to him.

And uh he said that uh for a few years he really thought he really was uh an Arya until finally he realized that he probably wasn't. And anybody that knew him would know that he wasn't an Arya, unless Aryas are just uh completely beyond any kind of rules because he was one of the most um irritable or crotchety monks that I've really known.

Um it it wasn't so much anger as more
like

um

I mean I'm I'm kind of uh

uh don't want to say hate, although

that's kind of the word that comes up,

but um

yeah, it's very different. I I learned

from him that there really is a

significant difference between anger and

hatred.

Uh even though it's the same word in

Pali, dosa, and can be used for both,

but um

yeah, there was definitely a difference

and it was really obvious with with him.

He really had kind of a foul disposition.

Um

So yeah, he he finally uh came to the conclusion that he probably really wasn't one. Just I mean he was just declared once because he had finished the course uh successfully at uh Panditarama. And he's not the only one. There's a more famous case uh I've been told of

who also was declared an Arya by U Pandita and decided that he wasn't one. And that's Pa Auk Sayadaw, the founder of the Pa Auk tradition in Burma. In fact, um I was told that the reason why he started his own tradition

is that he went to Mahasi at first and was training in the Mahasi method and then he was declared an Arya when he knew full well he wasn't one.

So then he decided, "Well, this is this is wrong apparently, so I'm going to try to uh find a better way." And then he started studying the texts carefully and cooking up his own method.

So yeah, it does happen. And um just based on my own experience, it seems to me that most of the people who consider themselves to be Aryas really aren't Aryas. And um there is a a Mahayana Buddhist text, the Diamond Cutter Sutra, that says, you know, any Arya is is not

going to believe that he is an Arya just because once you once you become an Arya, you're no longer thinking in terms of I am this or I am that.

So um yeah, there's probably lots of uh uh bogus Aryas out there. And most of them I assume are sincere, but um

all all it takes is uh for some people to just have like a really weird experience in meditation, which can happen pretty easily, and then they think, "Wow, that's that's really outstanding. Uh I must have really attained something." And so they get the idea that they are Aryas.

And uh there are some people that are

just um kind of nutty who think that they're Aryas. Unlike Christian nutty people who might think that they're Jesus or something, there are very few I I've met

I don't think I've met any nutty Buddhists who think that they're the next Buddha. They just think that they're an Arya, you know, like a Buddhist saint and are content with that.

So I think I answered that question, so I move on to questions from Frank.

And I drink uh ginger and ginseng tea.

Frank says, "If your supporters could somehow organize and orchestrate some

sort of Dhamma hall, hermitage, or
monastery for you and potentially other
monks, would you accept such an offer?"

Um

yeah, well I mean any kind of really
good offer um

would be accepted, although I do already
have plans. I'm going to be moving to a
place in uh

South Carolina.

And um

any kind of support, I mean if it's if
it's good support, you know, honest, you
know, wholesome support, then uh it can
be accepted. With regard to a hermitage
or monastery, I think my hermit days are
over and I think my monastery days are

over. I really prefer the freedom of being a free-range person.

So

um

yeah, I mean it's a good idea even if it weren't for me in particular. I mean um if you're going to have any kind of traditional Theravada, you're going to have to have monks and monks just do not live on their own. The whole thing is set up that monks aren't allowed to handle money, they're not allowed to do anything that costs money really, not on their own anyhow. They're not even allowed to feed themselves. So in order to have ordained Theravada

monks

um in in the West especially,
uh they have to have support. And uh
Asian Buddhists,
they're just programmed to support
monks. I mean they they realize that one
of the most important purposes for a
Buddhist layperson from a traditional
scriptural point of view is supporting
the monks because the monks don't
support themselves. They're just going
going for it. And they need, you know,
some sort of uh
foundation of support to help them.
Otherwise, you know, they got to work
for a living and pay bills and all this
kind of stuff, which is a a serious

distraction at times.

So uh with regard to the question, um
yeah, I mean I've already settled upon
um the idea of moving to South Carolina
and uh getting the hell out of
California.

Um any kind of support within that
context

would be um

I mean as long as it's uh you know,
honest um no strings attached kind of
stuff or no big strings anyway. Um
yeah, I could accept that. Although
really, I mean even if it's not for me,
then really if you want like traditional
good strong Dhamma, then yeah, I mean it

makes sense that you would support monks. Although in the West, the like the traditionalist Buddhists are spread so thin, it's really hard to get um like a community going in a in a lo- in a locality because uh the the traditionalist Buddhists in the West are spread out very thin and almost the only way they can interact is um virtually over the internet. So that's something that has to be worked out.

There's going to have to be, I assume, some new kind of conservative Buddhism in the West, but we can uh we can talk about that later.

So next question.

For whatever reason, various people have

a fear of spirits and some become afflicted at times. How much of this is dependent on their views and beliefs? How should a Buddhist reconcile something like demonic possession when to use a being is nothing more than a conditional flux of aggregates? What exactly is possessed and who exactly can be said to be the possessor? It seems to me that one necessary condition for something like this to even occur is a strong view of self or I am where ignorance of nature brings about a sort of gravitational pull of existence, not to say such occurrences do not happen, but more

uh that they happen because of we view reality. What are your thoughts?

Um, well,

demonic possession is accepted as reality or phenomenal virtual reality anyway in Theravada Buddhism. Like there's the weird rule for monks that says a monk is not allowed to eat raw meat or drink raw blood unless he is possessed by a demon.

And um,

yeah, Mahayana Buddhism has similar beliefs with regard to that. So, um, yeah, apparently demonic possession or like spirit possession, um, it can occur.

Um, at least what is identified or or

called demonic possession or spirit possession.

So, the way

I mean, there there are various ways of of um, explaining it. Like like with regard to modern science, they would just say it's some sort of like hysterical dissociation or a mental illness or something like that. Although from a more spiritualistic point of view, you can say that there are spirits and in order for them to function in this version of reality, they have to have a physical body and they don't have one.

Or just not having a physical body is like a severe handicap in this version of reality, this phenomenal uh, this phenomenal form of existence that we call reality.

So, um,

yeah, they would um, move into uh, a body. It it would be somewhat like like rebirth where you've got like uh, uh, like a

a stream of consciousness or or something along those lines that just enters an available body. So, in my opinion, what would cause demonic possession is not so much a strong belief in self or I am. It's like a weakness, like a a weakness of of of

your your own mind or spirit that that makes you vulnerable to having your body taken over by some other spirit.

So, I assume that I assume that it works that way.

Let's see.

Um, yeah, I mean, it's you can't really say that there is a definite being.

Um, in Buddhism, it doesn't really work that way. But I mean, it it's virtually the same thing. I mean, it's it's not so different talking about um, you know, like a karmic momentum of consciousness or mental states inhabiting a body instead of just a, you know, a personality of a of a being inhabiting a

body. So, um, yeah, I'm I I would say
that assuming that there are spirits
that possess

uh, certain people, then um, you know,
they're hungry for some kind of
phenomenal existence that they can't
have if they don't have a physical body
on this plane and um, they would target
people that have weaknesses and like an
unstable kind of mind that leaves them
vulnerable for this sort of attack.

So,

um, people that meditate a lot, people
that uh,

cultivate wisdom generally don't have as
much problem as people who are
uh, just wallowing in samsara and kind

of messed up. It'd be more likely to happen with them.

Um, I have a friend, an Indonesian monk, who um, has one of one of his main supporters in Indonesia is a guy who says that he can see spirits. And one reason why he respects my friend, the Indonesian monk, so much is because he can see that spirits just leave that monk alone. You know, they're they're like hovering around other people trying to influence them cuz even if they can't invade their body, they can still try to get some kind of effects that they want through influencing uh, somebody that is embodied, like embodied spirit. But um,

they leave they leave this monk alone.

They just know that he's uh,

uh, invulnerable or impervious or

something.

Okay, next question.

Uh,

see, would it be uh, maybe it's part of

the same question that I didn't notice.

Would it be more accurate to describe

such occurrences not as possession but

as a sort of obsession where various

mental states take on a sort of

momentum. I have heard various occultist

types speak of carnal elemental forces

in nature that have a possessing

obsessing element to them and hence why

all wise religious sages more or less

have taught to be moderate and to control their senses. As humans, it seems we can follow and sell out to our carnal lust and more animalistic desires or that we can aspire to higher planes with such practices as keeping precepts, following Brahma Viharas, good works, prayer, etc.

Um,

uh, so I think the question is is it really a spirit or could it be some sort of obsessive thought? And um, uh, yeah, especially in some cases, I assume it could be that way. Although um, going with the uh, the idea of real spirits, um, I mean, it is

canonical Buddhism that uh, demonic possession can occur.

And uh,

whether the uh,

the uh, mental processes

um, are located in a meat body or not,

um,

I mean, it it's in this in this version

of reality, uh, it tends to work that

way. Although or it seems to, but uh,

not necessarily. Okay, next question

from Frank. Also, how does all of this

apply to those who channel? I am aware

of some Buddhist sects like the Tibetan

Buddhists who are said to channel

deities. Can you explain this means

mechanism by which such practices are

carried out?

Well, channeling also is mentioned in the in the texts like um, the first 10 or so suttas of the Digha Nikaya, the Silakhandha, um, mention various sorts of animal knowledge or uh, tiracchana vijja.

Um,

and one of them is questioning a girl. Another one is questioning a deity. And when it's talking about questioning a girl, it's talking about questioning a girl in trance. Apparently, um, it has always been the case that spirit mediums tend to be female.

Not always, but there are more female

ones than male ones

uh, for various reasons.

So, um, it is mentioned, but it's also

um, declared to be something that is

beneath the dignity of monks, that it's

it's really not uh, something that uh, a

Theravada Buddhist monk should uh, be

practicing or or following, cultivating.

Not even going to talk to spirit

mediums. Although I did that once when I

was in Burma.

Um, just to just to test her really.

Um,

with regard to channeling, um,

like I I just mentioned I I tested a

channeler in Burma. She was supposedly

possessed by this deity called Abhaya

Kumara and um, I gave her tests and she failed all the tests or both tests that I gave her. And um,

it would be kind of a digression to explain the the procedures that I used, but um,

I I think with regard to most channelers anyway, I'm inclined to go along with Mary Baker Eddy, like the founder of Christian Science, who said that there are spirits, but as a general rule, they just mind their own business and don't have much to do with people.

Um,

but

what happens is you've got like this

ordinary seeming housewife who like everybody else has like deep wisdom deep down inside, but we don't believe that we have it as a general rule. You know, everybody potentially has the ability the the ability to work miracles, for example, but one of the reasons why we generally can't do it is because we believe we can't.

So, you've got this woman who deep down has this real wisdom, like she's, you know, locked into some sort of of deeper wisdom and um, she can't believe that she she can do that. I mean, she can't believe that she has that ability, but she does believe that she can channel some wise being

that does have the wisdom, that does have access to that wisdom. And so, with regard to most channeling, I would go with like a psychological um, explanation of um, like hysterical dissociation where it's like your subconscious imagination is is like cooking up a personality to use as a kind of gimmick to let out deep understanding that you don't really believe at a conscious level that you have access to.

So, it may seem like I'm contradicting myself with uh, believing that there is uh, like spirit possession, but that most channeling is just dissociation.

And uh, I'm really no

um, authority

on on the subject. It's something that

um, I have some exposure to and my

father used to train spirit mediums.

So, um, but just knowing that it exists

is very different from like

understanding the the metaphysical

implications of it. And it could be both

are true at the same time. Like um, one

of the weirdest books I ever read was

called Seth Speaks,

which is by Jane Roberts who is

channeling this multi-dimensional,

like essentially a deity, just a

superhuman being. Um and she was capable

of critical thought and and she was

always kind of uh struggling with this idea, is he real or is this just an aspect of my own subconscious personality? And um eventually she came to the conclusion that both could be true at the same time.

That this is just a a weird I mean the the universe is so inexplicable and I mean it's just unimaginably uh inexplicable. I mean it's um yeah, I mean it is possible that both are true at the same time. That it could be like a mental illness and uh a demonic or or in this case like a a deific entity, you know, some superhuman entity or or just a ghost or whatever.

So um yeah, it could be both at the same time plus a bunch of other things that uh we're just uh too ignorant or stupid to even imagine.

Okay, next question.

Uh I think we're getting some political ones next. What is your opinion of Buddhist nationalism like the 969 movement in Burma and the Bodu Bala Sena group in Sri Lanka? Well, the Sri Lankan group I know very little if anything about. So um I can only speak with any kind of uh knowledge on the 969 movement in Burma. And

um

yeah, I'm not really sure exactly to what extent it's it's really Buddhist

nationalism. It seems to be more just a matter of trying to save Buddhist culture and and Burma itself from Islam. Because they don't they don't speak out badly against Christians or or at least I've never heard uh anyone in the 969 movement speaking out against Christians or even Hindus or anything like that. It's uh mainly they don't like the idea of Islam taking over.

So um there there is some Buddhism and some nationalism obviously, but um uh to what extent it's really set up as a Buddhist nationalist movement, I'm I'm not really sure. It's uh

um

yeah. So next question. Um which and there's a bunch kind of on the same subject here. Do you think such nationalist groups would be better led by the laity and that monks are renunciants while the lay folk are still involved in worldly affairs?

Um

the monks can get involved in the the Dharma aspect of it I assume. I mean so long as they're not advocating anything immoral

um and just not really

uh

kind of dropping back into society.

Although in Asia you know, supposedly monks are renunciants, but in in Asia

like a Buddhist culture, it's just the way that the culture has developed or the society has developed that um the monks really aren't renunciants anymore. I mean they're they're just in a they've got their own social class. You know, they haven't left all social classes behind. They're now in the new social class and they tend to be like upper class, you know, people are are down calling down on the ground bowing to them calling them venerable lord and all this kind of stuff. So yeah, Buddhism is no longer that much of a renunciation movement in Burma. You know, it's like um in a village, the

village culture is centered around the monastery and the monastery the the village monastery anyway tends to be like, you know, right there in the village and um the renunciant monks are like a special kind of monk that might may live alone out in the forest, but uh there's not nearly as many of those as just like the village priest type of monk who are right there smack in the middle of the the society and the culture.

And um

uh yeah, I mean insisting that

Asian monks kind of go against their own culture in order to follow the text more strictly is uh it sounds nice, but uh it

doesn't really work that way in reality. But I do agree that uh most of it should be run by laypeople. You know, the political stuff is best left in the hands of of laypeople although I write political stuff and say political stuff sometimes.

Next question.

What are your views on nationalism in general? What are the requisite conditions for a nation-state in your personal opinion?

Nationalism.

Well, I'm kind of getting out of my my fields of expertise here.

Um but nationalism it seems to me that

you'd have like uh

you'd have to have people sharing like a belief system to some degree. You know, they'd have to take pride in their country and their heritage. They wouldn't all have to belong to the same race.

But um

they would all have to believe in the same kind of of nation and people and and uh you know, have have shared values. I mean that that's really necessary.

Um I suppose uh like a nationalist state would have stronger shared values than um some liberal kind of multi multi-cultural state, but the

the

the less of shared values that that a nation has, the more that nation tends to uh turn against itself and just uh break down.

So yeah, I think the most important conditions for a nation-state would just be uh

kind of nationalistic sentiments and just uh

a love of one's own heritage and traditions and uh love of one's own land and you know, one's own people.

You know, that sort of thing. It's it would be uh it would start with that and

then the nation-state would just sort of
uh grow around that I assume.

Although I mean they would sort of they
would interact. You know, the nation
would encourage that kind of thing, you
know, with propaganda or you know,
patriotic songs sung by children and
that kind of thing.

But um

yeah, I think the main point of a
nationalistic state is people
identifying with their culture and their
society and thinking that that's good.

And uh you wouldn't necessarily think
others are inferior, but you you'd just
have diversity. You'd have like a
diversity of of nations, a diversity of

peoples and cultures and civilizations and political organizations and all of that. You just have a diversity of them that get along.

And that would work way better than what the new globalists are trying to do which is just break down any kind of tradition

and uh have everybody just ruthless and interbreeding so that you've got just everybody's like light brown and of no particular um ethnicity or heritage or anything like that so that they will be more obedient and to uh you know, the the centralized socialist state or whatever the hell they're going for.

Next question. What conditions policy {comma} would lead to the development, maintenance and overall positive long-term welfare for such a state? What conditions policy {comma} should be avoided to prevent a nation from falling?

Um

it does seem that nations do have a like a life cycle life cycle.

You know, it's like uh

bad times make strong men, strong men make good times, good times make weak men and weak men make bad times and the bad times often involve some kind of collapse.

So um

I assume the best thing to keep the country going is to keep strong men going which means that you've got to uh have some kind of hard times and ideally you would have like artificial hard times where you just instill uh like an ideal of

um you know, like austerity and toughness

in the people. You know, it's like that was one reason why America was so strong especially um up up through World War II is that Americans had this Protestant ethic that like luxury was somehow sinful and degrading.

And um of course you had the advertising

companies in the in the like the
companies trying to sell stuff trying to
break that down and they eventually
succeeded during the uh the uh
prosperity that happened after after
World War II. There was like an economic
boom in the 50s, really nice economy in
the 1950s in America and um that started
the uh the turn towards uh just uh
wallowing in luxury and um sensuality
and that sort of thing. I mean there've
always been people like that, but the
mainstream was more Spartan
up until um you know, like the 1950s in
America or the very late 40s.
And of course um in order to keep the
nation strong, you have to keep

everybody or almost everybody sharing the same set of values and I mean if you the the trick is to get a good set of values. I mean just to have a crappy set of values that you are forcing everybody to follow which is what Marxist governments do.

It doesn't work very well.

You know, you're you're going to wind up with brainwashed sheep as as the population.

And that's not going to result in a strong nation.

I mean China's China's giving it a shot.

But we'll see how that works out.

So I guess

for a strong nation state to to exist,
you'd have to
avoid the uh
the good times making weak men.

And have everybody
you would encourage
uh like shared values. And try to come
up with a set of values that are
sensible enough that just about any
reasonable person would accept it.

Um

like like the way America has been.

But I think one
really bad thing that the founding
fathers of America foresaw and what is
happening now is
when people like poor people who are the

majority realize they can just start voting for free stuff then then that's it. The country just starts its downhill slide. So one way to avoid that would be um just have a law that anybody who's living on welfare unless maybe you know they're retired after you know they're living on a pension or something. But anybody who's taking more out of the system than they're putting into it should not be allowed to vote or to participate in in the political process. Uh only people who are contributing positively overall to the to the nation and to the economy should have some say in what's going on.

So I think that would help.

But it's not going to be happening
anytime soon apparently. It may take
like a

beginning of a of some kind of new
system

to uh

to really

instate that.

If if it happens at all.

Okay, let's see.

What are my opinions on Balkanization?

Um

well, it does happen. I mean I don't
really have lots of opinions on it. I
assume you're talking about the
Balkanization of America.

And um

I didn't like the idea. I I still don't like the idea, but if certain parts of America are going to just become like third world hell holes due to ultra liberal leftyism, social justice so-called, neo-Marxism, then yeah, I mean like red states would probably it would probably be to their advantage to bail out of this dysfunctional, you know, increasingly socialistic and even Marxist system then then yeah, I think Balkanization would be preferable to just becoming a slave in the brave new world.

But um

whether it's actually going to happen in America or not, I don't know.

I mean eventually I assume it will because everything that has a beginning has an end including the USA.

Do you think America or Europe will reach an accelerated phase of Balkanization anytime soon?

Um with regard to America up until the the last election I suppose, I uh thought it was very unlikely, although now all bets are off. It's it's pretty pretty clear that uh um the entire system is is rigged and corrupt now. So yeah, I mean there's no telling what's going to happen. It's we're going to hit like this liminal

sort of chaotic stage that we're we're entering already and all bets are off. I have no idea. It's going to be like chaos theory where just the slightest little change at the beginning can result in huge differences at the end and I'm not even going to attempt any kind of prophecies on that one. Although uh I think the Balkanization of of Europe is going to going to continue.

And I think the the EU especially may fall apart or just go back to being a kind of uh

um

what's the word? This sort of economic

an economic thing and less of a political one.

And that was the last last question by Frank. Next question is by Wendell.

And Wendell says, "I would like your take on focus on meditating on energy points like the Kundalini so-called serpent power."

Um

in Buddhism they don't really do that kind of specialized meditation much.

Um

it's more of a Hindu thing. Maybe like the Tibetan Buddhists do that kind of stuff too.

Um

either the the point of it is not

enlightenment

or else it's like a very indirect approach. It's like uh

So um

yeah, I've never really practiced any kind of like specialized meditation that isn't just going for increased uh simplicity and clarity and uh awakeness in the mind.

So um

it could be useful for some people.

But uh I've never really been called to it. So I really can't speak with authority on the effects of it or the benefits or anything like that because

um

I don't do it.

Next question is from Steve.

"Have you ordained people and do you still do that? What is the procedure like?

I have to say in the back of my mind I had always thought about doing it at some point. As it turns out, I have ordained a total of one person and I didn't want to ordain the person. I was just informed that I was going to be the preceptor of this American guy who came to the monastery a few years ago and wanted to be ordained temporarily just for like a few days or a week at most um in order to please his pretty Burmese girlfriend.

And um I really have never been into
like temporary ordinations because the
monks

I mean they're clueless. They don't know
how to follow the rules correctly. You
know, they've all they've still got
money and everything so that they're
they're they never have pure sila from
the from the get-go from from start to
finish.

But um I was just informed by the abbot
that I was going to be the uh
the preceptor and uh my my disciple and
I really didn't have um
really didn't have much interaction.

With regard to ordaining people in the

future, I think my days of that are pretty much over.

Uh I used to think about it like like uh like

Pali names, good Pali names for monks.

Like I like I like the name Munigosa.

I'm kind of sorry I don't get to name anybody that. But it has just turned out that uh I have had a few uh Western monks especially, a few Asian ones also kind of gravitate to me. After they were already ordained, they they'd read about me or hear about me and want to come visit me and you know, just sort of hang out and stay close and kind of observe what I was doing, that kind of thing.

But um

yeah, I have I have not ordained any
real disciples.

And the procedure
is relatively simple. I mean just about
anybody can be ordained

uh at like a Burmese a Burmese place.

Maybe not in America, but you go to
Burma and uh

yeah, you don't even have to be a
Buddhist really. I mean they'll they'll
just ordain just about anybody.

So

um

the procedure ideally is that you uh
break you sever all of your uh your
obligations.

You know, it's like you can't be in debt for example. You have to pay off all your debts.

And you can't have any obligations to the government. I mean you can't be like a soldier who is AWOL or anything like that. A runaway slave is out.

And um

so I mean you you settle your accounts, you know, you get yourself clear.

And then you go and different monasteries will have different procedures. You know, you might be required to be a monastery attendant for a while. Like in Thailand like in the Ajahn Chah tradition um you have to be like a monastery attendant

for quite a while before they'll ordain you as a monk. Although other places you just walk right in this very same day you can get ordained.

So um

with regard to the ordination it's just maybe half hour long ceremony with a lot of chanting in Pali. You'd have to have a preceptor willing to accept you and and you'd have to have the requisites.

The

the eight requisites which is the three robes

the belt, the bowl

the water filter

the the razor and the needle. I think

that's eight.

Must have a sitting cloth too.

Uh

so yeah, if you want to be ordained then

uh

my blessings are upon you and good luck
to you.

It's it's really not all that

complicated. And there there are no

lifelong vows. Like I already mentioned
most

um well, I almost mentioned it. Most um

like Thai and Burmese

um males

that are Buddhists are ordained at least
once in their lifetime, often just for a
few days when they're when they're kids.

They're ordained as novices. It's kind of like a uh ritual of like a right of passage into manhood or something.

So, yeah, even the king of the king of Thailand is ordained temporarily as a monk

um in his youth.

So, it's pretty easy to do.

Um to be a it to be ordained as a monk is easy. To be a good monk is is not so easy.

So,

yeah, that's that's that's the difficult part. It's just like following following the teachings of the Buddha

correctly and and sincerely and
conscientiously. That's the hard part.

Okay, next question from Dusty
Springfield.

How does faith factor into your
Buddhism?

For example, faith in the Dharma and its
ability to produce results as well as
faith in your own abilities to attain
it. Do you ever suffer a loss of faith?
And is that common among monks?

Well,

I've always considered myself not to be
very faith-oriented. You know, you've
got like the uh the reason-oriented
person

who is more in tune with like philosophy

and science.

And then you've got the faith-oriented person who's more in tune with like religion and and art.

So, it's like more or less like artistic temperament, scientific temperament, or philosophical temperament, and religious temperament. And I've always been like the more cerebral, head-oriented, philosophical type of person who I don't really have much use for faith.

I just

don't have much use for it.

But, I've told people this in Burma before. Like I'd be out in this forest in Burma, someone would come visit me,

you know, somehow in during the conversation I've mentioned that I really don't have much faith, and then they point out, "Well, I mean, you're wearing monk's robes and you're you're thousands of miles from home living alone in this forest, you know? So, yeah, I mean, I had to think about it. It's like, "Yeah, okay. I have that kind of faith. I have the faith that Dharma is essentially correct, that it is possible to become enlightened, and even if I can't become enlightened in this life due to whatever hindrances or or defilements or whatever, at least you can get closer, you know, you can make

progress."

So, yeah, there is that. And also,
there's there's another kind of faith
like St. John of the Cross, possibly my
favorite Christian,
um he talked about dark faith.

And dark faith is like when you get into
really deep meditative states where
you're

it's going going with the Christian
explanation, like the way uh St. John of
the Cross would teach contemplation, he
would say, "Dismiss from your mind
anything that isn't God." So, you can't
imagine God with your imagination, so
you dismiss the imagination. You can't

figure out God intellectually, so the intellect goes. You can't see or hear or taste or touch God. You know, all the senses, I mean, you just dismiss the senses. And essentially, you can't really grasp God with any kind of mental state, so it all goes.

But, when you succeed at that, when you've made your mind crystal clear, empty, and silent, there's still something there.

And that something there is from from St. John of the Cross's point of view, from the Catholic point of view, that's the spirit of God that pervades the entire universe, and you can't get rid of that.

And so, he called that dark faith. It's just this deep awareness

just deep down that you've got like the spirit of God inside you, and you can always feel it at a subliminal level.

So, there is that kind of faith also, although of course in Buddhism you wouldn't be talking about the spirit of God, you'd be talking about something else, just ultimate reality, you know, the paramatta sacca, the highest truth, you know, it dwells within you.

So, you can use different words, but that's also a kind of faith, and um so, yeah, it's it is definitely an

important factor.

And do I ever suffer a loss of faith,
and is this common among monks? Um
yeah, it comes and goes. I mean, it's uh
subject to conditions. So, it has its
has its moments, has its ups and downs,
and uh certainly, um
like a lot of Western monks who drop out
drop out of the monkhood, not only do
they stop being monks, they just stop
being Buddhists. You know, it's just
they they just do a 180.

And so, yeah, I I would consider that a
severe loss of faith.

Um

but yeah, it does happen.

So, next question

from Nardi.

What is happening in Burma? I ask you
because you were there for a long time.

Um

I'm no real authority on what's going on
in Burma now, but apparently the Burmese
military uh

overthrew the increasingly liberal and
democratic government. And they never
really they never really gave up power
to begin with.

But, they

in uh

there used to be economic sanctions,
like international economic sanctions
against Burma because it was like this

brutal military dictatorship. And so, in order to get the sanctions lifted, they had to like liberalize their governmental system, which meant that a lot of non-military people were allowed into government, and um a lot of the generals just took off their uniforms and put on suits, essentially. But, there were still uh certain aspects of the new constitution that was formulated that made sure that the army stayed in control with regard to what they wanted to be in control of, like foreign policy, for example.

And um

they were just losing their their grip, I assume.

And um you know, they it wasn't enough to satisfy them. They could see that the the the the country was moving more and more towards sort of Western-style global globalist liberalism or something, and they just didn't like that. And so, they just put the kibosh on it and uh overthrew the country again, which I mean, coups in Burma or even in uh you know, third-world countries that used to be British colonies are pretty common. It happens a lot. Even during the military dictatorship, there was uh at least once while I was there when the dictator was simply overthrown by like a coup and

just replaced by a different different
general or colonel or whoever it was.

So, yeah, there was one of those when I
was living in Burma. It was it was Khin
Nyunt was uh

the the leader of Burma. He was like the
the dictator of Burma, and then he got
he was uh overthrown on charges of
corruption, which is, you know,
they're all corrupt.

Um it's kind of like the stuff that's
happening against Trump now.

Um

and he was replaced by Than Shwe, I
think.

So, yeah, I mean, it's it's I wasn't
surprised at all. It's just this is what

happens.

Um

I think uh

Oh, yeah, I should I should mention
before I move on to the next question
that uh

in a way, they might if they might
really get away with it because um
if international sanctions are put
against Burma again because of the
overthrow of the liberalized government
and being replaced by a more military
government, then if they try to punish
Burma, all they're going to be doing is
is just push Burma into the arms of of
China because China's going to support

Burma no matter what Burma does because they want Burma as a satellite state, and they want Burma's natural gas, and they want Burma's ports, and all this kind of stuff. And so, it may be that um the new Cold War with China will uh let the Burmese get away with their military coup.

And uh in a way, it's it's okay because the military was sort of incompetent, and um

um it kind of supports Buddhism.

You know, like the military, you know, sort of like the the mafia was is Catholic, you know, the the Burmese military uh leadership is is Buddhist.

And so, um in some in some respects,

from a a Dharma point of view, Burma may be better off under the military dictatorship. You cannot serve both God and mammon, and if you got no mammon because you got these incompetent boobs ruining the economy, then people are going to be more religious, essentially. So, from the from the point of view of Buddhism and preserving one of the last remaining uh wisdom cultures in the world, then um yeah, it it's it's not it's not all bad, and it's it's not surprising, and it's no big deal as far as I'm concerned.

Okay, next question

from follower number A12C67E7,
which uh I think is the code for
uh a certain color. I looked it up, and
it's like a kind of reddish purple.

Could you talk about your travels in
Indonesia and about Theravada Buddhism
there as well as ancient Buddhist
structures like the Borobudur?

Um yeah, I can talk about that.

Um

I've been to Indonesia like uh four
times

and it's always Bali. I have a um
a friend, the one the one that I talked
about earlier who um the the ghosts
don't bother him.

And uh his family's very wealthy. They

live in Bali and um

so I got invited there and his family is
almost single-handedly

um promulgating Theravada Buddhism in
Bali.

Um

it used to be that Western Indonesia was
uh Hindu and Buddhist. Like just about
every country looks back to some
classical culture

for its um just it's that it derives a
lot of its culture from, you know, like
the the language and the the number
system and the calendar and some of the
some of the government stuff. You know,
it's like um America and the West in

general, we look back to especially the Roman Empire or to ancient Rome as our the classical culture upon which our culture is based. But in early Indonesia, it was India. Just the same with Burma.

Just India was the classical culture and um

so before Indonesia converted to Islam relatively peacefully

um they were

uh like a mix of Buddhism and Hinduism

and at some point the government decided just to amalgamate

amalgamate uh Buddhism and Hinduism. So

it just became like one religious system with Buddhism and Hinduism mixed

together.

And then when Islam started taking over
um Indonesia, and I don't remember what
century

but when Islam was

um really making heavy inroads into
into Indonesia

um

the people or a lot of the people who
wanted

to maintain

their

um like Buddhist Hindu heritage

uh went to Bali.

So it was like a lot of the

intellectuals and the philosophers and

artists went to Bali

and they set up a like a big temple on the four corners of Bali, which is shaped sort of like a diamond or a kite or something.

So to protect

Bali as as as like the spiritual place and um so Bali is like 90% they're called Hindu, but it's like a mixture of Buddhism and Hinduism.

And um it's it's very

um kind of kind of degenerate or I mean it's beautiful. It's very aesthetic, very kind of sensual, but um like when the people are doing the ceremonies and the the praying and all that, they really don't they really don't

understand the purpose of it. It's just the tradition. It's just this beautiful aesthetic tradition that they follow and there's almost no meaning to it anymore. And um the family of this monk friend of mine who lives in Bali, um they're like half Chinese.

And so they were following Mahayana Buddhism, but then at some point um many years ago

um the matriarch of the family converted to Theravada and uh she's been converting like especially like um Chinese Mahayana Buddhists over to Theravada, especially at first. And um they're just promoting it throughout

throughout a lot of Bali.

Um

so it's it kind of works in Bali because they're already geared towards a kind of Hinduistic Buddhist kind of culture where they have respect for wandering holy men and that sort of thing. So um yeah, they're they're their culture is more um adaptable to to Theravada Buddhism than say American culture.

So I think uh I hope I answered that one well enough. Oh, the the ancient Buddhist structures like Borobudur, um that's in Java and in also in Sumatra there's there's like Buddhist Buddhist temples and that sort of thing. And

that's from back before um
uh Islam took over.

So I really don't know a lot about them,
but uh yeah, it used to be a Buddhist
culture, Buddhist and Hindu that then uh
combined together into one system.

Okay, next question is from Chaplin.

What is appropriate etiquette for
Westerners interacting with monks? It
seems most people are completely unaware
of the proper monk layperson traditions
that are commonplace in traditionally
Buddhist countries.

Um well

yeah, I think etiquette would probably
be the best word because there's no

rules saying that laypeople have to act a certain way with monks, but there are rules for the monks cuz almost all the rules are for monks. The rules for monks uh with regard to what kind of people it is appropriate to teach Dhamma to. And you're not allowed to teach Dhamma to someone who is not being respectful, not necessarily to the monks, but even to to Dhamma.

So, you know, there's rules against uh a monk teaching somebody sitting on a high seat while he's sitting on a low seat. You know, you you should show respect for the teacher, that sort of thing. Um you know, or there's a rule against teaching Dhamma to somebody

who's walking in front while the monk is walking behind or teaching Dhamma to someone walking on a path while the monk is like walking beside the path.

So there should be respect you and um you know, take your shoes off when you approach a monk, that sort of thing.

Although it doesn't it wouldn't always work like if you're out on in a in a city sidewalk or something, it might not work so well.

Um

shouldn't point your shoes at or point your feet at at a monk or I mean in India you just don't point your feet at anybody who is like respectable, anyone

senior to you, anything like that.

Um

let's see.

Uh women especially if they're if they're with monks, I mean monks are celibate and trying to to live a holy life, but they're still guys.

So um yeah, women should be relatively modest when when interacting with monks and uh shouldn't be laying hands upon them, that sort of thing. Although the the monks might really enjoy it, but uh still it's uh if if they're trying to be conscientious monks, it is it's not so good.

Uh see, what else?

Uh just remember that uh like I was

saying earlier, monks really aren't even allowed to provide themselves with their own food. They're not allowed to store food overnight. They're not allowed to cook their own food. They're not allowed to even ask for food unless they're sick and I assume starvation would would qualify.

But um

yeah, so anybody that really wants to behave properly around monks should uh really study up on it. Because, you know, monks aren't allowed to handle money or anything and so um yeah, it's like one of the purposes of of laypeople traditionally is supporting

the monks.

And uh that would would require some training. I can't really answer it very well in a like a 3-minute or 5-minute long answer.

But um

yeah, it's like in Burma, monks aren't even considered to be human beings. Just the word for human isn't even used for monks. So there's

um this this very deep

respect where people just get down on the ground and and prostrate before monks.

I've had uh

young ladies spread their their scarves on the ground for me to walk on. Not not

to protect my feet, but to bless the scarf with the the feet of the holy man. And uh the founder of the tradition in which I was ordained, Tong Pul Luang Por Si Atto, um some women would uh line the sides of the path and spread their long hair out for me to walk on.

And um

yeah, that's that's kind of overdoing it, I think. I'm not I'm not advising anybody in America to do that sort of thing. But uh to have a certain I mean proper respect, you know, it's like a monk should not be um just treated like like an average dude. Unless he's his behavior is so obviously um you know,

dude-like

that uh

yeah, maybe in that case. But still

um you know, there should be some

respect and uh modesty and you know, cut

down on the raunchy jokes and that sort

of thing.

So next question from Chaplin. Tell us

about your typical daily or weekly

routine at the monastery in California

when it comes to meals.

You spoken about how traditional alms

rounds not happen in American

neo-Buddhist communities. Yeah, like in

in Burma

um

almost everywhere I would live

pretty much everywhere I stayed in
Burma, I would just in the morning just
take my bowl my alms bowl and just walk
to the nearest village
and uh people would put food in. When I
had enough, I'd turn around and go back
and
go back out into the woods or wherever I
was staying and and eat.
But uh in America it doesn't work that
way. So the way it works here is um
um people come in the morning, usually
like a a Burmese
person or a Burmese family
will come in the morning. They'll sign
up in advance, you know, the monks all

know who's coming that day. And um
you know, it's like uh one lady comes
every Tuesday, another uh there's this
doctor who comes every Wednesday. And uh
some days are open. Weekends generally
it's a different person, you know, each
each Saturday or Sunday. And um
yeah, I mean that's that's generally how
it works here. Um

uh the main meal is like 11:00 in the
morning.

Um

the monks eat a dawn meal, too, which I
don't eat. So, I'm not exactly sure how
they work that out. I I I suspect that
uh if nobody comes and offers it, they
just cook their own.

Um a lot of time monasteries are like that, too.

So, yeah, the the the the daily routine is uh around 11:00 I just go into the kitchen and

and uh somebody's

there or soon to be there who will offer food, and then uh most of the monks

don't use their bowls, but uh I always eat from my bowl unless it's something

like pizza or something

in which bowls uh

are pretty much uh unnecessary.

And uh

there have been people that have like

Western people have tried to offer me

food by uh having pizzas delivered, that sort of thing. In fact, uh Chaplin very nicely had a pizza sent to me.

So,

um yeah, so it's not much of a routine.

I mean, it's just uh 11:00 I go in and whoever offers the food, I eat it.

That's pretty much the routine.

Okay, next question from JML.

From a Buddhist perspective, what do you think psychedelics do?

I understand they're not part of Buddhism and I'm not advocating their use.

Psychedelics.

Um with regard to exactly, you know, the

function of of how they're how they're
doing what they do, I can't really say.

But um

they do some of them do have like a
consciousness-expanding

attitude. And in me they they often
trigger um or they have in the past
they've triggered uh like mystical
states or religious experiences.

And

I assume

part of excuse me, I assume part of the
reason for that is that
they're kind of knocking you out of your
ruts.

We're we're we're so governed by habit,

including habitual thought patterns that just being

um slammed out of the rut

out of your habits, it can really have an awakening effect on you, especially if you're if it's a drug that doesn't put you into a stupor.

You know, like narcotics or or alcohol, something like that, it it tends to lower your vibration and make you less conscious.

But with psychedelics, it can make you more conscious. It can make you more alert while at the same time um kind of blowing away your standard habit patterns of of your personality and how you think, so that you're like in this

unknown territory or you can be.

Um I think that's largely how it works.

And it can be useful for some people.

And uh ayahuasca is somewhat different.

I don't know if ayahuasca would uh

qualify as a psychedelic.

But um yeah, that that has potentially

positive effects, too.

Um

See, the next question is similar. This

one is from Average Dad. I don't I'm I

still wonder if it's supposed to be

Average Dude, but it's spelled Average

Dad.

Can psychedelics allow you to have a

glimpse of enlightenment? I know of a

monk that lives in a rural part of my hometown that tried DMT and 5-MeO-DMT, which I don't know what that means. And entities taught him about transcendental self that encompasses everything.

Is this like the soma of the Vedas, and does Buddhism have a similar thing?

Um Buddhism

yeah, it it doesn't really emphasize the use of drugs. It doesn't entirely ban all drugs uh like a lot of people think.

You know, there's the

the uh the fifth precept for laypeople is not taking ale, wine, or any intoxicant which causes cloudiness of mind.

And um in the Pali text, like it's for

the monks, the rules of monastic discipline is just uh intoxicating drinks. It's a it's a pācittiya offense to uh take majjapañña intoxicating drinks.

Um although technically speaking um cannabis is allowable as a medicine.

And with regard to other kinds of drugs, I mean, there's there's really no mention. You know, something like mushrooms or something like that, other than there is a rule uh forbidding a monk from taking a medicinal substance without uh like a medical need. Like if he's doing it for

fun, that kind of thing.

So, um yeah, taking any kind of medicine without a genuine medical need for it would uh be against the rules. So, it's really not used in Buddhism. In Buddhism, you're using meditation as a way of of blowing away your your uh at least temporarily your habitual thought patterns and uh enhancing your consciousness.

And um they do have a similar effect or they can, like deep meditation and like a mystical state that's uh triggered by something like LSD or mushrooms, um there is a lot of overlap in the effect, although of course, you're not going to be seeing

pretty colors or uh you know, your mind won't be distorted so much. It's just going to be silent if you're meditating well.

And um unfortunately

um

it's not as reliable for for everybody.

If you if you take the drug, I mean, you have a

you can be fairly confident there's

going to be an effect. Whereas with

meditation, you can meditate for years

and years and uh you may never get to

the same level of a mystical experience

that you would have from taking 500

micrograms of acid.

And I can speak from some experience on that because before I was a monk um I did take LSD maybe four times a year for maybe 10 years, so that's quite a few times.

So, um yeah, and like I said, it was I would have religious experiences a lot. It was like a part of my spiritual practice a lot of the time. I go backpacking alone out into a wilderness area and uh do a little fire sacrifice and take acid and uh just commune with nature and meditate and that kind of thing.

So, I mean, whether something is good or bad depends on your your volition.

So, if you have a positive volition

then uh there's going to be positive effects.

But if you if you're just doing it recreationally to to party or something like that, then uh it's uh probably better from a Buddhist point of view if you don't do it.

And um

yeah, it is true that the early Vedic Brahmins took uh a drug called soma.

And I don't remember what they think it was. I think it was some kind of stimulant and maybe had some some uh psychedelic effects.

So, I mean, in India they knew about that stuff, and I assume the Buddhists

knew about it, too. It's just that they don't

it's just not mentioned much in the texts.

Okay.

Next question. Was Buddha or Bodhidharma of Aryan descent? Are the teachings of both equal, or could you differentiate them?

Um

there's there's a good chance both of them were of Aryan descent. I mean, the the Buddha and Bodhidharma are declared to have had blue eyes, for example.

And um

with regard to the Buddha, he was from North India, and you know, he was of the

upper class in North India, and the ruling class was literally Indo-Aryan.

So, um yeah, there's a good chance he was Aryan. And Bodhidharma also supposedly was a Brahman and uh is declared to have had blue eyes, so he may have been Aryan, too, although um I don't think there's any way you could really prove

um

that, and uh it's not really of like paramount importance

whether they are or not. And with regard to whether the teachings are equal or not, um no, they're not the same. I mean it whether they're equal depend on your

definition of equal, but um
yeah, they're they're certainly not the
same. He's got Let's see. Average Dad
has some quotes here from Bodhidharma,
so I might as well. He says uh this
These quotes of Bodhidharma have a
non-duality scent.

Quote, "As long as you look for a Buddha
somewhere else, you will never see that
your own mind is the Buddha. The Buddha
is your real body, your original mind.

This mind has no form or
characteristics, no cause or effect, no
tendons or bones. It is like space. You
cannot hold it. It's not the mind of
materialists or nihilists. If you don't
see your own miraculously aware nature,

you'll never find a Buddha even if you break your own body into parts."

Um

So, um you know, the Buddha was, in my opinion, like

really he was not into philosophical structures, and he was just into you just go out and meditate and you experience reality without thinking. You know, you're never going to figure out reality.

So, it was it was like a practical way of achieving simplicity and clarity of mind sufficient to allow the the liberating insight insight to arise.

And um

Bodhidharma was uh

you know, he was a member of uh of a certain sect of Buddhism that already had uh very highly developed uh philosophical concepts.

Much more so than the Buddha himself had, I assume.

And um one of these philosophical um

what symptoms, I guess, is that uh obviously just from the from the quote that I just said, he is reifying ultimate reality. You know, he's reifying like the your own mind or the the one mind or the Buddha nature. You know, he's he's reifying it as a as a thing, as an it.

And early Buddhism, like like the Buddha himself, he did not reify ultimate reality.

He just avoided talking about it because just any kind of talking about it is just wasted talk because you're never going to explain reality in words. So, the main point is you just practice and meditate and just realize reality, you know, face-to-face, so to speak, without figuring out stuff.

And um

so the the Bodhidharma, I mean, like the Jana school, like what became the Zen school, was kind of getting back to that. But obviously, there is still a

lot of uh complicated uh philosophical stuff that was added that still got used a lot. And I assume the Buddha, I mean, he had to talk philosophy sometimes, but he didn't have this elaborate philosophy.

And uh he was not, as far as I know, he was not reifying ultimate reality or or nirvana and and just calling it, you know, referring to it as this existent thing because it's just off the scale.

Nirvana or ultimate reality is just completely off the scale.

So, it just transcends the the duality of is and isn't or or anything like that. It's just off the scale. Like the 31 planes of existence, nirvana or

nirvana is not on that
that system at all. It's just completely
other. It's just beyond.

So,

early Buddhism, really early Buddhism,
took that very seriously and uh was
mainly talking, you know, the
instructions were on how you shouldn't
be clinging to any kind of philosophy,
any kind of thought, you know, belief
system, anything like that. You're just
supposed to make your mind as as simple
and as clear as possible
so that the the liberating insight can
can shine through.

Okay, next question. My opinion on Alan

Watts and D.T. Suzuki.

Well, um I don't know a heck of a lot about either of them because they're, you know, they're mostly uh uh scholars of Zen.

Alan Watts wrote, I wrote, I read one book that he wrote. His uh I think it was just called Zen Buddhism.

And uh you know, he wrote like a lot of a lot of Buddhist scholars in the West wrote back in the like the 1950s. I mean, he knew more about what he was writing about. You know, it wasn't all just theory for him because uh uh apparently, he did practice to some degree.

And um that's really all I can say about

Alan Watts. I mean, I I listened to a few of his talks on YouTube and um read that one book. And uh he didn't really stand out. You know, he didn't really stand out from a lot of other Buddhist scholars of, you know, similar nature, as far as I can tell.

He didn't really uh stand out all that much for me. He had a kind of a poetical kind of way of writing that uh I didn't like his writing style very much.

And D.T. Suzuki, um similarly, I mean, he was a a Zen scholar, a very brilliant scholar. And he was a really good translator, as far as I can tell, of uh from Chinese into English.

So, um he did a lot of good translations.

And uh he also was uh he endorsed uh fascism and Nazism through World War and before World War which makes him kind of uh kind of a an edgelord naughty boy.

Um

but yeah, that's about all I know about them. So, I think I'll move on to the next one.

Um could you link best translations of Buddhist texts on Amazon?

Well, first of all, I would advise everybody to uh not use Amazon. Amazon is just too just outrageously rich right now. They're they're just getting richer

and richer while other other smaller businesses are just are just going under, going bankrupt.

So, um yeah, I would I would advise everybody to uh avoid Amazon if at all possible. But uh best translations of Buddhist texts,

setting aside the Amazon issue, um

Bhikku Bodhi, I mean, despite his uh his neo-Marxism, you know, his dedication to ultra-lefty causes and so forth, um he is one of the best translators we've got of Pali into English.

Um Nyanamoli was a little idiosyncratic.

Um

but he was he was a brilliant

translator.

Um Nyanavira was a good translator,
although he didn't translate very much.

Um Ajahn Thanissaro,

his his translations are a bit

idiosyncratic and kind of

self-indulgent, especially when he's

translating poetry. Although, he knows

what he's talking about and he may use

strange words for translating certain

things, but uh you know, his his

translations are are are relatively

good.

So, um

generally, it's best to avoid two kinds

of translators. One is just the Asian

translators who may not even have a

mastery of the English language and who are just dogmatists. They're just translating according to what the commentary says. And that's not of much use cuz they're not even they're not even like literally translating what the the Pali says in a lot of cases.

And um

the other kind of translator to avoid are the the Western philologists or linguists.

The scholars

who are just like uh a university professor who is interested in the language and uh doesn't really even understand the

philosophy. He's not even a Buddhist. He doesn't practice. He doesn't He doesn't really get the philosophy. He's just using a formula of translating this word into that and and so, um translations by Asian monks generally are not the best and translations by Western scholars who aren't even Buddhists, um they may be really technically precise in a lot of cases, but the very fact that they don't understand the philosophy of what they're translating is is a an obstacle and can result in blunders.

So, you're better off um if you want to read good translations of Pali into English, you you do well to uh

find like a monk who has a mastery of the English language, has a mastery of the Pali language, and uh actually follows

um as a way of life what he is translating.

And uh

Bhikku Bodhi, um he notoriously doesn't meditate all that much, if at all, but uh he is a good translator, I have to admit. Just uh don't bother with uh all of his his endnotes, which can be kind of depressing. But the translation itself is good.

Okay, next question.

Let's see. Opinion on traditionalist

school, especially Julius Evola with his book Doctrine of Awakening based on earliest Buddhist texts. Um I'm not exactly sure what the traditionalist school would mean.

Um Julius Evola,

uh I did read I did read his book when I was in Burma.

And uh it was an interesting book. I enjoyed reading it.

Um

he did have somewhat of a different emphasis than most writers because he was really interested in uh like the Aryan aspect and like the masculinity um mastery

um

just the the the virile power and
strength of of the Buddhist saint kind
of a stuff that uh
uh

gets downplayed

uh a lot. I mean, there there is quite a
lot of that actually in the Pali texts,
but uh you when you get to the West,
it's all pretty much castrated.

So, um

yeah, with regard to the traditional
school, I'm not exactly sure what is
meant by the traditionalist school other
than maybe just uh you know, like um
um

just orthodox Theravada.

I guess that could be called
traditionalist. If you're if you're
actually following the texts,
you know, instead of
calling yourself a Buddhist and then
just
you know, talking on and on about white,
you know, white privilege and and global
warming and that kind of thing.

Um

so, I guess that's good enough for that
that one. But Julius the book the book
that Julius Evola wrote, The Doctrine of
Awakening, is is well worth reading.

It's it's an interesting book. And uh
anyone who's interested in like a more
masculine approach

would do well to read that and also just read like the ancient suttas, which are uh geared towards tough male ascetics.

So, it's it's right there. I mean, he he wasn't really making up

I mean, he was emphasizing kind of the the Aryan and masculine and you know, the nobility aspect of it.

But um you know, he wasn't really making stuff up. He was just emphasizing certain themes.

So, next question, which will be the last question I answer on this video, is were humans before language or cognitive developments that allow for conceptualization and dualistic thinking

considered enlightened? Are animals enlightened? Which is an interesting question. Like um

Eckhart Tolle says that all animals are enlightened except for a few pets that have become neurotic due to the effects of their human masters.

And um

from the Buddhist point of view, no, animals are not enlightened. Um so from the Buddhist point of view also like primitive humans that hadn't learned how to think conceptually yet also wouldn't be enlightened.

Um

it is an interesting question though like like an animal has no

self-consciousness.

You know, like a primitive animal that is.

And so if you don't have self-consciousness in a way you're not really

um

separating yourself out of samsara. I mean you're just part you're you're It's like you're still subliminal in a way. So in a way that's that's kind of enlightened. I don't I don't know.

It's It's hard to say. It would depend on your definition of enlightenment, I think.

But um

yeah, I don't think that uh like a
tapeworm is like uh

just fully fully conscious of ultimate
reality. Or or like a parakeet.

I don't think a parakeet is just living
in you know, Satchidananda like the
Hindus say just the the bliss of of you
know, the

the spirit of God or or you know,
ultimate reality.

So

um

yeah, it's you start off just like like
some animals like like a cow for
example, they're not they're not as
conscious as us.

And so in a way they've got less

delusion than we've got.

But they still have some and I mean it's like in order to get rid of what they've got, they're going to have to be reborn you know, life after life after life to get complicated enough in order to start becoming reflexive and like uh

self-referential

in order to start

uh fixing or or like untangling the knots

or or that sort of thing. I don't know I don't know how well I uh

avoided confusing people on that one but

um

uh

yeah, so it's like

um

a more advanced being they've got more
delusion

because they just got a bigger mind they
can hold more.

Uh so a cow, you know, it's

it's it's relatively calm most of the
time and it's not uh doesn't have much
for wrong view.

Doesn't even have a concept of self
probably.

But um still from the Buddhist point of
view, it's not enlightened. It's not an
arahant. It's not a fully enlightened
being. Not as It's not a superhuman
being.

You know, if going with going with the idea that anything that isn't a human that doesn't think conceptually is is enlightened then it's like uh you know, a tapeworm would be it would be superhuman. It would be it would be way above us.

So uh with all due respect to Eckhart Tolle, um

yeah, I I would go with the Buddhist idea that uh

um

animals are not enlightened and uh very like archaic humans that did not think conceptually also were were not enlightened. And I think even Eckhart

Tolle um does say in his first famous book that uh the the mental states of an animal are not the same as the mental states of of a fully enlightened human being.

So there's one last question from uh a person called Dogbreath. Mr. Breath.

And it's such a long complicated answer that I'll have to give that I'm going to uh

give it separately.

But um just so you know, um

I'll read the question here and then

I'll uh do a different video to answer the question.

And uh the question which is kind of long goes,

"Does Buddhism consider existence to be deterministic? If so, how can what happens to me be my fault?

If Buddhists do not consider existence to be deterministic but rather uh that we live according to free will, then it would seem that with regard to karma the fate that befalls me is the result of the free will actions of a different person in the past. This appears to suggest that the morality ascribed to the cosmos by Buddhism is more amoral than moral because why should I be subject to the consequences of the free will actions of someone I know nothing about?

This appears to be a contradiction, a dichotomy. How can this contradiction be resolved and please comment on the main issues of determinism, free will, karma um

a moral amoral morality from a Buddhist or personal perspective?"

So obviously that would greatly increase the length of this video which is already pretty long and so um I will I'll attempt to answer that question in a subsequent video.

So

um I think we're done uh with this one.

And uh if you have any questions, you're

interested in Buddhist philosophy, that
sort of thing, feel free to uh ask away
either on my SubscribeStar channel or
um under the video
in the comments.

And uh

be happy and uh have a nice day.

Goodbye.

all right this is the appendix

to the third installment of question and
answers

there's one question from uh dog breath

who i prefer to uh call mr breath

about free will and uh i better answe

ask the question again i asked i asked

it um at the end of the last one

and didn't answer it so i suppose i

should probably ask the question again

before i answered it

so mr brass says does buddhism consider

existence to be deterministic if so

how can what happens to me be my fault

if buddhists do not consider existence

to be deterministic but rather

that we live according to free will then
it would seem that with regard to karma
the fate that befalls

me is the result of the free will

actions of a different person in the
past

this appears to suggest that the
morality

ascribed to the cosmos by buddhism is
more amoral than moral because

why should i be subject to the

consequences of the free will actions of
someone i know nothing about

this appears to be a contradiction a

dichotomy how can this contradiction be
resolved

and please comment on the main issues of

determinism free will karma

um a moral amoral morality from a

buddhist or

personal perspective so

it seems to me that mr breath is

very keen on a subject that i've been

talking about

kind of a lot recently i wrote a blog

post

a month or so ago on this very subject

and also i did a video with brian rue um

sort of as an update to um my previous

understanding of of free will especially

so um this is going to be kind of easy

for me because i've been thinking about

this issue a lot and that's why

i have to do a separate video just
because i'm going to have
kind of a lot to say but um
with regard to um determinism and
free will um that's something that
that i wondered about a lot
because it seems like buddhism rules out
both possibilities
for example with regard to free will
like um the buddha's second discourse or
what is considered to be his second
discourse the anata
suta he says with regard to all
five of the five condas that you cannot
say
let it be this way let it not be that
way and have it happen

and one of the five condas is sankhara
khanda which is
essentially volition so our will
would be one of the five condas or part
of one of the five kanas
and according to orthodox buddhism
even with regard to our own volitions we
do not have total control
that's one of the signs that there is no
self
that you know that none of these things
is ourselves
because we don't have we don't have
complete control over them this uh we're
just kind of
along for the ride in a lot of cases

so um

yeah there is that and also this free

will in general

it would imply uh a separated

individuality

like free will i mean what is it free

from it's free from the surrounding

environment

so you have free will because your will

is not just entirely enslaved and

conditioned by what is

around it or just through just enslaved

to cause and effect

because um i mean if there's a cause

then

then it's deterministic and

buddhism just teaches that there there

is no separated individuality and

if free will requires a separated

individuality

then uh that's that's it i mean there

isn't one and so you couldn't have free

will

but on the other hand you know the other

option

is determinism and buddhism

doesn't really endorse determinism

either like

there was a an ancient religion called

the ajivakas

that is now extinct and the ajivakas

believed in just pure determinism they

said that everybody

has a predetermined number of lifetimes
they have to live
and your karma just unrolls like if you
took a ball of string
hold on to the free end of it and then
just throw the string
or the ball it just rolls and unwinds
until until it's gone and that's how
they imagined how our karma
works itself out lifetime after lifetime
just purely deterministically
and uh the buddha the buddha said no
that's that's that's wrong view too i
mean you could uh
you go to hell for really taking that
kind of stuff seriously
at least it says that in some of the

texts and so

it seems like both options are out
or going logically the opposite of of
determinism would be more like um just
random chance

either something has a cause or it
doesn't have a cause if it has a cause
it is determined by that cause and
is not free but if it doesn't have a
cause it just happens at random

and uh so free will i mean free will
doesn't even mean anything logically

free will is it's just sort of um

it's it's not only logically impossible

it's logically meaningless

and uh like albert einstein who was no

idiot

um he said he had no idea what people
were talking about when they talked
about free will

and uh really it just the whole concept
of free will

cannot stand up to logical scrutiny
just because either something has a
cause or it doesn't have a cause

and if it does have a cause then it's
determinism and if it doesn't have a
cause then it's random and neither of
those is free will

and no combination of the two would be
free will

and also science

tends to reject the idea of free will

also

not because of the logical impossibility
of it just because of

uh like neurological neurophysiological
studies where

they've determined that your brain is
already

firing and making the decision before
your conscious mind is even aware of
what you're deciding

that kind of thing and

also just my own experiences

tend to cast doubt on the idea of
free will like you don't know what
you're going

to decide until you're deciding it

otherwise you would have already decided
and usually if we're making a decision
there's an obvious reason for making the
decision and so just the obvious
decision

the obvious reason decides for us but if
you don't have an obvious reason
to make the decision then if you're
mindful

and are watching your mental processes
you can see that uh

i mean you don't know what you're going
to decide until suddenly you find
yourself

deciding like there was one time i was
uh i talked about this in the last q a i
think where i was in a cave

and my my sweat rag the absolutely
necessary

um it was worn out and i had to get a
new one i had i had some stored up in
a bag and so i went into the uh the
little storage room

and i had the uh the new rags

uh narrowed down to two choices it was
the yellow one or the orange one

and um there was no obvious choice

of choosing either i mean neither one

was obviously any better than the other

until finally i'm just standing there in
a quandary

you know just sort of like uh buradin's
ass the donkey that's just paralyzed

between

two equidistant piles of food you know

there's

no no obvious reason to choose either

one so we just kind of paralyzed and

can't choose

i was kind of in that kind of a state

when suddenly

uh it just arose in my mind i'll take

the orange one

and you know i had no idea that that was

going to happen it just it just happened

so um just going with with logic

and and with um like the anatella

orthodox buddhism and also if you if

you're interested in that

in you know like neurophysiology that

kind of thing

then free will um yeah it just

doesn't exist but as i already mentioned

buddhism rejects

the notion of determinism also or like

absolute determinism buddhism does put a

lot of emphasis on cause and effect

you know everything that arises arises

because of a cause

supposedly but um

just pure determinism is considered to

be a pernicious wrong view

so for years um it just seemed like a

mystery you know it's like it's some

kind of paradox

and then finally just recently i read

this book

called uh the trickster in the

paranormal by george p hansen

which i've talked about a lot it's

definitely a paradigm changer

and there's this one part where he's

talking about meditation

and he says that um meditation is

self-referential

it's like reflexive and anything that is

self-referential can become paradoxical

like um the statement i am lying

or the statement this statement is false

because the statement refers to itself

then um it creates like a paradox

like the statement i am lying or this

statement is false

it can be neither true nor false it
becomes a paradoxical statement
because of this reflexivity and
self-reference
and with meditation your mind is
observing itself
and so meditation one of the the
sort of the accidental side effects or
maybe it's deliberate
of meditation is because it becomes
self-referential
it becomes paradoxical and weird stuff
can arise
and even enlightenment itself could be
called a paranormal event
so um

yeah and then so then i was thinking of
that a little more
and it just seems like
self-consciousness itself
is like this it's reflexive it's
self-referential and so it can cause
paradox
and so it seems to me that that there
may be something along the lines of
free will but it's essentially a
paranormal
phenomenon and the more the more
self-aware you are the more
self-conscious you are
the more of this kind of paradoxical
inexplicable should be impossible
phenomenon of free will

can arise so that's that's
my theory or my explanation of
of uh whether we have free will or not
is um if we do have free will
it's essentially like a paradoxical
more or less of a miraculous state that
cannot be explained
scientifically or logically and
enlightenment also would be an even more
extreme uh miracle
i think than than just
being to some degree free of
um just the slavery to cause and effect
obviously we don't have total freedom
but there may be
through this this paradox inducing

self-awareness where the mind is
observing itself
that there could be some kind of
paradoxical weird
essentially paranormal phenomenon that
arises from that which
people call free will
so um i think that answers the very
first question of does buddhism consider
existence to be deterministic
i mean there is cause and effect
obviously buddhism is really strong on
that
but um we're not just we're not just
slaves we're not just slaves to
circumstances
so if so how can what happens to me be

my fault

um yeah i think maybe i've indirectly
answered that one already

because there is karma i mean from the
buddhist point of view anything that
happens

to you is the result of your own past
comma

and a lot of it is just going to be
through being unenlightened and
enslaved to your conditioning and your
habits and so forth

and um that's just the way it is it's uh
you know it's like gravity or something
it's like whether it's
fair or not is uh largely irrelevant

so let's see you got to get to this

question again and see if

buddhists do not consider existence to

be deterministic or rather that we live

according to free will then

it would seem that with regard to karma

the fate that befalls me as a result of

the free little actions of a different

person in the past

well ultimately there's no person at all

ultimately from the buddhist point of

view

you don't exist and the previous person

in the previous

existence also didn't exist not

ultimately i mean it's like a virtual

existence but it's not ultimately real

this appears to suggest that the
morality ascribed to the cosmos by
buddhism

is more amoral than moral um

i don't know you know in a way i suppose
morality is ascribed to the cosmos but
it's morality is psychological

you know it's a mental thing morality is
mental so to the extent that the cosmos
is mental

then the cosmos would be subject to this
this moral law and really i mean
buddhist ethics is just

based on the idea you know anything that
gets you closer

to enlightenment anything that makes

your mind clearer

and more awake and more more peaceful

is going to be kusama it's going to be

good it's going to be good karma

so i mean it's uh i used to think of

karma as some kind of

as yet undiscovered law of the universe

where every

action has an equal and opposite

reaction kind of a thing

but uh um yeah in buddhism

karma is a mental state it's essentially

volitional will

and uh the will really doesn't give a

damn about us it's sort of like

schopenhauer

as well it's like uh you know a human

being is just will's way of making more
will

it it's uh yeah it's not really
personified

so let's see get back to this question

here this appears to suggest that the
morality ascribed to the cosmos by

buddhism is more immoral than moral

because why should i be subject to the
consequences of the free will actions of
someone i know nothing about

well deep down you do know

it's just it's subliminal it's you're

not you're not awake enough or conscious
enough

to uh be fully aware of your stream of

consciousness going back a zillion
gajillion years

because you've got a different brain now
something along those lines

so um yeah it may seem unfair

you know it's like you know children

getting abused it's a standard

a standard argument you know young

children are abused

um through no fault of their own but it

was like

you know the buddhist would say well in

a past life they did something

but then it just seems like really

really unfair

that this little kid is being abused

because of

you know what they did as an adult in a
past life and they don't even remember
it

but i mean it's not really a matter of
of morals in like a christian sense it's
just

energy seeking equilibrium you've got
this energy imbalance

that is just seeking equilibrium that's
that's pretty much how karma works

or um another way of looking at karma is
it's just this habitual energy

that just acts as an autopilot if you
don't have enough self-awareness and the
supposed free will to call your own
shots

then just this force of of of habit
from from past you know conditioning
is just going to make your decisions for
you and just run you like like a puppet
and uh it may seem awful about the
little kids and everything but uh
or or somebody being born with a
horrible deformity or something like
that
but uh really i mean we don't exist as
individual people
it's just in a way it's um different
manifestations of energy just
following following laws of nature and
as it turns out
you can interpret these laws of nature
morally

just by identifying anything that gets
you closer to enlightenment as moral and
anything that gets you farther away from
enlightenment as immoral you know it's
just kind of uh

just identifying what direction the
energy is

is flowing let's see this appears to be
a contradiction

a dichotomy um yeah well the whole free
will thing

is is just a paradox as far as i'm
concerned it's

uh it defies logic

and anyone who believes in free will i
mean that i mean it's

like like i already said it's not only
logically impossible it's logically
meaningless

and a lot of people believe in free will
partly

um just because of christianity
christianity

needs free will because if adam and eve
didn't have any choice

but to eat the fruit then god is just
punishing everybody

for for thousands and thousands of years
for something that

nobody could have avoided anyway

although the muslims say that

only allah has free will and we just

don't have it and they're fine with that

but uh the muslims are much
more comfortable with uh having a deity
who is
a cruel and capricious tyrant or at
least can seem that way
to people who do not understand the ways
of god
uh see how can this contradiction be
resolved and please comment on the main
issues of determinism free will karma
and
moral immoral morality from a buddhist
or
personal perspective and i think
maybe i just did so um
yeah this uh this answer is uh taking a

lot less time i figured it might take
about half an hour

and it's uh 19 minutes but uh that's the
gist of it

it's uh trying to recap it's like uh
first of all buddhism rejects like
seemingly

both options determinism and free will
and free will just logically um is
is impossible anyway but but determinism
also

is is is rejected and um

interestingly ramana maharshi who may
have been

a fully enlightened being despite the
fact that he wasn't a buddhist

um he said the only real free choice we

have

is whether or not to be mindful which is
kind of interesting

but i do think that uh it's it's sort of
the

the paradox inducing self-reference
of self-awareness that somehow

causes something that can be interpreted
as free will

that's my best guess that's my theory
ever since reading that book a few weeks
ago

and uh yeah i think that's it

so i hope i answered the question and um
if anyone has any more questions feel
free to ask

either on my subscribe star channel or
in the comments below these videos
and be happy and have a nice day

Hello and welcome to the fourth edition
to questions and answers and I am your
host

Panyo Bahasa.

And that's uh one of the few attempts
I've ever made to uh pronounce my name
correctly.

Panyo Bahasa with the uh H.

Usually we don't pronounce the H.

I've got lots of questions to answer so
I better get to it and the first
question which is a long one
possibly longer than the answer will be
is from Ship of Fools.

And it it is as follows. Had a question
for next Q&A show seems whimsical but

isn't. I watched a Gordon Ramsay's greatest hits clip compilation in which he proceeded to very passionately and effectively insult cooks that try to serve up rubbish to paying customers. On the one hand I believe there's a fairly solid argument he engages in wrong speech and perhaps wrong behavior. Certainly there is an argument for the purposes of TV ratings yet I believe the rage is completely authentic and to me this indicates a complete focus and strict moral code in terms of what he presents to customers. I believe also this type of behavior is a deliberate method to weed out those who are not committed to the art of cuisine and

engage in their own form contravention of right action. Engage in their own form contrave contravention of right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, etc. With his ultimate aim of presenting what is promised to a customer namely excellent food and service is his behavior towards those who seek to present food of a poor quality and offer poor service justified from the perspective of a Buddhist layperson.

Perhaps it is ultimately also good for the trainee chefs in the manner that his Zen master uses the odd jab, shout or whack with a stick to elicit a response

for the student's own good.

In this light can Gordon's often
hilarious methods be justified from a
Buddhist perspective if he is mindful
and aware of outcomes?

Okay, um Gordon Ramsay does a cooking
show. I've been told this. I've never
seen him that I can remember.

But um

uh really the short answer to this is um
whether what he's doing is good or bad
or the to the extent that it is good or
bad depends on to his own mental states.

So um to the extent that he is motivated
by say aversion

um yeah then uh what he's doing would be
uh quote bad karma unquote.

And to the extent that he's doing it out of a sincere desire to help people then that would be good karma. And like almost everything that we do it's going to be a mix. There's going to be a mix of positive and negative or all good and bad.

So um I mean it is possible to use really rough means to help people you know like classic classic example would be like an athletic coach or maybe like a a military drill instructor putting recruits through basic training where he's just giving them hell in order to turn them into soldiers that

aren't going to get killed on the
battlefield their first day in battle.

Or also like

Ship of Fools mentions the Zen masters
who uh

sometimes could be just really really
violent. Like was one famous Chinese Zen
master.

I think it's Ummon

who

became enlightened when his own teacher
broke Ummon's leg by slamming him in a
door.

So

um with with regard to the Zen masters I
mean there's the saying that even though
the Dharma hall can resound with the

shouts of the master and blows from his stick can fall like rain still the master abides in stillness.

And to what extent Gordon Ramsay abides in stillness is questionable. I don't I don't really know. But um really it depends on his mental states and to the extent that you got positive mental states of wanting to help others or just uh tell the truth that kind of thing then what he's doing has good elements to it and to the extent that he really just despises people that uh um don't live up to his standards or whatever then that would be uh bad karma. And uh it really depends on

his own mental states and we really
can't say

uh so long as we don't know what his
motives are then it's it's really
difficult to say.

The next question from Potila.

Could you speak a bit about how the
Burmese and other Buddhists in Asia view
Westerners non-Asians particularly
European descent who practice Buddhism?

When I was in India I encountered a
group of Burmese pilgrims who were
interested and bemused that Western
people practiced Buddhism. I've heard
from some that most Asian Buddhists view
us with a great amount of skepticism. If
so how could we work to make better

relationships across these barriers to help strengthen the Dharma?

Okay, um

I really can speak um with a great deal of experience just with the Burmese and um

with regard to like the Thais and the Sri Lankans uh Cambodians

Indonesians who practice Buddhism I I mean I have some experience with them but not nearly as much. But with regard to the Burmese um it is true that uh for starters a lot of Burmese people just assume that only Burmese people can really understand Buddhism or Dharma.

And um

to some degree it's a cultural thing I'm
or or it's really a like a class thing
where um
the the members of the upper classes
especially um
are more likely to view Western monks
with skepticism where the more humble
villagers of like the lower classes are
much more likely to have a great deal of
respect for any monks including Western
ones.

And um

so so there was sort of like a
uh there was like different attitudes I
would guess. Like from the upper classes
like the rich educated people especially
they would often view Western monks sort

of like they'd be viewing uh like a dog walking on its hind legs where you know they're they're impressed that that he's doing it at all but still they they don't think he's ever going to do a very good job of it. And so I've had like relatively well-educated upper class Burmese laypeople trying to teach me just the fundamental elements of Buddhism cuz they just assume that being a foreigner I don't know anything.

And so they're trying to explain to me you know how to sit in meditation and and like who Mahasi Sayadaw was and who was like the most famous monk in Burma during the 20th century.

And um

so yeah uh there is that on the on the
other hand um

a lot of the the like the poor villagers
they just really loved me as a foreign
monk partly because I was vindicating
their own religion.

They they just assume that Americans are
all rich and happy and beautiful
or at least rich and happy. And um
so I was like abandoning my my
Christianity supposedly because they
consider the West to be Christian and um
just abandoning my you know my my first
world lifestyle to come and live in
poverty with them. So they felt really
happy and proud about that. Although the

Burmese people or Asian people that you're going to meet in the West are generally uh upper class enough that they could afford to uh fly to America and move. You know a poor villagers as a general rule aren't going to get a um a passport and a visa and a plane ticket.

So

um you may wind up with a lot of the other kind.

But with regard to how Western Buddhists and Asian Buddhists um can sort of join forces I assume the best way to do that is just be um try not to be too Western stereotypically Western in your

Buddhism. Like um you know most Western Buddhists they just don't care about supporting monks or they don't care very much about it. They mainly come for meditation and they're not really keen on keeping sila and um they're not nearly as much into all of the ceremonies that the Burmese do. You know the Burmese really like their their ceremonies with the bowing and the chanting and the candles and all that.

And um

so uh

if you wanted to really fit in better like you went to an Asian temple in the West that allows

um so-called foreigners us

um yeah I mean you would try not to look too out of place. Try not to look too uncomfortable even if you don't really get what they're doing. Try to you know follow along and to be friendly and um you know just uh you know serve the monks the way the the way the other ones are doing and um um and just try to set a good example and show that you really you know you're not just uh an ignorant barbarian that um you know you you you are interested in meditation and you do know your your Dharma fairly well and uh gradually after they get to know you I mean they'll probably like you right off the

bat because they're very friendly. And after they get to know you and see that you're a serious Buddhist they'll start respecting you too. So I assume that would be the way to do it although if you really do want to uh spend time at at Asian temples and so forth you're going to be uh exposing yourself to a lot of uh aspects of traditional Buddhism in the East that Westerners really generally don't have much use for. Like all the the ceremonies and the chanting and stuff.

So

um

See I I wonder if I answered everything

here.

Okay. See I want to come Okay, so I think I answered that. Okay, next question also from Potida.

In your video of July 2nd, 2016, the four kinds of Theravada in the West, you appear more optimistic about sharing the Dharma with Westerners. Your recent videos come across as more black pill or perhaps more cynical as to the state of Buddhism in the West and its future. Do you think that establishing authentic Dharma in the West is possible at this point? If so, what are the real world steps to make that happen?

Um

Yeah, in 2016,

maybe I was a little more optimistic

about

um

monkhood in the West.

Um that was back before

I was aware of a lot of the Western

monks essentially selling out to like

social justice cultural Marxism stuff.

And I've also had five more years of

living well, not not the whole time

living in the West, but a few more years

living in the West since then. And um

Yeah, just living as a monk in the West,

um

it's it's like a

in a way it's an obstacle to um to

spreading Dharma.

Um there's there's another question

lower down where I'll address this a

little better, I hope. But um yeah, it

it does seem to me that um

like orthodox monasticism in the West, I

mean it should exist. I'm certainly not

opposed to it, but um

I don't think it's the most effective

way of spreading Dharma in the West just

because it's always going to be like a

foreign imported fringe thing. You know,

I I don't see it going mainstream. And

it's not even supposed to go mainstream

really. I mean, renouncing the world

just doesn't go mainstream.

Um supporting renunciants in the West, I don't see that as going mainstream either. In fact, even like Dana or generosity is is sort of being um

outmoded because people just see it more and more as just the responsibility of a of a socialized government to support the poor. And um so generosity is gradually being phased out to some degree, to a large degree in the West just because people will just say, "Well, why don't you just go on food stamps and get your food that way? Why should people have to bother to come and bring you food every morning?" You know, people are busy. They got They got work

to go to and all that.

So yeah, there's definitely going to have to be some kind of compromise, I think. Um between ancient India and 21st century West, but

I think I'll get a little more to on that issue later.

Let's see. Do you think that establishing authentic Dharma in the West is possible at this point?

Um yeah, I think one way to establish authentic Dharma is to um remove uh the ancient Indian stuff that is cultural and doesn't fit the culture in the West.

And that's going to involve some uh

deviation from the strict orthodox
Theravada, which is just designed for
the Ganges Valley of northern India
2,500 years ago.

So yeah, um I think I'll I'll I'll speak
more on this a little a little later cuz
there's another question kind of along
these lines.

So I hope I answered that one well
enough.

Um next is from Average Dad, who I I
keep thinking it is maybe Average Dude.

I

but it's spelled Average Dad. Okay.

Could you share for us which early texts
deem existence and non-existence as
illusory? Could help me learn more of

early Buddhism?

Uh existence and non-existence as
illusory.

Um

Let's see.

For starters, there's a very ancient
text called the Kalaha Vivada Sutta of
the Sutta Nipata,
which states that existence and
non-existence are conditioned by phassa,
usually translated as contact.

Although it might be more accurately
rendered as something like stimulation.

So

if existence and non-existence
are the result of essentially a mental

state, like mental stimulation, then the implication is that they're both conceptual. You know, they're they're not really rooted in ultimate reality. They're just conditioned on on mental states.

So that's kind of an indication that existence and non-existence are essentially mental constructs.

Um another example is uh a text, probably also an ancient one because it's kind of unorthodox, too. It's called the Lokayatika Sutta in the Samyutta Nikaya. It's See I've got it right here. Samyutta 12.48.

And I think Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation, he referred he calls it the Cosmologist.

And in the Sutta,

um well, I'll just read like the very beginning of it.

And then you'll just you'll just see for yourself.

Thus have I heard. At one time the Blessed One was dwelling at Savatthi in Jeta's Grove in Anathapindika's Park. At that time a Brahmin who was a worldly philosopher approached Blessed One and sitting to one side, that Brahmin worldly philosopher said to the Blessed One, "How is it, Sir Gotama, does everything exist?"

"Everything exists. Indeed, Brahmin, this is the oldest philosophy of the

world." is what the Buddha says.

Then the Brahmin says, "Well then, how is it, Sir Gotama, does nothing exist?"

"Nothing exists. Indeed, Brahmin, this is the second philosophy of the world."

And then the Brahmin asks a few more questions like "Is everything a unity? Is everything a multiplicity?" And the Buddha also says

"You know, that is the third philosophy of the world. That is the fourth philosophy of the world." And then he says, "But not tending to either extreme, Brahmin, the Tathagata teaches the Dharma by the middle." And then he expounds uh Paticcasamuppada or dependent co-arising. So um going with

this,

um the existence of things and the non-existence of things are extreme views, whereas the middle path of dependent co-arising is uh is like a middle path between is and isn't, which is kind of a mind bender. And I don't really think it's possible to grasp intellectually to really wrap your head around it because it's essentially mystical. The uh the highest truth just simply cannot be put into words.

Um

so that's that would be the two best examples I can think of of um um the

early texts deeming existence and non-existence as illusory.

Um yeah, they're they're conditioned um and dependent upon mental states. So maybe you could maybe that would be the same as calling it illusory.

Um next question is from Chaplin.

Today we refer to the teachings of the Buddha and other wise figures of the past. During the time of the Buddha, what ancient teachers would people of that time

2 and 1/2 thousand plus years ago be referring back to for their teachings? A lot of the teachers that we look to came long after the lifetime of the Buddha. Who are the most ancient that we have

record of? Who did the Buddha himself refer to as his own predecessors?

Um

Well, in the Vedic tradition, you had like the Vedic sages who were like the people who composed or channeled the the Rigveda especially.

Um that would be within the Vedic tradition though. And

with regard to the non-Vedic

philosophers like the Buddha, um the

Buddha had two teachers, but he wasn't

really referring to ancient um

predecessors

except maybe in later texts where you've

got the cult of the Buddhas where you've

got lots and lots of Buddhas. And our
Buddha Gotama is just the most recent of
a long lineage, although that apparently
developed over time. And I think the
Buddha

um in a way it was like part of the
Buddha's

claim to fame was that he rediscovered
it on his own without really having a
teacher to teach him.

So he just had this direct experience
that wasn't really dependent upon
teachers or traditions. I mean, it was
just this immediate realization
that couldn't really be taught to him in
words by anybody.

Or even even his meditation teachers

didn't know how to teach him how to to get enlightened.

So there is that. Although the Jains, um,

they they claim to have a tradition going way back into the past, um, which if true might make Jainism like the most ancient religion still in existence.

They had the, uh, the series of Tirthankaras, I think they were called, with, uh, Mahavira, who is nowadays considered to be the founder of Jainism, um, who was a, uh, older contemporary to the Buddha, just being like the most recent one. So, it's sort of like the, uh, the the series of Buddhas in, uh,

the developed Buddhist, uh, tradition.

But, with regard to, uh,

you know, who they were looking back to

as as like their own, uh, like ancient

sages or like their own versions of

Shakespeare and stuff, a lot of it would

be, uh, cultural stuff that just isn't

recorded in the texts.

And a lot of it is just, uh, obscure

names that I'm not familiar with. But,

with regard to Buddhism especially,

um, yeah, it's like one of the main

points of it is that, um, the Buddha

wasn't just repeating old traditions,

that he had this direct experience of

enlightenment that was just boom, in the

present moment, and, um, that's what he

was trying to, uh, help others to to attain.

So, there And also like, back then there was there was lots of legendary stuff, lots of mythology and that sort of thing. There wasn't any real, um, history in the modern sense of the word. And so, um, yeah, there's all these legendary figures and that sort of thing. But, um, to what extent their legendary words were recorded as some kind of scripture or something, I'm really I'm really not familiar enough with that to, uh, to say.

So, next question. Would you consider

setting up monthly Dharma teachings
online in the future?

Um, well, I'm open-minded to anything. I
mean, if there's, uh, if there's a
demand for it, I can provide the supply.
Although, um, I don't like the idea of
like virtual Zoom retreats.

Um, I would prefer retreats to be in
real life. Um, I've I've long had this
idea that it would be a good idea to
have forest retreats where you get a
bunch of people who hike out one day
deep into the woods, you know, just hike
for one, you know, morning, early
afternoon, set up a a good campsite,
everybody camps by themselves, you know,
not very far away, and then in the

evenings everybody meets at the
campfire, and there's like a Dharma
talk, that kind of thing.

And I tried it, um,

a few times in Bellingham, and it it's
mostly most of the the Buddhists there
were like boomers with health problems
and and, um,

they just weren't into weren't into
roughing it anyway. So, it it really
never took off. And in the Pacific

Northwest, it was an excellent place for
that sort of thing.

But, um,

yeah, I'd be more I'd be more into into
that than virtual retreats. Although,

like just, uh, meeting people online
and, uh, giving Dharma talks and stuff,
I can do that uh, once a month or once a
week or whatever, if if there's really
a,

um, a request or a demand for it, as
long as the demand is, uh, polite.

And oh, another thing I don't like to do
is, uh, guided meditations. I really,
uh, it's sort of like doing unto others
as you'd have them do unto you. I've
never liked people telling like getting
into my mind and telling me what I'm
going to think, you know? So, I don't
like doing that to other people either.

But, um,

with regard to, uh,

classes or something like that online,
yeah, I'm certainly open-minded to that.
Definitely receptive to the idea.

Next question from Zach.

I know faith isn't your thing, but is
there any practice in Theravada, even if
not canonical, that is analogous to
Mahayana faith practices like chanting
Amitabha Buddha's name with desire to be
born in his pure land? As a working
layman with a big family, a serious
daily meditation practice is hard to
keep up, but I would like
my mind elevated with good practices
with hope that I can be born in a higher
realm of Dharma, not just a sensual

pleasure realm. And I don't want to be a Mahayana Bodhisattva. I'm solidly Theravadan in my Dharma, although mostly. What do you think?

Um, well, there's all sorts of chanting that Theravadans can do. You can chant the Metta Sutta, that sort of thing.

And, um, with regard to getting a good rebirth, uh, from the Theravadan point of view, it's not so much through chanting,

you know, praying, it's mainly through acts of merit.

So, you know, acts of generosity, keeping Sila, that sort of thing, is, uh, the way you would be reborn into a higher realm next time or a better

world,

um, at least not one that that sucks
really bad.

So, um,

let's see.

Yeah, so if you don't really have time
to meditate a lot, then, um, I mean,
there's always just being mindful of
what you're doing during the day,
mindfully walking, that kind of thing.

And, um, yeah, you can you can learn
some chanting or or some kind of mantra,
you can do that. And, uh, be generous
and a and a good person, and that that
would be like your best bet. And study
the texts, that's another way of earning

merit. And, uh, there are suttas directed towards laypeople, which, uh, I haven't paid much attention to, but, uh, they're there, and, uh, you could find them easily enough on the internet.

And, uh, the Metta Sutta is nice, the the Mangala Sutta is nice. They're they're good for chanting, too.

So, I would I would try that and just just be a good person.

Next question from Dog Breath, who has a series of questions.

And this one is, uh, kind of interesting. What is the J quotient the J quotient of Ajahn Amaro?

I ask because anti-white behavior he

engages in with Tara Brach confirmed
appears to suggest he is I'm talking
about this, and then he, uh, gives a a
website that I looked at advertising a
kind of, uh,
uh, like anti-racism retreat with Ajahn
Amaro and Tara Brach and, uh, a few a
few other people.

See, isn't there some monastic code
against a monk speaking out against and
targeting one part of a population over
another?

I'm assuming the J quotient is high. If
not, he is an example of the complaining
weak monk that is a bad example
of Buddhism and who leaves many with a

bad taste in their mouths regarding Buddhism. Personally, I'd like to punch him. You can leave this bit out of the question if you want. So, you can just like unhear that part if you if you object to, uh, somebody wanting to punch a venerable one.

Um, with regard to the J quotient, I have I have no idea if if he was, uh, of Hebrew ancestry.

Um,

I met him once a long time ago, like in the early '90s.

And, um, let's see.

Um, yeah, I don't think he's an example of a complaining monk, although weak possibly. He could be weak. I mean,

he was he has he has a reputation for being like a soft, gentle kind of a city boy without much, uh, tough asceticism to him.

And, um, I mean, it could be that I mean, you got like the weak or just the soft, gentle, let's let's leave out weak, just like the the gentle, friendly kind of of monk who just wants to get along, and, um, so he's he's playing along. And it could be for all I know that he'll be sort of like the Dalai Lama talking with Greta Thunberg, and, um, uh, you know, not really spouting all the neo-Marxism stuff, but just, uh,

kind of semi adding some some moral support just through giving some standard Dharma that maybe lends some support to what the other people are saying.

So, um,

yeah, it is kind of unfortunate that, uh, so many high-profile monks are, uh, essentially selling out to the social justice warriors and, uh, degrading Buddhism to that degree. Although, a lot of people could turn around and say that I'm I'm kind of doing the same thing in the opposite direction.

So, I guess, uh, to each his own.

Um, yeah, there's a little bit more about him in a different question, but

I'll move on to the next one, cuz I really have no idea, um, whether he has Jewish ancestry or not. But, uh, so, um, still, I mean, it's like, um, the like the Hebrew ethnicity aspect of it largely becomes irrelevant because, you know, anybody who's drunk the Kool-Aid is is just as bad.

Okay, another question. You said in a recent video that you weren't sure that monastic life was for you anymore. Were you joking or serious?

You stated you preferred freedom. What does freedom look like to you?

I ask because I think many people look

at you and think you have the freedom already. For myself, I can say there is no freedom in working 40-plus hours a week just to pay a mortgage, hydro, phone, internet, and and at the end of it all have what little cash is left go to go on the kids or in my case the dogs. I certainly would like to find some freedom. Okay, well, for starters, I mean, obviously, it's like if you consider lack of freedom to be working 40-plus hours a week to pay mortgage, hydro, phone, internet, and have what little cash is left go on kids or dogs. I mean um, then if that is lack of freedom then you would be free in a maximum security prison cell cuz you

wouldn't have to work for a living
everything is just provided for you and
so I mean if you would call being in
prison freedom

then uh

yeah I don't know what to tell you.

And being a monk kind of is that way
it's like you have freedom of mind cuz
you don't have to direct your mental
energy towards like the job you know
whatever it is flipping burgers or
whatever

dealing with irate customers.

Um

so yeah let's see I don't know where to
go with this let's see.

Um

yeah I mean freedom freedom of mind is really is really the main thing but still there is like freedom of action. And in Burma or like an Asian or a Buddhist country um

I had quite a lot of of like physical freedom you know I could just wander around if if I could take the heat and if I didn't like one place I could just move to another place and the the people

knew about rules of monastic discipline anywhere I mean I could go anywhere so long as there are Buddhist people there and you know I could just take my bowl in the morning and walk through a

village and people would put food in my bowl and I could live for nothing.

You know life was free

which is the way it's supposed to be for a monk.

But in the west it doesn't work that way.

Uh in the west everything costs money for starters you can't just wander around and and sleep under trees very easily and you take your bowl and and walk for alms you may have your bowl be empty no matter how far you walk.

Um I've heard that some of the Ajahn Chah monks can do it.

Um sometimes they'll they'll make
friends with people or they'll stand
near a grocery store or something.
Maybe that would work.

But um
um like like I said before the rules of
monastic discipline are designed for
ancient India.

And um
like a strict monk isn't allowed even to
feed himself. He's not allowed to handle
money.

And so um
if I'm supported by Asian people in the
west you know I can just stay in one
place and they'll bring me my food if I
insist which is the way it's been

working here. Otherwise the monks would cook their own food a lot of the time but they they have learned that I won't eat it if they do.

So um

you know lay people you know they got they got to work to do they don't they I've had people that were like my supporters when I was in Bellingham like western people just just flat out asked me why don't you just drop out and get a job cuz they just don't see the point of it they don't see the point of monasticism they don't they just consider it to be ridiculous inconveniences that a monk isn't allowed

to store food overnight or cook his own food that people have to come every morning and hand food to the monk so that he can eat it and you know anything that costs money a monk isn't allowed to do and so

that's one reason why Dhamma in the west has this handicap

is that either if you're a strict monk I mean it's it's like being a potted plant that can't live outside naturally has to live inside in this protected environment with people taking care of it.

And um

it doesn't work so well or I mean another way of going about it is the

monk can just be a sloppy monk that
doesn't follow the rules in which case I
mean what's the point I mean you're just
wearing the monk's robes
for the prestige of it or that sort of
thing in order to get you know
get support easier or something which is
not a good reason.

Um if you're not going to follow the
rules and so I've been uh
yeah I've been in this kind of position
for quite a while and uh I
yeah I for years I've had the idea of
finding some kind of compromise.
You know just still living like a
minimalist existence

you know and not being completely caught up in samsara but still being able to feed myself to to handle a little bit of money. I don't think I would ever be rich even if I started handling the stuff.

So

yeah there is uh

that that actually is my plan.

Um I shouldn't be making any big announcements as of yet but um

yeah I am looking for a better way of existing as a Buddhist in the west.

And I've already got plans and I'll let people know of my plans in a few weeks probably.

So let's see.

Next question. It says it says last one but then he asks more after this.

What action can be taken and who should start the ball rolling in order to counter the publicity of the self-flagellating Ajahn Amaro and his tribal cohorts

are garnering for their cause they have the upper hand because they are organized and taking action meanwhile there is little to present an alternate or correct view. How and with whom can we become engaged Buddhists?

Well not all monks have sold out. I'm not sure about Ajahn Thanissaro down around San Diego. Um

I I would be surprised if he has sold out to the cultural Marxists.

Um the monks like in the Ajahn Chah tradition you know their main place is Abhayagiri which is just uh a stone's throw from Spirit Rock. So yeah they're they're like in the infection zone.

So

um

but I mean

like a strict

traditionalist or orthodox Buddhist

he's got the suttas backing him up. I

mean all you have to do is just follow

the suttas and you're going to be doing

well

and not all of the western monks are

going to be

um cultural Marxists. And like a lot of the Asian monks they're just clueless about political correctness and that sort of thing they don't really care about it other than the ones that are like being missionaries and that's the problem is that if you're a missionary you can't just go around insulting most of the people you're trying to convert. And most of the people in the west who consider themselves to be Buddhists or who are interested in Buddhism tend to lean leftwards and so somebody like me just bluntly stating you know just

stating my opinions

yeah I think I'd have uh

uh the average um congregation of
western Buddhists just fit to be tied.

You know I might I might just get
screamed out of the Dhamma hall or
something.

So um

I think the best route to take is sort
of like

Evola's riding the tiger I mean you just
be a strict Buddhist I mean really the
important thing is is your own practice
and your own mental states you can't
really care too much about the mental
states of other people.

So

yeah you mind your own garden it's like
you you are a good Buddhist and that's
really the main point that's the main
thing is to

you know do your best on your own and if
you can help others that's great.

And

but I mean if

the important thing is just to to mind
your own practice and to practice
strictly in accordance with your own
conscience and everything your own
understanding of Dhamma

and uh

that would be good enough and being an
engaged Buddhist like a socially engaged

one um

is kind of uh

superfluous or peripheral I mean it's
really it shouldn't be the main point.

Um if you can come up with some way of
doing that finding a strict western monk
and there there are some out there just
like a conservative

um right leaning

western monk or just a traditionalist
who doesn't give a damn about politics
who's just following the text strictly
as he can.

Um

yeah find a monk like that and they are
out there and if you can't find a monk
like that I mean you still got

the Dhamma as your teacher you still got the text and

there are ways you can network with with other other Buddhists even though it they might be all over the world very skin very thinly scattered but uh we are out there.

Okay next question.

Could you please give a brief summary bullet points he says of the main points of the Buddhist teaching from those texts that can be ascribed to him?

Um well whether

whether you ascribe a text to the Buddha or not depends on who you are you know like the traditional Asians will

describe all of the texts to the Buddha
and

like a a skeptic like like I am um

I'd be most certain about like the

really the really old ones like the

Atakavaga of the Suttanipata and a few

other texts like the

um Dighanaka Sutta of the

of the Majjhima Nikaya or like the the

middle part of the Sakapanna Sutta of

the Digha Nikaya um those look like

they're really archaic. And if you

wanted to go all the way back to that

for

basics of of the Buddhist teachings like

the most like the really the most

primitive ancient pre-Theravadan texts

you know before Theravada was even developed into a system there was already uh texts that were there that really didn't fit Theravada very well. So going with like the really ancient texts

um there are certain points that um um that you could say would be like fundamental to to what the Buddha was teaching.

And obviously, one of them is renunciation, which uh a lot of Western Buddhists um

um you know, they can't really do that very well other than uh in a in a limited way. Although, I mean, complete

renunciation in the ancient Indian sense
doesn't work so well in America.

So, we're going to have to find some
kind of other kind of renunciation
for that anyway.

Um

then there there's mindfulness. There's
a lot of emphasis on mindfulness. Just
being mindful all the time, you know,
even when you're walking, you're
mindful, you know, when you're
stretching forth your hand, you're
mindful, when you're eating, you're
mindful, when you're lying down to
sleep, you're mindful, when you're
waking up, you're mindful.

So, um

yeah, cultivating mindfulness, just being in the present moment and wide awake and attending to whatever it is that you're doing, you know, whatever arises, that's what you are attending on instead of your mind scattered in in you know, just thinking about what you're going to have for lunch tomorrow while you're doing something,

then uh yeah, that would be basic to Buddhist practice. And it is a powerful practice and it's not easy, which is one reason why um most people probably don't try it very much.

You know, just just getting into the habit of brushing your teeth mindfully

every day is uh it's like a Herculean labor for for most people, I think.

So, another another one is uh just meditation and jhana, which uh originally may have been like synonymous.

Um just meditate like the oldest texts they talk about a monk as a meditator, a monk should practice meditation.

Although, they don't really give uh

details on instructions, but that is there.

And uh with a lot of the really oldest texts, another fundamental teaching is is essentially no view.

Um you you're not supposed to believe

anything because beliefs really cannot contain truth.

You know, once once you turn something into a concept, it's not ultimately real anymore. It's just a concept about reality and it's not going to be a very I mean, it's going to be radically different from reality. So, um just getting caught up in words and concepts is uh something that uh a good Buddhist, especially uh like a seriously practicing hardcore Buddhist, wouldn't want to do uh except at the the bare minimum.

And also having no view is just part of the being mindful all the time where I

mean, you're essentially meditating.

You're not supposed to be thinking and having beliefs about stuff while you're in deep meditation. And so, just keeping your mind relatively clear all the time just allows reality to shine through rather than you cooking up ideas about reality.

And um another another fundamental teaching going all the way back to the Buddha, almost certainly, is um the psychological nature of karma and of right and wrong. You know, like Buddhist ethics are psychological. And it may be that the Buddha was like the innovator with regard to the idea that right and wrong depend on your mental states

rather than your your physical actions.

So, that's important.

And karma is volition. Um that could be an innovation of Buddhism. Just uh you know, like the the Hindus and the Jains and so forth, they have their own ideas about karma where it was largely uh physical. Just the action itself would be right or wrong. Whereas in Buddhism, it's uh they've got rules, but really um

um merit and demerit or wholesome and unwholesome are dependent on your mental states. You know, it's like the the classic example, you you're walking through the forest and you see a a snake

catching a frog and trying to swallow it. And so, you chase the snake away to save the frog. Um if you do it out of compassion for the frog, you've done something good. And if you do it out of aversion for the snake, you've done something bad, even though it's exactly the same action.

So, it's it just depends on your mental states.

And one other thing that I'll mention of just basic fundamentals of Buddhism is uh dependent co-arising.

And um

it's it's fundamental to Buddhism and essentially nobody understands it.

It's uh yeah, it's like the Theravadins

just uh

uh they coalesced it into 12 links and they just memorize the links and they think that's dependent co-arising, but it is really much more subtle than that.

You know, like I was saying earlier, you know, it's like dependent co-arising is like the middle path between is and isn't. It's the middle path between one and many, which isn't two.

It's one and and multiplicity. You unity and multiplicity, it's like the middle path between that. So, it's uh um yeah, it's very subtle and I'm not even going to attempt to explain it. So,

I'm going to move to the next question,
which is a long one.

This is after Dogbreath's last question.

This is long after his last question,
but he's still asking them.

Bless his heart.

Mr. Breath asks,

"20 years ago, I used to visit a
monastery in Ajahn Chah Forest Tradition
in the UK where the head Ajahn was a
stickler for following the vinaya." Good
for him.

"During this time, I visited Thailand
and was somewhat shocked to find several
monks embroiled in sex scandals. They
were visiting Bangkok whorehouses."

"The scandals hit the newspapers and TV

because it wasn't only the monks, but also the heads of monasteries. I was told there was a big scandal every couple of years and then it would blow over until the next one.

On the way back on the plane, I read a book called Not What the Buddha Taught."

I think

you you may be which I read.

"In which the gay practices of some Thai monks were described. All this was in clear contrast to my experience in the West where my Ajahn at that time was a stickler for the vinaya.

So, my question is, are Western monastics more moral or vinayaic than

their Eastern counterparts? If so, is this still the case or have standards fallen? Is spreading the Dhamma to whorehouses still a common occurrence in Asia? Do Western monks visit whorehouses in the West? And what about Asian monks in the West?"

Well, that's a good question or series of questions.

Um with regard to Western monks being stricter than Asian monks, yes, as a general rule,

Western monks tend to be stricter than Asian monks. For example, with regard to handling money,

um in Burma, maybe 2% of monks don't handle money, even though it's strictly

for prohibited. You know, it is strictly forbidden for monks to handle money except under very limited circumstances and almost all monks just handle money freely.

Um for Western monks, it's maybe half.

That's my experience. I can't say with any authority, but it's about half of Western monks and like uh

half of Western monks don't handle money and maybe 2% of Asian monks or

Burmese monks don't handle money. So, um yeah, as a general rule, Western monks tend to be more strict partly because they're not just following along with their tradition. They're they have

to go against their tradition in order to be monks. They have to go against their family sometimes. They lose most of their friends. Um you know, they're just going into this radically different world. And so, they have to be relatively serious. Whereas a lot of Asian monks that become monks, um you know, they're just maybe lazy and want to live an easy life or they just don't like girls very much and want a socially acceptable way of not getting married or they're really poor and they they want like a free education at a monastic school or they just want a awkward social mobility and people treating them with respect and so forth. Whereas their

father was an a subsistence farmer.

So, um

yeah, so it's like uh an Asian monk is going along with his tradition and um the tradition is rather corrupt and like popularized, you know, um you know, I mean, when when people get control of something, you know, they're going to bring it down to the level of their own defilements and that's just the way it is. Anything that goes mainstream is going to be corrupt as a general rule.

So,

um yeah, that is true that um

um Western monks, as a general rule,

tend to be more serious. Although, a few Asian monks, they still have like the medieval just stainless steel faith and they can be very saintly and very advanced. That's one one advantage they've got. They've got no doubts. Whereas Westerners, you know, we've been exposed to all these different points of view and we've got a certain skepticism and lukewarmness that a lot of the more serious type of Asian monks that stay out in the forest or whatever, um yeah, they don't have the same problems as us. So, there is that. And um let's see. With regard to

uh

uh with regard to Asian monks visiting
whorehouses, there was one case um this
was a long time ago. Um Ajahn Yantra
Amaro,

who was a famous Thai monk and he was
doing tours and giving talks. He had
books published and everything. And then
uh it turned out that he was uh
um ordering call girls in Australia. He
was he went to give a talk in Australia
and uh

um

he was uh

having call girls come to his hotel room
and uh he was paying with his credit

card. So when he got back to Thailand, he was defrocked by the government. You know, they even had the the credit card receipts and everything as proof that he was messing around with prostitutes. And then uh

he dropped out of
dropped out of the picture and then a few years later uh I heard that he was in like prison in America for um like visa fraud. He had like a counterfeit visa or a counterfeit passport or something. He entered America with that. And then um a little later he was apparently still pretending like he was a a monk, but then he was like going to discos or something in the evening like

wearing a toupee and layman's clothing.

And then uh he got in a car wreck and when he was drunk and killed somebody or something. And And it was just all kinds of stuff like that. Um some of that happened in the West.

So I mean it can happen although

um

visiting whorehouses I assume is very rare. I've I mean I've been hanging out with monks for 30 years.

And um

yeah, I mean

every once in a while you hear like a rumor of something like that happening, but I've never had any

uh close at hand experience with monks
that were that were that rotten
or or that corrupt. And And if they're
if they're messing around with
prostitutes, technically speaking
they're not even really monks anymore.
They're They're just automatically
excommunicated.

Uh so

um But yeah, I mean the main gist of the
question is that Western monks

um

are they do tend to be stricter on
average just because they have to be
more serious in order to become monks
cuz they're going against everything by
doing so.

And um

there there is a certain amount of corruption, you know, monks are human.

And you know, some monks become monks for

not the best reasons. And so you're going to have just rascals and and uh scoundrels and that sort of thing. But um as a general rule monks tend to be pretty good. I mean even if they don't follow the rules strictly, they tend to be good people. As a general rule.

That's my experience.

So next question.

Uh or series of questions from Mr.

Breath.

Various branches of cognitive science have demonstrated that we can be profoundly misled in our subjective interpretation of an experience. For example, when you look around it appears as though you're seeing things the whole time, but this isn't the case because the visual stream is effectively blind during a saccade.

Whatever that means. Where your eyes jump from one local target to another.

Cognitive science suggests almost every report of introspection is likely to be misleading. Meditation is a first-person experience. But given the scale of error regarding our own subjective interpretations of our experiences and

those of others A

cognitive science suggests almost every report of introspection is likely to be misleading. What is the Buddhist response to this?

B Cognitive science suggests almost every report of introspection is likely to be misleading. So what value is there in laying out stages on the path? For example, the jhanas.

And C

given the above, what value should we give to our own experiences of meditation and what value should we give to someone else's report of their meditation experiences from the Buddhist

perspective?

Okay. Well, cognitive science is nice. I

I was very interested in cognitive

science. And then it kind of got shot

down because it's politically incorrect.

So

um

with regard to the idea that cognitive

science suggests almost every report of

introspection is likely to be misleading

um it is true. I mean you can be misled

easily. But then again

like a serious meditator, like a

meditation master, he's going to be way

beyond a cognitive scientist with regard

to knowledge of how the mind works. The

cognitive science will have all kinds of

really interesting data. And you know,
you'll have like a a conceptual
understanding of certain things.

Whereas the meditation master will
simply understand he will just know
consciousness.

And it's interesting that this morning
somebody sent me a poem
by St. John of the Cross. It's my
favorite poem by him.

Um where he's talking about a meditative
experience that he had. It's like a
an experience of high contemplation,
which would be like jhana.

And one of the the lines in the poem
says, "Wise men disputing can never

overthrow it."

That it doesn't matter. I mean it's like once you have one of these experiences like like a deep mystical experience, you know, just like a like an insight experience

then

um

yeah, all all the cognitive sciences in the world saying, "Oh, that's just your brain misfiring or something."

Um it doesn't count for anything.

Um

like also in uh William James, the the varieties of religious experience, which I I recommend to anybody who wants to understand the religious mind. Um he has

one or two chapters on mysticism.

And

he says a mystical state has two
uh two qualities. One quality is that
the person who has the experience has
absolutely no doubt that it is more real
or at least as real as his ordinary
waking state.

And the second quality is that it has
persuasive power only on the person who
has it. I mean just just the idea that I
had a mystical experience and I go
around telling other people, then
obviously I tell a cognitive science and
he's just going to say, "Your
introspection is likely to be

misleading."

But um

once once you've really had deep
meditative states, if you're doing your
meditation right and and not just
clinging to the the significance that
you think it has where I mean like if
you're if you're really doing meditation
well then any kind of concept that
arises, you don't get sucked into it.
Like even St. John of the Cross, he was
a he was a meditation master even though
he was a Catholic. You know, he's
saying, you know, even if even if you
see God, you know, just dismiss it. You
hear You hear the voice of the Virgin
Mary, just dismiss it. Just even if it

seems like it's like divine. You know, you that's not the point. The point is to just make your mind clear.

And so um you're trying to clear your mind of anything that could be interpreted in any way anyhow.

So I mean cognitive science is very nice and

I've met a lot of people who've just been completely misled by their own experiences. You just have a weird experience, you just jump to the conclusion that you're a you're an aria or something.

Then yeah, but I mean still even though um there's like a very low success rate

or a very low accuracy rate with regard to having these higher experiences, you know, there's all kinds of junk experiences that are misinterpreted and so forth.

Still even if your odds are only 2% of really having uh like higher consciousness

then you're still better off than just going along with the cognitive scientists who have, you know, almost a 0% chance of of attaining higher consciousness unless it just happens to them accidentally. They have some kind of crisis or something that just slams them into a higher state of consciousness. Then maybe they'll

they'll stop saying, you know, "Well, the your introspection is likely to be misleading."

Um

what value is there in laying out stages on the path? Well, I mean with regard to the jhanas, originally the jhanas in my opinion were probably just like the four different levels of meditation where, you know, the lowest level you're still thinking and the second level you're not thinking anymore. And then you know, the next level above that is more refined and till finally you get to the highest level. You know, there's like characteristics with regard to you know,

each each level. I don't want to get into those, but but still um you know, it's it's relatively straightforward. Um unless uh

I mean

well, I mean people can even interpret the different stages of jhana differently. It's It's kind of controversial. But still I mean there there are some things that are relatively straightforward that uh um

that are I mean they they can be useful.

And with regard to stages on the path, yeah, I agree. I mean you're better off not even trying to identify, you know, what stage you're at anything like that.

Um you know, even if you become a sotapanna or something, you shouldn't even believe that you're a sotapanna. Just whatever happens happens. It's fine. You just keep going forwards. So a real adept at meditation is going to know how to cut through the of the misleading introspection to a very high degree. To a degree that cognitive scientists are absolutely clueless with regard to. So yeah, I like cognitive science. If if you're just going with intellect as a way of understanding reality, you're just screwed cuz you're never going to understand reality by

intellectualizing.

You're just going to have to just experience reality directly. And that's like um you know, just experiencing the Kantian thing in itself of your own consciousness.

That's your only chance at understanding ultimate reality is through introspection. So if you want to say, "Well, it's likely to be misleading."

And then just you know, give up.

Then I mean that's your choice, but your only chance really of of experiencing ultimate reality is through introspection.

So even though the it's it's like there's all kinds of traps and uh

um

just obstacles and and just
you know, false experiences you can have
and everything. Then But still I mean
you just do the best you can. and if
your karma is good enough and your
resolve is pure and all that, then
there's a good chance that you are going
to uh have some really um
like exalted meditative states

um

mixed in with all the misleading stuff
that the cognitive scientists uh warn
people against.

So, here's uh the last question. Let's
see wait, I'm going to make sure I

answered these ones.

Oh, over regard to uh someone else's report of their meditative experiences.

Yeah, it just doesn't even matter. If if it's your teacher and you trust them,

excuse me, then um yeah, I mean, you should listen to them obviously. And

anybody who's telling you about

meditative experiences, I mean, at least you should listen. But um

yeah, you shouldn't just say, "Oh my

golly, that person is an Arya cuz they

they say that they experienced this or something." Then

no, I mean,

really all that matters to you

is your own your own states.

So,

but even your own states you shouldn't be trying to interpret. I mean, you just meditate the best you can and don't try to analyze it very much. You know, don't try to say, "Oh, I'm I've reached stage X or whatever."

because uh yeah, chances are you're wrong. But still, you just do the best you can and by not interpreting it, not uh imposing significance upon it, you're much less likely to be misled.

You get misled by giving the false interpretations. So, just don't interpret it. You just meditate and don't interpret it and um that's going

to keep you safe most of the time.

So, next question. If there's still time for questions, here's one regarding metta. What does metta mean?

Is metta meditation described in the Pali Canon? Is metta meditation contained within those texts that can be attributed to Siddhartha Gautama Buddha? What are the earliest instructions for metta meditation?

Where are they found and what are they?

Okay, well, metta um

it's it's closely related to uh

the Pali word metta, which means friend.

So, it's like friendliness. Usually it's translated as loving-kindness. And um the standard definition is you are

wishing well. You're wishing like happiness and health to others. You're wishing like you have positive desires or positive uh like feelings towards another person. So, that's that's what it means. It's essentially you are you are wishing for the well-being of another being.

Is metta meditation described in the Pali Canon? Yes, it's it's uh described quite a lot. And um a lot of the instructions are are just kind of technical and cold where you just beaming metta in all directions to all beings. So, um it it's in there. There's there's quite

a few there's quite a few. I can't think of any uh sutta off hand that has these kinds of instructions, but you can find them pretty easily if you look.

Is meditation contained within those texts that can be attributed to the Buddha? Um

I don't it's not certain if uh you know, like the actual techniques that are given

would be uh

like go all the way back necessarily verbatim to the Buddha. Although, I'm pretty sure the Buddha did encourage monks to have like a friendly mind towards towards other beings.

And um the metta sutta is very nice. You

know, it's it's like one of the most uh
well-known

texts in Theravada Buddhism.

And uh

yeah, there's there's valuable
information in that.

And uh whether the Buddha himself
composed the metta sutta, I don't know.

But um it it's it's relatively old and
it's, you know, orthodox.

What are the earliest instructions for
metta meditation? Where are they found
and what are they? Yeah, I I really
can't say what the earliest instructions
would be other than just uh
you know, may all beings be well kind of

stuff.

So, um yeah, I'm no expert on I'm no expert on metta. I used to uh joke to my one of my teachers that of all the paramis of the 10 paramis of Theravada Buddhism, metta was my weakest one.

So, um now we move on to Frank who has some questions. Let's see. In some yoga traditions, they emphasize physical health coupled with their meditation practice as a means of attaining results. What are your thoughts, opinions on the mind-body relationship regarding meditation and insight? How does one's physical health and fitness play a role with their mental cultivation, meditation, and

overall state of mind? Well, I mean, the mind and the body are are interconnected. You know, they they're they definitely condition each other. So, it is good to be physically healthy. And if you meditate a lot, it does cause you to be healthier. Like I've noticed I have more resistance to colds and that sort of thing if I if I'm doing a lot of meditation.

Um and the and the Buddha I mean, there is talk like in the Vinaya of uh you know, it's good to do walking meditation after you eat and this sort of thing. It's good for your health and, you know, monks are allowed to keep

medicine and this kind of thing. So, um
yeah, I mean, it it is good to keep your
body healthy. Like um when when monks uh
before they eat, a lot of monks I did
this uh at some monasteries a long ago
where you chant about the four
requisites and and uh the whole purpose
of eating alms food, for example, is
just to keep yourself healthy enough to
keep living the holy life. And that's
the main purpose. You're not eating good
food in order to experience the pleasure
of the good taste or to beautify
yourself, make yourself look buff, or
anything. It's just to keep yourself um
healthy so that you can just keep
practicing.

So, um yeah, so long as you're you're like exercising for the sake of just being healthy and in good shape uh and you're not trying to attract the ladies or anything, then uh yeah, that would still be good Buddhist practice.

But um you shouldn't put too much emphasis on your body cuz really um the the mind is more important than the body with regard to uh the cultivation of wisdom and enlightenment and everything cuz it's essentially mental.

Um

so, your body is just like the your vehicle. You want to keep it in

relatively good running condition.

Next question. I have read that it was

propheesied soon after Prince

Siddhartha's

birth that he would be either a

wheel-turning monarch or a fully

enlightened Buddha. As the Buddha, it is

said that he turned the wheel of Dhamma.

So, in a way, he was destined to become

a wheel-turner of some sort. Can you

explain the difference of the wheels

being turned in the two above- mentioned

life potentials? Um actually, probably

no. Um

you know, it's the wheel-turning

monarch, you know, the the chakravartin

um chakravarti

um yeah, he he was essentially king of the world and I

I would be surprised if there has ever been one of those. And so, it's all like legends, you know, it's Indian mythology essentially. And um there's supposedly a wheel that followed him around that would just float in the air and follow him around, which may have been a corruption of some earlier sort of uh mythology like um you know, the ancient horse sacrifices or whatever where um the king would turn like a horse loose like a white horse and wherever it wandered, he had to conquer it. You know, it was just like uh it could be

just a corruption of some ancient thing
like that

where uh

um it you know, it doesn't really have
any meaning other than like the

um just the mythological

floating wheel as just one of the the
things that uh

a uh a wheel-turning monarch supposedly
has. And um I would be surprised if
there ever really has been in real life
a wheel-turning monarch.

So, um yeah, it's um

I'm not I I don't know if there really
is an answer.

Next question. The Venerable Ledi

In this book, he says that the light of

kamma is always in the universe for if it weren't, there would be no means by which a bodhisatta could develop to his supreme state as a Buddha. What are your thoughts on this?

He goes on to mention other lights that come only through the Buddha, four noble truths and such, which make it possible for beings to reach Nibbana. He says that Hindus have the first light and that this light is a worldly kind of light because while samsaric progress can be made through it, one relying on it alone cannot reach Nibbana. It was wondered if perhaps the wheel-turning monarch in my above question would be a

highly refined being relying on this first light.

Um by lights, I assume it just means like good things that help people towards Dhamma.

And uh the light of kamma is like a natural one because you can discover that or know about that even if Buddha Buddhism uh is extinct in the world.

So, in between

um dispensations,

um you can still know about kamma.

Uh but other lights

uh or things that are, you know, help people to become enlightened, um you know, only when there's Dhamma in the world and you have uh a Buddha or the

recorded teachings of a Buddha
uh teaching about them, you know, like
dependent co-arising or something,
then uh
um then people can avail themselves of
that.

And um yeah, Ledi Sayadaw he was he was
brilliant a brilliant scholar. He was
very Asian.

And uh reading his his manuals uh it can
be surreal sometimes.

And uh he had the typically Burmese
attitude that um

um

you're better off studying Abhidhamma
than than meditating because

um

if there's no dispensation of Buddhism
in the world, you can't study Abhidhamma
cuz there is no Abhidhamma, but anybody
can can meditate at any time.

But, um

yeah, I still think that meditation is
better. You're probably better off not
even studying Abhidhamma, except maybe
just a little to know what it is that um
you can be skeptical of.

Um

let's see. The the wheel-turning monarch
uh highly refined

um

Yeah, yeah, the wheel-turning monarch. I
I don't know. It's It's It's like

mythology, so I'm I'm not even going to go there. I I really can't say for sure. Next question. Can you explain the death to rebirth continuum? How does karma and mental states at the dying moment affect one's rebirth? Well, they say it's like your your dying thought, your last mental state before you die is the most important one of your life because that's what determines, you know, like the the vector or the momentum going into your next life.

So,

um yeah, in in Theravada Buddhism, there there can be no real gap

in in your other than just like the, you know, the the trillion gazillionth of a second in between flashes. So, it's like, you know, your last rebirth or your last mental state in this existence, then you die, then the very next moment your uh karmic momentum has to reappear somewhere else.

So, in in Theravada Buddhism, there's no There's no real um

I mean, there's no gap. If If let's say let's say it's your karma to be reborn as a prince next time, and there's like a a long waiting list for that because princes are pretty rare nowadays, then uh you you'll just have to take some

other kind of existence.

Um maybe even, you know, like a higher spirit realm or something. That could be like the intermediate state, like the bardo realms that Tibetans talk about.

It could just be sort of like a spirit existence that doesn't last very long before you then uh

have an appropriate physical body to descend into or something.

And uh

that's probably not the best way to explain it, but uh cuz really all that that migrates from one existence to the next is is like the your karmic momentum of your mind.

And um

in in Abhidhamma, they even say that
your last thought before you die becomes
like the the nimitta or the sign of your
subconscious mind, your bhavanga citta,
in your entire next lifetime. So, let's
say um your last conscious thought is of
your family

before you die, then your whole next
life, when you're not thinking anything,
when you're just in like this
subconscious continuum, there's just
going to be this picture of your family
in your past life that's going to be
there. Kind of like the the test pattern
on on TV sets back in the day.

Um

but yeah, because your last mental state is the most important one, that's why like Mahatma Gandhi, when he got shot, you know, as he's falling to the ground, he says, "Hey Ram."

Which is, you know, "Hey God." And it's not like, "Oh God, they got me." like in the movie. It's um you know, he's calling out to God. He wants his mind focused on divinity at the moment of death because he knows that's going to help him get a better um existence or or help him after he dies.

So, it is important um um when people die to try, if possible,

have uplifted mental states. And that's why like the Tibetans, they'll have monks chanting like the Tibetan Book of the Dead giving them instructions on what to do, you know, so like you try to stay in the you know, you're going to find yourself surrounded by light. You try and stay in the light as long as possible. You know, it it has a purifying effect and this kind of stuff.

Which um

yeah, I mean, it's it's it's good, I think.

Doesn't do any harm as far as I know.

Okay, next question. What are your thoughts on superstitions?

It would seem that many of them are

communicable and shared among cultures.

What do you think? Superstitions, I mean, that could apply to just about anything. I mean, a lot of what people believe nowadays, you know, 500 years from now, assuming that we're still around, those could be considered just gross superstitions. Even like materialism,

you know, just the belief that like uh like a disease is caused by a a virus.

You know, it's just accepted now, but uh 500 years from now, that might just be considered some primitive superstition.

Just the very thought that physical, you know, it's just like physical matter

had had that kind of effect or something. It's like uh you know, I mean, that could be a superstition. So, um a superstition is just a belief that uh other people think is Essentially.

So, um yeah, many of them are communicable and shared among cultures. And uh I think next questions are going to be more along these lines, so I'll move on to the next one. How does your new understanding of liminality explain such phenomena like superstitions?

Um my understanding of liminality coming from uh the book

um The Trickster in the Paranormal by uh

George C. Hansen.

George Hansen.

Yeah. I'm not sure about the C now.

Um yeah, and he's saying that um
everybody has to have a well-structured
belief system

to keep out the paranormal. It's like
the paranormal arises from like chaos
and uh like borderline states and just
ambiguity, the breaking down of of
rules. And so, the more rules you've
got, the more structure you've got in
your life, the less likely that scary
supernatural stuff is going to be able
to bleed through into your world. And
so, um yeah, a lot superstitions or any

kind of belief system is one of the main purposes of that is to just keep the world very structured and orderly and predictable and non-scary.

Because people have to feel like they understand something. It's like it wasn't until relatively It wasn't until modern times that people even knew what the sun was

or stars. You know, they didn't know.

You know, what what is the sun? Is this like this divine thing that God put there? And so, um

uh but everybody wants to

They want to know. I mean, it's It's

scary not to be able to explain

something. So, even if you can explain

it, I mean, like the the authority figures, you know, the shaman or the the priest or whatever, should be able to explain it. And if they can't explain it, you're not going to have much faith in them, so they're going to make something up um even if they don't really know. So, uh yeah, that's that's one reason why superstitions arises. Just people have to feel like this emotional security by thinking that they understand stuff when really we don't, and we still don't. We just use science now, which uh is very powerful and useful, but um yeah, eventually even that will be

considered a superstition, probably.

Okay, next question. Are the Burmese very superstitious? Yes. Do you have any stories about encounters with people and their superstitions? If someone is suffering from a superstition mental affliction of some sort, what are some things you would do to help them? Well, yeah, the Burmese, I mean, from Western Western point of view, the Burmese are superstitious. You know, it's like um yeah, they have uh no doubts about witches, for example. There's a like a a well-known um proverb in Burma that, you know, every seventh house houses a witch.

And I was warned about witches. Witches

are Witches are bad. Like even the the
abbot of this monastery long ago,
he told me about this guy who uh
the daughter of a witch fell in love
with him, and he
did not uh

did not show her the proper affection or
respect, and so she went crying to mama
the witch, and the witch put a hex on
him. And he started having like really
intense stomach pains. It's so so bad
that he wound up going to the hospital,
and they x-rayed him, and they found a
wooden shoe inside of his stomach.

Like a whole shoe that he couldn't
possibly have even swallowed.

So, um they didn't know how it got in there, but uh they had to cut him open to take out the shoe, and he's lying in the bed recovering, feeling a little better, and all of a sudden he starts feeling really bad again. So, they they x-ray him or or something to find out what's wrong, and they find he's got another shoe in his stomach. So, then they go, "Oh, yeah, this witch. We got a We got a witch problem." So, then they had to call um um an a polancia, which is like a white wizard, like a a a good Buddhist wizard, who um goes and starts doing the chanting over

him, and the guy's like screaming in pain because uh uh it's like that the hex has like this defense mechanism thing to protect itself or something. So, that uh you know, like someone who can cure him, the guy's afraid of him, and it hurts him and everything. But, uh finally the a polancia cured him. And there's just all kinds of stories about I mean, stories about me. There's people are telling me that they've seen pictures of me like levitating over the city of Monywa, this kind of stuff. So, um yeah, they're relatively credulous. You know, they can believe stuff pretty

easily. They're They're a faith-oriented people.

So, um yeah, they don't need a whole lot of evidence to back up their their beliefs. And uh see,

uh what are some things you could do to help superstitious people? Just just uh talk some sense to them, I suppose. You know, just exercise a little healthy skepticism.

Um but otherwise, I mean, if as long as

um you know, it's just their tradition and uh you're just uh the foreigner or whatever, then you're not going to be able to to get very far with them anyway.

But

yeah, just remain calm.

I guess that would be a good a good way of doing it. Just let your own mental states uh serve as kind of a

uh have a steadying effect on them or something. Maybe a little a little good Western skepticism. But everybody needs to have their belief systems and you know people that are of a different culture is going to have different beliefs with regard to a lot of things and uh you know, it's it's not necessarily a bad thing.

Okay, last question.

Last question of the evening.

We're already well over an hour here,
too.

Um this is from Frank. I know it is kind
of forbidden for monks to showcase
supernormal powers to the laity, but in
a world so focused and rooted in
materialism and the five senses, do you
think such a show of supernormal psychic
power abhijna might show people that
there is much more to this universe. I
am not asking you to break the rules or
speak out against them, but how do you
think people of this age would respond
if a monk were to come out and display
such powers?

Um

it does happen sometimes. Like like Neem

Karoli Baba, who was not a Buddhist,
um he would do this kind of stuff. He
did he had psychic powers and he would
do impossible stuff. And he used it
skillfully. Usually he wouldn't do it in
front of a crowd. He would do it just
focus at one person. Just you know, he
would know how to blow their mind and he
would blow their mind and put them into
a state of um you know, they're just
wide open. You know, they've just
they've just had their belief system
just shot down in flames. You know, it's
like what what it should be completely
impossible just happened to them. You
know, he just told them some deep secret

that they'd never told anybody. You know, he they just he just meets them, you know, and he's telling them all this this stuff that they that they they'd never told anybody, you know. And um I mean that happened with Ram Dass.

That's where um you know, Ram Dass goes to visit Neem Karoli Baba for the first time and um they're just sitting around. It was I probably their first day. Ram Dass's first day. He was still Richard Alpert at that time. And um uh Maharaji tells him uh you were out under the stars last night.

And uh at first Ram Dass didn't even remember everything. He goes, oh yeah, yeah, he went outside to pee in in the

middle of the night and he was just looking up at the stars and thinking about his mother who had recently died of spleen cancer.

So he's yeah, yeah, I was out under the stars last night. And then Maharaji says, you were thinking about your mother.

And Ram Dass says, yeah.

And then Maharaji says, she got very big in the belly before she died.

And Ram Dass is like, yeah.

And then Maharaji says in English because usually he would speak Hindi through a translator. He says in English, spleen.

She died of spleen.

And Ram Dass knew there's no way that this guy should have known this stuff.

And it was just

I mean it was just like shot down his his concepts of how reality works so that he was just like in this completely vulnerable state and he just he just has like this breakdown and just starts crying.

And um that's that's sort of like how Maharaji would convert people sometimes where he would just blow their mind until they're in this in this vulnerable state where they don't know, you know, what's what. They don't know what reality is anymore. And

then he would just gently um you know,
give them what they needed to know to to
help put them on a more spiritual path
or whatever.

And so that kind of thing it can happen.
Although like doing miracles in front of
crowds um

I mean just just the way karma works, it
might not even be all that possible in
the West when everybody is firmly
convinced that miracles can't happen,
then that's a pretty strong way to keep
miracles from happening. You know, like
even in the Bible where
um Jesus goes back to his hometown of
Nazareth and everybody there is saying,

yeah, isn't that Jesus the carpenter's son? I mean don't his brothers and sisters live here in town? I mean who does he think he is? And because they don't have any belief in him, he can't do very many miracles. You know, he just casts out a few demons, you know, and uh just goes on his way and um you know, says that no no prophet is without honor except in his own hometown or yeah, yeah, no prophet is without honor except in his own hometown.

So um yeah, I think it would have to be like in a one-on-one kind of a thing. And it could happen. Although like you say in in the question, it is against

the rules for a monk to perform psychic feats in front of lay people.

And the Buddha does say in a in a one of the in one of the texts that the only miracle that is really appropriate for a monk to do with regard to uh other people is essentially just look into their heart to see the best way to help them.

You know, kind of read their mind or something, but you're not like showing it off, you know, you're not like flying around in the air anything or you're not even telling you, I'm going to read your mind. You know, it's like you just think of a number from 1 to 100 or nothing

like that. It's it's like you just look into them and and and see where they need help and then help them.

So um

yeah, I think I think that would be my answer to your question and that is the last question and so I'm done.

And this is the longest one thus far.

Uh got quite a few questions this time.

So yeah, if you if you have any questions you want to ask, I can't promise that I'll I'll give a good answer, but I'll do my best. And just

include the question at the at the bottom of the video in the comments

um

or if I make an announcement on
SubscribeStar right before doing another
one, then you can ask there also and uh
be happy and have a nice day.

And uh good morning or good day or good
night or whatever whatever time you're
watching this.

hello and welcome to

episode 5 of question and answer

i am your host

bahasa so i'll just get straight to it

and

uh start reading off these questions and

the first one is

from steve who says he has a simple

question

but uh don't believe it because it's

this

huge block of of a question that's

actually

maybe four or five questions combined

but i'll get to it i have a simple

question about

meditation advice but a kind of long
drawn-out way of asking it

i'm a very poor meditator unless i put a
large amount of effort

in at first to force myself to do the
formal meditation

when i try to read the sutas i often
see the constant repetition and i just
think

oh man i don't want to go through this
just get to the point

kind of along the lines of things that
you were saying western people probably
won't have much use for

i like the traditional aspects of it i
just feel like it's difficult for me
when things are not condensed

because modern life trains people to
move more quickly
and to have such a short attention span
there's so much immediate gratification
available and if you get past that there
is so much
information to absorb about every field
of knowledge to try and build a picture
of reality
and so when something requires studying
and
has what i feel except extraneous
information i have trouble shaking this
feeling of existential dread that i'm
wasting my time
or that i should just look up the cliff

notes version

and a part of me says the feeling that i
need to meditate or do any particular
thing

is just contributing to a constant need
to

to be more or do more things an
obsession with doing and getting and
quantifying things and achievements that
is probably just generating more karma
and states of desire and aversion

i notice that type of feeling a lot when
doing more formal meditation
than also guilt about not being a better
meditator

part of me says these are hindrances and
maybe i should discipline myself and

force

it more often because i'm just being

avoidant

part says that the need to do meditation

is part of the problem in the first

place have you run into anything like

this

and any meditation advice or advice in

general

so there's a lot to unpack here

i think just for starters just the whole

idea

that the purpose of meditation is to add

to uh

you know add to the whole samsaric uh

contribution of information i think

that's uh

kind of barking up the wrong tree kind

of going the wrong direction

i'm reminded of a verse in the tao te

ching that says

he who follows the way of learning

increases day by day

he who follows the way of tao decreases

day by day

he becomes less and less until he

arrives at non-action

and with non-action there is nothing

that he cannot achieve

so meditation is is like going the other

direction from adding information to

form a world view because any kind of

intellectual world view is

is going to be a deluded world view
i mean we're all deluded to some degree
but um trying to understand
reality by thinking about it by adding
more and more
symbolic perceptions to the dumpster or
the dumper
or what is the hamper that's it the
hamper um
yeah i mean it just doesn't work that
way so the purpose of meditation is to
clear your mind and
reduce the number of uh beliefs
that you've got going at least while
you're meditating
um so yeah um

the whole purpose from like the the
dharmic point of view or the
the early buddhist point of view is or
like a lot of mahayana buddhist points
of view also is

i mean you meditate in order not to be
um

accumulating perceptual you know
concepts

so um yeah with regard to meditation
there is that

um if i've experienced anything like
what uh

steve here just described um the first
part of it

like the the motivational aspect yeah i
have had motivational problems

with meditation and um

for me it was um i also just am by

nature a bad meditator i just i have

like this supercharged hyperactive mind

and um let's see it would be uh

i can't remember the pali word uh udacha

udacha which is just mental agitation so

i've got like an agitated mind

just uh by nature it seems and so

meditation is difficult for me also and

um

i really have to try very hard to get

into

consistent deep meditative states and

sometimes even then no matter how hard i

try i still don't

i still don't get the consistent deep
meditative state like

really deep so um

if i go for a long time

without getting into the really deep

meditative states you know like what a

christian would call contemplation you

know where you're just not thinking

anything

then um uh yeah i mean

just having to go back to the abc's you

know go back to the elementary

techniques to try to build back up again

it can be very disheartening and

frustrating

and um so i i don't meditate nearly as

much as i used to

largely because of this motivational
issue of

um just the unreliability

um for somebody with like a really um

like a hyperactive mind like a

compulsive thinker like

like a lot of westerners are so

um with regard to that kind of situation

then um you do well still to cultivate

mindfulness even if you're not sitting

cross-legged with your eyes closed you

can still do walking meditation whenever

you're walking really

so i do that a lot i do most of the

meditation i do

nowadays is walking meditation where i'm

just walking back and forth or

just uh walking uh walking around

outside

and uh a lot of it is um in addition to

walking meditation

um like uh essentially hindu just om

just repeating home

like when i'm walking a lot of the time

i'll just spontaneously start owning

without really

deliberately planning to start

meditating it just comes out naturally

or automatically so

anybody who has you know they figure

they don't have the time

or whatever then i mean you can you can

meditate doing no matter what you're

doing i mean you don't have to be
sitting cross-legged with your eyes
closed to be meditating you can be
brushing your teeth or driving your car
or walking up and down stairs you can be
meditating while you're doing exercises
you know

if you're if you're doing like weight
lifting or something you can you can
meditatively lift weights you know
mindfulness of the

the musc the muscle exertion and that
sort of thing the sensations that you're
feeling

so um let's see

what else is in this question this is a

very very complicated

simple question um

yeah with regard to feeling guilt i mean

guilt is just

yeah you shouldn't feel guilt i mean

even if you even if you spent years

murdering nuns and orphans um you

shouldn't feel

guilt over it because that just adds to

the badness it doesn't it doesn't

improve the situation at all you could

say that

if you have enough guilt it will inspire

you to stop doing the bad thing

in future which is fine although if you

can just

decide not to do that in future without

the guilt that's even better
because in buddhist philosophy
remorse or regret is kokucha which is
always an unskillful mental state and
just makes more bad karma
so i'm not encouraging people to be
psychopaths
um if you're going to feel moral
scruples you should feel them before you
do the deed instead of after
because feeling them after um just adds
to the uh the overall bad situation or
unhappiness
so let me look through this uh question
some more
uh give us

i think that's probably
good enough but yeah it's like the
getting and doing and quantifying things
and achievements
is really um not what meditation is
supposed to be about
um that you're trying to free yourself
from that
you know that's that's all samsara and
uh ultimately the purpose of
meditation is not just stress relief or
making yourself feel better about
yourself
but it's helping you to detach from
samsara get closer to ultimate reality
and all the quantifying and the
accumulation of

concepts and all that is going in the
opposite direction

really um unless you can be the
philosophical type

like uh immanuel kant or somebody who uh
or or like nagarjuna who uses
intellectuality as a way of curing
yourself of intellectuality where you
just

go to um you just study the limitations
of your own mind until you realize that
uh intellect just isn't going to get you
there

okay so i'll just move on to the next
question these um this is from average
dad

and uh i did receive a message from him
saying that yes indeed i was correct
it's supposed to be average
dude except um he spells it average done
so um let's see the first question does
buddhism put
importance on physical fitness did the
buddha
teach it due amongst exercise
in buddhism like early buddhism
there was importance placed on health
and
um but with regard to um
like exercise like calisthenics or
something i don't even know if there was
even a concept of that in ancient times
you know i don't know if people just

worked out and did exercises

um my experience is that if you're

living

a relatively simple buddhist monk

lifestyle

you're going to be walking around a lot

i mean like the wandering monks

just the wandering is good exercise i

assume they're living a clean life

you know they're they don't have uh

vices or

very very few and and simple and

innocent vices

so um that's going to be uh

tend towards health um there is a little

bit of talk about

physical fitness or our health in
general in the the rules of monastic
discipline like monks are encouraged to
do walking
meditation after they eat to help digest
the food
and help not to be sleepy that kind of
thing
but um just living a simple lifestyle of
you know walking to the village every
morning and walking up and down hills
and chop wood carry water um
yeah without doing any special exercises
i sometimes i'd be
relatively burly just living out in the
woods i assume living
like a rough aesthetic lifestyle in a

forest

um in my case it seems to have brought
out uh

like caveman instincts and uh maybe
increase my testosterone to some degree
which also would just tend to make me
more muscular just without having to uh
lift weights or anything so uh some
monks exercise but you're not supposed
to do it for like self-beautification
once you're healthy that's good enough
you know i mean

you shouldn't be trying to get buff or
anything if you're a monk

just just to be healthy and physically
fit is really the whole point because

the whole purpose of having a body for a monk is just to enable you to practice dhamma that's the whole purpose so once you're able to practice dhamma that's good enough and you don't need to be lifting lifting lots of weights and getting all bulked up or anything like that

and uh swimming um

there's a rule against playing in water and uh

like i think swimming for exercise

that's sort of a borderline

case um you're allowed to swim if you have to like uh

swimming across the river because

there's no other way to cross it that

sort of thing getting away from a
from a like a herd of wild pigs or
something

but um uh

yeah as a general rule just just uh
living a simple and healthy lifestyle
is good enough to keep you healthy
enough

next question what do monks do in
temples

apart from meditation eating cleaning
etc do they read text or play
instruments

or are these distractions well certainly
um

a lot of monks read texts some i was

um i was advised by my teacher when i
was a

a very junior monk that i shouldn't read
a lot

but um i mean it obviously if you want
to learn

what the buddhist texts say you're going
to have to study them to some degree
and so reading is um

yeah that can go either way with regard
to playing instruments now it's um

actually against the rules of monastic
discipline for a monk even to touch a
musical instrument

it's one of the things that a monk is
not allowed to touch

so yeah even to just rest my hand on a

drum

would be um a minor offense for me

so um what do monks do in temples apart

from um well like when i was living in

burma

sometimes i'd just be just sit outside

and and just

watch the wind blow and watch the ants

crawl around that kind of thing just uh

sit out there and commune with nature or

meet with visitors sometimes

and uh you know you um in in asia

especially you walk to the village in

the morning and then there's

the whole food thing to can take a

couple hours or more than a couple hours

especially if you have a long walk just
to get to the village
and back and then eating and washing
your bowl and all that
and so

what monks do in temples apart from that
temples it's kind of a strange word i
don't really use the word temple
for uh a place where monks have like a
monastery

but it seems to be fairly common
especially in the thai tradition
to call monasteries temples for some
reason

um but uh

yeah a lot of chanting that the asian
monks do a lot of chanting

next question how much meditation do you do

daily is the meditation of an average person comparable to a monk

if the time is the same

um well like i said above i don't

meditate nearly as much as i used to

like my first 10 years as a monk i would not be surprised if i was averaging like six hours a day

certainly more than four hours a day for my first 10 years or so as a monk

and um eventually i just started

meditating a lot less just because i

wasn't really getting any deeper with it

and it was getting frustrating and

actually i was having to try as hard as
i could just to stay at the same level
it was like the red queen

in uh in wonderland where she had to run
as fast as she could just to stay in the
same place

he was getting to that sort of a thing
so um

yeah like i said now i really don't do
formal sitting meditation very much at
all anymore

although i still do walking meditation
and um still

still do uh just mindfulness of what i'm
doing a lot of the time

not constantly i mean i think you'd have
to be fully enlightened

to be constantly mindful um yeah the
saudi patano suta says that if you're
constantly mindful
for a week you're you're pretty much
guaranteed of
either becoming fully enlightened or
becoming a a non-returner
and with regard to uh the average
meditation of the average person
being comparable to a monk it depends on
the person i mean there's some people
that just have
like talent you know like some people
have musical talent or mathematic talent
or
or you know like athletic talent or

whatever some people

really just have like meditative talent

they can just sit down and they're just

by nature really good meditators i have

met people like that

so um somebody like that um

they might not know you know like how to

avoid

pitfalls and that sort of thing because

they haven't studied as much

or haven't had the same kind of teachers

but um

it is possible for a layperson to be a

much better meditator than a monk

although on average i would assume that

the monk would be a better meditator

simply because

he's just drawn to being like a
professional meditator

uh yeah okay next question

oh before i before i go on to the next
question um

for some reason i have written down here
the purpose of buddhist teaching is to
liberate us from our thinking by means
of our thinking

and um yeah i think i put that in the
wrong place i was gonna i was putting
that down as a note for something else
so i'll just move on

number four you make references to
physics and biological concepts in your
videos is being an intellectual an

obstacle in maintaining a clear mind

huxley talked about this being

independent okay yeah so that's that's

what uh the quote was for i just put it

in the wrong place

so um being an intellectual it can be an

obstacle especially if a person is just

um

like a hyper intellectual where they're

just

hell bent on understanding reality

intellectually

and ajahn chah used to say that that

scholar monks

generally don't make it very far even if

they they leave

the school monastery and go out into the

forest they're so
locked into this intellectual approach
that
they're just looking in the wrong
direction you're not going to understand
reality you're not going to become
enlightened
through through intellectuality you know
you have to let that go you have to
detach from that
so that's why there's the mahayana text
that says the purpose of buddhist
teaching is to liberate us from our
thinking by means of our thinking
so yeah if you can be like nagarjuna and
just use your own intellect to destroy

itself just analyze your own mind to
death until you just reach
voidness or something then that can work
or if you just don't identify with your
intellect no matter how intelligent you
are

if you just don't identify with that
then it's much easier to detach from it
and sort of be mindful of it and um you
just don't get sucked into it but a lot
of intellectual types

um they just insist on trying to
understand reality intellectually
and so they just reject with contempt
mysticism

which is non-intellectual because they
think that's just because they

just don't get it at all they just
cannot relate to it because they're so
locked into this you know everything has
to make sense
and reality doesn't make sense
enlightenment doesn't make sense nirvana
doesn't make sense
so you just have to let sense go
when you're meditating at least detach
from it it might always be there because
your mind is just going to be naturally
churning out thoughts sometimes but you
can
do it with detachment where you're just
not identified with that that is not you
anymore

so um

like being an intellectual can be

helpful i mean it can help you to

understand things and

one of the best purposes of being an

intellectual is just it

it increases the sensitivity of your

detector you're able to see

bad weak arguments um and

and just dismiss them because of that

but um yeah if you get locked into it if

you're addicted to it then uh it becomes

unlike a handicap okay next one

opinion of the eleusinian mysteries

specifically the greater mysteries it's

my understanding i have read

that nobody knows what happened in the

eleusinian mysteries

because they were mysteries they were
secret and

if it was recorded again according to
what i've read

then uh it all i mean it all just it
didn't survive

the hysterical christian book burnings
of the late roman empire

so yeah i mean i have no idea what
happened in the el yusinian mysteries
other than

when you got to the inner sanctum i
think you had to do it get there naked
and there would be like a
sheaf of wheat or something um

on the altar i mean that's that's it i i
really don't know

so um yeah i can't really answer that
one

my opinion of the el usinian mysteries
next one opinion of the tibetan book of
the dead i read it a long time ago when
i was like in my 20s
and it was interesting just uh reading
about

um what supposedly is going to happen to
you after you die

you know that you you spend some time in
the bright light and you have to stay
there as long as you can because it
has a purifying effect but eventually um
the average person will experience

fear of annihilation and then they'll
they'll leave the bright light and then
you go into like a dimmer light and then
eventually you're like surrounded by all
these beings and you're supposed to
keep reminding yourself that they're
just figments of your imagination and so
forth

so um uh it's obviously not necessarily
to know this stuff in order to become
enlightened

but um i mean it can be interesting it
could be useful for some people
especially um people who are
um considering death or near
death um just the advice i mean it

couldn't hurt

you know maybe maybe it'll really happen

you really will find yourself in the

bright light and just remembering oh

yeah the book says i should stay

in in the bright light as long as

possible maybe maybe that can be helpful

but um uh yeah i'm not a tibetan

buddhist so i haven't really studied it

intensively so i'll move on to the next

one which is

opinion on aldous huxley's description

of the dharmakaya

or buddha body trip report and i have no

idea what

a buddha body trip report is and um i

don't even know what aldous huxley said

about the dharmakaya i mean he was an
intelligent sensitive person
very open-minded he had an appreciation
for mysticism

but um aside from that i really can't
say

so i move on to the next one which is
opinion on kabbalah's concept of einsof
and its similarity to sunyata

oh boy kabbalah i

i know almost nothing about kabbalah

almost everything i've read about

kabbalah i read

in karen armstrong's book a history of
god

and it just seemed like gobbledygook

it's like i'd have no use for it

it's supposedly a mystical tradition but

it's got so much

jargon and all these symbols and like

the the tree of sephiroth and all this

stuff

that um yeah i mean it just it just it

seems like a really shoddy

kind of of mysticism because it's so

just littered just so overburdened with

all these concepts and

and this jargon and everything that um

yeah it's

it's really not my style so i really

don't have much of an opinion on that

other than uh i got no use for it

so then below this uh average dad

average dude says not a question a
request

you should do voice over of texts on the
channel would be great

yeah i i've considered that and uh

you're not the first person to

suggest that um

and yeah i'd be willing to uh to read

texts although there's different ways

that i could do it i mean i could just

do it like like this where i'm just

sitting here reading or i could just

have like a

like a picture on the screen you know

that doesn't change

which wouldn't be much fun to uh to look

at although

maybe most people would just be

listening to it while they're driving

their car or something

or i could uh try to get fancy and do

like a photo montage or something

but um that would be uh more work for me

but um the easiest for me would just be

i'd just be sitting here reading the

text

but uh i don't i don't know people would

be into that but yeah i am i have

considered that and i probably will

start doing it before much longer just

reading some of my favorite texts um

just so that it's on audio and people

can listen to it because they're too

busy or whatever to sit down and read
and also of course i'll just be picking
my favorites so uh

it may be uh sort of a higher quality of
of texts then most people would read
if they were just sitting down and
reading at random without knowing
what to read okay next question

from chaplin was

april 26 2021 being your 30th

anniversary since your ordination as a
monk do you plan on doing anything to
mark the occasion

um i wasn't planning on doing anything
that is that is my 30th anniversary
going with the western calendar will be

april 26th

i will be a monk for 30 years at that on
that day

and i wasn't planning on doing anything

you know it's just i i forget my own

birthday sometimes you know

it's just all days are pretty much the

same and there have been times i've been

just looking at the calendar trying to

figure out what day it is it's like oh

yesterday was my birthday

you know oh well you know every day is

buddha day that's that's the way i look

at it

so um yeah the 30th anniversary of my

ordination as a monk i mean it's kind of

interesting but

i'm not planning on doing anything

special except

um i recently told uh our good friend

brian rowe

that um at the beginning of one of our

one of our shows

that uh it was going to be my

anniversary that day and he looked up in

the calendar and it turns out we're

going to be doing a show on that day

so there probably will be like the

special 30th anniversary

show on the on the brian rue show and

that's that's going to be about it also

chaplin asks uh where can we send you a

token of our gratitude via snail mail

while you are still in california

okay yeah i'll be in california for uh

at least two more months

and um if i remember i might even

include the address down below um

below like the the url links you might

have to click on the see more

button but um just in case

um my my address here is uh pano

basabiku

at kusu lakari meditation center or just

kmc

that's easy 9698

south priest road french camp california

95231 that would be my snail mail

address for

uh um at least two more months

okay next question by chaplin

is would you consider doing more weekly
videos with basic

dharma talks on certain subjects or
maybe incorporating small meditations or
chanting i know you don't like talking
through guided meditations

yeah i'm i mean i'm fine with doing
weekly videos on basic dharma talks on
certain subjects that's fine with me
um yeah it's sort of like supply and
demand if

i have the demand for something i can
supply it as long as it's within my uh
my realm of expertise or experience
but with regard to incorporating small

meditations the only meditation i could
really do

would be a guided meditation and i don't
like guided meditations either giving or
receiving

because i just have this aversion for
somebody invading my mind and telling me
what to think

and besides when i meditate i don't want
to think anything

you know it's like i'm a minimalist when
i meditate i prefer

um like just as much emptiness and
silence when i meditate as possible

so um yeah i wouldn't be doing guided
meditations and i don't think anybody
would be interested in just uh

watching me sit here with my eyes closed
watching me breathing slowly
so um yeah probably no guided
meditations and chanting also
um i can do a little chanting i used to
know a lot of chanting
and then i just uh i'm not as
into chanting as like asian monks are
asian monks they can chant the same
thing for two hours every day
you know they'll be chanting abidama or
something chanting all of the parritas
and i used to know all of the parishes
all like the main eleven ones
and uh like the the biku patti mocha and
all that but just through

non-chanting you forget and uh
it just gets kind of boring after a
while just chanting the same thing over
and over again
um the asians um they don't get as bored
with that
as easily as westerners do so
and also just if i'm chanting just to
be just so that people can see me
chanting and nobody even understands the
poly that i'm chanting
then in a way it's just sort of like a
performance you know i'm like a
performance artist
like the like the dancing monkey or
something so
um yeah i probably won't be doing a lot

of chanting

so but but i can do talks i mean i'm i'm

pretty good at talking relatively

coherent on that

so um

yeah so i would consider i would

consider the uh the weekly videos on

basic dharma talks and so forth

okay next question from dog breath

mr breath what is your opinion of abi

dama i came across an online

course by bhikkhu bodhi about meditation

in the abhidharma do you consider that

abhidharma has

anything of value to say about

meditation if so

what oh abhi dhamma

i mean i have um a lot of western monks

just despise

i have to admit it's the third pitika

but

way more than half of western monks just

dismiss it as

not authentic teachings of gaura mabuda

it's like an old commentarial system

where they're trying to

systematize and intellectualize

everything

you know they're trying to you know it's

almost like like

aristotle's physics or something where

you just try to

um just fit everything into this

interlocking system

including nirvana i mean nirvana's like

off the scale nibana and pali

but still they've got that as one of the

four ultimate realities and is no more

real than like

nose sensitivity or femininity or or

earth element or something is it's just

kind of ridiculous

so um like jana vira used to say who is

a very famous monk who lived in the

50s and first half of the 60s in sri

lanka he said

you know the less abhidama you know the

better because the less you have to

unlearn

in order to understand the truth so i'm
not i'm not saying that abu dhabi is
completely false but i do think that a
lot of it is just uh
just made up it's just attempts at uh
explaining reality by scholar monks
who maybe didn't even meditate very much
it's it's just like a hyper intellectual
system of trying to understand dhamma
and yeah i used to i used to be much
more down on it because in burma it's
considered to be the most important
aspect of buddhism it's supposed to be
the the highest teachings of buddha is
abhidharma
and i've just never been able to take it
very seriously

most westerners can't because like i'm
i'm

like i've said before i'm kind of
mystical by nature i appreciate
silence and stillness it's like that's
how you understand reality you're not
gonna understand reality by thinking
about it

so you're not going to understand
reality by studying abu dhabi
you're going to understand reality by um
seeing through
the the illusion

and when you're thinking a lot you're
just adding more to the illusion
so you try to get things still and quiet

and peaceful and simple

and abhidhamma certainly is not simple

it's just extraordinarily complex

and biku bodhi is talking about

meditation and abdominal bee kuboti

doesn't meditate either

he's just he's never been much of a

meditator and uh most of these abi

donald scholars um

yeah they're not meditators either they

just they just specialize in

in the dogma and uh yeah i mean i used

to i used to come up with like

joke insults you know your mother was an

abu dhamma scholar and your father

smelled of elderberries

you know or stubbed my toes oh hurts

like a knobby dumbass god

so yeah yeah you just um if you want to

if you want to know more about

meditation go to a meditation master and

uh

if he's got stuff to say about abu dhabi

like like uh

the burmese meditation masters will talk

about i'll be donald sometimes

but even most of what is taught

as abhidhamma isn't even from the

abhidharma pitika it's just commentarial

because by the time the tapitica was

settled abhidama still wasn't finished

yet

so some of the basic teachings of

abhidhamma like the the chitawiti the
the

like the the the 17 mind moments in
order that have to occur in order to
have a complete

thought you know that's not even in abu
dhabi

or bawanga cheetah which is like the
subconscious substratum of mind and all
that

or the rupa kalapas you know the little
atomic structures from which all matter
are made

that stuff just isn't discussed um
much if at all in the actual abidama
pitika

it just kept developing and um

a lot of the most important stuff
developed after the the tapitica was
closed and no more texts were being
added to it

so um yeah um

i've written some um in in the old

um nipa pancha blog i wrote uh

at least three posts that were

criticizing

kind of borderline bashing abidama that

if you're interested maybe you could

look those up

so next question does panyo bahasa

mean anything when translated and yes

indeed it does

it's a combination of two words panya

and obasa

panya usually means it's usually

translated as wisdom

but um i like nyanomoli's

rendering of understanding and obasa

means shine so

i'm mr understanding shine uh if you

wanted to get even more technical like

panya is uh it's it's like the prefix

and so it has exactly the same

indo-european

etymology as the greek word prognosis

or um the english word for no

like in foreknowledge but it doesn't

mean seeing the future it just means

like uh

the pot which means forwards like in

sanskrit it's pro

in in greek it's pro which is a prefix
meaning

you know moving forwards uh here it just
means like advanced

it's like a more advanced understanding
which is like you know higher wisdom or
something

and the obasa the o is like a prefix
indicating downwardsness like the sun
shines down

so i'm uh mr foreknowledge down
shine if you wanted to get real
technical

but uh yeah it's like you know the light
of the light of wisdom or something like

that it's i didn't name myself if i had
named myself i would have named myself
something different

it's just uh when you get ordained your
preceptor gets to pick

what your paulie name will be and uh one
reason why i'm named pano basa is um

i was born on thursday and um

if you're a burmese monk or a monk

ordained in a burmese tradition

generally um if you're born on a

thursday

then your name starts with p b or m and

so

pleniobasa was just a convenient one

that came up so they just

stuck it on me

okay next question

oh this is a strange one i read on the

amida g

international temple website that

chanting of the name

chanting the primal vow could be traced

back to the pali canon is there any

truth to this was

amitabha even referenced in the pali

canon

and then later he added this large

block of of info that

um i i won't read the whole thing but

he's

it's he's sort of quoting what uh

shinran

shonin says about um how

amida buddha is mentioned in the ancient
pali text and

how in in one part um he was a

a monk named dharmakara but

in another in another part of this block
of info

he was just uh not a historical figure

but was just kind of

a transcendental buddha or something

so um just getting to the question of um

whether uh like the primal vow of amida

buddha

is uh referenced in the pali canon then

far as i can tell no i mean amida

himself is not is not mentioned

unless he's going by some other name and

um

who knows i mean it could be that the
buddha says you know like previous
enlightened beings of the past and then
like the

the these uh pure land buddhists would
say ah there you see

he's referring to amida buddha there it
could be something like that

but uh yeah the whole pure land thing is
practically the opposite

of what is taught in the oldest text

like like the whole bodhisattva concept
is essentially the opposite of what the
buddha was teaching

in the oldest texts because the buddha

was teaching

i mean according to to the very ancient
texts

um if you're able to become enlightened
get enlightened as soon as you can just
get enlightened in this very life

if you can do it now do it now so the
whole idea of putting off

enlightenment indefinitely until all
other beings are saved which is
essentially putting off

enlightenment forever because all
sentient beings just are not going to be
saved there's always going to be an
infinite number of them there's always
going to be just infinite

misery in the universe so putting off

enlightenment

um yeah i don't think the buddha taught
that

and i don't think you're going to find
amida buddha in the ancient texts

i really i mean i've read almost all of
it and

i don't remember amida buddha anywhere
in there and i'd be very surprised

and there's certainly no mention of like
praying to get reborn in the pure land

excuse me okay next question

it seems to me that no one knows what we
are caught up in and therefore

no one knows what to do about it that is
no one has an

answer or antidote on this basis all
religions and philosophies are
false on what basis does a buddhist
believe

siddhartha gautama buddha did know what
we are caught up in

well i do not accept the premise that
nobody knows what we're caught up in and
nobody knows what to do about it
and there there is no
answer or antidote

yeah i mean we'd just be screwed if that
were the case

um yeah i think it's fairly clear
that uh we're just we're caught up in uh
in beliefs really i mean it's like
perception is samsara

we're we're stuck in perceptions we're
stuck in the symbolic interpretation of
reality

instead of just dealing with reality uh
without the symbols just dealing with it
directly

but most of us are stuck in symbols
like mental symbols that are just
generated

psychologically and we think that's
reality

you know we're stuck in plato's cave
we're stuck in the matrix or whatever
so um let's see on what basis does a
buddhist believe siddhartha gautama
did know what we are caught up in well

the uh the very convenient working
hypothesis is that he was an enlightened
being that he saw
through the illusion into ultimate
reality because he had freed his mind
of his own thinking or of just being
like
identified with it so
um yeah i mean there's no way to prove
that he was enlightened there's no way
to prove anybody was enlightened
but um it does ring true to a lot of
people
you know this intuitively it just feels
right and it makes sense
and even though reality doesn't make
sense i mean the the idea

that um unenlightenment is caused by
um just clinging to illusions
essentially um clinging to like symbolic
interpretations of reality instead of
just
um experiencing reality directly without
the symbols
so um
yeah i guess on what basis does a
buddhist believe it would have to be
faith
because there's no way to prove it you
can't prove it intellectually or
empirically
in fact empirically enlightenment um
may make no sense whatsoever it's like a

paradox it's just off the scale like

nirvana is just off the phenomenal scale

it's not it's nowhere on the 31 plains

of existence

you know everything in samsara is

supposedly in one of these 31 planes of

existence

you know everything in phenomenal

realities quote unquote

is in these 31 planes of existence and

nirvana just

is not on that on that scheme

you know it's just completely completely

other you know it's just beyond so

um yeah just going with samsaric

you know empiricism i mean you just

can't prove it and so there's just gonna

have to be like this intuitive faith
or or worse than that would be dogmatic
faith

but um you know even having the the open
door there

you know even if it proves to be futile
i mean it's better than just having the
the closed and locked

door and it's all just materialism and
it's you know

um you know we're just stuck you know
we're just there is no escape from
plato's cave

you're better off trying i think than
just giving up

so next question what do you miss about

burma and what do you miss

most what i miss most i think

is the little wall geckos i really like

those little guys they're

they're these little lizards about the

size of a finger

and they change colors and they chirp

like like

sparrows and they they crawl around on

the walls they can go right across the

ceiling or up a

plate glass window and they eat bugs

which is nice

and they're just kind of fun to watch

and they're kind of cool looking so

yeah that's what i miss most about burma

is the little wall geckos

other things i miss about burma um well
i'm just
you're more you're more in nature in
burma than i am right here
and then i mean when i was when i was
living in burma mostly i was living in
caves
and no electricity and no running water
and you always know you know what stars
are in the sky and
what phase the moon is in and you know
you you're really like in tune with the
weather
you're in tune with the cycles of the
the seasons and the trees and everything
which is nice i like that um

i kind of miss just uh you know
burmese villagers they're just very
simple-hearted uh very open
generous very good people so that that's
nice too

although there's i mean mostly i'm
dealing with with burmese people here
too but the the culture in america
is somewhat different so i mean every
country has its good points and
bad points every culture does so um
yeah there are things that uh i kind of
miss i don't i mean i
i don't really miss it badly you know
there's things that i think are nice
it's not like i really miss them it's
just that i think that you know there

are there are nice things about uh
living in burma and uh like i said one
of the nicest things is the
little geckos okay next question
is karma the result of our previous
actions

if karma oh is karma the result of our
previous actions whether good or bad
whether freely willed or not
please define karma this kind of
question keeps coming up i have to i
have to explain

karma a lot um

but from the buddhist point of view

karma is chittanam so um

karma is will you know like like

schopenhauer's will you know the world
as will and representation
karma would fit the definition of will
pretty well like schopenhauer's will
so if you know anything about
schopenhauer's philosophy
you could interpret karma that way i
suppose
um see is karma the result of our
previous actions whether good or bad
karma is like the momentum
of your mental states
uh it's just like the the psychic
momentum of your mind
and so um it's in a way it's like
habitual
so if you do anything it sort of um it

influences the the stream of momentum of
your mind

you know you make your uh it's it's hard
to explain

it's it's very difficult to explain but
essentially that's what karma is it's
just the momentum of your mind it's like
will

uh and there's all these implications of
it that

uh i think i'll i'll spare everybody and
we'll get into it

but the next question is about karma

also so i'll just move on to that

next question by mr breath

in one video if i understand correctly

you said

karma was an impersonal force if it's an

impersonal force why how

is it a moral one based on good or bad

actions

what i mean is if my karma is the result

of previous good or bad

actions whether freely willed or not and

karma is an impersonal force

how is it karma appears to operate in a

moral manner

as in being based on good or bad that is

the odds must be stacked very high

against an impersonal force acting in

such a moral manner

and one which is entirely consistent

with almost

all other human made religions uh again
i mean i've i've explained this um
more than once and uh
first of all there seems to be an
implication here that good and bad are
some sort of metaphysical
realities in and of themselves whereas
in buddhism
buddha's ethics is simply based on
whatever makes your mind clearer is good
and whatever makes your mind
less clear is bad whatever gets you
closer to enlightenment is good
whatever gets you farther away from it
is bad it's sort of like like an
epicurean you know saying whatever

increases happiness or pleasure is good
whatever decreases happiness or pleasure
is bad

so there's nothing necessarily
metaphysical about it at all

if it makes your mind clear it causes
you to have

fewer desires and attachments and all
that

makes you more content that's good
and you know there's not necessarily any
kind of um you know

godly divine supernatural element to it
at all

it's just uh if it gets you closer to to
enlightenment

or or closer to peace of mind then it's

good

and it's just uh it's based on human

psychology i mean you just

you kill your own mother i mean it's

gonna mess your mind all up so that

that's why it's bad

you know it's not any kind of action

it's just the effect on your own mental

states

like buddhism is like ethics are purely

psychological

anything that causes you to have greater

peace of mind and fewer desires and all

that

that's going to be good regardless of

what the action is

so let's see oh i got to read this again
oh you say karma is an impersonal force
um yeah i mean if there's no self in
buddhism

then uh everything's an impersonal force
ultimately

and uh and like in schopenhauer's
philosophy will

is an impersonal force and it just sort
of

takes personal forms but it's the same
sort of force

regardless of what form it takes you
know the form is something else that's
the representation

or in buddhism it may be like the
perception you know the mental states

see

uh i think that's it

i think i answered that one okay so i

move on to the next one and this

the next few questions are from potila

not pointless portula but a different

one

see first question from potila regarding

monastics in the west do you think it is

possible to consciously develop a new or

revised

vineyard that would work better in this

setting you mentioned handling money and

obtaining food are some of the largest

obstacles

it seems that the models of christian

monastic uh

catholic orthodox are a better fit for
this culture

for example some farming production of
goods like candles books etc

yes it would reduce the amount of time

for formal practice but it seems to be

a more viable structure that would

permit the existence of monasticism at

all would it be an entirely new order of
monastics or

could the winner be augmented for living

a different

uh like or for or of renuncian life

if not it seems that some of these rules

are already moot

monks handing money money cooking for

themselves etc

so why can't some be set aside and

others cannot

actually none of them can be set aside

there's i mean

the rules are just set down you know

they're supposedly set down by the

buddha the only thing that could change

winya rules would be a great council and

asian monks that participate in great

councils are too conservative to change

anything

and so the rules aren't going to be

changed you cannot

legally validly change the rules of

monastic discipline nobody has the

authority not even the thai sangha raja
has the authority to change even the
most minor rules
so he can say it's okay for for monks in
the west to wear
sweaters but so what i don't care if he
says it's okay
the rule says that you can't and so
um yeah you're not going to be able to
revise the rules of monastic
discipline so um you're either going to
have
a few like a handful of just super
strict monks
that no matter how difficult it is no
matter how inconvenient it is for
themselves and everybody around them

they're going to follow the rules
strictly they're not going to handle
money at all they're not even going to
consent to other people handling it for
them because that's against the rules
too

they're not going to eat any food that
isn't properly offered
by by someone who isn't a monk and um
you know they're just gonna wear three
robes and uh if it gets really cold they
can uh

use like a wool felt blanket which is
allowable

but um there's not gonna be very many of
those

and so your other two choices are you're gonna have

sloppy monks that don't follow the rules very strictly and that's almost

everybody including monks that have a reputation for being very strict

you know the ones that are wearing like the karate pajamas and stuff

or eating cheese in the afternoon or that kind of thing

um or or just you know consenting to people handling

money on their behalf that kind of thing or

you're just gonna have to come up with

uh some new system that won't

be fully ordained bikus and um

i i don't see any reason why you can't
have all three you know you can have
that

handful that little nucleus of super
strict monks

and um you can also have

uh monks of varying degrees of

strictness that you know some of them
are just

they just consider it um you know okay

not to follow the rules completely

strictly because some rules frankly are
just

obsolete you know there are rules that

are just you know

the rules were developed in ancient

india

you know 2 500 years ago and some of

them are just

really obsolete in western culture and

so

there's different ideas about how to

deal with that i mean it's like

you can just deliberately break the

rules and think it's okay because the

rules are obsolete

or you can be the other way and say you

shouldn't break the rules and so if you

don't want to follow the rules or it's

just not convenient to follow the rules

you should either move somewhere where

you can follow the rules like it's

like buddhist asia or you uh

don't be a fully ordained monk and um
i kind of you know i i can accept that i
mean it's like
nobody is forced to become a monk and so
um i i just it just seems like
it's like playing it's like the rules of
a game if you don't want to follow the
rules
then it's better just not to play the
game than to sit there cheating
but i mean that's just my own
interpretation and other people will
have different interpretations
and so you know like it takes all kinds
but i think
in order for monasticism really to

to take off become anywhere near to
mainstream

in america like buddhist monasticism or
anything resembling buddhist monasticism
there's gonna have to be some new
unofficial system that isn't fully
ordained monks

and um you know like mahayana monks
from the terre haute point of view
they're they're not they're not really
monks because they

they don't get ordained in accordance
with uh the official

ordination procedure so their their
ordination would be invalid just based
on that

and um yeah it was a similar situation

in china it's like

in china wandering beggars did not have
nearly

the amount of respect that they have in
india in

india you know you have the wandering

holy man who begs for his food and

that's their you know they are revered

but pretty much everywhere else in the

world they're they're just beggars you

know they're they're like beneath

contempt or something

and so um chinese monks had to just

become farmers

and it's literally against the rules for

a terra bottom biku to be a farmer i

mean monk is not allowed to dig the
ground he's not allowed even to damage
green plants

which pretty much rules out any kind of
farming

so um yeah that's just the standard uh
uh complication that i've been wrangling
with

and um yeah it's it's i think it's
it's there's just gonna be a combination
of all the three options that i
mentioned

and um i think some kind of compromise
movement

where uh um just the uh the spirit is
retained but

um the the official ordination along

with the ancient
indian uh rules there are kind of
hindrances in the west or or handicaps
um yeah those would be set aside
although i mean the monks would not
consider themselves to be fully ordained
because
and that would be good for the nuns too
because then you wouldn't have the
ridiculous situation we've got now of
women wanting to be ordained as fully
ordained bukunis
um and then just rejecting the rules
because the rules are
are like prejudice against women you
know if they want to become bikinis

partly

due to the politically correct notion of
gender equality

and then immediately they just don't
follow the rules because the rules are
biased against women

so um with it with like the uh like a
new system

or a new order that that isn't bikus and
bukunis

then you can just set up rules that uh
fit western culture and

like the nuns and the monks can be
equals and everything's

everything's dandy

next question in comparative religion
can you speak about the decline of

christianity in the west and how that
has shaped

the entry of buddhism into the culture
as the west lacks an overall agreed upon
narrative culture

there are now so many competing ideas
and even religions do you think the
decline of christianity is a good thing
or does it do more harm than
good do you think the entry of buddhism
into western culture is just another
aspect of multiculturalism

inc which is destabilizing the west

um that's a good question i mean um

in a way buddhism becoming more popular
in the west

is a result of like multiculturalism and
the decline of christianity

um and so who knows maybe you know it's
like

um the frankfurt school may have may
have

considered promoting buddhism and other
non-christian religions to be part of
their master plan or something

but um it's not all bad i mean

obviously i'm i'm a buddhist i like
buddhism and uh

i i kind of i do regret in a way

not not in the the cucha on skillful
regret

uh maybe it is but um yeah i mean

western civilization it just became like

a religious monoculture
you know everybody's worshiping the
deified hebrew carpenter
and um just it just all the other
uh spiritual systems in the west became
extinct
just through the just like the
hysterical intolerance
of this this kind of of attitude that
took over
with like which is trying to take over
again in a different form
but um i mean you don't have to have a
religious monoculture like in the
buddhist time you had a number of
different

spiritual systems and like even before
christianity took over in the west
like in the roman empire you had a
variety of different religions and
different people worshiping different
gods and

you had like the philosophers that
didn't have much use for gods at all
and they were all getting along and in a
way it was more vibrant
and um it was more stimulating you had
like uh

different religions competing with each
other when you've got um like a
monoculture like a monopoly
you have the problems that monopolies
have where you just get corruption you

get a crappy product that's overpriced
because you only have one to pick from
you only have one producer
to choose from so having different
systems
competing with each other you know
that's good capitalism
and uh it's intellectual capitalism
spiritual capitalism but
it uh you wind up with a better product
and a better price
so um yeah it goes both ways i mean it
could be that uh the cultural marxists
or whoever
uh were promoting other religions and
christianity to weaken western

civilization but

it doesn't necessarily have to weaken

civilization because

you know like like ancient india or

ancient rome

um you know you could have you know like

a multi-religious uh

system like a culture and so long as

there there is some

bedrock or some substratum of agreement

you know like in like in

buddhis or like in india you know most

of the spiritual systems agreed on

certain things you know there is samsara

there is like a higher goal you know

there's karma and that kind of thing

and in ancient rome i assume there was a

lot of agreement on a lot of things too
um it may just be that the agreement is
a more secular nature in the west

because western people just tend to be
more secular

for whatever reasons you don't need to
get into that

so let's see i'm uh

see if i'm answering the question here

okay yeah i think i answered that one uh

well enough to satisfy myself anyhow

next question from potila can you speak
about the definitions of dhamma

as found in the text and in indian

culture of the buddhist time the term

dhamma is used in many contexts and

seems to mean multiple things in the
same text

would one definition of dhamma be
similar to the western idea of natural
law

in that it is an impersonal concept yet
has features

which one must follow to maintain
harmony

in following the natural law dhamma one
comes closer to seeing the truth because
it is the truth

um yeah dhamma or dharma in sanskrit

um or english now i suppose

um yeah it's one of the vaguest words in
the in the pali language

it's got all kinds of definitions like

um

originally it's based on the verb darede
which means to bear to hold up
and one of the earliest pre-buddhist
definitions of dhamma or dharma with the
law

you know like uh even even now in in
burma like uh

um the word for dharma is and uh teotha
g

is a judge you know it's like the the
tia

is like the the courthouse so it still
means

it can still mean law it's like this
that's like one of the earliest

definitions of it because

law is kind of what holds up society you

have to have order

to hold up society and um

in buddhism it can also mean philosophy

it can mean the buddha's teachings it

can mean

like a mental state like in especially

in the commentaries and in abhidhamma a

dhamma

is like a mental state or see

it can just mean anything real like in

abhidhamma again

um well actually dhamma it doesn't mean

necessarily mean mental state just in

abu dhabi

in the sutures also sometimes damas are

mental states

but um um like in abhidhamma in

in particular it means anything that's

ultimately real

like uh a dhamma is you know it's it's

based on

to bear to hold up and so presumably

a dhamma is what holds up the uh the

manifestations or the appearances or

like the qualities you know you have the

essence that that has

qualities to it the qualities are

perceptible

but the essence underlies that and that

that's also another meaning of dhamma

and i'm sure there's lots of other ones

that i can't think of

um but with regard to natural law

there's another word in pali and

unfortunately i don't remember what it

is it's a it's a two-syllable word

that just means like natural law like uh

like the

in uh in the vedas you have varuna who's

like the god of natural law

um might be kind of similar to poseidon

in in like a classical

uh polytheism where um

yeah it's like really impersonal whereas

dharma is more

i mean like like the other word the

natural law the word that i can't think

of

you know that would include things like gravity and like space and time and that sort of thing

whereas dharma can include that because it can it can include anything i mean it can just mean

thing you know like uh dhamma anata

you know just everything is without self you know

so um

uh i think i just lost lost the thread

um let's see

would one definition of dhamma be

similar to the western idea of natural law

yeah dhamma is is more of a spiritual

law

um or like a philosophical law so it's

it's more ethical more spiritual and

ethical

um

okay so i think i answered that one i

hope i answered it

and uh my lighting is is acting weird

because uh

when when it's bright outside i'm back

lit and then it doesn't show me very

well

and then so i turned the the lights up

all the way bright

and now it's dark and and overcast and

raining outside

um next question from pottiland

another question related to ancient
india and early buddhism

what was the view of different nations
ethnicities and racial or caste groups
in the sutas and early buddhism

the ashokan pillars and the buddha
himself mentioned the greeks

so there was an idea of foreign peoples
living outside the indian cultural
sphere at this time

the texts clearly talked about differing
capabilities between peoples men versus
women

moral versus immoral etc so how does
comma account for how large groups of
people come together and exist

with a shared language and culture

do they share some foundational comma or

are people from a group

reborn into a group due to their

attachment to those people

are all human births said to be equally

capable of attaining awakening or

resisting modern interpretation

some texts indicate that those who are

disabled for example may lack the

capacity to learn

dhamma how would language iq culture etc

play into this

and is it possible for one to really

escape the comma of their ethnic kinship

and i think this is about five questions

all combined

so let's see starting with um uh what
was the view of different
nations ethnicities and racial or caste
groups

in the suit as in early buddhism um
buddhism

the buddha himself um didn't have much
use for

any kind of racial or caste differences
it was like

once a monk was ordained he left behind
all

um like like class or cast

or to some degree race and uh everyone
just became you know

monks you know they became sons of the

sons of the buddha

so um yeah there was

that um

at the same time buddhism was probably
relatively

uh elitist where it was mostly men of
the upper classes or at least you know
from vices on

up that were becoming monks there
probably weren't a whole lot of
like outcasts and like uh sudras

or uh you know proto-australoid hill
people

that were becoming monks it does seem to
have been largely an upper-class

um sort of uh

uh for like the in intelligentsia i mean

it was

buddhism is uh to some degree like an
intellectual system

even though you're trying to go beyond
the intellect still it has an appeal
to philosophically minded people and
that's going to be more

people of the upper classes just
naturally with even without

you know filtering out um filtering out
like the lower classes

you know it's kind of the same way in
the west um

just because most of the people who
became buddhist monks were like
brahmanas and

shatrias doesn't mean that
it was a racist system or a classist
system it was
just that people of the lower classes
just weren't as interested in that sort
of thing
so that's uh that's one question
uh let's see the ashokan uh
the ashokan pillars and the buddha
himself mentioned the greeks so
there was an idea of foreign peoples
living outside indian cultural sphere at
this time
um yeah that's true there wasn't uh
there wasn't a whole lot of idea of
non-indian culture though
i mean you had some barbarians that

weren't really understood very well they
were just like
invading marauders that would show up
sometimes
but um india had this idea of the four
continents
and the subcontinent of india was uh
you know jambu deepa which was the the
southern continent
um inhabited by humans and the other
continents were
inhabited by non-human beings so they
really didn't have a very good idea
of like world geography at the time
um let's see next question
here in this uh this paragraph

um how does comma account for how large
groups of people come together and exist
with a shared language and culture

um is similarity of comma

do they share some foundational comma or
are people from a group reborn
into a group due to their attachment to
those people

um it yeah i mean if you're born into
everyone born into the same culture
they're gonna have similar beliefs and
so

they're going to have um similar karma
because karma is a mental state
so um yeah there's

um i have even read that uh some
cultures

even though there's not group karma

karma is sort of individual

but um still there are certain cultures
that

sort of reincarnate like rome

reincarnated as america in a way

to some degree anyway just because um

people with similar uh

you know similar attitudes are going to

um you know they're going to fit

together better than if you just got

radically different attitudes

and so um you know after one

civilization dies

then the people with these attitudes are

going to have to be reborn into a

different civilization

which will then kind of perpetuate a lot
of the attitudes from the earlier
civilization just through just
the karmic effect

uh let's see here but also i mean
attachment to

certain people um certain individuals
can be reincarnated and interacting with
each other

uh over and over again or so i have read
like

i supposedly in my own grandfather
according to my father he was
firmly persuaded that i was a
reincarnation of his own father which
makes me my own grandpa

um are all human births said to be
equally capable of attaining awakening
or is this a modern interpretation

um no i mean not all human births are
equally capable of attaining awakening
like

if you're born like a deaf mute then uh
you know obviously

that's going to be a severe handicap or
if you're born into a culture that just
has no

dharma no concept of that then that's
going to be a severe handicap

just just uh even though you're healthy
and everything you know your mind works
fine you just are not exposed to that

so um yeah there's definitely
inequality you know it's like inequality
is
built into dhamma and it's based on you
know it's based on ourselves i mean
we create the inequality um just because
people's karma is not equal people have
some people have
different kinds of karma you know it's
just some people's karma that they're
gonna live
they're almost up to the deva level so
they're gonna be living like a really
nice beautiful kind of a life other
people are almost down to the hell
realms
uh even though there's they're born in

as a human into a human body
but um uh yeah there's just lots and
lots of difference and so
uh different people have different what
are called pyramids you know just your
your karma is more or less developed
and um so yeah not everybody has an
equal
possibility although the possibility is
there i think everybody has
what in uh zen would be called the
buddha nature where there's
at least this little glimmer of
enlightenment down
down in the center of our heart
somewhere you know it's it's always

there i mean

you can't be completely devoid of any um
awareness unless maybe you're like a
vampire you know a soulless vampire
maybe just an absolute sociopath with no
compassion whatsoever no sensitivity of
that sort

no no conscience maybe but it seems to
me like

anybody would have to have at least this
little spark

of enlightenment down in there somewhere
okay let's see what else uh how would
language iq culture etc play into this
and is it possible for one to really
escape

the comma and their ethnic kinship well

it's not a matter of escaping kama
like even the buddha he still had past
comma
you know and enlightened being
supposedly still has past comma
influencing their life they're just not
making any new comma
um so you don't really escape from it
you just detach from it and that's
that's like uh
something that a lot of people don't
really understand you know they're
trying to escape
from this or escape from that or
eradicate or something
when really you just i mean that's just

nature taking its course you just stop
identifying with it you just detach from
it and

just continue letting nature take its
course because it's not really you
anyway

oh i think i may have answered
all of this possibly if i haven't you
can ask it again if there's some part
that i missed

okay well last question very last
on the list is from zach

and zach asks have you ever read the
lotus sutra

if so what do you think of it if not i'm
guessing you've heard of the mahayana
concept of upaya or useful means

what is your opinion on this concept in
spiritual practice

okay so this is like two questions one
is have i ever read the lotus sutra and
yeah i did like

when i was in my early 20s like i was in
college i read the lotus sutra

and i don't remember it very well i
remember there was like the

the simile that's also found in the
polytechnics of the the building on fire

that this world is on fire and um

you know the uh you got like the the
buddhas and the

pro buddhas and the i can't remember the
other group

maybe it was bodhisattvas or something
using different ways of luring
children out of the burning building as
a kind of skillful means
so um yeah the lotus sutra if i remember
correctly
you know it it was like a relatively
early mahayana sutra
and so it's got a lot in common with
with terra vada or just
primitive buddhism you know there's a
lot that is similar
and um aside from like the bodhisattva
concept
and um and also if i remember correctly
it was going mahayana buddhist texts
were going through a phase where you

would have like the magic

mantra at the end so um

like what is it

i don't think that was the lotuses for

them but um

so yeah i i've read it and it's a

relatively wise profound

sutra as sutras go

let's see what do i think of it as i

think i just answered that one let's see

i've heard of the mahayana concept of

upaya or useful means

what is my opinion on this concept in

spiritual practice

well it is mentioned in even like the

atakawaga which is a very ancient text

and it's in that saying that a monk
should just avoid all upaya but it's not
talking about teaching
gimmicks it's just talking about
anything that you rely on because
upaya means like something that you fall
back on or rely on
and so um the early buddhist texts were
saying with regard to like your own
minds your own beliefs you should not
depend on anything but
um i think that's different from you
know skillful means
where um like in teaching uh i think
you have to use skillful means because
you know the goal
is a paradox enlightenment itself is

just off the scale

nirvana's off the scale so um

yeah you're going to have to do whatever

whatever it takes really to help

somebody if you know how

if you can and so that can that can

result in you know

weird riddles or just confusing people

or just blowing their minds or

or whatever it takes you know it's like

um

uh some of the hindu swamis you know

they'd do miracles just to get people

interested and then once they got

interested then they could teach them

more easily

so there's that kind of thing too so i'm
not i'm not opposed to skillful means in
in teaching

um so yeah that's that's the question so
i think i answered it

and so that's it um

so if you have any more questions you
know feel free to ask and i'll just keep
doing this as long as people keep asking
questions

and i hope you can hear me because it
now it's raining hard outside

so um yeah if you have questions to ask
um just

include them in the uh the comments
below the video

or um um every

every once in a while like right before
like uh maybe a week
or less before i do one of these i'll
just put an announcement on my subscribe
star channel so if you're subscribed to
that
and it doesn't cost anything um you can
see the
like the announcements there too and so
um until next time um be happy
and i think we're done

hello and welcome to

episode six of question and answer i am

your host

and by a special request i am doing this

outside um

and we'll see how it goes because it's

flat as a pancake here where i'm living

and so it's usually windy as the f

word and today is relatively

non-windy so maybe the microphone won't

be picking up

wind interference the whole time so

uh yeah you're spared of the crummy

interior of my meditation

trailer which is sort of the modern

western equivalent of a hut

and so we're out in the pavilion out in
back of the monastery and that is
the big buddhist statue behind me
and we have a question about statues
coming up so
i might as well get to it first question
is from
bodhisattva969
and he asks how do you start to meditate
alone
what is the best way to begin
so that's a good basic question good
good question to start with
so um really i mean if you really want
to start meditating
probably the best thing for you to do
would be to

go to like a an introductory retreat

or go to like a meditation

center and um get some basic

instructions

but um just just right here um

as sort of some initial pointers

you should have like a clean quiet place

where you can sit cross-legged on the

floor if you're able to do that

maybe have a rolled up towel or a pillow

under your behind so that it's easier

for

you to keep your knees down you don't

want to be sitting with your knees like

up like this when you're sitting good to

have them

down so that you're forming like a solid tripod

and um keep your back straight

and doesn't really matter where you keep your hands so long as you have them at rest

and usually the best introductory

meditation is meditation on your breath

in which case you would have your

concentration

or your attention focused right right

around your nostrils

and you would be just paying attention

to the sensation of the wind

moving in and out of your nose

and for a beginner

you may have to start with just counting

your breaths which would be

like counting you know one one in breath

out breath is one and in in breath out

breath

two and get up to five and then you'd

start at one again and go up to six

and then you'd start at one again and go

up to seven and you just keep

starting back at one until you get up to

ten and then you start

one through five one through six one

through seven and

um just that kind of having to keep

track

helps to keep your mind focused on the

breathing although it's kind of like a

chore it's sort of like doing push-ups
or something it's not really
particularly enjoyable but if you're
able to do it
then you would just start um
like labeling just breathing in
breathing out
breathing in breathing out and your mind
is going to
wander to other things you'll just start
wondering you know what was that noise
or
you know my knee itches or whatever and
as soon as you
catch that your mind has wandered away
you just note that
and then you come back to breathing in

breathing out

there are other ways to do it i don't

want to get it too complicated but

you could also just meditate on like the

syllable ohm

or if you're really just starting off as

a beginner just trying to see how it

feels to just kind of relax

into not just having the monkey mind

jumping all over the place but having

your mind just

focused on something very simple to keep

your mind from

just proliferating all kinds of weird

ideas

you could also just meditate

gazing at a candle flame which is a
common yoga sort of meditation
or you could light an incense stick and
just keep your
concentration focused on the the seeing
of of the smoke as it rises
and that's kind of a good one too
because then you'll know when to stop
meditating is when the incense stick is
burned all the way down which is
i don't know 20 25 minutes for the
average incense stick i think
or you could even just sit in front of
like a goldfish bowl or an aquarium
and just quietly watch the fish just
silently gliding through the water which
is a very um effective relaxation

technique

for people who are stressed out you know
you come home from work you just sit
down in front of the fish tank and watch
the fish for

15 minutes or something but it is good
if you can sit cross-legged with both
knees

more or less down and keep your back
straight because it helps you to stay
alert and keep your mind as simple as
possible and stay

awake and alert in the present moment
because that's really the point

of meditation but as i say um

if if you can if you have access to it

then you do well to

go to like a meditation retreat or

meditation center or at least

read a book on elementary meditation

because i can't really get very far with

explaining

the basics in just answering one of many

questions

so i hope that's enough i mean it's well

worth it you know

i i definitely encourage people to

practice meditation because it has many

benefits

and it gets you closer to reality helps

you to escape from plato's cave and all

that which is good

so next question also from

bodhisattva969

how can we introduce an enlightened
western buddhism without becoming
effeminate at the same time
well original buddhism certainly was not
effeminate in fact as i've said before
the original
early buddhism was about as masculine of
a spiritual system as
has existed in this world
um first of all it was based on just
asceticism
and uh monks of course avoided women
like the plague except for when they
were
silently putting food into their into

the monks bowl in the morning when they
did go for alms

so i think in order to have

a relatively masculine form of

buddhism you'd have to have austerity

you know just

enduring discomfort with equanimity

that would be that would be a big one

and fearlessness

which uh uh you can cultivate that if

you're meditating in a forest i suppose

um i like the idea of meditation

retreats

being conducted in forests anyway so

just you know if if you have the the

leisure time and the weather permitting

you could just hike out into the woods

and

meditate under a tree or something um

and also just

taking responsibility for yourself um

buddhism is in the west especially is

just

ignoring the whole concept of karma

where everything happens to us

is the fruition of our own karma which

is literally our own

doing and so if anything bad happens to

you

you don't whine and complain and call

yourself a victim

which is largely the direction that

just about everybody is going in the

west including so-called buddhists
and you just accept it because it's the
fruition of your own karma
and you just man up and accept
the consequences of your own actions
um but yeah i mean with regard to
early buddhism they were they were in
order to be a monk in ancient
india ancient northern ganges valley you
had to be really tough
so um yeah buddhism was not intended to
be
a feminized system which is certainly
what it is becoming in the west with uh
you know lesbian gurus and that sort of
thing
so next question from reconciliation

do you know about the catholic monk

thomas merton being

assassinated for for being about

creating

anti-war opposition movement that could

not be stopped by the vietnam war hawks

um i i know about thomas merton i've

read

like the edited version of his diaries

and

um uh this was really the first i'd

heard of any conspiracy theory about him

being killed by the the government

the u.s government um my understanding

is that he was killed by a freak

accident when an electric

fan fell on his head in bangkok
thailand and um i mean obviously
to me anyway at least in the edited
version of his diaries he mentioned
nothing about
being followed by uh agents or anything
like that he i mean it caught
took him completely by surprise as far
as i could tell and um uh i did read an
article or two on the supposed
assassination of father merton and um
it seemed to me like the evidence was
pretty sketchy and hearsay and so
um it maybe it happened but um
i don't know that much about it and i'm
inclined to just
assume that he did die from a freak

accident

from having a fan an electric fan

fall on his head and instantaneously

electrocute him or

or whatever whatever the cause of death

supposedly was

next question from nardi i

came across a book about buddhist

cosmology and i would like to know your

opinion on the subject is this an issue

in the theravada school

or is it more of a mahayana thing well

certainly there's a lot of cosmology

in ancient indian buddhism

including taravana and i think pretty

much

all religions have cosmology because
one of the main reasons of a religious
system especially for the masses
not the advanced practitioners so much
but for the average person like the
average
villager is it explains the universe
you know they want to have like
everything explained they want to know
what the stars are in the sky
at night you know they want to know what
causes rain and everything
so um there's going to be some cosmology
in just about
any kind of religious system because
that's one of the main purposes
of religion so yeah the terra vada

buddhists

pretty much inherited most of their

cosmology from just

ancient indian culture so you had the

the flat earth floating on water with

the 10 million mile high mountain in the

center

called meru and the four great

continents

and the stars and the sun

and other heavenly bodies are inhabited

by deities

and this kind of thing so yeah it goes

all the way back to the beginning and

it's most of it

i assume is pre-buddhist although any

religion is going
to modify the cosmology
to fit it into their religion and also
so that they can say you know we've got
the improved correct version you know
they're not just going to completely
borrow their entire cosmology from some
previous religious system because that
would indicate that the previous
religious system was right
also so yeah there is there is
like an ancient indian cosmology that
the buddhists pretty much just
adopted from the culture and it's really
irrelevant
to practicing dhamma and
um from the western like the modern

western point of view it's

it's pretty much outmoded you know like
the flat earth floating on water just
is not very convincing to most people
although of course there are a few flat
earthers out there

so next question from kuru minha

why do you think theravada buddhism is
necessarily opposed to scientific
realism greetings from brazil

um necessarily opposed

scientific realism

at present i suppose you could say it's
necessarily opposed

maybe in future scientific realism as
you know science progresses then

it will come closer and closer in fact
scientific realism has been coming
closer and closer to
a lot of eastern philosophies for
example with regard to the observer
effect and the influence of
consciousness

on like conditioning what we perceive
and that sort of thing

you know that's getting much closer to
buddhism but with regard to like
the main um opposition

i suppose between theravada buddhism and
scientific realism i think it would
probably be something along the lines of
the effects of karma

you know karma is just not a scientific

term

um so yeah like the the whole

idea of karma conditioning our

experience

everything that we everything that we

experience

in like the sensual realm is supposedly

the fruition of our own karma

and then of course you've got the whole

issue of uh rebirth

and um that sort of thing so yeah

i would assume that the whole idea of

karma and just the the radically

fundamental influence of consciousness

on everything around us

like like later schools in theravada

just just dispensed with a whole
notion of physical matter and just
started becoming idealist
and uh even terawatta that accepts the
reality of physical matter
um is almost idealist really because as
i say
everything that we experience sensually
including our own thoughts is the
fruition of past karma
so i would assume that would be the main
the main difference
and as scientific realism becomes more
and more
aware of the the influence of
consciousness
on what we perceive and i assume they're

going to get closer and closer although
of course

orthodox terrible buddhism isn't going
to change but

scientific realism is is changing and

it is apparently getting closer and

closer not only to tarabata buddhism but
to

eastern spiritual systems in general

so next question from follower number

[Music]

a12c67e7

i have two questions do you personally

think there's any significance to dreams

beyond manifestations of the

subconscious mind

and i might as well just conflate that
with the next question which is does
buddhism have anything to say about
dreams

so um

my understanding from a biological point
of view is the main purpose of dreams
is it helps to organize um

information in our brain it makes our
brain more

efficient like they've found that

animals that don't dream have to have a
larger brain

than animals that do dream just to
compensate for the

loss of efficiency that that happens
through dreaming

so um i remember when i was in college i
wrote uh
a research paper on intelligence and
dolphins
and at the time i had no i i couldn't
come up with a good reason why a
bottlenose dolphin would have such a
large complicated brain larger and more
complicated than ours even though
it doesn't have like hands and fingers
and things that
need extra brain tissue to control them
and even though it's
somewhat larger than us i mean a lot of
the extra weight is just
blubber that doesn't require any nervous

tissue

so um but then years later i
found out that um dolphins don't dream
because they can only sleep for six
minutes at a stretch because they have
to hold their breath while they're
while they're sleeping so they have to
hold their breath
and catch this quick nap and then they
have to wake up in order to start
breathing again
so um just from a biological point of
view it's just it increases efficiency
and so it's um
you know things that happen in your day
or things that have happened recently
will just come up

and sort of reinforce the neural
pathways

help to get everything organized and
integrated and that sort of thing
although um you can't have dreams that
are

like subconscious messages to your
conscious mind

so you can have um
dreams that have some kind of spiritual
um

importance or value so there is that
and one of my favorite examples is i've
talked about this before how i used to
have
an australian monk friend who was

thinking about dropping out of the
monkhood

and he had this dream that he didn't
understand at all but

as soon as he told it to me it just
clicked i mean i just understood the
meaning of it

which excuse me

i just had lunch um

it it indicates that i mean your
subconscious mind can be

like leaving messages that your
conscious mind won't even necessarily
know

about it he won't be aware of it which
is which is interesting

and anyway his dream was that he was in

a canoe in a little lake

paddling around and around and at the

other end of the canoe or three or four

gorillas and the gorillas were

very quiet very well behaved but he knew

that if he paddled back to shore they'd

jump

out and run amok and so he was stuck out

in this lake paddling around and around

with these gorillas afraid to go back to

shore because he knew the gorillas would

just jump out and

and start causing trouble and for me it

was just plainly obvious that

like like freud says dreaming about

water

is symbolic of religion or spirit

and so him being stuck out in this lake

was him

pretty much being stuck as a monk in his

own mind

because he was afraid that the gorillas

which were his defilements

you know like his baser instincts were

under control while he was a monk but if

he

he went back into lay life you know he'd

just go back to his old rascally ways

which to some degree did happen because

he did drop out

and i do hope that he is happy i haven't

heard from him in many years

so um with regard to buddhism having

anything to say about dreams

well i mean obviously there's the uh the
more or less mythological story of the
buddhism mother

um getting pregnant from a dream

like she wasn't technically she wasn't a
virgin like

jesus's mother supposedly was but um
yeah she got pregnant

after dreaming of a white elephant
entering her you know the

elephants are sometimes called naga

which also can just mean a great one

like the buddha himself is called

naga sometimes so i mean that's

a pretty basic uh uh significant dream

in orthodox buddhism right there

um on the other hand i mean you can get
messages

from from dreams sometimes i mean if
it's if it's clearly some kind of
message coming up

then you know you should not just
completely dismiss it

but um buddhism as a general rule does
discourage monks from getting into the
business of interpreting dreams

you know becoming like a fortune teller
you know telling people the meanings of
their dreams and that sort of thing

so um for the most part dreams are just
kind of a

um like spam you know most dreams are

probably spam dreams but

um every once in a while i mean if

there's some obvious

benefit or meaning to one that that

really stands out then

uh yeah you shouldn't just totally

disregard it because buddhism says monk

shouldn't

pay much attention to that stuff

so let's see there's another question

about a dream towards the end

so i'll move on to the next one from

sakya puta

sakupuda asked um asked a question in a

youtube comment

um but it somehow disappeared and it was

visible only in the notifications but not below the video which is pretty common now i don't know why that is he says greetings venerable curious about your thoughts on these statements and then it was followed by links to no fewer than 11 other youtube videos by a person called theoria apophasis and um yeah i i don't want to give comments on all 11 videos in fact i didn't want to watch all 11 videos but i will give my uh response to the first one which is um mr theoria apophasis was

talking about the the meaning of the
word the tagata which is a synonym for
the buddha

the buddha is called the tatagata a lot
in fact he refers to himself

as the targata a lot of the time

and um yeah theory apophasis was

pretty obviously incorrect in his

interpretation at least with regard to

pali

because he says that

the tagata is the combination of two

words which is

tat and agata and tat is sanskrit

which means like like that

and maybe it has the same etymology as

the english word that you know like

in in the upanishads you know that thou
art

and agata means um

i think he agrees that it means um like
caim like gachadi is to go

our gotcha is the past participle of
tukam which

means you know come or become

something like that so the issue i had
with his interpretation

is that the tagata is the combination of
two words but it's not

dot plus agata it's the ta

plus agata and the ta means

like this or or such essentially

and agata means you know having come or

having

become so um the tagata

my best guess and it's it's it seems

fairly

fairly solid fairly steady is that

the target means he who has become thus

he who has become like this and

this data or like this or such is pretty

common

in in buddhist philosophy because it's

it's

with it's trying to put into

words something that can't be put into

words like

um bertrand russell said that the entire

english language every word in the

english language

except that and this are generalizations

that and this are specifics but

everything else is a generalization even

if i say

me that's a generalization of different

versions of me over the past

57 years so

it means you know one who has become

such and

there are other similar versions like um

in the ataca waga it refers to

enlightened beings as tadi

which means something like you know one

who is

thus one who is like this so

it's you can't really put nirvana or

enlightenment

into words because that just causes it

to become something other than

nirvana or enlightenment because

enlightenment is non-symbolic it's

non-perceptual

so once you put a label on it then you

change it into something else and so

they kind of try to dance around that

by saying um you know you attain

this dustness or suchness you know you

just become like this

and um leave it at that so

um yeah theory apophasis um

uh judging from his name and also from

the one video

that that i watched i watched part of
another one but it seems like he
definitely has

a kind of axe to grind where he's in
trying to interpret

any kind of enlightened system

excuse me again in accordance with uh
like

vedanta which is

um really reifying

ultimate reality reifying enlightenment

and um buddhism generally tended to

avoid that

as much as possible so

um you can't interpret buddhism in terms
of

like uh vedanta and there's a big train

going behind me now

um but um yeah

in a way you're like drifting away from
buddhism by doing so so if he wants to
interpret buddhism

in accordance with uh like um

like traditionalism or like the uh the
perennial philosophy

and reify ultimate reality and
enlightenment and that sort of thing i
mean

it's it's his choice and it may be
useful for some people but eventually
you have to let even that go

okay next question from brian

here is a question i just thought of

that i have thought of

before in your videos you seem to be
trying to get back to a more genuine
buddhism

what do you think of buddhist statues
i've got nothing against buddhist
statues

it is true that in early buddhism there
were no buddha images in fact there are
some people who theorize that the first
buddha statues were made by

greeks who had conquered northwestern
india and some of them had converted to
buddhism and of course the greeks liked
their statues of

of you know aphrodite and apollo and
that sort of thing

and so they modeled the buddha on
apollo and at that time
like around the beginning of the
christian era um
the greeks modeled apollo
uh with a kind of aristocratic top knot
of hair
and that's the theory of how why the
buddha
usually has like a knob on top of his
head now is it just got uh
people lost or forgot the original
meaning of it or they just never knew
that originally it was like an
aristocratic
greek top knot of hair i mean going with

the theory

um and so it got turned into like

an eternal flame or just a weird

mysterious bump on his head

and um people interpret that as one of

the marks of the the 30

the 32 marks of the great man is he's

got a head shaped like a turban

but i assume that just means that he has

sort of like a

like a kind of a round skull or

something

but um it is true that in in early

buddhism there were new

there were no statues in fact they

wanted to emphasize the fact that the

buddha

just wasn't in the world anymore he
wasn't in any of the 31 plains of
existence

and so in the earliest buddhist images
um

they would just have like an empty seat
or a footprint or just a bodhi leaf or
something like that

just to indicate that gotama buddha is
just not in the picture anymore he has
he is you know he is totally beyond he
is not in any of the 31 planes of
existence

but um um for some people

um it can be helped it gives you
something to kind of focus your

your attention on and there have been
times when i've bowed down the statues
usually

like when i'm i'm going to some pagoda
or shrine or something with other monks
they're all bowing to the

to the image and i just stand there in
fact uh sometimes i get sideways

looks because i'm the only person not
bowing to the statue or

just going to the shrine room to do the
positive ceremony when all the monks are
bowing to the

to the big statue and i'm just kind of
sitting there

um yeah i'm i'm kind of
i'm not an idolater so

but there have been times i mean maybe i
shouldn't say this but uh one of the few
times i ever took lsd

as a monk was in burma and i was staying
at this little monastery

and um i just stayed up all night and uh
yeah i was just sitting right in front
of the the main shrine at the monastery
because my room was just on this little
side

side room off the side of the main
congregation hall

and uh yeah i was i was just overflowing
with gratitude and veneration and bowing
over and over and over again

but um as a general rule it's it's just

sort of um

you know it's not fundamentally buddhist

it's not really an aspect of

um you know the teachings like the the

scriptures of theravada buddhism

so um if it helps somebody to focus

their attention

or you know inspires in them like

veneration and gratitude that kind of

thing then uh

yeah more power to you but um

i do have a little buddha statue so um

so i'm not i'm not really opposed to

statues but it's it's

just like a later development in

tarabada buddhism

and buddhism in general let's see where

am

i next question from jacob

how does a westerner go about becoming a
monk in

asia that's a good question

and probably the easiest way would be
to find one of the main meditation
centers

in burma or or wherever you're going in
thailand

or sri lanka there's there are

big like international meditation

centers where you can kind of get your
foot in the door

you can apply to to go there

and um then they have like a

well-developed

uh like i don't know what you call it

uh administrative system or something

where you know they just have like

somebody who's in charge of

working out the the visa issues for

foreigners who come there to stay

and and that sort of thing the way i did

it was i was ordained at a burmese place

in california

and then from california the supporters

like the burmese supporters

of the place who still lived in burma

they were able to pull strings and

the whole tradition you know if you're

if you want to ordain

in in like a a major tradition

then you can hook up with like maybe a
branch of that tradition outside of asia
and sort of get your foot in the door
that way otherwise

it's relatively different difficult
maybe in in the place like thailand but
in burma

it's always been a little bit difficult
to

to get set up there but once you're set
up there it's easy you know they have
like meditation visas

in burma so

just once a year i mean you just get
renewals and um

i'd have somebody taking care of that

for me

in rangoon so um

yeah so let's see how does the westerner

go about becoming a monk in asia

uh you could become a monk outside of

asia in an asian tradition which would

then ease your way to asia which is good

because

if you're going to be a monk especially

you're better off being a monk

in asia at least at first now i

i strongly recommend any

buddhist monk any terra vada buddhist

monk to spend at least a few years in

asia just so you feel what it's like to

live

a lifestyle similar to the way the

buddha was living

like in in burma i mean you can live

very close to the way

monks were living 2 500 years ago you

can just

wander around and sleep under trees or

in caves or whatever

and although the government discourages

that because they want to keep track of

all the foreigners in the country

still if you're a monk you've got sort

of

special privileges because it's a

buddhist country and people respect

monks and they don't want to hassle you

too much

so yeah you might have to sign
uh like on your visa application a
statement that
you will stay in one place you know
you'll just stay at the meditation
center or whatever
but um um generally you can
get around that kind of a thing so other
than that just
going to asia without being a monk yet
um yeah that would it would be more
difficult unless you've got some kind of
system set up with like a major
international meditation center
that has lots of foreigners coming there
anyway but some obscure tradition you
want to get ordained in some obscure

like alchemist tradition or something

then

um you may have you may have

difficulties you may have to uh

um somehow get to the country and settle

down somehow and then

and then start looking around from there

but that would be more difficult

so next question from zach

greetings pandey have you read much on

the ancient

greek philosophical school of pyranism

skepticism

when i first read on the subject i

noticed that there seemed to be many

similarities with early buddhist

concepts of no self cosmological
emptiness and not becoming attached to
philosophical dogmas like platonism or
abhidhamma

turns out i'm far from the first who
noticed this and books have been
written about cross-cultural influence
though i have

to admit i find the argument weak and
unnecessary a man with strong
contemplative capability

could come upon these insights on his
own so i'm just curious if you have come
across purenism

and what you think on the topic i'm
attaching

a like on the connections between

pyranism and buddhism

i think i should have made it clear that

pyranism like buddhism

isn't just skepticism for the sake of

skepticism there is a goal and that's

an ultimate calmness calmness and

unruffled nature

i can't remember what it's called though

there's anorexia something like that

there there also seems to be recognition

of an ultimate truth but also a

recognition that none of the dogmas men

make up are that um

yeah i i don't think that what the

buddha was teaching was essentially

skepticism

um there was a teacher
that was a contemporary of the buddha
named sanjaya or sanjaya
and the buddha's two chief disciples
sariputa and mogallana were originally
disciples of sanjaya
and sanjaya was like a puristic skeptic
and i do know something about pureness
exceptism for example i've read
sex disempiricus his outlines of
pyranism
so i have that in my bookcase
yeah i think there is a fundamental
difference between
skepticism like pyranist except
skepticism on the one hand
and like what the buddha was teaching on

the other like

a skeptic says you cannot know the truth

which in itself is

not skeptical because that is an

assertion right there

and for example there's the diganaka

suta of the majiminikaya where the

buddha apparently meets with a real

skeptic who says you know

nothing is acceptable to me which means

you know no no belief

is acceptable to him and then the buddha

points out well i mean you believe that

don't you you believe that no

no belief is acceptable to you so you

already you've already kind of missed

the boat

um but like you say it's like the

purpose of

of skepticism is just this peace of mind

from not

having any passionate or beliefs or any

kind of attachment to any kind of belief

and it causes a sort of peace

because you're not um you know you're

you're not fanatically believing

anything

um but with buddhism i don't think that

he really had the idea that you can't

know reality his

idea or you know what he was trying to

get across

was that you can know reality but you're

not going to know reality through
beliefs

so there's there is a reality there and
it's not just that you
don't believe anything that's not the
whole purpose but there's like a deeper
purpose to that which is essentially
mysticism

so on i don't from what i've read about
puristic skepticism they don't seem to
be particularly mystical

whereas i think early buddhism was about
as purified

of a mysticism as i've ever come across
so it may seem the same
at the surface or kind of at the

beginning but

the skeptics as far as i can tell we're

saying you know you just

can't know the truth whereas the buddha

was saying you can know the truth but

you can't know it through thinking

and so you have to move beyond the

thinking

in order to know the truth not just so

you get peace of mind through

not believing anything but you can

penetrate to

the kantian thing in itself once you've

detached yourself

from the thing as it seems so

um yeah i would say that there is a

difference

and uh skepticism would come closer to
what sanjaya was

was teaching but i could be wrong

i don't know next question

also oh this is a good one also if you
had to choose between

a seventh-day adventist a hare krishna

or a devout esoteric hitlerist

as your next religion which would you
choose

which is it's like a trick question

because i really couldn't

devoutly sincerely believe any of those

so i mean i'd have to be insincere

with regard to any of them a seventh-day
adventist

no it's not really my style i just can't
believe that uh

like a hebrew carpenter created the
universe and died from my sins and was
the only

begotten son of god and all that the
hare krishna

i mean just the whole you know

meditation isn't going to get you

anywhere and just you just chant the
names of god

uh umpteen times you know thousands of
times a day

um yeah not so much and the devout
esoteric hitlerist with all

with all due respects to uh herroo

my my good friend um yeah i

i don't think that i for all i know

maybe hitler

is in in some sort of deva realm right

now but

uh i don't know how anybody would really

um

be able to know that and uh personally i

just

do not think he was a saintly man

i don't i think he i mean i think stalin

was at least as bad as him

i mean there were he wasn't really as

bad

as he has been demonized to be by

mainstream

narrative culture propaganda history

quote unquote but um yeah i couldn't so
really i couldn't be any of those
sincerely so if i just had to
just go through the motions and pretend
to be one i guess i'd just have to go
with the hari krishna although i
wouldn't want to uh
have the the top knot and hang out in
airports or whatever it is
they do they have they have the probably
the best food
hari krishnas have good good vegetarian
indian food
so yeah i could be like an unorthodox um
outlier to the hari krishnas maybe i
don't know
it comes closest to buddhism too as far

as i can tell so

next question is from chaplin

you've mentioned that your father always

believed that you were a reincarnation

of your paternal grandfather

can you tell us more about your

grandfather

as a man and about his life and

common threads that you two have in life

um that's a good question although

i never met my grandfather unless i was

him in which case i suppose i met myself

um but yeah my father did believe that

i'm a reincarnation of his own father

and uh his father died maybe 20 years

before i was born so

there may have been some intermediate
state and and i don't
recall ever being my own grandfather so
um it's just kind of a hypothesis or a
theory for me

but um and also i mean we are similar in
certain ways

although that could just be genetic
um but apparently i inherited my
intelligence from him

and he was uh my grandfather was a
scholar

you know he's working on his fourth
doctorate when he died he had a phd
or a doctor it's in philosophy divinity
and agriculture and was working on a
doctorate in law

when he died and um he was he was gentle
probably more gentle than me
i picked up some of the non-gentleness
from my from my macho dad
and um one similarity uh
we had was that he was he was a baptist
minister an
ordained baptist minister and uh he got
ostracized from the clergy for holding
unorthodox views
so he was sort of an unorthodox
religious person
um kind of the way i am
so there there is that similarity and
i think possibly the strongest
similarities just like the strong karmic

connection with my father

um but uh it's hard to say i mean

another thing about my my grandfather

even though he was a mild-mannered guy

he was uh

he uh he definitely had like this strong

need for a woman in his life

and uh he was very popular with the

ladies because he was very

attentive and and uh complementary and

very gentlemanly that sort of thing

but um yeah i i assume just the

strongest

uh resemblance with my grandfather

or their strongest resemblances would

just be like general intelligence

maybe a certain amount of weirdness

um you know a certain appreciation for
um what could be called the paranormal
because my grandfather did have an
appreciation for that even though he
started off not really believing it even
though he's a baptist minister
my bible thumping grandma was really
more into the orthodox belief in
miracles and that sort of thing than my
grandfather was
and just like the attachment to my
father
so i think those would be the main the
main things although i'm not fluent in
greek and latin like he was or anything
like that

although i i can kind of hold my own
with paulie

um yeah okay i guess that's good enough

next question also by chaplin

would love to hear more about how

buddhism corresponds with the

traditional european male

mindset or libertarianism and

independence

in general yeah that's that's kind of a

um kind of a complicated or nebulous

kind of kind of a tricky one um

how buddhism corresponds with the

traditional european male mindset

well first of all there'd be like

self-sufficiency because buddhism

emphasizes that your own successes and

failures are your own responsibility
your own suffering is your own doing
ultimately

and um it does emphasize

um you know self-sufficiency and

and fearlessness and you know accepting
responsibility

and also austerity like a disdain for
luxury and discomfort

um so

yeah there is that let's see

libertarianism um yeah i've never really
considered how buddhism would relate to
libertarianism or like classical
liberalism

other than um i mean we really do

have the authority to choose for
ourselves

what we ought to do although from the
buddhist point of view there are

like um like universal

ethical laws or at least universal human
ethical laws where

you know if you cultivate certain mental
states it's going to be

it's going to result in more suffering

if you uh cultivate other

mental states it'll be it'll result in
less

suffering you know more happiness for
everybody so

um but it is it is our own choice in our
own doing you know it's like

if we go to heaven we send ourselves to
heaven if we go to hell we send
ourselves to hell

it's there's no god who's doing that and
so we are

on our own essentially and um
so that would be uh that would be
independence in general

i think so

um yeah that's that's kind of a
kind of a difficult question to answer i
hope i uh

got somewhere with it but um

yeah i mean like the buddha himself was
probably indo-european

and um like ancient indian culture like

ancient

like vedic brahmanism came much closer

to ancient greece and rome and its

religion than to modern hinduism

you know there are the fire sacrifices

to the gods for worldly goods and

uh maybe a little mysticism uh around

the edges

but it was uh you know it was like kind

of like early western paganism

so there's that similarity also if if

you want to emphasize that

and uh yeah it's probably better to

emphasize that

and just to go along with the uh the

leftist feminist

version of buddhism which is uh

taking taking over in the west and
thereby

vitiating buddhism and turning it into
something that it was never intended to
be

okay next question from follower number
one two c

six seven e seven well i think i think i
already did one by him

or her okay anyway

um just read your latest blog post and
was wondering if you have any thoughts
on

taoism especially the concept of
emptiness or the void

which was a central theme of taoism i

read the atakawaga and for some reason
it struck me as having some similarities
with the dao te ching
yeah there are a lot of similarities
between buddhism and taoism which is why
zen is essentially a combination of the
two
there's one aspect of taoism that really
is not emphasized much in buddhism
and which i like and that's the the
balance of yin and yang
you know the balance of positive and
negative or light and darkness how there
always has to be a balance you know you
can't have more
more of one opposite than another
because they have to

maintain some kind of cosmic balance in
the long run

and i believe that since i was a
teenager

really like um you know happiness and
unhappiness have to balance out you know
you're not going to have more happiness
and unhappiness overall or vice versa
although it's there's the quality of the
happiness and the quality of unhappiness
that

are also factors with regard to
taoism and its concept of emptiness or
the void

um yeah i really like the uh the taoist
concept of of dao as like the the

nameless uncarved block

which is what it's called in the dow

teaching where

it's you know it's not total

emptiness you know it's not like zero

it's you know the void or emptiness in

buddhism and

in taoism it's not just blank zero

it's more like the empty set in set

theory where it's just completely off

the scale

you can't really say anything about it

without without just

taking a wrong step so um

yeah i think i think they are relatively

similar and it's um

due largely just to the fact that

ultimate reality is
everywhere and so you're going to have
spiritual geniuses who can
um get some glimmer at least of the
kantian thing in itself
of reality or god or the dao
or the dharmakaya or nibana datu or
or whatever you want to call it brahman
and um
yeah then they'll try to explain it in
accordance with their own language and
their own
cultural concepts and so you'll have
differences
even among the enlightened beings from
different cultures but um

there are also a lot of similarities so
yeah i do like taoism

and i i like the dao teaching i have a
few copies of a few different
translations of it

next question is from potila what text
website

guide or document could you recommend
for western laity to read to become
better informed with how to interact and
care for

monks i've often found asian monks are
very

deferential when trying to figure out
how to assist them

they won't or can't state their needs
directly but western people don't know

the code

they are using and we tend to simply not

get the hint this brings us to an

impasse we don't learn how to fulfill

our role as

people and the monastic sangha doesn't

grow

our culture thinks an indirect approach

is not practical yet it appears that

this is appropriate at times according

to the linea

so how do we overcome this as westerners

to help domestic sangha to grow

we need to be better educated on

buddhist culture outside of the more

esoteric meditation philosophy texts

i've not had much experience interacting
with many theravada monks

for two reasons one language barrier two
temple ladies typically are older asian
women who are usually
serving monks and have a system in place
making it hard to learn the rules
and guidelines any suggestions on how to
address this

i do recall that the buddhist
publication society

had one of their publications just being
pointers for laypeople on what lay
people should

know about monk's rules of monastic
discipline

so there is that i gave a talk on this

once

maybe it was recorded i can try to look

through my files to see maybe

i've got like a recording of this talk i

gave

on just basic pointers

for lay people to be aware of you know

how to interact with monks

more properly if not maybe i could do a

brian rusho or something

on the subject or maybe one was somebody

else that would be uh

politically correct enough that i could

post it on on subscribe star

um but uh other than

other than that but buddhist publication

society on the internet i assume you can find

you know pointers for monastic

discipline for lay people who interact with monks

or you could i mean if you've got the time and the interest you could just go to the uh the vineyard texts and read those

although um most asian monks don't even really follow winia very strictly

if you interact with western monks they can they will happily explain things to you although just uh

here on this this q a video i could just say there are just a few basic points like um money food and women are like

the three main things that lay people
especially lay women

should be aware of when interacting with
monks like

monks technically aren't allowed to
handle money

but of course most asian ones do and
maybe half of western ones do

so that may or may not be an issue with
regard to food

a monk is not allowed to

eat food that hasn't been offered to him
by someone who isn't a monk

that same morning he can only he's only
allowed to eat between dawn and noon

and he's not even supposed to ask for

food

um so offering food is

is one of the best ways to support a
monk

it's one of the few things that a monk
really needs so

um when you offer it offer it with both
hands

to show respect you know you're offering
it wholeheartedly so when you offer
anything to a monk

it's good to offer it with both hands
and sometimes if it's something small
and it's easily handled with one hand
you can

what the burmese do is they'll just
touch their arm

with the other arm the other hand that
they're offering something with just so
they're still using both
both arms to offer it and with regard to
women of course

women aren't supposed to touch monks
monks aren't supposed to touch women
they shouldn't be alone together

a lot of times if a woman comes to talk
with the monk he'll just leave his door
open

which is still pretty much against the
rules nobody can see them

but um you know just kind of be careful
about that dress modestly of course
and um another thing is um

like a strict conscientious monk won't
ask for anything unless you give him
permission to ask

so if you are uh willing

to offer something to a monk let him
know that you know it's like venerable
sir

um bonte if you need anything feel free
to consider me

you know a donor of of requisites or
or something like that and then then
they can

if they need something from you they can
ask but if you don't give them
permission to ask first

they can only ask if it's something like
if they're really sick and need medicine

or something that it's okay

or there's another example like if their robes get lost or stolen or destroyed they can ask for for a cloth to cover themselves with

but it is relatively strict about about that

but like i say most most monks

aren't particularly strict anyway and so um yeah each each

monastery or temple will will probably have its own

um it's its own

sort of rules or lack of same

but uh yeah you might want to try the

buddhist publication society it's one of

the bodhi leaves

it's it's old it's very old so um i

don't know if you'll be able to find it

but i'm sure on the internet you could

find some some guidelines also

okay next question which potila says

this last question but there's one more

question

from somebody else after this

have you considered finding a way for

your followers or students to connect

and communicate directly with each other

in real time frank posed a few good

points on a post recently

it would be good to move building some

structures connections at this point

perhaps hosting a study or discussion

session via telegram or some other voice
text chat platform um yeah actually
i was looking into this earlier like
the subscribe star channel
allows for hooking up a discord server
uh like a link to a discord server on
subscribe star
and the problem with that is i'm a tech
i hope i didn't just insult somebody
with a mentally disabled loved one
but uh i really am and uh i was stymied
almost right off the bat because i you
had to have like a verified account
and then you had to have you know this
and that that i didn't have
but uh if there are anybody out there

who know how to set up a discord server
and

and maybe even have it connected with
the subscribe star

page my subscribe star page then uh

yeah we could set that up and uh that

that does seem like a good idea

um i'm i'm completely unaware of how
telegram works

so that might be a possibility also but

subscribe star does have

an option where you can have a direct
link

to a discord server so if anyone knows

how to set up a discord server

and hook it up somehow you could do it

yourself

maybe if if you're if you're so inclined

or maybe even just give me

um advice on how to do it but yeah i am

willing and that is a good suggestion

so last question is from dog breath

who uh i thought was on sabbatical but

he he pulled through with a question

he says last night i dreamt

i was dying the thought of dying doesn't

bother me during my waking state however

along with this dream arose a ton of

energy from deep within my chest area

let's call it fear it woke me up

i have done death meditations in the

past and thought i was okay with death

but the energy i experienced

last night was forceful and unexpected
why did my death meditation not prepare
me for this

more real experience are they lacking
or could i have missed something how can
a western person best approach
death so that it not merely
so that it is not merely shallow thought
based

what is the theravada or your own
perspective on

death what practices does it suggest
my previous practice was hindu
tonfricant origin

how can one approach the unexpected
um well for starters i would say that

um the way we behave in dreams is often
very different from the way we would
behave in real life

so you can't really judge how you would
behave in real life

by the way you behaved in a dream i did
have a dream where i was dying just
not long ago maybe a couple months ago

um

i don't know if i've mentioned it but
uh

i was in in my dream i was walking along
and uh like a giant hand just scooped me
up

you know some giant hand from the sky
just scooped me up and
flung me into outer space along with a

bunch of other beings

and i don't remember what the other

beings were they could have been humans

or they could have been all animals but

i do remember there was one penguin

and we we're all out in outer space and

they're all like

struggling floundering in the vacuum

sort of like

in 2001 a space odyssey where uh hal

cuts off the

the lifeline of the astronaut and he's

like struggling and floundering in space

until he goes still

and that was happening to all the beings

around me but for some reason

i wasn't dying yet but you know i had
zero air and i was holding my breath and
i was kind of wondering why i wasn't
dying earlier

or dying faster like everybody else was
and it's freezing solid

but um yeah in in my dream

uh i wasn't really afraid but it was
obviously a very

very serious very solemn

experience and um finally i realized
that

trying to hold my breath as long as i
could was just pointless i might as well
just get it over with and so i breathed
out

almost all of my air and um

and then i right when i was just fading
out into death i woke up
and maybe that's just the way it is with
with
dreams of dying i think every dream that
i've ever had where i was dying i always
woke up at the moment of death which
maybe is a good sign i mean
when you wake up at the moment of death
i mean that's
that's that's not bad um i mean how
would the dream continue if you're dead
unless you're you know you're going
towards the bright light and that sort
of thing
um i think the main

the main practice i mean first of all in
in buddhism there's mara nanusiti which
is

you know recollection of death you just
remind yourself

you know that you're going to die

someday like i've got a human skull

uh sitting on a table next to my bed but

um you know a memento mori like in the

middle ages that was a big deal like

like if people had a feast they'd have

like the skull on the table just to

remind everybody

but it's it's like a picture on the wall

after you've seen it a thousand times it

doesn't have much of an effect anymore

but um aside from just reminding

yourself that you're going to die and
just

trying to prepare for that you know it's
like

um you know it's a common saying that uh
life is is just a you know a lifelong
preparation for death

and in buddhism you know it's like your
final moments

you're fine your last conscious moment
is the most important one because that
determines where you're going to be
going

and um or it you know it determines your
trajectory

um you know going on to the next the

next stage or whatever

so um yeah i mean if you really are

dying then

hopefully inner wisdom is going to kick

in and

it won't it won't be like the dream but

aside from that um the best thing to do

is just not identify with with your

mental states and so forth not identify

with your body just realize that

your body and your mind really aren't

you

and um like eckhart tolle says you know

nothing that is real

dies it's like whatever whatever dies or

comes to an end

isn't you anyway it's just like a

certain illusion

is dying and so um

ultimately there's really nothing to be

afraid of maybe if you've lived an evil

life you might have some cause

for apprehension when dying but um

or if you have like children who are

dependent on you maybe that could be a

cause

for concern but um

yeah ultimately nothing that is real

dies

it's like whatever if it dies it really

isn't you

anyway so

taking that to heart um you know not

identifying with your body or your
mental states and
um just reminding yourself that
you know it's all impermanent anyway you
know everything is anicca
at least everything phenomenal is aniccho
everything that has a beginning has an
end neo
so just uh reminding yourself of that
um on a regular basis and um
just trying to cultivate wisdom you know
just trying to cultivate your awareness
as well as you can
so that you will die as awarely
as possible and um
i hope that at least knocked a dent into
that question

and uh that was the last question so um
i think we're done for for this one and
i hope the wind and everything didn't
completely

mess up the sound quality and um

i will continue with more of these if
people have more

questions so feel free to leave

your questions below in the comments or
wait

until i put up the announcement for the
next one on

on subscribe star and you're all welcome
to subscribe to subscribe star

and there's even a free bracket if uh
you can't afford to donate anything

and uh be happy

and uh it bugs me when i when people are

saying well i'll see you next time

because actually i won't see you at all

and neither will they so it's just silly

so i'll just say goodbye

and be happy if if that is appropriate

All right, hello and welcome to volume seven of question answer.

I am your host Panya Bass

and I've had sort of a rough week or two.

So I'm a little bit late.

And so

there's lots of questions to answer this time. The questions have been accumulating.

We've got to do the rough week. It's just that my consciousness expands and contracts like the Buddhist cosmos.

And I've been going through a somewhat contracted phase, but I'm feeling much better today.

And I'm pretty sure it's not clinically significant anyway.

So anyway, let's get to the questions.

And the first question is from Daniel.

What is my opinion

on John of the Cross's concept of nada, which means nothing in English?

Apophaticism

basically.

Yeah, John St. John of the Cross, that was his path to the top of Mount Carmel was just nada nada nada nada nada, which is nothing nothing nothing nothing nothing till you get to the top.

And

yeah, it's essentially mysticism or um the Catholics would call it like the

path of contemplation, contemplative
orders like St. John of the Cross's
Carmelite order

were uh

essentially quietists. I think they
would be called quietists, where the
idea is that you cannot
you cannot wrap your head around God.
You cannot understand God with your
thinking mind, and so you have to
dispense with that in order to
experience God directly.

It's somewhat like Kant's idea of the
thing in itself. God would be the thing
in itself, the ultimate thing in itself.
And by thinking about it

all you can do is wind up with the thing as it seems, which is still not God.

It's still not ultimate reality. And so it's not really complete nihilism where you're just trying to

just get rid of everything and leave nothing behind.

The idea of St. John of the Cross is you get rid of everything you're capable of getting rid of

getting rid of. And what's left behind

is essentially the spirit of God

because you just cannot get rid of God.

So yeah, the the nada or nothing is like

a worldly nothing. It's a phenomenal

nothing. It's not like an absolute

nothing.

So yeah, that's apophaticism.

Apophaticism or apophatic mysticism is the idea that

the highest truth cannot be spoken. You know, like the Dow teaching says the name that can be named is not the eternal name.

And so you just have to dispense with names and words and intellectual concepts and just uh dive headfirst into reality and just experience it directly.

So

yeah, that's that's my opinion of John of the Cross. And and I think that he may have been an arahant. If it is

possible for a Christian to be an

arahant, I think

there's a good chance he was one. He's

he was just extremely advanced. Going

with Buddhist terminology, I think he

was a master of fourth jhana.

And um

he believed that he had

or he apparently considered himself to

have reached the attain the the

attainment of of perfection, quote

unquote.

Which means that um

he had mastered contemplation, which

would be like mastering jhana. And um

he was no longer motivated by his own

self-will. That had been mortified in

accordance with Christian monastic

uh

yoga, I suppose you could call it. So

that um

yeah, he he was

um essentially not creating karma

anymore. Which which is the way the the

Buddhist arahant also is supposed to uh

to exist without creating any new karma,

which is essentially will.

So um

yeah, I've I've talked about him in uh

previous one. So I won't I won't belabor

the point. Besides, there's lots of lots

more questions, so I'll just move on to

the next question, also by Daniel.

Could you explain the 31 planes of existence, specifically the Arupa loka?

Well, I actually wrote an article which was like a brief survey of the 31 planes of existence, which is on my nipapancha.org website.

And um

I have the the document here, so I can just give you a brief rundown.

And um

maybe a little commentary at the end.

So starting at the bottom, the very lowest realm of the 31 planes of existence. And like in Buddhist cosmology

any being that exists is going to be in one of these 31 planes.

So at the bottom, of course, is hell or niraya, which is not the same as Christian hell because it doesn't last forever. None of the 31 planes of existence lasts forever. Everything is impermanent. Everything that has a beginning has an end.

So

beings who go to hell for something really bad like Devadatta's attempts to assassinate or murder the Buddha.

He wound up in the lowest pit of hell, but after a zillion gazillion years after bad karma is is worked out or worked off

then he will be reborn somewhere else.

And according to tradition Devadatta, even though he was like the Judas Iscariot of Buddhism he is destined to become a Pacceka Buddha, which is like a Buddha that is like a hermit and doesn't teach.

So there's lots of hell realms.

Not just one.

And you have there's the Nirabuddha hell and see the Kamuda hell and the Saugandhika hell and the Pundarika hell and the Pundarika hell and on and on. So if you divided all of those up into different realms, then there would be lots of hell realms. Like if the heaven realms are divided up into individual realms, but the hell realm

the heaven realms are divided up and hell realms are just lumped all together. So that seems to have just been like an arbitrary choice as far as I can tell. We humans are fifth from the bottom going with the traditional 31 planes. But if all the hell realms are divided up the way the heaven realms are, we'd be closer to the middle. So after the hell realm is the demon realm, the Asura loka. And it gets left out a lot because there really wasn't a lot to do with Asuras. They just didn't really fit the

cosmology all that well because they
were like an artifact
of

like really ancient Indo-European or
Aryan, quote unquote, mythology. They
correspond to the Titans in ancient
Greek mythology. The war between the
gods and the Titans and the gods win and
the Titans are chained under a mountain.
It's essentially the same myth
in Vedic India and also classical Greece
or pre-classical Greece.

So

yeah, they don't get mentioned very much
because uh

they were just an artifact of a very
ancient religious tradition or mythology

that couldn't be completely ignored and so they just got stuck down in the lower realms.

Next is animal realm, which uh as a biologist, I think that that could be divided up into different realms. I'm sure like a flea and a chimpanzee um I don't know, there's probably more resemblance between us and chimps as there as there is between chimps and fleas.

Next is the ghost realm.

Human realm, fifth from the bottom which is supposedly the best realm to be in because it's the best realm to be practicing dhamma or dharma. Because the

lower realms you're just too afflicted
or ignorant and the higher realms
everything is so nice, you're just not
motivated to try for something better.
Let's see, keep going. Six right above
us is the realm of the four great kings,
the realm of the 33 gods
the realm of the destroyer gods or the
the
the Yama gods. And it's not the same as
the god Yama like
in the Dīgha Nikāya Sutta. It's it's
spelled differently and
they're called destroyer gods because
they destroy unhappiness or something
like that.

The realm of the contented gods, Tusita

deva loka. The realm of the gods who delight in creating. And then the highest of the deva lokas, the highest realm in the the the sensual realm is the realm of the gods who wield power over what is created by others.

And that's where the Buddhist devil lives. He's not in in hell, Mara.

I mean, he's he he doesn't exactly correspond to the devil, but uh he's actually got a really nice place up in the highest sensual heaven realm instead of being chained down in hell at the bottom pit of hell like in Dante's Inferno.

So above that, you've got the the Rupa

loka, which is the uh

the Brahmas that have physical bodies.

And so let's see, the 12th is realm of the retinue of Brahma, then realm of the ministers of Brahma, then realm of the great Brahma. And it's interesting that the realm of the great Brahma, which would be like the highest realm to like a Hindu

or um

at least like an earlier sort of Hindu that hadn't developed all the the Upanishadic um mystical stuff.

Um

it's 14th from the bottom. It's not even halfway up. So, the the Buddhists

indulged in a little propagandism, I think, by putting literally the personification of ultimate reality for the ancient Hindus just at this mediocre level in heaven with all these other realms higher than that, some of which were attainable only by Buddhists. But, uh continuing up the scale, we got the realm of the Brahmas of limited radiance, the realm of the Brahmas of measureless radiance, the realm of the Brahmas of streaming radiance, realm of the Brahmas of limited glory, realm of the Brahmas of measureless glory, realm of the Brahmas covered in glory, realm of the Brahmas of wide-open fruition,

and the Brahma the Brahma realm of perceptionless beings, which is a really strange one because they're like statues. They're just uh I don't see what the point of it is because they really are not conscious. Uh if they do have any conscious, it's just like a like a a baseline subconscious continuum going on, and they're just frozen like statues. So, I really don't see the point of that. Maybe um maybe it really exists, or maybe just um the systematographers were uh trying to cover all possibilities, so they had had that.

And most of these realms, there's very little information on them.

Um they they tend to uh correspond to different jhana realms. So,

um

like first jhana applies to the lower three Brahma realms, like which includes the the great Brahma.

And uh I mean, that's still a relatively crude jhana level. And the Buddhists were trying to imply that Hindus could only get as high as first jhana or some such, which uh I don't think is actually the case.

Um

Finally, let's see. 23 to 27 are the pure abodes, which are the highest Brahma realms, or they're the highest

realms where the beings still have
physical bodies.

And these are

um

Yeah, you have to be like an Arya to go
to these places. You have to be like an
Anagami, which is the second highest
state of Buddhist sainthood. It's right
below full enlightenment. So, if you die
as an Anagami,

you go up into these

into one of these pure abodes, and you
stay there until you

um

pass out of existence or or transcend
existence. You know, you attain your
your parinibbana, your final your final

nirvana.

Um

Yeah, there's not a whole lot of
information on these, either. Um
maybe because nobody comes back from
these places
to to tell about them.

And

so, let's see. The the pure abodes are
the enduring abode, the untroubled
abode, the abode of good
the abode of the good-looking, the abode
of the good-seeing, and the unsurpassed
abode.

Although, the unsurpassed abode is
surpassed by realms 28 through 31, which

are the formless realms, which is what
uh Daniel was specifically asking about.
And the formless realms are the sphere
of infinite space, the sphere of
infinite consciousness, the sphere of
nothingness, and the sphere of neither
perception nor non-perception,
which, of course, correspond to the four
um
formless jhanas.

And I wrote an article on the formless
jhanas, and that's going to be turned
into a blog post coming up
um relatively soon, I assume. I could
maybe within a month.

And

I have this theory that the the formless

jhanas were originally a way of dealing with

attempts

like pre-orthodox attempts to explain nirvana or the experience of nirvana.

So, for example, the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception is like a paradoxical state, which you could say

that nirvana is like that. Like

enlightenment isn't as you know, it's

neither a state of perception or a state of non-perception.

And so, some people, early philosophers, maybe early Buddhist philosophers, would say that's it. That's that's what

nirvana is. And so, um as the the early

uh scholastics were formulating
Theravadin orthodoxy, then they decided
upon some other definition, and so they
just said, "Nope, that's that's close,
you know, it's the highest realm, but
still it's it's not quite there." And uh
same like the sphere of nothingness,
which is the second highest. Um
in a way, it's like a perception still,
but it's a perception of of voidness or
or nothing.

So, yeah, that that's not nirvana,
either. And uh um the one right below
that is the sphere of infinite
consciousness, and there are a couple of
suttas that really do apparently
describe nirvana or nibbana as infinite

boundless consciousness, luminous all around, and so forth.

So, um it seems to me that uh at least the top three formless realms were ways of dealing with early attempts to describe the highest state or nirvana, and somehow it just didn't pass muster as as an official definition, and so they placed it in a really, really high realm where the beings have no body, they're pure mind, and they live for a zillions and gazillions of years, but it's it's sort of a dead end because you cannot progress in dhamma there because you're essentially just in this super-refined state where you're not

really um having insights. You know,
it's just like this steady state of
bliss that lasts for zillions of years
until your karma runs out, and then you
come back down again.

So, um yeah, my best guess with regard
to the formless realms is that they are
an artifact of Buddhist philosophy,
and they correspond to very high
meditation states, which were seen as
not really enlightenment states, and so
they were just placed on the on the
scheme of things in an in an advanced,
yet still um sub-enlightenment level.
But, if you're really interested in
that, then
you can find

the

the article that I wrote as an appendix to um a different article about tarot cards and Ouija boards, and I can't remember even the the full title of the article that I wrote. Or, it will be posted on the blog in a matter of a few weeks, the gods willing.

So, next question by Average Dot, alias Average Dude.

Um

yeah, this also mentions the formless realms. He says, "My understanding of nirvana is the ultimate reality is beyond thing and no thing. Is this why it's described as nothing, as in no

thing, not a thing, but not the absence, either? I've seen in many traditions the absolute is described like this, not to mention negative theology is really helpful, but some Theravada monks describe nirvana as nothing, as in complete absence, the blowing out of the candle. Why would this be wanted, or is it even accurate or mistranslated?"

Um

well, it's it's going back to like the apophatic mysticism of St. John of the Cross, where nothing phenomenal is nirvana. And you can't point to what nirvana is. You can't describe it, really. And so, you have a lot of Theravada monks, especially like

intellectual Westerners, and there are a lot of, as you may know, um intellectuals can be really attracted to Theravada Buddhism cuz it's so analytic and and systematic and everything.

So, uh you have like an intellectual Western monk who maybe is not a meditation master, and he's just not a mystic. He just doesn't get the idea that um

you're not going to know the truth by thinking about it.

You know, a lot of people are just addicted to thinking. They're identified with their thinking mind, especially if they're intellectuals, and it just makes

no sense to them, and so they call it

Like um Venerable Nyanavira,

who was

famous English monk who

lived in Sri Lanka in the '50s and the

first half of the '60s, he was like

that. I mean, he wouldn't even

translate, or his students wouldn't

translate, the sphere of neither

perception nor non-perception because

that is like an impossibility. It's

logically invalid, and so he didn't want

to associate any kind of bad logic with

Buddhism. So, he would just leave it

untranslated.

And um

so, yeah, I mean, they were just sort of

backed into a corner. It's like if
nirvana isn't some
like absolute transcendental state that
cannot be understood intellectually,
then that just left nothing, and so they
would just say, "Yeah, it's nothing.
It's uh you know, the fire blows out,
and there's nothing left behind."

Although, the whole simile of the fire
blowing out, which does I mean, it is
applied to nirvana in very ancient
texts, that I I do think that nirvana or
nibbana

literally means blowing out, like the
blowing out of a flame.

But, the ancient Indians considered fire

to be divine. It was Agni, the god, like the messenger to the gods. And so, when you extinguish a fire, it doesn't just die. It just enters like this formless state. It's like this latent state that pervades the universe kind of a thing.

So, Nirvana was very possibly identified with that sort of that sort of situation.

So, let's see. Um he asks another question or maybe this is a continuation.

Just recently I saw that in the Theravada realms the 28 to 31 31 ones are formless. And then he did 29 sphere of infinite consciousness, sphere of no-thingness, sphere of neither

perception or non-perception as 31.

What does infinity of consciousness mean?

Oh, let's see.

Infinity of consciousness, well, Nirvana apparently was described as infinite consciousness at least once and like the Upanishads will describe uh Brahman um as infinite infinite consciousness also. So, some people were trying to define Nirvana as that and um maybe they had really expansive mystical states through uh like contemplation and like really advanced meditation and that's what they experienced or

that's close enough that you know, it's about as close as they could put into words and so that's how they described it. But then

due to working out the philosophy and getting like the exact definitions of things, it just fell through the cracks. It wasn't accepted. And so they just stuck it up as a a high heaven realm and as a very advanced meditative state.

Um is this 30 no-thingness sunyata and if so, is it appropriate to what I've described before? Daniel is still asking.

Beyond this realm comes Nirvana. I recently tried to understand the

emptiness sunyata concept and my binary mind doesn't help me. Well, sunyata or or emptiness can have different meanings. In Buddhism, it's like an emptiness of phenomenal forms. Like there's the one of my favorite suttas in the Majjhima Nikaya is the Lesser Discourse on Voidness.

And a monk is systematically developing emptiness. So, the first thing he does is he just goes out into a forest where you've got the relative emptiness of artificiality. You know, you don't have all the noise and the commotion and the people and the the culture, you know, the artificial rules and the straight

lines and and right angles and that sort of thing. And then through meditation, you're getting quieter and quieter, less and less content like phenomenal distinct content in your mind. And so um in Theravada Buddhism, emptiness would just be like relative emptiness of distinct phenomenal things or you know, distinct diverse content. You know, you're getting closer and closer to just stillness and and clarity. Although um in some Mahayana schools um they have really interesting ideas of emptiness like Nagarjuna who I think was really one of the the world's greatest philosophers even though he wasn't a

Theravada Buddhist.

Bless his heart. Um he was saying in uh his Mulamadhyamakakarika that emptiness is the same as dependent co-arising or pratītyasamutpāda. That dependent co-arising implies that nothing has a distinct self-existence.

That everything is only like relatively or virtually or conditionally real. And that he called that emptiness. That there is no underlying essence of distinct entities. So, it's all the phenomenal world is empty of of like a a distinct self-identity.

And that would also be essentially his

definition of no self or anatta in
Theravada Buddhism.

That um

you know, there's nothing has a distinct
self-existence. That it exists only in
relation to everything around it. That
everything is dependently co-arising.

And so existence

um at least at the phenomenal level

is um

conditional and uh in in certain

respects just um

um

uh what's the word? Virtual. It's like a
virtual reality.

So, um yeah, the Theravadans have

emptiness as just emptiness of any kind

of uh

distinct form, especially thoughts,
mental states. Whereas in Mahayana, they
take more of a metaphysical
philosophical approach to it and
identify it with like dependent
co-arising.

Okay.

Excuse me.

Next question is from Matt
who asked this in response to a blog
post I wrote
on traditionalism.

And he says

it's kind of an interesting story.

He says, "Honorable Paññobhāsa, I was

raised in a family whose de facto
religion

what I'm quoting

was the teachings of Jiddu Krishnamurti.

There is much value to be harvested from
his talks and I believe that my own mind
is positively shaped by early exposure
to his ideas, but for the purpose of my
response here, I will be coming from a
more critical perspective.

One of Krishnamurti's most commonly
repeated phrases was, quote, 'Truth is a
pathless land,' unquote, which was a
starting point for his smashing of any
and all spiritual authorities and to
make clear that one breaks through to
enlightenment like a bomb, not by

dutifully taking baby step after baby step as prescribed by one's guru. That was certainly his experience of attainment and he sought to show others how to become bombs themselves. On K's deathbed, he made it clear that not a single person properly understood his teachings and as such there was to be no successor after his death. The context at the time was his desire to not have squabbling wannabes using his name as a launchpad for their own false new age religion. I have interpreted this as an unintended indictment of his own teachings as he himself admits it produced no fruit. No bombs detonated,

so to speak. As someone who took Krishnamurti's teachings deadly seriously for many years, my personal experience was that beyond fits and starts here and there, one finds it all rather bewildering and it doesn't seem to lead anywhere as you might expect from something that is pathless. This is what led me to Buddhism which proudly proclaims an eightfold path.

People achieved awakening during Siddhartha's lifetime and this is where Buddhism stands starkly apart from Krishnamurti. It offers us mere mortals a trail of breadcrumbs to follow.

This all leads to my question. As someone who has devoted their life to

the Buddhist path, how has this impacted you? I know there is some prohibition in speaking directly about attainment for a Theravada monk, so I am not asking you to break with this tradition, but perhaps to speak more generally about your experience of devoting yourself to this path and perhaps what it holds in store for the rest of us. Or perhaps another way to ask this question is, why should anyone devote themselves to the Buddhist path? What have you experienced on this path that leads you to believe it is in fact a path to somewhere and not just some kind of formal navel-gazing or other useless activity.

Okay.

Unquote.

So, um

where do I start with this? First, I would say that Nirvana really does not have a path leading right up to the gate. That Nirvana really has no

um

like a designated entrance point or anything like that. So, ultimately, you're going to have to leave a path.

So, what Buddhism does is it provides you with a path towards greater uh clarity, um greater emptiness.

Um what it's doing is making your mind less cluttered and distracted so that gradually you're going to be

able to stop being distracted from the illusion and penetrate to the reality.

And that can happen at different places for different people. Some people might need to get way up into like fourth of jhana where there's like

virtually no distractions at all until finally just uh

you know, there's nothing to be

distracted by, so then they can have the liberating insight that uh

that all the waves on the surface really are not the ocean, so to speak.

Um other people, they might just uh

have first jhana or even the commentary say you don't even need to get as high

as first jhana in order to have the liberating insight.

So, what Buddhism does, it's uh it provides you with a path that uh systematically makes your mind more calm and clear and awake that helps you to get to as far as you need to get for the liberating insight to occur.

And Krishnamurti didn't like that partly because people just cling to the method. They'll cling to the path and they'll be afraid to leave the path and you have to leave the path in order to to really reach um the highest state because as I say, the path doesn't lead all the way up to the gate of of nibbana.

Um

so um yeah, it's it's for some people
one way it might work better and for
other people another way it might work
better. Like like Krishnamurti
emphasized and just uh be yourself.

Don't try to be something that you're
not. Don't try to live up to some
exalted ideal because it'll just make
you into a hypocrite. That people are
just naturally the way they are. They
are perfectly the way they are. And um
so that is uh

for him, just being in harmony with that
can make your mind calmer than
struggling and floundering to force fit
your your mind to this pre-established

uh system that was designed for somebody else.

Something like that.

So, um

yeah, it may be that for some people Krishnamurti's just complete rejection of any kind of dogma or any kind of system um

may work best and it's a matter of temperament. And uh obviously for a lot of people Buddhism works best or even like for St. John of the Cross, Roman Catholicism worked.

So, um yeah, you just have to find something that is in harmony with your own nature and go with that. If you really need to follow a system

and like your own just being yourself is too messy and distracting or whatever, then yeah, you you'll have to try something else. Although, if you're just struggling and like beating your head against a brick wall trying to live up to uh like an exalted ideal then uh yeah, maybe Krishnamurti could work better.

And um I just now remember that uh one of the higher one of the questions that I already answered, there was a part to it that I forgot to answer, which is um does nirvana above the 30 the 31st plane of the realm of neither existence or non exist or perception or non-perception?

And um

no, it's it's it is completely off the scale.

It's not on the list anywhere. It's not above or below or beside or anything.

It's just uh you can't wrap your head around it.

So, I'm getting back to the to the questions again. This one is um from a YouTube video, I think. Somebody called Era Fascista.

So, hmm. Have you ever said that your government of choice would be Have you ever said what your government of choice would be in your Q&A videos?

Don't think I remember hearing anything about it. Also, thoughts on fascism.

Um I think I did mention somewhere maybe not on a Q&A video, that uh my government of choice would be pretty close to what the founding fathers of the USA had in mind. It was uh like meritocratic uh libertarianism largely.

Um

Better without the slavery, I should say.

But um

yeah, I like freedom and any kind of authoritarianism or totalitarianism is not optimal for me because I'm really not a normie. I'm not going to follow the mainstream. I'm going to be an

outlier an outlier no matter what the mainstream system is going to be.

So, I appreciate something like classical liberalism, not what goes by the name of liberalism nowadays, which is mostly just a kind of hysterical socialism.

Um

yeah, something

not really conservative because I'm not particularly conservative. Um but

something where people are free

but that doesn't work with everybody and working less and less in America.

And um

because some people just uh they do not have the wisdom to participate in the in

uh the system of government like the way
like in a in a democratic government. Um
you know, everybody is supposed to be
participating at least in a pure
democracy, which is what um
America's the the the the left
especially is is driving towards.

So, um then you you'll have to have some
kind of authoritarianism or or else just
limit who is able to participate, which
is the way it was in the early USA. It
was only

um

adult male landholders who were citizens
were allowed even to vote or to uh

So, yeah, in a way I could sort of be

like uh

uh a sympathizer a fascist sympathizer
just going with the idea that if I had
to make a binary choice between Marxism
or some form of fascism like uh

um what Evola was um in favor of,
although some people say Evola really
wasn't all that much of a fascist, then
uh yeah, I like Julius Evola. At least
fascism endorses spirituality.

That's that's one of the best things
about fascism is that it really is
pro-religion.

Whereas communism um their religion is
just worshipping the state, you know,
there's like the the the communist
government or whatever, just communism

itself is is the new god. Which uh yeah,
that's that's not for me at all and um
I would be in favor of just about
anything other than than communism.

Next question by Nardi.

What should a monk do regards to
dangerous animals in the jungle while
meditating? Have you ever had
experiences with wild animals in Burma
or elsewhere? I remember one time you
said a monk friend of yours was bitten
by a cobra or something. How did that
happen? Anyways, thanks for what you are
doing.

Um I've never come across tigers or wild
elephants or anything really dangerous

and big in the forest. And um

I have stayed in forests that had tigers and leopards and wild buffaloes and elephants and things, but um I I saw some tracks and that was about as far as it got. And the best you can do is just not be afraid and um always have an easily climbable tree nearby just in case.

And um yeah, that's about it really. I mean, being afraid doesn't help anything.

So, you just uh assume that uh if you protect Dharma, Dharma protects you. You just have a little faith in your own karma, I suppose. And go about your life and um

Ajahn Mun, who was uh a great meditation master of Thailand, used to say that monks should live in dangerous places like places with uh dangerous animals just because it makes you more mindful. It makes you more alert and aware all the time.

Pretty much of necessity.

Um

So, let's see.

Um the monk friend of mine who was who was bitten by a cobra yeah, he he was an he was an old man. He was about 80.

And he had to uh get up in the middle of the night to go pee a lot, I assume. So, he he got up in the middle of the night

to go pee and there was a cobra that lived in a hole just a few feet away from his his cabin. And apparently he stepped on it in the dark and it bit him two or three times.

So, um

a cowherd who was driving his cattle through the the monastery grounds the next morning found him lying there on the ground still alive but delirious.

And um

yeah, I've I've I've

that's like the worst thing to me about it was just he was just lying there in the dark for hours and he fell down immediately. So, um a cobra bite isn't enough to

just knock you down as soon as you get bitten. So, I assume it was just like mortal dread.

Just I mean, he was I don't know, terrified or just in such shock at the at the realization he'd just been bitten by a big cobra that uh it just knocked him to the ground and he was um delirious the next the next morning.

Um I wrote a a long blog post about it, which is on the sidebar of the old uh Nipa Pancha blog telling telling the story of

um him being bitten by the cobra and um and the cremation and everything, you know, how we were friends and how the

Burmese villagers conducted the the the funeral and all that. And I remember the the the very day after he was bitten by a cobra. Pretty sure it was a cobra. Um I went to the to my outhouse, opened the opened the door and there was a big viper just coiled up right right inside the outhouse.

So, needless to say, I had changed my mind about using the using the toilet just then and slowly backed away and closed the door and left it there. But um yeah, just based on the fact that a cobra lived right next to his cabin and um just the the distance of the fang marks and everything that um yeah, it probably was a different snake.

Um next question by Dog Breath.

Could you please explain what you mean by perception is samsara?

Uh that's that's a tricky one. I Maybe I should have carefully thought this one out before answering it. But samsara is really our perception, I should say, is um

it happens in two stages. You've got papanca and sankhara, or you could say you've got nama nama and rupa, except it would be rupa first and then nama.

Whereas,

um

first you your your mind differentiates a form. You know, it separates one thing

out from everything else, and then it
slaps a definition onto it, like a a
name or, you know, just some kind of
recognition, something some
generalization

that you can or a universal or or
something that you can identify it by.

So,

that is really what our world consists
of is all these different diversified
objects and beings and and states and so
forth.

The um

really it requires um a perceiving mind
to differentiate these things. That uh
differentiation, like multiplicity, is
an artifact of perception.

That um

in order to differentiate one thing from another, you have to have relations. You have to have different from or or even same as or bigger than or or or smaller than or better than or whatever. You have to have these relations in order to divide things and kind of group them and and organize them and everything. And those relations are purely psychological. There is no different from in in like empirical reality out there. Like a chemist can take a sample of matter and analyze it down to its component parts. He's never going to be able to isolate

pure different from or pure same as, cuz that's all in your mind.

And um that's really what samsara is is this phenomenal world that we live in is uh created by our own mental states, which is a fundamental teaching of Buddhism that gets ignored a lot.

So, um yeah, this this world we live in would just be an unthinkable void without thinking minds um making sense of it or at least attempting to make sense of it.

And uh I could probably just keep yammering away on that one, but um um I have written quite a lot about it in in especially my older philosophical stuff.

Like on the nibbanapanca.org website,
you could probably find some
uh maybe a more coherent attempt at
answering that.

So, next question from uh Dog Breath
here is uh "When you responded to my
question about death on the last Q&A
video, I suggested the solution
was to disidentify with the mind and
body. How do I do this?

And if I manage it, what am I left with?
Naked awareness."

So, how do you disidentify from your
mind and your body? How do you stop
thinking that the the meat puppet and
the mental states are really you?

Uh well, first you just you just go with the the intellectual approach. Just um just the philosophical reminders to yourself.

You know, just think about Buddhist philosophy, reflect on that, you know, that this is this is not me. And um even even if you're you're not identified with your your thoughts and or your mental states and your body, that doesn't mean that you're you're left with naked awareness necessarily, because there is mindful attachment. So, if you're just observing the arising and the passing away of phenomena, including your own mental states and so forth, then that is a really powerful

way of detaching from it and disidentifying from it. Like for example, let's say irritation arises in your mind, which I mean, it arises in my mind sometimes, too, I have to admit. Um if you're identifying with your mind and your mental states, then it's like I am irritated. You know, this bugs me. I don't like this at all. But if you're if you manage to be mindful, then it's you're just observing it the way like an ichthyologist would be observing a a dead fish. You know, it's just irritation is arising. And when you are mindful in that way, you are detached from it. You're not identifying with it

anymore. If you are anything at all,
you're the one that's doing the the
observing and not the thing being
observed. So, anything that you observe
really isn't you, at least at that
moment.

So, the irritation arises, then it's
like you observe the irritation.

Irritation arises. Um or you're thinking
or you're you're noting, you know,
irritation is arising, that kind of
thing. Then, you know, it's just not you
anymore. And so, you can do that with
anything. Any mental state, you can
detach from it and observe it as a kind
of uh

you know, third from a third-person

perspective.

And um

doing that habitually just as a mindfulness practice is probably your best way of disidentifying. But uh having the the the philosophical groundwork there also is helpful.

Next question. In a video I watched recently, you were talking to Bryan Rue about lust, and you stated you wished you were able to get over it.

Hmm, I don't remember that. Why haven't you?

Is this a lack of vitality in the Buddhist teachings about overcoming desire, or is it that you didn't want to

overcome it? Do you know any Buddhists that have overcome it? Thanks and wishing you well."

Well, there's kind of a lot to unpack there. Um to some degree, it is true that not wanting See, not overcoming it and not wanting to overcome it can amount to exactly the same thing. That if if you could just wholeheartedly want to break an addiction, for example, then you could break it relatively easily.

But the the trouble is the motivation, where, you know, it's it's nice. I mean, lust is very pleasurable. I remember one time

many years ago, I took this kind of

medicine that just completely eradicated
my sex drive for for several days. And
um

I it's I don't know, maybe Freud was
onto something when he was saying that
you know, lust is like the driving
force, because really it was like I was
out of gas. It was it was just like
everything was just flat and
and um almost like everything is in
monochrome, you know, the the zest for
life and everything it just evaporated.
And uh I have to admit, I come from a
like a a relatively lustful family, and
I think it this might be in my blood.
And um

let's see. Like William Blake said, it's those who those who overcome their desires have desires that are weak enough to be overcome.

So, um like a lot of Asian monks, maybe a lot of Western monks who are just very gentle and mild-mannered and peaceful, they're just not very high T to begin with. They don't have strong desires to begin with.

Um and so, they can overcome it because their desires were weak enough to overcome.

But if you got strong desires, then uh um

yeah, I mean, it's like you've got hormones and special areas in the brain

and everything that that condition that stuff. It doesn't just go away. So, the best you can hope for in a lot of cases is just you just get used to not scratching the itch, but the itch doesn't entirely go away. Sort of like I used to know a psychiatrist who specialized in curing people of OCD, like obsessive-compulsive disorder. They'd have like the urge to wash their hands again and again, or check to make sure the door is locked again and again, that sort of thing. And um he would teach them mindfulness, um sort of like I was saying before, you know, it's not me, it's just the symptom. And

um they could detach from it and not react, but they would never be completely cured because it was like a genetic disorder in their brain.

And so, um

yeah, the trick is that you just get used to it. You just get used to being horny and frustrated or something, and it doesn't entirely go away.

At least um in my case. And uh like I said, um I also have the motivational situation of not wholeheartedly wanting it to go away, because it is um it's it's fascinating and and uh uh

yeah, it's just pleasant,

I suppose. It's it's more than just

pleasant, though. It's it's um you know,
it can just
fuel you in life. It's it's like part of
the life force.

Um

see

see if I'm missing anything here.

Uh a lack of vitality in the Buddhist
teachings. No, I really don't think so,
because the Buddhist teachings aren't
telling you to uh

uh well, maybe maybe they are

uh telling you to just eradicate lust,
eradicate anger, that sort of thing. But
it it's it sounds very nice, but it's
not very realistic, cuz it generally it

doesn't work that way. Or if you are going to completely eradicate, say, lust, since we're talking about it, then you may have to replace that with some other attachment that is equally fierce. You know, like theomania, you know, people that just become religious fanatics, then, you know, all of their former um sex drive or whatever is just redirected into this new mania, which may be useful. You know, if it helps to get you closer to the goal, you know, it gets you out of the brothel or whatever, gets you into a monastery, then sure. But eventually, I mean, it's you've just redirected this same force that it has um you know, it's still

keeping you in samsara and keeping you unenlightened.

So,

um yeah, to a person who is just lustful by nature, um you may just have to uh find yourself a nice girl and settle down. And um

cuz otherwise, you just may be like a really frustrated and horny celibate person.

And I I can speak about that um based on personal experience.

Next question from Steve B.

Here's a quick question. You mentioned the Diamond Sutra in a previous story. I thought the Diamond Sutra was

fascinating. I know it's not an original Buddhist text. Could you say something about it and what your perspective is on what is contained in it?

And speaking of Zen,

have you ever read the Hagakure?

Uh well, as answering this last one first,

um if it's really called the Hagakure, I I've never read it. I have read um the Hekiganroku or the Blue the Blue Cliff Record, which is really good. I like that. It's it's really nice. I like koans.

But um yeah, I don't know what the Hagakure is. So, um

let's see. The Diamond Cutter, you know,

the Vajracchedika Sutra.

Um yeah, it's very profound.

And um

it was a very early Mahayana Buddhist text.

And one of the purposes of it, uh I think it's What is it? Um

Prajnaparamita. It's one of the

Prajnaparamita Sutras, which was a movement against

the earlier Buddhist movement towards

Abhidharma and just the complete

systematization and formularization of everything. So, they're trying to get

away from um just trying to systematize

Dharma into a set of axioms and rules

and and and that kind of thing. You know, the just the the intellectualization of what really is unthinkable.

So, um yeah, it is profound and it was a reaction, in my opinion, largely against the earlier, like the the so-called Hinayana tendency towards um just

hyper-organizing

and hyper-formularizing

everything. Just trying to get

everything into this fit into this

system. And um the the author or authors of the Diamond Cutter, um

they were reacting or responding to that and trying to move back towards the

apophatic mysticism or um

um

just not being not trying to actually describe or explain the unexplainable.

And uh there's somebody walking around outside who just distracted me. So,

um

Yeah, also planes and and trains and everything going by.

So, let's see. Uh yeah, the Diamond Cutter, I I do like it. It is it is very nice.

It's it's very profound even though, as you say, the uh

it's probably not original to the Buddha. It was probably cooked up

hundreds of years later, but still it's
uh it is profound. Just because the
Buddha didn't say something doesn't mean
that it's it's wrong or not profound.

So, the next question
is from Bodhisattva969.

Should one buy a house or an apartment,
running up debts, or rather stay in rent
for a happy life?

Um

I don't think it really matters all that
much. It's a matter of mental states.

Whichever causes less attachment
and desire, I suppose. Um renting maybe,
from a Buddhist point of view, a
strictly Buddhist point of view,

um

renting would probably be better because, first of all, it's not like an anchor. You know, you're not like attached by necessity to this one place. And it would cause less um less of a an a sentiment of I, me, mine, especially mine.

So, um a lot of people who know about handling money way better than I do would just scoff at the idea of renting when you can own something instead. But uh I think from the Buddhist point of view, probably renting would be more dharmic.

Um but then again, it just depends on the individual. For some people, um just

having a a nice place that's paid for
and you don't have to worry about it
anymore, uh you their mind is more at
ease. Maybe it's just a really nice
place where they feel at peace.

And uh they don't have to worry about
the rent getting jacked up or being
kicked out for not following some dumb
rule or something. So, yeah, it would it
would be a an individual um case-by-case
choice, I think.

Next question by Bodhisattva969. What is
your daily routine as a monk and is
there a meditation or anything else that
you do every day?

I don't really follow a daily routine.

Um

sort of I mean, um I I don't follow a
med- meditation schedule anymore. If if
I feel like it, I will, and if I don't
feel it like it, I won't. Um the most
regular

meditation I do is like the evening
walking meditation, which even that
isn't absolutely every night. If I have
other things to do, I'll do that.

Um

But I mean, for me, it's like you get up
and uh you know, attend to uh you know,
emails or whatever until lunchtime and
then go eat and then come back and
and rest and and just write and read and
you know, maybe go out and do some

walking meditation, that sort of thing.

There's There's really not uh

There's There's almost no routine at this place.

So, um I've lived other places where you've got a more regimented schedule, but here it's just everybody's left to their own devices pretty much.

So, yeah, not much of a daily routine here.

Next question also by Bodhisattva969.

What is your current goal as a monk? Is it still enlightenment, have a better next life, or a quiet, happy life in general?

Um

First of all, I would just advise you

and everyone else to beware of
goal-oriented Dharma. Like the only
the only time we have is now.

And uh it doesn't make much sense to
have goals for just the present moment.

So, um of the of the options, probably
uh quiet, happy life in general. That uh
setting up a goal, the reality is almost
always different from the goal. So, um
and then and then you get disappointed
and frustrated.

Um I've I've told people before, I've
advised people that if if they're going
to become a monk, um the desire for
um becoming enlightened is not
necessarily even the best reason for

becoming a monk. Maybe the best reason for becoming a monk is just that the lifestyle is in harmony with your nature. That you just like living a simple, austere, meditative life. And um that might get you farther, because if you set up a goal, then you're going to strive towards that goal. And in all likelihood, things aren't going to turn out the way you expect them to. And then you can get frustrated and disillusioned and and and miserable and all that. So, um

yeah, I think just taking each moment as it comes is probably best. And if you become enlightened, then yeah, that's lovely. That's excellent. But um

like striving for achieving the goal,
it's it is encouraged in the text, so I
shouldn't completely badmouth it, but um
um

yeah, I mean, the the goal that you set
up in your mind is not going to be
enlightenment anyway. You can't imagine
enlightenment, like we've already been
talking about up above in these earlier
questions.

So, um you're setting up like this
imaginary, false goal in your mind that
may help you in certain ways. So, I
mean, this would be like renting or
buying. It's like whichever works best
for you.

But um

yeah, I did have goals when I was

younger and uh

um gradually, I just realized that

you're probably better off not having

lots of future goals, especially

spiritual ones, because they tend not to

be realistic anyway. And um like

Krishnamurti was saying, like just

striving to live up to an ideal results

in hypocrisy and and dishonesty and and

probably frustration and everything,

too. So, um yeah, so let's just go with

uh quiet, happy life in general and move

on to the next question. How did you

come to Bali? Um

When I was in Burma, I met uh a Balinese

Indonesian monk and we became friends
and uh his family live in Bali and so
his family invited me to go to Bali and
so um I was their guest.

Um

uh like three or four three or four
times I went to uh Indonesia. And uh
they're very wealthy and they're they're
trying to set up Theravada Buddhism on
the island of Bali. Um probably most of
the Theravada Buddhism in Bali today is
largely a result of the efforts of Ibu,
who is the mother and matriarch of the
family and the mother of my Indonesian
friend, who right now I think is uh in a
meditation cabin in Burma.

So, next question. What do you think of making Dharma explanatory videos? That Buddhist teaching is interpreted quite differently, especially by the wimps of the Buddhist left. Something like this guy does. And he left a uh link to a YouTube video, which is all in German, so I'm not exactly sure what he said. I turned on the auto translate and it's all like Google Translate semi-gibberish. So, it didn't help very much.

Um I'm I'm okay with making uh Dhamma explanatory videos. I guess these ones that I'm doing like this one I'm doing now is a Dhamma explanatory video except I'm just responding to other people's

questions.

But um

yeah, I could uh I could do that and uh

if there is if there is like a demand

for it, preferably polite demand, then

uh yeah, I can do that. Just like um

I've I've I've still been uh

sort of slowly moving towards doing like

readings also, like reading some of my

favorite texts.

And uh people might just get stuck with

seeing me reading

instead of uh like the

the nice slideshow or something just cuz

it's so much easier to do.

Video editing is kind of a

foreign land for me.

So, what do I think about making Dhamma explanatory videos? Yeah, I'm open to that and I'm I'm willing to do that and uh maybe I'll be doing more of that in future.

So, next question from follower number A12C67E7.

Lately, I've been having trouble meditating because I often follow fall into a state in which I am dreaming or hallucinating.

Excuse me.

The trance state you talk about, I'm assuming as it's not just a wandering mind or daydreaming, then I wake up, quote unquote,

with a start when I realize what's happening and try to continue meditating. Does this happen because I'm tired or is there some other reason? Are there techniques I can use to prevent this from happening?

Um yeah, it's not necessarily because you're sleepy. It's it's because you're sort of easing into a mild trance state.

Um

there there are techniques that you can use to prevent this from happening. One is doing walking meditation. You're not You're You're much less likely to uh space out if you're having to stay awake and alert enough, um you know, to not

bump into things when you're moving around.

Um

also, there are there kinds of meditation you can do where if you're carefully observing your mind, like um one one meditation technique I like to to tell people about is um it's in uh the Buddhist commentaries where you know, you've got the the termite mound with six holes, and there's a a monitor lizard inside the termite mound. You want to catch the monitor lizard, so you block off five of the holes and you watch the sixth hole very carefully so that when the lizard comes out, you can grab it immediately.

And that's a a metaphor for

um

like

quieting the five senses. You know,
you're sitting in a quiet place.

You know, move You're You're sitting in
meditation, and so you're not moving
around. You're not being distracted by
all the sensual stuff, and then you just
watch your mind carefully and try to
catch whatever thought arises. You know,
it's like you're at a a library and
you've got a loud speaker hooked up to
your mind so that every time you think,
it blasts in the library and the the
scary librarian lady's like glaring at

you. So, you have to like keep your mind silent, you know? Or it's like you know, it's somebody can read your mind and you want to hide from them or something. So, you have to like stop thinking. And that kind of meditation is is powerful if you can do it. It's not like the highest possible kind of meditation to do, but it is a higher kind of meditation than just, you know, breathing in, breathing out, breathing in, breathing out for for an hour.

So, if you can do a kind of meditation where you're carefully observing your own mental processes, then that will keep you alert because if you're just doing something

like breathing in, breathing out or om
or something something really repetitive
that doesn't change or um you know, it
can just lull you into the trance state.
It can be like a hypnotic thing. So,
um yeah, what you're doing essentially,
it seems to me, is a is a mild form of
self-hypnosis.

So, um yeah, I would I would advise you
to uh switch to a different meditation
technique and maybe do walking
meditation.

And maybe uh drink a cup of coffee
before you sit down
or strong tea. Caffeinate yourself a bit
cuz that will help you not to just uh

bliss out into into a a dreamy
um mild trance state.

So, next question from Potila.

Bhante, could you please discuss Dhamma
Anussarin versus Saddha Anussarin as
discussed in Majjhima Nikaya 22. Also,
could you please discuss bhavana
practices from the Saddha Anussarin
perspective?

Spoken like a true
academic Dhamma student.

So, um I remember the sutta. I've read
it and I remember at the time
it just didn't do anything for me at
all. It's just more of this complicated
like Abhidhamma kind of stuff, and
probably in my my opinion, it's probably

a relatively late sutta that doesn't go all the way back to the Buddha. But wanting to answer your question, I I dug out my uh

Buddhist dictionary, which is a really good book. I I advise, you know, I recommend this book to anybody, and you can even get it free in some places. You know, it's printed for free distribution a lot of the time. It's by Nyanatiloka, who was a German monk who lived in Sri Lanka a long time ago, like during World War II era.

And um

so, I looked up

let's see, what did I look up? Dhamma Anussarin.

And it says the Dhamma devotee, which is one of the seven noble disciples or Ariya Puggalas. So, then I have to look up the noble disciples.

And uh here we go.

The sevenfold grouping of the noble disciples is as follows. First, you've got the faith devotee or the Saddha Anussari. Then you've got the faith liberated one. Then you've got the body witness. Then you've got the both ways liberated, the Ubhato Bhagavimutta.

Then you've got the Dhamma devotee, which is the Dhamma Anussari, which Potila also asked about. Then number six

is the vision attainer, the Ditthi Patta. And seven is the wisdom liberated one, the Panna Vimutta.

This group of seven noble disciples is thus explained in Visuddhimagga chapter 21 verse 73.

He who is filled with resolution, Adhimokkha, and in considering the formations as impermanent, Anicca, gains the facility of faith, and he is he at the moment of the path to stream winning is called a faith devotee or the Saddha Anussari. At the seven higher stages of like um uh path and uh path and fruit of the the four stages of sainthood, it adds up to

eight. That's That's what he's talking about. The first one is just the path of the Sotapanna.

And if that doesn't mean anything to you, it doesn't matter.

So, to at the seven higher stages, he is called a faith liberated one, the Saddha Vimutta.

Then he who is filled with tranquility and in considering the formations as miserable or Dukkha, gains the faculty of concentration, he in every respect is considered as a body witness, a Kayasakhi.

He, however, who after reaching the absorptions of the immaterial sphere has attained the highest fruition,

he is a both ways liberated one, and
Ubhato Ubhato Bhagavimutta.

Let's see. Let's see. He who is filled
with wisdom and in considering the
formations as not self,

gains the faculty of wisdom, he is at
the moment of stream winning a Dhamma
devotee or the Dhamma Anussari. At the
other six stages,

uh a vision attainer, Ditthi Patta.

And at the highest stage, a wisdom
liberated one.

So, that's There you go. It's a
for me, I mean, it doesn't help doesn't
help me to get enlightened at all. It
doesn't help make my mind more peaceful.

It's just more of this complicated stuff
that uh like the Diamond Cutter Sutra
was uh rebelling against or the authors
of the Prajnaparamita Sutra Sutra
Sutras. Um

so, yeah, it's like it In my opinion,
it's like a symptom of the ancient
Indian passion for systematizing and
intellectualizing everything.

So, um yeah, I really can't help you
very much on explaining Dhamma Anussaris
and uh

what was the other one? Saddha Anussaris
because uh yeah, it just doesn't It
doesn't really say anything to me. And
uh it's just unnecessarily unnecessary
complications that uh

I don't see how it would really help anybody to become a saint or to have peace of mind. Although, maybe they just really like that and it makes them happy to study it.

Okay, next question by Potila. Second question. Do you think it possible for a layperson in this day and age to reach Sotapanna?

If not, what should be the goal for the average layperson in the West to aspire to?

Well,

um

I was telling somebody, maybe Brian Ruhe, recently that I consider the four

stages of sainthood

um you know, Sotapanna and Sakadagami
and Anagami and Arahant to be largely
uh more of this kind of systematization,
and I think it is garbled from the
original meaning.

Like uh some of the first verses of the
the Itivuttaka, I think it is, referred
to an arahant as an anagami, which makes
sense. I mean, like an anagami is
someone who does not return and that I
mean, you'd think that that would be an
arahant.

But, um

a sotapanna or a stream attainer
is uh

I think it's possible that originally it

was just a person who had been sort of
born again as a Buddhist, just uh
so to speak.

Um somebody who had uh converted to
Buddhism and where it was really taking
it to heart.

Um and then it got turned into like a
superhuman mental state later on because
there there is a weird uh vinaya rule
about uh a monk not being a burden on a
family that is uh sotapannas
a family of sotapannas.

So,

um

yeah.

Uh with regard to uh becoming a

sotapanna, even if it is a superhuman mental state, I don't see any reason why a layperson couldn't couldn't attain that.

So, um yeah. I mean, regardless of the exact meaning of a sotapanna, whether it's the traditional orthodox definition or or something else, then uh yeah. I I don't see any reason why it should be impossible. In fact, I don't think it's absolutely impossible for a layperson to become fully enlightened.

According to uh orthodox traditional Buddhism, if you become fully enlightened as a layperson, you have to be ordained within 24 hours

or you're going to meet with some sudden
and violent death. But, um
oh, well.

And uh

the goal for the average layperson in
the West to aspire to uh I already
warned everybody
cautioned you all against goal-oriented
Dhamma.

Um

so, live in the present moment and do
the best you can and uh
be mindful.

And uh I think you're going to be doing
well.

Next question from JML.

How do you deal with sloth and torpor during meditation and during normal life?

Uh first of all, I mean, there's just the determination. You just like just get yourself motivated. I think that's probably the best thing to do.

Um

Uh like I like I said to the the other person, uh maybe a cup of coffee.

Um there there are suttas that discuss things you can do. Walking meditation is another one.

Um

sloth and torpor, tina middha. It's it's uh yeah, it's I can experience I can experience or I can uh I can relate to

that.

Uh sloth or tina would be like laziness
and torpor would be like sleepiness.

So, it's like laziness and sleepiness.

Um

Yeah. I mean, walking meditation, if
you're really prone to just nodding off
when you meditate, then yeah, I would
suggest doing walking meditation. Or
again, um maybe meditate with your eyes
open.

Meditate like on
incense smoke or candle flame or
something like that, maybe even.

Um

Yeah, it's part of it can just be that

um

you know, your eyes are closed and you're motionless and it's quiet and everything and so you just naturally uh start drifting towards sleep. That's one reason why uh meditating while lying down doesn't work very well for most people because you just naturally just relax into a sleepy state.

So, um splash water on your face, meditate on light, pull at your earlobes sometimes. There's there's lots of little tricks that you can find in the suttas for reducing sleepiness. Although ultimately, it's a matter of um just having the motivation to really really push through it.

Um okay, next question from Chaplin.

How will you spend your 30th anniversary day that is coming up in a few days?

Um

I might have a special 30th anniversary

Brian Lu show, but um aside from that, I

don't have any plans and it's um

it's it seems to be a bigger deal to to

you, dear Chaplin, than to than to me.

It's like birthdays and and Christmas

and that sort of thing. Um I've been a

monk living in in a non-Christian,

non-Western country for so long that um

yeah, Chris- Christmas is just another

day. My own birthday, I I forg- I've

forgotten my own birthday before. Just

looking at the calendar, trying to figure out what day it is. It's like, "Oh, yesterday was my birthday." That's interesting.

Um so, yeah. I mean, it's for me it's just it's another day. It's it's like a landmark, you know, 30 years as a monk. Um going with the Western calendar.

But, um

yeah, I don't I don't plan on on having throwing any parties, wearing the wearing the paper hat or anything like that.

Next question from Chaplin. The texts admonish clinging, passion, and desire. How does one reconcile this with romantic love?

Well,

starting with this orthodox Theravada

Buddhism,

um some people just have

uh strong enough

uh what what what I how would I say it?

Well, not everybody's cut out to be a

celibate monk living living in a cave or

under a tree. Most people are closer to

the mean and um just want to live a

relatively peaceful, relatively happy,

normal life. And so, it makes sense for

them to settle down with a nice person

and have a family and and do the best

they can within that context. So, that

would that would apply to most people.

Um although

uh romantic love, it's uh

it's not the stablest form of love for

most people, but it is it does have

genuine love in it and it can be

beautiful and profound if especially if

you find the right person and you have

uh a heart that is

capable of really something approaching

unconditional

uh just really deep love and intimacy.

So, um

let's see.

Uh where do I go with this?

Um

yeah, the clinging and the desire from a

Buddhist point of view is always going

to result in in
unpleasant effects.

So, um

you you just have to accept that. I
mean, if if it's worth it, I mean, if if
it's worth it in other ways. If you
think that uh the
the the negative karma that is going to
arise naturally as a result of the the
passion and the and the lust and all
that sort of thing. If uh
you know, if if it's like you're willing
to accept that, it's your choice to
make. And um in some people, I mean,
it's just the sensible choice to make
because

being a celibate hermit just isn't for everybody. And really interacting with other people can be one of the best ways of making progress. That's that's one thing that I've I've I've mentioned before. It's like one weakness of being a monk nowadays is there's no challenges really. You just you're living in the comfortable place and um you know where your next meal is coming from and uh you're not you're not being harassed by non-Buddhists out in the forest or whatever. No, there's no dangerous animals. So, um yeah, you you can you can stagnate easily or just uh just sort of

just fail to make progress, you know,
just kind of holding steady. So, um
yeah, getting out there and interacting
and and making waves,
uh I shouldn't just wholeheartedly
recommend it for everybody, but still um
it is more conducive to change, which
would include change for the better.

And um like like I said, romantic love,
if you find the person that you're just
you just uh

what's the word? Resonate with that
person.

You know, that you're just happier with
that person with than without them, then
um yeah, I mean, it does make sense. And

it's not all bad, obviously, and the human race would go extinct if uh people just all became celibate hermits.

So, um

yeah, I mean, it's

anything that you do in a worldly context is going to have some negativity involved. You know, like having children, you you're going to have attachment and worry and and all this about your children, which has negative karma, but then again, negative and positive tend to balance out. So, you can follow the

the Buddhist monk, the ancient Indian

Buddhist monk method of avoiding both

positive and negative and just going for

the smooth sailing of of just a flat
calm. Or then you have to accept
positive and negative. But, um
if you
want the positive bad enough that you're
willing to accept an equal amount of
negative, then that's your choice to
make. And uh like I say, um if you find
find the right person and it's uh
you just resonate deeply and there's
like a like a deep connection between
you, then it can be really beautiful and
profound and uh
certainly worth it for a lot of people,
probably even most people.
Because as I say, being being a celibate

hermit um does also have its drawbacks.

Next question, and this is the very last question

and this one also is from Chaplin.

Is there anything you will miss after you move from California?

And I've considered this for a few minutes and the answer as far as I can tell is nope.

Not at all. I can't think of anything I'm really going to miss after leaving California other than maybe a few friends. Yeah, I suppose that would be it. There's there's some nice people that I have known here and I've got a good friend who lives in Fremont although he's moving out of out of

California also. So I guess that one
that one wouldn't even really apply.

So

that's it. That's that was the last
question and um

I hope I did a good enough job answering
and uh

I'll be doing more of these like volume
eight will be coming up assuming that
people ask questions.

So if you're curious about anything

that is applicable like Buddhism,

Buddhist philosophy, meditation

uh living in Burma, me personally, that

kind of thing then feel free to leave

leave your questions

in the comments below or

on my subscribe star channel.

Uh the subscribe star channel is open

for anyone who wants to subscribe and it doesn't necessarily cost anything.

There's like the the free

the free option and uh you can leave you can leave your questions there also.

Usually I make an announcement um

a few days before I do a video ask like making last call for for questions.

And so um

yeah, I think that's it and so uh

feel free to ask more questions and uh

uh

be happy.

And that's it.

See you next time. No, actually no, I
won't see you next time cuz I I don't
see any of you guys.

hello and welcome to

edition number eight episode number

eight

volume eight of question and answer

and i am your host panyo bassan

and uh we were having kind of a uh

lull in question asking and then all of

a sudden i put the announcement up on

subscribe star and uh a certain fellow

certain good fellow named dog breath

just unleashed this merciless onslaught

of questions

so it's gonna be a long one again it

looks like and so i better just

uh get to it

let's answer questions so the first one

is from

nardi and he asks the perennial question

what happens after death

kind of uh

question people have been asking since

prehistoric times

and uh the easy answer to that

is what happens after death is probably

pretty similar to

what happened before you were born so

all you got to do is just remember what

happened before you were born

and just maybe give a slightly more

developed

version of that hopefully if you've

lived a good

life and made progress you'll have a

slightly more developed version of that
after you die and if you don't remember
what happened before you're born that's
just too bad for you

um but i think the more orthodox answer
will be given um a little

uh very soon actually because he he
continues on the same

in the same vein so the next question by
nardi is how does

incarnation to the next life happen

and from my own personal experience i
really don't have personal experience

um with regard to what happens in
between lives

or in past lives or in an afterlife

because technically speaking it won't be
me anymore i mean they'll be like
underlying
um like you could call it maybe an
underlying
mental essence or something but
i mean i'll have a a different different
brain
probably will not identify with this
meat puppet anymore so um yeah as far as
us individually is concerned then uh
um to some degree the the atheistic
materialists would be right
and we just stop existing although
um uh yeah anyway i'll just i'll just uh
deal with the uh the orthodox answer
here

and uh so how does incarnation to the
next life happen

going with orthodox theravada buddhism

the very moment after your

mental processes cease in this life

they necessarily have to arise somewhere
else

so um also in terrible buddhism that

would generally occur at the moment of
conception

so um as soon as you

die going with orthodox

orthodox theory orthodox dogma orthodox

scripture then um yeah

it's called rebirth linking

consciousness so as soon as

your mental states cease at the moment
of death

in this life then the very next moment
you would have i mean that consciousness
would have to

um find like some kind of

backup into into another existence

because

there there can't be more than just one

split second

of of a gap so

um yeah in a way it's sort of like

um going with like um oh

isaac newton is just like the law of

conservation of mental energy or

something if you've still got this

imbalance going in this

life like a karmic imbalance hasn't all
worked itself out yet

then just because the uh the container
for that mental imbalance uh
stops working the mental imbalance just
has to continue

until it works itself out sooner or
later so it's just gonna have to appear
somewhere else

and it's an infinitely big universe and
so

um there shouldn't be too much problem i
assume

uh finding the right circumstances for
the

karmic continuum or karmic momentum to

uh

continue unabated until sooner or later

um it gets worked out and we become

enlightened

so yeah it would just be the uh

the karma the stream of karma which is

really all

that that reincarnates or all that that

trans migrates or whatever you want to

call it um some buddhists have an issue

using the word reincarnation which

i i really don't see a problem with that

but um

yeah all that goes from one life to the

next is karma which

which is like the the momentum of your

mental states

and it's generally in a state of imbalance which is causing it to be dynamic because it wasn't in a state of imbalance then um yeah i mean it wouldn't it wouldn't necessarily have to continue or anything it would just be all worked out so let's see next question from nardi also on the same the same theme do we have a sort of purgatory or limbo to spend some time or do we go directly from one life to the other through our last thought and like in tibetan buddhism they have like the bardo which is

an intermediate state or a lot of people
who have

near-death experiences they will
describe

you know first rising up and going
towards the bright light and then they
meet

like a spirit guide who um sort of gives
them a review of their past life

and then they have to make decisions or
maybe they're just told they have to go
back because they're not done yet or

something like that

but in buddhism even if there is like an
intermediate state that would count as
just

uh an existence i mean if there is no in

between state you have to go
from this existence after this existence
ends the very next moment another
existence has to start because there
can't be a real
gap and there are some
philosophical problems with that that i
have discussed elsewhere but we
needn't wade into that particular issue
because
we've got lots of questions to answer
here but um
yeah i mean it could be that you've got
strange karma
or you just got like this one little
thing that needs to get worked out

and um so the the next life might just
be

like a brief spirit existence or maybe
even um just your just take existence as
an embryo that then gets
aborted or or like a miscarriage or
something happens anything like that can
happen

um but even even like the intermediate
like a bardo realm

would technically from the buddhist
point or the theravada buddhist point of
view

would be something like a spirit realm
that just doesn't last for very long
so next question don't you think that by
disrobing you

could delete all your development

delete um

no not really i mean i could be working

off some of the good karma

you know i've been earning merit through

my my monk's life

and it may be that the little minor

heaven realm

of a lovely lady or something could uh

um you know i'd be like paying for that

just how do you say sort of using karmic

money

you know so sort of my part of my my

cash in would be that

or something or just eating eating good

food that kind of thing

sort of like the way heaven is supposed
to work i mean at a much larger scale
you got all this merit um built up
and then you get into the heaven realms
and supposedly you just wallow in
sensuality and
and joy and bliss until it's all used up
and then back down you go into the into
the
human realm or something but um
the question i mean the assumption seems
to be that um after i stop being
a fully ordained biku i'm just going to
stop making any kind of progress
and i don't think that that's going to
be the case it may be a different kind
of progress

or it may be slowed down or something
because being a monk really does
facilitate certain kinds of progress
but i got as far as i could with that it
seems like
and so it's time to make progress along
different lines
if i'm going to continue making progress
and so
yeah i mean i'm i'm going to continue
practicing dhamma
um how well i'll be practicing it
remains to be seen
but um yeah it's not going to delete
all of my development and
i mean people can still make progress

and people can even become enlightened
without being ordained because
or nuns or whatever they're ordained as
so yeah i don't think i'm going to be
deleting

very much other than just the uh the
beku part at the end of my name
i can still be called panyobasa i just
won't be panyobasa beku

all right next question last question
from nardi if you die

at 80 years old in let's say a bad
mental state

don't you think it will vanish all your
30 years trial of staying out of samsara
well i mean if you die in bad mental
states no matter

how old you are then i mean that's going
to have an effect your your very last
mental state

is the most important one of your life
because it determines

your like your trajectory your momentum
going into the next existence which we

can get to a little later there are a
few more questions along these lines

but um yeah it's not going to vanish all
my 30 years trial of staying out of

samsara

and um yeah the the staying out of
samsara

i'm not exactly sure what is meant there
some people just make this assumption

that being a monk is not being in
samsara but

um it it is even like the highest
formless realms you know the most subtle
of all the heaven realms are still
samsara

so long as there's any kind of
individual existence it is samsara
so um yeah if i died in bad mental
states

that would influence my trajectory going
into the next life but it wouldn't
change my karma very much you know
there's like this

um accumulated stream or or
accumulation of karma that um
you know just one bad mental state isn't

going to just prove all of that out of
existence

so yeah let's just hope that uh

when we die we all have relatively good
mental states which is very important

and i'll get back to that

so the next question is from

unseen perspectives

can you recommend an easy way for

english speaking lay people to cultivate
an interest in learning the dhamma

and then in parentheses he says in my

opinion the word of the buddha and those
thick books translated by bhikkhu bodhi

are too cryptic for lay people with a
casual interest in buddhism and short

attention spans

yeah well i mean the the casual attitude

and the short attention span

is a hindrance and it could

effectively prevent some people from

really

being introduced to something that could

help them a lot but really that is

our own doing but um getting back to the

question here

an easy way for english-speaking lay

people to cultivate an interest in

learning the dhamma

i assume for a lot of people just

pointing out the pragmatic benefits like

some people

um maybe like even

in a hospital setting they can be taught
mindfulness techniques to help them cope
with stress

or some kinds of mental illnesses or
just chronic pain

or the fear of death maybe maybe they
have like a

terminal terminal case of something and
there are a lot of hospitals that are
teaching essentially buddhist meditation
or or mindfulness to help them detach
from the pain or detach from the worry
or detach from like the

obsessive compulsive urges that kind of
thing and so

emphasizing just the pragmatic benefits

um to pragmatically people
could be good and i mean just just
coping with stress i think that's
probably the main reason why people even
learn

buddhist meditation nowadays i remember
once i was giving an introductory
instruction to beginning meditators
at a dharma hall and just out of
curiosity i asked the beginning
just the the people there why they
wanted to learn meditation and the most
common answer was just
coping with stress and it does work
and there will be another question or
two along these lines farther down
but that would be one of the main ways

of getting

you know worldly minded lay people

interested in buddhism is just pointing

out the actual

real life benefits of less stress and

greater happiness or contentment um

just even just teaching ethics could

work for some people because that also

is conducive to

serenity and peace of mind and

some people would just be interested in

the philosophy philosophically minded

people

um could really take an interest in that

too or

another way of getting some

english-speaking lay people
to cultivate an interest would be like
young men who are looking for
some way of asserting their masculinity
which it might seem kind of strange
because buddhism is considered to be
kind of uh
um like compassionate and non-violent
and thereby
like stereotypically feminine in certain
respects but the
austerity of it and just the
fearlessness that it teaches
um it is a way
of like tapping into the divine
masculine without having to uh
actually go out and shed blood that kind

of thing

so um for that also i think there is
potential for like young men who are
really trying to

uh uh come to grips with their own
masculinity which is just

um like demonized in in western
civilization now which is just totally
degenerate and sick

um yeah i mean that that would be
another way also

so for different people there would be
different ways but i assume just the
just the pragmatic benefits you can get
you know not just theoretical stuff but
actual

um you know on the ground results

i think that would be the best way of

going about it

so next question is from average dud

alias average dude

who says it would be really great to

list

all the times nirvana is described

especially the ones where it's described

as infinite consciousness

oh and are the 31 planes told

in the sutras too well

um yeah to list all the times nirvana is

described

i'd be sitting here for more than half

an hour just going over it

there are some interesting descriptions

there's one in the udana and
unfortunately i forgot to
have the the reference here to just
blurt it out to you
but um the ones where it's described as
infinite consciousness

there are two main ones one is in digā
11 which is the ke watasuta i think
and then one is in majāmenikaya number
49

and they both have the same strange
explanation

which i happen to have right here
consciousness unmanifest infinite
shining

all around here water and earth fire and

wind

gain no foothold here long and short

small and large pleasant and unpleasant

here name and form without remainder

are completely stopped

so that is found in two sutas it's a

very ancient

text and uh in pali it's

like the beginning part of it but

means like unmanifest consciousness

and it's pretty obviously referring to

nibana

and there are similar um

similar text say kind of similar things

like there's another text that refers to

consciousness being luminous or just

shining forth

and that um our unenlightenment is
caused by

um like um extraneous defilements
kind of blocking the shine of the
consciousness

and that's in the same utah i think and
again i don't remember the exact uh
the exact citation but um

yeah that's it wasn't orthodox it's a
really old

description which fell by the wayside
and probably got turned into a formless
janna as kind of a consolation prize

but um uh yeah infinite consciousness
is also how brahman is described in some
of the upanishads

like formless infinite consciousness and
of course god
is described in in much the same terms
in some
theological schools so um
it didn't work very well in theravada
buddhism because the theravada buddhists
just
developed this idea that nibana just
should not be reified it should not be
even called
a thing and try where you try to
describe it as
something because then you've just
dragged it down
into phenomenal existence so it's best
just to leave it completely off the

scale the buddha usually didn't talk
about it much except in negations you
know it's not this it's not that
and even in the the uh the famous quote
where it's you know it's just talking
about no

wind earth fire water you know it's like
none of the elements there's no
light or darkness you know it's just
this kind of paradoxical
unthinkable state

and see with regard to the 31 planes
um if i'm not exactly sure if all
31 of them are specifically mentioned
but most of them are generally in
passing

so you know there's mentions of uh
non-returners going up into the
the divine abodes and um or not the
divine abodes but um
maybe it is the divine abode it's not
the the brahma viharas but it's
like the highest uh realms of
the the non-formless brahmas
they're reserved for non-returners
there's so there's mention of all
of lots of these different realms
although

i don't think there is one sutub that
just systematically lists off all the 31
planes of existence you kind of have to
hunt and search for them unless you just
want to read something that isn't

uh scripture you know just like a um
a review or something like i wrote an
article on the 31 plans of existence
it's on the uh

um nepapancha.org website

the next question is from woke wotan
oh before before i do that i just will
say again that uh

if you want the description of nirvana
as

um infinite consciousness it would be in
the diga 11 which is the ke watasuta or
majima 49 which is the brahma something
effect uh i don't have the book here
yeah i don't have the book so never mind
okay getting back to woke wotan

he says asking for a friend when
entering stores without a face mask
and getting requested to wear one this
friend simply replies with
don't wear them because of medical
reasons

this is a lie because his real reason is
he doesn't want to comply
with and his eyes absurd
useless tyrannical mandate as doing so
is typical herd mentality that actually
hurts society

he knows from experience that telling
the truth about his reason not to wear
one

often only leads to fruitless
discussions and frustration on both ends

plus he risks getting refused entrance
to the store

he wants to maintain good mental states
in a way he feels

not wearing a face mask because of
aforementioned reasons is similar to
claiming

conscientious objection to military
service

but without being open about it because
arguing with

npcs is pointless when playing computer
games one doesn't try to

chat with an in-game npc about the
weather

after receiving a quest either does him

lying influence his karma in any way

um well the short answer to that is yes

because

um if you're lying it's still lying

regardless of your reasons i assume

you know the reasons can mitigate the

lie but it's it's

ultimately still lying so

maybe if you wanted to play it a little

more careful he could think up

some actual medical reasons like he just

doesn't like being

oxygen depleted or something or or

whatever

like with with well i suppose fogging up

his glasses so that he can't see

could uh theoretically be a medical

reason

that he doesn't want to discuss because

when your glasses are fogged up you

could like

bump into something and hurt yourself

but if he doesn't wear glasses then

he might have to go get some but yeah

this is one reason why there are monks

is that if you live a worldly life

it's it's damn near impossible to follow

the five precepts perfectly

and lying is the easiest precept to

break

and just to be polite in a civilized

society

requires you to be a damned liar

sometimes even if it's just white lies
you know you say you're sorry when
you're not sorry and you say i'd like to
but i can't
when actually you can you just don't
want to
and and on and on so um
yeah in his case um it could be
just the lesser of two evils sometimes
you have to choose the lesser of two
evils
so um that might be the case in his case
so he's just uh
taking a small hit you know it's not
like you're gonna burn in hell for
something like that like you're not
gonna burn in hell for swatting mosquito

and um sometimes uh

you just have to uh figure out what is

most suitable you know it's like

are you willing to take a little bit of

a hit for some

some other benefit so

um yeah but the the short answer is that

uh

he is still speaking with the the

intention of deceiving somebody

and uh it is going to be uh

it is going to have karmic effects you

know somebody is probably going to

tell him some little white lie in the

future or something

to balance it out or or whatever but

um you know i i can't really endorse
lying

um like just recently i was advised
that uh all i'd have to do after i'm not
a monk anymore

is just say that i've been unemployed
for

for two years because of the uh the lung
power sicken

pandemic and uh i could i could collect
like 20 000 bucks

in like socialist back pay

but um the whole idea of lying like that

um really does not appeal to me at all

and i would be very reluctant to do
something like that

so anyway next question is from ken

why not innovate and start a tradition
that is compatible western values
um yeah that's that's a good question i
have been thinking about that a lot
part of the thing for me is that i'm an
individualist and i'm not
really kind of uh like a tribal
person and not really
like like even belonging to like a
political party it seems like most
people
are followers so um it doesn't really
matter what their political party does
they just
take the side of that anyway and i could
never really relate to that it's like

well i mean this

this policy i approve of but that one i
don't and so i just kind of make up my
own mind

and and i'm just uh an individualist
by nature so i mean i can i can work out
something that works for me
and share it with other people and maybe
it'll work for them too but

like becoming the leader of a movement
um yeah i'd have to have that greatness
thrust upon me i think because i'm not
gonna be

really seeking it but um

if i find something that works for me
because i am really uh i am going to be
working for some kind of compromise or

uh some kind of innovation that works in
my case

because i'm not just gonna just dive
into the world into the world and start
flipping burgers as a total normie so
i will be looking for something like
that and if it works for me it could
work for other people also and
who knows maybe it'll be popular and
strike traction

and in my case um the obvious
choice would be some kind of
i wouldn't want to call it a reform
movement necessarily but a kind of
compromise movement of theravada
buddhism with the west

without wallowing in the you know the
white elitism of the the vipasana
um you know like the ims style or a
spirit rock style buddhism

um but there's another idea i just was
playing with

excuse me uh i just had lunch a little
while ago

um this other idea is um

i had this idea of like neo-cynicism

you know like the ancient cynics you

know the famous diogenes who lived in

the tub and

it was about as close to buddhist

monasticism

as existed in classical western culture

you know the cynics the

cynic philosophers and in some ways

it was better suited to

the west than than like monastic

theravada because

they weren't required to be celibate

because

the cynics considered like sexual desire

to be just

a natural desire like desire for food or

desire for sleep

and so they really didn't see that as

something

to uh to forbid

and also they were allowed to handle

money although of course they didn't

they didn't have very much of it because

um in their case they tended to be uh
just sort of wandering um mendicants
or something but um i was i was thinking
i was considering it not like i've made
up my mind or anything but uh
just taking like um a synthesis
of some of the best of like
the ancient cynical philosophy and
also buddhism just adding a lot of
buddhism or to the cynicism or adding a
lot of cynicism to the buddha
to the buddhism and uh forming
like this neo-cynical movement and just
just the title i mean i could write a
book sort of like the bronze age mindset
like the the neo-cynic manifesto
something like that

um which might turn off the buddhists
even though it would have a lot of
buddhism in it but we'll just see how it
goes

but that that's uh one of my ideas for
innovation and starting a tradition that
is compatible with western values like
ken here has

asked me about so i'll just uh put it
out there

and uh ken's second question is what is
so wrong with free market capitalism
that i can't just pay a month cash to
teach me something

um i assume maybe that's like a like a
rhetorical question

but um the main it's it's not anything
wrong with free market capitalism it's
more a matter of
restrictions on buddhism or dhamma or
dharma

like monks just aren't allowed to handle
money so that that's uh
makes it foreboding forbidden right
there

but also there's another issue that that
i consider

is that uh dhamma really should be
free of charge that i mean it should
just be free to all beings
everyone should have access to it and so
i really don't like the idea of charging
money for

pure dhamma like if i translated

something from

from poly into english like my atakawaga
translation

i would feel really uncomfortable with
charging money for that

because it is dharma although my own my
own strange philosophical ideas i guess
are fair game so i can monetize those i
suppose

but um um on the other hand people want

to donate people want to support

me or any other dharma teacher then yeah

you

you gather up treasures in heaven for uh

the generosity

um even from the orthodox point of view
so next question is from johnny anand
who is a frequent viewer on bit shoot
and johnny anand asks how does a
buddhist

know if he has hypnotized himself or is
in deep meditation

and what is the difference and that is a
good question because a lot of
meditators just can't tell the
difference in fact a lot of

like burmese meditation instructors and
probably a lot of western meditation
instructors especially like the new age
ones

just cannot tell the difference they
just hypnotize themselves go into a deep

trance

and think that they're in jhana or some
such

but samadhi is not all some asamati

and so yeah that is a good question so

uh one handy rule of thumb is if you're
meditating and you go into a deep state
so that you're just oblivious to

everything around you you do not hear

the the ticking of the clock you do not
feel the mosquito biting you

you know you don't hear the phone

ringing you don't hear anyone knocking

on the door you're just like completely

oblivious to everything outside your

mind

then in all likelihood you are in a
trance state and

you've just essentially gone into a
hypnotic trance and

um with regard to buddhist meditation

it's you're going to be more awake you
know that's

that's what you're going for in buddhism

you're trying to wake up as much as

possible you know the word buddha

itself means awakened so

um yeah if it's making you more

oblivious to everything except for maybe

just this

laser pinpoint on some object

then um yeah in all likelihood you are

just going into a trance so

um try to be as aware of
everything even though i mean you're not
really focusing on it and if you're like
in a
really like a deep mystical state you'll
still hear the ticking of the clock but
it's just going to be passing right
through you without any kind of
resistance you're not going to be
focusing your attention on it it'll just
be like an image in a mirror that's just
there so long as it's there and when it
passes away it passes away
but you're not completely oblivious to
it because it's all just part of the
whole

sensorium and you're just aware of that
um all pretty much all the same time
so it's not like you're really ignoring
anything

so that would be uh that would be my
answer to johnny anand

and um next question is from pk
who asked uh a few questions here

do you really consider being poor and
staying poor

of any help of spiritual progress

well for starters i would point out that
two of the

wisest spiritual teachers known

to the west namely the buddha and jesus
of nazareth

both strongly advised voluntary poverty

to anybody

who wants to be enlightened or to follow

a spiritual path

and my experience is that um

yeah voluntary poverty is beneficial

or it can be it's not necessarily

beneficial like even in the buddhist

texts there were

very wealthy donors who made relatively

high

attainments like anata pindika or

there's one

suta where it's talking about how a

person can live in a mansion with a

beautiful wife and eat

excellent food and just surrounded by

luxury

but if he's not attached to that then
and there's no problem whereas there's a
guy living in a hut with an
ugly bad tempered wife and he's just
eating you know beans every day
and if he's attached to that then that's
a problem

so the main reason for for voluntary
poverty is it just
decreases your opportunities for
attachment

although um a lot of people especially
in the west

uh if they're poor they've just been
conditioned to be ashamed of that
and to be upset or dissatisfied

with their their poverty and so it just
causes like a vicious
circle or something but um overall
yeah i mean if the buddha and and jesus
of nazareth both agree
that um if you really want to live a
spiritual life and make
progress and get closer to ultimate
reality or god or whatever
then simplifying your life works
very well that's one of the main things
you should do just live a simple life
and it's easier to live a simple life if
it's just
kind of thrust upon you through your own
poverty than uh

trying to live a simple life when you've
got millions

but um as i say it's it's just kind of a
general trend and there are some rich
people who make

great attainment and of course most poor
people

um they they don't make great attainment
so it's just one i don't know i wouldn't
want to call it a gimmick but it is

kind of a in general it tends to be more
beneficial than harmful to live

in relative poverty and uh

both the disciples the the chief
disciples

like the uh the the morse the most
serious disciples

of the buddha and jesus were told just
don't even

use money at least in one of the gospels
he advised his uh apostles not to uh not
to handle money

so next question is mindfulness helping
you in daily life despite the
disappointment of not achieving the big
bang awakening experiences

many peop many serious practitioners
develop a craving for

yeah mindfulness is uh it's invaluable
really

because if you're not

mindful then you're just going to be
a slave to your your knee jerk habits

like um there's something that causes
irritation let's say
just barking dogs bug you so
if if you're not mindful then you're
just gonna be bugged and you're gonna be
all pissed off and
bitching and moaning about the barking
dog or or just going out and like trying
to shoot it or something
whereas with mindfulness you can detach
from that or just anything like fear or
worry or
anger or anything if you have
mindfulness then you can detach from
that
you observe it as a phenomenon that is
arising not as

you you know instead of i'm afraid where
then you can just like you know freak
out or
wallow in it or something just continue
to stress out go into
some kind of downward spiral then if
you're mindful then you just
see fear as a rising it's not you
because if you are anything you are the
observer and not the thing being
observed
and so you watch the fear arise and
because
you're observing it and kind of
detaching from it and kind of putting it
as a distance you know putting it on the

other side of you to to look at

then it doesn't control you anymore or

at least it doesn't control you nearly

as

much and you are weakening the karmic

momentum that caused it to arise in the

first place because you're not

reinforcing it

you're not feeding it and so it's maybe

a little weaker next time it arises

so that sort of thing i mean no matter

what you're doing

it's it's it's good for you if you're a

lay person it's just as good as if

you're a monk

and as a lay person it will be more

difficult to cultivate deep samadhi

states but the mindfulness
is always there the opportunities for
mindfulness are always there no matter
how busy you are
for example the teacher of sn goethe was
uba
kin in burma and he was like a
government
relatively relatively high up government
bureaucrat who was
lived a very busy worldly life but
um he was still um like a
an adept at mindfulness meditation and
so it doesn't really matter
what you're doing you can do it
mindfully no matter what you're doing

you can you can manage to do it

mindfully

and so no matter how busy or hectic or

worldly

you are you can still practice

mindfulness and just driving your car

or walking or brushing your teeth or

eating is hard because

you tend to want to indulge in the

pleasure of eating the food

but anything that you do can be done

mindfully

regardless of whether you're a monk or a

lay person and it's just as easy for a

lay person

except the the monk is reminded to do

that more often and has

less distractions to kind of lead him
astray but so long as you aren't led
astray then

the distractions themselves are just
more grist for the mill and

you can just be mindful of all of it so
yeah it has been helpful to me and it
continues to be helpful to me

and um also just like let's say you're
you're

in a relationship with another person
and they're in like a really bad mood
and they're being cranky or something
and

one you know maybe sort of like
argumentative

then if you're mindful then you know you
can

you can avoid being sucked into it and

then you can be like this uh

um sort of the bedrock of uh kind of

peacefulness that

that kind of helps to uh ground the

other person and

it avoids the whole thing turning into a

fight or some such

so yeah mindfulness is uh it's just the

panacea that is

i mean is you can't have too much of it

with guard even samadi you can have too

much samadhi

but you can't have too much mindfulness

too much samadhi and you you just

zone out and uh just go into this state
of bliss and you're not really making
progress

but you just cannot have too much
mindfulness and anybody can cultivate it
it just takes the will to cultivate it
so let's see where am i okay next
question

from pk psychokinesis

that's not the question that's pk bad
joke

are you open to experimenting with
mindfulness and concentration
techniques mixing and matching intensity
and quality of
attention to the standard vipassana

noting um

i think my answer that question is i'm
not exactly sure what the question means
mixing and matching intensity and
quality of attention

wow well i mean i am open to
experimenting and a lot of the
meditation techniques i have practiced
over

the course of my career as a meditator
have been just

worked out through trial and error and
just

it worked for me and so i went with it
so long as it was working

so um yeah i mean i have been
open-minded and not

really just locked into you know just following

verbatim cookbook fashion what the book says

although i've done that sometimes too

because generally the

the cookbook instructions do have some validity to them

but still you have to be flexible and uh

use your intuition and your your

inspiration and find what works the best for you

but uh yeah my the basic answer to that

question is i don't understand it

next question also from pk what's the

value of venerated scriptures and

slogans if they are not
directly easily related to experience
but turn into topics of speculation
and debate well obviously any
any scripture that isn't helping you
to wake up or helping you to be a good
person or a contented
blissful person or a peaceful person um
yeah it's its value would be very
limited
the only value of something like
abhidhamma for example which has almost
no practical value that i have seen
beyond what is contained just in the
basic sutas
is uh it gives you kind of a belief
system that

maybe is like a wholesome belief system
maybe more wholesome
than a previous belief system or some
other mainstream belief system
so um you know that's one of the basic
reasons for religion in general is it
just gives you a belief system
to kind of to use it to navigate your
way through life and then some belief
systems are better than others and
everybody has to have one
until you become completely enlightened
and then even then you're going to
appear to still have one
so um but with regard to the stuff
that's theoretical that you can't really

prove it's just
dogma if you can't verify it through
your own experience
then that's just dogma and
to some degree you have to rely on it i
mean if you want to take somebody's
advice with regard to
what enlightenment is like then you
find someone who you think has a good
likelihood of being enlightened
and listen to what they say but still
you shouldn't
insist upon anything that you can't
really prove which
would pretty much rule out a lot of
christianity and
also a lot of the new social justice

stuff so

yeah just uh if you're going to insist
upon something at least be able to
verify it

see the value of venerated scriptures
and slogans if they are not directly
easily related to experience but turn
into topics of speculation and debate
well speculation can be fun

you know philosophizing in that regard
and uh but i mean debating

something that you don't really know but
you're just

repeating what you've been told that's
that's a stupid way of going into
into a debate so

yeah yeah so you shouldn't you should
try to be as

as dogmatic as little as possible just
uh

try to uh have some experiential support
for for your philosophical beliefs and
if you don't have experiential support
it just sounds like a really elegant
theory or something then you shouldn't
be insisting upon it and

maybe debating somebody would be good

just for exposing the weaknesses of your
own point of view

that would be one of the the best

reasons for debate is just

no point of view that can't stand up to
an all-out attack is

is a point of view worth keeping so you should expose your own point of view to the criticisms of others and not just protect it or get angry if somebody's just like finding fault with your point of view just just put it out there and let it get attacked and if it just gets torn apart then uh it was it was not the best point of view to have and so you're better off having it torn apart so you can maybe try something else okay next question and we begin the

merciless relentless onslaught of
questions from
dog breath and i'm not complaining at
all

he asks good questions so mr breath
says i recall reading somewhere that
it's possible to self-ordained as a
buddhist monk

is this so well from the theravada point
of view the answer is nope
you have to be ordained um
by at least five monks

um in in the ganges valley it's ten you
have to be ordained by at least ten
monks

they all have to be in good standing and
uh it all has to be done according to

the poly

formulas so um yeah you'd have to go

through an ordination ceremony with

regard to

like some of the mahayana schools i have

no idea

but um yeah with regard to theravada no

you cannot self-ordained

only the buddha did that

so next questions next question please

explain

skandas and in pali that's condas

and how to get rid of them real quick

yeah well the condos the five condas

are what all human beings are composed

of

the five aggregates usually conda is
translated as aggregate um
and and we're all composed of five of
them which is rupakanda which is just
physical matter our body
is rupaconda supposedly and then there's
and i might not get this in even in the
right order but then there's
uh way to nakanda which is feelings
veda nakanda which would include like
emotions and just like physical
sensations that kind of thing
then there's sanya condo which is
perception and that
is just the meaning of of the existence
you know
that you've got objects with with

meaning you know

you're living in a world of different

objects and phenomena

that all have their own meaning even if

it's just this thing that i don't know

what it is still that's

that's your identification of it is that

that thing there that i don't know what

it is

so everything has to to be perceived has

to be uh

it has to be viewed as in something

distinct that uh

has some kind of idea associated with it

then you've got um see sankara kanda

which according to the sutas is mostly

karma

it's it's volition it's it's essentially
will it's like the motive force of your
mind

you know it's like the the vedana and
the sanya the the feeling and the
perception is kind of like the
um like the static aspect whereas
will is like the kinetic aspect so you
kind of in a way you have sort of like
the spatial aspect in the temporal
aspect

of the same phenomena at least according
to my interpretation

and then finally the fifth conduct is
anaconda or consciousness

so you've got form feeling perception

um essentially will and consciousness

and um let's see where's the question

again please explain the condas and how

to get rid of them real quick

well how to get rid of them real quick i

mean yeah

that that generally doesn't happen i

mean you could blow yourself up but even

then

like like i was saying earlier on you

just the very next moment you just take

a rebirth as a new being with your own

new set of five condos

and even even enlightened being like the

buddha himself

after he became enlightened then at

least two external observers

they still had the five condos so it's

not so much

a matter of getting rid of them real

quick or real

slow it's um

mainly just uh um like

attenuating your attachment and

identification with the condos

because even after enlightenment

ultimately nothing

changes which is the great paradox for

me

so yeah i explained the condos i hope

but uh the the getting rid of them real

quick i mean even even the buddha didn't

teach that maybe

an enlightened being could just look
into your spirit and
just see exactly what you need and and
do that and maybe you're close enough to
full enlightenment that you can just say
something and it clicks
and poof you're enlightened but still um
technically speaking at least to
external observers you're still going to
have the the body and
the feelings and the consciousness and
all that
so next question from mr breath did the
buddha give any direct talks or
directions about
sex to either monks or laypeople

well um sort of kind of

but um my my according to my

recall my memory of things that the

buddha said about sex

he's mainly saying don't do it i mean if

you're able to be

celibate then you should be celibate and

if uh

if you're not able to be celibate at the

very least you should keep the five

precepts

and avoid from avoid like sensual

misconduct

which generally means you settle down

with a nice

person of the presumably of the opposite

gender

who loves you and you are faithful to
that person and you love each other and
and um yeah i mean that is still
relatively wholesome
you know you're just at least you're
still keeping five precepts
but um with regard to monks especially i
mean obviously monks are supposed to be
celibate so the buddha would not be uh
yeah i mean he just told he advised the
monks to just avoid women as much as
possible don't
don't even look at them i remember uh
there's one suto where ananda who always
had kind of a soft spot in his heart for
women

asked the buddha you know what what to
do about women and he just says don't
don't look at them don't see them
and then ananda's like well what i mean
what if they're like

um let's see what was it what if they
just stand right in front of you
and they're they're like talking to you
and everything

and i i'm already misremembering this
but i mean ultimately he just gets to
just be

very careful be very mindful so

um yeah i mean in terrible buddhism
especially

you're not going to find any sex manuals
or you know there's there's no tantric

stuff

taught so

um yeah mainly the the instructions or

talks about

sex the directions about sex is

if you're able to be celibate it's best

to be celibate

but if you're not able to be celibate or

for whatever reason you have

you have commitments or something then

uh yeah just

just refrain from sensual misconduct

and uh you know don't be indulging in uh

promiscuous wantonness with

with prostitutes or so forth and that

kind of thing

so yeah yeah it's uh terabyte of
buddhism is very nonsensual
kind of approach which uh can
run head first into western culture and
crash so next question from
dog breath why did buddhism die out in
india

that's a good question and there's
there's like two aspects to it first of
all

um it started becoming kind of decadent
you know it was becoming more and more
just the mahaya it was developing into
mahayana

which took over most of india i'm pretty
sure

and um when india was predominantly

buddhist even

and um it was just becoming really weird
and esoteric there's all these you know
a lot of the tibetan stuff originated in
india and it was just getting really
weird and esoteric and just
deeply philosophical so that most lay
people couldn't really relate to it much
anymore

and the main centers of this new kind of
buddhism that was developing in india
it was centered in buddhist universities
so those were like the like the
like the intellectual heart of this new
kind of buddhism
and then what really finished it off of

course was the

the invasion of the muslims into india

who

essentially just exterminated the

buddhists there

and the buddhists were more committedly

non-violent than the hindus the hindus

at least had some

like military heroes like like krishna

for example

who they sort of set an example that you

can be a good hindu and still fight you

know the whole bhagavad gita is on that

theme

at least at the the basic level

you know it could be interpreted more

spiritually but uh

you know it's essentially krishna
telling arjuna that
it's better for him to fight than not to
fight so the hindus had that the
buddhists didn't
and the the universities just got wiped
out and sacked
which kind of destroyed the the
intellectual centers
and the people were already kind of
drifting back towards hinduism to some
degree because the buddhism was becoming
just too esoteric and
intellectual and everything and um yeah
what
just finished it off was uh the muslim

invasion

and just the it was essentially genocide

and uh the buddhists who didn't just uh

convert

or or die uh left

as refugees a lot of them went to to

burma a lot of them went to tibet which

was one of the

the reasons why tibet became

predominantly buddhist

and um fortunately the muslims didn't

have a navy so they couldn't get to the

island of

sri lanka or ceylon

and so through good karma i suppose

theravada wasn't wiped out when most of

the other schools were wiped out in

india

so let's see next question how close to
early or original buddhism is taravana
well of the the schools that exist today
it is all in all all things considered
it is by far the closest
which is um the main reason why i
i became a terabyte of buddhist because
i wanted to get as close to the original
buddhism as i could
you know i didn't want to be following
some mutation that
that arose a thousand years later so
of the ones that exist today then
theravada is as close as we get
um but there are differences like

um only about half of the topitica would
be called korra texts

so only about half of the dapitica goes
back to before the schism started

like they're they're even before

mahayana arose there were supposedly

like 30 different schools of so-called
hinayana

you know lesser vehicle the the earlier

kind of buddhism before the the

bodhisattva concept and all that

arose um the way it did in mahayana

so um let's see where was i going with
that

oh yeah well some of the texts they had
all

in common which indicated that those

texts uh predated the schisms and then
some of the

the texts are are very different from
each other

like with regard to abhidhamma in terra
vada only

teravata had that version of abhidhamma
which indicates that

that version of abhidhamma really did
not become

scripture or canonical until after the
schism started which indicates that the
buddha didn't originally teach it

so you can you can use certain kinds of
detective work

to weed out some of the later

developments

and there's a lot of uh scholarship

um expended on that especially in the

west because the burmese are more

fundamentalist they want to believe that

the buddha taught all of it

so um but but some western scholarship

does

investigate um

see yeah it does investigate like what

the original buddhism was likely to be

like and if you really want to know

what the original buddhism was like or

they're very very ancient read the

atakawaga of the sutonipata

that's i mean that's the biggest chunk

of really archaic

buddhism still in existence as far as i
can tell

so that would give you a good a good
taste of what the original

buddhism was like just read the
atakawaga and

there are also some other sutas in the
uh the sutoni pata

the sutini pata has some later sutas in
it but it has a lot of

really really ancient ones so that would
be a good way to find out

let's see next question from dog breath
of the early sex which was the closest

um i have read that there were a few
that were very conservative and again

just through good karma

i think theravata was one of the closest
ones one of the least

progressive schools of buddhism it was
one of the most conservative schools of
buddhism

there was another supposedly hinayana
school that actually was like a reform
movement a reform movement

though it wasn't it wasn't really super
ancient but it was trying to get back to
the ancient

roots and it was called celtrontica
which

um means it's just it's just the sutras
they avoided any kind of of like
abhidhamma kind of a stuff

you know any kind of superfluous or like
extraneous development of philosophical
concepts

they didn't have much use for that they
just stuck with the old suitors

so the celtrontica school also would
come close

like uh like teravata in some ways it
would come closer because it wouldn't
have all the abidama stuff and probably
not nearly so much of a commentarial
tradition because

modern theravada

in a way it's more buddhism than

buddhism because

the the commentaries are the final word

on the meanings of the pseudos

so if the buddha says red but then the

commentary says

well when he said red what he really

meant was blue then

the orthodox position like for for the

very orthodox burmese buddhist is blue

because

when the buddha said red what he really

meant was blue and there there is some

of that kind of stuff

and i just i call that buddhism so um

yeah so uh i guess of the ones that i

know of

theravada and the the extinct celtronica

school came about as close

so if you want to get closer than

taravada first you just uh

dispense with the uh the the texts that
are

after the core and and like i say maybe
you study

really ancient stuff like in the soutini
ponta

so see next question from dog breath
please explain

dependent origination that's that's a

that's a dirty question that's just

that's not playing fair because even the
buddha couldn't explain it

like according to the um the ancient
tradition

after the buddha became enlightened he

almost just became like
a pacheco buddha he was just going to
not teach dhamma he was just going to be
a hermit and mind his own business
because he figured nobody would
understand
dependent co-arising or dependent
origination as
mr. Bress calls it padiccha samupada
but um of the explanations of dependent
origination or
dependent co-arising possibly the best
explanation i have come across
is not terrible and is by Nagarjuna like
the mullah majamaka karaka if you really
want to understand dependent origination
um it would be worth your while to study

that i think

and um in a way he he gives lip service
to the 12

nidano theory you know according to

orthodox theravada there's the 12 new

donald theory and i'm not going to go

into it but it's just

this causes that and that causes this

and this causes that and that's

like the whole cycle of samsara is based

on on this kind of thing but um

i think that's a later development the

the 12 knee dyno theory

is probably a later development and that

was not the original meaning of

dependent core rising but dependent

colorizing is so hard

to for some people to understand that it
just got turned into this formula that
just got memorized by rote and then
you've got

monks think that they understand it
because they've just memorized the 12
links

but um like nagarjuna says the whole
essence of dependent core rising is that
nothing has an individual self-existence
everything exists only in relation
to the conditioning of the context of
everything around it
so nothing exists as an individual
entity it's just a conditional
kind of um like a virtual existence

and so nagarjuna even went so far as to
say that dependent core origination
is the same as emptiness because
everything is empty
of an individual essence everything
every individual thing or every
phenomenon that seems to exist
only is there because of just the
the context of everything around it
that you know it has all these causes
that exist outside of itself
and so it really does not have this
inherent self-existence and that
includes us personally that's
that's one uh relatively wise definition
of no self explaining no self that

nothing including us has an individual
self essence

that we seem to exist conditionally

because of all the conditions that are
causing us to seem to exist

and that's as far as it goes so

rather than spend two hours just

wallowing independent core origination

which even the buddha couldn't really

explain effectively because still almost

nobody understands it even though it's

considered to be one of the most

important

fundamental teachings of buddhism i'll

just

move on to mr breast next question here

which is as follows

i hit a wall with my meditation practice
but have found
death meditation very helpful which
meditation or meditations would you
recommend
from the sutas for a beginner or
an experienced meditator and i assume he
is
asking which meditation or meditations
on
death i would recommend and
the main one for monks in the buddhist
time was you go to a charnel field which
is just like a cemetery for the poorest
of the poor where the corpses are just
flung out on the ground

to decompose and be eaten by animals
and yeah that's not much of an option
anymore they don't have those
in the west so um
it seems to me your best the best kind
of meditation on death
is just to expose yourself to death just
to uh
um somehow find if not
images of dead people um just like
actual corpses go to
uh probably like funerals aren't the
best because in a in the west
you know like the dead person is just
made up you know they're wearing makeup
and got their best clothes on and they
look like they're asleep and everything

but um just just reminding yourself
every day that you're going to die i
mean that that's
that's a pretty strong it's like a
powerful

um way of kind of kicking yourself in
the ass

in a in a wholesome dharmic sort of way
it is one of considered to be one of the
great protectors is just
recollecting that you are indeed going
to die but

um i mean you can you can like have
like skeletons and stuff around you can
get like a human skull or a fake human
skull

but i mean after you've seen it 50 times
it's just like a picture on the wall and
you don't notice it anymore
so whatever it is you're gonna have to
keep it fresh
in order for it to continue having the
effect
and um yeah if you don't have any good
corpses to
contemplate then uh yeah you might uh be
looking
in like gruesome areas of the internet
or something like that
um if that's really your thing but just
reminding yourself that you are going to
die
is uh i mean that in itself is a

pretty potent contemplation

next question is it possible to find

buddhism anywhere on the planet that

resembles what the buddha taught

out in the forests of a theravada

buddhist country like

like burma or thailand or sri lanka

you may find very serious monks who are

really

trying to follow the original spirit of

the sutas

and yeah they are they do exist

it's not going to be mainstream and

i don't know if you could find it in the

west just because the culture is so

radically different in the west

so if you want something that comes as
close to what the buddha taught
you'll have to go to a culture that is
relatively close
to the culture of ancient india in the
buddhist time like the ganges valley
so sri lanka or burma or or thailand
just out in the
out in the rural areas the small
villages in the forests
you may there are places where there are
serious monks who are really
trying to do their best to to really
follow what the buddha taught
i was doing that for quite a while and
i'm sure i'm not the only one
next question do you believe buddhism in

its original form

or its traditional terra vada form has

any place in the west

or do you believe it is destined to be

watered down so as to be

unrecognizable

um well the outward form of it

just doesn't fit the west you know

the the whole ancient indian part of it

um the cultural part

um and a lot of the beliefs just like

the cosmology that sort of thing

yeah it's it's really not going to it's

not going to fit

um it's not going to fit the west very

well because

science is more reliable even even
being politicized and taken over by the
cultural marxists and universities and
all that

it's still more reliable than the
buddhist cosmology the flat earth
floating on water with the 10 million
mile high mountain in the center and
that sort of thing

so um the best we can do is try to get
just the the essence of it

you know which is really just awakening
just i mean the awakening is is always
on tap you know

we're we're always completely immersed
in ultimate reality it's it's
it's not even a tenth of an inch away

from us so

um anything that helps us to wake up i

mean you can call that

dharma and it's not necessary for it to

just adhere to an ancient indian way of

going about it because

the ancient indian way was adapted to

ancient india and were not in

ancient india so

i am sure there would be forms of

buddhism or forms of any kind of

dharma that would be

better than orthodox tiravada

simply just simply due to the outward

form of the orthodox tiravata which was

adapted to fit

ancient india instead of the modern west
so yeah exactly what form that will take
remains to be seen you've got people
like eckhart tolle
who are teaching a kind of amorphous
sort of dharma with with
almost no emphasis on rules of
discipline or
or or morality even
and for a lot of people that may work
best different people need different
techniques or different approaches and
it's
better to have a variety of
of different ways of going about
cultivating wisdom or waking up because
one size does not fit all

um some some basic um

basic principles may apply to everybody

but

um yeah different people follow

different routes and there's just more

variety

in in the modern west we're more

individualistic

so like in a place like rural burma on

the villages

pretty much everybody thinks pretty much

the same you know they all

share pretty much the same world view

and

um so there's a lot less divorce and

that sort of thing

out out in places really like
traditionalist culture is simply because
there's less uh irreconcilable
differences because
you know pretty much everybody shares
the same kind of attitudes with regard
to
a lot of stuff whereas in the west we're
more
individualistic and more
sort of alienated or atomized or
something like that
so um yeah it's
you're going to need more of a flexible
and
variegated approach to
to waking up and different people will

just have different uh

different things that work for them more

so than in the buddhist time or

in even like a modern

southeast asia so let's see

let's see do you believe buddhism's

original form

okay so yeah the best most important

parts just the fundamental essence of it

yeah that applies everywhere just it's

just universal

but um you know just like desire is the

cause of suffering that kind of thing i

mean you can't just throw that out

but um especially the outward form of it

like the

the actual worldly appearance of it is
going to have to be

different to some degree and uh yeah
getting rid of the

the brown robes and that kind of thing
would uh would make sense

and so the last question by mr brass
which is a joke question because he's a
wise guy

if you decide to reordain do you get
your trailer back or do you have to wait
another 20 years for one

um well i'm i'm not going to reordain
i'm

i'm pretty sure i'm pretty certain of
that but

um yeah i don't know i probably wouldn't

if i was reordained i wouldn't i
wouldn't

come back to uh here even though this
pavilion is very nice

the statues are nice uh

so yeah i wouldn't i wouldn't get the
trailer back

because i don't even want the trailer
okay next question

is from airmid i don't know if

i pronounced that right airmid

asks can you talk about death and dying
the mind

states best associated with this time
what conditions the next rebirth and
have we some control

impact on our next rebirth at the time
of death

if you can think of relevant sutas to
read that would be helpful

thanks okay well the relevant sut is i
won't i won't read now because

i didn't even bring the book i forgot to
bring the book that i was going to read
for a different reason

um but uh yeah we've talked about death
and dying a little bit already

the mind states best associated with
this time would be the wisest

possible states you can have because
like i said a little

a little earlier um the most important
moment of your life from the buddhist

point of view and probably from the
hindu point of view also is your last
conscious moment because that is what
determines what direction you're facing
what direction you are headed on going
into your next existence

so that's why for example when mahatma
gandhi got shot

he said hey ram you know that was like
the last utterance that he made before
he died

and it wasn't like in the in the movie
with ben kingsley where it's oh god
they got me no it was i mean he was
saying hey rahm he was he wanted his
mind

on god he wanted his mind directed
towards

god at the moment of death because
that would be most helpful

um to him to his spirit after death

so from the theravada buddhist point of
view

if a person is dying then

certainly they should be reflecting upon

good things like uh a common bit of

advice is if someone is dying

then the monk or whoever is sitting by

their bed with them

would urge them to remember like one of

the best things they've ever done

you know like the most meritorious deeds

they've ever done

so that when they're dying their mind is
on this really wholesome
good thing and they feel good when they
die

because um if if you've got like a
positive

sort of a light mental state when you
die you're going to be heading in a more
positive

light direction whereas if you're all
like freaked out and

or something like that when you die then
you're more likely

to wind up going in a dark direction

but let's say for example you've got a
saintly person

he's lived a very good life and then
right at the very end like he gets
tortured to death or something
and so um even though he's lived a
really good life
he's like in a really bad mental state
at the moment of death
so that can cause him to go in a
downwards direction
but um still all that good karma is
there so that the downwards direction
will be very much mitigated and it
probably won't last very long and then
and then he'll go back
up again or whatever the metaphor is
so um yeah so the best advice
when you die try to be as calm and

as either positive or neutral as possible just try to be as awake and conscious as possible so don't uh you know don't get stinking drunk and crash your car into a telephone pole something like that um try to be uh i mean if you can't be in a positive mental state maybe just being unconscious it would be best i'm not sure about that one i'm not sure how that would work but um yeah that that's essentially it is uh your last mental state you should be living your life preparing for that so next question is from chaplin what

are you most looking forward to in meals
after not being allowed to feed yourself
for 30 years

being subjected to mostly asian curries
and jungle gloop with

insects yes i have eaten insects

how will you dine and what are you most
wanting to eat or cook yourself

how will i dine hmm

yeah i gotta i gotta try to avoid making
the uh

the obvious kind of uh sensual sort of
remarks here

but um i will be eating lots more ice
cream

than i have been eating over the past 30
years that's for sure

and uh yeah more bread and cheese

i'll be eating oatmeal i think a lot

organic oatmeal

with butter and honey and maybe some

dried currants or something stirred into

it

but um yeah food is really not

not like a major attachment for me so

i'll probably still be eating pretty

spartan

aside from the the ice cream and the

occasional apple fritter

next question from chaplin what are your

teaching content creation and dharma

plans a few months down the road after

you get settled in south carolina

well i'll still be uh writing the blog
and doing doing this kind of stuff so
long as i still uh
i'm getting questions i'll still be
answering them and
uh maybe doing a few other kinds of uh
of videos and uh if i
if i'm not too busy working for a living
then
i may actually write a book or two like
there was that the neocynic manifesto
or uh just a kind of spiritual
autobiography i assume would be
interesting
considering that i have lived kind of a
strange life
like 13 14 years just uh meditating in

caves um

see and uh yeah if i'm if i'm actually

uh

like handling money and able to move

around without

uh the handicap of not handling money

then

yeah theoretically there could even be

like retreats or something

and i'll be able to meet with people

more easily

that kind of thing so we'll just have to

see how it goes but the uh

the content creation and uh yeah that's

that's not going to change a whole lot

i hope dharma plans yeah

well best best not to have too many
plans to regard you practicing dhamma
should be like spontaneous like dancing
or something

but uh i am going to uh
have uh intimate interaction with
another human as part of my dharma
and next question what can we as
supporters do to help you through your
big transition

well

yeah i i don't want to be too cheesy i
don't want to be like dr
steve turley just uh
just shamelessly uh shamelessly hyping
myself and
asking for donations and that kind of

thing it's it's always very cringy for
me

but um yeah i essentially just uh
getting enough money to to feed myself
and pay the rent

would be uh the best the best kind of
support i could get at first plus

i mean the moral support is always is
always appreciated and

those of you who are already supporting
or are also much appreciated

but um yeah i mean that's that's really
um as much as i hate to say it then the
best kind of support

that i could receive making the big
transition and essentially starting from

scratch would be uh

just moral support and uh maybe a few

bucks after i'm allowed to start

really handling it okay

next question is from zane and we're

almost

yeah we're almost done okay zayn is the

last questioner

and uh his first question is

it seems to me your focus on following

the rules

of the closest to original buddhist

practice you've been able to find

has been primary and your focus on

following the rules of

vineya has been the primary

self-identity as being a monk

how now will you your definition of
being a buddhist

change or remain the same upon disrobing

well i mean i didn't really identify

most was following the rules although

being a monk really is a matter of

vineya

because i mean the monk is ordained

through vineya and uh he's pretty much

i mean a monk is essentially defined

technically

has in in accordance with the vineyard

even if he drops out it's in accordance

with vinnia

so i mean that was just sort of a

technicality i wasn't really identifying

with that primarily
although i was trying to follow the
rules strictly just as a matter of
like conscience and uh just trying to be
as straight of a monk as i could manage
but um for for a buddhist in general or
a theravada buddhist
traditionally the definition is anybody
who
takes the three three refuges and the
five precepts
you know you take the the refuge in the
buddha dhamma and sangha and then you
keep the five precepts of
no killing no stealing no wrong speech
no sensual misconduct
and i've already got that in the wrong

order and no

no wine ill or intoxicants which cause
cloudedness of mind

so i mean just believing that buddhism
is is a good and wise

system and that you're trying to live in
accordance with that would probably be
good enough

that you could call yourself a buddhist
um if you believe

uh you know some of the fundamentals you
know like karma and

um you know the four noble truths and
that sort of thing

then uh yeah that would be helpful and

um

what's good to me i'm just kind of
amorphous you know

i'm like a liminal being and i um
defining myself kind of locks me down
so i'm just going to do the best i can
and try to be spontaneous
and try to cultivate wisdom still and
try to be as

open to this ultimate reality or
ultimate truth as i can manage
and uh yeah so my definition of being a
buddhist for me

isn't going to change that much because
i really am not working with the
definition of
of a buddhist for myself anyway or even
really like as a human being or anything

so yeah it's when you define something
you kind of lock it down and i'd rather
not be locked down very much so
um yeah although it's true i will it
will be like no rules
five precepts still i suppose but even
that i mean uh
i'll probably break some of the five
precepts sometimes
might uh have less compunction about
swatting mosquitoes for example
if they're biting me not like i'll go
out hunting mosquitoes but i do have the
right to strike out in self-defense
and who knows i might even share a
bottle of wine with my sweetheart

sometimes

you never know so next question

no doubt you'll follow the pancha sila

which she has in parentheses here

shravakayana precept

spoken like a true mahayanist but how

much more leeway will the new situation

provide you

uh well yeah that's pretty much it just

uh the

the five precepts as uh um

sort of like the uh the template for for

proper behavior and

that would be it other than just uh you

know always

trying to be as awake and mindful as

possible

and uh you know never just giving up and
um

you know even if your back is turned on
dharma i mean

you can still feel it back there you

know you know that your back is turned
on dharma

that's still a kind of mindfulness even
when you're living in the world

is um you know even when you just don't
want to think about it you

deep down you know that you don't want
to think about it and it's still

there so yeah i think i reached that
point long ago i don't think i could
ever just

completely go back to um just
being completely blue pillled in the
matrix again

so last question what will set your
parameters for your new self-definition
as a buddhist and yeah i think i pretty
much already answered that i'm going to
avoid self-definition as much as
possible although

i do think that buddhism is
the best philosophy of life that i've
come across

and i do believe that the buddha was in
all likelihood i can't prove it
but in all likelihood an enlightened
being

and uh and i will still be uh

kind of uh uh what's the word
striving in my own way even though i
won't be striving
in a monastic way um i'll still be
you know wanting to be as awake as i can
manage and wanting to cultivate wisdom
and to understand reality and know the
truth
and and if possible help others
in the same in the same endeavor
so yeah self-definition is uh
self-limitation
so probably better off if you don't
define yourself very much either
and um that's it that's that's the last
question

so i hope i didn't uh bungle this too
badly

and uh i hope everyone at least uh got
close to having their questions answered
and if you have more questions then we
can do number nine

and i can still answer these um you know
even after i'm not wearing this brown
toga anymore and not sitting out in the
nice pavilion with the tweety birds
although people might think that my
ability to answer questions will
suddenly

collapse or something if i if i come on
wearing a shirt

and with maybe even a hair longer than a
quarter of an inch

so um yeah if you if you have questions
feel free to leave them down below in
the comments

or when i do make the announcement on
subscribe star if you have access to
that

then you can leave your comments there
too and be happy

and have a nice day and uh

maybe i'll see you no i keep saying i'm
gonna see you next time and actually i
don't see any of you guys

because i'm just looking into a camera
got it gotta tell the truth

i'm not gonna see you next time

so goodbye

all right hello and welcome to
question and answer number nine
i am your host panyo basa
or david reynolds whichever you prefer
and i am no longer ponyo bossa mahatera
or panyo basubiku or
even panyobazo salmonera is just plain
old panyobasa
and so far so good and i'm going to
drink
nope it's not wine it's some kind of
organic berry juice
but we'll get to wine later on in the
questions
but i just wanted to say that um a lot
of the people who have been kind of

down on being a lay person really just
take for granted just the the blessings
and miracles that surround them for
example

i can just walk right into that kitchen
over there

and just open the refrigerator door and
just

have anything i want whenever i want it
which is just so bizarre

it's just i'm still not completely used
to it yeah

but we can get to that later that's that
could be worthy of an entire video

of me just um bitching at you guys for
uh

not fully appreciating the blessings and

miracles that surround you at all times

but uh first i guess i should answer

questions because that is

technically the reason why we are here

so first question is from wendell

and i'm not fully sure that i understand

this question

do you believe you retain memory after

the death

in your brain actually says if your

brain which uh

is not good english so i'll ask it again

here

do you believe you retain memory after

death in your brain

i do i think of it like a capacitor

well um i assume

wendell is asking if i've got

memories in this brain of

lives that i had when i had a different
brain

and i don't think that's necessarily the
case

because as i just said it's

it's a different brain than i had in a
past life

that is if he's really asking the
question if that's the question he's
asking

um you could interpret it to mean

um do i have memory

after death that's still stored in
my dead brain and um

yeah maybe that's maybe that's what the
question means in which case i think
it's possible

yeah i don't think it's necessarily like
um

oh there's some kind of old-fashioned
computers that if they got unplugged all
the memory would just disappear sort of
like uh some calculators too

so in that case um i'm not sure i don't
know

neurophysiology well enough and with
regard to

memory of past lives in in the brain
that's alive

now um i don't think that's necessarily

the case either because

i don't think that the brain creates
consciousness

the brain is sort of like a computer
that

um takes electricity in the case of the
computer

and complexifies it and organizes it and
utilizes it but it's not

creating consciousness it's just
utilizing consciousness

manipulating it so

getting back to this question though um

yeah i'm sorry wendell

i don't fully understand the question um

do you believe you retain memory after
death

in if your brain okay

yeah maybe maybe you're gonna have to

ask it again

and uh please excuse the shirtlessness

but i am in south carolina and it's hot

and i'm thermo-regulating again i've

already set the president

as a monk even in california where i did

a

shirtless or topless question and answer

video

and again this is not wine next

question from nardi

what do you mean by being mindful and

how do you do that

i tried this for a long time in the past

and it resulted in a bad meditation
where i couldn't do anything good while
being awake

well that's that's a good question what
do you mean by being mindful and how do
you do that

um mindfulness

oh let's see i think the best

the best definition of of mindfulness or
city the poly word is sati

sati and i think a better translation
than mindfulness would just be like
attention

like in burmese the word city not only
means mindfulness but it's also on
warning signs you know like
like attention so um

really that's that's what it is it's
paying close attention
and um there are kinds of mindfulness
like
mindfulness of the qualities of the
buddha or something like that
mindfulness of death
mindfulness of the fact that we're all
going to die where you're not
like right here in the present moment
but as a general rule being mindful
usually as as a meditation technique
especially a deep meditation technique
it's referring to being in the present
moment
and not spending a lot of your mental

effort

interpreting what you're experiencing

but just experiencing it

um just in the present moment as just

wide open

and um just experiencing it fully

because if you're interpreting it then

you're paying

some of your attention to the

interpretation and to some degree you're

ignoring what you're being mindful of

like you see a dandelion in your front

yard

for example and a little kid who's more

mindful than an adult

who hasn't cluttered up his mind with

all these interpretations and labels and

all that

um the little kid will see the dandelion

you know in its full splendor you know

you'll see it as a pretty flower still

you know the bright greens and then the

yellow and everything whereas

when you get older you know you go out

and you just

you just glance at it enough that

the interpretation just springs into

mind as you know damn dandelion

weed and then you just stop paying

attention to it you know it's like as

soon as you see it enough

for the label to register the identity

as soon as it means something

and you don't consider it to be
important then that's it you just
you pay out just this little glimmer of
attention to it and then you just go off
in your mind with regard to the
interpretations and everything
so being mindful is
not spinning off into the
interpretations of things but just being
right there
in the present moment and um doing as
little thinking about it as possible
so the way you do it um
is first you start with the simple
things you know like breathing for
example
and uh there have been times like i've

been walking back and forth
talking with somebody just walking back
and forth out in front of their house
you know for exercise or whatever and
having a conversation
where i was being mindful of like the
movement of my mouth
and like the vibration in my throat you
know these these physical phenomena they
were going along with talking
and for some reason i wasn't so much in
the
the habit or the practice of being
mindful
that just the the talking the
conversation was just taking care of

itself

it was just nature taking its course

whereas my mindfulness

was really concentrated on

excuse me just you know like i say

just the physical phenomena of talking

and the the muscles in my mouth

moving and all that kind of thing so it

is possible but you have to start off

with simple stuff

before you get to the the more

complicated stuff

so it's like driving a car or playing a

musical instrument you have to start off

with the the scales

uh you know b b flat scale or whatever

and then um the better you get at it the

more complicated you can get and then
you can you can do all kinds of things
or driving a car you just start off with
the really simple stuff and then you
don't try the parallel parking or
going on the freeway until you've gotten
a certain amount of competence going
so mindfulness is the same way um
i say that mindfulness is attention just
paying
careful attention to something and um
tom poulos seattle who was the founder
of the tradition in which i was ordained
um he said that sadiq which is usually
translated as mindfulness is
which in burmese means knowledge so

according to him

uh mindfulness is just you know

knowledge is

awareness essentially so the more aware

you are especially if you're aware of

what's happening

now you know be here now then um

then you're being mindful let's see

next nardi says how do you become

mindful in what you are doing without

falling

in a meditation mode that blocks you

from being functional during the day

um yeah yeah i kind of already touched

on that one where

um you start off with just simple

mindfulness of breathing or

if you're walking being mindful of the
movements of your legs and

the pressure of the floor against your
feet that kind of thing maybe the oily
sensation in your knees

which is what i would be mindful of
sometimes

and when you get that down then you can
be

mindful of more and more complicated
phenomena

so yeah that would be the way to do it
you have to start off simple and then
you get more complicated after that but
if you're going for more and more
simplicity then you're kind of going

the samatar out but if you're just
trying to be as mindful as attentive and
aware

of what's happening now no matter how
complicated it is

that's more of that we pass in our route
or the mindfulness route

and we're going to we've got a question
a little farther

a little farther down on the list here
um

discussing that so i'll just keep going
next question is from follower number
three six two e zero b

venerable salmonera a question for you
although technically i'm not even a
salmonera now

uh venerable well lay person

venerable nobody is offending

someone a violation of wrong speech

if one makes a joke or a criticism and

another becomes offended does this

entail comic demerit karmic

did the buddha ever deal with difficult

oversensitive people

i seem to have a habit of testing people

with inflated

egos challenging them and trying to

deflate their grandeur

okay that's that's a good question also

it's a relatively easy one because i

have

discussed this uh in blog posts and so

forth

um in buddhism

what you do is good or bad skillful or

unskillful wholesome or unwholesome

depends

entirely on your volition your chidana

so it doesn't matter whether you offend

somebody or not

so long as um it matters more if you

have the intention of offending somebody

so it's worse to want to offend somebody

and fail

than it is to accidentally offend

somebody without the intention of

offending anybody

so you can say whatever you want to say

so long as you do not have the

deliberate

intention of being hurtful and so long
as you're not trying to deceive anybody
as long as you really think you're
telling the truth

then you're doing fine and that's that's
one thing that

that left wing western buddhism has
completely lost they've just
thrown that aspect of dhamma out the
window

where um leftism in general

in the west is so intent on blaming
somebody else

for um you know our unhappiness or our
dissatisfaction or our successes and

failures and so forth

so um the buddha himself did offend

people sometimes

like the the famous case of

um one time the buddha was i mean

according to the legend

right the buddha was sitting in a park

in meditation probably and he was a

royal prince according to the legend and

was very majestic and handsome and tall

and there was this brahmana

who had this beautiful daughter and he

never

found a man that was good enough for

this this

daughter this princess among women until

he saw the buddha sitting in the park

that day and he thought ah this man is
good enough for my daughter

so he brings the daughter to him and
pretty much just offers it to him

and the buddha according to the legend
says what is this

full of urine and dung i would not want
to touch it even with my foot

which um i mean he didn't even call her
her he called her it and yeah that's

that's uh definitely would qualify as uh
what does it say here

yeah he he definitely offended the girl
and it has such shock value for the
parents

that the parents became arias they

became like sold upon us as a result
but um the girl just hated the buddha's
guts for the rest of her life because
she was

uh grossly insulted by him and
it's understandable and i'm sure he's i
mean he has

the buddha spoke insultingly you know
according to the the texts
more than once that's that's the the
case that really stands out which is uh
a lulu in my opinion so i mean

you can't really say what the buddha's
motives were so you can't really say
that he

he wasn't making karma anymore anyway
because he was an enlightened being

so um he didn't do anything wrong from
the point of view of buddhist ethics
because he didn't have any negative
unskillful volition because an
enlightened being
almost by definition is not creating
karma

so he wouldn't have ordinary volition
anyway

so yeah the answer to the question is um
so long as you're telling the truth
and uh you think something ought to be
said

then even if you know it's going to hurt
somebody's feelings
so long as that is not your intention so

like so long as that is not
why you were saying it then um
yeah you're not doing anything wrong
from the point of view of genuine
buddhism
you can't really speak for the uh the
pseudo-buddhism
that is masquerading as dharma in the
west
so next question is from alex
what possible elements of lay life or
modern culture do you intend to accept
or deny
for example listening to music
television
different styles of clothing eating out
okay well let's see i don't really

i mean everyone has their preferences
right so it's not going to be
so much me accepting or rejecting
something

because it's too secular or anything
like that

i think it's just i've always had things
that i like and things that i don't like
for example listening to music i've
listened to that even as a monk so
and i'm just playing it in my head a lot
um just for years and years

just living in caves in burma i'd still
i remember one time
i woke up on the concrete floor of this
cave with

four sticks by led zeppelin just
pounding away already it was like
i had to have been playing since before
i woke up
um let's see listening to music
television i've always hated television
since i was a teenager i've headed
television so i've just stubbornly
refused to accept
tv even though you can watch tv shows on
the computer if you really want to
you know you can watch old reruns of
beverly hillbillies or
or there's this one show i've been
watching called chopped
uh some kind of cooking show but if you
watch it on the computer you don't have

the commercials and the commercials are
really just such an insult to my
intelligence that uh
just it's just demeans my dignity to
watch commercials
so yeah i wouldn't even watch youtube if
if i didn't have ad block
let's see with regard to different
styles of clothing
um i just want everything to be plain
and simple you know so i'm going to
favor probably like
gray cotton khaki olive drab
that kind of thing and uh
yeah i bought a belt that was like my
first day here in uh

south carolina oh my second day yeah
first day i didn't go anywhere
so um yeah i'm just gonna this it's just
gonna be plain and simple i'm not going
to be trying to make any kind of
buddhist fashion statements or anything
with regard to my hair um
i am going to do something that i
haven't done in 30 years
probably soon which is shave my face
without shaving my head
also um my sweetheart likes
shaved heads but i i haven't had hair
in so long i just want to grow it out at
least an inch
just to see how it goes you know to see
how bald i've got or whatever

and uh when i do have my hair cut i've
always been kind of a minimalist i don't
like

any kind of weird styles you know i'm
probably not gonna have it shaved on the
sides and long on top or anything like
that

probably uh the way it used to be i just
go to the go to some place and just say
cut it down to an inch and a half just
every hair on my head the same length
um eating out uh

let's see yeah i don't think there's
necessarily anything uh

non-dharmic about eating out although
one consideration is

that if you eat food i've read this i
think it was ron doss that said this
that um you know when somebody cooks
food

to some degree their their mental states
or their

vibes kind of permeate into the food a
little bit

and he he's talked about how he had this
teacher this in india

who would get violently ill if he ate
food from somebody that was angry

and so you're better off if you've got
somebody who likes to cook for you
that loves you or just at least likes
you

um at least that aspect of it kind of a

non-physical aspect of it would be
better than just
going to some place where some teenager
who doesn't give a damn about you
is just slapping food together because
he's getting paid minimum wage for it
um if you can afford to go to a fancy
restaurant where you've got a chef who
takes pride in what he's
what he's cooking maybe that would be
better i don't know
but then again paying an arm and a leg
just to eat
food is uh kind of silly in my opinion
but that's another that's another
miracle i i fried an egg for the first

time in 30 years today

and it was good i had an egg sandwich i

mean that that in itself i mean

so many people they just don't

appreciate

that um i mean just being able to walk

to the fridge and get

food whenever you want it is really a

blessing

or uh i mean even having my own bathroom

for years at the monastery in california

it was it was a rare

shower that i could take without

somebody somewhere else in the building

flushing the toilet or turning on the

hot water so that my

my showers didn't just go scalding hot

or freezing cold or something

okay anyway that was that was my answer

to uh alex with regard to uh

what possible elements of lay life and

modern culture i intend to accept or

deny

um yeah i'm just gonna live a simple

life

and i will still be an abnormal

minimalist by western standards i am

sure

but um yeah i don't see anything

necessarily wrong with uh

listening to music or i don't know

wearing a shirt that's

uh red i can wear a red shirt if i want

to

okay next question is also from alex

what is your opinion of

bhakti or devotional yoga as a way to
enlightenment

that's an interesting question and

uh i mean it's really got

a lot of would you call it advocates

especially in india bhakti yoga is one
of the main

branches of yoga but i think it's mainly

suitable for a heart oriented person you

know you've got karma yoga the

like the yoga of service which is sort

of like what gandhi was doing

or mother teresa even though she wasn't

a hindu

and then you've got like bhakti yoga
which is

the the yoga of this wholehearted
love and devotion to the guru and
it seems to me that just using romantic
love

as a spiritual vehicle just trying to
love another person as perfectly as you
can just as
openheartedly you know as completely as
you can

that would be similar to bhakti yoga i
think it's

um really it's it's i see it more as

um a vehicle of love rather than

like just obedience or or just reverence

something like that although reverence
itself would have like the open-hearted
acceptance to it because

my handy definition of love is just
acceptance in a way it's just knocking
down

at least a window in pink floyd's wall
so that you just

open to somebody without anything closed
off between you

so bhakti yoga to the extent that it
does that to the extent that it gives
you greater love and if you're loving a
really wise person

then mental states are contagious

then the mental states of the the wise
person will

have its effect on you which also can be
beneficial although
that can be beneficial regardless of
what kind of yoga you're doing if you've
just got an instructor and you respect
your instructor then
or you have a certain amount of love and
appreciation and gratitude
towards towards really anybody then
you're going to get
benefits regardless of whether you're
you're taking
the path of meditation or or service or
anything like that
so getting back to the question what is
your opinion of bhakti yoga as a way to

enlightenment i think

it does work for some people especially

if you pick the right guru

i mean if you just pick a crackpot

charlatan um the hindus say that

you know even if your guru is a crackpot

charlatan still

if you do it perfectly it's still a

valid

um valid vehicle to enlightenment

because it's really um just the capacity

of your own heart to

fully accept and love somebody

so yeah it's really not

the route i have taken although i'll be

taking it

more now that uh that i have a

sweetheart you know so it'll be
um part of my my spiritual practice
um starting you know

recently relatively recently is um
just to to love somebody as well as i
can

and to be as have as good of an effect
on the other person like if you have a
relationship

then um you know you have another person
to consider

obviously like if i'm in a bad mood and
i'm by myself i can just sit there
grumbling and like bitching and being
pissy to myself or whatever but
if you know you love another person and

they're there you don't want to just
take it out on them so in a way it kind
of steers you to being a better person
in that regard

and um you know that that's kind of a
spiritual

practice in and of itself so

i guess i do have a little bit of
devotional yoga going now

um maybe more than a little bit

but um yeah i mean i've been more head
oriented

throughout my life so it's more what
guyana yoga or raja yoga

rather than the bhakti yoga but um

okay next question this is from frank

what is the status of vada and then in

parentheses he says i still have hopes
that we might see this take off
well the status of naval cavada as far
as i know

is relatively unchanged i mean there was
there hasn't been really an official
status

for nava cavada at present it's an idea
that um um i mentioned it years ago on
the old blog

where um

because monasticism doesn't fit western
culture very well you have to come up
with a compromise

you know of semi monks wearing you know
gray sweats or army surplus or something

like that keeping

a reduced number of precepts that kind
of thing

and uh yeah i'm i'm fine with that i
mean it's still

still the same status as it was before
as far as i know

but i can't really do it by myself so
hopefully there will be enough

like-minded people getting together to
form like um

like a critical mass or a nucleus you
know the bare minimum required to really
get something going

um to some degree i'll just be doing it
on my own like i said i'm just going to
be living kind of a simple

still relatively minimalist um

existence and so um

yeah it could be i could be enough of a
nucleus all by myself if i do it well
enough

although i'm not really getting out and
mingling yet i've been

just spending most of my time here or
else just going to

places like the uh the phone store and
the bank and things like that

okay so naval cavalry i mean it's uh

it's still i mean maybe maybe it's a

little bit progressed now that that i'm
not a monk

so i've taken a step closer to that

although uh yeah it's gonna it's gonna
take more than just me
i don't think one person makes a
movement

next question from beatpat427

since time is cyclical as exposed as
opposed to

linear if one dies on earth in the year
2021

couldn't they still take rebirth in an
earlier year on earth

say 1921. that's an interesting question

my father used to talk about that

my father believed in in reincarnation
or rebirth

and um he always used to say that he
would have been happier living in the

stone age

he would have made a good like warrior

shaman or something he really did not

like the modern world very much

and so he said that he was hoping he

could be reincarnated into the past

and at the time i just didn't see how

it's possible because if you're going to

be reincarnating in the past and you've

already

you've already been reincarnated in the

past you know it's already there because

it's in the past

um see with regard to time being

cyclical

as opposed to linear i really don't

think it's cyclical or linear

tell you the truth i mean india went

with the cyclical idea

um you know the eons and all that which

is probably originally based on

early observations of just the cycles of

the

the sun and moon the seasons and all

that

um personally i see

time from from like a scientific point

of view i just see it as like the fourth

dimension and then

we just interpret it however we

interpret it which is going to be

like a false interpretation based on our

crude animal

um nervous system our perceptual systems
or whatever

so um i really don't see it as cyclical
or

linear is just whatever we make of it
but

uh with regard to going into the past
like being reborn in the past i think
what it would

more likely is just there are so many
alternative worlds you know it's just
many worlds hypothesis

and so um you know you're going to be
able to

whatever is appropriate for you to be
born into

i mean it's going to happen and it may
be

you know an alternate world um you know
that's in a in a past age or something
um i think that might be more likely
than uh this

exact world going back into the past
but uh who knows um if it did happen
that way then

you could be you know more advanced in
this life

and then another life after that you'd
be cruder again

because you were in an advanced state
when you went back here but if you could
do that

then you might be able to be reborn into

two lives at the same time that kind of
overlap or something which is flatly
impossible from the buddhist point of
view

and i think from the orthodox buddhist
point of view being reborn into the past
would be impossible also

so um yeah that was kind of a
complicated one

so i'll just move on to the next one and
this is from

potila

not buddhism related but i'm interested
to hear your thoughts on the ufo
phenomenon coming out in the media from
former dod

officials i have a similar opinion to
you

as you expressed to herroo on the topic
possible but right now a lack of
evidence it seems

though now is starting to come to light
with new videos and evidence

what are your thoughts about what it
could be

and if they are not humans the purpose
of their visits

well i've got two main hypotheses with
regard to ufos

i got the old one and the new one and
the old one

is that ufos are probably

not coming from planets in outer space

you know some other star system but it's just

different versions of us i already mentioned the many worlds hypothesis so there'd just be like a

a different version of earth with more intelligent more advanced

us in it you know maybe you know there was some toba catastrophe didn't happen 75 000 years ago and

didn't wipe out most of the human race

and there's just been steady progress

ever since and and now they're all like trans human or something

um so they would just be coming sideways through probability

like probability would be like the fifth
fifth dimension or sixth dimension or
something

um that that was my old hypothesis and
if they come

they're coming here they're coming here
like as scientists

like anthropologists studying primitive
tribes or something

um and then of course they might have
like uh in star trek you've got the
prime directive where you're not
supposed to be

mucking up in the the society you know
like

just you know landing on the white house
lawn anything like that

so they'd be like scientists trying to
be as low impact as possible
something like that um i think it's
possible and that would be why
they can't have proof of it because you
know they're so much more advanced than
we are they just don't
want us to have proof so they just we
can't have it
or something like that but then just
last year
i read the book
the are in the paranormal by george p
hansen and uh
i think he's pretty much sold me on the
idea that

ufo phenomena are paranormal

it's like ghosts or bigfoot or

witchcraft or that kind of thing

where it's uh it's not really flesh and

blood beings

flying through space in nuts and bolts

spacecraft

but it's like

a paranormal event where

it's possible archetypes are like

materializing

through like the the cracks in our world

view or it's like it's it's really it's

really

such an excellent theory that that

hansen puts forth

it's it's in a way it's like an idealist

like a philosophically idealist
theory where um we have to have
rules and laws to keep everything like
regular and predictable and more or less
safe

and we just can't do it perfectly you
know there's always going to be little
cracks and weak spots and anomalies
and um paranormal events like chaos can
flow through those

and sometimes the chaos will take the
form of primordial archetypes

and so i'm still of the opinion that uh
like the greys

are essentially what people were calling
elves

a thousand years ago and elves were not like cute little santa's helpers a thousand years ago like the anglo-saxons um elves were scary and a lot of the same archetypes just sort of like the the gracile you know high intelligence and you know sort of a slender build and a big head and also the whole idea of changelings i think they were called where children were abducted and replaced with like half elf beings that kind of thing there's a lot of recurrence of themes between um you know earlier earlier beliefs about supernatural beings and what are now

being called
space aliens and um
the archetype just gets clothed in
whatever the the current culture
believes and so now we we're we're
living in a technological age
and so the elves are coming as
technological beings
in uh high-tech spacecraft or vehicles
or that kind of thing
so either way the i don't think the ufos
really are
space aliens coming from some other
planet and all the stuff about
uh the world federation of planets and
humans are

at the verge of being accepted into the
into

the galactic council and all this kind
of stuff

um yeah i i don't believe that

but uh then again i'm no expert you
might want to get uh

harry's opinion i'm sure he'll have a
very different one from me

uh let's see next question

this is a buddhist question what do you
make of the supposed conflict between
samatha and vipasana

in terms of realization it seems that
there is a conflict between

deep states of jhana and insight using
mindfulness

both states don't seem possible at the same time

but it is clear in the text that both work but not always clear how okay

well it is true that um

the buddha taught at least in my opinion

the buddha really did teach

jhana and uh wipasana but

i think it was a lack of understanding

early on that caused it to branch off

into two entirely different

sasanas like sometimes in burma people

will ask

which sasana do you belong to do you

belong to the jhana

sasana or the weepasana sasana or as
sana and i don't think that originally
there was any conflict at all i don't
think it was two separate paths
um one thing that people don't realize
is that we passana isn't something that
you
do it's something that spontaneously
arises
so you don't do wepasana i mean it's
sort of
it's called that now but really what
you're doing is mindfulness
or mindful reflection at most and then
that can trigger like the intuitive
insight that arises but
the way it works i think my best example

my favorite

example anyway is the the small

discourse on voidness

or emptiness in the majaminikaya i don't

remember what number it is

but it's the the small or lesser

discourse on

voidness or emptiness the chula

i think it's called and um

in that you've got the meditator goes

out into a forest

he's going to cultivate emptiness so the

first step he takes

is to go into a forest that's like your

first

step into emptiness is going into a

forest which i think

is uh it's it's it makes a nice meme and
could become a motto or something if i
do get like

hiking meditation retreats going but
that is the first step

and then he cultivates deeper and deeper
meditative states he gets

into genre states goes through all the
genres until finally he hits the
signless

concentration of mind which is sort of
like nirota samapadi it's like beyond
jhana even it's the highest possible
meditative state

and then he comes out of that and then
what he does is he realizes

it's like it strikes him that even the
highest

possible meditative state is still not
nibana

that's still not it and so what happens
is that is an insight that arises

after jhana that you realize that no
matter how

good the genre no matter how deep it is
that's still not

it nothing that you can cultivate is it
and so it's like just something just
snaps or lets go

and boom you're enlightened according to
the pseudonym

so even orthodox theravada says that

janna

and wipasana don't arise simultaneously

what happens is

first you have the jhana usually or you

have you know some kind of meta deep

meditative state or or whatever it is

and then that triggers the insight

that triggers this intuitive knowledge

that that that is the uipasana so it's

like

um they're not in conflict at all even

though you can't have both

exactly at the same time because when if

you're in genre you're not thinking

anything really

if you're in deep genre i mean and so

after you come back

then it's like in in like orthodox
terrible

that you they say you like you review or
something like that

and then the wii pass nut arises

and uh the deeper your meditation
probably

um the more likely you're going to have
like a deep insight um

experience like the the better your
meditation

um probably just going with statistics
the more likely

it is that you will have like a really
profound

liberating insight or just just a

profound

um insight even if you're not completely

liberated by it

so yeah and i think you just got

confused

by scholar monks writing commentaries

who weren't really into meditating they

were just into like

philosophical systematization of

everything so they're just making

everything all complicated and just

trying to describe

everything and putting everything into

into categories and all that

and um yeah i think they missed the boat

personally

so yeah i don't think there was

originally any

conflict between uh jhana and wipasana

that it was mainly through commentators

who maybe weren't meditators themselves

who were

just theorizing and didn't fully get it

so i hope that answered the question

because i'm moving on to the next one

also from potila saying

lastly how was your train ride from

california to south carolina and

i shouldn't go into too much details

because uh

that's what um the blog post i posted

recently and the next one after this one

are that's going to be like the official

description of the train ride

and um one thing i realized it should
have been

should have been fairly obvious but one
thing i realized is the train ride even
though it can be very scenic at times

it's very nice i really liked it

and no regrets at all but much better
than a plane ride even though it took a
lot longer

is that mainly you're getting views of
junky backyards

because you know trains always go behind
instead of in front so they go behind
houses

and uh like factories and that kind of
thing and it's

it's not the best houses because you
don't have train tracks going through
the nicest neighborhoods
so yeah there's a lot of junky backyards
but there's also lots of uh
uh just wilderness and and deserts and
didn't see the rocky mountains of course
that's that's

i really still don't get that one how
can you go over the rocky mountains and
not

and not see them even if you did it
during the daytime i just don't get that
at all

so that's a conspiracy i can discuss
maybe some other time

what did they do with the rocky
mountains

uh so yeah if you want to really know
how the train ride went

i guess you'll have to read the blog
because uh

it's all it's all there so next

question is from dog breath mr breath

he says you have spoken on an earlier
video about the best acid trip you ever
took as a monk

i don't remember that one now you're not
a monk

now that you're not a monk do you intend
to continue your psychedelic expirations
and have you

ever done mushrooms um

yeah i don't uh i don't really remember
talking about the best acid trip i ever
took as a monk i'm not really sure
what what it would have been i've taken
it a few times over the past 30 years
and then i did write a blog post about
the worst acid trip i ever took which
was shortly before i became a monk
um but yeah before i was a monk that was
sort of my spiritual
practice as opposed to uh spiritual
study
my spiritual practice consisted largely
of taking like
lsd especially just going out into a
wilderness by myself

and uh dropping acid maybe doing like a
little fire sacrifice
pouring like honey or butter or incense
or something into a little campfire
that kind of thing maybe uh reciting
some verses from the rig
veda so

i guess the main question here is do i
plan on continuing with that and
if if the situation arises i mean i'm
not going to be going around uh
you know looking for a drug dealer or
anything but um
i mean if the situation were to arise
then uh
yeah i'd be open-minded with regard to
that

um have i ever done mushrooms yes i i
was a monk before i ever took mushrooms
which i've taken a few times
and it's very nice it doesn't last as
long as as

lsd but uh it's similar it was very
pleasant it was it was very nice
it was uh almost every time i take
psychedelics like that

i have a religious experiences like
mystical experiences

even just smoking cannabis it's like
sometimes it's like everything is
god just going with like theistic
words theistic terminologies you just
see everything as a manifestation of the

same

divinity you know it's just different

forms different

shapes and colors and everything but

it's all just the same divinity

so yeah it's it's nice sure

why not but um

yeah like i said if if it happens i'll

be open-minded you know if it just

presents itself but i'm not going to go

out searching for it

and i've really gotten too old to really

fully appreciate just blasting my mind

i used to i used to just sometimes i've

just thought back when i was like

18 just man the stuff i did just the

abuse

i put my mind through just pushing it to
the limit you know

so yeah there's there's more wholesome
ways of pushing yourself to the limit
than

just completely uh blasting your mind
with some kind of chemical

but uh it can i mean it definitely can
be beneficial

and uh at least in my generation
most people who were ordained as

tyravata buddhist monks that i

did i know of uh westerners i mean

um started off with like psychedelics

some kind of some kind of psychedelics

and then uh

then you have this experience it's like
uh

i mean it's just as valid as the
ordinary waking state

i mean you have no doubt at all about
that you know it works differently the
mental state does but it's just as real
and then um it just gets you into the
idea that uh

you know i want to experiment with you
know finding a different

frame of reference but not relying on
chemicals to do it and that gets a lot
of people

into meditation to begin with i think
nowadays it's mostly just stress relief
that gets people meditating but

back in back in my day you know 35

40 years ago when i was when i was young

um you know it wasn't stress relief it

was just trying to find

some alternate route to reality and uh

that's still valid

i assume although i'm getting kind of

old for um

doing weird things to my brain

so next question also from mr brass

what exactly is a salmonera what are the

requirements for being one

how does one become one and what does it

mean for a person's daily life

once one is one okay

well like i said i'm not even i'm not

even a salmonella anymore i was uh
a salmonera from the day i started the
train trip

till the night i ended the train trip
and before even leaving the train
station

i ceased being a salmonera just by uh
telling somebody that ty wasn't one
anymore

so um the requirements for being one
it's

technically i'm sure there are
requirements it's it's pretty much the
same requirements for becoming a monk
except you don't have to be 20 years of
age i think that's the main difference
so in asia it's mostly kids that are

there are salmoneras every once in a
while you'll meet a kohinji
in burma which is an old salmonera you
know a fully adult salmonera
and usually it's honest and rather
humble

guys who just realize they don't want to
follow all the rules of monastic
discipline

and i like that i used to get along
really well with

old salmoneras or older you know fully
adult salmoneras because

at least they were honest enough to
admit they didn't want to follow the
rules

and i think that is better than just
being a fully ordained monk and not
following the rules

you know if you if you want to um you
know just want to cook your own food
that kind of thing then

you're better off as a as a salmonera
and

so yeah the qualifications are
essentially the same as the
qualifications for being a monk except
you don't have to be

fully 20 years of age how does one
become one it's just a

it's like ordination as a monk comes in
two steps

first you're ordained as a salmonera and

then in burma usually

um you'll be a salmonera for like one

day and they'll ordain you

give you the higher ordination as a monk

and um what summoners they only have 10

rules

and um i suppose it's unfortunate that

the 10th precept

the 10th rule is not handling money so

even the salmonera is not allowed

technically to handle money but i

disrobed down to salmonera um

partly because i just didn't have any

layman's clothes yet

and i figured it was less blame-worthy

to be handling money

as a novice than as a fully ordained
monk

and feeding myself and that kind of
thing

so you would become one just by going to
a senior monk oh another difference is a
single monk can ordain a salmonera

like a senior monk who's got at least 10
years

of seniority as a monk can

ordain a salmonera just in a private

ceremony just just the two people there

whereas a full ordination as a biku

you've got to have at least

five monks in good standing

participating in the ceremony

and all you do really is you just take

the three three refuges

and uh the ten precepts and then you're

a salmonera

and uh what does it mean for a person's

daily life

pretty much the same as a monk um

i mean you got less rules to follow

which is convenient you're even allowed

to touch

women as long as all you're doing is

touching them

so yeah i think i think i

probably maybe answered that question

so i'll move on to uh question number

three from dog breath which is

are you going to turn your blog posts

into a book

and that is a good question and uh

yeah i'm going to be starting with um

the old blog

and uh so any of you that really want to

read it for free

time is running out because probably

within uh

i don't know maybe a week i'm going to

figure out how to take it down and just

leave like a stub there

just directing people to the new blog

and maybe also

plugging the book or three because i've

i've had this idea of you know i've

written quite a lot of

theoretically potentially valuable stuff

on the old blog so i was thinking of
maybe

editing the best ones into maybe three
books one would just be like
straight straight buddhist philosophy
and um

maybe two other ones would be about you
know slightly different
subjects so

yeah i was kind of hoping that uh some
publisher or editor would manifest but
it's it's looking more and more like i'm
just going to have to edit my own book
using like
amazon self-publishing software stuff
like that

and uh so that's that's one thing i can
do is if

if any of you who see this you have any
particular favorite

um articles that i wrote on the old blog
that you want to make sure winds up in a
book

then uh yeah you're welcome to to let me
know

wherever we wherever we communicate
either like in comments below this or
on the discord server or subscribe star
or personal emails anything like that
just just let me know if there's uh
any particular favorite

blog posts on the old blog and

um yeah i will be taking it down i don't

see much point in
selling something that you can just get
for free on online anyway
so the answer to that are you going to
turn your blog posts into a book
some of them i will that is the plan
anyway
inshallah god the gods willing um
yeah and uh i may have to just edit it
myself
so it may be kind of a crappy job at
first until i get it down
okay last question from dog breath is
have you had a beer yet
hmm technically the answer is no
although uh

i have had some wine it is true i didn't
really drink enough of it to get drunk i
think it was mainly uh

just uh kind of helped me relax

with another person and celebrate at the
same time

so yeah i'm not planning on becoming a
drunk or any such thing

but uh yeah i have uh i have had some
wine

my first night here and then uh a couple
nights after that i had a little more

so yeah i broke i broke even five
precepts

now i mean not all five but uh yeah that
one i did

so let's see next question from chaplin

do you plan on doing any upcoming blogs
or videos on the transition

uh yeah well the the blog that i just
did and also the last video that i did
from uh the hotel room in in new orleans
were uh

talking about the transition or at least
the the journey

and uh i do suspect that um

a lot of what i'll be writing about on
the blog for the next couple months

considering that i generally write about
what's in my mind you know and this
transition

really is kind of an important thing so
i will be writing about it

and uh one of the main things that i
plan on writing about and maybe talking
about also

like on just a video format like this is
uh

so many people have uh given me feedback
and that

you know they consider not being a monk
anymore is

uh kind of lamentable because being a
layperson

is so crummy in certain ways

and um i mean obviously you're going to
have more positive

and more negative as a layperson

but i think what a lot of people are
doing is they're just so

used to all of the um the nice things
about being a lay person you know the
greater

physical freedom and just the ability
like i said just

walk to the refrigerator and help
yourself to whatever you want

um or just you know just having like a
nice place

um being able to sit out on the balcony
and drink my coffee in the morning

it's really nice so i think what happens
is it's sort of like people seeing the
dandelion

that i mentioned earlier where
eventually you just get to the point

where you're not mindful anymore
and then you have these negative
associations or just associations with
the first noble truth of just never
being completely satisfied and then you
just want to kind of blame
you know whatever it is for for not
being fully satisfied but
you're never going to be fully satisfied
no matter what you do or don't do
because that's just the first noble
truth
unless you can manage to become fully
enlightened
so yeah that's one thing that i do want
to
pontificate on is that uh you know it's

don't let anybody tell you that a lay
person cannot

attain deep spiritual states i mean
you're going to be more distracted but
sometimes

it's just like the some kind of crisis
from being a lay person or living a
worldly life just some crisis will come
up it'll just slam you into a highest
level of consciousness

or you know who knows you can just be
walking in a forest

just being in the present moment and
boom

or whatever it is so

it's trickier you know it's more more

advanced difficulty setting

but uh some people do best on on higher
difficulty settings

like when i was in school i always did
best in the most difficult classes

like the easy classes were just kind of
boring they weren't challenging me

and to some degree being a monk was kind
of like that for me just uh

i wasn't having enough challenges and so
i wasn't really at my best anymore

so let's see i guess i sort of answered
that question

maybe so i'll move on to chaplin's next
question which is

when do you plan on starting the

recorded dharma talks that you mentioned

previously uh

yeah well soon i mean i'm kind of doing

dharma talks

um just in these q and a things

and um

i've always kind of been a little bit

reluctant to talk about really simple

basic stuff

because everybody else is talking about

it you know all the other dhamma

teachers

or at least the the serious like the

monk ones

are talking about that kind of stuff and

i really

like talking about things that other

people aren't talking about
so talking about what has already been
talked about a thousand times
it doesn't interest me as much i like
the weird stuff
so if anybody wants to know something in
particular
then uh yeah you can just let me know
you want to know something in particular
like like these q and a things um they
work really nice
for that otherwise uh you may just have
to wait until i
the the spirit moves me
the mood strikes me to talk about
something that just through random
chances something that you want to learn

about

uh but yeah it's gonna happen i'm going

to start doing the

the readings too so

my girlfriend is an artist and so we'll

be going out into uh

aesthetically pleasing uh

areas i think for that sometimes

next question would you consider doing

a series of buddhism 101 type readings

of some foundational texts for those of

us who have

lots of learnings to do okay yeah that's

that's similar to the the question above

that

and i think the answer is pretty much

the same

um the buddhism 101 stuff i think it's

you're gonna have to request it

specifically

um because as i say i prefer the weird

stuff

and kind of going at things from from

the sides or from different angles

you know so um yeah just the basics

you might be better off with one of

those really orthodox

kind of boring monks that that are on

youtube

um and uh yeah you'll get a lot of the

foundational stuff from that

and uh you want something weird then uh

come to me or you want you want me to

explain something

uh simply and something really

elementary then i think it'd probably be

best if you just

just ask me like in the q a or or

elsewhere

and i can get to it and so the very last

question

also from chaplin please explain your

name

transition is it correct that you went

from beku to samanera to simply

panyobasa

how shall we refer to you now

um yeah i was panyobasabiku

and uh also as as brian rue it was

pretty much only brian

that would call me that but he would

call me panyobasa mahatera

the great elder which is anybody who's

been a monk for at least 20 years

is a maha terra a great elder and a

terra is anyone who's been a monk for at

least 10 years or

10 10 rainy 10 rainy seasons

because years are counted in rainy

seasons for a month

uh the year for the word for year is

wasa which

literally means rain because they count

in uh

in uh rainy seasons so um

yeah i went from panyobasa biku or

in uh brian's terminology ponyobasa
mahatera to panyobazo salmonera which
was

uh i mentioned that above and that was
just for the train trip

just uh like 15 minutes before i left to
get

on the first train to maybe 15 minutes
after i got off the last train i was uh
just a salmonera

and um i don't know people could call me
plenty of also salmonera but uh

this pony obasa was good enough or i
mean i'm david reynolds now it's it's
really weird even just calling myself
david reynolds i have to like get into

the habit of signing my name again like
my

my my signature it's uh it's really
strange just the whole transition is is
is kind of strange and uh you know i'm
kind of

kind of going about like a little kid
whereas you see the dandelion as the
pretty flower instead of
just seeing the weed and then your mind
shuts down so

um yeah it's it's it's been good so far
although i'm drifting away from the
question here

how shall we refer to you now um i'll
respond to anything that isn't overly
abusive

so either ponyo bassa or david works i
mean i'm still paniobasa

it's not like i'm stealing the name um
more than half my life i've been called
that so i guess i've earned

the right to have um a paulie name

like i guess aja shanti he's not a monk
and he's got a

an indian name there's lots of you know
new agey people with indian names or or
like hindus

that kind of thing so yeah i'm still a
ponyo bassa i'm just not paniyabasa biku
or even panama salmonera at this point
so yeah i know you just not necessarily
call me venerable lord although i don't

think any of you ever did

anyway bonte is not necessary anymore

so yeah just uh ponyobasa or

uh david i guess

i've never really been into names i

don't identify with names it's just

it's just words so um yeah i guess

that's it so that is all the questions

so uh anybody who uh thinks that this

one wasn't a

complete nose dive after the ones i did

when i was a monk

then and you still have questions to ask

about buddhism or meditation or me

personally or

or burma or anything like that

then just even like supernatural

paranormal stuff

rebirth then if you have any kind of

questions about that you're

you're quite welcome to ask very welcome

and uh

put them in the comment section below or

um i do put an announcement up on

subscribe star

before i do the q a video so you can you

can leave questions there also

or on the discord server if you have

access to that

and uh i refrain from saying i'll see

you all next time because i

never see you all because i'm just

looking into a like a camera

so there you go be happy

and uh i assume there will be a

q a number 10. so have a good one

bye

hello and welcome to episode
10 of question and answer and i
am your host panyo bassa not panyobasa
biku anymore obviously
not panyo basa mahatera
and i'm still wearing a shirt
although if you prefer i can be called
david reynolds also because that has
always been the name
on my legal id like on my passport
or on my new south carolina id card
so without any further ado i'm going to
start answering questions because we got
a lot of them
that i mean most of them were asked
in in in like large numbers just within

the past

few days so i've been hit by a tsunami
of questions and so here we go the first
question

is from insalubrious dithyramb

he says hello david as a layman is it
possible for me to meditate by learning
mindfulness from youtube i have tried
several of ah john brahm's meditations
and they have

worked for me so far is this safe

um yeah something like mindfulness

meditation is a fairly

safe meditation or something like

anapana as a general rule

is a safe meditation um if you start

having

problems then it's good to consult somebody but it's unlikely that anything bad is going to happen to you other than just getting stuck or not knowing what to do

um i think it's like tibetan buddhists and hindus especially can have these relatively dangerous meditation techniques like kundalini meditation is notoriously dangerous if you try to practice it from a book without a skillful

qualified teacher guiding you so um yeah with something like that where you can really kind of go off into like some kind of

dark realm

or make yourself vulnerable to dark

forces

or mess up your kundalini so that you

know

it's going too high up your spine when

you're not ready for it yet or something

like that

then yeah definitely you should have a

qualified teacher who's

overseeing what you're doing and guiding

you but something

as basic as mindfulness like mahasi

style mindfulness

or i assume what ajahn brahm is teaching

or just

ordinary anapana something like that

some kind of

um probably most mantras like home

something like that those are safe and

basic

and it doesn't even mean because they're

safe and basic that they're not advanced

meditation techniques because

something like anapana you can go all

the way before the jhana with that you

can become enlightened through

practicing that so it's

it's basic and safe but also some of

these meditations can really take you a

long ways

so um yeah you can if if your best

teacher is a book or your best teacher

is a youtube video then

yeah follow that teacher and if you do

have

problems you reach a stumbling block or

something like that then yeah you should

you should ask a qualified teacher

but um yeah if it's working for you then

that's great

and it is uh safe as far as i know i

don't think ajahn brahm

uh is teaching dangerous things or or

even like

uh most of the other insight meditation

people

or for that matter most of the stuff

you're going to see on youtube

is not this advanced esoteric

potentially dangerous stuff so i think
you're doing okay so the next question
is from

steve let's hear more about your
navakavada

ideas and how to do it i would be
interested to hear it

well my own approach to navakavada at
present

is essentially just getting myself
established

because i mean i have to attend to
reality just like um

just practical pragmatic reality here
so i've got to set myself up relatively
to get relatively stable more or less

just be

sure that i'm able to pay the bills that

kind of a thing

and um i do really

plan very soon to uh

take a hike up on paris mountain where

there's some good hiking trails and some

primitive camping sites

that could possibly be a site for

meditation

retreats like camping retreats so that

was those have been part of my plan for

quite a while

um also i'm working on

getting some books published which may

uh in addition to providing me with a

little bit of

material for paying bills you know
passive income i think it's called
um also uh i mean it's going to
maybe serve also as a kind of
advertising

you know it's like um nava colada isn't
going to work if nobody knows about it
so for me at present i'm just trying to
get my own act together

and um i mean me teaching dhamma
me leading retreats if people are
interested

i mean that's really the best i can
think of at present

um it could possibly involve me
eventually uh wearing you know the gray

sweatshirt or something although it's
very hot and humid here in south
carolina so sweatshirts might not be the
best option

but um yeah nava cavada is

um just in theory i mean the basic idea
of it

is a compromise between

teravada like orthodox theravada which
was designed for ancient india in a very
different culture than one we're in
and modify that sufficiently so that it
will fit

western culture like modern or

post-modern western culture

and so that's going to involve changes
in rules

and uh changes in clothes um
just changes in a lot of things and like
most westerners
can't really accept everything in the
texts anyway because it comes from a
pre-modern
even largely pre-logical age
and so fire-breathing dragons in a flat
earth an eclipse is being caused by a
demon called rahu swallowing the sun or
moving into his mouth
that kind of a thing um yeah so
um like most westerners capable of
critical thought aren't going to accept
that sort of thing so
really just 100 orthodox taravana

is not really a viable option
if you want it to strike traction
there's always going to be a fringe of
people who are
able to accept anything but um
there's going to have to be some kind of
modification or
if people are claiming to be orthodox
theravada while at the same time
thinking like westerners um the monks
are going to be fudging on the rules
which they already do
even the relatively strict ones are
fudging on rules
and um the lay people um
i don't know five precepts it's pretty
easy to be relatively strict with those

so at least there's that

so with regard to the lay people um

it's not going to be so much of a change

unless

we're going to develop a kind of

quasi-monk hood that's intermediate

that isn't an official monkhood but for

people who want to practice at a higher

level

to make more renunciations maybe follow

more rules

although lots of rules really is not the

best idea and

there is evidence that the buddha

himself

warned against having lots of rules with

the vineyard

this this massive pile of rules

um possibly arguably developing

after the buddhist after the buddhist

party nabana after

after he died so um

yeah and and the more people that are

interested the more feedback there's

going to be and there's going to be more

people

um discussing this in working it out

um with regard to me if i were to

develop navigator single-handedly then

it would

probably just apply to me personally

which is kind of the way i've been doing

things i've been living

essentially as a loner and
really haven't been trying to
proselytize

but with books coming out and maybe more
people reading the blog that kind of a
thing i may have more of a voice
and in that way more influence and
possibly my strange ideas will spread to
others

although it's going to require um
probably some kind of uh seed crystal or
just a like a critical mass or something
because i'm not the sort of person who's
really like

a missionary like a proselytizer i can
have

relatively good ideas sometimes and i
think some of my good ideas would
actually
work in the west but um
yeah i'm not going to be just like
marching through the streets or knocking
on doors
or that kind of thing it is going to
require some kind of advertising i think
possibly like even in like buddhist
magazines
maybe there's enough people that really
don't like the ultra liberal
neo-marxist kind of of buddhism in the
west
who still are like reading inquiring
mind or tricycle out of desperation and

they might see

um you know some kind of advertisement

or are you tired of ultra liberal

buddhism

still want to you want to practice

serious more traditional buddhism

well yeah contact so-and-so or join here

or something

that might be um really a realistic way

in the west

of spreading the message and uh

maybe if uh if things prosper

my books will will help with regard to

that just spreading the message

maybe i should uh write write about nava

cavada a little more

in uh in the volumes that i'm editing
now

so yeah with regard to nava cavada at
present

i'm just pragmatically trying to get
settled here

and uh um ideally i could

i could set up as a teacher if if there
are people who are interested

i mean i don't want to teach like empty
rooms that kind of thing

but uh i mean i have given dhamma talks

like in bellingham where like two or

three people show up so i have done that
before

but um yeah we'll just see how it goes

and uh anyone has any uh good ideas

you're welcome to share them

next question from reconciliation

i still would like to get your opinion

of the differences between western

monasticism and eastern monasticism

well um the main difference between

western and eastern monasticism is that

western monasticism is

christian and uh so it's based more on

like european and also to some degree

west asian culture whereas eastern

monasticism

was originally based on indian culture

and then spread to places like

china and korea and japan where it

adopted

more east asian elements

so um yeah

like western christian monasticism

um is characterized by the three vowels

in fact it's it's

characterized by vowels in general which

is

really foreign buddhism at least i'm not

as familiar with

mahayana monasticism but

christianity you have the vows of i

don't remember the order it's like

poverty chastity and obedience

and in order to drop out

of a christian monastic order i have

been told

you can't just drop out i mean even if

you drop out you're still considered to
be an ordained monk you've just got
renegade

so um i've been told that for a priest
or a monk in a in a catholic order
to stop being a priest or a monk they
have to have

um they have to have permission from the
pope himself

whereas for for like theravada buddhism
there aren't any real

vowels there are precepts and if you
break a precept

then there are other precepts telling
you

how to make confession and that sort of

thing and

um with regard to uh

certain things like uh breaking the vow

of or the

precept of of no s-e-c-k-s you know

the christian vow of chastity or the

closest there is to it in buddhism

um you're just automatically

excommunicated and that's that

so um for for a

like uh eastern monastic or at least a

terabyte

buddhist monk all he has to do is just

tell somebody that he's not a monk

anymore and mean it

and that's it he's not a monk anymore

that's essentially what i did

so um yeah the main difference between western massism and eastern massachusetts is just the religious traditions so you've got mostly christianity with uh um like lifelong vows whereas in of buddhism especially it's of course buddhism and it's much more fluid much less structured usually although some traditions like thai tradition have made it very structured but in the text themselves so long as you're you're following the precepts

you know you're ordained and following
the precepts more or less
conscientiously

you can you can do pretty much anything
you can live alone in a forest or you
can live in a big crowded monastery in
town or

you know you do have a lot of options
especially in a buddhist culture that
supports that sort of thing

whereas i'm really not sure about about
christians

or or other um monastic orders or
monastic traditions

so that's uh that's about my best
opinion i can give on comparing western
monasticism with eastern

especially just in a few minutes so next
question

from follower number three a three six
two e zero b

panyo bassa sir can monks wear head

scarves in very cold or very hot

weather european monks would surely do
better in a more extreme

weather if they could cover their heads
to shield from direct

exposure um actually

there are provisions for that in in the
rules of monastic discipline from monks
and that is that if you are in a place
where you

it's like intense heat or intense cold

you can cover your head with your
sitting cloth

um maybe i should have brought it i
still have my sitting cloth here it's
back there in the closet

but um it's just a piece of cloth that's
you know two and a half feet by two feet
maybe something like that

and you can wear it over your head sort
of like an arab you know maybe
even tie it on and um that works

everywhere except in in town

if you are among the houses quote
unquote

then um yeah you're not allowed to cover
your head

and um it was considered to be somewhat

of a sign of disrespect

also like if you're listening to a

dhamma talk you shouldn't have your head covered

and it's even against the rules for a monk to teach

dhamma to someone whose head is covered because

it's not showing adequate respect in accordance with ancient indian culture to to the dhamma that the monk is teaching

so yeah if a monk is in the forest or inside the monastery or just outside of a public place

he can cover his head with his sitting

cloth

or presumably with another piece of

cloth

but uh wearing turbans and hats and caps

and that sort of thing is against the

rules

so let's see what it says here what do

you think about men wearing head scarves

for practicality or fashion some people

just aren't into

hats so it could be a good alternative

perhaps well i mean that's just a matter

of personal

personal choice i suppose if you're

really into wearing uh

like an arab kind of head covering or or

a turban

or something then uh yeah i mean that's
your choice

you know everybody's free to uh wear
what they like

i suppose so yeah

but uh like i was saying with regard to
monks it's the only allowable way
that uh i i can remember seeing in the
texts

from uncovering his head like in in
cases of really intense sunlight or
something

is just take his sitting cloth which is
a piece of cloth like two feet by two
and a half feet

and just putting it over his head and um

i have seen some monks who
will have like one of their robes just
folded up and just balanced on there
like
burmese nuns do that they'll take like a
large
piece of cloth much larger than a
sitting cloth like maybe a folded robe
and just kind of have that on top of
their head which
also would be allowable i assume if it's
your own robe
then um that would be allowable also but
not in public
it's just not allowable to have your uh
for a monk
who has to follow rules you know linea

to have his head covered in public
so he'd have to uh be uh
prudent with regard to what kind of
weather he's going around republican
so next question is from vajra wolf

77 does the existence of
kama or karma point to a universe that
is governed by free will
or determinism i've tried to square the
concepts in my head and it seems like
comma

points to a middle way between the two
or perhaps it is futile
to even relate the concepts at all but i
would love to hear your take on this
and as it turns out i have this is

probably the third q a maybe the fourth
where i've been addressing something
along the lines of this issue i even had
like a an

extra q a where i just answered that one
question about free will

and i really it is it is nice what um 77
here says about

uh like a middle way between free will
and uh determinism because really both
are are pretty much ruled out by
buddhism

like free will um the buddha's second
discourse after his enlightenment
traditionally accepted as that was the
anata

suta where he's saying that none of the

five condos

are really under our control with regard

to any of the five condos you can't say

let it be this way let

not be that way and have it happen and

one of those five condos is

is sankhara khanda which is uh

essentially will or chijna

and that's that's where what free will

would be if we have free will

and if everything we have or everything

that we consist of is the five

condas then yeah i mean that would rule

that out but determinism also was ruled

out that was like a

pernicious wrong view of um a

non-buddhist

philosophical set called the ajivakas in
the buddhist time

and uh they believed that it was just
straight determinism

that uh you were just mechanically live
out

life after life until you reached i
think it was like 80

000 or 84 000 or 88 000 lives

and it was just like taking a ball of
string holding on to one end of the
string and then just throwing the rest
of it until it just rolls and rolls and
rolls until it's just completely

you know there's not a ball anymore it's
just all unrolled

and so that's the way they considered
life on this

on this planet and the buddha said that
was wrong also

so yeah i've thought about that for a
long time

like uh if it's if free will and
determinism are both

out then yeah it's i've considered to be
just this

kind of a mystery or a paradox there's
some sort of middle way between the two
and um recently i was

just months ago i was reading a very
important book called

the trickster in the paranormal by

george p hansen and he points out that
self-reference produces paradox like
the mathematician kurt godel proved
mathematically

that um any kind of equation
or statement that refers to itself
can produce paradox like the classic
example

is i am lying i can't if i'm
if i if i am lying is true then i really
am lying

so that i'm not lying i was lying about
lying but if it's false if i am lying is
false

then then then i i would be lying and i
wouldn't be lying

and so self-reference produces paradox

and in the book george p hansen was pointing out that meditation itself is a kind of self-reference and that can cause

paradoxes and even like miraculous paranormal stuff to happen

because you're creating like a paradox in the empirical world

something that shouldn't be possible somehow is possible that's that's his interpretation of

paranormal events paranormal phenomena

and um i was thinking about that it was an intriguing idea

and really just being self-conscious you don't even have to be meditating just

being aware of your own mind

your own mental processes is itself

self-referential or not

enough that it could produce some sort

of

seemingly impossible paradox and i think

free will

may if if free will exists then

it could be just this paradoxical thing

caused

or brought about by self-reference just

being aware of your own mind

so um yeah that would be uh the short

answer

i think um in the in the book

that uh i am working on the first volume

of essays

that i'm going to publish actually has a
relatively in-depth

article on on this very issue

so um yeah i'll just uh

be mercenary here and plug the book and

i encourage you to get it and read it

the next question is from kuru minha

how do you reconcile your knowledge

about evolutionary biology with your

metaphysical idealism

greetings from brazil that is a good

question

because um it's it's kind of tricky for

me

to wrap my own head around it because

um like darwinian

biology darwinian evolution like the
theory of natural selection everything
it does strike me as
if not ultimately true nevertheless it
is such
an elegant theory that describes
empirical phenomena so well better than
any other theory i'm aware of
that um yeah it just it's hard not to
accept that
even though i really am a metaphysical
idealist i'm not a materialist i do not
think that physical matter exists
if there's no mind perceiving it
which does put me into uh some
some kind of problematic positions like
if i don't think that there's

um any kind of physical matter if
there's nobody there to perceive it
then the whole like creation of the
earth

would just be this unthinkable void it
would be like in this

limbo until eventually some mind
became conscious enough you know some
some mental pattern became complicated
enough to become

self-aware and then and that's

like when the universe would start um in
in like an empirical or objective
sense because if there's no mind there
there's no

empiricism or objectivity unless maybe

we just assume that there are gods you
know maybe small

g gods that have been observing the
whole thing from the beginning and
maybe their perception of it has sort of
collapsed the state vector

to cause these phenomena to occur even
before

conscious life evolved on this planet
so yeah with regard to scientific
theories

um it's just the strongest paradigm for
understanding things that i'm aware of
at least with regard

to the the realm of samsara buddhism is
good for helping you to get out of
samsara but if you want to understand

the phenomena within the context of
samsara

then science really is about the best
and um

it'll probably dominate until a better
theory comes along

you know it's certainly not the only
theory we've had for explaining reality
before before um before science we had
christianity really

and uh that was relatively easy in some
ways it explained things better because
you could just say well

god made it god made it that way just
just because he wanted to and we can't
understand god so that's that

and um yeah i mean that's it worked
and uh before that you had sort of like
uh polytheism
kind of paganism and that worked and
before that it was something else and
before that was something else some kind
of primitive animism
way back there in the stone age and
probably science itself will be replaced
by something that's even more elegant
and then if i'm still alive at that time
i may
um let go of evolutionary biology
in favor of this new system that works
even better
but until i find a new system that works
even better for

explaining the mechanism of how it works
within the context of samsara
then yeah i'm sticking with charles
darwin because
i like him and really it is just such an
elegant
theory science really is powerful and
one reason why science is so powerful is
it's just so
integrated you know it's it's worked out
to be self-consistent
it's not supposed to contradict itself
and um
that in itself is powerful getting back
to george p hansen and
the trickster in the paranormal is like

the the stronger of a system we have for
understanding reality

um the more we hold scary uh
unpredictable paranormal events

at bay so um yeah science is about the
best we have for that which may

account for uh the uh the low
amount of miracles and and magic and
that sort of thing nowadays

but uh yeah i don't think that science
explains ultimate reality but i do think
that

it is a very convenient and useful and
powerful way

of making sense of
empirical reality of of like
making sense of the the shadows

flickering on the walls of plato's cave
so within the context of the dream
within the context of the matrix within
the context of plato's cave
science works really well until we find
something that works even better
so next question is from nardi
it's okay to pass from observation of
body directly to the mind
that's the question is it okay to pass
from observation of
body directly to the mind i ask you
because i see observation of body and
sensations as boring
and i can focus my mind only when i
observe the mind and its

objects okay well there there's two
points to this that i'd like to make
first

is that uh yeah there's no problem at
all if you want to do cheetah nupasana
which is mindfulness of your own mental
states mindfulness of your own mind then
yeah

that that works just as well if not
better than than mindfulness of the body
so yeah i prefer it also sometimes i am
aware of movements of my body especially
if i'm if i'm doing walking meditation
or just you know there's like a flash of
mindfulness when i'm like reaching for
something
that kind of thing you know you're

mindful of the emotions of your arm and
sort of like the oily feeling in the
joints and that kind of thing

but i agree that observing your mind
and sensations or just observing your
your mental states

um it's in a way it's more useful

yeah it can be more useful because you
you learn more about yourself you might
learn more about your body from

mindfulness of the body but you learn
more about your mind

about your own psychology your own
identity to some degree

by uh observing your own mind

and the the second point i was going to

make is that uh

really as far as i see it like i've

already said i'm not a materialist

so um even observing your own body and

your own sensations is just

a different level of observing your own

mind

like um mindfulness of breathing

really you're being mindful of

sensations and sensations are mental

you know no matter what you're being

mindful of it's mental

because um you're i mean the noting

itself

is mental so even if presumably it

starts off not being mental

like your own body you know if you want

to believe that your body exists
separately from consciousness then uh
i mean still it's just this unthinkable
blank void
until the mind is there to make sense of
it or to perceive it
so yeah i consider it all to be
um mindfulness of of the mind or mental
states
but um yeah getting back to the first
point though is yeah there's no problem
at all
if you can be mindful of your own mental
states that's even better than being
mindful of your body
or it can be anyway second question from

nardi is

what's the daily routine of an ascetic

well by golly i assume there's all kinds

of daily routines of ascetics like

you know the the naga babas the naked

shaivite

hindus have their own routine which i

include

which i assume would include smoking

hashish and that kind of a thing

or uh you know the ancient jains who

would just smear themselves with mud and

wander around

without owning anything they just beg

for food in their

in their cupped hands you know or even

ramana maharshi when he first renounced

the world

um you know he'd wander around with

without even a bowl

and on and when he would go for alms

he'd just stand out in front of a house

and like

clap his hands a couple times just to

let people know he was there

and if they offered him any food he'd

just stand there in the street and eat

it

and then move on to the next house if he

didn't have enough

so yeah and then i mean you've got

christian aesthetics some aesthetics are

just

literally torturing themselves you know
like some of the
the old ajibaca aesthetics like uh
there's a story in the donald pilot
commentary about this guy who wanted to
be in a jeebic aesthetic so he goes to
the aegis
and uh the very first thing they do is
they just
lying down on his back put put a couple
of planks
like crossways over his chest and some
of the heavier
uh aesthetics sit down on those to hold
him down
and then one of the the other monks the
ajibica aesthetic monks

just took this kind of a comb that grips
the hair and just like
ripped all the hair off of his his face
and his head
and um and then of course you got
buddhist aesthetics i mean
there's just so many different kinds of
aesthetics that uh the daily routine of
an aesthetic
varies largely from ascetic to ascetic
so it may be that you're asking
specifically about terravata buddhist
aesthetics but even they
especially if they're living on their
own out in the forest they're just gonna
have all different kinds of things you

know you've got

the 13 do tongas these optional

aesthetic practices that a monk can

follow

like never lying down or wearing robes

made only of rags eating one meal per

day eating only food that you've

collected walking through the village

when you go for palms round there's all

living only in cemeteries living only

under a tree there's all these different

uh aesthetic practices that can be

adopted and different monks will adopt

different ones so there is no real

daily routine of an aesthetic other than

the individual one of each one

and the next question is kind of similar

also from nardi

and what are the biggest difficulties of
an aesthetic life

and again it's going to depend on the
aesthetic really

it definitely is they're going to have
different aesthetics have all kinds of
different problems

you know one ascetic his problem might
just be being celibate that he's just
horny and thinks about

women all the time or another ascetic um
he's just thinking about food all the
time or another one

he's he's doing the sitting practice
where he sleeps in a sitting position

and is just sleeping just a few hours
per night and he's just
uh just yearning for a good night's
sleep

or or anything i mean whatever

yeah it's different aesthetics are gonna
have you're gonna have different
routines and different

different biggest difficulties so see
nardi has some more

it's is it possible to grow in dhamma in
this life and by the next

good incarnation to fall down again um

that's a good question and yeah yeah

that does happen in fact

that's the way some sorrow works it's

like um so long as you haven't become a

saint yet so long as you haven't had at
least a glimpse
of nirvana or enlightenment then
you know you live a good life in this
life and then you
may be your next life you're up in some
heaven realm
and according to the buddhist texts i
mean you might be up in this heaven
realm living in a
like a golden palace or a crystal jewel
palace with you know a thousand
gorgeous celestial nymphs and then you
just use up
all of your good karma as though you're
using up winning the lottery

and then after your karma has expired
then you come back down to earth or
wherever it is
you're going to go and it's just up and
down up and down up and down forever and
ever until
finally you get at least the glimpse of
enlightenment
and then once you become a sotapanna
according to uh the texts
then you're you're not going to go into
the lower realms and you're guaranteed
of enlightenment with
relatively soon not necessarily in this
life but i think it's no more fun no
more than five
lifetimes to go if uh if you're a soda

pong and

if you're an onigami which is one notch

below full enlightenment then you've

just got

one more life to go and you're

guaranteed

so until you get to the stage of being

an arya

which is getting at least that glimpse

of enlightenment

then it's just up and down up and down

up and down forever and ever

okay next question do you sincerely

believe it is possible to be enlightened

in a lay lifestyle it is possible it's

more difficult for most people

than if they were living the lifestyle
of a simple renunciant

but then again most people can't live
the lifestyle of a simple renunciant
either

and so in that case um your best bet is
to

go for it within the the limitations of
being a lay person

which is uh essentially what i've
decided to do because

it was like i got as far as i could with
the monk's lifestyle so i got as much
out of it as it seemed i was able to
so i'm i'm going for a change and we're
going to see how that goes

but there have been like like goenka was

a layperson his teacher also was a lay
person who bought ken
in burma and um
even according to orthodox theravada
even though they say
you can become enlightened but you have
to be a you have to be ordained right
afterwards or you're going to die
but still they say you can't be an
onigami like i think anatapindika who is
one of the main supporters of the buddha
was a layperson but uh he was a very
advanced saint
and uh there are there are cases um
uh nowadays of people who supposedly
are enlightened or or died died recently

but were enlightened before they died

um just as the lay people you know

eckhart tolle supposedly is enlightened

ajay shanti

is a married man despite the uh

sanskrit name and uh he has a reputation

for being enlightened i think there's a

woman

uh catherine ingram i think she's

supposed to be enlightened

like uh nisargadatta maharaj in

india he was considered to be a real

spiritual heavy hitter and an

enlightened being even though he ran

this little

it was like a little stall selling like

cigarettes and stuff

um christian and murdy both of them i
mean they weren't ordained

so yeah it is it is possible to be
enlightened in a lay lifestyle although
i mean the lifestyle is going to be
modified it's going to be a like a
simpler kind of lifestyle

i think you know you're not just going
to be you know out chasing after money
and just somehow become enlightened but
then again when lay people

um either become enlightened or they
have like this

intense awakening experience that shifts
them into a higher level of
consciousness

as a general rule it's not just
caused by um liberating insight after
meditation
usually there's some kind of um like a
crisis has to hit
like there was a scientist named john
wren lewis
who was um on a
vacation with his wife in thailand and
somebody poisoned him
because they were going to they're going
to rob him after he lost consciousness
and he almost died he had a near-death
experience
and that near-death experience just
slammed him into a higher level of
consciousness that he

he said that he remained in after after
ever after so even if he wasn't fully
enlightened he was
in a higher level of consciousness than
he was before
and it wasn't due to meditation practice
and the same thing goes for eckhart
tolle he wasn't really a meditator
he just had this it was like an
existential crisis he was just
like suicidally depressed and just
that slammed him and he just couldn't
stand
living with himself and it just slammed
him out of this rut
so um yeah just the short answer do you

sincerely believe

is possible to be enlightened in a lay

lifestyle i would say yes

it may be less likely than for a monk or

a nun

or just some forest living recluse some

spiritual being living out in the woods

alone regardless of whether he's

ordained or not but

uh yeah it isn't like it is it is

possible although

you have to uh be more skillful

at uh you know all the distractions not

being distracted by

all the distractions you know not not

just being distracted by the

the shadows flickering on the walls of

plato's cave

or or like getting seduced into

believing that the matrix is real

getting blue pill'd it's way easier well

i mean almost everyone's blue pill'd

including most monks and nuns

you know they think that samsara is

reality that this is real that i am

or whoever they are you know is real and

all that but um

uh yeah i mean it's possible so i'll

just move on to the next question

which is from dog breath

and mr breath says morality plays a

large

role within the buddhist belief system

worldview ethical action

speech karma monastic rules all combine

to produce a moral paradigm

so is an enlightened person who has gone

beyond

morally infallible how can an

enlightened teacher act in an abusive

manner towards

students well that's an interesting

question

and with regard to this part here is an

enlightened person who has gone beyond

morally infallible the answer is

yep and the reason for that is that an

enlightened being

practically by definition is not making

karma anymore

so an enlightened being has literally
gone beyond

good and evil not in a nichian sense
but they just are not making karma
anymore

and so really everything they do is
essentially neutral

morally neutral regardless of the
effects of it because

um the effect on their own spirit the
effect the effect on themselves

is is uh essentially zero

so how can an enlightened teacher act in
an abusive manner towards students

um i'm reminded of maharaji or neem

karoli baba who is the guru of ram das

very famous and he may have been fully
enlightened as far as i know
and ram das would say of him this this
supposedly enlightened being
that the better you got to know him the
more you realize there really wasn't
anybody there
and he'd be yelling and hitting people
and and cussing and all this stuff just
going
into these seeming rages and laughing
and shouting and crying and everything
but ram das said you better the more you
knew him the more you realize that he
was just like a mirror to your own karma
he'd just be reflecting your own karma
back at you

so if you had some kind of karma where
somebody's supposed to hit you or
something

then maharaji would hit you and it
wasn't really

him making some sort of deliberate
choice it was just all spontaneous flow
with nobody there it was just nature
taking its course

so i assume an enlightened being would
be that way where even the buddha is not
thinking of what he's going to say next
you know he's not planning out what his
next sermon is going to be
it's just he sits down and it just is
elicited

from the audience that uh if he's got a
wise audience maybe

the the talk will come out you know more
profound

so i assume um yeah that's that's my
answer

the short answer is is enlightened
person who has gone beyond morally
infallible i'd say yep

because really they've just gone beyond
morality morality just doesn't stick to
them it's just not really an issue
anymore

so the next question is from wanderer
and that is what is your view and
understanding of
magic and magic here is spelt uh

m-a-g-i-c-k with the k so that's
like uh aleister crowley i think
i think aleister crowley was uh the one
who made that famous
i could be mistaken and uh i think it
was dog breath who
informed me just recently that the k at
the end of magic
when it's spelled this way stands for
kabbalah
so it would be based on like um
like jewish esoteric mysticism and then
it kind of ran through the mill of like
freemasonry
and so um i really don't know that much
about it i've

never really liked or trusted aleister
crowley

and um it just struck me that magic is
is a way of like exploiting samsara

you're trying to make the most

of samsara you're not trying to become
enlightened as far as i know

you're just trying to become like an
adept like a master

of samsara and uh like

maybe becoming something like a

nietzsche and over man at the same time

just trying to make yourself immune to

morality like the distinctions of good
and evil

something like that but um yeah it seems

it strikes me as being very samsaric

and uh really um

yeah it's not it's not really

spiritually beneficial

as far as i know i'm no authority on it

but that's just uh that's my take on it

so next question also from wanderer

about

karma if i would try to shoot for

example

an empty can but when i shoot the bullet

goes through the can and

accidentally hits a person and kills him

or her

without me seeing it and under my

lifetime i never get to know about it

would it then not affect me the

slightest

and this question is asked to you and

the belief according to taravana

okay well my view and the terror of

autumn view are very similar on this one

with regard to terra vada whether what

you do is right or wrong whether it's

good karma or bad

karma depends on your own volition

so if you just accidentally kill

somebody and are oblivious to the fact

that you accidentally kill them

you know you're like like the example

you gave or maybe you're like way up on

this mountain and you accidentally kick

a rock

and the rock rolls down and starts an

avalanche and kills somebody

like half a mile down below and you

never you never hear about it or even if

you do yeah

you don't make the connection that maybe

you kicked the first little pebble that

started the whole thing going

then uh yeah you haven't done anything

wrong

you did not deliberately intentionally

hurt anybody

and so from the buddhist point of view

you didn't do anything wrong

so if there is any karmic effect from

that

it could be through a kind of subliminal

kind of uh like a paranormal like
like esp or or telepathy or something
where like at a at a non-physical very
subliminal level
that you kind of you somehow know that
you accidentally killed somebody
but even accidentally killing them would
not be the problem i mean that wouldn't
be positive or negative it would just be
completely neutral because you had no
intention whatsoever to hurt anybody
but if you deep down somehow you
intuitively
or or like um psychically
feel that that happened then it could
have like residual effects you could
have like

guilt or something which would make its own karma but

um i think the main question here is uh i mean uh from from the point of terabyte of buddhism

you know right and wrong are matters of volition or

will so you you have to have a deliberate intention

to to do something in order for that something to have a moral value

if you do something completely by accident then uh

yeah it's it's it's amoral it's it's not good or bad

so the next question is from potila

listing question here in case it was
missed can you talk a bit about

buddha buddha nusiti

sanganusidi the texts say it leads to
nirvana but the practice is not taught
much

in the west um yeah this

of the the 40 standard meditation
techniques

that are given in the texts i think it's
the commentarial tradition like the we
suddenly maga

um buddha nucidi which is uh

contemplation of the qualities of the
buddha

dalma nu city which is contemplation of
the qualities of dhamma

and sangha nucidi which is contemplation
of the qualities of the sangha
they are orthodox standard meditation
techniques
but they're they're relatively low level
um i don't know the text according to
potila the text stated it leads to
nibbana
but um also according i'm pretty sure
it's according to the wizui maga that
you don't even get the first
genre with that because there's so much
thinking you know like
um the standard formula for buddha new
city for example
was a burmese accent burmese

pronunciation of pali

would be what edp

and so a lot of burmese people when they meditate they'll just be repeating that more or less like a mantra usually with a mala or like a rosary

you know one bead is every time you do that and uh the buddhist 969 movement is based on these three meditations where the buddha has

nine qualities that you recite and then the dhamma has six

and then the sangha has nine again so

yeah it's a relatively elementary meditation technique

and if it does lead to nibana maybe it's just because

anything can really lead to nibana in a way it's uh

you're still thinking a lot and you're not even close to first jhana

or or any jhana really but um

uh at least you're not thinking anything about wholesome so long as your mind isn't wandering

so there is that but it's it's a relatively uh

elementary kind of meditation and

it can be useful if you're busy doing something else you're washing dishes or something and

you just want something going through your mind that's wholesome

especially if you understand the meaning
of the of the poly or
you're thinking it in english or
something but

uh yeah it's an elementary meditation
technique that is orthodox but

it uh doesn't it doesn't get you even to
first gen

at least i'm pretty sure that's that's
what i've read

so let's see next question from potila

what are your thoughts on bhante we mala
twim system and his rejection of the
term theravada for

sutawata so that's two questions let's
say

first what is my opinion of

ponte

twim and i'd never even heard of it

before

i have to admit i even looked it up i

think it's like tranquility wisdom

insight meditation or something like

that

and i'm not sure who bonte mala ramsay

is i really do not study up on

other um buddhist teachers very much

i just um i've just spent my life uh you

know just

looking at the the poly texts

occasionally reading a book on the

subject but not very often

and uh just observing my own mind

so with regard to the first first part
of the question here what is my what are
my thoughts

on bonte wheat malarami's twim system is
uh

yeah i've never heard of it before i
looked it up a little bit and it didn't
really explain what it was

so i i just kind of stopped stopped
looking

so yeah sorry sorry i can't help you on
that one

next part of the question is what are my
thoughts of his rejection of the term
terravada for sutawata

um yeah i've got no problem with that
especially if he's not

accepting like the complete edifice of
terra botta buddhism

and like i sort of touched on a little
earlier

that uh orthodox tarabata it includes
all these texts that not everybody

finds acceptable or believable and
you've got the entire commentarial

tradition you've got abi dama

and all that and so if you wanted to
call yourself

just uh like a staunch terravottan you'd
have to

maybe um modify the definition of
taravana

so that you can say well somebody who

completely rejects abhidhamma and the
commentaries can still be a teravatan
or you know some month that's not
following the rules can still be a
terabyte in monk

or you can just change change the name
you know like i

we already talked about navakavada up
above

you know teravata is doctrine of the
elders nava cavada would be doctrine of
the newcomers which is us

barbarians of the west and uh so
sutawata

yeah i mean it's uh like the doctrine of
of the discourses the doctrine of the
sutas

um he left out within maybe he doesn't
follow it strictly i don't know
but yeah i mean if if he's not going to
really accept full orthodoxy of
theravada

then it would be honest to call it
something else

rather than pretend that it's it's still
orthodox tiravana

so yeah yeah i've got no problem with
that and

you know i've i've done similar things
so

move on to the next question also from
potila

can you talk about your opinions

concerning the western redoubt
and prepper movements do you think that
conservatives or right-wing political
dissidents should relocate to specific
areas

in case of social turmoil or to carve
out a saner place to live in peace
should right-wing buddhists think about
selecting a temple or
area to do something similar in order to
focus on cultivating a spiritual life
as laity okay so there's a number of
sub questions in here so my opinions
considering the western redoubt and
prepper movements i think back in the
80s they were called survivalists
and they'd be moving to places like

idaho or alaska and just trying to be
self-sufficient

and um whether that's right or wrong
whether it's good or bad whether it's
helpful or unhelpful really depends on
their own mental states like

like i've been saying whether anything
is good or bad you know the moral
quality of something depends on your
volitions

two people can do exactly the same
action and

uh one person is doing something good
and the other person is doing something
bad

so you know like the classic example is

you you walk into the forest and

you you see a snake trying to swallow a

frog and the frog is struggling to get

away

and so you chase the snake away

well i mean if you did it out of

compassion for the frog you did

something

wholesome and good but if you did did it

out of a version for

the snake you know then then you did

something

you know negative and wholesome and bad

even though it was exactly the same

action

it's uh it was the the volition behind

it that determined whether it was good

or bad

and western people i think maybe burmese
people also they they really don't
they don't really um grok that they
don't really get it

you know it's like is doing this good or
bad but really it's it's the mental
states involved

and you can do this with positive or
negative mental states and that's really
what determines whether it's good or bad
so yeah with regard to to that i mean if
people

if if they're just fulfilling something
that really

um you know intuitively they're drawn to

then it could be really good i mean
there's nothing wrong with being
self-sufficient

in fact it might be a wise and if you
really think civilization is going to
collapse

or you really think america is going to
just degenerate into civil war or
something then

yeah i mean it would make sense and if
you've got a family you got you you've
got

you know children or something that
you're responsible for that would be a
proven course to take if you really
sincerely think that that is likely to
happen

or that even there's a good chance of it
so yeah i've got nothing against that
so now we go to the next part of the
questions do you think
that conservatives or right-wing
political dissidents should relocate to
specific areas in case of social turmoil
or
carve out a senior place to live in
peace
well it does kind of make sense i mean
if you really think that
there is going to be like civil war then
it does make sense that you wouldn't
want to be caught behind enemy lines
you know it's like uh that's one reason

i mean it's a minor reason

it's i mean it's it's not really it's

just a benefit more than a conscious

reason

of me me living in south carolina is

that

south carolina is is good and red you

know it's a conservative state

and uh so if if the civil if the civil

war really does happen if the the

proverbial hits the fan

then uh at least i'll i'll i won't be

caught behind enemy lines i'll be on the

right side

so to speak so

yeah i mean again it's just a matter of

volition it determines whether it's

right or wrong

um next part should right-wing buddhists

think about

selecting a temple or area to do

something similar in order to focus on

cultivating a spiritual life as

laity well people like potila and others

who contact me sometimes

are really interested in community

they want to have a buddhist community

whereas mutual support

and that's it's not a bad idea although

my history from the very beginning from

the time i became a buddhist i was a

loner

and part of the reason for that is just

that buddhist people

with a similar point of view as me are

extremely scarce

and so um yeah i just went on my own

like

like the horn of the rhinoceros and

that's that's good buddhism there's

nothing

non-buddhist about being a loner and

just practicing on your own

just uh having a teacher you contact

occasionally maybe

learning your meditation off youtube

reading lots of books

there's nothing necessarily wrong with

that but if you can find a good

community

that helps you then obviously yeah

it might be a really good thing to do

that too so

um yeah should right wing buddhists

think about selecting a temple or area

to do something similar

um in order to focus on cultivating a

spiritual life as laity

um yeah there's nothing wrong with that

and if you can find such a place then

then

that's excellent more power to you um if

you find a really good place uh

yeah let everybody else know too maybe

that will attract more people and create

a better or bigger community

so yeah all it's gonna take is like one
rich eccentric theravada buddhist
to uh just start up a place and maybe
everything else will just fall into
place after that

but um yeah like i say my own approach
has been

largely one of a loner and i am

i have been quite willing to teach
others especially since coming back to
america in 2011

um in america you have to work for a
living and

uh i am most qualified to be a buddhist
teacher than anything else i think

so yeah i'm quite willing to participate
if something like that

really happens but at present uh

i'm more interested in just setting up

so i can feed myself reliably

rather than setting up a dhamma center

so

um yeah but i mean if you want to give

thought to that

and you really do not like being a loner

in your buddhism

then if you really need the support of a

group

or a tribe something like that then

yeah sure i mean it makes perfect sense

next question can you talk

about the origins of the mahayana

movement

more specifically about the strong need
for multiple buddhist deities
bodhisattvas and the like to help one to
enlightenment early buddhists were left
with the dhamma

quote he sees that alma sees me unquote
but the mahayana took the idea of
buddhas to the extreme

is this just a natural human trait to
need help from above

okay well i could do an entire an entire
video

on the origins of the mahayana i'm going
to have to give you like the stripped
down version

but it's my understanding that mahayana
was based on more than one

movement in india in ancient times
and one of the movements was just like
an aversion for abhidhamma an aversion
for all this complicated systematic
psycho not psychology but philosophy
that

a lot of scholar monks were cooking up
like in terra vada you've got the
abhidhamma you got some mountain of
commentarial literature
where they're just intellectualizing
everything conceptualizing and
categorizing and organizing and
systematizing

and some buddhists
presumably mostly monks realized that

that was not
what dhamma was all about and so they
had like this reform movement where they
were just talking
if they talked at all it was like in
paradoxes you know it's like
the diamond cutter sutra which is one of
the early mahayana texts you know the
bodhisattva
the bodhisattva is not a bodhisattva
therefore he is a bodhisattva that kind
of stuff
and it's just trying to shut down
intellectualism is trying to get back
towards something like the atakawaga
which is
one of the the earliest buddhist texts

in existence

so that aspect of mahayana was really
an attempt at returning to a purer form
of dharma and i've got no problem with
that

you know like zen is kind of kind of
like that it's sort of anti-intellectual
um with regard to the other movement i
think that's more

what potila has in mind here and i think
that the other movement arose mainly in
southern india

which is more devotionalistic

historically like like the hinduism of
southern india is more

devotionalistic or at least it used to

be and um

that was based ultimately on roots

even in terravata or in the older

schools where

it's just human nature that you want to

glorify the founder of your religious

system or if you've got like a great

king you you glorify him

and um so what arose

even in terra vada is a kind of

literature called janaka which is

talking about the buddha's previous

existences and these janaka stories are

kind of like aesop's fables and a lot of

them really are

fables that were just appropriated from

earlier

indian tradition and just had like
a little buddhist introduction packed
onto the beginning
and a little buddhist conclusion tacked
on to the end with the buddha saying you
know in this life i was the fox
you know and ananda was was like the
quail or something you know it's just
kind of giving identities to to the
different characters
in the story but um what happened was
that in in the mythology there arose
this idea
that the buddha had to perfect himself
just lifetime after lifetime after
lifetime just millions of lifetimes

just making himself perfected enough to
be

a fully enlightened buddha not just an
ordinary arahant

and so because the buddha was glorified
and they had

all these legends of him just you know
for millions of lifetimes perfecting
himself

to rise up to the state of glory that uh
there there came to be like a division
between a fully enlightened sama sambuda
and just an ordinary enlightened being
or an arahant

so um that was like the origin of the
the bodhisattva idea
is that it used to be in terror

and in terrible buddhism even now the
the equivalent is bodhisattva
in pali and it just means a being who is
destined to become a fully enlightened
buddha

and i think even the word bodhisattva
is a mistranslation from from pali or
our language very similar to pali
because bodhisattva means enlightenment
being

which is kind of strange considering
that a bodhisattva is
like postponing enlightenment
indefinitely whereas

in terravada sata can also be
it's like a past participle of the verb

sajadi which means to be bound for to be attached to

and so originally bodhisatta

could have been um just a being who is bound for enlightenment

and then it got misunderstood by uh

southern indian buddhists apparently

and uh they gave it the wrong sanskrit equivalent or rendering so

yeah i think it could be that some of these

early mahayanas who took that route were like the pure land

where you're not even trying to become enlightened in this very life like the buddha

historical buddha was saying was like

instructing people

it's like some of them were trying to
become enlightened in this very life and
they just couldn't do it i think like
shinran

in japan was kind of like that they're
just trying to become enlightened
and it doesn't work for them for
whatever reasons

and so then they fall back on just
devotionalism just

praying to a higher being

almost like christians do praying to
some higher being to get them

born into a pure land of the west where
it's much easier to become enlightened

next time and that's not what the buddha
taught he said you should become
enlightened in this very life if you
possibly can

and so praying to be enlightened in a
next

life or or worse yeah postponing
enlightenment

until all of the other beings in the
universe are going to become enlightened
too

um yeah that's i really do not think the
buddha taught now

okay so let's see i guess that's a
that's a

long enough or short enough um
explanation or answer to that question

so we'll move on to the next one because
as i say there are lots of questions
that have been asked just in the last
few days so the next question is
rainy day from rainy day 365.

would you elaborate or clarify more on
your statement that love is acceptance
and acceptance is love

yeah that that is like a motto of mine
that is

my definition of love is just acceptance
and so the opposite of that would be
rejection and hate is just like total
aversion just

pushing away so

let's see one way of talking about it

is um

i use the example of pink floyd's wall

some of you who are old enough

may be familiar with pink floyd's the
wall

considered by many to be pink floyd's
greatest album

and it's about how we spend our lives
just building this wall around our heart
just to protect ourselves but it closes
off everybody's it

closes off closes us off from everybody
else even though it might protect us
you know we're no longer vulnerable
really

but still we're just closed off we're
like this

self-enclosed ego and
what love does or um acceptance
is at least you're making a door or a
window in pink floyd's wall
and you're no longer just a me like if
you love somebody it's not just
me and that other person it's like i
love that other person it becomes like
us there's like uh like a union of some
sort
like a spiritual union and um
i mean love i mean it's not just
romantic love either i mean what's
mostly called
love but in the west or to some degree
even in the east

is it's just like animal mating

instincts reproductive instincts it's

the emotional aspect

isn't really love the emotional aspect

is like

animal reproductive instincts that are

elicited by

love or they've got like an element of

love

you know like a mother hen taking care

of her chicks

um you can say that's just animal

instinct but still there's there's like

this little spark of genuine love i mean

she accepts her chicks

she's not xenophobic towards her chicks

at all she just accepts them

wholeheartedly you know they run to her
for protection she covers them with
their wings and sleeps over them and
everything and

that is acceptance that is i mean it's
not just uh

wanting to give or anything like that
it's just

um you just let down your defenses you
let down your the walls around you

so i guess i'll move on to the next one

if if that's not a good enough answer

i'll try again later maybe

i mean some some of these questions are
so detailed in the answers i could just
make a video of

each one next question is from

zen bits does dharma come from the

sutras

if the sutras were all burnt where then

would dharma

come from well that depends on the

definition of dharma and dharma is one

of the vaguest

terms in in buddhist philosophy like

dhamma in in pali um

yeah it's got lots and lots of

definition it can just mean thing

it can mean the teaching of the buddha

it can just mean like philosophical

views in general it can mean

law it can be mental state it can mean

all these different things

and so if you're going to call
dharma just what is contained in the
sutras

which is a possible definition then yeah
if the sutures were all burnt then the
dharma would just
cease to exist but that's that's a very
narrow definition

and uh if you if you say that dharma is
truth and that the buddha didn't he
didn't invent dharma he just
rediscovered it you know there's like
the the simile in the polytechnics of
the ancient city

and uh you you're wandering through the
forest and you find this ancient city

that's i mean it already it has been
there for a very long time
and the buddha is compared to the the
explorer or the person who discovers
that ancient city
um yeah the buddha did not invent dharma
he just discovered it and uh kind of
shared it with others as well as he
could
so yeah the dharma is everywhere
supposedly yeah the dharmakaya
maybe you could call it as a as a
mahayana buddhist
so it depends on the definition of the
dharma but if dharma is really just
spiritual truth or the way to
enlightenment

then yeah the sutras the the printed
books are

um kind of uh superfluous or almost
irrelevant

you know they're just uh you know it's
like a book about

horses i mean um yeah it's like if the
horses if the the

book about horses was burnt i mean the
horses would still exist

it's kind it's kind of that kind of a
deal so the next question is from

bpat427

now that you're a layperson do you plan
on picking up a weapon to defend
yourself

or your home golly i might have to
divide this into two videos like two
sections

because there's there's all kinds of
detailed stuff

i can talk about on these so do i plan
on picking up a weapon to defend myself
or my home

actually um yeah i am kind of interested
in getting a pistol

at least one and uh there's one fellow
who kind of sold me on the idea of
dismissing west

the smith and wesson 360 model 360 with
the titanium

uh cylinder shoots 357 magnum are 38
special

or then i've got this other friend who's
saying i think he's saying it's the
glock 19 is just like the ultimate
pistol so but the thing is as a
layperson

i mean this is one reason why monks
become monks is because as a layperson
you have duties

and you may have duties to like hurt
others i mean if if you've got a family
for example if you've got people you
love then

yeah i mean it may be your duty to
protect that family

or um it may even be that you may have
the duty to protect

your country so

uh yeah i mean that's that's one of the

aspects of being a man

and i remember i had this this friend he

was a monk for many years

and he dropped out and he got married

and he had a stepdaughter because his

wife had already had a daughter from a

previous marriage

i think a son also and he was just

trying to be as monk-like as possible

while no longer being a monk well being

essentially a family man

and one time i asked him it's like what

would happen if

like somebody assaulted your wife would

you just stand there

i mean i mean you have to do something
and his answer

just his saintly almost inhuman answer
is like well it would be her karma
wouldn't it

and it's like i mean how can you be a
man

and have like oh like a mate maybe
children it's your duty to protect them
but still you're so committed to ahimsa
and non-violence that you would actually
let them be

raped or killed and you would just stand
there and not

and not lift a hand against the
the aggressor i mean you may be a saint

you may be a very advanced being but i
it's hard to consider a person like that
to really be a man
so yeah i mean that's if you really are
totally committed to non-violence even
to the point of not even protecting
you know other people who need to be
protected
then um yeah you may be better off just
renouncing the world
but um i've i've considered like as a
uh like a buddhist uh defense of
soldiers
you know you really have to have
soldiers and they should be seen as like
noble
um what's the word tragic heroes

where they are um sacrificing
their own welfare in order
that for others to live in peace you
know they're sacrificing their own
virtue they're sacrificing their like
their future rebirth perhaps
uh for the sake of others and i mean
that's that's a noble renunciation in a
way
at least i see it that way and as a lay
person if you have loved ones i mean
you really should do your best to
protect them even if it involves
um you know shooting someone who's
really going to kill
someone if you don't shoot them that

kind of a thing with regard to
protecting myself it's not that big of a
deal with regard to protecting my home
it's not that big of a deal
although uh if if like a civil war broke
out i know which side i would be on
so yeah it's it's it's kind of weird
ethics there
it's not purely buddhist but then again
if you want to follow pure
buddhist ethics you pretty much have to
renounce the world
so the next question also from bpap427
what's your opinion
on bonte wierasu and the 969 movement
well even though i was living in burma
for many years i

really i really don't know that much
about it to tell you the truth

i've seen some um quotes of his that
make perfect sense you know

he just his main concern seems to be
keeping burma like mostly traditional
buddhists and he's not like advocating
hate towards non-buddhists but there is
like a real potential for

burma to be like i don't know

overrun maybe is not the best term but
uh

you know kind of um

adversely affected by um intolerant

islam moving into the country and really
gaining a solid foothold

and i mean all

buddhists really do have a precedent for
not

uh welcoming islam because india is the
homeland

of buddhism and the buddhists were
essentially exterminated in india

by fanatical muslims who would just
slaughter buddhists by literally by the
millions

not all at once not in one day but over
the course of their conquest of most of
india

literally millions of buddhists killed
if not with a sword then or burned to
death

and i mean in the islamic chronicles you

know they've got chronicles where
they're actually bragging about all the
all the buddhists that they burned alive
or

killed with swords and that kind of
thing a lot of them just uh
you know starved to death as refugees
and forests and that kind of thing also
so um yeah that's about

all i know about bonte wierasu in the
969 movement

i mean my first exposure to venerable
wierasu was

was years earlier before the 969
movement even existed

and that was i went to a retreat

conducted by uh

tenjidong seattle and if you've never

heard of him

it doesn't matter but um i didn't think

the tanjidong method was a legit

buddhist method i think he was just

having people breathe too hard until

they were getting dizzy they were like

hyperventilating

and then uh he's calling that pt saying

they're getting closer to enlightenment

by

being all dizzy and like acting drunk

and uh this same venerable weirathu

wrote a book

denouncing um tenji don seano

so which kind of vindicated my point of

view also but

um with regard to the like the face of
buddhist terrorism and all that

i just i haven't seen it i mean he may
he may have uh

endorsed violence against muslims at
some point

but um i'm unaware of that and i really
haven't been following it very well
anyway

so i think i'll just move on to bpat 427

the next question

and that is have you met any fellow
theravada buddhist

in south carolina yet and the answer to
that is no i have in fact i

i'm unaware of having met any buddhists
at all so far

although as i say since i got here

um partly i've just been attending to

just getting things settled and it's

it's really it's really a challenge

and i think i may do a little video just

kind of giving another update

like like quest for for credit you know

just

just i have zero credit rating just

literally zero

and just just that is such a handicap

in in the west now so maybe i'll i'll

just

do another little uh um

like a transitional update just on that

one

but uh yeah that in a way it's like

i mean like i said i've my buddhism has
been

essentially solitary i haven't really
been out

looking for buddhist groups and

um i think there may be a sri lankan
place and where within like a 20 mile
radius of here i think i

remember hearing something about that so

yeah i'll eventually go there i assume

after i get a car and everything

but um yeah first things first so i'm

starting off like uh

just like the like the uh the embryonic

fertilized eggs just still i'm just in
the cup of cells
stage at this at the present time
so next question and this is a wise guy
kind of question from old be
pat 427 he's asking which i prefer
mustard-based or vinegar-based barbecue
and uh yeah i have no idea i don't know
what are the ingredients of barbecue
sauce although
i was in a walmart believe it or not i
was in a walmart recently
it was like possibly the first time i
ever entered a walmart in my life
and um there was this lady there who uh
was like thoroughly just heartily
encouraging

or endorsing it was duke's white
barbecue sauce she was just she's just
saying her husband just absolutely loves
it

so if you live down south where you can
get duke's mayonnaise

where everybody eats dukes mayonnaise
down south then

they also make this white barbecue sauce
that apparently is just to die for
so don't die for it literally but uh
that's what i've been told

and uh with regard to mustard based or
vinegar based i'm totally clueless

i have no idea i just eat food i don't
really bother with what the ingredients

are

okay last question from bpat427

orthodox theravada teaches that all
sentient beings have the potential for
enlightenment

but it also teaches that one can't
become enlightened until a buddha is
born and teaches the dhamma

in a specific world system how could an
ant become enlightened if it can't
understand the buddha's teachings

sure if the ant is alive during the time
of the buddha it could have its mind
read by the buddha

and become enlightened but even if the
teachings of the middle way are still
being taught on

said planet after the buddha's death who
could teach the

ant well this is kind of strange

and uh takes a little bit of unpacking

here first of all

um the first statement up towards the

top here is not entirely true

since he says orthodox tyrabada teaches

that all sentient beings have the

potential for enlightenment

but it also teaches that one can't

become enlightened until the buddha is

born and teaches the dhamma

um they're still they're still pacheco

buddhas so

um even when there's no buddha

even when buddha buddhism is extinct
when the dhamma
the true dhamma is unknown in the world
then there are still a few beings
becoming enlightened they're becoming
pacheco buddhas so they're like a buddha
they're higher than an ordinary arahant
but um they're unable to teach or for
whatever reason they just aren't just
stay as hermits and
don't teach and they don't start
buddhism going again
so there is that but getting getting
farther down here with regard to the ant
um yeah he says sure if the ant is alive
during the time of the buddha it could
have its mind

read by the buddha and become
enlightened

um i don't think an ant has much of a
mind to read tell you the truth
and um yeah whether an ant becomes
um yeah i think buddhism teaches that
animals

really they can't really become
enlightened

i mean the potential is there because
you have the potential
to move up on the scale until you're at
a level where you have sufficient
wisdom and understanding that you could
become enlightened
but i don't think the buddha is saying

or buddhism or whatever

be pat has read that just because

everybody has the potential for

enlightenment

like the buddha nature like in mahayana

buddhism they talk about the buddha

nature

then yeah that doesn't necessarily mean

that the buddha could enlighten anybody

it's like not everybody who met the

buddha became enlightened most of them

presumably didn't

and one of the most famous zen koans is

the monk asked joshua if a dog has

buddha nature and

joshua just says which is like no

i think uh what in in the original

chinese it was like

which is sort of like the barking of a
dog but um

that's neither here or there so yeah i
don't

even if the buddha were alive i don't
think he's going to be enlightening
entire colonies of ants so

um yeah in in in that case i mean

if if you had the potential for
enlightenment and

uh you're born at a time when

um there is no buddhism there is no true
dharma in this world then potentially
you could be born in a different world
where there is that

so there there is that too

so i'll just uh move on to the next
question because we're already uh well
over an hour here

this is from follower number a12

c67e7

how do you kick a bad habit you really
enjoy and have no will to give up

what kind of a question is that how do
you kick a bad habit you really enjoy
and have no will to give up the answer
that is easy you don't

you do not kick that habit so the only
way to change your behavior

is to change your perceptions for

example i'll give you i'll give you an
example from my own

my own life my father tried to quit
smoking

many times my dear departed father he'd
smoke two packs of marlboros a day
and um you know then he'd try to quit
and he quit for a while

the next thing you know he's like maybe
chewing a little chewing a little snooze
or

or like uh smoking a pipe a little bit
and the next thing you know he's back up
two packs a day again

it was really hard for him to quit
smoking you know he quit

many times and then started again many
times so

then one fine day his legs started
turning black
and the thing was he went to a doctor
about it of course
and uh he had he was a longshoremen he
loaded logs onto ships
and a log had rolled over and crushed
one of his legs
years previously and there was enough
capillary damage that
tar from from the smoking was starting
to
clog up the little cap damaged little
capillaries in his leg
and his leg was just turning black and
so the doctor told them you're gonna
have to stop smoking or we're gonna have

to amputate that leg

all you had to do was stop smoking and

then the blackness would clear up as the

the tar

gradually dissipated and his perception

of the situation changed

radically so that he just stopped

smoking

you know it wasn't so hard anymore i

mean it was still you still have the

same urges

but as soon as you get that urge of man

i want to smoke that cigarette it was

just like

amputate the leg i mean it's like do i

want my leg amputated

just for the sake of smoking the

cigarette and i mean

it was no it was a no-brainer it was

just an easy choice to make

and um so really it works that way with

regard to everything it's like uh like

krishnamurti used to say if you get

bitten by a snake once you don't have to

go to

classes or or like seminars on how to be

careful about snakes it just happens

naturally you've

you've had personal experience with how

bad snakes are

and so you're just careful about snakes

ever after you don't need you don't need

to study anything you don't you don't

need to try

even so it's just a matter of perception

and uh once you see that that bad habit

really is a bad habit then you're not

going to enjoy it so much and you are

going to have the will to give it up

but you just have to see that it's

really a bad habit and with some people

like if they're drug addicts or

something

they may have to hit absolute rock

bottom they may have to

to lose their their family you know lose

their marriage

lose their house lose their job lose

their friends lose their reputation

lose their health lose everything and
once they hit rock bottom
then they'll think gee maybe i maybe
that's not so good after all maybe i
really should stop
and just halfway wanting to stop isn't
good enough because you know during the
half the time that you want to stop me
yeah you're stopped but then you know
the itch or the urge starts coming
back and the next thing you know you're
doing it again because you haven't
really fully realized that
that it's just not good for you and you
shouldn't keep doing it
so yeah so that was a really easy
question how do you kick a bad habit you

really enjoy and have no will to give up
you just don't you're just going to
change your perceptions
and you mostly it's not going to be a
deliberate
act of changing your mind it's just
going to be you something's going to
happen which is going to change your
perceptions for you
as a general you're going to have some
kind of realization some kind of
some kind of accident or epiphany or
something is just going to happen
to you which is going to change your
perception
of the um of the world that you're

living in and then

it's going to be a lot easier

okay next question from follower number

a12c67e7

are there plans to resume your shows

with brian rue

and i'm happy to tell you that yes

indeed we're going to

uh uh record another show tomorrow

the gods willing so yeah i'm glad about

that i've settled down

enough and my my distraction and

mental flurry has died down enough

that uh yeah i can get into doing doing

another show with him

and i think part of one of one of the

the episodes that we're going to do

tomorrow i think is going to be pretty
much

like just a status report from me

how life is going with me wearing a
shirt

and not eating rice

okay next question is from sub wolf

77 which i assume is the same as

vajra wolf 77 who already asked a
question about

but uh we'll give subwoof the benefit of
the doubt here

first question i've been trying my best
to learn sadiq meditation through books
and online resources i do my best when
out and about in daily life for example

if i stub

my toe or cut my finger at work i try to
catch myself

in the mental state of disliking the
pain before i can really attach myself
to it and amplify it

as far as sitting practice goes i have
been stuck on anapanasati

for probably a year now and i am afraid
to really try different things because i
feel like the results i get from trying
to concentrate on other objects

besides the breath are subpar any advice
for someone like me should i

try something different or stick with
anapanasati

even though it is an extremely basic

meditative practice

well as i've already said above

or earlier anapanasati or meditation on
the breathing

even though it is very basic

and easy to do relatively speaking

you can get all the way to four of the

genre with it i mean it's

just because it's basic and simple it's

it's also very powerful

if you're good at it so there's no need

so long as it's still working so long as

you're able to do it

and hopefully if you're still making

progress with it or at least you're

getting

out of it what you want out of it then
yeah there's there's no need at all to
switch to a different meditation
technique you
might want to try a different technique
every now and then just to experiment
see if something works better but um
yeah there's absolutely nothing wrong
with anapanasity
and uh yeah it'll take you all the way
to fourth jhana and
presumably beyond so
let's see make sure i'm answering the
question completely here
yeah yeah i think i just did so yeah
there's no problem at all you can you
can stay with it for the rest of your

life and if it continues

to work for you then you're doing really

good second question

what is your opinion on the zen doctrine

of no mind and can you explain it

i am generally very intrigued by

buddhist philosophy as well as

philosophy of mind sort of stuff and i'm

thinking about purchasing

suzuki's explanation of the doctrine um

well for for starters i'm really not a

zen teacher i know some

things about zen you know i've read a

lot of zen books

i was originally drawn towards zen

checked out as in monastery before i

decided on terra vada um

but i think you're you'd be better off

just purchasing suzuki's explanation

because uh

yeah my explanation is going to be

pretty sketchy

i'll give you my best my best guess here

on the the zen doctrine of no mind

i assume zen has been

influenced by my jamaica and

majamaka presumably was

started by a just a brilliant

buddhist philosopher named nagarjuna

and nagarjuna was saying that even

i mean that nothing in the phenomenal

world is is really valid it has no self

essence

there is no reality to the phenomenal
world

and that would include mind i remember a
long time ago

i picked up at a used bookstore in burma
a textbook on indian philosophy

that was uh written in india and it was
based on

ancient or medieval indian philosophy
texts

so um it was mostly based on hinduism

and in that sort of thing but it did

have uh a chapter on buddhism

and for the sake of convenience i assume
because the the medieval

hindu scholars used the same method they

divided buddhism into four different
groups

you had two hinayana groups and two
mahayana groups

and the the of the two mahayana groups
they had majamaka and yogachara

majamaka said nothing is real yogachara
said only

mind is real that matter isn't real

so the majama because we're saying mind
isn't real matter isn't real

the yogacharas were saying matter isn't
real but

mind is and then below that i can't

remember i think they were called the
celtronicas

who are saying that mind and matter are

both real

but you can you can know mind directly

but you can infer

the existence of matter and then below

that or the fourth group was

i think they were referring to sarvasti

bottle because theravada was already

pretty much of a non-entity in northern

india at that time

it was saying you can know mind and

matter directly

so considering that zen is probably most

influenced or at least significantly

influenced by

majamaka who is which says that

neither mind nor matter really is

ultimately real that uh i assume that
would be

the zen doctrine of no mind or at least
that's my best guess

um yeah uh like an expert on zen could
answer that question way better than me
so i'm just moving on to the next one

last question by subwoof77

did you ever think about contacting
arctos to publish your book

they have a lot of alt-right authors as
well as a lot of books published on
eastern spirituality

it seems like you might fit in there i
haven't read your blog a lot so i am not
sure of the depth of your material
but i look forward to purchasing your

book when it is published

well i'm glad you're going to uh

purchase the book

it's the first of a series of five

actually i mean they're they're not like

um you could read them in any order

they're they're like uh

um compilations of essays on various

various topics so um but getting back to

the question did i ever think about

contacting arctos

i looked at the site and it seemed um

to uh really emphasize uh older

authors like evola

um so yeah i didn't really contact them

i i sort of thought about it a little so

i guess i could answer yes to that
but uh i'm i'm mainly going with
uh just just as a matter of practicality
um going with just amazon
self-publishing
as much as i i do not trust or like
amazon very much
i have to admit it's very convenient and
i would remain the uh
the possessor of the copyright and uh i
can just design the book as i please
i mean it'd be easier if someone
designed it for me i have to admit
but uh at least i got my hands on it and
i'm almost completely finished with the
editing of the first volume and have
started on the second volume also

so um yeah i also contacted a publisher
called antelope hill

that our good friend frank suggested
and they actually got back to me and
were asking me if i was

uh planning on uh writing a new book
from scratch or if i was just going to
do

buddhist essays from the blog and that
sort of thing and they said they'd uh
they'd read my my blog the the later one
the the outsider blog and uh
give it a look and get back to me but uh
in the meantime

i'm preparing stuff for for amazon

if uh bronze age pervert can do it i

suppose i can do it

next question is from chaplin what has
been your largest adjustment so far
transitioning from monk living under
stringent rules and deprivation for
decades

to a completely free and autonomous man
with complete freedom and
responsibilities

well that's a good question and uh
there are a number of options i could
choose but it seems to me that the
biggest adjustment the largest
adjustment

by far is sharing my life with another
person

because i have been a hermit for so long

i've been

like complete i've been celibate for 30
years

that kind of a thing and just just like
self-contained

you know just like largely closed off
like monks are trained

that when you're interacting with
another person that other person is just
stimuli

you know in the seeing in the scene

there's only the scene in the herd

there's only the herd and the

felt there was only the felt that kind

of thing and so

you just sort of deconstruct other

people

um into stimuli and you're just mindful

of the experience of interacting

and to really just open up

and be just completely wide open

with another person it's really taking

some getting used to

and it's it's not all bad at all but

it's really a challenge for me

because i've been just sort of closed

off and self-contained for so long

that uh really just opening up to

another person

even a person i dearly love is uh

yeah it's it's been a surprisingly

challenging

just because it's just like this habit

that um yeah it's going to take just
some easing into it i think i really do
but i know i'm capable so
see how it goes next question
unseen perspectives asks
i am interested in how you and your
girlfriend
found each other if you feel okay
discussing that well we found each other
online just in cyberspace
and then after i mean we knew each other
online for gosh
we have known each other probably like
three years now
and uh gradually after that we met in
like a different kind of space

i mean after like the well i mean almost
from the beginning but
gradually was developing that we were
sort of meeting in this other kind of a
psychic space it's hard to explain not
on the physical level really but i mean
it
certainly wasn't just online but there
was just this
i don't know how to explain it kind of
like a
deep psychic connection
that both of us were experiencing
and uh yeah so that's that's how we uh
that's how we found each other
um and finally the last question
from hey it's tigg and i have no idea

what that means hey it's tig short for
tiger maybe

hey it's tigg asks ponyo bassa would you
talk about the attainments of a
layperson or

the attainments a layperson can achieve
from practicing

the eightfold path also could you

compare and contrast these attainments

to those a monk could achieve well

as i've already been saying the the

attainments that are

possible are the same essentially it's

just that

higher attainments are easier

for a monk if the monk is practicing

well

just because he has so few distractions
distracting away from that that most
people

they're so caught up in the in the
images or in the

the illusions you know the maya that um
they just forget that it's maya they
just start

taking it at face value they start
thinking that the flickering shadows on
the walls of

plato's cave are real they start

thinking that the matrix is real

and um it's because of all the

distractions all these

entanglements and um

but i mean the attainments that are
there are the are the same attainments
it's just that
the monk has uh kind of streamlined his
life and reduced
the distractions um
hopefully well enough that uh it's more
likely
that he can break through the uh the
illusion
to the to the ultimate reality which is
always
just lying right there underneath or
just pervading everything
it's just kind of bizarre it's like
we're fish trying to discover

water and we're soaking in it and our
own body is mostly water
but still it's like we have no point of
reference for dealing with
water because it's just so everywhere
that it has no meaning
we just can't see it so
yeah i mean the ultimate reality is the
same the the possible attainments
are the same it's just that um the
buddha
going with a pre-existent tradition you
know he tweaked that and improved it
and uh improved the philosophy into
more or less of a scientific way of
maximizing the odds of becoming
enlightened

so long as the monk's life really is
compatible with you
or the life of a renunciant so
i mean for some people even they might
have greater potential as a layperson
simply because
um they just are not cut out for you
know just like their personality just
doesn't fit monasticism for whatever
reason
so um yeah the attainments are
essentially the same it's just that
a well practicing renunciant has more
um has like a higher likelihood
better odds of of uh
winning the big score and that's the

last question

and so it's already gosh like an hour

and 43 minutes

so i think i'll just uh leave it at that

and uh um

yeah i'll probably be producing more um

more of various sorts of videos i keep

saying that but it's really going to

happen

and the books are coming out and uh you

can uh

you can see my content on subscribe star

or

various other places on my blog and um

be happy and if you have any more

questions

i mean and i'm still game for this so uh

yeah if you have any questions just
include them in the comments below
or on the uh under the announcements
that i put on subscribe star
and uh again be happy and peaceful and
well
as well as the first noble truth and
some sora will allow

hello and welcome to

question and answer number eleven

amazingly we're already up to number
eleven

and i am your host pano bassa or uh my
uh

secret public name is david reynolds

and i was going to do this yesterday

because we got lots of questions

but i was like very zombified and sleep
deprived yesterday

because the night before for the first
time possibly in my life first time i
can remember

i shared the same bed with a dog

and the dog was not any figurative kind

of dog it was like a literal
dog like the domesticated symbiotic
carnivorous
mammal canis familiaris and this dog
really likes me
and so i spent the night with this
uh very affectionate little whippet
like uh pushing up against me and
nuzzling me and like
licking various parts of my body
including my mouth and the soles of my
feet and occasionally walking on me
and so i had to put off for today and so
without any further ado
i will tell you again that there's lots
of questions some of them very difficult
and complicated ones

um in fact i kind of have a suspicion
that one or two
wise guys are actually trying to ask the
most difficult
questions they could think of and so
this could be a long one this could be
two hours or something and so
uh i advise you to go pee before we get
started
and um we're not going to wait for you
so uh you better
pause this before you go pee and maybe
get yourself some popcorn or something
but uh of course
wash your hands after you pee before you
get the food

so uh without any further ado let's

uh let's get started on this long

list of sometimes

difficult complicated questions with

regard to buddhism

and a few other things so the first

question is from

void92

and void92 asks

i would really appreciate if you could

make a video on how to become a teravata

buddhist monk in south asia

if it is still possible nowadays

as far as i know it's still possible it

certainly is certainly still possible

in burma and sri lanka i've been told

that it's

more difficult to be ordained for a
westerner to be ordained in thailand
simply because
so many westerners are like
social justice activists or have been
indoctrinated into social justice so
that they become
troublemakers among conservative
traditionalists
as most asian monks are so
with regard to ordaining in thailand and
sri lanka i really am not in a position
to give advice because i've never been
ordained that way but in burma
the way you would become ordained is
you could be ordained at like

as i was at like an ethnic temple
in america and then after you've already
been ordained and you've got
you know like the monks there or at
least the abbot they're
endorsing you or sponsoring you then you
could go to
to southeast asia presumably within the
same tradition
as the uh the place you were ordained at
or there are some big meditation centers
in places like myanmar burma and
um you could contact them
like on the internet via the internet or
just go there
and do a meditation retreat and then you
could sort of get your foot in the door

that way

although you'd probably be obligated to
remain at that meditation center

so um it is possible and if you are
going to become a teravata buddhist monk
um it is strongly advised that you take
care of all of your

um debts and like social obligations
before before you are ordained that is
that is necessary not everybody does
that but um

yeah you should get rid of all of your
money before the day of your ordination
and um i mean you can't be like in the
military reserves or anything like that
but it is possible and um

yeah the two main ways of becoming a
monk

in asia is first get ordained in the
west

at like an asian temple and then use
that as a stepping stone to asia

or else just go to one of the big
meditation centers in asia that you can
you can find links to contact them on
the internet i assume

and um and then just do it do it that
way but those would be the two main ways
i can think of

so next question also by void92

will you continue making videos i really
appreciate them

and is there any way to financially

support you

well that's a convenient excuse for me

hyping myself i suppose

but yeah i am continuing to make videos

in fact i'm making one at this very

moment

and um yeah i'm i'm trying to diversify

trying to do more solo videos where i'm

just reading text and giving some

commentary or just giving a little

discourse

um i did an interview with um ponte

giavaropano which

uh went out went really well so we may

continue with that

there's a number of other things that

i'm working on

so um yeah i am going to continue making
videos

and uh the uh the content will be
diversified from the way it was

in uh the past few years and with regard
to financially supporting me

i appreciate the interest

and um yeah i've got a subscribe star

channel where people can subscribe

and uh sort of commit themselves to

anywhere from

zero to one hundred dollars a month as a
continuing thing

or also i have a paypal link both of
those

are or should be in the uh the comments

or not the comments but
the info thing below the video
so you can find them there
and it is appreciated oh yeah i should
also mention that tom
another way to support me and get
something back is
to uh purchase my books and i've got two
of them out already
one should be another one should be up
within a week or so
the first one is this one essays in
terrible
buddhism writings of an incendiary
buddhist monk and uh yeah they're
collections of buddhist

essays mostly philosophical and

um yeah they've uh they've gotten a lot
of positive feedback so it's it's a good
book

they are all three of them and uh

there's going to be

a total of five uh um in this series

of the writings of an incendiary

buddhist monk

and um then uh yeah

i may start writing other things but at
present

um yeah those would be the main ways of
supporting me if you are so inclined if
you're willing to contribute to the
cause

if you just want merit you know you

believe in

the traditional buddhist concept of

merit than just a flat out donation

in accordance with uh you know the the

two methods that uh

should be uh linked below or

uh you can also buy a book and then you

get something back so

the merit may not be quite as pure but

then you get more merit from reading and

considering

some of the philosophical concepts in

the book so

anyway anyways a winner

and so i'll just move on next question

is from reconciliation

is there an equivalent to indulgences
and purgatory in eastern religions like
buddhism for example
reading the bible 15 minutes is worth an
indulgence of 200 days in purgatory
according to pope leo the 13th
well um from the buddhist point of view
really all there is is purgatory i mean
there's no permanent hell
if you've done something really bad or
you've died with like really horrible
mental states you could wind up
in a kind of hell-like realm but it
doesn't last forever once the karma is
has run its course then you pass from
there and get reborn
somewhere else maybe as a human again

maybe higher maybe lower

so um yeah with regard to the whole

concept of purgatory sometimes in

translations

the translators are reluctant to refer

to the hell realms or

miriah as hell because they're not like

hell

in the western monotheistic sense of

some place

permanent that you go to it's um it's

just a temporary thing like everything

in buddhism you know everything is

impermanent every every phenomenal thing

is impermanent and that includes uh um

an existence in hell or in existence in

heaven or in existence

as a human or anywhere else so with

regard to

uh the indulgences part um there's

another question similar to this lower

down i think

but um yeah there's no way you can

really erase

your bad karma that um

your bad karma has to run its course or

there are some

cases according to abidama that um

you have some bad karma or good karma

for that matter

and just the opportunity doesn't arise

it's just the circumstances never

quite are ready or ripe for this

particular karma to arise

and so over several lifetimes it can

just fade out

but um with regard to bad things you've

done

there is a famous sutta and i've

mentioned this before

where the buddha refers to bad karma

you've done in the past it's a handful

of salt

and if you take that handful of salt and

you mix it with a cup of water it's so

salty that you can't drink it

but you take that same handful of salt

and mix it into a whole

pool of water and once it's once it's

dissolved in there

you may hardly taste the salt at all it

may be just unnoticeable

and so he he refers to that as like a

way of diluting down bad karma

so from the buddhist point of view the

best thing you can do

if you've got bad karma is just

overwhelm it

with lots of good karma just do lots of

good things to compensate

and that will at least um

oh what's the word it'll it'll make the

uh

the bad karma even if it arises much

more tolerable or

or not nearly so bad like

uh in my life i've got a history of when
something really bad happens there's
also usually something good that happens
along with it

like when i was in burma the two times i
was hospitalized with malaria

two times i was so sick with malaria
that i had to go to a hospital

just um through seemingly random chance
somebody showed up at this remote forest
area

in a jeep and was able to just take me
right back to the hospital

upon arriving and

another time was i used to bite into
rocks in my food when i was

in burma just out in the forest out in
the same remote areas
and sometimes there'd be like this loud
crack and it would hurt and i'd be
feeling around inside my mouth just to
see if i broke a tooth
and i'd be thinking like if i break a
tooth out here in the middle of nowhere
that's not going to be good
you know how am i going to get to a
dentist or anything
and so finally um i was
staying temporarily in this rich
neighborhood in rangoon
you know like the by far the biggest
city in burma
and some servant i went for alms around

through the neighborhood and some
servant girl offered me some bean curry
that had a rock in it and i bit into it
and broke

three teeth on this one rock and um
so i had to see a dentist but as it
turned out just through karmic
coincidence

the servant girl was the servant of the
dean and rector of the rangoon
dental college so he was just right
across the street and so

i finally did break my tooth or teeth
biting into a rock in my food but you
know it was um

the person who was more or less

responsible for that was you know the
number one dentist in the country
and so he fixed my teeth for free and uh
i had him as my
free dentist for a few years after that
and so i had the same dentist as the
dictator because he was the number one
dentist in the country
so um yeah getting back to the question
though
it's like um yeah i mean
you can't make your
bad karma go away i mean there's no way
of
being forgiven for your sins i mean
if you forgive yourself i mean that can
help you from making more bad karma

through the guilt and
regret and remorse and all that but um
it's not like in christianity where a
priest can just wave his hand over you
or like in
shinto also where they'll just wave the
wand at you
and make your sins go away it doesn't
work that way it's gotta
it's gotta run its course and so the
best you can do is just
dilute it way down with lots of good
and so the next question by
reconciliation was there ever a time
when there was
nothing if so then how is it possible

something can come from nothing

if not then why no creator

um this is getting into the whole

unthinkable

issue of the buddhist middle path

where the middle path isn't just the

middle path between

self-indulgence and self-torture the

middle path

there's lots of middle paths in burm in

in buddhism

and i mean there's like a middle path

between

existence and non-existence the middle

path between

one and more than one you know it's just

a mind blower

it's not logical i mean it's um

if you're dealing with like aristotelian

laws of thought everything has to be a

or not a you know everything has to be

logical and reasonable

you're living in an artificial mental

construct

but reality is just unthinkable and

doesn't work that way

um see every time when there was nothing

in

existence non-existence from the

buddhist point of view

the what causes this universe to seem to

exist

anyway is um ignorance or delusion

and i've got my own theory

um it's it kind of arose spontaneously

when i was out in a forest one time

and i refer to it as the the simile of

the block of marble i assume

some of you have heard of that before

where um

it's like the entire universe is just

this dimensionless sizeless

point you know you can't really say that

it exists or doesn't exist

and um

i kind of relied on the one useful idea

i ever got from

hegel is how he starts his logic he

starts his dialectic you know the first

thesis is just pure being

and then the antithesis to pure being is
pure non-being because hegel points out
that pure being and pure non-being are
so completely devoid of any
distinct content they don't have any
boundaries any kind of variation
you know there's just like pure
unthinkable
just like without boundaries just
infinite
formless and so because
pure being and pure non-being um are
just indistinguishable
they just melt together into one thing
you can't tell them apart
and so the only way you can have

anything that seems to exist in a
perceptual sense

is you have to have contrast so your
mind has to create a contrast between
this and not this you know in order to
perceive something you have to

um create an outline around it so to
speak you know you have to focus your
attention on that

and differentiate it from everything
around it

and um so it's like to exist

is like um being and not being rubbing
up against each other or

yes and no or is and isn't or even like
theism and atheism you know god and no
god

they have to like rub up against each other but ultimately they're the same it's just an artificial distinction and if that doesn't make sense to you uh well congratulations because um i mean it it's so difficult for that to make sense i mean it's just off the scale reality is off the scale reality cannot be comprehended intellectually not ultimate reality anyway so how is it possible something can come from nothing one way of one way of of thinking about it is that all the positives and all the

negatives have to balance out in the
long run

that in the universe all the positives
and negatives

cancel each other out so you wind up
with zero

so that's one way of doing it um

also from the buddhist point of view i
mean it's not really

existence it's it's like a virtual or
conditional

existence and it's based on this
formless

everything nothing that is
incomprehensible

so in a way there is a creator for this
universe but the creator

is a deluded and unenlightened mind
and you can say well what created the
deluded unenlightened mind
in a way that's like um within
i mean within this formless unthinkable
everything nothing you can you can say
that there are
um you know every possibility is
contained
it's like the block of marble every
possible statue is contained within that
block of marble it's potentially
there it's really there every single
molecule every single atom is
already right there in the right place
all you got to do is dismiss

the rest of it and um

so it's like some of these uh potential
forms of energy or whatever you want to
call it um

become self-referential they become so
complicated

that they start perceiving themselves in
a limited and deluded way and thinking
that they are separate from everything
else

and that everything else again um you
can't really say that it does or doesn't
exist because it's just

completely off the scale of like um
artificial

perceptual dualities of yes and no is
and isn't

etc so i mean if this doesn't make sense
to you

i mean um yeah it's not really supposed
to make sense

it's the the middle path is something
you have to experience

directly and largely through um
mystical states i mean it's like when
you stop thinking

you're wide awake and you're not
thinking anything then you can
grok it you can like intuitively

i suppose um get a feel

for the for the idea or the

call it a fact that this phenomenal
world

we're living in is a kind of artificial
construction

um that i mean everything is

infinite like like uh what's his name

william blake

you know if the doors of perception were
cleansed we would see everything as it
is

infinite but um we have limitations and

we don't see that there is this

i mean we're just seeing this tiny

fraction of infinity

when really infinity's you know

everywhere always there

and that infinity again going back to

hegel

um you know everything and nothing

really kind of merged together

so again it's like um i'm talking about

this stuff is

is is complicated um

but uh yeah i think i should just

like i said people are asking like the

most difficult possible questions on

this one

so the next question is from vajra

wolf77

you said that you feel that magic and

hear magic is spelled m-a-g-i-c-k

so he's talking about uh kind of

aleister crowley's

uh version of magic so i'll start again

you said you feel that magic is

something not spiritually beneficial
crowley defined magic as causing
changing conformity with one's own
will whether that be change in one's own
consciousness
or the external world sometimes this was
done with elaborate ritual but it
needn't be
with that being said maybe not for a
monk whose goal
is a straight shot right to the absolute
through complete renunciation but for
the average person still
in the world who
can't completely renounce don't you
think there could be
some spiritual benefit to this type of

practice for example

perhaps using ritualistic techniques to

cause change in one's own consciousness

or physical environment

that will make them more conducive to

spiritual practice

also going along with the theme of magic

genuinely curious if you've ever looked

into or studied the western concepts of

the orgy god magic in your spiritual

journey it is closely associated with

neoplatonic philosophy so i could see

why you would reject it as the

neoplatonic

noise is similar to atman but the goal

of said magic

always with the k is essentially gnosis
or

liberation so i'd be curious to know if
you think there is any value in that
okay long complicated

question but yeah in a previous video
i said that i really didn't think that
magic with a k

was uh really dharmic

that like like it says here that it's uh
it's causing change in conformity with
one's own will

but really if you're trying to be
dharmic

or truly spiritual you're trying to
transcend your own will

you know it's like um change

causing changing conformity with your
own will is essentially manipulating
samsara you're still

purely samsaric at that point and i
think crowley really was

um it's like the point of what he was
doing seemed to be mastery of samsara
more than the transcendence of samsara
to

attain some ultimate reality beyond
samsara

so he's still dealing with the illusion
that

magic in a way is um kind of mastery
over the illusion or manipulating the
illusion

masterfully but um

i am unsure of there being any emphasis
on really transcending the illusion and
not being deluded anymore

and if you want to know the wisdom of a
system i mean it's good to
see what the teachers of that system are
like especially the original

teacher and if you look at aleister
crowley i mean he he did not strike me
as a wise person

in fact he was kind of a bad guy
kind of a very rascally guy and there's
nothing necessarily

bad was being a rascal but i just do not
consider him to be
particularly wise so

um yeah with regard to magic with a k
um i do think that if you really want to
cultivate wisdom there are better ways
of going about it than
this kind of crowley stuff
so um yeah i think i'll just move on
there's so many questions to answer here
and some of them as i say and as you've
already seen are rather
deep complicated ones so i'll just move
on to
uh vajravul 77's next question
okay something i'd like to see you
address is the meaning of the word
dhamma
as it is used in the saudi patana suta

as it is hard to find a clear and
concise

answer out there yutadamo bhikkhu in one
of his videos said a dhamma
is like a teaching other sources i've
read

said dhammas are basic categories your
perspective would be nice and also
perhaps a little bit about how the word
evolved from its use in the
bhagavad-gita

to what it denotes in the buddhist sutas
okay that's a good question although
first i'll get to this last part about
uh

how the word dhamma evolved from its use
in the bhagavad-gita what it denotes to

what it denotes in the buddhists

it's my understanding that the

bhagavad-gita comes after the buddhists

that it has been argued that to some

degree the bhagavad-gita is an argument

against buddhism because buddhism was

becoming like the national

spiritual movement of india at that time

um so

yeah i don't think that uh the word

dhamma evolved from its use in the

bhagavad-gita to what it denotes in the

buddhists

unless you want to say that the

bhagavad-gita still use like the archaic

pre-buddhist meaning of it and um

dhamma is a very vague

word in poly it's one of the hardest

hardest words to translate it depends on

the context because it can mean just

about anything in fact

dhamma can just mean anything or it can

mean anything

real or it can mean um

a mental state or it can mean law or it

can mean

philosophy or it can mean like the true

philosophy taught by the buddha

and um yeah i can mean other things

besides

and so uh what uh vajra wolf here is

referring to

is um there there are the four

applications of mindfulness and one of them

is dhamma nuposity which is uh

recollection of dhammas or dhamma

and yeah i mean it is controversial no

people do not all agree

on what it's supposed to mean and um

so i think the the two main

interpretations

um are given here one is that it's like

uh

a teaching it's like um um

dom anupasity just can just be like

recollection

of like the the philosophical concepts

concepts of buddha especially like the

the most important ones

like you know the four noble truths or

um

dependent core rising that sort of thing

or also

um let's see what's there basically

categories

yeah and i mean they kind of overlap

there because

usually the buddhist teachings are are

divided up into categories you know four

noble truths you got the four categories

dependent core rising according to the

stock formula

got divided up into 12 categories so

yeah i mean this one i've i've always

been unsure myself exactly what was

intended

and um i'm not sure if anybody really
knows unless they're just guessing
correctly

um so yeah just interpret it as as best
you can and if you find a teacher
who puts forth a really good persuasive
argument

then uh yeah you can go with that i
guess ajahn tenisero's explanation is as
plausible and reasonable as

any so you might want to refer to him

but i agree it's like i also have

um never been quite sure what is

referred to in dhamma neupocity like the
fourth of the four

saudi patanas and uh i do think it was
just kind of like um
like a catch-all like like uh maybe
i mean calling it a junk drawer would be
disrespectful perhaps but
um um yeah i think it could just be like
recollection
of basic principles of buddhist
philosophy something like that
that would be my best guess but i as i
say it's just a guess
i'm not 100 sure on that
so i'll move on to the next question by
nardi
how do you interpret the five aggregates
as something just empty inside and
outside or as something

more and this is another one

man it's just i'm getting hit with these
really

deep difficult to answer questions

because this one also it's like

um most people it seems like they're

just locked into this dichotomy like of

dualism it's like

either it exists or it doesn't exist

either it's real

or it isn't real and the middle path

like uh of

dependent core rising pedichamopod

especially just cuts right down the

middle

you know it's just uh sort of real

conventionally real real within this
artificial construct
that we're creating it's real within the
context of the matrix or
or plato's cave but in reality it's just
um

yeah it's it just doesn't work that way
so how do i interpret the five
aggregates and he's not asking for me to
give a definition of the five aggregates
which uh which is good um

but uh for those of you who are
unfamiliar the five aggregates of the
five condos are supposedly what
um what we are made of in our totality
so you've got rupacanda which is
the body you've got weijinakanda which

is

feelings and sensations you've got uh
sunya conda which is perceptions you've
got

um sankhara khanda which is

mainly volitions it's like you're
cheating out your karma

and then finally you've got winyanaconda
which is consciousness

so that from the buddhist perspective
from the point of view of buddhist
philosophy

that is all we are is these five these
five aggregates

and uh again it seems like nari is
mainly asking here

is it really purely empty or is it
something more than empty
and again uh it's it's like the middle
path

between empty and not empty existence
and non-existence

um i've got this i've got my translation
of the the atakawaga here

it's not for sale at present but um
there's a very old suta the kalahawi
wada suta

and um right here it's verse nine of the
kalahawi warasuta

in stimulation are founded pleasant and
unpleasant in stimulation not
being they do not exist non-existence
and existence to

whatever that means i tell you that they
are founded in this

so in this really ancient pseudo it's a
very old one

the buddha himself is apparently saying
that non-existence and existence

themselves depend upon *pasa*

in pali which usually is translated as
contact but here i translate it as
stimulation

so it's like existence and non-existence
are essentially *um*

mental perceptions or mental states

and *um* like ultimate reality

just transcends that dichotomy the

dichotomy between is that isn't and it's

a mind blower

and it may not be able to be

comprehended intellectually

you just have to grok it you have

to just get to this mystical state where

you just

experience the truth of that

so see getting back to nardi's question

are the five aggregates something just

empty inside and outside

or are they more than that um

it all depends on how you look at it man

and it's like what

what is empty like um some people would

say empty is just a zero

which then that wouldn't be correct

because zero is just one of the extremes

you know zero and not zero or the two
extremes and the little path cuts
between that

um in mahayana buddhism which has a bit
more sophistication

in its uh metaphysics and its philosophy
in general

then dependent core rising itself is the
definition of emptiness like nagarjuna

says dependent core rising

is emptiness so it's like this

conditional virtual existence

that isn't really totally real

and isn't really totally not real like

you can say that

a mirage isn't totally unreal because i

mean there's something causing that
mirage

and in this case it's just virtual um
mental it's like a kind of mentality
that

has become so complicated

that it looks inwards at itself

and forgets that it's really attached to
just this

formless consciousness all around it and
because the consciousness

in that sense you know like like brahman
or or

um like the noise of plotinus

um because it's just infinite and
formless

then it really doesn't have any way of

of like

pointing to anything and saying that and

so it just kind of transcends existence

and like like hegel says it just kind of

merges into the same thing as

non-existence

so again we're just wallowing in just

the mind-bending

implications of dependent core rising

and um so i'm just going to move on to

the next question

and the next question is from otomo

how do you deal with an ordained monk or

nun who is clearly showing signs of

mental illness

delusions paranoia lack of emotional

control

manic states extreme phobias the flip
side is how do you deal with a lay
person also exhibiting signs of mental
illness who insist

the monks or the facilities of the
temple must help them

okay so that's uh at least two questions
really

um

the rules of monastic discipline for
theravada buddhist monks and nuns

there is a kind of exemption

from having to follow the rules in a
monk or a nun who has

gone so insane that they're no longer
fully aware of their behavior you know

they're going into like a fugue state or something

they're no longer fully responsible for their actions

then they can do all sorts of things and um

if they they have no recollection of it afterwards

then they really are not held to account they're not considered to be guilty of breaking those rules

if they're just crazy in the usual sense of neurotic

or whatever then yeah welcome to the club that's the human condition

that from the buddhist point of view

anybody who is not fully enlightened
is to that extent insane like there's
the old saying
in pali no oh marco which is
the common person is out of his mind
so that kind of insanity um yeah
so long as you're still aware of what
you're doing more or less then
yeah you're still responsible because i
mean the state you're in is your own
doing ultimately it's all because of
your own
karma your own actions especially your
own mental actions
so yeah with regard to monks or nuns
clearly showing mental signs of mental
illness

if they're so completely out of it you
know they're having a psychotic episode
or something then

they may not be responsible for their
actions but if

if they at least are aware of what
they're doing you know it's just a
standard case of

neurosis or or something like that or
like um

schizophrenia maybe if it's not like
really extreme

then still and they are they are
responsible for their actions

and uh um

i'm not exactly it would depend on the

case as to what actually to do with them

i mean

there's if they've got a wise teacher he

could uh assign them some practice that

could help

ground them and there are there are

various ways of doing that and i won't

really

get into that but with regard to lay

people

who are exhibiting signs of mental

illness and who insist the monks or

facilities of the temple must help them

well i mean really the monks

um at the temple at the monastery

um they can send meta i mean they can

just beam love at the person which may

help straighten them out if they're like possessed by a demon or something the monks may chant purita over them and try to

like exercise any kind of malevolent forces

um they're not absolutely required to do that but they might as well

it's if they're able to i mean if they're just completely

um you know not qualified to do it and realize that then maybe they should uh advise the person to try somewhere else or try a psychologist or psychiatrist or something

but um yeah i mean if the monks know

what to do

and are able to help and certainly

that would be a good thing to do but um

i mean if they just don't know how to

deal with the situation they shouldn't

just

blunder in and try to do something that

might cause more harm than good

so yeah it's monks are not

required by the ancient rules to

um act as therapists for lay people

but uh i mean if they are qualified if

it's something relatively

straightforward you know just uh

you know giving them some advice to help

ground them that kind of thing then

yeah that would be fine next question

from otomo what qualifies a person to
give a dhamma talk

well i mean if they know what they're
talking about i mean that's that's
basically

it from the from the point of view of
monasticism buddhist monasticism

um among probably

i mean even beginners give talks in the
sutras there are there are some beginning
monks who

are already giving talks so

i mean you can't really become a teacher
of disciples until you've been a monk
for at least 10 years

but um what qualifies a person to give a

dharma talk is

if they just know what they're talking

about that i mean that's that's the

bottom line right there

i mean if you understand what you're

talking about and that's that's it

so next question is from stephen

and this is a long one we know

superstition

exists for example the stories in

ancient buddhists and other religious

texts and we also

know how these how those with strong

faith accept these stories as

fact people with less faith reject these

stories as

myth in light of the above i suggest it

is possible that the stories about
buddha and his spiritual attainments
could also be superstition possibly
maybe i think it's a possibility that
just

as stories of religious leaders were
created to attain specific
goals for example the arising creation
of the

philosophy that jesus christ was
actually god

and how that was new philosophy was
perhaps used to

strengthen and unify the roman empire
which adopted it

as it was under attack from barbarians

or the creation of the stories of
muhammad which did not begin to arise
until at least 100 years after
the alleged birth of muhammad muhammad
ibn ishaq
etc whatever that means
uh i continue all the creation of the
myth of ancient
jewish leaders for example abraham mooses
etc which were written about
while the jews were taken captive into
ancient babylon and how these ancient
stories served
a purpose to help the jews in babylon
survive their exile from judea
israel is the same
in the same way can you see the

possibility that perhaps the stories about buddha were created or exaggerated okay um the whole question just essentially boils down to the last sentence can you see the possibility that perhaps the stories about buddha were created or exaggerated and obviously from a western point of view some of the stories about buddha were exaggerated or created yeah i mean i mean obviously anyone who is familiar with the polytechs and the commentarial tradition knows that for example the tradition says that the buddha was about 27

or like 5 meters tall

which is just um yeah i mean that's just
yeah that's i do not consider that to be
plausible

or like the 32 marks of of a great being
um i mean it's just impossible that any
one person could have all 32 marks

so that's impossible right there i mean
that's just a logical impossibility

or some of some of the miracles that the
buddha supposedly performed

in the text you know he's warning monks
repeatedly don't be

just showing off miracles or psychic
powers

um you know you should hide that kind of
stuff you shouldn't be showing it off to

people

but then sometimes he'll just ignore his
own

advice and like uh like the classic
example of that is the twin miracle

where the buddha supposedly levitated up
into the air and sprayed water out of
one side of his body and fire out of the
other side simultaneously

and that's supposedly such a huge
miracle that only a buddha could do that

but yeah i just as a westerner

with a capacity for skeptical thought

yeah i've got some skeptical thought

with regard to that kind of stuff

and it's mainly just a matter of

glorifying

the founder of the tradition um making
him

seem even better than he already was
and the way he already was is good
enough

you know an enlightened being in fact
it's kind of counterproductive like
the same way with jesus where probably
jesus

and the buddha were human beings
that attained this relatively or even
absolutely exalted state and they're
saying look

i'm a human being same as you i can do
it so you can do it too

and then people come after that you know

they're not in a position
to try that hard or they're just you
know they're just not
right for it and so they just um deify
the founder or glorify the founder
beyond the human level
and just start worshiping so
yeah it's just human nature i think but
um i
yeah i am inclined to agree and it is
logically um pretty obvious
that uh not everything that is said
about the buddha in
even in the oldest texts is uh entirely
true
so i'll move on to the next question

from hey it's tigg

do you have any insight on aditana i've

heard it referred

in the context of strong determination

in meditation sitting but was wondering

if it had a broader or different

meaning thanks um you're welcome

and yeah aditana literally means

determination and it's one of the ten

parameters

uh many yes this it's the

eighth of ten parameters and it just

means determination it does it's not

necessarily restricted to meditation

it's like anything um

just if you really just unflin you're

just unflinchingly determined

to accomplish something then that would
be aditana

so it's not just with regard to
meditation i mean it would require a
kind of aritana perhaps to
get ready to renounce the world or maybe
it would take aditana to uh you know
just

face something that you don't want to
face like living in a cave or living
alone or living in a cemetery
you know if it's just this determination
you just make this resolution this
resolve

i'm going to do this and you just stick
to it no matter what

then that would be uh the parama or
perfection of abhaya

it's a kind of spiritual quality that if
you want to become fully enlightened
then yeah you need to uh you need to
have sufficient determination

so uh yeah it is it is built into uh
buddhist philosophy and uh

it is um kind of a requisite for
enlightenment certainly a requisite
for uh like full-blown buddhahood

and essentially it means just
determination where you just stick with
something until you've

accomplished it okay next question from
hey it's tig

panyo basa when it comes to sex do you

think buddhist ethics would be better
for our western society than christian
ethics

from what i understand although both
religions promote sexual restraint
buddhism does not seem to push guilt and
remorse on sinners quote unquote

rather it would have people be mindful
of their misdeeds and resolve not to
repeat them

do you think this approach would help
alleviate the neuroses our society has
when it comes to sex and sexual
expression

well that's kind of an interesting
question and

in some ways yes and in some ways no in
some ways buddhism is more easy going
with regard to sex and in some ways it's
even stricter than christianity
for example um with regard to
the five precepts you don't literally
have to be married to somebody
in order to avoid sexual misconduct
that if two people are um
you know they genuinely love each other
they're not being promiscuous they're
not messing around with other people
you know it's like they're not already
obligated to somebody else then that
would be uh
um that would be okay you wouldn't be
breaking the five precepts it would go

to that

but on the other hand um in buddhism the
ethics are so finely tuned that almost
anything you do is going to have some
immorality mixed in

so even a man and a woman who are
married you know

it may be that they are virgins on their
wedding night they've been faithful to
each other for the past

30 years and they just love each other
dearly but even so

if there's any kind of lust or
attachment involved then

from this deep buddhist ethics there's
going to be at least a little bit

of um unskillful karma you know bad

karma and so um

in buddhism it's not all black and white

in christianity it's either

is sin or it's a virtue and you're gonna

go to hell forever or go to heaven

forever

and in buddhism it's almost everything

is a shade of gray

so um the layperson can't go for pure

white

but they can at least go for as pale of

grey as they can manage

and that could be good enough because

you don't become enlightened

through reaching pure whiteness of like

purity of virtue um i think i may have

just blasphemed or or like

indulged in some heresy because um like

in the wesuda maga it says you have to

have purity of virtue before you can

have purity of concentration

but still um yeah

nobody completely eradicates all the bad

karma and

presumably only an arahant is able to

uh proceed through life without making

any bad karma

at all and so

you can use a shade of gray as a jumping

off point to alignment

i mean that seems fairly straightforward

to me

so i think it might depend on the on the
person i mean

um christianity has more of a sense of
like uh what is it repentance and
shame and this kind of stuff that really
is not healthy in my opinion from a
buddhist point of view it's

i mean if you're going to have um moral
scruples you should have it before you
do the act and not afterwards

you know repentance just from a buddhist
point of view

if it's going to be skillful is you just
acknowledge you did something wrong and
just determined to do better in future
but like the whole

remorse thing is uh you know the beating

your breast and

crying and stuff is uh that just makes

more bad karma

so um yeah

it's kind of a tough question i don't

think anything is going to alleviate the

neuroses of our society with regard to

sex and sexual expression because we're

already

very neurotic and i think human beings

in general are just neurotic about sex

um part of that i think i read about it

in

like desmond morris's the naked ape

which i think was the first really

important book i ever read

where he's saying that evolutionarily
the human being is in a transitional
state between

just sort of the orgiastic sexual
behavior of our tree dwelling ape
ancestors

like a chimpanzee has sex on average
like 20 times a day even if the females
are not

in in heat even if they're not in season
and um but then when our ancestors our
ancestors came down out of the trees and
started walking upright

then um the females could have many more
babies but only if they had a like a
male protector

like like a like a female chimpanzee she

can only have one baby every six years
because she has to carry the baby
through the trees with her
so the baby has to be able to make its
own way through the trees
before she can have another one so when
our ancestors climbed out of the trees
going with biology of course
um you know human females can can have
lots more kids you know they can be
you know have a toddler and be pregnant
with another one
and um but it requires monogamy
or at least evolutionarily we started
moving towards monogamy but we haven't
fully made the transition

and so there's all this neurotic stuff
going on in our minds
and um even like
women you know they put clothes on to
kind of cover their nudity to keep the
guys from going crazy but then
they're like wearing like revealing
clothing and like
using like lipstick to make their make
their lips look
more like you know like like they're
sexually aroused in this kind of thing
so i think we're just stuck with being
uh neurotic about sex because it is such
a powerful thing
that uh it's it's easy to be um
easy to have hang-ups and that sort of

thing about it

but um yeah i think if people can
overcome the christian uh idea that
everything is either good or bad that
that there's always going to be like
shades of gray

and that the average person does well
just to go for light gray

if they can't manage white then light
gray is is still doing pretty good

then uh yeah i think a buddhist ethic
with regard to sex could be an
improvement

although um yeah i mean christian ethics
have been largely
abandoned in the modern west or

post-modern west now

anyway and now we're just going into

like

full depravity just total degeneracy it

seems like it's like the celebration of

degeneracy

so um yeah i think buddhist ethics would

definitely be preferable

to uh you know like the uh what do you

call it

post-modernist uh moral relativism

that we we seem to be uh seems to be

gaining traction now

next question from andre

i think you hinted at being on the

autistic spectrum

could you talk more about that if that's

not too personal and what challenges but
also

rewards that brings in the practice or
maybe you could talk about mental health
in general in the practice but really
any story or antidote anecdote you have
is interesting to hear

um i've never really been tested for
this

and um so i can't really say for sure
that i'm on

autistic spectrum although i will
confess that just

two days ago maybe even early yesterday
my girlfriend was smiling at me and
kind of laughing at me for being

autistic

um yeah she says she says for sure i'm

autistic because i mean it's like

we're watching some cooking show i'm

turning into a foodie since i stopped

being a monk

we're watching this cooking show and one

of the things that they were using was

tempeh

and so she didn't know what a tempeh was

and so i just remarked well tempeh is

soy beans that are cultured with a

fungus

called rhizoconium oligosporum and she

just flat out accused me of being

autistic for even

knowing that kind of stuff it just

registers in my mind and stays there

so yeah i know all these scientific

names from from school you know

pycnopodia helium toities is the

sunflower star you know

strangelocintrodus

drobacciensis says the green sea urchin

et cetera et cetera

and um so yeah maybe that means i'm i'm

like some kind of borderline

autistic or something and i mean anybody

who's going to be living alone in caves

for 13 years

anyone who's going to become even a monk

like a western person

who just bucks his own cultural

traditions and just

[Music]

you know becomes a buddhist monk and
tries to live like some ancient indian
ascetic

for for many years yeah i'm obviously
i'm not a normie i'm not totally
normal although um you're probably
better off not being totally normal
and yeah just being abnormal i mean that
can be

definitely an asset because if you're if
you're

totally normal then you're and you're
just going to be drinking the kool-aid
you're going to be in the mainstream
you know you're going to be believing

what cnn tells you that kind of stuff
so yeah you're better off being kind of
on the outskirts or the fringe
just because it helps you to detach and
not take the mainstream so seriously it
gives you

um a little more freedom a little more
um

mental freedom but um again i can't
really say if i really

am on the autistic spectrum uh let's see
make sure i get this question down

before i move on to the next one

talk about mental health in general in
the practice

well i mean to have a strong healthy

mind is one thing i mean not to fit into
society is something else it could be
that your own sanity
causes you not to fit in and i think uh
um eric fromm who was a member of the
frankfurt school for a while but still
it does kind of make sense that uh um
not fitting into an insane society can
be
considered a symptom of sanity
he wrote an entire book about that
although he was pushing some kind of
socialism in the process
but um yeah i mean you have to be
mentally healthy to practice correctly i
think it is a mistake that uh
um you've got like

uh dharma centers having like healing
retreats

and and that kind of thing it is kind of
morbid to me

that uh i mean just to emphasize healing
emphasizes something that you have to
heal from so it's like

um it's to some degree it's reinforcing
the problem

i've got nothing against uh people using
um buddhist techniques to cure
themselves of

of mental um dysfunctions like i used to
know

a psychiatrist who's one of the world's
leading authorities on

obsessive-compulsive disorder

like people who have this irresistible

urge to wash their hands 50 or 100 times

a day

or they're afraid to touch anything

because they're because of the germs or

they have to check their their front

door to make sure it's locked again and

again and again

or they have to make sure they have to

check the the coffee maker again and

again again make sure it's turned off

that kind of a thing

and you can use uh like mindfulness

techniques

to cure yourself of that but um

really buddhism was originally intended

for people who were
mentally healthy and really
the only pure mental health would be
enlightenment
so you're you're moving towards greater
mental health like i said earlier the
average person is insane going from
buddhist
philosophy and um so yeah you start
where you're at and you do the best you
can
and the higher you get in your practice
the more sane you're going to be
so um again there's there's lots of
questions here and so i'm just gonna
i hope i answered that well enough um

i'm not sure that i'm autistic

regardless of my girlfriend's teasing me

but um and with regard to mental health

yeah i mean we're all

insane up until we're fully enlightened

and the more you practice dhamma and the

better you are at practicing dhamma the

more completely you can practice dhamma

the more seen you are going to be

although being sane from a buddhist

perspective

might seem pretty weird from like the

mainstream perspective

i mean saints and sages um

may seem pretty weird and eccentric and

maybe even

nutty from the mainstream western

perspective especially

so yeah it's uh

crazy is uh largely uh um

it's a debatable debatable state

okay next question from andre

i've heard a monk say once that you can
correct your bad karma by donating money
or time to a cause in relation to that
bad karma

what do you think or is being generous
in general keeping the precepts and
meditating enough

um yeah i've already kind of dealt with
the whole indulgences thing

up above um

you can't really correct your bad karma

but you can

alleviate it you can dilute it down by

doing

benevolent act making good karma to kind

of

drown out or dilute the bad karma

um yeah so there's no way you can

you can like erase bad karma other than

um

possibly just avoiding the circumstances

that would allow it to reach fruition

long enough that it fades out over the

course of several lifetimes

but um yeah your best bet is just do as

much good as possible do more good than

bad and you're going to be moving

upwards

you do more bad than good you're going
to be moving downwards again it's not
like in christianity where it's all good
or all bad you know it's all black and
white where you're either going to go to
heaven forever

or go to hell forever after you die um
it's just all shades of gray and so the
more

good you add the lighter the gray of
your overall

um mind is going to be

so that's the best the best advice i can
give on that so i'll move on to the next
question

from bodhisattva969

from a buddhist point of view how should
one view this clown world in which we
live

mass migration of so-called refugees
islamization

rainbow gay parades guilt cult etc

as a buddhist as a real liberal
or right-wing man i think by real
liberal he means like a classical
liberal

from the american american
interpretation

okay see i'll just back up here as a
real liberal or right-wing man you have
the feeling that nothing will change
there have been
countless murders and attacks by muslims

who came into the country

through merkel's opening of the border

in 2015

in addition to those muslim foreigners

who were here before

even so most people still vote for the

same parties or even more left-wing

parties how should we as buddhists look

at this in order not to get

mad or bitter and maybe i should specify

that

bodhisattva969 is living in germany

right now

um well i mean for starters

we are in samsara you can say that

everything you experience

is the fruition of your own karma so you
put yourself in that position
even though you might not be fully aware
of that
so there's that to the world is always
going to be insane
there's that too the normie the normie
human
is out of his mind um
so with regard to all that i mean you
should maintain a sense of equanimity
just realize that i mean you are there
because that is exactly
where your karma has put you that's
exactly where you need to be in order to
learn to deal with this situation so you
don't keep making the same

karma that keeps you facing this stuff
again and again

so um that would be the best way of
looking at it in order not to get mad or
bitter unless you're going to get mad
and bitter at yourself because from the
buddhist point of view you put yourself
in that

position and you need to learn how to
cope with it with equanimity

or maybe even some meta or

or like love or friendliness um

yeah because if you react negatively if
you react with

with anger or bitterness or or that sort
of thing

then you're reinforcing the karma and
causing it to keep coming out
so um that doesn't mean that you
shouldn't try to fix the situation you
shouldn't do what is within your means
to improve the situation
you know you can vote against open
borders for example
you know you can you can even indulge in
some activism so long as it's
enlightened activism and it's
motivated by positive mental states
instead of negative mental states
so whatever you do i mean you should do
it with equanimity or positive mental
states as much as possible
and that would include dealing with the

insanity of politics because
politics has always been insane it seems
to me that
uh the relative calm that we experienced
like in the 80s and 90s and maybe the
the oughts you know the first decade of
the 21st century
that was more the exception to the rule
that was just the kind of uh
prosperity and peace that really is an
anomaly
and now we're getting back towards the
kind of usual mayhem
and insanity and hysteria that uh
usually accompanies civilized society or
any kind of human society

i mean anyone who's read a lot of
history knows that um there's just been
[—] hitting the fan just over and over
and over and over

you know it's like the roman empire it's
like tiberius was the second emperor and
and and caligula was the third emperor
so like

just within a few decades of the roman
empire beginning you've already got this
this lunatic who's uh who's like um
totalitarian dictator

so um yeah i mean this kind of stuff is
just

always going to be going on and it's
ultimately

um our own doing because our own karma

has put us here

so um we just have to learn to deal with

it with some

equanimity and if you take decisive

action there's absolutely nothing wrong

with that just make sure that your

motives

are more good than bad you know as good

as possible as positive

as possible that you're actually trying

to help

um you know help your brothers and

sisters you know

just try to help the situation and not

just try to get revenge on somebody that

you don't like

or lash out at your enemies that kind of
a thing

and i've given the same kind of advice
to like feminists i mean if someone's
going to be a feminist they should do it
out of love

for women rather than hatred or
resentment against

men or if someone is like you've got
like a black

activist trying to improve the situation
of black people in the west they should
do it out of

love for black people and not resentment
or anger or hatred

against white people because if you do
anything motivated by positive states

you're making good karma and you're
you're likely to actually improve the
situation even though it may not be
really obvious that you improved it
whereas even if if you're motivated by
hatred or anger or resentment even if
you get what you're going here
what you're trying for still it's going
to result in more bad than good it's
going to just
breed more resentment and anger you know
anger breeds more anger resentment
breeds more resentment
and so um having some peace in your
heart when you're doing what needs to be
done

is really the best way to go about it

so next question is from bpat427

regarding right livelihood to what

degree would you say

that extends for example if someone

works at a restaurant that cooks with

hydrogenated vegetable oils and serves

soda would that be viewed as dealing

poison

if somebody manufactures scopes slings

or accessories for firearms

could one still be said to deal in

weapons

would making weapons designed for target

practice as opposed to war hunting

or hunting net you less bad karma or

would it

all be volitional and depend on how you
feel regarding your profession
well be pat 427 is obviously a westerner
because asians just don't think this way
um yeah like if if you
if you work at a restaurant and cook
with hydrogenated vegetable oils
and serve like coca-cola would that be
viewed as dealing in
poison yeah well dealing in poison is is
wrong livelihood like
if you're at a grocery store and you're
selling like insecticide or rat poison
something like that then that would be
um wrong livelihood but um with regard
to the hydrogenated vegetable oils and

the soda pop that would depend on your
own volition it's like
if you consider hydrogenated vegetable
oils to be toxic
and you are serving them to people then
yeah in your own mind
which is really what matters most
then yeah i mean in your own mind you're
poisoning people and so
um yeah that would be wrong livelihood
especially if you're taking their money
you know you're having them pay you to
poison them
so yeah with regard to that one it
depends on your own
perspective i personally do not consider
hydrogenated vegetable oils to be uh

poison might not be the most healthy food

you know obviously sugar and high fructose corn syrup are not the most nutritious foods you could eat

but um it depends on your it that that one depends on your own perception okay let's see dealing if someone manufactures

scope slings and accessories for firearms when would still be said to deal in weapons again that's

that is the i mean buddhist ethics depends on volition it depends on and your volition is

is like completely linked with your uh

perceptions

so um yeah if you consider

if you sincerely believe that scope

slings and other accessories for

firearms

are not um

are not like dealing with lethal weapons

then uh yeah i mean you're still not

um you're still not doing wrong

livelihood but you got to be honest with

yourself i mean just

uh indulging in sophistry just trying to

uh

twist things so that you come out okay i

mean that's that's not good either you

got to be honest with yourself

um so that one yeah that's that's like a

great borderline case and it would

depend

more on your own attitude if you really

feel

that you are selling lethal weapons by

uh

making slings for an m16 or something

then yeah that would be uh technically

wrong livelihood

although as i've said uh in an earlier

video

wrong livelihood is really a tricky one

like you even if you're just

working at a grocery store and you're

selling wine to

somebody then you've just sold

intoxicants you're a drug dealer

or you know you're at a restaurant and

you're serving wine to somebody again

you're technically from a buddhist

perspective a drug dealer you are you

are

providing people with intoxicants but

again it's like

um in the west especially going for pure

white

may not be realistic i mean just going

for as light of gray

as you feel comfortable with it may be

your best bet

um but let's continue here would making

weapons designed for target practice

uh net you less bad karma yeah i mean if

it's

if it's just for target practice then

it's not really a lethal weapon is it

you know it's like uh i mean just making

a knife like kitchen knives i mean

it's true that more people are are

stabbed to death with kitchen knives

than shot with guns

in this world um but still i mean you're

just making kitchen knives and you

consider that to be kitchen knives then

uh

you know you're not hoping that somebody

will use that knife to to stab somebody

or then then uh yeah i mean you're doing

okay i mean

um somebody who makes bricks i mean a
lot of people get killed by being bashed
in the head with bricks but that doesn't
mean that um

you're you're like selling lethal
weapons by selling bricks

it would depend on your own perception i
mean if you really want somebody
to use your bricks to bash other people
in the head then yeah you're making bad
karma

and that could be wrong likelihood too
but uh just following precepts i mean
you gotta be careful not just to get
lost in the idea of just the words of
the rules i mean

really what it all boils down to is your

own mental states

and um yeah try to keep them as

as neutral or as positive as you can

manage

ultimately neutrality is better than

positivity because

like positive karma is still karma it's

keeping you in samsara

like mara the the buddhist devil if you

can't get you to be bad he'll get you to

be good because either way

you're still creating karma that's

keeping you bound up in the system

so yeah it at the end here so or would

it all be volitional and depend on how

you feel regarding your profession yeah

that's exactly it

so i'll just move on to bpat 427's next question

is it considered sexual misconduct for a monk to occasionally

masturbate if he's abstaining from all sexual activity but his mind is fixated on sex and he happens to have a wet dream would that be breaking any linear rules okay that's two questions

and um let's see

yeah a monk is not allowed it's it's

sangha di seisa

number one it's it's like one of them

it's like the fifth

rule of all the monk rules um it's

a relatively serious one that a monk is

not allowed to have an

orgasm deliberately unless it's in a

dream

so technically spanking the puppy is

against the rules but if you just pet it

a little bit

it's still you're still making you know

sensual

karma you're still indulging in lust and

attachment and everything

but uh you're not technically breaking

the rule so long as you're not

intending to have an orgasm so long as

you're not trying to have an orgasm

consciously and deliberately

then it's not exactly against the rules

although

as i was saying earlier buddhist ethics

are so finely tuned

that any kind of lust or attachment is

going to create at least a light and

gray ethical

situation so

yeah if he's abstaining from all sexual

activity but his mind is fixated on sex

um yeah well i mean to the state your

mind is fixated on it

um if if thoughts arise

um you know like the first motion like

in like in roman catholicism they'll say

the first motions like

when when the thought firsts arrive

first arises that's just

the result of karma and that's like a
passive thing you didn't cause the first
thought to arise

but if you like dwell on it and start
and just

you just take the ball and run with it
then yeah you've started uh

you started creating acoustic or bad
karma

even if you're just sitting there
fantasizing and you're you're not moving
at all

but a wet dream is not against the goals
and when i was when i was celibate and
young

i was having a wet dream on average

about once every
three weeks or so when i was in my 40s
they stopped happening and i missed them
the only way that would be against the
rules would be if you
go to sleep with the deliberate
intention of having a wet dream like
you're you're trying to do lucid
dreaming or something
you know you're deliberately trying to
come in your sleep
then yeah that could be breaking the
rules but if you just go to sleep you're
just you're just a horny person
and you go to sleep and you have a uh
like a erotic pornographic dream
and you have an orgasm in your sleep

then that is not against the wills
so move on on to the next question by
bpat427

is there anything in the linea
prohibiting monks from operating
vehicles or riding horses

uh yeah actually there is there's um
it is against the rules for a monk to
ride a horse

um there is a rule against a monk
traveling in a vehicle although the
implication is that the vehicle is being
pulled by

living beings because it's not against
the rule for monk to
travel in a boat like in a sailboat and

so i think the commentarial tradition
has decided that
it means uh like block carts or
horse-drawn carriages
or that kind of a thing and so
there is an exemption if a monk is sick
like he's too sick to walk
he is allowed to travel in a rickshaw
pulled by a
man i think if i remember correctly but
then the commentarial tradition has that
interpreted to mean
a bull so
um yeah i think the the easy way of
explaining this
is that a monk is not allowed
to travel in a vehicle or

be a burden on a living being
unless he is too sick to walk and then
he can avail himself of that
and i availed myself of that once in my
30 years as a monk um
i hurt my foot and i had to walk
i had to travel 32 miles through a
forest to get to the nearest
car road and uh yeah i had torn this
hunk of skin off the bottom of my foot
my feet were wet and i stepped on a
sharp rock and messed up the bottom of
my foot
so the the villagers in that area
chipped in and rented me an elephant
from

a labor uh from a lumber camp
and uh the elephant was named sanwin
which means special bright love
and so i rode this elephant like halfway
16 miles
through the forest until we got to a
kind of dirt road
the bridge was washed out so cars
couldn't get there yet but uh we could
follow
um this dirt road on a block cart so i
got off the elephant and onto this block
car
and it was while writing the bullet card
that i realized why it's against the
rules for monks to ride in bullock carts
unless they're sick because

unlike horses as soon as you stop
beating on a bullock it starts slowing
down

and so to go 16 miles in a block cart
two bullocks are receiving a seven hour
long beating

and so yeah it makes sense although with
regard to cars

um they i mean obviously they didn't
exist in ancient india when the rules
were made

so um the uh the experts in modern times
have compared cars with like
boats where um you know it's like
there's no animal
getting a beating from you being in a

boat so that was considered to be okay
and it might be the only way of crossing
the river anyway if there's no bridge
so people kind of um considered cars and
trains and that sort of thing to be sort
of like boats

and but there were like i have been told
that uh when

cars and trains first reached burma
there were some strict monks that just
refused and just

everywhere they went was on foot

although that could be uh

definitely a handicap nowadays when
monks are traveling all over the world
um see where am i here

yeah so okay i think i answered that

question now the next

next question from uh bpat427

as an extension of my previous question

would one accrue

more bad karma for enabling people in

and unwholesome professions for example

would a heroin addict develop more bad

karma for enabling a heroin dealer to

sell him poison

on top of the bad karma they're already

creating um

yeah i think yeah i think that's that's

pretty likely

i mean it would depend on on the case

but obviously like

taking an extreme example if you're

hiring a hitman

to kill somebody that you don't like

then yeah you're facilitating somebody

else committing murder which is

which isn't going to improve your karma

at all

but again it's like it depends on your

own volitions

so um

yeah like the lady at the grocery store

if she's selling you a six pack of beer

um i doubt that she's going to be

um punished in the hereafter

uh very much if at all for for selling

you that six pack of beer especially if

she doesn't see anything wrong with it

she's just a westernized normie who

doesn't consider it to be immoral at all
um she's not a buddhist keeping five
precepts so she's not breaking that
precept really
she hasn't taken it upon herself to
begin with so
yeah it would depend on the individual
case but yeah i mean if
if you're doing business with like a um
here we go the heroin dealer
um yeah i mean you're you're
facilitating their own
um their own unwholesome behavior
and uh possibly their own greed and so
forth besides
i mean you could be buying something

completely normal from somebody and

still you're

you're facilitating their greed you know

you you buy a car from

the notoriously uh stereotypical used

car salesman and he's like trying to

get as much money out of you as he can

then

you know he's going to be chuckling at

how he ripped you off because he didn't

include the spare tire or something and

yeah he's going to get bad karma for

that but you can't really be responsible

for

other people's mental states entirely

but

um yeah obvious cases i mean if you're

if you're hiring orkin to exterminate
your

your insects in your house rather than
exterminating them yourself i mean
you're essentially doing the same thing
and a lot of the veneer rules are the
same you know it's like

monk is not allowed to commit murder but
he's not allowed to help anybody else
commit murder either

you know he's not allowed to um kill
animals but he's not allowed to like
have somebody else do it for him

either because essentially you're just
using the other person as an instrument
so i hope i answered that one and so

i'll move on to the next one

oh this is this one's a lulu too when a
fully enlightened being dies does their
specific strain of consciousness cease
to exist

quote quote or could it then be
projected anywhere

due to its infinite nature and this is
one of the questions that the buddha
himself refused to answer you know

if the target after the target dies does
he

does he cease to exist or does he
continue to exist i mean that's just
you just do not answer that question

that's another one of those middle path
questions between between yes and no yes

is one extreme

no is the other extreme and the middle path just cuts right through the middle and it makes no sense from a logical point of view but uh then again reality makes no sense from a logical point of view like nirvana

really makes no sense from a logical point of view so you've got rationalists trying to interpret nirvana as just pure cessation or something and they just miss the boat

but um i mean obviously if the buddha refuses to answer i mean why should why should i

you know um there is one interesting

suta though where

somebody asks the buddha if a fully
enlightened being continues to exist
after death and

he he remarks that you can't even say
for sure if the enlightened being exists
even before death so you can chew on
that one too

and so uh yeah i'll just move on to the
next question also from

beatpath427 could people carrying out an
involuntary sterilization eugenics
program

avoid negative karma if their intention
is purely to

benefit the society they live in

hmm i think bpat427 wants to sterilize

people

um actually from the buddhist point of
view

yeah so long as you know that you are
sterilizing people against their will
or helping others to sterilize people
against their will

then yeah i think you'd be making some
negative karma

because from the buddhist point of view
even like neutering an animal like
fixing an

animal you are messing with another
being sexuality which can come back on
you

like i think there's some story of um

like venerable sariputa who was the
buddhist right-hand man in a past
life he was a farmer or something who
was like castrating animals and then as
a result of that in a
subsequent life he was born as a eunuch
or got turned into a eunuch
um with regard to eugenics that's a
different question
sterilization is one thing eugenics is
another i mean if eugenics is just uh
you know encouraging people who are um
like genetically compatible you know
they're more likely to create
strong healthy children um in a way
you're still encouraging them to uh to
get naughty with each other which

i mean that's an entirely different
issue and again it just goes back to the
whole idea that
absolute pure whiteness purity of virtue
is a virtual impossibility especially if
you're living in the world
so um yeah eugenics would be more light
gray than
mandatory sterilization um
but uh i mean if you've got a lot of
good volitions you know you've got a lot
of good reasons then the good reasons
might outweigh the bad ones
you know it could be that um i don't
know maybe somebody they're just so
genetically messed up that really they

would be creating genetically messed up
children who would be suffering a lot
then you know it's possible i mean you'd
have to weigh the
all the pluses and the minuses and see
which uh which is heavier before you
make your decision
to the best of your your capacity but
messing with the the sexuality of other
beings i have read in buddhist texts
that uh yeah that's gonna come back on
you and your own sexuality is gonna get
messed up um if the karma is allowed to
reach fruition
so the next question is from chaplin
what is your view on collective karma
quote unquote

can karma start with the individual then
trickle upwards in many individuals into
a broader karmic effect that changes an
entire community

country society or race

um this is uh like a contentious issue

it's a good question too

but it is a contentious issue sort of
like in um

evolutionary biology where

there's the argument or the the

controversy as to whether there's like

group evolution and i think that the

mainstream

um like the consensus of the mainstream

is that no

it's always an individual thing and that
is also the answer

in mainstream or orthodox buddhism

that there really is no collective karma

that it's all individual

that your your own individual karma will

cause you to be reborn

in this or that society but

you could say that there's like a

virtual collective karma that there's

something

kind of like collective karma in that

people who have similar karma and

similar mental state

similar attitudes are more likely to be

um

born together in the same kind of

society

so you know if you've got a warlike if

you've got warlike karma

and a warlike attitude you're more

likely to be born into a warlike

society and other people will also

so it's sort of like you've got

collective karma

and um with regard to the trickle

upwards of like

people um

uh see how would i how would i describe

this you know like one person makes a

major change in the society which then

spreads

um yeah you'd have to say that everybody

that is affected

by that would already have to have the
receptivity like the karmic receptivity
for that to happen

to them um

but uh yeah i mean orthodox buddhism you
would say no there is no collective
karma although

um orthodox buddhism does kind of
uh ignore the possibility that there is
like a deep

connections between people and that um
you know you're just in the presence of
another person their own mental states
will have an effect on you because

deep down there's there's like an um i
mean the barrier doesn't go all the way

down to the bottom

you know the barrier between you and

other people pink floyd's wall or

whatever

there is a level where that just doesn't

exist and so that's where

like empathy and uh like

maybe even telepathy can take place

where there's just uh

like in us it's not really this distinct

individual and that distinct individual

which ultimately aren't real to begin

with

so all i can say for sure is that uh

from the point of view

orthodox tarabata buddhism there is no

collective karma

although there's uh uh you could you

could argue that

you know the same kind of thing does

happen

anyway um for whatever for whatever

reason or through whatever means

in that uh you know people with similar

karma are just gonna be

reborn together and so there's going to

be that kind of agreement

of karma and it you could call that a

kind of group karma at least there's uh

like trends with regard to what kind of

individual karma the

inhabitants of the society have

so yeah that's that's my best answer on

that with regard to whether there really
is collective karma

i could be a heretic and uh accept the
possibility that there is

and for all i know there may be it all
depends on how you look at it

next question from chaplain i'm really
enjoying reading your first two books
that you recently released on amazon do
you plan on publishing any of your
translations

or other works when this current series
is complete

um yeah i think so

that is the plan it's going to depend on
whether the this current series

really is uh you know i mean if people appreciate it and and buy it and uh you know it's if it's uh turns out that writing a whole new book from scratch would be worthwhile if i think people will actually read it then yeah i would be happy to do that especially if i'm not too busy um like working a regular job to do it with regard to my translations and most of my translations are in the first volume essays of terabyte of buddhism there's the big atakawaga translation which did get published very briefly for free distribution and from the very beginning i've always had

the the intention that that this book
especially the atakawaga translation
should be for free distribution it
should be done

i don't want to charge money for it um i
did have the idea that

if uh if it did wind up in a in a larger
anthology of something i could uh
somehow um just have like an intro
saying that

please consider this part to be free you
know it's like

the box of cereal 20 free you know it'd
be like that

although um there is a very generous
and uh devout fellow named frank who

has uh expressed a willingness to uh
have this
published at his own expense or at least
to uh
make a large contribution to that and i
would feel happier
with with that because it has always
been my
intention that the main like possibly my
main contribution to
western buddhism would be my atakawaga
translation
and so i really i really don't like the
idea of charging money for it
but yeah we'll just see how it goes
let's see
see publishing any of your translations

or other works when this current series
is complete

um yeah yeah i mean like like i said if
if there's a positive response
positive enough response from my first
books

that it makes it obvious that there is a
demand or an appreciation

and people would be willing to uh to uh
buy more books if i were to just go
through all the trouble

you know like writing my memoirs or
something then uh yeah i'm going to
continue with that because

i i do write relatively well and um
i don't always enjoy writing but i enjoy

finishing writing it's like when you

when you finish

writing something you can look at it as

something that you have accomplished you

know and if it turned out well then

it feels good so um

yeah you're just gonna have to uh wait

and see and i'm gonna have to uh

try to come up with good ways of

advertising because that's like the main

that is like my main issue at present is

how to make the books known because uh

if nobody knows about them then

nobody will buy them other than just

people who know me already

so we'll just see how that goes and so

the next question

is from dog breath mr breath

asks this is kind of a long complicated
one

biofeedback offers measurable data for
meditators using this data

improvements can be made and deeper
meditative relaxation states

achieved autogenics whatever that is
was also born out of the western
scientific mindset

and also has many studies to show its
efficacy have you ever considered using
these methods

would you consider utilizing these
methods if you were to teach
meditation do you see a time these

methods may be used in mainstream

buddhism

do you see anything wrong with using

these methods in a buddhist context and

i'll

i will consider all of that to be mr

brett's first

question and as it turns out i've often

thought about that

i remember biofeedback used to be you

get these electrodes attached to your

head in various places and then it would

make little squiggly lines on the paper

sort of like a lie detector test or

something and i like that idea because

it's like

if you can get into a good meditative

state

and then you see what the pattern is on
the lines then you can just
kind of not necessarily lock into that
but

you know you know what it is that's
creating the best results

and then you can sort of use the the
squiggly lines or whatever it is
as just something that you focus your
attention on and you can kind of control
that by cultivating the mental state
that that causes the lines

to be in the the optimal at least

optimal for you

configuration so i actually went to the

went to the trouble of getting this
little

i can't remember what it was called but
it was a bio feedback thing that uh
um it had made progress since the
squiggly lines on the paper

it was a bluetooth thing that you'd fit
onto your head it just had one electrode
that

stuck to it pressed up against um
like your your left frontal lobe

and um i used it a little while it was
hard to get the bluetooth to
to hook up it was really kind of a
chintzy

thing and um it wasn't really accurate
enough to be useful to me and so because

of the complications of using it and
the questionable results i i just
stopped using it after a while
but they are getting better at it in
fact

the us government is doing a lot of
experiments

on um like

having electrodes you know up against
your head

and um using that as a way of

like um operating on like a fighter
plane or

pretty soon you'll be able to play video
games just by thinking your commands
to some degree it's already happening

and so yeah i don't see any problem with that i think that could be really useful technology for aiding people in meditation

and uh they do have better ones than the the chintzy little one electrode one that i got i think they've got one that has like a headband with several electrodes that may produce better more reliable results

so um yeah if anybody wants to try that uh get get one of the good ones and uh tell me how it works

because i was really interested in that and i do i do still think it's a good idea

next question from dog breath

it is not possible to experience this
one's a lulu also

it is not possible to experience
something that is not known

if it were it would instantly become the
known

meaning any state of consciousness
experienced must be

knowable and therefore natural

and then he's got three questions

following up from this

does this mean enlightenment is a purely
natural state and not something

extraordinary and that anyone can attain

it if so why does it appear so if you
have attained it

does this mean that meditation without
supernatural concepts

added to it is simply deep relaxation
and

if the enlightened state is natural why
is it necessary to work or have to do
something to attain it wouldn't it be
instantly available or quickly
attainable

by which i mean it easily as easily
attainable as relaxing

okay this one's got some unpacking to do
so i mean the first the first statement
that he has sort of like the
the springboard to these questions um
is it is not possible to experience
something that is not

known meaning any state of consciousness
experienced must be knowable and
therefore

natural um yes and no i mean
you can experience something and really
not know what it really

is you can like you can perceive
something you don't know what it is you
know it's like what the hell
is that but it's like you just
experience as that

whatever it is and i'm not exactly sure
what to label it any more specifically
than just

this thing that i'm unfamiliar with so
that's how perception works you have to

put some kind of a label onto it it has
to be something but i mean it can be
something as vague as
this whatever it is that i really can't
define anymore exactly than
this whatever it is so it is possible to
experience a mental state
that you're unfamiliar with and just has
you confused
and you don't really see all the way
through to the bottom of it
but anything that you experience um
yeah it's it's natural and it's noble to
the extent that you at least
have perceived it as something but it
might not be as i say it might not be
anything more specific than just

this what is this um

but yeah from the buddhist point of view

anything you experience is natural there

is really is nothing supernatural

in buddhism except maybe for

enlightenment itself

because enlightenment simply is off the

scale it is not

part of samsara nirvana or nirvana

is not in samsara it's not any of the 31

planes of existence it's just totally

off the scale

so getting to his first question here

does this mean enlightenment is a purely

natural state and not something

extraordinary and that anyone can attain

it

if so why does it appear so few have

attained it

enlightenment itself is a paradoxical

state because as i say it's

off the scale and um it's

it's like it's not samsara but it's

simultaneous with samsara it kind of

overlaps with samsara

it gets to into the the extremes of like

the mahayana buddha saying that nirvana

and samsara are the same

um so it's a paradoxical state

enlightenment especially

i mean meditative states are one thing

but uh

you know they're not enlightenment

meditative states are like entirely
different kettle of wax from
from nirvana because nirvana has no
beginning and no end it is not
conditioned it has no causes and no
effects

it's just this formless infinite
absolute

um which means that it just transcends
existence and non-existence we're
getting all the way back to hegel again
and so buddhism just doesn't even bother
to try and reify it mostly
um see does this mean that enlightenment
is a purely natural state
that's questionable not something

extraordinary well

it is extraordinary uh assuming that you

can even say that it exists

within a the context of samsara which is

what we're stuck in right now

and anyone can attain it whether

anyone can attain i mean that would be

purely

potential i think realistically most

people

can't because they're just not ready for

it they're not right for it even though

they're just swimming in it all the time

because

any kind of formless unconditioned

absolute isn't going to have boundaries

so if it's in the mind of an arahant

it's also in the mind of a chicken and
like a serial killer

it's just that we don't notice it

so so why does it appear so few have
attained this because they're so

locked into their perceptual system of
dualities and

is and isn't and this and that

natural and unnatural all the words all
the concepts

it just makes so much noise that they uh

they just don't see through it to the uh

to the absolute foundation of it all

so to speak next question from or

like the next question in this list of

questions from dog breath

does this mean that meditation without
supernatural concepts added to it is
simply deep relaxation

um in a way you could say that it's
simply deep relaxation it's

it's like deep relaxation of your mind
it's like ultimately

from the dharmic point of view you're
meditating to make your mind

as clear as as awake and as peaceful and
uncluttered as possible so that you can
ultimately

see through um all of the phenomena that
your mind is conjuring up to the reality
that

that that is um underlies that and
ultimately pervades it

so um yeah i mean meditation without
supernatural concepts added to it really
is

it's uh like uh techniques for
um pacifying and clarifying
simplifying your mind making it as awake
and alert and clear and empty
and uncluttered as possible so that you
can see

through the veil see through just the
phenomena

the multiplistic phenomena of samsara to
the reality which

lies underneath it because we are in the
matrix right

now we are in plato's cave

so the last question here

from dog breath on this list of

questions

if the enlightened state is natural why

is it

necessary to work or to have to do

something to attain it

wouldn't it be instantly available or

quickly attainable

by which i mean as easily attainable as

relaxing

well i mean relaxing is one thing and uh

becoming enlightened is something else

because

just relaxing is not going to get you

enlightened like krishna bernie said you

can open the window but you can't make

the breeze blow in

the best you can do is just make

yourself as available for enlightenment

as possible

by simplifying and clarifying your mind

as possible

um so i mean it kind of is

instantly available because we're

already soaking in it you know our mind

is already just

pervaded by enlightenment it's just that

uh

we don't care or we don't notice um

but just because just for the sake of

argument if something were

natural let's say if the enlightened

state is natural

um why is it necessary to work for it or
have to do something to attain it i mean
being at the top of mount everest is
natural

you know i mean it's not by supernatural
means that a person climbs to the top of
mount everest

it's not by supernatural means that

somebody wins an olympic gold medal

um it's purely natural means that you

win the olympic gold medal but still

you've got to work your ass off and even

most people who are working their ass

off to win an olympic gold medal still

don't win it

so just because something is natural

doesn't mean that it's just gonna
plop right into your lap um
but again i mean becoming fully
enlightened um if there is anything at
all that's supernatural

in in buddhism it would be um nirvana
and the attainment of nirvana because
nirvana cannot be caused it has to be
effortless

and um you cannot force nirvana
you know you cannot make it happen you
cannot

make yourself be enlightened all you can
do is be as available to it as possible
and um you know it's we're almost
getting into the realm of like divine

grace where it's just uh
whether it happens or not is not
entirely under your control
so i i hope uh i'm not like
totally confounding everybody with these
answers but some of these questions are
just
um you know they're just going right off
the rails
into uh paradox and um things that you
really can't put into words
the whole middle path is just a mind
bender you know middle path is not only
between
self torture and self self indulgence
it's in between
yes and no it's in between is and isn't

between existence and non-existence

okay next question from potila

some traditions like contemplative

christianity and bhakti yoga

talk about being infused with divine

light or divine love as one of or the

highest states attainable by humans

they hold that this is god bringing the

experience to them by way of blessings

or

grace what would the equivalent buddhist

state of meditation be

to these experiences of intense love or

light

it seems that it is a lower state than

described in the suttas for causing

awakening because it appears to be a
highly emotional rapture like trance
but also a collapse of the self quote
unquote

and generates intense sympathy and peace
you have spoken a few times about

a type of perennial view of paths but it
seems that some have experiences that no
correlation

have no correlation between traditions
okay

so i'm i'm understanding this question
to mean something like um

in in christianity at least among some
christian

mystics or saints

they are saying that uh you know the the

soul of the uh

you know the the like the highly

advanced christian

you just be full of light and love for

the whole universe

because god is love and you're you've

become god through participation

of some such and um

yeah i think one thing to bear in mind

that may be significant here

is that christianity has always been

more heart oriented and

uh or feelings oriented faith-oriented

whereas buddhism has been

more head-oriented more philosophical

and scientific

and so um you know there there are

various

mental states that you can experience um

in it while being enlightened presumably

you know there's

like an enlightened being can still have

all kinds of you know

pretty much the still the same uh

spectrum

of of thoughts and feelings other than

maybe some really

like really uh unskillful negative ones

um

so it could be that just the like the

more heart oriented path is taking you

in a slightly different direction on

your way to enlightenment

than the just the more sterile um
this sort of analytical or not no i
shouldn't even say analytical
just just more of a head oriented more
of a like a
gyani yoga kind of approach
um it's not bhakta yoga it's more just
the
the yoga of knowledge or the yoga or
raja yoga the
yoga of like meditative
contemplation um so i mean it could be
that
it's just that christianity is going by
a slightly different route
to the top of the mountain than buddhism

is

or it could also be that you know like a
fully enlightened being could be
experiencing this light and love
although it's it's not so much um
emphasized in the texts and i mean it's
not so much emphasized even in their own
life

because they just kind of see it from a
more head-oriented point of view

so um

yeah i mean i mean you can meditate on
metal i think meta meditation gets you
up to what is it second or third jhana
supposedly

um but that would not be uh
enlightenment

it would not be the same as
enlightenment in fact no mental state is
the same as enlightenment because
enlightenment really is not this or that
mental state
so yeah that's another kind of a subtle
one
but yeah my best guess is that uh the
more heart heart-oriented
more feelings and faith-oriented systems
are going to have
more of that kind of fireworks and
special effects going on on your way
there but it's not the same as
enlightenment
or if it is the same as enlightenment

then even a fully enlightened
terawatta buddhist monk would be
experiencing that sort of thing but
it wouldn't be seen as as important
or as worthy of mention or some such
that's my best answer to that so i'm
going to move on to potila's next
question

though orthodox tyravada does not teach
an origin for existence

i must so why is there something instead
of nothing

i can't be an atheist because this world
is just so odd outside of tarawa
teachings

what is your thoughts on the origin or
reason for all things

okay well i've already kind of touched
on this before

and uh you know it's like going back to
hegel

absolute being an absolute non-being or
indistinguishable

and so this whole um the the ten
thousand things mentioned in the day
chain come from

um like this self-referential
consciousness

which arises because it can out of out
of the

the infinite everything nothing there's
anything that possibly can exist
can't or anything that possibly can't

exist does exist in this

virtual potential form and then this

virtual potential

consciousness becomes self-referential

and starts

perceiving itself and thinking that what

it is perceiving

is really what it is and it's just uh

like the virtual statue um

that uh you say that it potentially or

virtually does exist

but uh again from the buddhist point of

view this entire universe arises through

ignorance

or um i mean some some old versions of

dependent core rising say that it arises

from perception

or papancha which is like
differentiating designation which is
what i consider to be essentially a
synonym for perception
so somehow you've got uh the potential
you you can say that there's this
infinite consciousness which because
it's infinite and formless can't really
be said to exist
um you know it just transcends
transcends any kind of
uh you know no label will really stick
to it
um and then in this infinite
consciousness you have little
virtual uh parts of it that

that become aware of themselves and then
become unenlightened because they're
they think that what they are perceiving
is the reality
and they falsely uh differentiate
themselves from everything else and then
they're generating all these dreams
which is uh our karmic samsaric
existence
um but to say that there is something
out of nothing or something instead of
nothing again that those are the two
extremes
you know it's like something is one
extreme
nothing is the other extreme and
buddhism follows the path by the middle

you know

dependent core rising just cuts right
through it

it's not something it's not nothing

and it again i mean this is sort of the
theme of this

this uh q a and uh i hope i'm not just
uh

blackpilling everybody on these q and
a's because uh

yeah people keep asking these questions

of is it yes or is it no

or does it exist or does it not exist

and

ultimately from the point of ultimate
truth

it's it's you can't say it's one or the other

you can't say it to both and you can't say it's neither it's just uh

reality cannot be put into words reality is an unthinkable void

um until you experience it and then it's it's like infinity it's god

it's dao brahman whatever

nirvana so

yeah if you if you think that the

universe exists that's one extreme

if you think the universe doesn't exist

that's the other extreme and buddhism

teaches the the way by the middle

uh there's a sutta in the uh

submutanica which in bhikkhu bodhi's

translation is called the
cosmologist which deals with this like
this this cosmologist
asked the buddha you know does the world
exist and the buddha says you know
that's
that's the oldest that's the oldest
philosophy of the world
so then he says well then mr gautama
does it not exist and buddha just says
that's the second philosophy of the
world
and then he says that uh buddhism
teaches you know
the middle way between these extremes of
his and isn't and that's the middle path

of

independent core rising and if you

really want to understand dependent core

rising i suggest you study nagarjuna

because i

really don't think the the stock 12

nidona

formula is uh really all that

explanatory

so i'll just move on to the next

question after i've uh once again

um denied yes and no

where in buddhist cosmology would the

semitic gods like yahweh and

allah fit in are they local devas who

gain

power the more worshipers they have

that's an interesting idea

perhaps more like rakshas or asuras

given their desire for power praise and
adoration

there is a portion on the where brahma
is

you know there's a portion in the nikaya
where the

brahma is reborn alone and mistakenly
believes he creates the universe

but it is actually kama coming into
being the satire recalls

the semitic gods behavior and view of
themselves the desert gods seem to be
opposed to

dhamma are there gods in the suttas who

work

against the buddha mara excluded because
that's his job

um well let's just assume for the sake
of argument that yahweh

and allah really are deities

and um that they aren't

just like uh kind of a crude and deluded
attempt at describing ultimate reality
or

you know what the what the hindus or the
vedantists call

brahman so yeah you'd have to say that
there was some kind of

devas i mean they wouldn't necessarily
even be as high as brahmas

um but i mean if you if you read the

text especially in the old testament you
can see that yahweh himself
uh evolved you know it's it's um
in some in some respects he's just a
sociological phenomenon because
uh originally he was equated with the
god

l who was like the canaanite god who had
a consort and he was just
one of many gods and just sort of the
god responsible for this and that
and then mooses came along and conflated
l with
yahweh who was some sort of midianite or
edomite god
and he became more and more powerful

until um by the babylonian captivity
not much earlier than then maybe not
earlier than then he was uh
the only god and uh
allah kind of uh was very much
influenced by the old testament yahweh
to some degree they overlap so i mean
what what submitting what they are like
i mean it's hard to say because it's
like

you know 3 000 years ago yahweh was
very different than he is now um yeah so
he has evolved
but let's just assume for the sake of
existence you've got uh
some kind of powerful god resembling the
old testament yahweh

um yeah they'd be davis and uh
obviously not all devas are dharmic
you know most of the devas if you can
trust like what the buddhist teach say
they're all just having their fun up in
some heaven realm just enjoying the
sensual pleasures
enjoying their gold and jewel encrusted
palaces
full of celestial nymphs and they've got
like the
you know the heavenly gardens and the
fountains and all that kind of stuff
so they don't they don't really care one
way or the other about the buddha or
about

dharma they're just uh they're just
living their own

hedonistic existence um pretty much the
way a lot of humans are living their
hedonistic existence here

for that matter a lot of like spoiled
and pampered pets are just living their
hedonistic existence even though they're
in the animal realm

so i would assume that most gods and
are just not really concerned with the
highest dhamma

and uh with regard to this question here
at the end are there gods and the sutas
who work against the buddha

well i mean in addition to mara you've
got mara's daughters

who are kind of his assistants and um
there's a lot of mention of mara's in
the plural

and that's not necessarily just uh a
sequence like a temporal sequence of
this god has the rule of mara until he
his karma is exhausted and then he's
replaced by a different

uh different being who plays the role of
mara until his

his karma is exhausted i mean there is
that too

but um i think there are probably a lot
of

wrathful deities as the tibetans

describe them and there's one weird suta

of the mara tajaniyasuta

where it's talking about kali even how

kali is like a

an aunt of mara

so uh yeah i mean there's probably like

uh

more or less malevolent devas i mean

even the uh

like the what do you call them uh

in in burmese they're called balloon

you know they become like man-eating

ogres but technically speaking they

would be low-level devas also

so yeah there's there's a lot of devas

um

i don't know how well yahweh and allah

would fit in because as i say

yahweh especially evolved

radically from just a kind of tribal

canaanite god up to you know just

essentially

the only true god

but um yeah i would guess that uh most

devas are just uh sort of like um

sort of upgraded versions of us you know

they're living in a better world they

live longer they don't get sick and

you know they they've got whenever

they're hungry they just think and this

the food's already in their mouth or

whatever

you know that kind of stuff they don't

have to go potty

um so they would be just sort of a
dharmic just because they don't really
give a damn

well that's one reason why uh they say
that being

being born as a human is the best
possible way to be born because

the beings in the lower realm serve
they're too ignorant and too afflicted
really to practice dhamma or to
understand it and

the devas have it so nice that they just
are not inspired to try to improve their
situation

so yeah i mean there have been devas in
the texts

like in the sub youtu nikaya coming to

monks and uh kind of

telling them you know why don't you just

i mean you're you're still young why not

just

drop out and enjoy pleasures of the

senses until you're old and then you can

ordain if you want to so yeah lots of

davis just do not get it or do not

appreciate

dhamma and uh i assume some of them

are even opposed to it

including mara and his daughters and

possibly his

his kinfolk and the other maras

and uh some collies too maybe

so uh yeah i think i think i answered

that one sufficiently

i hope next question is from frank

i'd like you to explain the reigns

retreat from the perspective of a monk

okay um the reigns retreat

in terra vada buddhism is kind of

analogous to lent in roman catholicism

and it in the buddhist time it was

usually the first three months of the

monsoon season

of the official monsoon season although

a monk is allowed to postpone his reigns

retreat by one month so it would be

the second third and fourth months of

the monsoon season

and uh in ancient india it was just

traditional

that monks would stay in one place
because it's raining all the time and
living under trees is not really good
i've i've tried that before i found from
my own experience that a tree does not
make

a good umbrella or at least the tree i
was staying under
did not make a good umbrella it just the
leaves kind of
channel the the raindrops together into
bigger drips

they get you just as wet maybe i mean
some trees i assume they shed rain but
it would seem like it would not be
beneficial with the tree to uh deflect

all the water away from the roots

so um yeah that plus monks wandering

around

during the planting season they might be

trampling

farmers crops and that sort of thing and

so it just became a tradition early on

probably among all of the uh samana or

ascetic schools in india

that during the heaviest time of of

rainfall of the year monks would just

stay

in one place and um

then it became traditional that that

that was a time of uh

more intensive meditation and

uh yeah even even in uh like burma

um during the the three months of the
reigns retreat that is considered to be
a time of
more intensive practice and people
generally don't get
married at that time so right at the end
of the range retreat there's all kinds
of weddings in burma
because the people have been waiting for
the range retreat to end but frank here
is asking for
the range retreat from the perspective
of a monk
so yeah that's that's essentially what
it is i mean originally when monks were
homeless

wanderers it was just a time when it was
heavy rain where they would just stay
together in one place and it's against
the rules for a monk to
live in the open or under a tree during
the rains retreat he has to actually go
under a roof
or or into a cave or something and uh
yeah so that's about it i mean it's the
the years are counted in
in rains the the the word for year
in pali is wasa which also just means a
rain it's like
you know like the the indians in the old
cowboy movies talking about many moons
you know even the word monk comes has
the same etymology as the word moon

so um in in ancient india the word for a year

just uh kind of followed the same thing

it was like one um monsoon season

was like the kind of how you count not

only years in general but amongst

seniority

is counted in wasa how many reigns

retreats you have

you have been ordained so i was

my seniority was 30 reigns before i uh

started wearing this this nice shirt

okay so next question is from jml

is there any chance doing mushrooms a

few times just for curiosity's sake

would not be a precept violation okay

that's kind of an interesting question
the fifth precept is uh i undertake the
precept to refrain from
ale wine and intoxicants which
cause heatlessness or cloudedness of
mind

so i think the key term there is is the
heatlessness

it's a cause for carelessness like if
you're drunk

um you know you just don't give a [_]

it just kind of makes you stupid

sometimes and um makes you

less um conscientious

it makes you less aware of dharma

so um with regard to mushrooms it would

depend on why you take it and its effect

on you

like as a monk i took mushrooms uh at
least twice

than i can remember and uh for me
taking psychedelics like mushrooms and
lsd

um almost always result in like
mystical states and religious religious
experiences

so um if you're taking it for spiritual
reasons like as an entheogen

so to speak like doing like a um
an ayahuasca ceremony something like
that then i think it could be
justifiable

because sometimes taking uh

like a chemical that will just slam you
out of a rot

is exactly what you need or at least it
can be very beneficial

so um yeah i mean there's a good chance
i wouldn't even be

i wouldn't have even become a monk if i
hadn't uh taken

um psychedelic drugs as a layperson
because

one of the main effects that it has
is it just shows you that there are
alternative ways of viewing reality that
in their own way are just as valid
as just being a straight normate so
um yeah i wouldn't i wouldn't say that
doing mushrooms

um is necessarily in violation of the
fifth precept unless you're doing it
just recreationally to party
um you say here just for curiosity's
sake

i mean just for curiosity's sake i don't
know if that would be
a good enough reason but if you're doing
it for spiritual purposes
like to bring up stuff that's deep down
to knock you out of ruts that maybe
you're stuck in
to give you like a different perspective
on reality to expand your consciousness
something like that i think it could be
justifiable

so finally the last
question the very last one
and we've already gone more than two
hours
is from shawarma dharma when thinking
about serious practitioners
forest monks etc what are the salient
differences between the thai burmese and
sri lankan
approaches um that's
kind of an interesting question and um
i mean i would have to rely on like real
like oversimplifications and
generalizations because
you know the thais and the burmese and
the sri lankans they're they all belong
to

the same um religion quote unquote
terabyte of buddhism although there are
cultural differences
and so um one gross oversimplification
is that of the three the three pitikas
the three baskets of the pali topitica
um the sri lankans have a reputation for
emphasizing the sutas
the thais have a reputation for
emphasizing winya or monastic discipline
and the burmese have a reputation for
emphasizing abhidhamma or like the
the abstract technical philosophy stuff
but with regard to the serious
practitioners
um it's my understanding that the

burmese

tend more towards mindfulness meditation

like

mike mahasi has been probably the most

influential

uh tradition of the 20th century like of

the past hundred years

in burma sri lanka it's my understanding

you're more likely to do samata

meditation more

emphasis on jhana um

and with regard to the ties i'm not

exactly sure what the time

practices are because the ties kind of

have a reputation for just following the

rules

and not meditating very much i'm sure

but this is an oversimplification again
it's just

a gross generalization but the ties are
really into

following the rules and living the
lifestyle and

they also do more do tonga so they're
they're more likely to just be wandering
around homeless and sleeping in

cemeteries and that kind of a thing

but they do have a reputation for not
meditating nearly as much

as the burmese so i'm just comparing

tai teravada with burmese tarabata um

just again going with the gross

oversimplification and the

generalization the

burmese are more interested in

meditation and scholarship

and the thais are more interested in

following the monastic discipline

and practicing outward austerities

and with regard to sri lanka it was very

corrupt

very degenerate for hundreds of years

although

in the 20th century i think maybe even

the very late 19th century they started

having reform movements that were very

serious

uh forest traditions and i don't have a

lot of experience with them i've got no

personal experience

i've met a few monks western monks who
lived in sri lanka in in these uh
traditions and uh it seems to be very
much based on the sutables
and uh very very sincere
although most sri lankan buddhism and
for that matter most burmese and thai
buddhism is
relatively corrupt um
so the saline differences between the
thai burmese and sri lankan approaches
uh yeah i mean it's you're gonna find
the full spectrum
pretty much everywhere i would think
there's not a whole lot of forest
burmese buddhism like i was ordained in

the tompulu tradition which is one of
the few

burmese forest traditions um so

the burmese traditions are mostly
for serious practitioners especially
they tend to uh

be centered in like uh meditation
centers

you know like mahasi and uh now and

uh there are a bunch of other ones

someone and mogo

and uh you have the goenka method which
arose in burma also

but they tend not to be based on uh
forest forest practice

and uh ties there's more emphasis there
there are more forest traditions in

thailand and probably now in sri lanka
also

but uh i'm really most of my experiences
with burmese taraba so i can't really
speak with a lot of authority
on thai and sri lankan buddhism although
with regard to the ties

um a few hundred years ago the burmese
made an unprovoked invasion of thailand
and sacked their capital ayudhia
and it caused their like ecclesiastical
hierarchy and their

buddhist um like the the university
system to collapse
which they never fully recovered from
that and so

the ties um even some of the meditation
masters are
really bad scholars you know they don't
know the poly correctly they use the
terms incorrectly
but partly because of that they also
teach from their own personal experience
which is good
and so you have some real meditation
masters in thailand
even though they might not be familiar
with the correct
poly terminology and so forth but
i assume that is at least as good
probably better in many cases than
the burmese idea of just dogmatism and
you just teach

exactly what is in the books even though
you may not have any personal experience
with it

and again with uh with regard to the sri
lankans i really i really can't say that
i can't say that much about them because
i've got very little experience with
them

so um yeah i guess that's the last
question

and uh we're already well over two hours
i i tried to warn you

i hope you went pee before you started
watching this

and um if you have more questions i mean
it's

people are just keep coming up with more
and more questions which is good

so if you have more questions just leave
them in the comments below

or if you're on the subscribe to our
channel

um which the link is below um

i do make an announcement a few days
before i uh

do the next one or if you're on the
discord server

which uh now is by invite only because i
think we were

getting infiltrated by uh trolls um

you can you can request um

an invite to uh to the discord server

and then there's like a q a room there

where you can you can ask questions

there too

but um if you're if you're just uh new

to all of this

then uh yeah just it's good enough to

leave your questions in the comments

below

and if it's on youtube then i'll get

like an email

um bit shoot is a little trickier i

don't get notifications so much i have

to go search for those

but um yeah you're uh you're welcome to

ask questions

and like some of these people that have

asked them today uh

you can hit me with your best shot some
of these were like

uh you just have to wander into the
realm of formless void and
incomprehensibility trying to answer
these things

but i guess the the main theme of the
questions today was

the middle path is not just the middle
path between self-indulgence and
self-torture it's the middle path

between yes and no

between is and isn't between existence
and non-existence

and uh if you don't understand that then

uh that's that's completely

normal because nobody can really

understand intellectually if you think
you've understood it intellectually
you're uh
you've gone off the tracks you're in a
rut
so uh yeah that's that's it and uh
um yeah like i said you're welcome to
ask again and uh
be happy

Hello and welcome to episode 12 of
question and answer.

I am your host Panyo Bassa,
also known as David Reynolds.

Hail audience.

Uh

where do I start? I suppose I should uh
say uh

that my sweetheart always wants me to uh
shave and look nice for these, which is
one reason why I don't have like a
week's growth of whiskers on me right
now.

But what it results in is uh I put off
shaving till the last minute and then I
sit in front of everybody with like cuts

and razor burns.

So uh

please be patient with that if it uh if appearances make any difference to you at all.

And so I've got lots of questions here.

And so I might as well just get started.

First question is from Potila,

also known as Besties with Dr. N Glyke,

and whose secret name is Slave of

Knowledge.

First question.

Besides Nagarjuna, which Mahayana or

non-Theravada Buddhist philosophers do

you find help illuminate the early

Dharma but do not create new sutras or

lineages?

Okay, well um

just for starters, I might as well throw
in uh the Buddhacarita by Aśvaghoṣa,
um which is really not breaking any kind
of new ground with regard to philosophy
or anything, but um
it is like a standard
um account of the Buddha's life from a
non-Theravada Buddhist perspective, but
still it was like pre-Mahayana
traditional early Buddhism.

And um I have read that it is considered
to be one of the most perfect, most
beautiful classics of world poetry ever
composed.

In the original Sanskrit, I assume.

So, there is that. But, to with regards
to the philosophical stuff,

um,

yeah, I mean, I can't really say

Prajnaparamita because that really did
create, um, new sutras and lineages.

So, um,

uh, really with regard to philosophers
that I find help illuminate the early
Dharma, just about any

like

mystical

anti-intellectual,

anti-emotional

sort of,

um, Buddhist writer or or philosopher,

um, can really help illuminate early

Dharma. So, like the Xin Xin Ming of,
um, the third patriarch in China or the
Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation,
um, I mean, they're just as radically
anti-intellectual or approximately as
radically anti-

um, rationalistic as like the
Atthakavagga, which is really ancient,
um,

very early

uh, Buddhist philosophy.

And after after the Buddha passed away
and still early on, like within the
first 100 years or so,

uh, scholars and philosophers just
started formulating these elaborate

systems, which really went against the earliest teachings.

But, um, it's just human nature. Like, um,

like, uh, nature abhors a vacuum and intellectualism also abhors a vacuum.

Then, people are just going to cook up systems and so forth, especially in India where it was just like this passion.

But, um, the Buddha really was teaching that I mean, you cannot understand reality by thinking about it. And so, if you really you to understand reality, you just have to keep your mind silent, or at least not rely on what your mind is telling you.

And so, any kind of like the like the old Zen stories, anything like that, it really is just hammering away at that.

Then uh yeah, that's that's helpful because uh

philosophy in general, any kind of elaborated system,

is already off the path, at least with regard to the teachings of early Buddhism.

Any kind of intellectual assertion, you know, is is one extreme, isn't is the other, and the middle path just cuts through the extremes.

And so, you really can't put it into words.

And so, any kind of Buddhist philosophy that emphasizes that, that emphasizes the futility of trying to figure stuff out intellectually, that's going to be helpful. At least uh Um I mean, a lot of people just can't stand this, just like having the rug pulled out from under them, you know, they're just in free fall, but um uh if you really want to understand reality, you you're just going to have to get used to free fall.

Unfortunately for uh some people that that don't like that.

So, the next question from Potila, "Can homosexuals, male and female, be ordained into the Sangha, or are they in

the pandaka category category, which are prohibited?" Yeah, pandaka usually means a eunuch, but it can also mean anybody that isn't fully male or fully female, someone who kind of comes in between.

Um and that would include um hermaphrodites, people like that.

Um what does the process look like to remove a pandaka as a candidate from ordination?

Okay. Uh getting back to the first part here, can homosexuals, male and female, be ordained into the Sangha? Well, they obviously are. I mean, with regard to female ordination, that's just a whole different issue. And in Burma,

where I was a monk most of the time, um
it just wasn't an issue at all because
there were no ordained females other
than just um eight precept nuns.

But, um according to vinaya, according
to the ancient rules of monastic
discipline,

uh it's pretty clear that homosexuals
are considered to be uh pandaka.

Um there's even mention in the texts of
part-time pandakas, which um presumably
means like a bisexual or or or something
along those lines, something that's more
behavioral than physical.

So, I mean, you don't have to be
literally

um like a eunuch in order to be a

pandaka, just going with the ancient texts.

So, I mean, a real physical eunuch,
um

like a person like a male who has lost his family jewels or is seemingly male but just never had them,

um yeah, you're they're just not allowed to be ordained. And if they are ordained, the ordination is invalid.

Um and even even a monk who loses his family jewels through a terrible accident, technically, it is my understanding that he just can't be a monk anymore. He's just immediately excommunicated because you have to be a

complete man in the biological sense
in order to be ordained as a monk.

You can uh have the penis cut off or
something, but so long as the uh
the the testosterone-generating
glandular tissue, so to speak, is still
there, then you're still ordained.

So, with regard to homosexuals, as I
say, I mean, there's there are quite a
few in the Sangha, uh latent ones
anyway, just sort of by nature.

And uh they tend to gravitate towards
the more luxurious places in town, I
have noticed.

Um they tend to be pretty
pretty rare out in like really rough
areas in uh like forest areas or just

really rough um

sort of forest monasteries, that kind of thing.

Now like austerity generally um is not favored by them for some reason. That's an overgeneralization, I assume there are some really tough ascetic ones.

But um

yeah, it's that kind of thing is generally overlooked. I mean, if they're going to actually indulge in homosexual behavior,

yeah, then they're they're just going to be kicked out. They're going to be excommunicated. Um but then again, like

even a heterosexual monk who just indulges in actual sexual activity um with anybody, I mean, you're just going to be kicked out for that, too.

Um

so

um the process to remove a paṇḍaka as a candidate during the ordination procedure before the ordination actually takes place, the candidate is questioned and one of the questions is, "Are you a man?" There's another one that says, "Are you a human?" which is supposed to rule out like non-human beings that are just taking human form. But um "Are you a man?" is specifically asking, you know, "You're not a female, you're

not a eunuch, you know, you are a complete male."

And um

so I mean, that is kind of a filter. But

um

uh as I say, I mean, if it's just

behavioral, then generally

um they slide through and um it's not

much of an issue, I suppose. I mean,

uh I've never heard of a latent

homosexual monk being kicked out just

for being a latent homosexual.

Uh but um

yeah, one who is um

like a eunuch, not a complete man in the

biological physical sense,

even if they're ordained, then the ordination is just invalid.

So, next question.

Also by Potila.

How does early Pali Buddhism understand ghosts in the Western tradition? In the West, we talk about haunting by a specific person, like a murder victim in a house, but per Buddhism, that person has already been reborn. Are they reborn as a ghost with similar characteristics as their previous life? Also, did you have any encounters with ghosts or other similar beings while meditating in Burma?

Okay, that's two questions, I think.

The first question is the understanding

of ghosts seems to be pretty similar all around the world.

Like, um,

ghosts even in in Buddhism,

I'm called peta, it's considered to be one of the the five lower realms.

Five?

Yeah.

Four?

Man.

But, nevertheless, ghosts, um, yeah, I mean, it's it's like in the West where a lot of ghosts just identify with their existence before they died as a human.

And in fact, that's one of the things that causes rebirth as a peta or a

ghost, according to Buddhist tradition,
is you're so attached to something in
this world, possibly even your own
identity, your own social status, or
whatever, that, um,
you just I a lot of ghosts don't even
realize that they're dead, that they
they they're not their former life
anymore.

So, yeah, that that does happen. I mean,
it's like, um,
yeah, it's it's like in the West where
there are ghosts of that sort. In fact,
a lot of them are. In fact, the the
original idea of hungry ghosts
um usually the hungry part um gets
downplayed because the meaning has

changed over time. But a hungry ghost was an ancestor that wasn't getting offerings. It's like part of the the whole ancestor worshipping cult of of ancient India, which also is common throughout other parts of the world. And so, their their descendants aren't offering and making offerings of food and so forth, and that's why the ghosts were hungry and uh living in misery and and poverty and so forth. So, apparently they also, even like in pre-Buddhistic times, were still identified to some degree with their former existence and still

relying on their their descendants to support them and so forth.

So, let's see.

See if I'm getting all of this.

Um yeah, yeah. So, a ghost generally, uh like if you read the Petavatthu, which is a very strange text in in Theravada Buddhism, they tend to recall their past life fairly clearly.

And so, their their life as a ghost is kind of a punishment of some misdeeds of their their previous life as a human, and um they're aware of that.

So, this last question, or the last part of this question, also did you have any encounters with ghosts or other similar beings while meditating in Burma?

Um

Yeah, there was one time when where I apparently did uh see an apparition.

Um whether it was a ghost or not, I can't really say, but um

I've probably talked about this before, but one day I was completely healthy. I was wide awake, wasn't sleep deprived or anything. I just filled a bucket of water down at the well and I had it on my shoulder and I was carrying it back up towards my cave up on the hill.

And I was walking right in front of the congregation hall.

And

um

because I went around barefoot and I'm walking through the tropics and so forth. I don't want to step on scorpions or or anything pointy or icky or anything. I'd be looking down at the ground when I was walking.

And I saw somebody come through the bushes coming out of the trail um into the clearing in front of me. And even though I was seeing them with my peripheral vision, I could see clearly enough that it was a young a young Burmese man wearing like a blue shirt.

And and he just came out and and stops and sees me and then he just takes off running behind the congregation hall. I

mean, he just It was he ran so fast it was just like a blur.

And my first thought was if you if a layperson meets a monk at a monastery and immediately takes off running, he must be a thief or something. And so I went around behind the congregation hall looking for him to see what was up and there was nobody there.

And I didn't see how he could have gotten away anywhere. And then I started thinking that he was totally silent. He was running full speed like 20 ft 20 ft away from me. You know, there was no thumping of feet on the ground or anything. It was just

total silence. And he was going so fast.

I mean, it was just a streak.

So

then I started thinking, well, yeah,

maybe there wasn't really anybody there.

But I mean, still that could be some

sort of hallucination. It's hard to say.

Anyway, um

one time I told two Burmese ladies who

were visiting about what had happened.

And I was kind of concerned that they

might be scared because Burmese people

are uh

notoriously fearful of ghosts. In fact,

um Asian people in general tend to be

more afraid of ghosts than Westerners

who often don't believe in them.

And they just immediately, I mean, is they just told me who who the person was.

They said, "Oh, that's There was this Burmese guy who lived who lived there before I lived there who was uh

he was just a novice. He was like a koyangyi they're called. He He didn't want to be a fully ordained monk, but he was like a an ordained novice. And one reason why he didn't want to be a fully ordained monk is he was actually living in the congregation hall with his wife for a while. And that was just too much for the the villagers. And apparently,

the according to the story, he got
poisoned.

And um then he died.

And so, um

according to the Burmese, anybody who
dies an unnatural sort of death is more
likely to become a ghost anyway. And so,
yeah, they had no doubt whatsoever who
it was.

But uh whether that was really me seeing
a ghost or not, I don't know, but uh
uh that would be probably my best
example other than the notorious case of
me being attacked by ogres, but I don't
want to really get into that one. But
that also, in my opinion, was just a
case of like a waking dream. I just

woken up. And um

I think maybe I was just still dreaming or something.

But uh yeah, I won't I won't bother you with that long story cuz there's lots of other questions to to answer here.

So, the next question is from Otomo.

And he says, "Issue.

What is your own process of dealing with troubled monks? Troubled monks such as those who exhibit mental instability, start up deviant activities, say things that are clearly

anti-Buddhist or contrary to what is commonly considered Buddhist lore?"

Well, my own process of dealing with such troubled monks was be just to avoid them.

Um, when I was the abbot of a monastery, troubled monks like that, I would uh either not let them stay, uh not let them, you know, move in in the first place, or if they started exhibiting this kind of troubledness, I might uh send them packing.

Um, there's really not much else you can do. I mean, you can't force a monk to disrobe. A lot of people just people that are not familiar with the rules of

monastic discipline think that uh
you know, like the the Sangha can get
together and just excommunicate a monk,
but the only person who can really
excommunicate a monk is himself.

And if he's just not in the mood to do
that, then all you can really do is just
sort of ostracize him and not have
anything to do with him. If if it really
is a case of somebody cracking up like
at a meditation retreat or something,
then they might be sent to a doctor,
they might be sent to some traditional
healer or some something like that.
Um, they might just be sedated for a
little while.

Um,

but yeah, the the Burmese are very tolerant and you can have really weird monks who if nobody's really willing to put up with them, they'll just become like the the half-crazy hermit living in the the hut out in the woods. And some people will still support them maybe um, because they think that they have some kind of wisdom or just because they're monks.

Um,

but yeah, that that's about it. There's really not much that you can do other than not let them live at the monastery with other monks and cause problems, but you can't really just dis- defrock them

or anything like that. You just do what you can and I assume different situations, different cases would have different approaches and different monasteries and different abbots would have different approaches.

So, the next question is from Dogbreath. And he asks, "What are the Four Noble Truths?"

Which is sort of like uh on a Christian Q&A, somebody asks, "Who is Jesus?"

So, I'm tempted just to get up and walk away for a few seconds just for dramatic effect.

But, um let's let's do this.

Okay, Four Noble Truths, which is just basic, just fundamental to uh Buddhist ethics. I mean, this is like the backbone or one of the backbones. It's um the heart or something, you know, it's some vital aspect of Buddhism.

And um

as far as I know, all schools of Buddhism accept the Four Noble Truths, the Arya Sacca.

So, that you can you can really rub the no- you rub the noses of lefties or something like left-wing Buddhists by pointing out to them that the Noble Truths are the Aryan Truths because the word Arya in Pali is translated as noble

in English.

So, the Four Noble Truths, the First Noble Truth is Dukkha Sacca or the Truth of Suffering, which is if you exist, you suffer. That um

For example, being born is suffering, not getting what you want is suffering, getting what you don't want is suffering. Being separated from what you love is suffering. Um getting sick is suffering, getting old is suffering.

Usually, dying also involves some suffering. And in fact, if you really want to get down to it, according to Buddhist philosophy, even happiness has an element of suffering to

it. I mean, there's nobody is ever 100% satisfied. There's always this lurking chronic dissatisfaction, which it seems to me is is really what is just pushing us forwards restlessly through time from one moment to the next. We can't really stay the same from one moment to the next. It's like we're just constantly like a mentally fidgeting or something.

So, um yeah, the first noble truth is so long as you exist as some sort of individual being, you are going to suffer.

There's going to be this incompleteness to you. There's going to be this chronic dissatisfaction.

And um even if you're happy, you're not going to be 100% absolutely happy.

So, that's Arya uh that's um Dukkha Sacca on the first noble truth. Second noble truth is uh Samudaya Sacca or the truth of the cause of suffering.

And the cause of suffering is desire.

Um the the word usually used in Pali is Tanha, which literally means thirst, and it's usually translated as craving.

And some people will say, "Oh, that's just like unwholesome craving." But as far as I'm concerned, any desire causes suffering. Even if you are desiring enlightenment, even if you are desiring goodness and truth,

that that desire is causing you to be set up against reality. I mean, it's like if you are desiring truth, it's because you are dissatisfied with the lack of truth at the present moment. So, I mean, you could say it's a kind of wholesome desire that leads you in the right direction, but it's still Dukkha. It may be justified Dukkha, arguably, but it's still Dukkha.

There are some versions of the Four Noble Truths

that have the cause of suffering being uh Upadana in Pali, which is usually translated as clinging. Literally means uptake.

And uh the two are closely linked. Like

desire and uptake are very closely linked. And uh, both of them could be said to be true.

And so, um, I mean, the point of that is that whenever you are unhappy, it's because you want something.

And that's something really important to know. In fact, I've I've advised people. I've I've taught kids Buddhism before and it's like I try to really emphasize that if you know only one thing about Buddhism, if you just remember one thing about it,

a very good thing for you to remember is whenever you're unhappy, it's because you want something.

And that can be really useful in life because if you're unhappy, and then you ask yourself, what is it that I want, you may realize that what you want is just something totally ridiculous. You know, it maybe it's just a rainy day and you want it not to be a rainy day, which is just utterly futile cuz all the wanting in the world isn't going to make it stop raining. You know, it's just wasted unhappiness. Just self-inflicted misery.

And speaking of self-inflicted, another implication of this, that all suffering is caused by desire, is that in Buddhism, desire is a volitional state. It is ultimately

optional if you are awake enough to realize that it is optional.

And so,

um, another aspect of Buddhism that derives from the second noble truth is that ultimately all suffering is self-inflicted.

That we are causing it to ourselves.

So, that's the second noble truth.

Samudaya sacca, the the truth of origin or of the arising of of suffering.

The uh, the third noble truth is nirodha sacca. And the third noble truth is very simple logic based on the the two.

In fact, it's just a a logical

consequence of the second noble truth.

It's like if suffering is caused by desire, then suffering ceases when desire ceases.

So, that's the that's the third noble truth. It's that uh suffering ceases when desire ceases because desire is the cause of it.

In fact, I mean, I'd I'd even go far to say that suffering and desire are just synonymous ultimately.

That you can't have one without the other.

That they are simultaneous.

And um this you can't divide them up. I mean, they're they're essentially the same

phenomenon.

So, the first noble truth you can you
can see for yourself through experience.
If especially if you're you're very sort
of sensitive and can can really look
into things deeply and in a very
sensitive, like refined level.

The second noble truth, um that also you
can
at least
partly verify through your own
experience.

And the third noble truth is just simple
logic. If the second noble truth is
true, then the third noble truth also is
true.

And then the fourth noble truth is Magga
Sacca, which is the truth of the path.

And the truth of the path
is essentially that there is a way
leading to the cessation of suffering.

And

um traditionally that is explained as
the noble eightfold path. So, the noble
eightfold path is generally considered
to be the fourth noble truth.

And the the noble eightfold path

is Sammā Ditthi or right view,

Sammā Saṅkappa or right mental action,

right thought, right attitude,

Sammā Vācā, right speech, Sammā

Kammanta, right action, Sammā Let's see.

Sammā

uh

Some are

What is it?

It's It's right livelihood.

Ajiva, samma ajiva.

Then you got right effort, samma vayama,
right mindfulness, samma sati, and
finally right concentration or samma
samadhi.

So, right view is basics of Buddhist
ethics like uh if actions have
consequences, for example, even
believing the first the four noble
truths could be considered um right
view, so it's kind of circular in that
in that respect.

Um

samma sankappa

uh or right mental action, right

thought, right attitude is mainly um

having good thoughts, avoiding bad ones,

or at least uh staying neutral, you

know, avoiding negativity, and avoiding

like really harsh violent kind of stuff,

avoiding greed, hate, and delusion in

your thoughts.

Then comes samma vacca, right speech,

which is mainly not lying, being

truthful and honest, also not being

abusive, not badmouthing people behind

their back, not indulging in uh

pointless gossip, that sort of thing.

Next is samma ajiva, right livelihood,

which uh is mainly making a living in an honest and relatively harmless manner.

Which would include not not killing as part of your job, you know, not being a fisherman, for example, not selling poisons,

not selling drugs, which unfortunately would even include like a checker at a grocery store who's who's selling beer or or rat poison or something.

Not dealing in animals for slaughter, not dealing in slaves, which would include pimps.

Um mainly just making a living that is honest and and really not harmful to others.

So then we come to

Oh, wait, I skipped samyak karmanta,
which is right action, which is mainly
keeping the precepts, not killing, not
stealing, not indulging in sexual
misconduct, and not taking intoxicants
which cause heedlessness or cloudedness
of mind.

Then

samyak vayama is right effort, which is
usually traditionally interpreted to be
the four right efforts, which is
the effort to cultivate good
um, good traits or good habits that you
don't have yet. The effort to maintain
and improve good traits or good habits
that you already have. The effort to get

rid of bad habits or bad traits that
you've already got. And the effort not
to acquire any new bad habits in future.

Then you got

samyak sati, which is right mindfulness,
which is essentially

being aware of

the situation in the present moment.

And

there's a lot said about that, and I
really don't want to

go into like a long um,

discourse on on mindfulness.

But yeah, there's plenty of plenty of
information on that, and that's really
what most Buddhism in the West is based

on, really, is primarily mindfulness.

And then finally you've got samyak
samadhi, right concentration, which is
considered in some texts to be like the
the apex, just the culmination of the
other seven.

And that um,

is

it's defined in like the

Mahasatipatthana Sutta, which is the
Bible of the Vipassana movement in the
West, as the four jhanas. So it's like
um,

the four levels of contemplation, or you
can just say it's like the four levels
of meditation. With the first level,
you're still thinking, you know, you

still have

some kind of object in your mind and you can be labeling and still still thinking verbally until finally you get to fourth jhana, which is just perfection of mindfulness, perfection of equanimity, where you're not thinking anything anymore and your mind is not exactly blank, but it is unified. It's It's You just have like this single simple non-verbal perception in your mind. And that is considered to be fourth jhana. Is considered to be in some of the texts to be a kind of jumping off point for enlightenment. Like the Buddha himself,

when he when he died,

he died while he was in fourth jhana.

So, those are the four noble truths. And

just just review, you've got

first noble truth, the truth of

suffering, and that is that if you

exist, you suffer. Second noble truth,

samudaya sacca, the truth of of

origination, is that the cause of

suffering, the origin of suffering, is

craving or desire or attachment.

Just insisting upon things being a

certain way, being at odds with reality,

just friction against the way things

are.

Third noble truth is nirodha sacca,

which derives from the second noble

truth, and that is if the craving ceases, suffering ceases. And the fourth noble truth is the noble eightfold path, and I just discussed.

So,

I'll move on to the next one.

By Airmed.

And this is kind of a a subtle and maybe a little difficult one.

Quote, "We are all one." Unquote. Is a view that the Buddha refuted. Could you speak to this from the text perspective and also your own perspective, please?

We are all one.

Um

I'm not sure exactly

where the Buddha specifically refuted that, although it wouldn't surprise me.

Um

technically speaking, even the concept of we is uh already deviating from Buddhist philosophy since Buddhism denies the existence of an individual person.

Um

even even the one part is uh I mean it it could be it could be uh argued against going going from the text themselves.

Um

so I think

uh I mean there's so many different levels I can approach this.

We are all one.

Yeah, it it seems like from a a textual
textual point of view,
the the whole aspect of we
um is already faulty. That there really
are no multiplicity of of individual
beings at the level of of reality.

Um

I mean you could kind of

I mean Buddhism does Orthodox Buddhism
does take some steps in the direction of
we are all one. For example, um what we
consider to be our individual selves
really are

um

they're conditioned by everything around

us around us. I mean we are conditioned by the whole rest of the universe. So in that sense,

um we may not be all one, but we are all interrelated, we're all interconnected, that we are all everything is conditioning everything else.

So I mean, you could say that it's all one big system that samsara, whether it's real or not, is all one big interconnected system.

But the individual parts are not ultimately real because they are just conditioned by everything else.

Also, we are all one could be approached to some degree from the the standard Buddhist ethical

principle that you should always put yourself in the view or in the position of the other.

So, before you do something to somebody else, even if it's just like an insect, you know, you should realize that I mean, to some degree you're doing that to yourself.

That because of the karma because really we are all interconnected and because your karma depends on your mental states and so forth, there's I mean, we may get to that a little later here, but um you shouldn't do anything to somebody else unless you wouldn't mind that being

done back to you, which is common to Christianity also. It's the golden rule.

Um

So, yeah,

it is a subtle question and it's kind of a difficult one to answer.

But, um

I think I think I did my best on that one. So, I'm just going to move on to the next one. And this is a question from Mat Ayur.

M H A T

Ayur.

Venerable Panyobhasa, I have two questions that are haunting me these days and one that is personal.

I would appreciate if you develop on it.

How should we deal with the realization of our death?

Uh that's a good question. How should we deal with the realization of our death?

That is

uh a basic teaching in Buddhism, especially very early Buddhism. Puts a lot of emphasis on the idea of death not out of sheer morbidity, but to remind us that we're not going to live forever and that uh we shouldn't waste our life.

That we should try to make progress in Dhamma in this life. That a human birth with even the opportunity to practice Dharma is very rare.

And um

so, we shouldn't waste it.

We should be trying to uh become more awake and uh cultivate our wisdom, cultivate our understanding.

And um

one purpose of contemplating the fact that you are going to die someday is it can inspire what is called samvega in Pali, which is a sense of alarm or urgency. You know, it it will motivate you to get going. And I can speak from my own experience, the very first time I saw dead people close up, I had to actually look for them. I went to the the city morgue in Mandalay and saw all these dead bodies lying around

on racks.

And one of them had just

had just uh undergone a complete

autopsy. It looked like he had swallowed

a hand grenade. You know, there's this

young pretty girl lying there dead.

There's babies lying there dead. There's

It's um it really has a strong effect.

The first the first time, I mean, to a

sensitive person.

And um

after after I walked out of that morgue,

I'm looking around and there's, you

know, there's the the young guy flirting

with the girls and the little kids

laughing and giggling and and playing

and, you know, everybody's going about their business.

And uh I just felt like this saying, "Why? How can you be so happy? You realize what's what's in this building back here?"

Um

and yeah, it really can inspire you to uh to practice more uh sincerely and more intently, more intensively.

So, that's one of the benefits of it is uh

I mean, you realize you're not going to live forever. You realize that uh you know, you're just going to keep getting older and older and your body's

eventually going to break.

Uh even the brain that supposedly is uh generating your personality is going to break and stop working and that's going to be it for this time.

And so

uh

yeah, I just don't don't waste it. Don't just uh you know, spend all day just playing video games or or uh watching TV or

or whatever or just wallowing in some kind of unskillfulness, you know, just hating on people on the internet or something.

Um yeah, try to try to uh do something

positive. It doesn't mean you have to go out and really accomplish anything and get famous in a worldly sense, but uh you should at least

um

try to understand yourself, try to understand reality as well as you can.

So, that's that kind of just leads to the second question here, which is similar, which is how should Buddhists prepare themselves for their own deaths?

And um I assume he's talking about Buddhists that

I mean, they're not really on their deathbed yet.

Um yeah, that that would be like a different like a different kind of

question, I assume.

Um maybe I can get into that a little bit, too.

But

you prepare yourself for your own death partly just by reminding yourself, you know, maybe it's just on a daily basis just once a day or something that you really aren't going to live forever, that the body that you're wearing now is going to break, the brain that's generating your thoughts is going to break and not work anymore.

And um so, you really should uh um you know, make as much progress as

you can. That's the best best way to
prepare yourself for your own death is
just uh

um try to be ready for it. You know, try
to cultivate some equanimity, too. I
mean, you you are going to die.

Everybody dies. And so, I mean, it
shouldn't be considered too terribly
horrible. You know, it shouldn't be too
scary.

You shouldn't be terrified of dying.

There's a lot worse things that can
happen to you than dying.

But um

that I mean, that's one way of preparing
yourself is realizing um that, you know,
everybody does it, you know.

Everybody.

So, it can't be too terribly horrible, I suppose.

Uh

How to prepare yourself for your own death? If you believe in rebirth, then you know, that can help take away some of the sting, I suppose.

But, um

mainly you prepare yourself for your own death by trying to live a good life so that, you know, if there is an afterlife, it's not so scary. You're less likely to wind up someplace bad because of the bad choices you made in this life. So, that would be one way of

preparing yourself for your death is
just live as good of a life as you can
so that even if there is something after
death, it's much less likely to be
something like hell-like.

Um

with regard to someone who is actually
near death, you know, you're you're
lying on on your bed for the last time.
You're not going to get up no more, then
standard Buddhist ways of preparing
yourselves for that
are just remember just try to keep your
mind positive. Try to to think of
positive things. Try to think about good
deeds you have done. Try not to think
about bad deeds you have done and then

just lie there wallowing in like regret
and remorse and despair cuz that just
leads you downwards because it is a
common belief in Buddhism, also in
Hinduism,

that your last conscious thought
uh is very important in determining the
direction you take after you die. So,
some people will say that the most
important moment of your life is your
last one

because really that's
that your entire life is just preparing
for death.

You're preparing for your final moment
cuz that's going to

um be a major determinant on on what direction you go after you die. And it doesn't mean it's like your last moment is all there is to determining what your next life is going to be, cuz there's all this karma also that you've got in your deep down inside your your stream of consciousness or wherever.

Um

but yeah, I mean you you should when you're near death, you should try to think as positive and wholesome and uplifting of thoughts as possible, so that you'll be moving in a positive uplifting direction, or at least you'll be pointing in that direction.

You know, maybe you've done bad things

your whole life and you somehow managed
to die with a positive mental state, but
even so, I mean um

you I mean

the the karma's going to work itself
out, but at least you're you're going to
be moving if facing in the right
direction

um or at first, you know, in the
beginning of your next life or some
such.

So,

I mean it's just the standard the
standard story. I've I've said it many
times, like when Mahatma Gandhi got
shot, his last words were Hey Ram,

not oh God, like in the movie, although that could be a literal translation, but Hey Ram, he just wanted his mind focused on God as he died, because that would help determine what happened to him after he died.

So, the next question from Mahat Ayur is

is it a problem for a Buddhist to be a game developer and play video games?

Thank you very much for your teaching and lessons.

Um

technically speaking, being a game developer is not wrong livelihood. I mean it doesn't it doesn't tick any of the boxes that you're supposed to avoid

uh in order to have right livelihood. I mean

it's you could say it's sort of it could be a borderline case if you're like selling a game that has virtual weapons in it for you to kill virtual enemies.

Um

I mean, you could be indirectly promoting unskillful, unwholesome mental states or you're you're making a video game with like big bouncy titties on the the female characters that might in might inspire some lust or something.

But really as a layperson, uncompromising saintliness is generally not really an option.

Um

you're just going to have to accept that there is always going to be a certain amount of unwholesomeness or unskillfulness in what you do. Even people that uncompromisingly keep five precepts, you know, just as strictly as they can, still if they believe that they exist, they're they're still making bad karma because that's based on delusion and all this.

So

yeah, it's it's uh if you really want to get down to it, I mean, it's like, you know, should you eat meat because it encourages the killing of animals or or all these

things? Um there's all these considerations. Should you pay taxes because your taxes go to uh bombing foreign countries and killing people and that sort of thing. Um really whether what you do is right or wrong depends upon your own volitions. So, if if you are really not promoting violence, I mean, it could be that you sincerely believe and there probably is some evidence to support this that people who play violent video games are just kind of working their aggression out and um it makes them less likely to actually uh load up the shotgun and head for head for Walmart or something.

Um

so you it just depends on your own attitude. It depends on your own volitions.

Uh so, I really don't see it as a problem for Buddhist to be a game developer and play video games. As a monk, I played a few video games myself. So, um yeah, I even like killed zombies and stuff as as a monk.

Um I I wasn't like dedicating my life to it or anything.

Um but still, I mean, it's I mean, listening to music and and eating meat and these kind of things, I mean, you can say it's not absolutely 100% saintly,

but then again, um

being absolutely 100% saintly is just not an option for most people anyway.

So, yeah, it depends on your own volition. So, you should just introspect and see if you're being a game developer and playing video games is causing your mind to go in a negative direction or not. And if it is, then it may be a prudent choice to change directions.

So, the next question is from

Bodhisattva 969.

From time to time, I donate to a forest monastery in Thailand. How does this affect my karma?

Well,

the way it affects your karma depends upon your volitions because volitions are karma. There's like the standard famous quote in the text,

which is cetanaham bhikkhave kammam vadami, which is the Buddha saying,

"Monks, I say that karma is volition."

That really what is called karma is like Schopenhauer's will. It's like the motive force of your mind.

So, um

if you donate to a forest monastery in Thailand, it will the effects of that will depend on your your will, upon your mental states, like why do you do it? I mean, if you if it's just like some kind of greedy investment, I mean, And like

um

you know, you're just doing it in order to to to earn spiritual points or something. I mean, I mean, it does work.

Um the Burmese are real spiritual materialists as a general rule.

Um you know, they see merit or karma as a kind of spiritual money. Like there's the novel uh George Orwell, Burmese Days, where U Po Chin, who's like the villain of the story, he's doing all this bad stuff. You know, he's really the villain of the story. And his wife is the traditional little Burmese lady who just keeps um warning him that he's an evil man and he's going to go to

hell.

And U Po Chin says, "Oh, you don't know anything cuz I'm going to uh build a pagoda."

And uh he just thought that by building a pagoda, it was just going to erase all of his sins, so to speak. But um at the end of the story, he has a stroke before he builds the pagoda. And uh so he's just kind of screwed.

But um yeah, I mean, generally the effects of of generosity, giving to a monastery or just giving \$5 to a homeless person or donating to um

you know, like the the pet No, like the the animal shelter or something.

Anything that you're doing out of just a sincere desire to help is

reinforcing

this positive wholesome desire to be good and helpful and generous. Also, generosity helps to

um

reduce your sense of self and selfishness.

So by being generous and sharing what you have, it does reduce your idea of I me mine, which is the central to delusion and suffering in in Buddhism.

So

um in Theravada Buddhism, there's a lot of emphasis on, you know, the the best

uh generosity is generosity to
renunciants, but to some degree that is
uh I mean, to some degree it's true, but
also to some degree it's wise guy monks
trying to encourage people to donate to
them
more than anybody else.

But, um I've tried to explain to
Burmese,

um like even a Burmese doctor once, that
I mean from my point of view, I think I
would probably make more good karma by
feeding a hungry little kid or even a
hungry, like starving dog than to put an
extra plate of food onto a table in
front of a fat monk who's already got 20
dishes of food sitting in front of him.

So, and and and the doctor disagreed because uh the texts say that you get the most karma, the most merit by donating to monks.

But, um whatever makes you feel good, I mean, that's really um that's kind of how karma works. I mean, if if it has like an uplifting, positive effect on your mind, if it makes you feel happy and expansive and less selfish and less greedy and this sort of thing, then uh yeah, it's just reinforcing those kind of habits, and that is going to have effects on how you navigate through life in the future, which is largely how karma works.

Uh I think there's another question down below that's uh that's getting into that.

But, um

yeah, so ultimately you can answer that question better than I could cuz you know your own volition and how you feel when you do it better than I do.

So, the next question is from Nido.

Hmm.

He says, "Hi David, could you do a video on how to deal with different experiences arising during meditation, which the Zen Buddhists call makyo?"

Makyo.

Um well, this is sort of doing a video.

That's part of a video anyway.

Um

but the thing is here, I I don't know what makyos is. I've I suppose I could just do research on these questions, but I'm pretending like I'm just being asked right now.

And uh yeah, I don't know what makyos is. So, I'm not even sure what the different experiences are arising during meditation that are implied here.

Um but I can say that uh just going with standard Theravada Buddhist like Vipassanā meditation practice, it doesn't matter what arises, you just note it and let it go. Or if you've gone

beyond noting, then you just go straight to let it go. You don't take it seriously. You know, it's just irrelevant. And um you know, even St. John of the Cross taught this kind of stuff to his disciples who were practicing contemplation. He was telling them, "Even if you Even if you hear the voice of God, even if Jesus Christ himself is standing in front of you talking to you, um just just note it and let it go. I mean, it's it's it's not why you're sitting there in in contemplation. You're trying to keep your mind clear. And so, if it's something important, it it uh you know, if God really wants to tell you

something, then you know, he'll he'll
let you know. But But still like uh the
devil can impersonate anything he wants.
And uh you really shouldn't just take it
at face value. It could just be a
delusion or something. And so, really
you just cut through it. You just You
just let it go. It's
uh You You don't feed it. You don't just
keep You don't pursue it.
You know, it arises, and then you don't
You don't uh react. You know, you just
see what arises, and then you see it
pass away because you haven't sustained
it by clinging to it and pursuing that.
So, that would be I'm I Again, I don't

know what makhyos are, but uh that would be how to deal with any kind of different experiences that arise during meditation that really aren't the object of meditation. You know, any kind of strange thing arises, you know, you can be hearing the the voice of the Buddha talking to you. You can think that you have just attained sainthood, and really you should just, you know, just note it and let it go. You just don't attribute significance to it. And um just just keep keep meditating.

Next question is from Nardi.

Can a man which is paying a bad karma live a good life through mental awareness and acceptance of whatever

comes?

Yeah, that is true. Let's say um in a past life or for whatever reason, um you're living a life with lots of hard knocks.

You know, you you you've got bad health. Maybe you were born with some sort of disability, and maybe you had really bad parents. You're living in a bad part of the world, but still it is possible to live a good life.

That is your choice. It may be more difficult because you don't have the momentum going in that direction, but still it is possible. You do have that ability.

And um mental awareness definitely helps, and accepting whatever comes is is crucial.

It's like, you know, something bad happens to you. From the Buddhist point of view, I mean, ultimately you brought it upon yourself through your own karma, but even if you set that aside,

um

if bad things happen to you, then you have the option of just reacting, you know, just having a meltdown or being triggered, getting upset, or you start blaming somebody or just ranting or whatever. This always happens to me, you know, on and on and on. Or you can just accept what happens with as much

equanimity and fortitude as you can muster and just keep moving forwards.

So, it's like

um

I mean, this kind of life of bad things happening, in a way it's just sort of the life of a lay person, too. A monk can be trying to

um live just a neutral life with, you know, everything staying pretty much the same from one day to the next, but a layperson may have all kinds of these samsaric waves to surf.

And um

so, you just learn how to be a good surfer. I mean, it's like

keeping everything down to stillness and silence isn't going to work very well, at least not at the the outward phenomenal level. If if you've got a family to support, you've got a job to go to, you've got people to interact with, you've got social duties, and so forth.

Um yeah, you're just going to have to learn to deal with whatever hits you with a certain amount of equanimity and fortitude. Like um the ancient uh philosophers, the ancient Greek philosophers like the Stoics were talking about ataraxia, which is just uh the ability to just take whatever comes and and not just

spin out and and just um melt down or just uh you know, freak out over it.

Um in fact, ataraxia, I just read the other day that uh in non-philosophical jargon among the ancient Greeks, it was considered to be the ideal mental state for a soldier going into battle.

And um in a way, that's kind of what we are in right now. Um this figuratively speaking.

That uh even a soldier in battle, you know, the the the samurai Zen master, you know, they can be out there, you know, fighting and killing and still kind of having some stillness and silence deep inside, even if just

everything is raging around them.

Um you know, another example is the the stereotypical Zen master who uh you know, the the Dharma hall can be resounding with his shouts, and blows from his stick can be falling like rain, but still inside, he is living in stillness and silence.

Which is uh paradoxical. It may not make much sense, but um there is some truth to it.

So, uh yeah, it is possible to live a good life and to be happy, even though um you're getting hit over the head uh with some fair regularity.

It's It's trickier. It's more challenging. You know, it's definitely a

higher difficulty setting than just being a monk sitting in a cave.

But um some people do better on harder difficulty settings.

You know, if things are too easy uh you know, you just get bored.

And then you kind of zone out.

So, it could be that just continual challenges work best for some people.

And uh the challenges aren't what you choose. That's one thing that makes them challenges is that you don't want them to happen. You're not You're not expecting them. You know, you don't want You don't really want it to happen, but it just happens.

And so, you have to learn how to deal with that.

And um

Yeah, that's That's one thing that I've I've been saying for years and years is that's one of the weaknesses of being a monk nowadays is that everything is so easy and predictable that um they're lacking in necessary challenges.

As a general rule, I mean, not always, but uh that that does happen. Whereas being a lay person so long as you don't lose your awareness,

I mean, so long as you don't just get completely lost in the matrix, so long as you don't start believing that Plato's cave really is reality, then uh

yeah, I mean, you can still make a real profound practice.

And I'm uh betting my life on that now because as you can see, I'm not wearing monk's robes anymore.

So, next question from Nardi.

Since karma is ultimately a state of mind and since we are what we think, can we change our lives in this life, not only inside us, but also outside, like attract people of our same thought around us, for example? Well, that's that's pretty obvious. Yeah, of course.

Like uh you're living in a bad situation, you know, you've got to maybe in a bad part of the world and you've

got a bad job and you're surrounded by bad friends or something. I mean, you can just pull up stakes and move somewhere else and start over. I mean, obviously, your your mental states your karmic mental states, you know, your volitional actions are going to be reflected in outside in your life.

So, um you have like skillful wholesome mental states, then uh you're going to be living outwardly a more skillful and wholesome life.

And um we do tend to attract people of our same thought around us, you know, like some people join the the Discord server associated with my SubscribeStar

channel, and uh they're bingo, they're
uh

interacting with people not necessarily
the same exact thoughts, but at least
people that are pretty much on the same
page.

So, yeah, yeah, that's that's fairly
straightforward. Um
it's

I mean, it's like your state of mind
really does have an influence on your
outside life. Even um

like just to give a couple examples, um
it is known that people who are more
worried about getting cancer or
something are more likely to get cancer

just cuz the worry adds stress to the system. It's like a chronic stress.

Or another one is people that are afraid of getting mugged or assaulted or more likely to get mugged or assaulted. For example,

um like a mugger, like someone who's going to assault somebody in the in the street on a dark night, they see somebody walking along like a predator with his head held high showing no fear, he's going to think twice about messing with that person. But he sees somebody that's like constantly looking over his shoulder and and just like hunched over and scurrying along out of fear, then yeah, they're an easy mark. I mean,

they're they're prey. They're not a predator.

So, your mental states do determine a lot of your out your external actions both consciously and subconsciously.

And so, I'm moving on to the next question

from Insubrious Dithyramb.

Hi David, I've been meditating regularly for the past 8 months

focusing mostly on body sensations and

observing thoughts in Sayadaw style

walking meditation. I progressed quite

rapidly the first few months, but from

the last couple of months my practice

has become quite stagnant, almost like a

chore. I can't seem to figure out what I'm doing wrong. Do you have any advice? Well, that's I mean that's a good question. I assume lots of people have the same situation. I have I have been in the same boat.

Um

and there's different different kinds of advice I could give you.

Um

I mean just right off the bat, I can say that uh anyone who takes up meditation uh at first you're going to be just doing really light lifting stuff. I mean you're just going to be clearing up uh like the really easy parts. And then after you've been at it for a while,

then you're getting down to bedrock and then it becomes a much more difficult to make further progress. At least in many cases it can be that way.

Um

like there's one of the wisest old monks that I that I've ever met is uh Sayadaw U Zotikha or U Jotika as he is called in the West.

Uh Mahamyaing U Zotikha.

And um

he he he used to say again and again that uh you know, it's like the most important time to meditate is when you don't want to because um

you know, it's just you know, in in a way it's sort of like exercise. I mean, you if you really want to be healthy and fit then, you know, you eat right and you exercise even though you really don't want to. You just make yourself do it cuz it it's good for you. You know, it's sort of like your sacred duty or something. So, just grinding through and muscling through it is is one approach. Another approach is um you could try a different technique.

Um

Yeah, I mean that is a possibility, too. So, I mean you say you can't seem to figure out what you're doing wrong. You may not necessarily be doing anything

wrong.

Um you may just be going through a dry phase.

Um it may be that you just made as far as you're likely to made as much progress as you're likely to make at the present time with that technique.

Maybe you need to uh

um

like refine the technique. You know, maybe not even change to a completely different technique, but maybe if it's just getting boring and dull because you're noting everything, then maybe you can let go of the noting.

Um St. John of the Cross, who was a

great meditation master, I mean he was a master of all the jhanas as far as I'm concerned, he used to say that that's one way you can know that you're ready to move on to contemplation, that you're moving up to advanced meditation, is that

when you're noting and like visualizing or thinking in words, you're labeling, when it just becomes like this dull and boring and sort of a chore, then that means that you may be ready to move on to the next stage.

So, that's a possibility, too, but I really I mean I don't know you personally. I can't really tell exactly where you're at. So, I can't just give

you exact

advice. I can just kind of toss out some ideas.

But um

yeah, sometimes meditation can just be a chore, just like doing exercises or something, brushing your teeth or something. It's

not necessarily pleasant. If it is pleasant, that's that's ideal because then it encourages you to do it more.

Um and then PT or like exhilaration is one of the the seven factors of enlightenment and so forth, but um still um

yeah, just uh

stick with it and I mean, if you really just cannot make any more progress, then definitely then you should switch to a different method. Try something else.

So, next question from B Pat 427.

Are microorganisms
conscious?

Okay. Well, um

that's I mean, it seems like a simple question of yes or no. It's sort of like Joshu's Mu. Does a dog have Buddha nature? Um

in a sense, anything alive

uh has at least a rudimentary elemental kind of consciousness. Like in in

ancient Buddhism, plants were considered to be a king Let's see See if I can say

a king driya jiva, which is one faculty life. They only had one sense faculty, and that was touch.

And microorganisms could be like this.

It's just an extremely simple elemental non

Obviously, they're not thinking, you know, obviously, should be obvious. They don't have any sense of self.

They're not really aware of any individual existence, but there is just sort of like the the pulsing uh elemental consciousness of life going through them. And I mean, even inorganic matter can have consciousness to it, as far as I'm concerned. I think that

really um it may

it may be like the next uh

Copernican revolution in in science or

or in empiricism that uh what a

physicist calls

energy is really just a very elemental

form of of what a psychologist would

call consciousness.

So, personally, yeah, I think

microorganisms have just a totally, you

know, just a simple elemental

rudimentary kind of consciousness, but I

don't think that they have preferences

and likes and dislikes and hopes and

dreams or anything like that.

So, the next question from B Pat 427, "A

human existence is the most conducive to

enlightenment, but can devas and hungry ghosts become enlightened as well?"

Um

with regard to devas, yes, they can become enlightened. Some devas are um are supposedly aryas, saints.

I do believe there are many stories of the Buddha giving discourses to uh groups of humans and devas, and the devas were becoming enlightened also.

Presumably, they have um like the

it it's hard to say exactly what devas are like just reading the text because um the text, sort of like the ancient Greek um mythology, has devas as really

just people that live longer and have and are more powerful, but they don't seem to be much more intelligent than humans. Whereas, I consider a superhuman being is going to have superhuman intelligence also.

So, I think that they would be at least as capable of liberating insight as us.

Although, traditionally in Buddhism, um they live such a pleasant life that they're not as motivated as we are. For example, I was talking earlier about the idea of dying and uh

I mean, compared with a deva, we're like mayflies. I mean, we we don't live for very long at all, whereas a deva might live for, you know, zillion gazillion

years.

So, there is that. And then, you know, they just they have a much more pleasant existence, you know, they don't have sickness and and and that kind of thing either.

So, but nevertheless, um they they are sensitive and intelligent, presumably, superhuman beings.

So, yeah, I think uh Davis can become enlightened. Although, with regard to hungry ghosts, I'm not going to categorically insist that they can't. Although, from a Buddhist point of view,

I would say it is very unlikely.

Um again, referring to the Petavatthu,

there are

um

ghosts, not necessarily hungry ones,

that um you know, they're so afflicted

that they can't really make progress.

But, then eventually the affliction

ceases, and then they become like devas.

Because really, in the Buddhist

cosmology, there's like a continuum with

with ghosts at the bottom, and then

you know, like devas, gods at the top.

And then it's just sort of like this

There's like this intermediate state

where, you know, the highest ghost and

the lowest god are pretty much the same

being.

So, yes, I mean most ghosts, it's my understanding. I mean, their mind is full of mud. They're just like semi-conscious. They're like in a stupor all the time.

And um

I won't say it's absolutely impossible, but um the odds of their becoming enlightened, of them really having profound liberating insights, are much lower.

But, uh who knows? Maybe a Buddha would know just the right thing to say to them to really cause something to click deep down.

Okay, next question from Bpath427. What do you think of dialectical monism?

And this is like the Machiaos of above.

I really don't know what dialectical monism is. It just seems like an oxymoron, like a contradiction in terms.

Like monism is just like, you know, simplicity. It's just like singleness, whereas dialectic is uh complicated uh philosophical argumentation.

So, using complicated philosophical argumentation to arrive at utter simplicity, um

I mean, it has been done. It can work. I mean, that's kind of what Nagarjuna was doing, just uh uh demonstrating

ruthlessly that that all arguments can be just picked apart into nonsense.

And then, I mean, you're just using the mind to kind of tear itself down, sort of uh deconstruct itself.

Um

So, yeah, I mean, I'm just I'm just kind of babbling now cuz I don't even know what dialectical monism is. So, I'm just going to move on to the next question.

From also from Bipac 427. Have you ever made a kasina disc? If so, could you give instructions?

I have never personally practiced kasina meditation uh other than very informally.

Um and I can I can get back to that. The closest I've come to kasina meditation, but I have been instructed on how to make an earth kasina disc. And um I mean, making a kasina disc is really simple because all it takes is just a colored spot that's about the size of a plate.

So, you just get like a big square of white paper or some neutral color, and you just get a colored spot, you know, like red, yellow, blue, you know, and um that's it. You've got a kasina disc. And then, you put that up on the wall, and you gaze upon that and meditate on that. With regard to earth kasina, um the instructions that I received from my

preceptor was you just make like a
slurry of mud, and then, you paint paint
the mud onto the the the surface, you
know, in a in like a circular like a
disc form, and then, let it dry, and
there you go, you've got an earth
kasina.

Um the closest I ever came to kasina was
when I was living out in the woods, and
I'd be sitting there just gazing out at
the forest, and my eyes would just rest
on a roughly circular patch of green
that was a different color of green than
the surrounding green, you know, and
then, I just let my gaze rest on that
and just kind of sort of contemplate um

the simplicity of the green.

But um

yeah, I mean, to make a casino disc, all you need is just a colored spot. It's, you know, yay big around, and there you are. It's very simple. You wouldn't have to paint it, you I mean, you could just uh have it printed up or something.

You'd probably find one.

Um

yeah, I just just get a plate or something that's the right color.

If you wanted to do a colored one.

So, the next question is from Captain Haddock.

And he says, "I was wondering if you'd consider doing a video about

Padmasambhava."

"The Tibetan depictions of this seem very profound, but very arcane."

Oh my.

Padmasambhava, people just people hit me with these things.

Um

Padmasambhava is dependent co-arising or dependent uh origination, it's called a lot of the time, conditioned genesis.

Um there's a lots of different names for it, which indicates that uh

very few people really understand it. It

It is controversial, sort of like no

self in Buddhism is also controversial.

So, you got all these different

explanations of it.

Um according to the legend, the Buddha himself, after he became enlightened, almost just became a hermit and didn't start Buddhism because he figured nobody would understand Padmasambhava. And then, according to the legend, Brahma had to come down out of heaven and beg him

saying that there are some people with little dust in their eyes that will be able to benefit from it.

So, I mean, if the Buddha himself almost became a a silent hermit Buddha because he figured nobody would understand Padmasambhava, I mean, who am I to try to explain this?

I kind of I kind of understand it.

And um

mainly

Paticcasamuppada, I mean

forget the 12 Nidana theory.

Um

if you really want to understand

Paticcasamuppada, I'd say your best book

to read would be Nagarjuna's

Mulamadhyamakakarika.

Um that's very profound. He does give

lip service by dedicating uh one chapter

or so to the 12 Nidana theory which had

already become orthodox. But the 12

Nidana theory, in my opinion,

um was just sort of a patch-up job.

That it didn't originate with the Buddha himself. That it evolved over a period of at least 100 years.

Um I've done a little bit of study on that. One of my few contributions to Buddhist studies in academic sense, I suppose, would be

um my description of the evolution of Patikkasamuppada which can be found in an article called What Did the Buddha Really Teach on nipapanca.org.

Um

but there's another interpretation of Patikkasamuppada which is simply this being that is.

Um in this arising that arises. This this not being that is not in this not

arising that ceases or in this ceasing
that ceases.

And um

mainly it's it's getting back to what I
was talking about earlier where
everything is conditioning everything
else. Nothing has uh an individual
self-essence.

Everything appears to exist as an
individual simply because it is viewed
in relation to everything else.

So nothing really has an individual
self-existence or self-identity.

That it's all relative or conditional.

And um

there's there's one strange sutta. It's

one of my favorite ones cuz I like the strange ones.

Um in Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation it's called the Cosmologist. It's in the Samyutta Nikaya. I don't remember what number.

But um

a worldly philosopher

like a Carvaka

or uh

kind of like an Epicurean in in ancient

Greece goes to the Buddha

and uh he asks him, I mean,

um

is is is it the Buddha say what is what

is the first one? He asks uh

does everything exist? Does the world

exist? And then the Buddha just says,
"Well, that's that's the oldest
philosophy of the world."

So then he says, "Well, then does the
world not exist?" And the Buddha says,
"Well, that's the second philosophy of
the world."

And then the the Cosmologist says,
"Well, is everything one?"

And then the Buddha says, "Well, that's
the third philosophy of the world." And
then the Cosmologist says, "Well, is
everything multiple Is it multiple? Is
it more than one?" And then the Buddha
says, "That is the fourth philosophy of
the world." And then he says, you know,

"The Buddha teaches the way by the middle

which just cuts through all of that."

So I mean, it's just a mind-blower to think that um there is a middle path between exists and doesn't exist or between one and more than one. You know, it's it's not logical. It doesn't make sense. But then again, if you're if you're insisting upon logic and everything making sense, then you just stuck in samsara because reality just cannot be described.

So yeah, I mean, I'm just kind of sitting here making noise because if the Buddha couldn't explain it to people, I mean, really, he considered it to be the

most one of the most important aspects of Buddhist philosophy and still almost nobody understands it. Like in Burma, they just memorize the the chant of the 12 nidanas.

And um I'm I'm not even going to really I'm not going to go into it, but uh say

Who is up is the alting car alting car abisha wingana. and I'm just you know it's just this this list of this this causes that and that causes this and this causes that and they call that dependent co-arising but it's just a list of terms that they have memorized and repeat like parrots and think that

they understand it.

So,

Captain Haddock's second question here.

Also, what's your opinion of nimittas?

Do you get them? I've had one all my life but never knew it. When I got into meditation, it really came to life.

Okay, so a nimitta in Pali

the English translation is usually something like sign.

Like s i g n.

So, it's like a manifestation of a form.

It's like an image.

And

in the the commentarial tradition of Theravada Buddhism,

if you start experiencing a nimitta when

you meditate, which often is this sort of like a a white circular cloud or like an oval or sometimes you can even have like an image of the Buddha sitting in meditation, you know, it's some sort of image that appears in your mind when you're meditating. According to the commentarial tradition, that is a sign of ubhacara samadhi, which is sometimes translated as access concentration or neighborhood concentration, which is the the stage right before you go into first jhana. So, in in um the commentarial tradition, like as written by or edited by Buddhaghosa, it's really important

because you're not going to get to first jhana even without going through the stage of neighborhood concentration. But, on the other hand, it's not mentioned in the suttas itself and you would think that if it's so important, then why doesn't the Buddha talk about it in the suttas?

And in fact, when the Buddha talks about meditation, if he's talking about nimittas at all, he's talking about animitta.

You know, where you're just you're not trying to have nimittas at all. I mean, the best of meditation has no signs, no images whatsoever. You're just getting into all just like absolute simplicity

of mind.

But before you get into that stage,

before you're in fourth jhana or

whatever, then uh

yeah, I mean, it's it's like seeing

anything else, I suppose.

Um you

uh so you Captain Haddock here asks, "Do

you Do I get them?" I have experienced

nimitas. For me, it was sort of like a

like a white kind of a doggy kind of

oval. It just appeared in my mind when

my meditation was getting relatively

deep.

But um

I don't It's It's sort of like the what

I was talking about above. I mean, it's you shouldn't attribute any great significance to that. Just note it and let it go. It's like, "So what?" Okay, it arose. That's fine, but don't uh attribute any great importance or significance to that.

So, I think I'll just move on to the next question, which is from Chaplin.

And this is kind of an easy one. Chaplin was uh

threw lobbed me a

um a softball on this one.

Do you believe that Buddhism should should be pushed Do you believe that Buddhism should be pushed onto others via racially profiling certain ethnic

groups that are traditionally not drawn to Buddhism on their own?

An example would be American Dharma halls that frequently do membership drives to target black people, then give those minorities teaching positions based purely on their skin color, despite their lack of experience or knowledge. Well, obviously, I'm totally in favor of this because I insist completely upon diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Not.

Um

Yeah, I mean, it's

to to use diversity hires for Dharma

teachers

makes no more sense than using diversity

hires for surgeons or airplane pilots.

I mean, you want the most qualified

person for the job regardless of like

race or gender or anything else. I mean,

if if they know the stuff better than

anyone else, they're the ones who should

be sitting up front teaching it.

With regard to

um like the recruitment drives

to uh attract

um like people of color into these elite

Buddhist movements in the West, which is

mostly like college-educated, relatively

well-off white liberals.

Uh Starbucks Buddhists,

so to speak.

Um yeah, the membership drives. I mean, it's mainly to assuage the conscience of these people that really don't like the idea that they're in a kind of white elitist movement.

You know, that their their ranks are mostly white liberals.

And so, just out of shame or embarrassment more than anything else as far as I can tell, they're trying to recruit as many

um

non-white people as possible. Which is

kind of strange because um most Buddhists in the West probably are not white anyway because most Buddhists in the West are probably Asians who are just practicing the Buddhism that they brought to America with them or that their parents brought to America with them.

So,

yeah, it's like they don't really want to be involved in this Asian immigrant Buddhism. So, they start up their own white Buddhism, and then they're embarrassed because they're so white.

And then they try to attract people that ordinarily would not be attracted to Buddhism.

And I mean, I'm not even going to go there with regard to explaining why it is that say um you know, black people or or Hispanic people do not do not enter Buddhism in the same numbers as white liberals do.

Uh

Yeah, we don't even need to to to go into that. But I mean, this I've I've been talking about this relatively recently where there is more diversity, equity, and inclusion now than there was in India in the Buddha's time. And the Buddha was a fully enlightened being presumably. And

even he wasn't doing membership drives
trying to get low caste Shudras or
aboriginal hill tribes
to join the Sangha.

So this is not anything enlightened.

This is just

just more ridiculous leftist politics.

So let's see.

I'll just move on to the next question
then.

Cuz I've already I've already ranted on
that issue plenty recently.

See, Chaplin's second question. When you
wake up each day, what is the one thing
that still boggles your mind and makes
you think, "Wow, I'm not a monk
anymore."?

Um that is a good question, although
when I wake up each day, really
there's nothing that really boggles my
mind in that respect because even when I
was a monk, I was just me
pretty much. And now now when I wake up
in the morning, I'm still essentially
the same me.

Um there are some there are some
changes.

Um but most of the the really radical
changes, it seems to me, are deep down
and some of it's just like subconscious.

And um

I can I can get into that a little bit.

But um really it's like I do have some

holdovers from being a monk that are I'm not completely cured, so to speak, of being a monk. For example, like when my sweetheart offers me some food sometimes, and she's a really good cook, so she offers me food and I'm glad to receive it. And but when she puts it down in front of me, I'll reach out quick to touch the plate before she lets it go of it just so it's properly offered still.

It's It's strange and it's just like this this habit of 30 years. I mean, I can just help myself to whatever's in the fridge, but still if somebody puts food in front of me, this this instinctive habit of reaching out

quickly to touch it before they let go
so that it's that it's properly offered.

And it reminds me of

um I'd been a monk for several years

when still I would have these habits

like I'd have like I'd wash my face and

there'd be like like water drops on my

on my forehead. I would just go like

like this to to like shake the hair out

of my eyes because I used to have long

hair and usually you feel that feeling

of some kind of light pressure on your

forehead. It means your your hair is

getting in in in in your face. So I

would just kind of like

try and get my hair out of my eyes when

I didn't have hair.

Or a lot for years, like if I was going

to leave my cabin or something,

I'd be going out the front door, I'd

slap my behind just to to see if my

wallet was in my back pocket.

And I didn't have a wallet anymore. I

didn't even have a back pocket.

But it took years before that stopped.

And um

also it took more than 10 years before I

was a monk in most of my dreams in which

I was participating in a dream.

Um

yeah, I would I'd still be a layperson

in my dreams most of the time for like

the first 10 years as a monk.

But kind of getting back to the the
subconscious aspect of this.

Um

Yeah, there I mean deep down there
really is something inside me that's
been a monk for so long. It's just not
letting go of being a monk.

And um

that

really I mean it's it's difficult for me
because I don't have any conscious
control over it.

It's just there.

And um

like with regard to like the sweetheart
that I just mentioned, I'm just it's

just such a radical change for me to
share my life with another person
that um

it's it's taking some I have to relearn
how to be a normal human.

And uh

yeah, it is it that's that really is the
most mind-boggling part to me is just
the realization that you think
everything's everything is just like
like when I dropped out of the monkhood,
I mean there was no real crisis or
anything going on. I was quite willing
to do it. I just I just seemed obviously
the thing to do like the right thing to
do. And so I mean there was no
like existential crisis or anything like

that, but still just deep down you have these deep habits that have been there for years and years and uh it takes some relearning or reprogramming or something.

So um

just getting back to this question and answering again, when you wake up each day, what is the one thing that still boggles your mind and makes you think, "Wow, I'm not a monk anymore." If if there's anything at all

um

along those lines, it's just the just realizing that I can just go into the kitchen and help myself to anything I

want.

Anything there I can just I it doesn't have to be offered properly. I can just make it myself. I can just go in there and pour a glass of orange juice for example. I couldn't do that for 30 years. I I can just go in there and fry an egg if I want.

It's just I mean that in itself is is such a strange and radical change in my life.

Um

and that's like the the every morning thing.

Yeah, there are other things that are just as radical even more so, but uh they're not involving me waking up each

day and uh

just realizing I can just go and make myself breakfast.

So, I might as well just move on to the next question from Shawarma Dharma.

To interpret religious texts literally seems to preserve their vigor over many years in the hearts and minds of the people. To interpret religious texts metaphorically allows for greater depth of understanding and a more nuanced knowledge base, but it seems to weaken or breaks the spell of its influence over the people. What is better for the development of Dharma in the West? To promote a literal understanding or to

embrace a metaphorical reading?

Well,

a literal interpretation of scriptures usually results in rigid dogmatism with people just clinging to the words and thinking that's good enough.

Whereas

a more metaphorical reading mainly just allows people to reinterpret the scriptures in any way they please.

If they don't like something, they'll say, "Oh, that was just a metaphor." or something.

Um

but with regard to to like Theravada Buddhism, it seems pretty clear that um your best bet is to interpret it the way

uh it seems that it was meant to be interpreted.

That um when the Buddha talks in in parables, he makes it clear that he's talking about parables. Like the parable of the raft, he's not talking about a real raft. You know, it's just a metaphorical raft. So, um it it's pretty obvious to me that um the Buddhist texts were written relatively objectively.

That uh if there are symbols and and like symbols and metaphors and similes and this sort of thing, then it's they're

pretty pretty obviously that way.

That they're not they weren't trying to sneak in metaphors.

So,

your best bet is to interpret it

literally uh within reason because I

mean, when you're talking about deep

philosophy, um sometimes you just have

to use words that are

um just

crude approximations because you just

can't explain ultimate reality in words

anyway. So, you have to use these

metaphors for Nirvana, for example, you

know, where there there is no earth,

water, wind, and fire, where there there

is no light from the sun, stars, or

moon, and and this kind of thing.

Um

but uh even then it's again, it's it's
it's it's pretty clearly to be poetical
metaphorical kind of talk.

And one of the things is that sometimes,
even though it's it's a literal meaning,
um you modern Westerners just can't
accept it, you know, like the earth is
flat and floats on water. That goes all
the way back to the canonical texts. Or
you know, there's the strange strange
sutta, I think it's in the Udana, where
venerable

um

uh

who is it?

Venerable

Sariputta is sitting in deep meditation,
and these two ogres, these yakkhas, walk
by, and one of them smashes
venerable Sariputta in the head so hard
that it would have split a mountain.

But Sariputta, because of the power of
his his wisdom and his meditation,
it doesn't even cause him to stop
meditating, which causes this this yakka
or ogre to just I mean, the earth just
splits open, and he just drops
immediately into hell.

And

I mean another another example or
there's a few suttas where eclipses of

the sun and moon are caused by a kind of demon, like a titan, swallowing the sun or moon into his mouth. His name is Rahu.

And I mean those were meant literally because people really believed that stuff at the time. And so a modern Westerner just says, "Well, I mean they meant it literally, but um yeah, that's that's some cultural conditioning that we don't have to uh we don't have to accept that in order to be serious Buddhists cuz it's really irrelevant to the main message of Buddhism anyway. The main message of Buddhism is is valid. It's just

timeless. And so it's not going to change. I mean maybe some a little bit on the edges just because of figures of speech and so forth that were favored in ancient times in ancient India. But still, I mean the Theravada Buddhist texts um yeah, I mean just use some common sense. And um most of it is pretty straightforward and objective that Theravada Buddhism never been accused of being extremely imaginative. So um yeah, just just consider it to be literal except for the cases where it obviously wasn't intended to be literal to begin with. And uh the stuff that you just can't

swallow like the flat earth floating on water or the the 10 million mile high mountain in the center of the world and all that um

yeah, well I mean that's not really um I mean that's just irrelevant to the main message of Dharma anyway, which goes back to the four noble truths and dependent co-arising and and that sort of thing.

So, I think I'll just move on to the next question. And this is uh our last questioner here is Oroboro.

And he asks he asked more than one, but this one is

I am am I right in my understanding that

karma is therefore more of a direct result of action.

For example, I'm always angry, so people will avoid me leading to me being lonely, as opposed to a magical mechanism. For example, I kill a fly and will therefore get hit by a car a week later. This interpretation would also contain the notion of good versus bad in a cosmic sense.

As there is seemingly no correlation between the two events except that I categorize them as bad.

Okay.

Um

the magical mechanism I really there's not as much difference

between these two interpretations as our friend Oroboro seems to imply.

For example, I mean it's like it's as I've said, karma is a mental state. It is volition. It is like the will that it's the this the motive force of your mind.

And it's also it's kind of a a good way of looking at it is that we are dreaming our way through life. We are creating this world for ourselves.

And

um a person who does lots of bad things is more likely to have bad dreams. A person who does lots of good things is more likely to have good dreams. So,

it's like let's say you kill a fly. I really don't I think it's kind of a an exaggeration here to think that if like someone who kills a fly will therefore get hit by a car a week later, but let's say you just have this really negative hostile kind of mind, very angry, very crude, and you don't you don't think anything of killing a fly while just like yelling in rage at it, just cursing it. And then that kind of attitude is more likely to have you in a position where you do get hit by a car a week later.

Um it's It's that killing the fly, just that mechanical action somehow caused the mechanical action of getting hit by

a car a week later, but the mental states which are conditioning your existence being negative and and like painful and violent and so forth, um it's just going to be conditioning your existence afterwards, too. It's

It's um

If you've got like a violent mind, you have violent dreams.

So,

that's one way of interpreting it. I mean, both are true. I mean, it's like

um

you know, if you're always angry, people will tend to avoid you leading to you being lonely. That is obviously a result

of your volitional acts, but also
um you know, if if you've got like this
really crude
um like dark, negative kind of a vibe to
you,
to your mind, then you're going to be
conditioning, you know, dark, crude,
painful events in your life because um
you can call it magic or not,
but I mean, I'm I'm really not a
materialist. Maybe Ouroboros really is a
materialist who's sold on like
scientific realism and so forth, who
really thinks that there's like atoms
and molecules flying through space even
with no conscious mind there to to
perceive them.

In which case, yeah, it could be that he would consider my own um attitude to be magical thinking.

Um

but nevertheless,

really our mental states do determine

um

the events that happen to us. Like, just going with physics. Let's Let's say

Ouroboros here is a a scientific

materialist, and um you know, there

there still is this notion that before

an object is perceived, it's in a state

of like quantum randomness. It is

indeterminate until a perceiving mind

collapses the state vector, so to speak.

And and then you got something like discrete that's happening. It's not just less this nebulous cloud of possibilities. It collapses down to one of those possibilities. And the the mental states of the person who is collapsing that state vector can determine how it collapses.

So that could be like a materialistic way of explaining how karma works in in some way.

Where it's just the quality of your mind is collapsing the state vector and determining what is happening in your surroundings.

Um you know, in accordance with the the quality of your mind.

Well, even good people can have bad dreams and bad people can have good dreams. And it's a lot of that maybe most of it is just deep down subconscious stuff that you don't have any conscious control over.

Okay, let's see.

I think maybe I answered that and it's such a such a strange nebulous kind of question. It's it's kind of hard to answer it.

So I'm just going to move on to the next one cuz it's similar.

Is reincarnation to be understood physically? For example, I act bad as a

human and then

born as a donkey.

As opposed to a philosophical concept.

For example,

I practice mindfulness and will be
reborn tomorrow as a new me.

One can follow this thought further with
an impermanent self. I'm not the same
tomorrow as I am today, etc. But it is
different in to the first
as the first implies physical death
between the two lives.

Um

Well,

if you'll forgive me, I will bring up
Abhidhamma philosophy. I usually don't
have much use for it, but it is orthodox

Theravada. And according to orthodox

Theravada,

everything is just appearing and

disappearing, you know, trillion times a

second.

And

so I mean there is no continuation from

one moment to the next. Everything is

completely new from one moment to the

next. And not only that,

and and I've asked Abhidharma scholars

about this and they really can't answer,

but if everything disappears, you've got

existence and then non-existence and

then existence again, then that new

existence isn't even caused by anything.

It's just arising out of nothing because the previous cause had already ceased to exist before the result even arises.

So it's it's arising from nothing.

And so really I mean you could say that we are really just ceasing to exist every moment and it is a similar mechanism,

I believe, to how reincarnation or rebirth works

because there is no linking cause. Like David Hume, who is considered to be possibly the greatest Western philosopher to write in English language or at least he used to be,

um he pointed out that there's really no way of proving cause and effect. All we

see is that one thing follows another thing consistently enough that we say that what the first thing causes the second thing.

But it could be that it's just similarity.

This I mean the similarity of of one mental state is is close enough to the next mental state that you see a continuation.

And that could be the way reincarnation works. It's just a similarity of my mind um

you know, it's it can be seen as a continuation of another mind that arises after this mind ceases that is similar

enough

that there's there can be seen as a kind of connection.

But um

yeah, we're we're just wandering into metaphysics here which is uh kind of dizzying, I think.

Um

but

y-

Yeah, yeah. It's the whole idea of of similarity being really

um what

links one moment with the next or one life with the next, it's something that I take very seriously. I think it may be correct, but it's it's very difficult to

explain, especially in a few minutes.

And uh we're we've already been going for quite a while here. So, um I'll just uh go to the very last question. This is the last question, also from Ouroboros.

And um he's uh linking this to the previous one. If it's the first, which is uh that is reincarnation is to be understood physically, that uh for example, his example is uh he acts bad as a human and then is reborn as a donkey.

Uh would it still make sense to follow Buddhist thought tradition even if one does not share that belief? So,

apparently the question is, even if you don't believe in reincarnation, can you still be a Buddhist?

And

um it leaves some

like it leaves some loose ends.

But like the Four Noble Truths are just as true whether there is or is not reincarnation. Like suffering is caused by desire. I mean, that is true regardless of whether there is reincarnation or not.

Um you know, if you you the consequences or actions have consequences. I mean, that's true regardless of whether

um

there is reincarnation or not.

So, I would say that a lot of people who consider themselves to be Buddhists in the West really don't have much use for reincarnation or for that matter even for like nirvana.

Um or to some degree for karma, either.

So, but they still consider themselves to be Buddhists. I mean, you may be a heretic, but welcome to the club. I'm a heretic, too. Like I had don't have much use for Abhidhamma philosophy or the commentarial tradition, which makes me a literally a heretic from the point of view of orthodox Theravada.

But, one thing is I mean, even if you don't believe in reincarnation

or karma or something, then
if you practice and you meditate in
deeply, then insight will continue to
develop and who knows, maybe uh maybe
you'll see the light and you'll see the
truth of it uh
few years down the road or something.

But, um

with regard to um if you don't believe
in reincarnation, could you still be a
Buddhist or should you still follow it?

Does it make sense to follow it? Um

I mean, yeah. I mean, it's it's it's
good and to follow it as much as you can
or as much as you're you're willing to
accept.

That even just realizing that suffering

is caused by desire and that suffering ultimately is always self-inflicted. I mean, even that. Like like I was telling people like I was saying earlier, it's like if you if you understand or remember only one thing about Buddhism, just one thing, then realize that it's whenever you're unhappy it's because you want something. And ultimately, it's your choice to want it or not if you if you have enough consciousness to take responsibility for that.

So, I mean, that's true regardless of whether there's reincarnation or not.

So, yeah, just accept as much of it as you're able. I mean, it's it's all good, really. Unless you just want to accept the this the silliest parts of it. You know, I mean, if if your Buddhism just amounts to insisting on the existence of Mount Meru in the middle of the earth, the flat earth floating on water, then yeah, you might not get much benefit from that, but uh

um there is like some really profound wisdom to Buddhist philosophy and uh

you know, as much of it as you accept is good, even if you're not going to accept everything. I mean, I don't accept the the flat Earth on water or that kind of thing.

Um so, I'm I'm a heretic, too. Maybe not quite as radical of one.

But, um

yeah, so just accept as much as you can, and then anything that's useful. I mean, you can be an eclectic. You don't have to just be pure only Buddhist or pure only

Presbyterian or whatever. I mean, if whatever seems to work for you, I mean, go with that. You know, I mean, there's no monopoly. I don't think there's an absolute monopoly on enlightenment. I don't think Theravada Buddhism is the only way to possibly become enlightened. It it works, at least for some people,

apparently.

But, um

yeah, I I I don't know if anyone is absolutely 100% orthodox, unless they're just such a boring dogmatist that they don't have an original thought in their head.

So, yeah, good luck to everybody, and uh I think we're done.

Still here. Yeah. I've been talking for a long time. Okay, so I guess we're done, and uh if you have any questions, you're welcome to ask. You can ask them in the comments below, or you can ask them on my SubscribeStar channel after I make an announcement, or if you are one of the privileged ones

who is uh in on the Discord server, you can ask in that the Q&A room there. And uh I go through all of that, and uh make up my list, and then I sit here with my razor burn and cuts on my face, and answer your questions. So, I think we're done, and be happy.

all right hello and welcome to
episode 13 of question and answer
and i am your host panyo basa also
known as david reynolds
this is my secret public name
and i must admit i'm kind of surprised
that we're all the way up to episode 13
already it's just uh people keep asking
questions and so long as you keep asking
i will keep answering so without any
further ado
let's get to the questions and the first
one is from
shawarma dharma
and i suspect that's not his real name
but anyway shwarma dharma says

for the next q a less a question and
more a prompt for hearing your thoughts
idea number one the sparta meets
buddha meme shared here and he's
referring to the uh
the discord server that we have
associated with the subscribe star
account it has um
it has like the the raging spartan king
leonidas from the movie 300
and then it's also got a picture of the
buddha and it says yes you can be both
and at the bottom it's got the buddha
sitting there with like the the same
raging face as king leonidas
so uh i suppose i should start over
for the next q a less a question and

more a prompt for hearing your thoughts
idea number one the sparta meets buddha
meme shared here
jordan peterson's idea of being a
controlled
dangerous person carl jung's
sri lankan and other militant buddhism
so that's idea one idea two
don't kill mosquitoes meta loving
kindness prohibitions on military
careers from white
livelihood right livelihood developing a
breathy
dharma voice and all that implies
so how does theravada and how do you
panyo consider these ideas as

integratable or mutually exclusive

so that's kind of interesting that's

that's a good question i think

so i mean from the

orthodox traditional terra voden point

of view

then i mean if you're really going to

take morality completely seriously you

are going to purify your karma you're

going to purify your mind so there's

absolutely no negativity there

then you renounce the world and go and

meditate under a tree for the rest of

your life

there are some bones tossed to the lay

people

i suppose you could say with regard to

the five precepts and even the five precepts

uh yeah i mean you're not allowed even to kill a mosquito even if you're following five precepts

so um the question here is how do you reconcile these two

if they are even reconcilable and

um this is a theme that i've been addressing quite a lot in my blog

in fact two of my most recent posts have been on this very subject

more or less and um

yeah i would say that if you really are intent on

being a complete saint

then yeah your best bet is to renounce
the world just
literally renounce worldly life become a
homeless wanderer or at least
get yourself locked up in a cloister and
just
meditate for the rest of your life but
that doesn't really work
for most real humans i mean you have to
have
killing in order to live i mean
life requires death if you don't have
a military you don't have police armed
with guns
then you're just going to have rampant
crime and then barbarian invasions and
so forth

people will have to be vegan and even i
mean they're just going to starve
because
even the i mean you wouldn't even be
allowed to use insecticides
on on the veggies so
it's it's nice it's like it's like a
luxury
pure morality is is a luxury and uh not
everybody can afford it
in in various ways so how do you
reconcile it
is first of all you try to be honest
with regard to
what the texts say and uh the texts
based on ancient

india and like ancient buddhism was
based

on a very very ancient tradition going
way back into prehistoric times in

indus valley civilization where you're
trying to purify your karma

and the buddha had like a radical
psychological way of

going about that but the the idea to
begin with

was i mean you purify your karma through
saintliness of some sort or another and
um

that's how you get out of samsara that's
like the basic idea

and um most of us

uh we just really can't afford to live

that way it's it's not even in
accordance with
with a western culture you'd practically
have to
go to asia or just uh seclude yourself
in in some remote monastery somewhere in
order to really
do that of just avoiding
all negativity and unskillfulness and so
forth
so um most of us have to be honest and
say okay this is what the texts say
you're supposed to do this but i'm not
in a position to do it so i'm just not
gonna do it
and um that requires a certain

like a certain courage and manliness to
accept the consequences of your actions
it's like okay i'm going to kill animals
that means i'm making unskillful karma
negative karma that's going to come back
on me i'm going to face that with as
much equanimity and fortitude as i can
muster

so yeah that would be that would be the
way you deal with it i mean you can't
deny

karma if you're a buddhist i mean that's
one of the fundamental
teachings of buddhism and so if you're
going to do

bad karma quote unquote then you have to
acknowledge you're doing that you have

to acknowledge that there's a very good
chance it's going to come back on you
whatever you have done to others
is going to come around back on you
sooner or later
probably and so you have to have the
courage and fortitude to just face that
and say okay i will accept when it comes
back on me with as much equanimity
as i can muster and
with regard to uh the uh soldiers
that uh is mentioned up above
um yeah i've had the idea for a long
time that a soldier should be viewed as
a kind of tragic hero who is sacrificing
his own virtue

possibly sacrificing his own hopes of
heaven

for the sake of others and that that is
uh you know that's

that's an honorable sacrifice and so i
think there should be some respect for
that even though the person

really is sacrificing their own virtue
um for the sake of their country for the
sake of their families and friends and
just

you know as a matter of duty so

yeah i mean if you're going to live in
the world then you have to accept that
you're going to be doing bad things

sometimes and bad things are going to
happen to you as a consequence of that

and you just have to have some stoicism
about you you have to have some backbone
you have to be willing for bad things to
happen to you sometimes and to deal with
it with a certain amount of equanimity
or philosophical detachment or whatever
so that is uh that's how i consider
these ideas as integratable
whereas theravada buddhism orthodox
theravada buddhism
um just it just tells you to be as
saintly as you can manage
and uh your best bet is to renounce the
world
so i'll just move on to the next
question

and i do apologize if i didn't answer
that one sufficiently

excuse me next question is from mirror
of

emptiness my question for the next q a
is on the ship of fools podcast we were
speaking of being mindful in extreme
situations

me giving the example of being the
observer of my own intense

panic attack panic attack and you giving
the example of losing your temper and
going into a rage while being mindful

the more i thought of it the more i came
to the conclusion that i was probably
just

totally psychologically detached and

that

that is quite common in a crisis so i'm
wondering what do you think of this
regarding your own example of mindfully
raging and what is the difference
between mindfulness and psychological
detachment

anyways okay well

first of all i mean there's nothing at
all wrong with detachment

buddhism teaches detachment pretty much

all philosophy teaches detachment

and so i assume that what mirror of
emptiness is referring to here is
actually dissociation

um and i really can't speak for

uh what mirror was experiencing
when he was having his experience but
with my own experience
dissociation um you know it's a part of
your
personality part of your mind detaches
from the rest and really there is no
full connect i mean there's like a
closed door between them
you know like somebody who's channeling
they might not
remember what the other personality is
saying
even though it might just be a figment
of their own subconscious imagination
so or a person with multiple
personalities that's like a classic

example of dissociation hysterical
dissociation

um you know one personality isn't
necessarily

aware of the other personalities but
for example on the case he's talking
about

and there's been numerous occasions in
my life where i have gone through
a kind of um i won't call it
dissociation but maybe

a kind of detachment where like in this
case

i was living in a cave in burma and
the heat was just unrelenting it was
just

so hot for months and months probably
the rainy season
and like at least one out of every three
rainy season sometimes two out of three
and that part of burma were just a bust
it'd just be a drought and the crops
would fail and it just wouldn't
rain and it was probably one of those
and finally i just snapped and was just
yelling and cussing and slamming things
and suddenly there was just a kind of
shift of consciousness where there was
like
i was suddenly aware of this higher
level of consciousness
that was just observing me throwing a
conniption

so i was still throwing the connotation
you know i was still yelling and cussing
and slamming things
but it was as though i was an actor
playing the role of somebody throwing a
connotation
because there was just this other level
of consciousness just
observing it all with detachment and
just not really being involved
and that's happened to me many times not
just
not just that time um often in times of
crisis
like um there have been a few times even
before i was a meditating monk

where i'd be driving a car that would
hit a patch of ice or something i'd
start sliding out of control and again
it was just
my mind would just become crystal clear
i'd stop thinking
it would be like this higher level of
consciousness
would just do whatever was necessary to
keep me alive
until the crisis had passed and then i'd
go back into the normal state of
consciousness again
and um it really
has struck me that that level of
consciousness is
always there so um

with regard to dissociation uh you know
it's like when i was felt like i was an
actor playing the role of somebody
throwing a connection you know where
it's like

the conniption is going on you know it's
like you're you're like a method actor
playing out

you know like living out the the role or
whatever but at the same time you know
the actor always is knowing you know to
be

like if he's on stage you know you're
facing facing the

the audience or facing the camera and
you know where your balance is and you

know where you know everybody else is to
balance out the scene and
you know you know how much slobber's in
your mouth and all that
um it's not necessarily any kind of
contradiction
or anything unhealthy at all it's just
um
just the way it is and i really do think
that that higher level of consciousness
is always there but our ego
is identified with itself and ignores
higher levels
of consciousness that are just as much
us or maybe even more us than the ego is
so um yeah i'm not sure how well i
answered that one

but um let's see i'm i'm reading the
question here i'm wondering what you
think of disregarding your own example
of mindfully raging

um yeah and it wasn't always raging
either as all sorts of things could
happen

that would uh sort of trigger this
sudden awareness of like almost like
looking down at yourself you know sort
of like a

near-death experience where you just
kind of rise up and you look down you
see yourself sprawled on the pavement
down below

i mean it wasn't really like that but it

was sort of like a psychological
equivalent of that where like one part
of your mind is just kind of step
back and watching all this stuff going
on

and really that's what mindfulness is
like as a practice if you're practicing
um mindful detachment that's pretty much
what you're doing anyway

so i think i'll move on to the next
question from otomo he asks a number of
questions here

and he says more stupid questions if you
have not already answered them and i
would just point out
that there are no stupid questions there
are only stupid people

and um um nobody who asks these
questions are stupid people
i can i can say that honestly so
um no worries it's all good
so his first question women in buddhism
can a woman
gain enlightenment in this life and
according to orthodox tarabata buddhism
the answer is yes
in fact um in the story of
the buddha allowing a an order of nuns
to exist
at first he thought it was a really bad
idea and he didn't want to allow
an order of nuns to uh to become part of
the buddhist sangha

but his his cousin ananda his cousin and
attendant

ananda the venerable ananda talked him
into it and

one of the arguments ananda used was
um pointing out to the buddha and the
buddha had to agree to this that women
are just as capable of becoming
enlightened as

men according to uh like

the uh the ancient tradition um

only a man can be a fully enlightened
buddha who gets the the wheel turning
again after buddhism has died out

but aside from that um

yeah women are just as capable of

becoming enlightened as men so women and

men are not

the same obviously and

in some ways they may not be equal for

example with regard to physical strength

but apparently at least according to

buddhism

with regard to wisdom or at least the

potential for wisdom or the potential

for liberating

insight men and women are equal and that

is

arguably the most important kind of

equality that we could have

so the answer is yes women women

uh can gain enlightenment in this life

so the next question idolatry in

buddhism

buddhist statues are heretical how
do the southern asian sects deal with
that

and um i had no idea that buddhist
statues are heretical

in the the ancient terrebonne texts

the pali texts there's no mention of

buddha statues at all they haven't been

invented yet so there's no mention of

them just as there's no mention of

computers or cell phones or or monopoly

you know i mean it's just not there

so i'm technically really buddha statues

are not heretical from a

theravada buddhist point of view um

one theory about the origin of buddhist

statues

they were invented by greeks who had
invaded and conquered northwestern india
at that time they had converted to
buddhism and the greeks liked their
statues and so they started making
buddha statues

and the story goes that the first buddha
statues made by the greeks were
modeled on the god apollo and at that
time

in that part of the world apollo had a
top knot of hair

and that's why the buddha statues had
that weird lump on the top

it's based on this aristocratic top knot

of hair that the god apollo
had at least according to the story but
yeah for the first few hundred years
of buddhism there were no buddha statues
and if the buddha was represented at all
in art it would just be an empty seat or
a footprint something like that just to
emphasize that he was no longer in this
world he had he had
attained nibana he was no longer in
samsara
so um the southern asians like statues
too
by now obviously and it's not really
heretical
you know it's got its good points and
it's bad points it's at least a focus

for

uh devotional feelings and so forth

so um yeah i think i'll just move on to

the next question

also from otomo regarding buddhist

prophecy

do you believe them if so why

don't they just create suffering

um i'm not exactly sure what buddhist

prophecies otomo

is referring to there are prophecies in

the pali texts

so in in the ancient sutas there are

prophecies

made by the buddha and

you can use these prophecies if you're

cynical

and like a good scholar as a way of

dating the text

because usually the way it works and

bible scholars do the same thing

it's like you've got a book of

prophecies and

when right at the point where the

prophecies stop being 100

accurate and start being wildly

inaccurate right at that point

is probably when the text was composed

and so the buddha has a very high track

record with regard to

his prophecies which could indicate

if you're a cynic or a skeptic or

something

that the the text wasn't composed until
after the event that he was prophesying
because the buddha really um i mean he
was not really a prophet he was just a
philosopher sage just teaching people
how to do as he did and uh hopefully
become enlightened
so um uh with regard to other buddhist
prophecies i mean i
i don't even know what they would be and
uh don't they just create suffering
really i i don't see how they would
create suffering um
it could be if it's a wildly wrong
prophecy and people are
like clinging to it or something then it

could create suffering just as anything
create suffering if you cling to it
sufficiently

um but yeah there are prophecies in the
polytext

and not very many as i recall

and uh like for example

i think it's uh there's a sutta where the
buddha is passing through patali puta
which is like a small town at that time
or like a

a large village maybe even and in the in
the

sutta he prophesies that it will become a
great capital and

later it did become the capital of uh
the magadan empire i think

and so you could say that that was a prophecy and it was like a harmless one i mean he was just saying that you know that that town was going to be a great capital but i mean the skeptics or the the cynics can say well that probably was not composed until after pataliputa had become a great capital and then they just sort of retroactively had the buddha prophecy that but it's really irrelevant i mean prophecies are irrelevant to the main point of buddhism so it's not really any more important than

like the cosmology a lot of that kind of stuff either

a lot of them the myths and legends fire breathing dragons and all that sort of thing

they're not really to the point of the central message of buddhism so

fortunately we can dismiss most of the narratives because

buddhism really isn't based on a story it's just based on

human psychology more than anything else so we'll just move on to the next

question here can a buddhist

be dual religion jewish and buddhist

if so why if not why

um i have met

i mean it's kind of interesting that he
has jewish and buddhist as an example
because i used to know this guy
who um

he was really a devout buddhist he
meditated every day he had memorized
polytext by heart

he attended the very first meditation
retreat at ims

he was just really into buddhism he
thought it was you know 98

factual and reliable and uh

he also denied that he was a buddhist he
insisted he was a jew

but as a jew i mean he did not keep even
the ten commandments and he thought that

yahweh or jehovah was really just a kind of brahma you know he's one of many gods which you know the ancient jews also i mean

they were polytheists up until um the babylonian captivity or after the babylonian captivity

so um i suppose you can

be buddhist and some other religion so long as you're not denying the central tenets of buddhism

um you know if if your other religious belief causes you to reject the idea of karma for example or it causes you to reject the four noble truths

or or something like that then uh

yeah then you'd be like a semi buddhist

and maybe a semi something else
but um yeah you can you can be dual
religion so long as
your other religion isn't causing you to
positively disbelieve
some fundamental tenet of buddhism
otherwise you'd be like semi like
quasi or something
okay next question
can you name all the monks that have
attained enlightenment
like siddhartha how many are there
do you know i mean nobody can name all
the monks that have attained
enlightenment like siddhartha i mean if
you read the text it's been

millions of them probably um
and really it's just a trick question
anyhow because
um i mean enlightenment is a paradoxical
state
nirvana is just not within the context
of samsara it's
it's completely off the scale and so
it's just really incommensurable
with anything going on in this world in
orthodox buddhism they can say okay
you're an arahant if you have
no greed hate or delusion you know you
don't experience
suffering anymore you're not creating
new karma anymore
but only another arahant could possibly

know

whether somebody is an arahant or not

and maybe in some cases even then

another arahant wouldn't know so

it's like if you're unenlightened you're

looking at the world through

unenlightenment colored glasses and you

can meet an enlightened being and you're

just going to be clueless

he's just going to seem as foolish as

you are probably

or if you got the idea like you an

enlightened person

has the idea that so and so probably

their teacher

is enlightened all they're doing is they

they're cooking up some
unenlightened idea of what enlightenment
is like and then sticking it onto this
other
person it's an unenlightened idea of
what enlightenment is
because any kind of idea an
unenlightened person has is bound to be
unenlightened
so the whole thing is kind of a trick
question i mean we could meet arahants
and not even know that there are hans
if we're not our aunts or it could just
be that being an arahant
within a some sorry context is pretty
much meaningless
because just enlightenment itself or

nirvana

is just a completely different level of
reality and the whole thing is
paradoxical and kind of a mystery
so i'll just uh go on to the next
question which is a lulu

i must say are you enlightened
if so why if not hawaii explain what
brought you to enlightenment or what
keeps you from enlightenment
so again it's it's kind of a trick
question

and obviously i don't want to claim that
i'm enlightened
but um i mean nobody should just
say that they're unenlightened because

that helps to reinforce being unaligned
it's just like
slamming a door in your own face
so i mean you don't want to limit
yourself you don't want to
say i'm unenlightened because that is
like one of the nails
holding you down to an enlightenment so
to speak
and even worse than that is saying well
i'm not living up to such and such
standard and so i can't become
enlightened i'll never be enlightened in
this lifetime i mean that's
i mean that's just awful i mean that's
really slamming the door in your own
face

so just be open-minded and it's best
just not even to think about it not even
worry about it whether you're
enlightened or not i mean you are what
you are

you know it's you can say that it's just
perfect under the circumstances whatever
whatever you happen to be um you know
it's just

exactly what you need to be so
yeah so that's kind of a question that's
best just

left unanswered and nobody should even
stew over that

you know don't don't think that you're
on enlightened and don't think that you

are enlightened either you know you just
whatever it's just uh just keep going
forwards and don't bother with it
so the next question is from nardi
what do you know about marpa the teacher
of miller ripa and how he was an
advanced meditator
translator and had also a wife
are there in buddhism examples of people
like him
advanced meditators living a lay life
i've heard that tibetan buddhism has a
lot of examples like this
okay well i really don't know a whole
lot about tibetan buddhism anyway
but i have read um it was like an oxford
university press

um edition it was his name was evans
wentz and he did a lot of good editing
jobs of buddhist texts mostly tibetan
ones

and one of them was about the songs of
milorepo which include

uh an old biography of melarepa or i
think it was his autobiography
or it was considered to be his
autobiography

so i read about marpa a little bit in
that and

the life of milorepa at least the story
version of it is really fascinating i
mean

he this guy was he was living on a diet

of nettles for a long time he was just a
hermit living out in a cave in tibet
and he ate so many nettles that he
turned that he turned green and also his
clothes just rotted off so he was like
this green naked person
and if anybody saw him they thought he
was a monster

um but with regard to marpa the teacher
and how he was an advanced meditator
translator also had a wife i just
vaguely remember the details of marpa
um really whether he was
how advanced he was or anything um i
can't really say
so move on to the next part of the
question here are there in buddhism

examples of people like him advanced meditators living a lay life the first example that comes to mind would be uba kin who uh was the teacher of sn goenka he lived in burma s lived in burma too originally and um he was like a government administrator he was he was uh you know some sort of government official who had you know like a busy job but at the same time he he was a meditation master so it is possible and i think uh uba kin also was probably married i can't say for sure but

i wouldn't be surprised um

so yeah i mean there there are advanced
meditators

who uh live a lay life

i would assume that they're more into
mindfulness or

be passing on meditation quote unquote
than uh

developing jhana because i mean if
you're living a busy life with lots of
lots of stuff going on then you're
better off meditating on a moving target
and uh not trying to cultivate just
absolute stillness and simplicity

but um yes it can be done and um

like one of the one of the most famous
upanishads or one of the most famous

parts

of a famous upanishad is uh the
enlightened brahmana or the very very
wise brahman

teaching his favorite wife and it's like
a dialogue between the brahmana and his
wife

i don't even remember what upanishad it
was but it's one of the main ones

so um at least there are records

of really advanced spiritual beings

who did live in the world and uh were
married and had families and all that

it's um it makes it more difficult you

know it's like a more advanced

difficulty setting

but um it's still possible

and uh really again just thinking that

you can't become enlightened unless

you're

a renunciant is again you're just

slamming a door in your own face

so the next question is from sam in fact

he's asked a number of questions here

and he says thanks for your time and

patience i hope you have understanding

and i am not trying to offend in any of

my language or thoughts here peace

okay well taken question one

can you please address corruption in the

buddhist hierarchy for example

in the materialized establishment such

as problems with deception making

business monks who can't

practice what they preach fake relics

etc

why i think this is most important

people have had enough deception from

other groups and turn to buddhism as the

last

known religion that is supposedly the

most revered as

saintly also deception is a big factor

to drive people wrong especially if

they're in a vulnerable position of

seeking help from higher power

okay well i mean what it all boils down

to

is that no matter what the religion is

no matter what the religious system
is it's going to be run by human beings
and human beings
for the most part are foolish and
any religion that becomes like a
mainstream religion especially if it
becomes like a state religion
you know like the religion of a culture
then
obviously it's just going to go corrupt
as hell you're going to have just
corrupt politicians
um taking the the roles of like uh
priests and um
like bishops archbishops that kind of a
thing
and so um within just about any system

the majority are going to be
foolish to some degree i mean you're not
just gonna have like a sangha of
arahants there's gonna be
wise guys and crooks and clowns and
drones and
and just um for the most part the uh the
drones are gonna be the majority
um they might be well-intentioned um
you know not bad drones you know they
might have a good heart they might be a
good person even if they're not very
good at
like living the life of a monk and
living up to all the
responsibilities and ideals and all that

um so yeah a lot of this i mean

like in burma um burma has

very strong buddhism relatively speaking

i think

it could very well be called the most

devoutly buddhist country on earth

but still it's like what do we got here

deception

yeah that happens making business yeah

like a few of the most famous

monks in burma they charge money for

their their

dharma talks um monks who can't practice

what they preach which is most of them

because the standards are so

high in buddhist monasticism that uh

yeah

you get angry i mean that's you're not
supposed to do that you're not supposed
to feel lost

you're not supposed to uh um you know
you just you're just supposed to be
striving single-mindedly for
enlightenment

and pretty much just non-stop and almost
nobody can manage that and

uh most people just aren't right for
that like most of the people who become
monks especially in a buddhist culture
where it's mainstream

they're not doing it out of like this
intent

desire to become enlightened i mean a

lot of them just want to live an easy
life

or where they're really poor and can't
afford a good education unless they
become a monk and get to go free to the
monastic schools

or maybe their fam their parents are
poor and have got eight kids so they
just send one of the kids usually like
the laziest ugliest one to to become a
monk

um just to have fewer mouths to feed and
then to add the prestige of having a
monk in the family that sort of thing
a lot of a lot of monks in burma have
been ordained since they were children
and they just don't know anything else

to do in life they're just kind of stuck
that way

and uh see fake relics yeah lots of
those although most people
don't know that they're fake you know
they think that they're real

so um buddhism i mean

yeah like terra vada buddhism was
regarded like sex scandals they're way
less than

than in lots of other religious systems

um

yeah i think i think the buddha did
really well when he set up the system
for example he had like a two-level
system of religion

which is you know it's possible in other religions also it does happen in other religions but you've got like the really sincere practitioners

they've got a higher set of standards and more rules to follow

and then if you're if you're really not up to that then just five

precepts minimum and uh you know even most

most people don't follow those perfectly so

um it helps to reduce hypocrisy anyway

and uh having strict rules against

handling money kind of

sort of makes the monks better although

of them still handle money but um
yeah it's it's i mean as as religious
systems

go teravata buddhism is is a good one
pretty obviously but any any religion
um once the the enlightened founder dies
you know it's just going to go downhill
into corruption and just you know human
foolishness because it's human i mean
we're not we're all human
and there might be certain upsurges of
inspiration where things get
better and more enlightened more fresh
and alive
more inspired but they don't last you
know it's all in each and nothing

nothing lasts forever

so i'll just move on to the next

question by sam

think about the possibility of a mix

between maya and

ghosts or that sort of energy or even

deceivers of energy

please address what you think about this

mixture possibility

and i'm not 100 sure what the question

is because

maya applies to samsara in general so

ghosts would be an aspect of maya or

illusion samsaric illusion but then

again so would we i mean

in the highest heavens also are

manifestations of

samsaric illusion to some degree

um with regard to

deceivers of energy that might be sort
of

um if i understand correctly maybe

something like what's called a glamour

or like a succubus like a like a

parasite a drainer of energy

and um yeah they could exist and uh

i wouldn't be surprised at all in fact i

think there's a good chance of it

but um really our own mental states are

are preeminent and our own karma

determines what happens to us so

um if if you have

a problem with some parasitic little

spirit that's sucking some of your
energy

and i've read that this does happen it's
it's not in orthodox terrible

i'm pretty sure but i have read that
such things can happen

that just as there are physical fleas
there are also

like little like little spiritual

you know like ghost fleas or something
that suck our life for us or something
like that

um yeah i mean it can happen but it
can't happen to you unless it's your
karma

that it's going to happen to you so you
still ultimately

deep down are in control
of your own life and whether that is
happening to you or not
most people just aren't enlightened of
course and so they
they have the subconscious mind that
that creates problems that they really
can't be aware of consciously because
it's subconscious
but um yeah it's it's mostly
just the unskillful karma that allows
that sort of thing anyway
and so um it's it's still karma
but um i mean the main gist of the
question i'm not exactly sure
the uh a mix of maya and ghosts like

ghosts could be illusory that it's like
a kind of
aspect of a mental illness and yeah sure
that's that's possible too
but it is all ultimately psychological
because karma is really
what is conditioning our experience so
i'll just move on to the next question
which i trust i will understand better
in terms of what i know about karma in
buddhism anything bad that happens is a
part of the person's path or clearing
their karma
how would a traditional buddhist address
a room of young children that have been
used as slaves or raped by adults
in this example the children would

already have some recovery

so they could move on to the next stage
of understanding and healing

or maybe you could address adults about
this example

okay this is really kind of a tricky
kind of sensitive touchy sort of
question

because like i just said whatever
happens to us really is the result of
our

our karma's like the fruition of our
karma

you know like any sensation you
experience positive negative or
an abu dhamma scholar recently told me

even neutral

sensory experiences um they're all the
fruition of karma

and so the standard explanation is that
uh

you know it was the fruition of bad
karma from a previous

and most western people don't believe in
reincarnation and so they just reject
that as [__] and then sometimes they
can just twist it around and say you're
blaming these

these victims you know it's a victim
blaming you know it's like

you're blaming these little kids for for
causing themselves to be abused
and that's an ugly way of saying i mean

i mean

in a way it's kind of true but it's not
the kids that did anything wrong it was
just the

it was like the fruition of the actions
of a previous person with
them being sort of the continuation of
that

um but let's just say for the sake of uh
playing devil's advocate or mara's
advocate let's just let's just leave
reincarnation or rebirth out of the out
of the deal all together
then um still

i mean i'm not going to reject karma in
this

life with karma in this life being that
you know our existence is a
manifestation of our own mental states
that you know we really are um
to a very profound degree determining
what happens to us in life
and it's like if you put a little kid
behind
the wheel of a car and let them drive
the car
then there's a good chance they're going
to crash the car because they just
are not skillful at driving a car yet
they're not skillful at
navigating such a vehicle and
small children um i mean just with
regard to driving this body through life

just like creating an existence for
themselves they're not skillful at that
yet

either and so you know sort of like
they're they're they're not good at
lucid dreaming yet

and so in in that sense you can say that
because they're children

they just don't know any better they
don't have enough wisdom cultivated yet
to uh to steer their life in a good
direction and their parents obviously
have

woefully failed in protecting them back
there

sometimes their parents are the primary

predators on the men of
just inflictors of misery so
yeah i mean i am compassionate it's not
like i'm trying to do any kind of victim
blaming here
um buddhist philosophy can be pretty
cold
and so i mean there is that too but
um even even if you you say is the
fruition of their own karma then
still i mean you should do what you can
to be compassionate and to be helpful
and obviously
uh you know you shouldn't encourage
anything like that
and do your best to discourage that sort
of thing from happening

in your world

so let's see if i'm answering the

question correctly if i've just

completely gone off on a tangent here

let's see what a traditional buddhist

how would a traditional buddhist address

a room of young children

have been used as slaves or raped by

adults

yeah i mean the world is

i mean samsara is a place of suffering

and

we are imperfect which is why we are

here and

just it just gets more um imperfect for

some than for others i mean sometimes

just in this very world

you've got hell realms you've got minor
heaven realms and you've got minor hell
realms just

i mean just going to like a crack house
or something um

i had a little bit of experience with
that like a long time ago

and um i mean not that i was like a
crackhead or anything but still i mean
you can just wind up in the wrong place
at the wrong time and it's just like
this hell like vibe you know there's
just people who are creating a hell for
themselves

and obviously they just don't know any
better

you know it's like it's not like i mean
you can say it's their own fault but in
a way

i mean they just can't help it and so
um the best thing you do is try to help
you know i mean

so next question as

this is also by sam as i understand the
mental state of a buddhist is to do
nothing

of no harm and act as in the snake and
frog example that you have given before
can you please address this situation
your thoughts

about a buddhist of this nature that
walks across the path to see an adult

beating a child or raping them side note
there is a real scenario of buddhists
going after rapists in myanmar i think
this is the country then there were
other buddhists that did not agree with
this

i am just wondering about the normal
instinct a human has to intervene
compared to a buddhist that does not
have that instinct

okay well i mean one of the the points i
need to emphasize here
that i emphasize a lot and it requires
emphasis

is that in buddhism right and wrong
are not matters of physical actions you
know you can say i mean is doing

such and such right or wrong but i mean
it can be either way it's like the the
like the the frog and the snake example
that he mentioned here it's like
you're walking through the forest and
you see a snake trying to swallow a frog
and
the frog is squealing and struggling to
get away
because obviously the frog doesn't want
to be eaten by the snake
so you chase the snake away
if you do that out of compassion for the
frog you've done something good and if
you do something
if you do the very same thing out of

aversion for the snake

you've done something bad it's the exact

same action it can be good or bad

depending on the mental states

and in action not doing anything is

morally neutral

which if you're going for enlightenment

is actually preferable

to earning merit because if you're

earning merit you're still

making more karma that keeps you in

samsara

so not doing anything is morally neutral

it's neither good nor bad

even if you're just watching somebody

drown you're watching somebody get

assaulted or whatever

and really this is largely based on
um this prehistoric
uh ancient indian philosophy of
karma is what is keeping us in this
world and we need to exhaust our karma
somehow

in order to liberate ourselves from this
world and so

um there are cases like in the text of a
monk that will actually

sit on a riverbank and watch a pretty
girl drown because it's against the
rules for a monk to touch

a woman so to swim out and save her
possibly doing mouth-to-mouth
resuscitation

he could break a rule by doing that so
he's just not even going there he'll
just sit there and let her drown
and technically i mean it's cold as hell
but technically so long as he's in a
neutral state
then i mean he's done nothing good or
bad
but it's just not human you know i mean
you have to be just
so uh just
so detached that i mean you've just gone
beyond
humanity at that point and there are
stories like
um there's a story of a buddha the
buddha in a previous life he was a

farmer

and he had one son his only child

and he was a farmer so he went out to

plow the fields and he brought the kid

with him and the kid's just playing in

the shade of a tree

you know he's helping his wife maybe by

getting the kid out of her hair or

something

and so he's plowing the field and he

looks over and he notices the kid lying

motionless on the ground so he runs over

and it turns out the kid has been bitten

by a snake and is dead

so this the buddha who is very wise

being of course i mean he wasn't the

buddha yet this was in a previous life
but still i mean he had been cultivating
wisdom

life time after lifetime for eons
what does he do he just goes back and
finishes plowing the field because
there's nothing you can do to save the
kid the kid's already dead
so the field had to be plowed so that's
what he did

and i mean it's just kind of cold and
inhuman you know it's it's
you can argue that it's just a myth just
giving an example of just super
human equanimity and detachment
um yeah it's uh

you're probably better off if you see an

adult beating a child or raping them

um just anybody with an ounce of

like compassion and just

i don't know i mean yeah i mean i would

i would intervene

it just seems like the obvious thing to

do

um side note there's a real scenario

buddhists going after rapists in myanmar

yeah that is true and the rapists tend

to be muslims

which is it's like a muslim buddhist

thing and

um sometimes you know it can just be a

made-up story

um i've many times living in burma you

know you hear of
muslims raping a burmese buddhist girl
and then you've got reprisals and
sometimes you know like
burning down people's houses and that
kind of a thing
and um i mean just intervening and
stopping it from happening
is one thing but uh like revenge is
is obviously unskillful from the
buddhist point of view even
even like using violence and just like
anything motivated by hatred or ill will
anger rage that kind of a thing i mean
it just makes things worse it really
doesn't improve the situation
so um you know trying

to stop bad things from happening trying

to stop

bad things that are already happening

that's fine

but um doing so in a state of just

state of rage or revenge or hatred

anything like that

all you're doing is just fueling it

you're just throwing fuel on the fire

even though you might stop this

particular case

you know you've created more karma for

that sort of thing to happen

so um yeah so technically

just not doing anything even though the

whole world is going to [__] all around

you

that is morally ethically neutral from a
buddhist point of view so long as your
mental states are also neutral

and that's really the point i mean good
and bad are mental states

in buddhism it has very little to do
with

outward actions or even just outward
rules

it's the mental states that that are
really determining whether what you do
is good karma or bad karma or just
neutral so the next question let's see
oh wait this he's got a sub question
after that one

then is this kind of non-action

considered enlightenment

and i've already pretty much answered

that whereas i mean

physical non-action i mean it's just

neutral it's it's not enlightened or

unaligned it's it's irrelevant

largely so but but like

mental non-action yeah it's it's sort of

like

in the dao tai ching it's talking about

wu way or not action as a kind of

enlightened state

where your mind is just in this kind of

stillness you know equanimity and

stillness

you could say that that is enlightenment

i suppose that would be about as good of
a

of an inadequate definition as any

but um yeah i mean

just just watching something bad

happening and not reacting

or watching something good happening and

not reacting outwardly um yeah has

it has nothing to do with wisdom really

because wisdom is

is internal it's a mental state it has

nothing to do with physical action i

mean

your physical actions are a reflection

of your mental states obviously

but that's not necessarily the case i

mean a person who doesn't talk could be

a silent sage or they could just be an
idiot

and just don't feel like talking then
so yeah i think i'll just move on here
one more question that is also extremely
important in terms of teaching

others sex is a part
of who we are literally although i
understand the abstinence in monks or
practitioners etc

why is this subject not addressed by
monks or buddhists as a teaching to lay
people

how can someone teach another person how
to have a better life

by not addressing the elephant in the

room maybe they do address it but if so
why would it not be one of the most
important subjects

since this is who we are well for
starters

monks the primary purpose of a monk is
not to be a teacher

the primary purpose of a monk is to just
radically renounce the world and

go for it until you're enlightened

so the primary purpose of a monk is to

be meditating under trees in the forest

not not to teach people in fact there

are a few sutas that say that

or there's one in particular um where

it says that uh a monk really has no

duty to talk to lay people other than

just politely asking them to leave him
alone

because a monk is more or less of a
recluse he interacts with people when he
goes for alms around but

um not necessarily any other time

so this is again it's just this radical
renunciation

um Theravada Buddhism was like a
spectator sport where

you know like the people that are really
serious that are like the the pro team
and then

like the lay people are just like the
fans supporting their favorite team

um but even so i mean monks can teach

about sex

mainly that is limited to just uh

encouraging them to keep the five

precepts which includes

precept number three which is um to

abstain from

sensual misconduct which

uh mainly means adultery and uh like

like wanton promiscuity you know

consulting consorting with prostitutes

or just like

you know picking up chicks in bars that

you don't give a damn about

you know it's like if you want to avoid

breaking the third precept then

um you would be faithful to one person

and you know you would have sex with a

person only that you

love and they're not already they don't

already have binding

obligations to somebody else that sort

of thing

um aside from that monks really have to

be careful about talking about sex

especially to women

because um if they veer off a little bit

into

uh being a little too explicit or

something they've just broken a very

serious offense

broken a very serious rule so

yeah monks they're not supposed to talk

about sex much

um because it is something that they
shouldn't even be thinking about really
and um so that's kind of what the lay
people

i mean it's sort of like a lay person's
issue and so you know the lay people
have to kind of work that stuff out on
their own

like um it's um it's like a major rule
there is a major rule a sanghati cesar
rule against a monk even participating
in a marriage

so it's very different from like
christianity where marriage is a
sacrament

in in buddhism because it was based and
it was originally like a monastic system

it was a system of renunciation

so that um yeah that's just monks don't

even go there this

um in burma or other buddhist countries

like

a couple like on their wedding day after

they've already gotten married they can

go to the monk

to receive the blessings but the monk

really should not bless their marriage

before they get married

because then he would be acting as a

kind of matchmaker

encouraging this kind of romantic

attachment stuff

that um you know buddhism is so

unworldly

that it just tends to avoid that kind of

stuff altogether if

if at all possible

so yeah that's that's one reason why

lay teachers in the west can do better

than monks in the west

because lay teachers can talk about that

kind of stuff more and

also um they can speak from their own

experience with regard to worldly issues

that lay people

encounter so monks are often so attached

and so

unworldly so sheltered you know they're

just like

living in a monastery or out in a forest

or something that
uh they really can't relate to the uh
like the problems of of everyday modern
life in in like in the west or
in a westernized civilization
so i hope i answered that one well
enough because i'm moving on to the next
one and this is from
bodhisattva969 the highest goal in
buddhism is
enlightenment or nirvana and the end of
samsara
to be born again and again does that
really mean we should extinguish
ourselves with enlightenment or is there
anything else behind

that somebody can achieve

well this is uh i mean it's it's always

butting heads with just the whole

paradox of enlightenment because really

enlightenment is off the scale is just

not a samsaric phenomenon even though

there are attempts to describe it as

such because you have to describe it

somehow

but by describing it you just

invalidated your description

so um does that really mean we should

we would extinguish ourselves with

enlightenment no because there

ultimately is no self to extinguish

all you're really extinguishing is a

kind of illusion or delusion

and uh says or is there anything else
behind that somebody can achieve and
that immediately reminded me of the last
two verses

of a really ancient polytechnics called
the kalahawi warasuta

of the sutuni pata and

it's first there's talk about

enlightenment and i won't i won't go

into that i won't read the whole suta

here but

at the end um the the person asking the
buddha

the the questions um he asks about

um enlightenment the buddha gives this

strange enigmatical

speech i suppose i should read that too
here i'll scroll down here
i just happen to have it right here his
his description of enlightenment is
he has no perception of perception he
has no perception of non-perception
he is not without perception he has no
perception of
void for one who was attained thus form
becomes void
for founded in perception is
diversifying designation
which is uh very koan like and uh
kind of inscrutable so then uh the
person who's asking him
the questions asks uh do indeed some
intelligent ones here declare that the

highest purity of the spirit
is to that extent or do they declare
that it is even more than that
and then the buddhist says indeed some
intelligent ones here do declare that
the highest purity of the spirit
is to that extent but then some of them
claiming to be adepts
declare an attainment in which nothing
that was taken up remains
so having understood these to be
dependent the sage
and investigator having understood the
ways of dependence
a released one having understood does
not come to contention

the wise one does not attain to this or
that existence

so one of the points of what he's

saying here as far as i can understand

is that you just don't cling to any kind

of explanation of what enlightenment is

that any explanation is going to be

invalid because this enlightenment is

just off the scale

and so if you want to have an

enlightened attitude

you don't cling to any point of view you

don't cling to any beliefs

any any kind of philosophy and

originally buddhism was this kind of a

radical just let go of absolutely

everything including your own belief

systems including

including dharma itself

and uh i mean that is just such such a
void

you know it's just like free falls like
having the the rug just yanked out from
under you and no floor or anything
underneath that

that um yeah buddhism couldn't couldn't
stay that way for very long

so they started cooking up all these
systematic uh

philosophies but um

let's see i may have wandered away from
the question here does that really mean
we should extinguish

ourselves with enlightenment we would
extinguish ourselves with enlightenment
or is there anything else
behind it that somebody can achieve
there there is nobody
i mean ultimately from the buddhist
point of view there we don't extinguish
ourselves because there's nobody to
extinguish there's no self to extinguish
and uh you know it's like nobody can can
achieve it because there is nobody
ultimately and that's that's kind of
like what enlightenment is just
realizing that
there's nobody to become enlightened
anyway
that's another invalid way of explaining

it and i'm just moving on here

dog breath good old dog breath

he's got a number of questions here

could you please

give an overview of the relationship

between nihilism and buddhism

okay nihilism and buddhism um

he's referring he he sent me a much

longer version of this question it was

it was like a an essay all in and of

itself

so i i'm pretty sure what he's what he's

uh referring to here

is that in the buddhist time there were

a number of

um um philosophers

teaching other systems and they mostly
went under the the rubric of
ajivaca they were ng anjivacas of some
sort or another
and some of them denied the existence of
karma saying that you can just
go up one bank of the ganges with this
rotating
razor knife thing and just like turn
every every living being you see
just heap of bloody flesh and then come
back along the other bank and do the
exact same thing just leaving just
blood and mayhem everywhere and you're
not creating any karma at all that you
know
it's gonna have no effect on you that's

one kind of nihilism

another kind of nihilism i think that or
that was called acuria vada or something
like that it's just uh denying that
there is karma denying that uh

actions have consequences and then

there's another kind of nihilism

called um uchida or annihilationist view

saying that when you're dead you're dead

you know that would be like a modern

scientific materialist would be that

kind of nihilist they might be both

kinds for all i know

um let's see can i give an overview of

the relationship between nihilism and

buddhism

well buddhism denied both of those

obviously buddhism

does very much emphasize the fact that

actions have consequences especially

inward actions like volitional actions

you know your mental states have

consequences

so even just a flash of anger is going

to have its consequences any kind of

negative thought

is going to have consequences

any kind of positive thought will have

consequences

and so the kind of mental states

required

to just butcher and slaughter every

living being you meet

i mean it's hardly likely you're going to maintain like philosophical detachment and pure neutrality while doing such a thing so that's going to have that's going to have effects on your mind and the state your mind is in is having effects it's conditioning the reality that you're generating for yourself so obviously the buddha did not uh endorse um a denial of karma and with uchida deity it's trickier the whole annihilationist view that was considered to be an extreme the other extreme was called

eternalist view or sasata dt which says
that

after you die you just you have an
immortal soul that just

lasts forever and the buddha denied both
of these extremes and he

followed the middle path which is
dependent core rising

and yeah i'm not really going to get
into that but

the thing to remember is that when

you're dead you're dead is one extreme

and your soul is going to live forever
is the other extreme

and the buddha denied both and

part of that is is just that any kind of
view of reality is going to be

false that once you symbolize something
into thoughts
then it's already invalid it's just pure
some sorry
rubbish at that point no matter how
elegant it seems no matter how
convincing
it seems still once you've made a model
in your mind of what reality is supposed
to be like then um
yeah it's like drawing a picture of god
almighty i mean you
you just can't do it it's it's not even
an approximation
you can say well this is just a crude
sketch of what god almighty looks like

but no it's because

god almighty doesn't look like anything

just even assuming that there is a god

almighty

right just just playing i don't know

devil's advocate

will say that there is a god but i mean

there's no picture you could draw of him

that would be

even like a crude sketch i mean it just

doesn't work that way

and that's it's the same way with

reality in general you can say that just

like like spinoza says you know that

reality is god that's like

i'm pretty sure spinoza said that and uh

i say it too it's like

if there is a god then god is just
ultimate reality you know

so you just can't put it into words and
that's

why like earlier i was talking about how
early buddhism is just saying you know
you don't

don't cling to any point of view don't
cling to any philosophy you know

no belief system is is it you just let
go of all of that

and so you you let go of the idea when
you're dead you're dead and you let go
of the idea that you have an immortal
soul that's going to live forever

and um that's just call it good i mean

don't even bother with it i mean don't
bother with trying to figure out whether
you're enlightened or unenlightened or
anything like that just uh
just be here now essentially
and it's very hard to answer some of
these questions any any question that
relies on dependent colorizing
is is just uh it's not easy to answer
because even the buddha himself
was not very successful at answering it
because it's considered to be central to
buddhist philosophy but still almost
nobody understands it and he almost
uh didn't teach buddhism according to
the legend because he figured nobody
would understand it

so next question here also by mr breath
the agi vacha gotta records a
conversation between the buddha and an
individual
named vacha

the buddha asks vacha a question to the
effect of if a fire were to go out and
someone were to ask you whether the fire
went

north south east or west how would you
reply

and vacha replies that the question does
not apply and that an extinguished fire
can only be classified as

out so mr breath's question is

i am confused as to how an enlightened

being can be both

out and in that is in this world

existing

especially if to exist is to transgress

and we are told the buddha did exist for

many years following his out

of enlightenment can you please explain

the seeming contradiction

okay there's there's a number of things

i can say first of all

in uh ancient india fire wasn't viewed

the way

modern science used fire fire was a god

it was agni it was like the messenger of

the gods

and um it had like a like a latent

existence everywhere like like a piece

of wood that hasn't been burned yet has
like

the fire kind of existing in a formless
state inside that wood

and um so when a fire goes out it's not
necessarily just

just like ceasing to exist it's just
going back into like a formless state
so there is that um

but again it's like the whole question
of how can an enlightened being be both
in

and out um

oh it's

samsara and nirvana are not opposites
they are not mutually contradictory

it's sort of like um i wrote

a long time ago this uh this little

story about uh a

glass coca-cola bottle it's old story

when coca-cola bottles were still glass

and it's like well what is it is it

glass or is it a bottle

and um well i mean it's glass and it's a

bottle right

sure so um

it's not really a contradiction in terms

even though glass and bottle don't mean

the same thing

so it's like a glass is a bottle is not

a

so you've got this thing that's a and

not a simultaneously which should be

impossible according to the aristotelian
laws of thought

has to be a or not a it can't be both
but here it is and not a because it's
glass and it's a bottle

and bottle does not mean the same as
glass bottle

is not glass i mean you can have a
plastic bottle you can have a glass
ashtray

so they're they're not synonymous

they're i mean

it's a and not a at the same time and so

i um the buddha he's he's in

nibana so to speak and also in samsara

simultaneously

but samsara is like a state of the
illusion you know it's just
form you know it's not essence it's form
like like the coca-cola bottle it's like
the re the answer to the to the mystery
or the
the question glass is is like the
essence or substance
bottle is just the outward form of it
and you can
you could say the same thing that that
uh nirvana is the essence
of this universe and that some sora is
just uh
a kind of conditioned apparent outward
form
but they're not mutually contradictory i

mean they don't

they're not mutually exclusive

necessarily

if you're completely stuck in samsara

then yeah you don't you're just clueless

with regard to nirvana there is no no

one as far as you're concerned

but still just it's just pervading you

because it's you know the essence of

reality

is just pervading you anyway and uh with

regard to the buddha being both in and

out another another answer to that

question

is uh there's a different pseudo where

somebody is asking him the standard

um question that he refused to answer
and that is does an enlightened being
exist after death

and um generally he refused to answer
that question but in this one sutra that
i remember he

even went so far as to say i mean you
can't really say that he exists

even before death whether he does or
does not exist you know the whole thing
is just uh

kind of paradoxical and again you cannot
describe reality

in words so it's just an act of futility

um so the seeming contradiction is a
seeming one but it's

not really a contradiction because

samsara and nirvana

are not opposites and are not

necessarily mutually exclusive

and uh of course some of the uh mahayana

buddhists

go so far as to say that they are the

same

so next question from mr breath here

what difference can it possibly make

whether or not one acts without

virtue in regard good mental verbal

and bodily conduct if there is no self

to benefit from such

actions that is if all impermanent

phenomena including thoughts

and these actions are related to no self

what possible difference can this make
i ask because this does of course raise
questions about the full path
well um you can say that there is no
self
but by the very same token there's no
action because there's no self to
perform that action
the whole thing is like a mutually
conditioning
illusion or delusional state
so um i mean you're like
in a dream and it's like so long as
you're in the dream
even though i mean the dream you isn't
real arguably and your actions in that
dream

aren't real arguably still i mean so
within the context of the dream i mean
you're still

your actions still have consequences and
uh you're going to suffer if you do
something

you know like you know hitting your head
hitting your your hand with a hammer or
something

in the dream i mean there's no real
hammer and your your dream hand isn't
your real hand but still i mean in the
dream

it's going to hurt and all that so um
so long as you're you're stuck in the
samsaric

uh plato's cave then i mean you do well
to try to uh be as low impact and cause
as little suffering for yourself and
others even though yourself and others
are just part of the
the dream the flickering shadows on the
wall so to speak

um let's see

and go back here what difference whether
or not one acts without
virtue and regard yeah i mean ultimately
it doesn't matter at all

i mean you know you go to hell i mean
what difference does it make

it might make a difference to you even
though um you know the whole thing is
is kind of an illusion but i mean if you

don't want the illusory you
in absolute misery then you should live
like an illusory good life
um until you can transcend the illusion
and then it doesn't matter anymore
and uh somehow i'm just feeling like uh
um i might not be answering these
questions some of these questions are so
subtle and there they keep going back to
the whole
idea of dependent core rising and uh you
know samsara not being ultimate reality
and so forth
so i'll just move on to the next
question also by dog brows
in the alaga dupa the buddha describes

how some individuals feared his teaching
because they live
they believe that their self would be
destroyed if they followed it
he describes this describes this as an
anxiety caused by the false belief in an
unchanging everlasting self all things
are subject to change
and taking any impermanent phenomena to
be
a self causes suffering nonetheless his
critics called him a nihilist who
believes the annihilation
and extermination of an existing being
the buddha's response was that he only
teaches
the cessation of suffering actually he

taught two things

suffering and the cessation of suffering

my question

it seems to me that you see his question

it seems to me

this is wanting your cake and eating it

contradictory

because if there is no fixed self to be

annihilated

there is only no self and

if there is only no self exactly what is

extinguished upon the event of

enlightenment

and this is just pretty much uh is

almost the same as the last question

that really there is no self to be

annihilated

but i mean ultimately there is i mean

there's no actions or anything it's like

the whole samsaric world is just this

mutually conditioning

virtual reality and so long as you're

stuck in it

you got to play by its rules

so um

what exactly is extinguished upon the

event of enlightenment

um in a sense you can say that really

it's like a paradox at the moment of

enlightenment nothing changes

nothing real changes all that changes or

what can all that can be said to change

would be the illusion

you know it might stay an illusion but
it's no longer delusion because you're
no longer believing it so it would be
just

a slight shift with regard to that it's
like the illusion
stops having any um power to perpetuate
itself

at least in in one case um
but again it's it's uh we're trying to
describe

um reality within the context of
unreality which just
doesn't work another question on this
topic also by dog breath
can it be said that buddhism is built

around this paradox

um not really i mean the paradox is

always there

and it pervades everything in a way it's

kind of a way of coping with it or

dealing with it

but that's at a very advanced level

mostly

what buddhism is built around is just

this

really ancient concept of purifying your

karma

purifying your mental states until

um you are free and buddhism was more

psychological

it didn't have such a mechanical like

like the jain

concept of just mechanically exhausting
all of your karma
until your your your jiva your soul
is completely unburdened and then can
just float up and merge in heaven
um buddhism it was more of a
psychological thing
so um you're you're purifying your mind
well enough
that a kind of intuitive liberating
insight can arise
and that's good enough and then that's
the that's the paradox that's when the
paradox happens because
ultimately nothing real changes
so yeah there is the paradox

enlightenment itself is the paradox but
uh

most of buddhism is just trying to get
to the get to that paradox

last question from uh dog breath and
this is kind of a naughty one

i have to say okay

mr breath asks is money hungry [—]

an appropriate criticism of tibetan

buddhism whose teachers seem out of

all sects of buddhism to be the most

interested in

selling dhamma further some of them even

tried to sell dhamma but instead use the

word donna

or or just generosity like a voluntary

gift

i have yet to find one tibetan buddhist
organization that doesn't sell dhamma
but

gives freely they all seem to have their
hands out

and cross my hands with silver style i
am told even the dalai lama

hides his rolex when dealing with the
common folk

how nice of him fact is

most of these tibetan teachers seem much
more infatuated with private jets

rebounds sunglasses and mercedes cars
than the teachings of the buddha

care to comment on this criticism

as i've said above a couple things i

said about one was that um

i really don't know all that much about

tibetan buddhism like um

yeah very little i've had very little

engagement with tibetan buddhism i've

read a few books

and that's about as far as it goes you

know i've known a few people who were

involved

in tibetan buddhism so i've heard a

little bit indirectly from them

so that's one that's one thing and uh

also like i said

earlier um i mean whenever you have

humans involved there's going to be

foolishness involved

yeah i mean you're just not going to

have a religion that turns everyone
into a fully enlightened saint that most
people are going to be fools most people
are just not

ripe for enlightenment even if they try
their hearts out even if they try as
hard as they can to become enlightened
even so most people fail and they just
stay

foolish and they've got their desires
and their cravings and their preferences
and all that

so i mean that's that's found in all
schools of buddhism like terra vada
buddhism

um the same thing happens like in in

some of the ims like the inside

meditation society

groups where they're calling you know

they're like

they're including donna like the the

volitional

generosity as part of the bill when you

go to the go to the retreat that kind of

a thing

um some and some of the these teravata

buddhist places too i mean any of the

elite buddhist places you know the

multi-million dollar luxury dharma

resorts

i mean they're going to be charging

through the nose some of them charge an

arm and a leg

and then they wonder why it's like
there's not very many people of color
attending these things let's see
um so yeah money hungry [__] yeah i
haven't seen it i can't really say
but uh that sort of thing you're gonna
find everywhere
um i don't know about shambhala
international
that was the group that um brian roo was
a member
of before they kicked him out um
and uh yeah he's not a rich man so i
assume they must not have charged very
much for him to be
involved up until they threw him out for

his political views uh

so yeah i can't really i can't really

say that uh

tibetan buddhism really stands out in

that regard because i've seen it pretty

much everywhere

so next question is from potila

and potila says you mentioned that it is

possible the bikuni order arose

after the death of the buddha you based

this on passages

teri gata in question like

in parentheses question mark in the text

where the lives of none

seemed copied from the lives of monks

do you think the bikini order started

during the buddha's lifetime or came

after if it came after

then did the idea of the four-fold

community

um come out of this development also can

you point out

a few texts you are referencing to make

this conclusion

okay this is kind of a complicated one

um first of all um

let's see is it possible that the bikini

order arose

after the death buddha i think it is

possible

because there's definitely some uh

ambivalence towards bikunis in the texts

i just get the impression that um

the bikini order was added almost as an
afterthought

and that a lot of the the terrors like
the senior monks just
didn't like the idea and so um it could
have arisen at the first council
maybe the buddha allowed it but even so
if he did

it was the bikunis were just kind of
like a tolerated group or sort of a
fringe group

i mean they're they're very rarely
mentioned in the texts

there is the terry gotta which is a
reference here

that is it's a book of inspired
verses supposedly composed by nuns like

enlightened nuns

although a lot of the scholars nowadays

um are of the opinion that most of them

are fake

that they're just cooked up after the

fact like they're they're composed

in like verse meters that didn't exist

until hundreds of years

after the time of the the non-supposed

existence

and um you know it could have just been

um

cooked up by by monks and then just

attributed to

to nuns some of that some of that almost

certainly happened

um but the reference to uh let's see
here uh basis on passages in the text
where the lives of none seem copied from
the lives of monks
that's mainly in the the vineya or the
the rules of monastic discipline
where the rules that are um
similar between monks and nuns which is
most of them they just
just took the the origin story for the
monks rules and just like
pasted the names of nuns onto it instead
in a lot of cases
and um there was the notorious group of
six monks
who were supposedly responsible for all
sorts of misbehavior that caused all

sorts of rules to be

formulated and for the nuns they've

gotten

very conveniently the group of six nuns

who do the same kind of stuff

and that really doesn't prove anything

because

the origin stories themselves are pretty

obviously cooked up after the fact in

many cases

um so yeah i don't have any

proof that the nuns or the bikuni order

um arose after the death of the buddha

but there's obviously some ambivalence

there was obviously some

serious reluctance to allow nuns to

exist in fact

according to the text the buddha himself
thought it was a really bad idea and had
to be persuaded by venerable ananda
to allow the order of nuns to exist and
even then he's like

okay but now you've done it and says
that buddhism will exist for only half
as long and then they had to
formulate much stricter rules for
nuns than for monks

partly because in india then
as is still the case now um in many
cases

um women were married when they were
children essentially or at least they
were betrothed

and they might even might not meet their
husband until their wedding day
you know they just like two strangers
it's like an arranged marriage
and women had very few rights in ancient
india

and so well they had very few rights
pretty much in ancient anywhere
and so a lot of them would try to be
ordained as nuns just to get out of a
bad

marriage or some such and they wouldn't
have a genuine
um spiritual calling you know they'd
just be like
trying to get away from it from a

bastard husband

and so they made the rules much stricter
to

prevent that from happening um so that
only the the women that were really
serious about becoming enlightened would
uh undertake it but

um also it could have just been some
monks that just

really didn't like the idea of nuns
because men and women together makes
trouble

especially if it's uh you know they're
trying to be celibate

and unattached you know so

if you're trying to be celibate and
completely unattached to anything

worldly than

men and women together it's just too
easy for nature to take its course in
such cases

so i mean the whole thing is very
complicated and i think arguments could
be

generated either way and so i've never
really said that uh for sure it was one
way or the other but

it does seem possible that uh like
bikunis were

allowed like at the first council after
the buddha had already passed away
um and then they just uh slapped
together

rules that were based on the monks rules
in most cases
and yeah
so see if it came after then did the
idea of the four-fold community
come out of this development so the
four-fold community would be
um monks nuns and then male lay people
and
female lay people i assume
uh yeah presumably that would be the
case if that were
if that's the way it happened i mean so
much of buddhism
of even orthodox theravada is a later
development
um anyone familiar with the history of

christianity knows that uh it just
mutated explosively during its first
hundred

years or so and something similar
happened with buddhism

so um yeah i mean that's just an open
question and uh

somebody could possibly investigate
and uh analyze the texts more thoroughly
than i have

uh with regard to answering that
question whether

just the historical buddha historically
really allowed

the order of nuns in if so why are they
mentioned so little

in the texts

okay next question excuse me

is from bpat427 when can we expect the next

video with you and herroo and i thank beatpat427 for answering or for asking an easy question

these are really refreshing when i get like a really easy question

um when can we expect the next video with me and hero

and any time i mean it's um

yeah it's gonna happen you know

inshallah

uh brian and i are good friends and uh i think he's lost a little interest in interviewing me ever since i lost the

mystique of being a monk here i'm

wearing a black

wife beater um but

yeah i mean we're still good friends and

uh it's still

you know it's still on the table we're

gonna we're gonna do more shows in the

future but i can't say exactly when

next question from bpat427 have you ever

met anyone you consider to be a

sage well that's um

oh sage i mean there's there's no real

definition for sage

sage could just mean like a very wise

person

and um yeah i mean i've met some wise

old monks

probably my best guess as to like

a really advanced spiritually advanced

being that i have met

is uh i met shuyum in seattle once

and he was the teacher of the famous

uttai janiya who's

uh all the rage at uh i guess

and uh in near rangoon so

um he was a senior disciple of mahasi

sierra mahasi seattle

allegedly wanted him to be his successor

but shui lumen seattle just went his own

way and started his own

tradition or his own monastery and i met

him once it was in monstate

and he was probably about

i mean he had been at least in his 80s
then but i mean he was just
just really just bright i mean you could
just
you just get the vibe off of him he'd
just be looking right at you like he's
looking right through you
you know and just completely alert and
just sitting straight up and down
and he was with another monk who's about
the same age as him but the other monk
was almost
blind almost deaf he had to yell into
his ear and maybe he'd hear you and
maybe he didn't
but uh um i knew one of his disciples

and his disciple was confident that
shuiyu minsano could just read minds i
mean he would just look right through
you

so he was possibly the most spiritually
advanced monk that i'm aware of having
met

i've met quite a few that had a
reputation for being enlightened
but that doesn't necessarily mean very
much because even i have had a
reputation for being enlightened in
certain parts of

burma all you have to do is just be a
relatively serious monk and you can get
that reputation pretty easily
so yeah i he would be my best bet

shuegome in seattle

so next question also do you think

you've ever met a true sotapanna

and this is like a trick question

because

um i mean my interpretation of the four

stages of sainthood

um are very different from

from the orthodox so i'm a heretic with

regard to this

but personally i think the original

meaning of a soda panel or a stream

enterer

is um it would be like um

the the buddhist equivalent of a

born-again christian or just

even just uh like a new convert somebody
who's just become buddhism just started
living like a spiritual life you know
they're inspired and
you know they've they've set their life
on a path of dharma
that that would probably be the original
meaning of a soda panel they have
entered the stream of dharma but it's
not like they're guaranteed
never never to go to hell or they're
guaranteed of becoming enlightened with
an x number of lives or anything like
that
doesn't mean that they've necessarily
had a glimpse of nirvana unless
you know lots of people have done that

so

yeah with regard to a true sodopana um
as far as i'm concerned a true sonapana
would just be like a true sincere
buddhist

um but yeah yeah and with regard to like
the

traditional interpretation i think
that's largely mythology and so i really
um take what the grain of salt and he
claims regardless who makes them they
could be like

you know just the most famous monks but
if they're claiming you know that they
became a sort of panda

on this date and you know and it's like

yeah okay

maybe but um personally i think that the original meaning of the soda panel was just somebody who had uh

converted to buddhism and was like a sincere practitioner

because like for example just uh give you an example of why i think this

um there's an obscure rule a

that uh forbids relying too much

on a family of of sodapanas essentially

and um yeah it just kind of strikes me

as odd they'd have a rule like that

unless you don't want to rely too much

on a family of soda pons just because

they're like new converts and they just

tend to be just too generous in donating

stuff to monks and then that can
be a hardship for them so just out of
compassion for these new converts
um they made that rule that's that's my
interpretation i'm a heretic though so
uh

you can interpret it as you please and
finally

the last question the very last
question of this particular episode 13
is from chaplin and chaplin says

can you compare the buddhist concept of
karma with christian sin
and how does forgiveness come into play
with both

do bad deeds simply compound with bad

karma in buddhism to be worked out in a future life

while christians believe in a system of confession or perpetual forgiveness and washing away of sin in this very life

okay yeah that's that is a good question

because it's like a fundamental

difference between buddhism and

certain other religions including

christianity that

um christian sin would correspond to

what in buddhism would be akusala kama

or akusula karma which is unwholesome

karma because good karma wouldn't be sin

but bad karma

would be the buddhist equivalent i

suppose

and uh how does forgiveness come into
play with both

well in christianity

then uh if you accept jesus as your
savior he

somehow washes away your sins or if
you're a catholic and you make
confession then

the priest tells you to do the hail
mary's or the

the what's the other one the the lord's
prayer

or something and that's supposed to
eliminate

your sin and in buddhism karma does not
eliminate except by just running its

course

so that is a major difference between
christianity and buddhism

is that in buddhism you can be forgiven
of your sins but that doesn't make your
karma go away

that whoever is forgiving you is doing
good karma of their own like new good
karma so let's say somebody wrongs you
from the buddhist point of view you
should forgive that person for wronging
you

that that is the best the best approach
to take

or at least you shouldn't get upset
about it you should retain some
equanimity

and um but that's pretty much the same
as forgiveness

you know it's kanti or forbearance so

um yeah so forgiveness is a thing in
both religions but

in buddhism the forgiveness is like good
karma it's like a virtuous

attitude to take towards others so if
other people are bad they're making bad
karma for themselves but at least

you can forgive them for that which uh

you know at least you're not harboring

hatred and resentment and that sort of
thing which is good for you

so it's it's really a good practice for
the person to forgive others but no

amount of forgiveness

is gonna i mean the buddha himself could

forgive you but that's not gonna make

your karma go away

you know so let's say you punch somebody

in the nose

they forgive you but i mean you still

got the bad karma for

punching punching that person in the

nose they just refrain from making more

bad karma through the resentment and

that like the

desire for revenge and the hatred and

all that

so yeah there's the karma has to work

itself out or

according to abidama um sometimes just

there's no opportunity you know
it's your karma to get hit by a train
and for some reason
um you just haven't don't go near train
tracks or something and it just
doesn't happen so eventually it just
kind of fades out
that can happen too in some cases but
um yeah so forgive i mean
the buddha is not a savior he doesn't uh
absolve us of our sins
um we just we have to to work it out on
our own or at least get as close to
working out on our own that uh
that there's just like the the insight
arises on its own

which is uh like a paradoxical state
enlightenment itself is like a
paradoxical state

so there there could be some um
validity to the idea of divine grace
because we can't

make ourselves being enlightenment
because making is karma and
enlightenment

is not the result of karma not the
direct result anyway

nirvana has no cause and no effect
because it's off the scales i keep
saying so yeah yeah that's the
difference is uh

christian sin god forgives you and it's
all wiped away

but uh in buddhism even if the buddha
himself even if thousands of buddhas all
forgive you i mean
you still got the karma because uh
you've made it and it's it's there
in your own personality or in your own
character or something and it's uh
it's got to run its course in accordance
with uh this
universal law
and so i think i answered that question
and so i think i answered all of the
questions
at least i hope i did some people might
still be scratching their head but
i did my best and uh if you have any

more questions

and i would not be surprised if you do
because people have been asking lots of
them

then you are very welcome to ask and i
will do my best to answer them

and as you may have noticed i do best
within the realm of like terra vada
buddhism and

early buddhism and meditation ethics

burma that kind of thing and

tibetan buddhism i don't really know all
that much about every once in a while
somebody will ask me

a question about something that i've
never even heard of before but um
i'll be honest and admit that i just

don't i don't know

but um for the most part with regard to
terrible buddhism

and what early buddhism was like i've
got a pretty good idea

or at least like a coherent one

and so you're welcome to ask if you have
questions to ask you can put them in the
comments below this video

or if you are subscribed on my subscribe
star channel then i'll put out

an announcement and you can put your
questions there

or if you are on the discord server
associated with the subscribe star

channel there is a question and answer

room

on the server where you can uh leave

your questions also

and uh hit me with your best shot and uh

people keep asking really good questions

so uh ask away and everyone be happy

hello and welcome to episode 14 of
question and answer i am your host panyo
basa alias david reynolds
and uh i am just amazed that we're
already up to 14 already people just
keep asking them questions and so i keep
answering them and 14 is a big number i
mean it's more than i can count on my
fingers
and before i start answering questions i
suppose i should give you a little
update on my situation i am
slightly excited to announce that
tomorrow
will be my first day at work i will be
working for money for gainful employment

from the first time in
30 years more than 30 years
because of the curse of adam
which says that we must earn our bread
by the sweat of our brow and i do like
bread i do like sandwiches and so
i'm gonna sweat and uh
and earn some of that
and consequently um
i will be a little busier than usual
especially on weekdays from like nine to
five
and i'll be less available
to you and your inquiries and so forth
those of you who make inquiries and try
to contact me
i'll be more available in the evenings

and the weekends when i will still be
doing my dharma stuff

and occasionally uh entertaining my
girlfriend as well

and so um as a result of that i think
i'll probably be going easy on myself
and

start posting blog stuff maybe once a
week like on weekends instead of every
five days like i've been doing for the
past few years although that does have a
precedent

in that my first blog was once a week so
it's not like i'm a total slacker
and so i'm going to be working for a
living

helping to pay the rent and so forth
getting the bread for the sandwiches
until the day comes the god's willing
when i will be able to be a full-time
dharma teacher
and any of you who would like to
participate in helping me to attain that
goal you're very welcome for example to
sign up on my subscribe start page or
to uh purchase one of the books that
i've written thus far which should be
down below in the comments under this uh
under this rectangle with me in it
so um yeah i think i'll just start
answering questions now and the first
one is from average dud
or uh maybe it's supposed to be average

dude but there's no silent e so average
dad says

i read some suto where buddha says that
for there to be conditioned reality
there needs to be an unconditioned one
is he referring to nirvana there
and

it is my understanding that he is
referring to a text

which is usually referred to as udana⁸³

it's one of the most well-known

sutas or discourses in a text called the
udana

and i just happen to have it translated

here and it's short so i'll read the
whole thing

it's it's a famous one

so some of you may have heard it already

thus if i heard at one time the blessed

one was residing in sawati at jita's

grove in anata pindika's park and at

that time the blessed one instructed

exhorted encouraged and inspired the

monks with a talk on dhamma relating to

nibbana

the monks intent attentive having

applied their whole mind heedful

listened to the dhamma

and then the blessed one having realized

this on that occasion breathed forth

this inspired utterance

there is monks an unborn unbecome unmade

and unconditioned for if there were not

be coups or monks and unborn unbecome
unmade and unconditioned then there
would not be known

a way out of this that is born become
made and conditioned but since there is
an unborn unbecome unmade and
unconditioned there is to be known a way
out of this that is born become
made and conditioned

so this is a famous text partly because
it is used by people who want to
assert or prove

that nirvana is really a state
that it really is a kind of underlying
substrate or reality

that nibbana or nirvana isn't just

non-existence it isn't just extinction
although

there are some like

i'm pretty sure one of the most famous
western monks

um

in history western theravada buddhist
monks nyana vera who was uh

very intellectual

had no use for mysticism and still has
quite a few followers today even though
he died in 1965

his followers also being relatively
intellectual

um

yeah that didn't phase him and he still
insisted that nirvana was simply

extinction just

a kind of ceasing to seem to exist

but um

it can be said that the sutta is

asserting that there is like an

underlying reality

that uh is called

nirvana or that there is at least a

state that can be attained that is

called nirvana

but in my opinion

[Music]

um

nirvana is off the scale i mean you just

cannot assert anything about it and have

that assertion be valid it's just

completely off the scale but it's very
difficult to talk about something that
is completely off the scale

i mean how do you talk about something
that really is just an unthinkable void
to the intellectual mind

i mean the intellect cannot grasp it it
cannot be grasped

so

it's just off the scale and uh just
saying that it does exist or it doesn't
exist or it does and doesn't exist or it
neither does nor doesn't exist it's all
just

invalid bungling and attempts to wrap
your head around something that you just
cannot grasp or wrap your head around

but um

in answer to average dud's question here

yes it is it is pretty obviously

referring to nibana or nirvana

and um

you may think that it's a proof that

nirvana is some sort of verifiable state

but as i say um

people can use

all sorts of

um intellectual

i don't know methods techniques tricks

quirks to prove pretty much anything and

so you've got people just still saying

well and yet

even though he says that still nirvana

is just a

non-existence or whatever or some people

make similar arguments about like an

eternal soul where you know the buddha

pretty obviously denies that that there

is one you know

all states conditioned or unconditioned

are not self

but

people people can just take scriptures

and um or poly texts and

use them how they please but yeah this

this is referring to nirvana so i'll

just move on to the next one

uh also by average dad

hey sir how extended is your breathing

in and out and is it different in

meditation

i try to have eight breaths a minute

well um usually in buddhist meditation

you are advised to breathe

naturally that you're not trying to

regulate your breath although if you get

into deeper meditative states your

breath tends to slow down and there are

some meditative techniques like the

sunlin method

and

also the tanjidone method in burma

where you speed up your breath and the

rationale for that is that if you speed

up your breathing just a little

then you're making a conscious effort to

breathe which keeps your attention on
the breath more easily this is referring
to meditation on the breath

but as for myself um yeah i just breathe
naturally this seems like the natural
thing to do for obvious reasons

although when i do walking meditation

um

it usually comes out to eight steps per
breath

it just naturally comes out that way

so

um that would be about as close to what
average dud is talking about here

um

yeah you should just breathe naturally
unless you're doing some meditation

technique that specifically requires you
to regulate your breath but in terravata
orthodox terra vada that's that's
uncommon

so i'll move on to the next question

which is by mahat ayur

and he says

i think it's a he

venerable i was wondering if inside the

buddha's teachings there is anything

that correlates with the concept of npcs

or non-playable characters

is it possible for a living being to not

also be a sentient being

thank you for your teachings

well this is an interesting question i i

like this question

and um i have been told by a german monk

years ago who lived at pa

in burma

that there are npcs or what could be

called npcs that there are like

beings moving around and doing things

that really do not have like

um

like karmic consciousness involved

and um the examples that he gave were

the demons in hell and also

unfortunately the celestial nymphs in

the heaven realms

that um

like the demons in hell i used to wonder

about that it's like where do they fit

on the scheme of things of the 31 planes
of existence

um

i mean

you maybe you could say that they were
denizens of hell that just sort of uh
you know sort of like the trustees in a
prison or something or or maybe they're
are like asuras or kind of demonic
entities that have jobs in hell
torturing beings there but i was told
and i assume this is from the
commentaries i don't think uh it's in
any sutra
that
these beings are just generated by the

karma of the beings there that they're a
kind of

um

manifested illusion you know they're
just there um as a result of the karma
of the beings that um you know it's like
they're karma to be punished in hell or
tortured or tormented or whatever and so
these beings just manifest and um
there's no real mind there

um i've been told the celestial nymphs
in heaven are that way although i've
also been told by a nice burmese lady
that uh the celestial nymphs in the
heaven realms

are mostly virtuous burmese women who
are rewarded for their lifetime of

virtue by going up into heaven and
participating in celestial orgies
so yeah this is just commentarial though
but it is interesting
and um to some degree i would even say
something like an insect
um maybe that could be
what do you see what he calls here uh a
living being that is not also a sentient
being
um
insects just based on my knowledge of
biology they don't really feel pain i
doubt that they have any
um
i mean they don't really have an ego i

mean i don't know if they have any kind of subjective experience they're like little robots you know a fly will fly away from your hand if you're trying to swat it in non-buddhist fashion but it's it's pretty much like the automatic doors at the grocery store they just you know it's just stimulus response they're just doing what is naturally what they're programmed to do but um that's that's getting into heresy that's that's not orthodox buddhism um i'm i'm not saying that they're not conscious i'm just saying that i'm i'm skeptical as to whether they have perceptions and volitions that it's uh it might just be a kind of

uh primordial rudimentary kind of

consciousness there

um sort of like a plant

but uh yeah as getting back to mahat

ayur's question uh yeah there are what

are essentially npcs but i haven't heard

of them being

um at the human level it's it's possible

i mean anything's possible i suppose and

uh it seems like there's lots of them

walking around on the sidewalks

but um

with just getting to orthodox terrible

buddhism according to the commentarial

tradition anyway um yeah it's like the

demons in hell especially um

are supposed to be this way

so i'll just move on to the next

question and this one is from hey it's

tigg

and hey it's tigg says pano basa can you

talk about your crack house experience

so i think it was the last

q a video or it was a recent video

anyway where um i was just talking about

how there are essentially hell realms

just in this world i mean you don't have

to die and go to hell to find yourself

in hell you can go to hellish realms

um you know maybe not quite as extreme

as the the boiling pitch and the

you know the the demons with axes and

stuff but um still i mean there are

hellish and relatively heavenly realms
just at the human level um
and my crack house experience i
mentioned that i've been in experiences
like that before i was a monk
and i wasn't a crackhead or anything i
just happened to be in the wrong place
at the wrong time a few times
and um
the crack the crack house experience
isn't a very good one so i'll just i'll
just give you a brief description of
that and uh then tell you uh maybe a
better
example of like a hell realm
uh a human hell realm that i experience

and then we'll just move on but um yeah
i mean i didn't even go inside the crack
house i was just outside of it and i was
in seattle

and um for reasons that i don't remember
i was walking down first avenue which is
uh not only where pike place market is
but it's also like the really seedy part
of town where like the sex places and
the prostitutes and the drug dealers and
stuff are and there was this black guy
named walter or at least that's what he
said his name was who uh tried to sell
me some thai stick he called it
and uh

it was i mean it was it was worthless
stuff it was pretty obviously he was

just um you know doing whatever he could
selling some kind of worthless crap just
to make money to buy drugs and he was uh
pretty strung out already

and um for some reason i mean i'm really
a trusting person as

just as a general rule

and um

so i mean i actually gave him a ride

somewhere he wanted a ride and it was it

was to this crack house i didn't know

where he wanted to go but that's where

it wound up being

and um

he stole something out of my truck um

you can get into that but uh yeah he

actually

ripped something off out of my truck and

then went inside

um to to get some drugs i suppose and

i'm just kind of dumbly just sitting

outside waiting for him until finally i

think it was like the girlfriend of the

the drug dealer who lived there came out

and uh

very nicely just advised me that the guy

was uh i mean he's just high and he's

not coming back out for a long time so i

might as well just be on my way

you know she was um

i mean she didn't have to come out and

explain things to me but um

yeah

but um i mean that that wasn't a very
good experience i mean it's not a very
good example because i didn't even go
inside i mean i have seen people
shooting out before which it really bugs
me i don't like shots i had to leave the
room when i saw that happen

but um one time

um

i mean this one kind of sticks with me i
had just started working
as a fisheries biologist
uh stationed mainly in astoria oregon
and there was a hotel there and my my
colleague my partner
uh wanted to find a cheap place to stay

in astoria

and so we both went there to this

to this hotel called i think it was

called the waldorf astoria which is

supposed to be like a famous hotel but

this place was just an absolute dive

and we walk in and um i think it was

like the wife of the manager

was frying food and i mean the whole the

whole place just

reeked of just fried food like years

worth of fried food

and she had no bridge to her nose which

i think was probably

at least i've read that that couldn't be

like

indicative of a relatively advanced

stage of syphilis

and um the guys showed us this room

and i mean it was just a scary room just

the vibe i mean there's

who knows what kind of atrocities had

gone on in that room it was mainly just

like this dirty

mattress in a dirty room with dirty

walls and

and

i mean it was

just the vibe of it was was just really

creepy to me

and um

he um my partner was informed that uh

you know it was like a hundred dollars a

month but if he paid cash it was it was
like 60 or something and um
yeah i just strongly advised him that uh
yeah it would not be a good idea to live
in a place like that
um you know it's just kind of a flop
house for drug addicts and so forth
and uh just the whole vibe was just a
really creepy vibe i would have
personally preferred living under a
bridge than than staying in a place like
that
although i guess people can get used to
anything so i'm sorry i don't really
have good examples of of crack houses
but
that's that was what i was thinking of

when i mentioned it in the in a previous
video

so we'll just move on to

the next question which is from sam

and sam asks

what are the different ways to process

emotion through meditations i assume he

means meditations that's it's such a

common typo people are always typing

mediation when they when they want to

say meditation

so yeah i'll just back up and read it

again and i'll we'll just assume there's

meditations in both places here

what are the different ways to process

emotion through meditations what are the

different ways to release tensions that
come up during meditations well the
technique is essentially the same
it's essentially you just note it and
let it go especially if you're doing
mindfulness meditation which is what
most people in the west do
um practicing somehow ta
is

more difficult for compulsively thinking
westerners living busy lives so a kind
of mindfulness meditation or sati batana
or so-called insight or vipassana
tends to work better for laypeople
in the west
and the technique of processing emotion
or releasing tensions that come up is

you just objectively note it
and then you just let it go and if it
doesn't go away i mean if it's something
that's really persisting
you know some sort of irritation or
tenseness or whatever you just keep
noting it and it's you're just observing
it

the way like an ichthyologist would
observe a dead fish on a table

um

and and that in itself is a good way of
processing emotions because you are
detaching from the emotion it's like
anything that you observe isn't you if
you are anything at all you are the one

doing the observing and not the thing
being observed so if you observe your
hand is you observing your hand the hand
isn't you

um if you're observing your car you know
the car isn't you it's just you

observing the car and it's the same way
with mental states if if like

like worry arises

if you are observing the worry then that
worry isn't you anymore it might become
like a part of your ego or something if
you're not mindful

and then you're you're kind of lost in
it you know you just it can just sweep
you away but if you're mindfully
observing it

then it's not you it's just you

observing this mental state that is

arising

and when you do that when you're just

mindfully observing objectively your own

mental states

um especially emotions because your

thoughts

it's my experience anyway that you can't

really observe a thought from start to

finish because maybe it's the same part

of the brain that notes and thinks

that just observing the thought will

just cause it to poof out of existence

but with regard to feelings you know

like emotions like sam here is asking

about then you can just sit there and
observe that

and it's not you you are detached from
that and you're taking away the karmic
power of it at least you're very much
reducing the karmic power of it like

let's say it's irritation let's say
something is arising you've got like a
yapping dog outside

and it's it's irritating you
so you observe

like the yapping as as just the sound
as well as you are able and the
irritation that arises you know if
you're not completely just

noting it as sound i mean if some of it
is getting through enough that it's

irritating you then you can note the
irritation and then the irritation isn't
you and then

even though it's a rising through force
of habit which is a manifestation of
karma um still you are weakening that
karma and so it's less likely to keep
happening because you have made a
disconnect

that you know it's not

you being irritated it's not i'm

irritated it's just irritation is

arising and that can be used for fear or
anger or or hate or jealousy or greed or
anything really

it's more difficult with the pleasant

emotions because you're naturally want
to kind of wallow in those the the the
unpleasant emotions unless you're really
into

being a hothead or something

um

they tend to be easier because you
as a general rule you just naturally
don't like the negative emotions like
worry or fear so it's easier to kind of
detach from those

or or irritation like i just mentioned
just observe it mindfully and if if
you're

somewhat of a beginner then you can just
label it you know like if it's worry you
just you can just note it as worrying

worrying worrying um just to keep your
mind from wandering or to keep from just
getting lost in it

and uh with regard to releasing the
tensions um it's pretty much the same
thing and you just observe the tension
how does the tension feel

you know just observe it objectively
experience it objectively don't identify
with it

just note it

and uh it'll run its course because
you're no longer reinforcing it you're
no longer feeding it you know it's like
a flame that you've stopped feeding and
eventually the fuel will run out and

then it will just die out

so now i think is a good enough answer i

hope that is a good enough answer to sam

and so i move on to shawarma dharma's

questions

good old shwarma dharma

and uh his first question is

some say buddhism leads to nihilism

specifically the belief that life is

illusory and therefore meaningless

others see it as essentially

existentialist as in the kirk

guardian idea that each individual gives

meaning to life and lives it

authentically what's your take

well

um there's

since he specifically asked for my take
i suppose i should just take the
heretical route and just give you my own
take rather than what orthodox dogma
says

um

but i suppose i should i should start
with orthodox dogma just out of uh
faithfulness to buddhism so um

abhi dhamma which is orthodox says that
mind and matter are ultimately real so
in a way orthodox tiravada is rather
materialistic

and

life consequently i mean the life force
or uh

i think it's jiwita or something like
that um

i mean it's it's like an ultimately real
dhamma according to uh tirabata buddhism
so um

yeah at least life itself or or the
phenomena of life even though individual
beings can't really be said to exist as
intrinsically real entities nevertheless
the

the dhammas or the the ultimate
realities which are

in terravata buddhism

manifest in tiny particulate form like
subatomic particles just flashing in
in and out of existence at a rate of
like a trillion times per second

those are real according to taravana
but the meanings that you apply to those
are ultimately illusory
so but with regard to my with regard to
my own take um
ultimate reality is is off the scale as
i've already said
so um yeah i see uh meaning as delusion
meaning and delusion are ultimately
synonymous as far as i'm concerned
um meaning
is just like a significance that you
attribute to something else you know
it's sort of like a label or like an
interpretation that you slap onto
something

and that is not the reality that's just
like the interpretation of the reality
so meaning is just an interpretation of
reality and not the reality itself

so yeah i would have to say that life
is

deeply illusory and meaningless

sorry sorry to disappoint you guys but
uh

yeah but then again the ultimate reality
is just infinitely beyond our experience
and i don't mean just infinitely

you know beyond our reach i mean it's
it's like infinitely

more

um

just like all-encompassing i mean it's

just like

infinity

so

it's it's better than meaning i mean

reality is better than some petty little

meaning that you slap onto something i'm

not i'm not saying that it's

um

you know just nothing

but i think we're going to get back to

that whole idea of of nothingness a

little a little later on

um

so let's see i'm not sure if i'm not

even answering this question others see

it as essentially existentialist as in

the kierkegaardian idea that each individual gives meaning to life and living it authentically

what's your take yeah i'm not sure exactly what living authentically according to kierkegaard would be

um he wasn't existentialist so i assume that means you know you're just applying your own meanings to things

um which would be like a samsaric relative conventional kind of authenticity

but sorry to disappoint you shwarma dharma but

really

um reality ultimate reality is just off the scale you can't talk about it

because once you talk about it you're
just talking about
meanings that are just these petty
little interpretations slapped onto the
reality or attempting to slap onto the
reality and failing
so if you want to really know the
reality you've got to
practice or maybe you'll just be blessed
by uh some profound experience as a
result of almost dying or something
um

sometimes i i've said in the past that
the closest the average person comes to
enlightenment is when he's in the middle
of a sneeze because you're wide awake

and you're not thinking anything

so next time you sneeze uh

just observe yourself carefully observe

your mind and maybe uh you'll get some

insight into uh

nihilism or its uh alternatives

so i'll go on to the next question from

shawarma dharma

and he says when thinking about

expanding theravada in the west how do

you see it integrating into the lives of

the rank and file american or to put it

another way

why would your local firefighter or

policeman or bus driver take up a lay

buddhist life

one more angle on the same question it

seems unlikely that middle class

american women are going to start baking

cookies and bringing them to the local

sangha to feed the monks every morning

as a cultural norm

what is the enticement for disaffected

christians not of the soy latte drinking

variety to choose an american terra vata

path

well that's a good question

i don't think we should all be holding

our breath for this to happen but it is

a good question

and

i think um

one good way to answer the question or

to start answering it would be to give
an example of a person i know
who may as well remain nameless
but um he started off working
as like uh what is it an emt like like
in an ambulance crew
and he was seeing just horrible things
you know people that
you know had had like got wrecked their
cars and flown through the windshields
and landed 50 feet away and they're just
like this breathing bloody mass that
it's just you're just amazed that
they're even still breathing
and
he saw so much horrible stuff that he
was just really getting stressed out and

freaked out

and um it it inspired him to start

meditating maybe somebody advised him

you know maybe you ought to try some

meditation to help cope with this like i

was saying earlier i mean you can

observe mental states arising and by

noting them by being mindful of them

they don't take you over it gives you

some resistance and also some

independence and it strengthens your

spirit against just being swept off your

feet by uh these uh

intense and sometimes very unpleasant

feelings

so um something like that i mean uh with

especially regard to the firefighter and
the policeman

um it's it's a way of strength and
you're strengthening your mind it's sort
of like ancient stoicism where it's
teaching you to uh

uh have some

um like armor or i mean it's not even
really armor it's just making you
invulnerable

or relatively more

invulnerable to really stressful
traumatic experiences

so and

um

that in itself is a good reason for
practicing theravada buddhist

mindfulness at least even if you're not
adopting the entire system which most
westerners don't do

at least the meditation techniques and
the mindfulness techniques

they are conducive to

a certain amount of stoic equanimity

like philosophical detachment um

less

less desire less worry less stress less

fear less anger less irritation and more

equanimity and contentment fewness of

desires which results in in less

suffering less unhappiness and that in

itself is a pretty damn good reason to

practice something if it makes you

happier in the long run which buddhism
really does if you practice it
more or less sincerely and incorrectly
um

yeah i mean it it has benefits that you
can see in in this very life you don't
have to wait until after you're dead to
see if you're saved or not
which is getting to a little later part
of the question the disaffected
christians part

um

yeah buddhism really fits the western
mind

better than christianity does at least
for

more or less objective

um philosophically minded people like
like intelligent objective reasonable
people

um you have less of a narrative that you
have to believe in like with
christianity you have to believe what
you can't really know you can't prove it
one way or the other that
jesus died for our sins he's the only
begotten son of god
and so forth

um i mean you pretty much have to
believe that to be a christian i don't
know if you can really
be a good christian and maybe there are
some sects that can manage it where

um you just consider jesus to have been
just a wise teacher like like the buddha
was or so many others and not
the son of god who
is like an atonement for our sins that
kind of a thing

um but with buddhism

the important stuff you can verify it
something like reincarnation maybe you
can't verify it but that's not really
necessary because like the meditation
techniques i've already told you of like
detaching from your your your feelings
and so forth you know just by through
mindful observation

um

yeah it strengthens your mind it gives

you self-discipline gives you less

unhappiness in life

um even just uh keeping five precepts or

just living like a moral life um that

obviously can can make you happier too

although even christianity has has some

of that obviously

so

yeah the main enticements

few westerners

it really is just verifiably conducive

to greater peace of mind greater

self-control less suffering less

you know less worry and stress and so

forth

and uh it's reasonable it makes sense

you know it requires no unquestioning
faith and a narrative that you can't
really prove one way or the other
so

yeah that would be my answer to that so
i'll just

move on to the next and like i say i
mean it would be good if

more people took buddhism seriously
especially terra vada buddhism or just
like some philosophical form of buddhism
you know it would be beneficial to the
society although

again

i'm not really holding my breath it
would be nice though

so the next question is from potila

and potila says

in the last q a you mentioned that being
is an extreme and non-being is an
extreme do you mean these as states of
reality or are you talking about them
solely as concepts

do you mean non-being is the same as
nothingness

if so how can something which never
existed or had the comma to come into
existence be an
extreme um

in a way this is kind of a trick
question i'll get to the middle part
here um the middle it's actually like
three questions here um the middle one

is do you

mean non-being is the same as

nothingness yeah yeah i would say that

non-being would be nothingness

um

so let's get to the first part here do

you mean these as states of reality or

are you talking about them solely as

concepts and i just

do not differentiate between the two as

i've already said reality

is just off the scale

reality is

i mean from an intellectual point of

view is an unthinkable void

you know it's formless

so um

states

of reality or states

really are

just concepts you know it's a mental

state any kind of state is ultimately a

mental state because you get rid of the

mental states and all you've got left is

just this unthinkable void you don't

have states without a perceiving mind to

perceive them as states

so um

yeah a lot of a lot of people that um

they don't

have much

affinity with mysticism maybe they don't

have a lot of experience with mysticism

or they just are really

keen on intellectual

academic kind of understanding

understanding of things

um

yeah it's it's it's harder to uh to

grasp this or it's it's harder to just

cope with the idea that just reality

cannot be grasped the present moment

cannot be grasped you can't hold on to

it it's just

in flux

and furthermore

once once you've grasped something

you've just turned it into a concept

which isn't reality it's just an attempt

to stick some kind of interpretation

onto reality

um so then the last ques the last part
of this question um i don't fully
understand see if so how can something
which never existed or had the comma to
come into existence be an extreme

um

if you're going with dualism i mean
you've got it's sort of like
aristotelian thought everything has to
be a or not a consequently everything
has to exist or not exist and those from
the buddhist point of view are extremes
yes is an extreme nose and extreme you
know just the binary
off and on or

or or whatever those are like the two
extremes and buddhism teaches the way by
the middle which is dependent cold
rising and

thank you

everybody for not asking about that one
on this episode

because uh even the buddha really could
not explain it very well because you
have to be comfortable with unthinkable
void to some degree

just trying to lock everything down into
some systematic explanation

i mean it may be very elegant and very
self-consistent very logical and all
that but it's not reality i mean it's
it's uh like conventional reality but

it's not ultimate reality because
ultimate reality is just completely off
the scale it's completely beyond the
symbolic thoughts the country conjured
up by your

mind um

so let's see

i'm just checking to make sure i
answered the question before moving on
to the next one also by potila uh you
mentioned that being is an extreme and
non-being is an extreme yeah

do you mean these estates agree okay

okay so i think i answered that one

so yes

um

maybe i should uh

uh mention hegel i mean i've

i've

i've got almost no use for hegel but

there's one teaching one thing that

hegel said that really stuck with me and

i have incorporated that into my own

understanding my own intellectual

understanding of of conventional reality

and that's he starts his logic with the

very first um

what is it uh the dialectic the first uh

you know thesis

um

antithesis and then synthesis you know

it's like the hegelian dialectic starts

with the thesis you know you start with

this idea and then you have the
antithesis that kind of negates that
idea and then you have to have a
synthesis which then
kind of reconciles them and then that
synthesis becomes the next thesis which
then has its own antithesis and on and
on and on until you wind up with uh
um

like

german like late 18th century or early
19th century german
culture being like the uh
like the the culmination of the whole
thing

but we didn't get into that but his his

first thesis was just pure being
which oh here is is just like uh you
know it's like an extreme and then his
antithesis is pure non-being which
according to him and this is the one
thing that i really like this is the one
thing hegel said that i can really
accept is that pure being and pure
non-being both of them are so devoid of
any determinate content that they just
merge together they're indistinguishable
and in hegel's logic he just took it for
granted after after going through the
first part of the dialectic that pure
being and pure non-being even though
they are presumably opposites they are
just indistinguishable and the same they

are identical

so there's that also as a kind of kicker

um we might get back to that because it

really is it's uh

to me it's

if somebody can prove to me that that is

wrong

um yeah that would be interesting

so i'll just move on to the next

question also by potila

if there are so many monks breaking the

vineyard which is the rules of monastic

display

for example

handling money

not wearing robes correctly etc

then what is the point of ordaining
you mentioned a few experiences of older
novices who pretty much kept living as a
layperson do they think of ordination
and wearing robes to be magical rituals
to get good karma or that if they break
a few

then they can keep a few too to get
merit it seems like it's an attachment
to rights and rituals at its worst well
i'll answer the last part first

especially with regard to burma which is
where i mostly lived as a monk

it's been more than 20 years there and
yeah the burmese tend to be spiritual
materialists they consider a monk to be
a superhuman being the word for human

being is not used for monks

um like a human being is lu and a monk

is a punji which i mean just

it's not the same you don't you do not

refer to a monk as a human being and so

they have this idea that um

you just

spontaneously automatically are making

great merit just from wearing robes just

from going through the ordination

ceremony you've become like a superhuman

being just i mean you don't even have to

do anything you can just sit there

so

yeah there is there is that but i'll get

back to the first part of the question

here um if there's so many monks

breaking the rules then what is the

point of ordaining

well

there's different ways of answering that

first there's just the cultural answer

that um it has just become the tradition

in pretty much all buddhist countries

that some rules you follow and some

rules you don't and they make up new

rules even that you have to follow

um just in accordance with the tradition

of the country

and um so

there are a lot of monks in burma who

um

culturally are strictly practicing even

though they're breaking all kinds of
obscure veneer rules like for example
they may not touch money but they're
telling the monastery attendant what to
do with the money which is exactly the
same

violation of the rules i mean amongst
not even allowed to tell anybody what to
do with money

so what is the point of ordaining

uh

well

it's better to do something imperfectly
than not to do it at all in in many
cases i assume that would be a good way
of putting it

um i mean

anybody who could be a perfect monk

i mean you're pretty much already a

saint and you don't really need to

ordain in the first place

so

um

yeah there's breaking the rules is is

part of the rules it's like making the

confession like if you break a rule then

there's other rules

telling you how to how to act after

you've broken a rule you know there's

certain rituals and confessions and and

that sort of thing which are also part

of the rules so it's just built into the

system

that uh

rules are going to be broken and some
rules i mean you just can't help but
break them it's it's very difficult not
just not to break rules sometimes you
can break rules accidentally

um

like it's against the rules to drink
alcohol for a monk even if you drink it
accidentally maybe you just uh take a
drink of something that has started to
ferment and boom you just drank some
wine so you have to confess that or i
there were a few times when people would
give me some kind of herbal medicine and
they assured me oh it's not alcoholic

and then you take a spoonful of the
stuff and it's like 100 proof
um then you just broke the rule
so then you you have to confess that and
uh so breaking the rules uh is just
built in it's like if you break the
rules then it's it's not like a vow you
know it's not like your ex communicate
or anything except for the like the most
important rules uh you can get
excommunicated for that
but uh for the most part you you break a
rule and then
um you just make confession and that
just sort of magically erases it at
least as an ecclesiastical offense you
still have the karma

but um

yeah a lot of burmese monks getting back
to the spiritual materialism they just
break rules wantonly and then they just
think that you just make the confession
that like the the sacred magical blah
blah blah

and uh it just makes it poof out of
existence but

shamelessly breaking the rules i mean it
is making karma

so um you don't you don't make the karma
disappear even if you have uh

um

you've done uh

what is it

i can't remember what it's called i'm
having a mental block but i mean you
you've essentially uh resolved the
violation of the rule you've you press
reset by making confession
so let's see have i answered all of this
here
uh
yeah i think i've answered all that so i
mean
basically the answer that if you know if
so many monks are breaking the rules
then what is the point of ordaining
is you know you do the best you can
and uh even if you do something
imperfectly you know you go bowling you
have to bowl 300 i mean you say well i

mean i didn't get a strike every time

what's the point of doing it

um

yeah so you do the best you can and uh

um you know it's just kind of built into

the system the assumption is there that

you're not just you're not going to be

perfect at it anyway although it is true

and this is something that was really an

influence for me in in

like dropping out of the the biku sangha

is um

i mean if you're just

not really willing to follow the rules

if you're not even going to try or like

if you're just living in a culture like

in america where it's damn near
impossible to follow the rules correctly
then
according to my own
view my own personality um yeah i mean
if i'm not even going to be following
the rules like if it's just too damn
difficult not to handle money that was
something i decided many many years ago
if it's like if handling money just
becomes necessary then i'd better just
drop out rather than be uh like
essentially a shameless monk that can't
even confess the offense because like
something like handling money you can't
even confess it without getting rid of
the money first and most monks that

handle money they're not going to get
rid of all their money just so they can
confess the sin or the uh the offense
so

yeah i just got to the point personally
where uh

um i just wasn't in a position
and uh wasn't really inspired to follow
the rules strictly anymore and so i just
felt

um that it would have more integrity
just

um to be a relatively good lay person
than like a sloppy monk

but there are monks that um
like a monk living in say alaska

or northern canada where it gets so cold
i mean you've got to break the rules by
wearing the parka and all that and
all the socks and shoes and things that
strictly speaking are against the rules
it may be in the winter time that it's
never

i mean if you're far enough north then
uh
um

i mean it just may be dark all the time
which would mean that you're not allowed
to eat because you're only allowed to
eat between sunrise and noon
so you have to break that one in cases
like that you know maybe but um
it's it's just it's an individual call

each individual has to make his own
decisions about what is appropriate for
him

or her

and so uh

i think i'll just move on to the next
one

but i mean the point of that is you just
do the best you can it's better to do
something imperfectly than not to do it
at all so long as you consider it to be
worthwhile and beneficial as long as
you're getting benefit from it so long
as you're making progress or whatever
so the next question or group of
questions is from somebody

whose name is all in japanese letters

but

i availed myself of google translate and

it turns out the person's name is

yuichiro

or yoo-chan

and yuichiro i think i think that's what

the name is according to google

translate

asks

when doing deadlifts and such i usually

slap myself and get hyped up for the

lift it could be considered anger is

this a bad state of mind if it's not

directed at anyone or harming anyone

except the bar

additionally extreme emotions like anger

trigger a physiological response which causes an adrenaline rush and makes you physically stronger a fact used by many athletes would it be possible for athletes warriors etc to enter this state of mind for increased performance then dissociate

with it so that your mind is calm while your body is raging and would this be a better mental state or as an athlete or warrior should you just suck it up and accept that doing your duties will come with bad karma

well

answering the last part first as i seem to be doing

quite a lot sort of like a witch saying
is prayers

um

i'll answer this last part uh as an
athlete or warrior should you just suck
it up and accept that doing your duties
will come with bad karma well of course
you're gonna have to do that i mean you
can do both but uh i mean you should
never

reject the idea of karma i mean what
you're going to do is making karma so
long as you've got volitions involved in
the action

as long as you've got any kind of motive
or motivation

then you're making karma

um

so yeah it could be both but we'll get
up to the top of the question here
with regard to
slapping yourself and getting hyped up
before lifting weights

um

yeah i

maybe there's some really subtle

um

bad karma quote unquote involved in that
but even believing that you exist is is
like subtle bad karma you know because
of no self and all that

um

so i mean anything you do is going to

have at least a little bit of bad karma
mixed in sorry to say um

so

yeah i've done similar things um like
mainly as a way of overcoming sleepiness
as a monk like i was doing intensive
practice and i'm starting to get sleepy
um you know there's there's various ways
you know get up walk around that kind of
a thing get yourself worked up a little
bit i won't give all the details because
people haven't really asked about it but
um

yeah there are ways of getting yourself
stirred up a bit which um you know you
can't have positive results
um so i have done that personally

um

getting yourself

hyped up on an adrenaline rush

uh makes you stronger

um

yeah um

this is kind of a subtle question

involving relatively subtle mental

states

but um some people like they go for

thrill sports like motorcycle racing or

rock climbing because it

uh requires them to be mindful it

requires a heightened state of awareness

which is good

like a heightened state of awareness

you're closer to to reality or
enlightenment

and um

if you're racing a motorcycle or rock
climbing or or whatever you know
whatever it is or like

uh you know like the samurai zen masters
who are sword fighting

all it takes is just one split second of
unmindfulness in your dead

so it's it's a way of enforcing

heightened states of awareness which are
actually pleasant i mean it's

um you know it's good it makes you feel
more alive more conscious more
more real

and um

it seems like uh some of the things that
uh yuichiro is talking about here could
i mean that could be applicable to that
also

um

i mean if you can

uh cultivate the expanded consciousness
without having to get the adrenaline
rush then so much the better but uh
better heightened consciousness with
adrenaline than uh stupor without
adrenaline

so

it could be uh

uh you know you're just

willingly taking some very subtle

unskillful karma in order to get a
greater benefit overall

but uh yeah this is something i haven't
really thought about much so
that's that's my answer

i think

yeah i don't think it's necessarily i
mean just to be hyped up just to be
having an adrenaline rush is not
necessarily unskillful or bad karma
um you know the adrenaline rushes is
largely a physical state

and um

whether you're having positive car
making positive karma or negative karma
depends on your volitions
and um yeah i don't think an adrenaline

rush is the same as anger i mean it can
be

positive or negative

it's just like a

kind of a greater state of excitation or

something which i mean you could get

lost in that and uh get all excited and

just be wallowing in samsara

wallowing in the matrix or whatever but

maybe you have to be a little more

careful under those circumstances

but i don't think it's necessarily a bad

thing so i'll just move on to you each

hero's next question here

um i mostly found out about buddhism

through jazz because a lot of my fellow

musicians said meditation and
mindfulness helped them play better i
agree

the point of improvised music is to be
in the moment and just act without
conscious thought i've experienced
moments in music where it feels like i
transcend my ego and become one with the
band all our minds resonate on the same
frequency so to speak and music just
comes out

what do you think is going on here from
a buddhist perspective our minds
actually connecting for example and
since this state of mind is more like a
trance than mindfulness is it a positive
mental state

well i've had similar
um experiences to this like um back in
the day when i was giving dumb talks to
live audiences sometimes you just get
into the groove it's like the audience
is resonating with what you're saying
and you just get into this flow of this
spontaneous flow where i don't know what
i'm going to be saying any more than
they do you know i can be just as
surprised by the words coming out of my
mouth as anybody else it's just this
flow where it's like the karma of the
audience is eliciting the words coming
out of my mouth
and um i mean you can you can have sort

of a group mind even like two people who
love each other like intimate moments or
even like a boy and his dog i've had
like really empathic experiences with
with a dog before

so this sort of thing happens
and

i really do think that it is a kind of
group mind is sort of a merging of
consciousness even though orthodox
theravada would say that is impossible
i'm pretty sure orthodox theravada would
deny

the the possibility of that but

i mean it seems to me that that's what's
going on it's you're you're reaching a
kind of deeper level of consciousness

where the minds are connected and
there's sort of a flow in between the
the different the different minds so
that there is to some degree a group
mind going on
and

this can be good or bad i mean like like
mass hysteria like a mob you know just
this raging mob that's going to lynch
somebody they're having a group mind too
it's it's a similar kind of thing except
that's negative so it's like a group
mind can be positive or negative it can
be wholesome or on wholesome just like
an individual mind

um

so yeah it's it's not necessarily good
or bad

you know like like the raging mob that's
gonna gonna lynch somebody i mean that's
that's a group mind also

um

but uh yeah i i haven't really thought
about it in the in the realm of music
but

um ram das used to talk about the same
thing where people would come up after
he gave a dharma talk and thank him and
he's he's saying you know i was just the
instrument you know it just came through
me

um you don't like after a violin recital
you don't go up and thank the violin

and um so in a case like that um my idea was that it was really just the karma of of the group that was eliciting my words

um in in the case of the dhamma talk with regard to the the music if you're all just jamming and there's not even an audience it would be you'd sort of be the audience as well as the musicians because you're you're listening as well as uh playing the music so it could be something like that also

but um i'm unaware of terrible buddhism really trying to explain something like that i think according to the orthodox ancient indian abhidhamma philosophy in

the commentarial tradition um they might just deny that that really happens that you might just be fooling yourself or something but um

i don't really adhere to the orthodox tradition very well

so i'll just move on to the next question

a question related to the ai question do you think if humans become sufficiently wired up and connect or upload their consciousness to the internet

could the entire world wide net become a gigantic brain with each human brain acting something like a neuron

what would the philosophical implication of this be

would it be one individual being could

it be conscious

could it become enlightened

okay

well we're dealing with a technological

singularity here um i mean if that

happened it would be the technological

singularity um in real life and one

reason i think maybe the only reason why

it's called the singularity is because

you can't really say what's going to

happen once that happens

like for example um

yeah it is possible that you could have

just all these different

computers or all these different human

personalities merging into this huge
super mind or this huge super computer
excuse me

and uh

i mean you're dealing with an order of
consciousness or intelligence
just orders of magnitude beyond what we
are able to comprehend

like they say with regard to the uh
technological singularity which is
really a scary thought i mean it's it's
probably a much bigger threat to the
human race than global warming for
example even though nobody talks about
it or very few people talk about it
um

you've got a computer that is uh

what's the recur what is it recursive
self-programming

whereas it's like improving upon itself
and it does so at an exponential rate
and uh a computer can because it doesn't
have

i mean it can just reprogram itself
um you know from the bottom up like a
human we've got all this programming
that we can't really

uh we can't really erase it we're just
kind of stuck with human nature and the
limitations of our mind and so forth but
a computer doesn't have the same
limitations and it can just
like program itself and improve upon

itself at an exponential rate so that
sooner or later i mean according to the
experts here it's going to get beyond
the human level and within just a short
time after that it's going to be as far
beyond us as we are beyond amoebas or
cockroaches or something i mean it's
just gonna be many orders of magnitude
more intelligent than us you know maybe
a billion times more
more intelligent than us
or you know it's like you've got a
billion human minds all combining
together they'd be like the same thing i
mean what you're going to wind up with
that group mind
would be just completely

incomprehensible it's just an act of
futility trying to understand what's
going to happen just like
you know how is an amoeba gonna
understand a human mind you know how's
even a frog gonna understand human mind
is just not going to happen so it's it's
just totally beyond and it's it's a
singularity because we have no idea we
can make guesses but the guesses are
almost certain to be wrong
um let's see if let's get back to this
question here uh
yeah i mean so what what what uh you
each hero here is asking it does seem
possible i mean you could upload

human minds

into a computer and then the minds are
able to interact through the internet or
something or maybe we could even just
have like some kind of chip with
internet access

or whatever and uh yeah you're gonna
wind up with something orders of
magnitude beyond what we are able to
comprehend and so it's uh time to move
on to the next question

also from you each hero

have you heard of the center for
contemplative research nope

if not basically they're trying to
advance the science of consciousness
through studying contemplatives not only

through putting them in machines and
stuff but also relying on their
self-reported experiences do you think
some mix of a scientific and
contemplative approach to the science of
consciousness could lead to a scientific
breakthrough could it bring science out
of scientific materialism

um yeah it's possible although my
experience

with

like psychologists using pet scanners or
that sort of thing on people who are
meditating

um they're essentially just degrading
the experience down to

neurophysiology

and um you know you just don't get much

beyond that although it sounds like

maybe these people at the center for

contemplative research

are

taking uh like a deeper more

comprehensive maybe more spiritual

approach in which case sure it's

possible although

to what degree spirit can integrate with

scientific empiricism is questionable

but i do think that it may be the next

copernican revolution which could really

revolutionize science and cure science

of scientific realism or scientific

materialism would be

the realization that

mind and consciousness or mind and

energy are the same

that

what a physicist calls energy is just a

very elemental

form of what a psychologist calls

consciousness and vice versa that what a

psychologist calls consciousness is just

a very elaborate complicated

manifestation of what a physicist calls

energy and that that second part is is

already done it's just that um

i think it could be like a copernican

revolution to realize that

mind consciousness and energy are

identical and that uh that even

supposedly inanimate matter um

is conscious in a very

primordial

simple sort of way i mean it's it's not

like a rock is thinking it doesn't have

a personality or anything but there's

just this primordial extremely primitive

consciousness going on

anyway that's that's my idea

so the next question from you each hero

or you chan

in physics the universe has zero net

energy the energy of matter is cancelled

out by negative energy in gravity

scientific materialists often use this

to say the universe could have arose

spontaneously from nothing which is not entirely convincing argument from a buddhist perspective could the universe have come from nothingness like positive and negative duality and karma emerging from some primordial consciousness or a substance like brahman or emptiness which has zero net energy and zero karma so i'm just going to uh bring back old hegel

and his idea that pure being and pure non-being are the same so nothingness would be uh also contain infinite energy you know sort of like uh i may be misunderstanding it but there

is like the casimir effect where they're saying that empty space can contain zero energy and infinite energy and uh the the answer you come up with depends on how you do the math but if the math is valid and works out either way

so um

let's see

yeah i mean i used to i used to say just half jokingly that's how god created the universe out of nothing he just had all the positives and negatives

balance out to zero you know all adds up to zero and um i like that idea too

so um yeah i think positive and negative like yin and yang

um you know it's more of a taoist idea

than a buddhist one in buddhism you've
got a

a doctrine or an idea called lokodama
which is

opposites remaining in balance

so yeah i think that's possible too in
some weird way that

almost certainly is beyond our
intellectual comprehension

but again i do like the idea that
absolute everything and absolutely
nothing are ultimately the same

okay

next question from you hero

in the buddhist view i think nothing has
any intrinsic nature not dependent on

everything else yeah that's
that's good however to operate within
the illusion of samsara you need to make
useful differentiations between stuff
because getting your foot slammed in a
gate still hurts so is there some idea
of authenticity or the true nature of
things within the illusion
a politically relevant example would be
if someone is born a male if being a
male is empty of intrinsic nature what
is stopping them from just slapping on a
dress and declaring themselves female
is there a useful idea of the true
nature of a male that one should adhere
to
yeah this is this is a good uh this is a

good question

um i've i've thought about this before

like

in buddhism theravada buddhism

especially

there are the two levels of truth you've

got conventional truth and ultimate

truth ultimate truth is the unthinkable

void you know it's like you can't wrap

your head around it but conventional

truth

um

essentially is just what what people

agree is true

just if enough people agree that

something is true that makes it true or

if enough people believe it that makes
it true

um

i think mahayana buddhism has taken it a
step farther you know the ultimate truth
is just as unthinkable so you set that
aside that's a void

that's sunyata but um

they divide up conventional truth

which they call like covering truth

um

into into two kinds i mean you've just
got whatever people believe and then
you've got like um

what is really valid within a psalm

sorry context so that would be sort of

like uh like emmanuel kant's philosophy

um where you know the thing in itself is
on unthinkable but at least you can um
come up with some sort of
um viable like valid principles within
the realm of the illusion
that there are like valid rules or laws
the illusion itself must obey
so that is possible although
um

i've been i've been thinking about this
a lot lately where i mean it could just
be that the the rules of the illusion
are still just conventional in the sense
that as humans we're all agreeing on
these laws of nature for example just
because we're all human and so

um we're more alike than different and
so we think more alike than differently
and so just because we're human we might
agree on certain laws of nature certain
primordial dharmic laws that might not
apply to some alien intelligence
that i mean just works on very different
principles like there could be beings
that are just going with such different
assumptions such different beliefs such
different laws of nature that we could
be in the same room and they wouldn't
see us and we wouldn't see them just
because we're just being two different
worlds

um

so i'm still thinking that um

conventional truth still isn't really
true

that it is conventional in that we all
agree on it but

it could be that there's like a
a deeper bedrock

of the illusion of plato's cave or the
the matrix or whatever where

um just because we're all human

with the exception of some like

completely psychotics that just cannot
function in in the world

um

you know we agree on certain principles

simply because you know our minds work

more or less the same more more alike

than differently

um

let's see i think with regard to uh

the politically relevant example someone

is born a male well going with theravada

you know orthodox theravada

then maleness and femaleness are

ultimate realities so you're just stuck

being one or the other maybe a

hermaphrodite and a little bit of both

but um

yeah i think

i think

we'd be i mean going with my idea

like like i just mentioned

you just get down to like the empirical

bedrock of

you know i mean you got x and y
chromosomes you've got uh the naughty
bits of a male instead of a female
that kind of a thing
um just going with biology
then um yeah even though it's just
conventional truth it still is like an
empirical sort of bedrock
at least for now until things change
until we have like a different paradigm
we're working with maybe
um
so
yeah i mean i still i still uh like
biology a lot
and um

so i mean you can like with regard to
the like the the transsexual

um

like the the trans woman

who uh

has a pp like a boy and uh has like x
and y chromosomes like a boy but still
is wearing the dress and flouncing
around and

insisting on being called ma'am

yeah i mean

at one level

like a superficial kind of a level you
can say sure just out of courtesy we can
say that they are female in accordance
with you know if enough people accept
something it's like the conventional

truth

but like at the deeper

um

like the empirical level then there are

certain standards that um they don't

change just because people want to

believe that they're different i mean

you've got a bunch of people that say

it's racist to believe that things fall

down instead of up i mean it doesn't

matter things are still going to fall

down instead of up people saying math is

racist now but still no matter how

racist or politically incorrect it is i

mean two and two continue to equal four

so long as you're dealing with like a

base base ten number system

um

so yeah i mean

there there is like an empirical bedrock

but um that could just be because we are

all human we all think similarly and so

we agree on certain rules that seem

unvarying

or necessary but

they're still not ultimately real

so i'll just move on to the next

question here

and this one is similar to a previous

one that you each hero also asked i

think when a creative

artists musicians writers etc enters a

flow state it's often said that they

aren't the ones creating but rather
channeling some creative force do you
think this is true what are they
channeling and where does it come from
well um like the ancient classical
pagans believed in muses and so they
thought that when an artist was really
inspired you had this goddess that was
being channeled through the artist

um

but personally i think it's more likely
a matter of channeling your own
subconscious you're just getting into a
deeper level

um and um

as we as i was mentioning earlier if

there's a group of people involved it
could be sort of a group consciousness
that's helping to condition it
um

but i think ultimately you're just
channeling a deeper like uh what is
usually a subconscious level of your
mind that uh

is manifesting
up into consciousness

so i'll move on to the next one

in western philosophy like schopenhauer
art music etc is seen as a glimpse of
the transcendent but in buddhism monks i
think aren't supposed to make music even
though a lot end up doing so anyway can
art be a source of wisdom or is it a

distraction

well

um with regard to music especially in
buddhism i mean buddhism is one of the
few religions

that considers music to be immoral or
unethical or just unskillful karma which
is one reason why buddhism buddhist
music is tends to suck it's you know the
hindus have way better music than the
buddhists do

and uh while i'm

on this digression i might as well say
that

shiva has better music than vishnu
according to my experience

got more got more drive to it you know
kind of a dark energy to it or something
but um

let's see get back to this question i've
i've distracted myself

um

yeah schopenhauer i mean he was too much
of a platonist for my tastes

but in buddhist monks i think aren't
supposed to make music yeah that is true
can art be a source of wisdom or is it
distraction well one one art form that
really is very much used in buddhism is
poetry

so um some of the some of the most
profound sutas are in the form of poetry
like the uh the tsutoni pata is mostly

in the form of poetry

um

so obviously you can you can have wise

teachings placed in like

uh verse forms

so

that obviously would be an example of

of wisdom through art

um even fiction i mean

yeah i mean fiction of when you're

dealing with words you can you can say

wise things

so yeah i mean

um

just going with fiction as an art form

just like dostoyevsky or like moby dick

i mean that's there's profound wisdom in
that but uh
yeah i think with regard to like um
uh like painting
uh monks maybe aren't supposed to do
that but nevertheless you go to um like
monasteries it's it's very common to
have like
edifying
uh scenes from the buddha's life
especially or the scenes from the
jatakas that kind of a thing on the
walls as
something
educational
or like like uh statuary is the same
obviously in buddhism you've got buddha

statues that's one of the main art forms
if

if it's good enough to be to warrant
being called art otherwise you just have
these artisans cranking out these ugly
buddha statues like often happens in
burma

architecture also is an art form which
can have like an uplifting inspiring
effect

so at least there's that i mean it and
it also can focus people's attention
like like a statue the buddha statue um
some people can really get attached to
that sort of thing in which case it can
become unskillful to some degree but um

still i mean it can be uplifting and inspiring and really you know you see like this beautiful majestic buddha statue people can be moved to tears or uh just like really have profound faith you know they're inspired to practice

more or something like that so yeah i mean art can go either way although dramatic arts are a no-no from the buddhist point of view and music as a general rule also

there's even a rule saying that monks who are chanting should not adopt a sing-song musical kind of voice when they're chanting which is almost universally ignored by a lot of buddhist

monks because they like they like to
sound musical

but um technically according to
monastic discipline even when a monk is
chanting he should just adopt an
ordinary

uh like a conversational tone of voice
while reciting poly texts

um

but yeah i think i think art can be can
be inspiring and uplifting and uh if
it's has a message the message can be a
wise and profound message too
even a painting can have a wise and
profound message but uh
even much more so

um

poetry and just uh like

prose writing

so the last question by a yuichiro

let's see what is the role of the

creative

oh wait a minute did i already

okay that was it yeah i almost answered

the same question

so okay

that was the last question by you each

hero about art and it is kind of

unfortunate that that buddhism almost

alone of religions considers music to be

um

sort of a distraction or like a

wallowing and sensual pleasure because

um before i move on to the next question
really

ancient indian buddhism you know the
earliest buddhism was based on this
prehistoric indian culture going way way
back

where you know the world is a bad place
and you should try to
escape from this world or or go beyond
this world and you do that by not
clinging to this world by not attaching
to it and

um music because it's a kind of sensual
pleasure

um is something that people cling to and
so it's just considered to be a no-no in

accordance with um just the ancient
indian culture at the time even though
obviously some music can have like
uplifting effects
and um you know for for the average lay
person just a some certain amount of
pleasure is just uh
not necessarily to be avoided i mean
if you're living in the world being a
total ascetic is uh
uh really a
kind of a downer you know it's like i
mean from the buddhist point of view
really
the ethics of buddhism is so finely
tuned
that it's almost impossible to avoid

bad karma quote unquote i mean even
putting salt and pepper on your mashed
potatoes to make it taste better would
be a kind of wallowing in sensuality you
know even to believe that you exist if
you're like a really radical renunciant
you can go off into a forest and live
under a tree and maybe just maybe
you can avoid any kind of speech or
physical action that is going to be
unwholesome but good luck trying not
even to have any like nasty thoughts
so i mean it's just
um buddhist ethics are so finely tuned
that it's almost impossible to to do
anything that is just purely good

there's always going to be it's it's not
going to be all black or white it's
always going to be a shade of gray and
so

the best you can do is
accept

the law of karma

except that you're going to be doing
unskillful acts sometimes just as a
matter of being a human being in this
world

and have enough

stoicism and equanimity that you can
face the consequences like the fruition
of the unskillful karma when it comes
back at you and i think i may have more
to say about that

even though uh this is already a long
one

do i'm talking a lot here

next question is from chaplin

and chaplin asks

what is your best actionable advice for

buddhists who are being faced with the

current authoritarian regime

removing civil rights

imposing forced experimental rna

injections and big tech government

compliance

huh

yeah that's that's like uh

that's like a key question that gets

asked a lot

nowadays um

my best actionable advice for buddhists
who are being faced with the current
authoritarian regime um well obviously
going with just traditional orthodox
buddhism

the the obvious answer is you just opt
out of society and renounce the world
and you go off into a forest and
meditate under a tree and you wander
around in a state of vagrant beggary
and just beg for your food in the
streets and you don't handle money and
you don't have a family no more and you
don't have connections and you're just
like this
almost a non-human being

and

obviously even for most

monks i mean they're not going to go

that far

so

um the best buddhist advice would be you

just go as far in that direction as you

are willing and able to go

so that might mean

moving off the grid you know moving into

like a rural area

um

cutting way way down on all of the the

worldly samsaric interactions like

social media and then just the

news that are really just propaganda

that kind of a thing

and um

you just uh do your best you you you

know try to live a moral and non-harmful

life try to do good to yourself and to

others

um

you can try to

add some enlightenment or higher

consciousness into politics by just

taking part in like your local school

board or getting involved in you know

small scale politics or or like uh

um you know just some sort of

organizations you know that uh multiply

um multiply your will by you know you're

like adding your will to like-minded

individuals

and forming a kind of movement maybe

um

but uh yeah the easy answer to that is i

mean

um

the buddhist

the buddhist solution to the craziness

of the world from the very beginning is

you just opt out of it and the closer

you can get to that

ideal

um that would be the

the best you could do from a buddhist

perspective

and

to some degree you uh

you think globally and act locally by

just you know taking care of yourself

you know if you're doing good if you've

got relatively

uh relatively wholesome attitude and so

forth you're going to be

um that's going to be generating

outwards you're going to be influencing

those around you

so um if you do good then you're going

to make a better world and also if

you've got a good mind you're going to

be living in a good world

um

if you've got a bad mind you're going to

be living in a bad world you've got a

perfect mind you're going to be living
in a perfect world regardless of what's
going on i mean the world's always been
crazy

um there's always been
authoritarian kings and governments and
in genocide and all this kind of thing i
mean it's just perennial themes

um

so it's not like things have suddenly
gotten really bad

um they've pretty much always been
messed up and bad

i think uh like the 1980s and 90s were
just sort of an exception to the rule
things were going pretty well back then

as far as i can remember

um

but uh

yeah i mean you stand by your principles

um

tell the truth

um if you really think something is

wrong you shouldn't do it that which

would give you the right to disobey what

you consider to be a stupid or unjust

law although

you know it's the duty of the cop to

arrest you for doing it and so he's got

his duty also

um

and then uh one other thing is uh is in

a question down below so i'll get to

that when that question gets asked also
with regard to uh organizing and uh
actually doing something

but um

yeah your best actionable advice for
buddhists would be um

to detach

from the worldly craziness because the
world's always going to be crazy it's
just the way it is it's always going to
be crazy

so you just detach from that

and if you're able to

uh inject some sanity

into it in whatever way you think is
appropriate for you what you think you

can actually do which is within your power within your your limitations or your circumstances then certainly you should do that also and just add some goodness and sanity to uh to the mix the more of that you can add the better

so i'll move on to the next question

which is from zane

and zane says

see as i've mentioned to you before but don't expect you to necessarily remember i'm in south korea where it said that about 15 to 30 percent of the population is purportedly buddhist out walking today masculisk i go to the nearest buddhist temple about a

five-minute walk away and see on the gate a notice saying make sure you put on a mask before entering

on a recent short vacation i visited quite a few notable buddhist temples in more rural areas of south korea only one of the temples i visited had monks not wearing masks while doing sadana or just walking around the temple grounds

all other temples had masked monks and signs up everywhere reminding folks to wear a mask i thought the buddha dharma was in addition to compassion supposed to be big on wisdom

i'm questioning the wisdom of mass masking given the actual scientific

papers on the efficacy of masks in
stopping the spread of viral infections
particularly those written prior to say
2018

and also the wisdom of masking long term
when numerous studies demonstrate the
problem

the problems related to that practice is
the wisdom simply in going along to get
along is that really wisdom when the
mask wearing also seems to be acting as
an nlp

hyposis i think it means hypnosis
technique known as yes set

where if the subject submits to one
command it's easier to get them to
submit to further commands might not

buddhist wisdom include asking for some
monks at your monastery to read klaus
schwab's book on covid 19 and the great
reset

and to do a little analytical digging
into the socio-political implications of
the current policies i guess this is a
question i would like to see you address
well again this is uh

kind of hitting the hitting the nerve
hitting him like

touching the

feeling the pulse so to speak

um

but uh

first of all i mean monks really are not

supposed to be socially engaged you know
they're supposed to renounce the world
renounce the craziness

um

but that renunciation is primarily
mental i mean there is uh there is a
linear rule a rule of monastic
discipline in the poly text where the
buddha says monks i allow you to obey
kings

and um

that was mainly with regard to the
king's determining the calendar but um
still i mean it just makes sense that a
religion should pretty much obey the law
just to stay out of trouble just to kind
of keep their reputation clean

um like early christianity like jesus of
nazareth said something similar with you
know um you know

render under caesar what belongs to
caesar

and

so just following the law is kind of
basic to uh

to religious systems that are just
trying to

you know keep their head down just kind
of stay out of trouble i mean staying
out of trouble is kind of basic to being
a buddhist monk

and ultimately the outward forms are
really not the point

so wearing a mask or not wearing one is
ultimately neither skillful or
unskillful

it's just an outward form and whether
you are skillful or unskillful wholesome
unwholesome depends upon your own mental
states

um so i'm sorry to uh
to answer in that way but that does seem
to be like the orthodox
uh standard mainstream buddhist answer
that uh some monks just want to say hell
no i'm not wearing the mask
um yeah they can do that too
they might get into trouble
um you know they might have to just go
off and be loners go out and live in the

forest you don't have to wear a mask
that's the way monks were supposed to
live anyway you might have to wear one
if they go for alms in the village or
something

um

but uh ultimately i mean the outward
circumstances

um whether you're wearing a mask or not
wearing one is irrelevant because it's
the mental states that are really key
so i'll just move on to the next

question i mean

well maybe not yet it's like i mean the
wisdom is irrelevant to uh wearing a
mask or not

so i mean that was that would be her
wisdom fits in i mean you can be wise or
foolish wearing a mask or not wearing
one you know there's there's there's
people doing both i assume
so i'll just move on to the next
question

and this is from bodhisatta 969

how can we network better and really
change something it seems that somehow
everyone does their own thing

david reynolds buddha war rex on

telegram bonte g varupanyo brian rue

right wing dharma squad ship of fools

etc i think people really want to be

active and not just watch youtube videos

we could support each other and give

donations to people who

cause

really serves us whose cause really

serves us for example propose a buddhist

community that is worth supporting

instead of supporting any buddhist

community what is our plan for the

future and where do we want to go

can we start an association or any other

idea that brings us forward as a

counterpart to left-wing buddhism in the

west so again this is uh really what a

lot of people are interested in

especially uh

those who are traditionalists or

conservative buddhists

not just the uh starbucks buddhists

um

and i mean one obvious drawback is that

we are very finely

we're we're like scarce i mean we're

thinly spread and so there's not going

to be very many

um

like

traditionalist or conservative western

buddhists

living in the same town or the same area

so i mean it's pretty much

limited to the internet

i mean that's that's like the main

manifestation of traditionalist buddhism

aside from one's individual practice and

that's that's like the the unit

is the individual

and the individual's practice

um

and uh yes you want to do something you

want to accomplish something and as it

turns out i mean this is still within

the realm of the internet but a group of

people including me and bonte gi

varapanyo

um and shipa fools for that matter

we are collaborating and trying to get a

larger

um

a larger group going that um may attract

more people

probably have some kind of slick website
uh higher quality videos than this one
that kind of thing

and um but still i mean it's gonna have
to be primarily on the internet simply
because

um people

um like people that are interested in in
supporting me or watching my videos or
subscribing on subscribe star they're
all over the world they're just thinly
spread all over the world

and um it would take

some real some something really big to
inspire even half of those people or
one-third of those people to all

migrate to the same geographical area to

live you know just to live in the same
community so that they're face to face
instead of uh face to screen
so yeah we're still we're still working
within the realm of the internet at
least until enough people get
interested for reasons i've um discussed
above

um

or or maybe for other reasons if enough
people get interested so that you're
actually able to form little um nuclei
groups you know in real life face to
face

in the same place geographically then
that's fine yeah we can do that and get

like uh like an actual physical building
with like a dharma hall that kind of a
thing maybe maybe a monastery you know
we can get bonte g to come over here or
what or something

um

but uh for starters we're just trying to
get like uh

like a movement going or just a larger
group going that uh

looks nicer maybe a little more polished
maybe to attract people

superficially at first who then see that
there's something deeper than the

superficial appearance so i mean we are
making efforts we are

trying to get something started um

um i mean we haven't even really got the website going yet but it has i mean the the domain has already been purchased and everything so um i'll keep you updated on that when developments substantial developments happen we're still uh in the formulation stage at present but we are we are making efforts but um sorry to say it's it's mostly going to be an internet phenomenon for the foreseeable future because we are really just going with reality or conventional reality anyway we are thinly spread around the world and so finally the last question the very last one

is from frank

who actually asked two questions here

but uh they're they're kind of the same question

and frank says

how to make wholesome decisions in our

current situation how does one weigh

decisions with regard to comma

and this is a very condensed version of

a different set of questions that he

asked that were very long uh talking

about

um this the subtleties of of comma how

karma works

and that

um you know there's like i mentioned a

little earlier it's very rare to have

all white or all black all wholesome or
unwholesome there's always going to be a
shade of gray involved
and um so how do you
navigate through worldly samsara you
know you've got a job you've got a
family to support
you can't just renounce the world and go
off and meditate under a tree
or maybe you just feel like you've got
like a sacred duty to your children or
whatever reason maybe you've got health
issues that won't let you do that
whatever but you are just living
in uh in the world in the craziness of
the world which as i say has always been

crazy the secular world has always been
more or less insane

so how do you know how to

behave skillfully

like for example

um

you're being forced to take a vaccine

that you don't trust that you think may

be more harmful than good you think it's

just a violation of your rights as a

citizen to be forced to take this

experimental vaccine that's going to

mess with your rna and so on and so

forth

do you think it's it's better just to

take the hit or do you think it would be

better to kind of fudge on the truth and

like finagle some kind of health
exemption even though you're pretty
healthy

um

get some sympathetic doctor to give you
like a bogus health exemption on the
grounds that you know you have some
condition or something that maybe you
don't really have

or whatever it is i mean um you're gonna
have to choose the lesser of two evils
essentially i mean you're living in the
world i mean

um most people

um you know it's like

even living in a cave i i've had

situations where you just choose the lesser of two evils like i've got a mosquito that that's gonna bite me and i think well okay i'll just take the hit let the little bastard bite me but it's fussy you know it bites me in one place and it doesn't hit the right artery or something so it flies up and it whines around a little bit and then lands somewhere else and bites and it doesn't like that either and then it lands on my forehead and bites and maybe it doesn't get a good vein there either so then it just keeps doing this and finally i really i just think it's like maybe if i just slap the little bastard and get it over with i'd make a less bad

karma than just sitting here hating its
guts

because it won't just finish biting me
the little bastard

and i mean this kind of thing just

happens all the time it's like you can
say well it's slightly unskillful karma

to put salt and pepper on your mashed
potatoes to make them taste better you

know it's a wallowing and sensuality and
all that but then again you're eating

just bland plain mashed potatoes

you're going to have a certain aversion
for that in your mind too

so you just have to skillfully

understand yourself as well as you can

and understand you know um what is going to be

the lesser of two evils in in any case

you know it's like you think about

you want to do something and you realize

there's going to be some unskillfulness

involved

so i mean you can't really deny karma

that's i mean i think a lot of like the

progressive starbucks buddhist types i

mean they're they're just redefining

morality redefining ethics so that you

know whatever whatever's politically

correct is is good and right and proper

and all that but i mean karma is

you know it's one of those bedrock

things it might not be the ultimate

reality of nirvana

but it's it's pretty much inescapable so

long as we are human so long as we have

minds that are working in a human way

um

yeah the karma

it's like you

you do something unskillful it's going

to have like negative effects on you you

do something positive you're going to

have positive effects you do something

negative you have negative effects

with regard to your mental states you

have you do something with positive

mental states

then it's going to have positive effects

even if

it's not obvious at first you know every

every action has its effects you know

every every action has consequences

so i mean you want to do something that

you know is going to be

unwholesome let's say

then

um i mean you should first consider i

mean do you want to do that like just um

if you accept karma

then just consider i mean would i be

willing to have this happen back to me

you know let's say you're going to give

someone a piece of your mind then you

think well would i want somebody to be

saying this kind of stuff to me

and so long as you're willing i mean you think it's worth it you think it needs to be said enough that you are willing to have the same thing happen back to you

then uh

i guess i mean you just accept responsibility for your actions and go for it and then try to have equanimity and some stoicism to face the consequences when they occur

so yeah i mean that's that's the best you can do it's if you're living in the world you you're going to be doing unskillful things sometimes like if you're if you're alone under a

tree with no family and no friends and
know anything

then uh yeah you might be able to uh
have pure

mental or pure physical and and like
verbal actions anyway but still i mean
good luck not having any naughty
thoughts

um

so i mean we're just uh i mean buddhist
philosophy is so finely tuned that like
i said there's always shades of gray so
you may just have to choose the lesser
of two evils and
don't try to

like kid yourself don't try to fool
yourself into thinking that you're

totally

not doing anything wrong if i mean if

you really are you know telling a lie or

or something like that but um

still i mean sometimes it may be

justified and i'm reminded of this story

it's a it's a

famous short story i think it's called

the other wise man and it's uh it's a

christian story about one of the magi

from persia who sees the star of

bethlehem and all that and he's gonna go

to

offer treasures to the the baby jesus

with the other three

and um so he's got these these gems you

know he's got like this big pearl and
this big diamond like a ruby or
something but he's got some business to
take care of so the so his friends the
other three they take off heading
towards jerusalem before him and he's
going to catch up with them on the way
but it's like he keeps getting
uh

keeps getting like um what's the word
delayed like um he stops off at this
oasis and there's a person there who's
almost dead you know he's like very sick
and so the guy is like nursing him and
helping him before he continues on his
way and so the the other wise men stop
waiting for him and they just take off

and so finally

this other wise man he makes it to

jerusalem i think it is or or maybe

bethlehem he's he's in judea at this

point

and um

it's like in like the the new testament

says king herod has ordered all of the

baby boys to be killed and he's

staying as a

as a guest in the house of this this

hebrew lady

and she's got a baby boy and she's

totally freaked out she's just in tears

because i mean the law is the baby boys

are going to be killed so this other

wise man

he uh stands at the doorway and when the
the roman soldiers or whatever the
soldiers are they come um demanding
entrance to see if there's any baby boys
in the building he uh

hands this

pearl you know this really valuable
pearl to the soldier and says there
aren't any baby boys in this building
and um you know the the soldier looks at
the pearl and uh you know as he's agreed
and uh maybe a little bit of honesty
mixed in he just you know calls to the
other soldiers there's no baby boys here
let's just move on and so i mean the
other wise man he he told a lie but he

told the lie to save
a baby from being murdered essentially
so i mean it's obviously
uh you know choosing the lesser of two
evils in that case i mean it's not
always going to be that clear-cut it's
always going to be some kind of shade of
gray and you just do the best you can
and see i'm going to read the question
again just
make sure i get this right how to make
wholesome decisions in our current
situation how does one weigh decisions
with regard to comma
okay so another thing let's say you
you've already

pretty much committed yourself to doing something that you know is not purely ethical just because the the other alternative may be even less ethical going with your own standards so then i mean one good thing you you can do i mean you can't really deny karma again i mean if you're if you're a good buddhist i mean you really should um not try to fool yourself and try to just justify anything you do you should admit okay what i'm doing here is going to make some bad karma but karma is a mental state so another thing you can do is just try to do what you do with as pure of a mental state as possible

like you can swat a mosquito while just
cursing and just raging at it or you can
just you know almost and you know just
with equanimity just reach up and slap
the mosquito maybe uh reminding yourself
that insects don't feel pain and so
forth

um

so

uh yeah i mean just like the the samurai
swordmaster you know the the zen master
who's also a swordmaster

um

he he may kill but

and and and he's not exempt from karma

he's going to be making bad karma but he

may not be making as bad of karma
because he is cultivating mindfulness
and equanimity he's got a sense of honor
you know he's not going to act motivated
by anger or hatred or like revenge
anything like that it's going to be
purely honor purely duty and he's going
to maintain as much equanimity as
possible while he's cutting people's
heads off and he's still cutting
people's heads off and that's not good
but it's still
wiser
than just having the blood lust and just
raging like king leonidas in the movie
300
um

i mean still it's like

there is uh you're mitigating

the unskillfulness

um

i was gonna give an example oh yeah back

when i was a junior monk

i uh

i asked my teacher

uh which is worse i mean which makes

worse karma doing something

uh

wrong that you don't even know is wrong

or doing something wrong that you know

is wrong and like an example would be

like fishing like killing a fish there

are i mean a lot of people in america

like you may maybe christians they just consider

fishing to be good wholesome fun you know there's nothing wrong at all with killing a fish that's why god put fish there so we can catch them and eat them so they don't think there's anything wrong with that i mean like like some terrorists they might think that blowing up an entire building full of people is actually good you know they think they're doing something good they think they're gonna go to heaven for now so i mean

the question was i mean which is worse if you do it if let's just make it simple and you know you go and catch a

fish and you you kill the fish

and that that

if you are a buddhist and know that

you're making bad karma by doing that or

on wholesome karma

um or if you just you're like a

christian and you just think it's good

clean fun and you're not doing anything

wrong i mean which is worse and he kind

of surprised me by saying that

if you do something wrong knowing that

it's wrong

that's actually you're going to make

less bad karma because it's like

if you pick up something hot and you

know in advance that it's hot then

you're going to take precautions so it doesn't burn you as bad you might still get your fingers burned but at least you were kind of careful about it you're not just grabbing right onto it and burning your whole hand and uh he said that's that's kind of the way it is if you're going to do something wrong and i mean you acknowledge that you know it's there's some wrongness to it it's it's not pure black or pure white it's the gray

um

then uh yeah you're gonna be you're gonna be careful you can you know try to to observe your mind carefully and try to be mindful at least you know try to

maintain as much equanimity and as little greed hate and delusion while you're doing it so at least you're mitigating the the karmic results of it so um that would be my answer to this uh question or double question is uh

you know how do you weigh decisions with regard to kama i mean you have to weigh your your mental states and um you know you choose the lesser of two evils i suppose or maybe one of these days you just feel like choosing the greater of two evils just because then still i mean you have to be willing to accept that that is

going to have consequences you should be
willing to accept those consequences
uh coming back to you in future and you
should try to have like a stoic attitude
that you can face those consequences
with some equanimity and fortitude
and um

when you're doing the deed try to have
as pure of a mind you know as as less
greed as little greed hate and delusion
as possible i mean it's like the samurai
zen master you know if he's out there
killing he's doing it just out of duty
and equanimity and honor and you know
he's not feeling hatred and that kind of
thing
and um that's that's really the best you

can do

and uh

you know welcome to the club i mean

everybody has to do that i mean from the

buddhist point of view even listening to

music or putting salt and pepper on your

potatoes is gonna gonna be a little bit

unwholesome so

um

trying to be absolutely pure

is uh

is a fool's errand to some degree

especially if if you're not a renunciant

and um that is uh the last question and

we're almost two hours

man i just keep talking and talking i

should maybe just do these every few days so there's just a few questions to get answered and you get them in little bite-sized pieces instead of these long ones but

this is how it's been happening so there you go

and uh

if you've got questions to ask you're you're always welcome to uh to ask questions

and uh so long as you keep asking i will keep answering

so you can post your questions in the comments below or if you're on my subscribe star channel you can post them there especially after i make an

announcement just post them in the
comments under the announcement or if
you're on the discord server um you can
post them in in the q a room uh in the
associated discord server and the links
to all of these things

should be

uh in the description below the video

and

again

you can you can buy my books too which i
have recently published and they should
be in the links below also

and uh be well and happy

and

i think we're done for this one

All right, hello and welcome to episode 15 of question and answer.

I am your host Panyo Basa, also known by other names like John David Reynolds.

Those are my uh secret public names.

So, uh I got uh as usual lots of good questions here.

And so, I am going to commence to answering those questions.

And the first one is from Rhinoceros.

And Rhinoceros says,

"Early Buddhism, for example, the Ataka Vagga, heavily discourages all yogic or magical practices, the various methods for gaining superhuman abilities, and instead prescribes endurance as the

go-to way of dealing with ailments such as cold, hunger, and insects.

Can you comment on the matter? Should we painstakingly endure, or should we practice yoga, magic, Taoism on the side? I know the right answer already, but man, physical life and its limitations are hella hard."

He says.

Um okay, well, first of all, I would uh just point out that um the Ataka Vagga or early Buddhism really doesn't heavily discourage yoga, like yogic practices. And by yogic practices, I don't mean um you know, wearing the tight yoga pants and uh

uh doing sun salutations and so forth on
a mat, but um

yoga really, it means any kind of
spiritual practice, any kind of
dedicated spiritual practice.

And so, really, just meditation or
wandering around homeless could be
called the the yoga of an early Buddhist
ascetic.

It is true though that um
early Buddhism and even later Theravada
does does

discourage magical practices like uh
uh developing

not so much developing psychic powers
but developing them as like your main

goal. I mean if they arise as kind of a side effect of your other practices, that's fine.

But even then you shouldn't be showing them off.

Um

but with regard to it, let's see here.

The various methods for gaining superhuman abilities and instead prescribes endurance as the go-to way of dealing with ailments such as cold, hunger, and insects. Okay, well, with regard to endurance, definitely the Atakavaga and other early Buddhist texts encourage a monk enduring with equanimity cold, hunger,

um you know, heat,

uh sickness, all that kind of stuff, all

the the uh

the unpleasantness that arises,

especially for an ascetic who's just

living outside, sleeping on the ground

under trees, and begging for his food

silently in the in the streets and

everything.

Um you know, like living in caves or

whatever.

Um I mean he's not just sitting there

enduring just like bitching and moaning

to himself and oh this sucks and and I

just got to

got to put up with it. It's not that

kind of endurance, really. It's the yogic practice of like mindful detachment and equanimity. I mean that is practiced as a kind of yogic practice, not uh outwardly with regard to uh assuming postures or anything necessarily, but um like an inward kind of mental yoga.

And so that would come first, just the cultivation of um mindful or philosophical detachment. And then uh when the cold or the hunger or the insects or whatever come along, then you're already you've already got equanimity going, and so they just kind of crash against your equanimity like waves against a rock.

So,

yeah, there still is a kind of yogic practice that's going on.

Just wandering homeless and meditating because it's still uh even in the Ajikan Waga monks are encouraged to be meditators.

So, that would be the yogic practice, and that would strengthen you against these uh hardships.

Um

I think that pretty much answers the question. Let's see. Should we painstakingly endure, or should we practice yoga, magic, Taoism on the side?

Um I'm not exactly sure what
rhinoceros means by Taoism here because
there's like the Taoism of uh
essentially like mindful equanimity,
just uh being in harmony with what
happens, just kind of accepting
accepting what happens and living a kind
of minimalist life.

Like in the Dow Te Ching, something like
that. But then later on Taoism, uh it
really did adopt a lot of um

I guess you could even call it sorcery.

So, um I'm not exactly sure what kind of
Taoism he means, but uh really you
should be practicing mindfulness and
detachment and equanimity
um before the hardships arrive so that

you'll already be in the habit
of maintaining the equanimity when the
hardships arise, and it's it's way
easier that way.

Um you know, if you're practicing
mindfulness
when things are going pretty good, then
you're already in the habit for when
things start going pear-shaped
or uh sideways or whatever.

So, um
yeah, that's that would be the yogic
practice is just uh practicing
meditation and mindfulness, which uh
cultivates equanimity
and uh

greater

a greater capacity for accepting harsh
circumstances.

So, um

yeah.

Maybe maybe Myanmasaurus here means yoga

is just sort of like um

uh

systematic kind of practice.

But, um

yeah, I think I already answered that.

So, I'll just move on to the next one.

The next question is from Render.

And Render asks, "Do Buddhists make
sacrifices to idols?"

And uh there's different kinds of
sacrifices, I suppose.

But, um I I can only speak for Theravada really. I I'm sure most Mahayana would be the same way. I can't really speak for the Tibetans, but um if by sacrifices you mean like animal sacrifices, then no.

Uh a good Buddhist would not sacrifice an animal to an idol or to anything else.

Um but, I mean there are different kinds of sacrifices. I mean a sacrifice is um you know, like giving away something of value to you.

And um

I mean, that that can be possible.

Sometimes uh

uh Buddhists will make offerings to
Buddha statues, which technically could
be called idols.

So, um they'd be small a small
sacrifice, I assume. Like a little bit
of their food. Like it's really common
in Burma

that before people eat, they take a
little bit of the food and uh offer it
to like their the statue on their altar.

So, you could call that a sacrifice or
just offering flowers, something like
that. It would be a a teeny teeny little
sacrifice.

Um but, it's it's not killing an animal.

And really

um

generally people don't offer anything really big uh to Buddha statues or to pagodas, anything like that. They might offer something really big to a monastery, like lots of money, something like that. Um whether you consider that a sacrifice or not, I can't really say.

But um

um I think I answered that one. So, I'm just going to move on to the next one.

And the next one is from

I'm not sure how to pronounce the name.

It's Michelle, I think.

Um a fellow who lives in Iceland.

And uh he says

"I often think about this right-wing

sort of spirituality that I was into for some time. That's how I came across you.

I think about someone like Evola.

He wrote a book about Zen Buddhism, as you may know.

What intrigues me is how can one cultivate true wisdom, be ethical, and don't cause suffering to others, and at the same time cling to nationalism, race, tribalism, and that sort of thing, or engage in politics at all, which I found pretty toxic, no matter on which side one is. I'm not judging people who do follow this path. I did myself.

I hated Islam and cultural Marxism, LGBT, etc., but I felt severe cognitive

dissonance and inner conflict with this.

It was unbearable.

You have been an eye-opener on this, and

I also had a powerful mystical

experience that showed me the unity of

life and being, non-being. So, I want to

know your position on this. What do you

think about the Burmese monk who

endorses violence against Muslims, and

what do you think about Lama Ole Nydahl,

who is Danish and his anti-Muslim

immigration rhetoric?"

Okay, that's kind of a a long question,

but uh I think I understand the gist of

it.

It's like, how do you reconcile Dharma

with uh something like nationalism or
uh

ethnic

tribalism, something like that.

Um well, I think the keyword here is uh
cling. He's got Let's see. What

intrigues me is how can one cultivate
true wisdom, be ethical, and not cause
suffering to others, and at the same

time cling to nationalism, race,

tribalism, and that sort of thing. Well,

the thing is, I mean, if you're

practicing Buddhism correctly, you're
not clinging

to that stuff. I mean, you can adopt

nationalism if it seems like the

rational, obvious thing to do, or you

can adopt um you know, some sort of tribalism, nonviolent, you know, non-hateful tribalism. But, um I mean, just belonging to a tribe, people just a lot of people seem to instinctively crave that, or just instinctively feel more natural and happy if they belong to some kind of tribe, even like a a Dharma group can be kind of a local tribe.

So, nationalism and and race and tribalism and that sort of thing, I mean, in and of themselves, they're neutral. They're neither good nor bad. It's just the attitudes of the people. It's It's like anything in Buddhism or

the way karma works, the outward act
itself

is really more or less neutral.

But, it's the mental states that go
along with the action, the the outward
action, that really determine whether
it's good or bad. And I always give the
example of uh

the person who sees, you know, a snake
trying to swallow a frog, and the frog
is struggling and trying to get away,
and you chase the snake away,

but it I mean, if you do it out of
compassion for the frog, you've done
something wholesome and good, you've
made good karma. If you do it out of
aversion for the snake, you've done

something unwholesome and bad and made bad karma. It's exactly the same action, but whether it is wholesome or unwholesome, whether it's good karma or bad karma, depends on your motivation, why you did it. Like the mental states accompanying the action.

So, it can be that way with regard to nationalism or tribalism of any sort, also. Maybe not of any sort, but of many sorts.

And so, if it just seems like the obvious thing to do, like he mentions the Burmese monk, um who endorses violence against Muslims. Um whether he really does endorse

violence against Muslims, I'm not sure.

I don't know enough about him.

Uh his name is Venerable Wirathu.

And um

I'm not sure, I mean, it if he does endorse violence against anybody, that would be non-Buddhist, that would be non-Dharmic.

But, I mean, there's a difference between endorsing violence and just wanting to preserve like Buddhist tradition in Burma.

I mean, there's nothing necessarily wrong with that. I mean, it's it's worldly and samsaric to some extent, but we are living in the world. We are human beings living in the world. We do have

some

uh social responsibilities. Monks aren't
supposed to have as many,

but still

a good Buddhist can still want to
preserve Buddhism.

And if he thinks that um

the country being taken over by Muslims
is a real threat,

and that that could uh destroy Buddhism
in the country, then

he may consider it to be appropriate to
take measures,

although

they should not be motivated by hatred
or desire for violence or revenge or

anything like that. It should be done objectively and peacefully and with some equanimity and preferably with some compassion.

With regard to Lama Ole Nydahl, I really don't know that much about him. I'm told about him a lot.

Um

but

it says here he's got anti-Muslim immigration rhetoric.

Uh I mean, seriously, I mean, if he really does think that it would be bad for the country, then I mean, so long as he's not motivated by hatred or anything like that, so long as he's not endorsing violence or or hate or anger trying to

stir up resentment or anything like
that, but as long as he's pointing out
what he considers to be a legitimate
danger

and he's trying to do something peaceful
about it, something positive, then yeah,
he's not doing anything necessarily
wrong at all. And that that applies to
just about anything. It's not just um
being

um

like not liking the idea of mass
immigration. I mean, it's just
from a worldly point of view, just mass
immigration from foreign cultures that
do not share the same values as your own

native culture, I mean, obviously that's going to be destructive to some degree to your own native culture. And if you've got children especially, you have to worry about that sort of thing.

So,

yeah, again, it all depends on on your your motives and your your attitude.

So, if you can just objectively see something as positive or helpful, even though it might be politically incorrect or frowned upon by others, then I mean, you're not doing anything wrong necessarily by endorsing that. And if you see what you consider to be a a danger just objectively and pointing that out and maybe adopting

some peaceful non-violent measures
to to deal with it, then really there's
there's no conflict with
with at least lay Buddhism. Monk Monks,
monastics in general, they're supposed
to renounce that sort of thing and just
go off into a forest or into a a
cloister and meditate, but um
laypeople, I mean, you're just living in
the world, you've got responsibilities,
you've got duties.

And um trying to protect your your
community,
um that would be like an obvious duty.
So, I don't see necessarily anything
wrong with

uh a certain amount of nationalism and
uh tribalism, so long as it's um got
positive reasons and uh you're not
endorsing anything really um non-Dharmic
by doing it. And again, I one of the
main words in the here in this question
is cling. You don't You don't cling to
it. But still, I mean, you can do it
with a certain amount of philosophical
detachment. Like if if your car gets a
flat tire, you change the tire. I mean,
you're not clinging to anything
necessarily. You just see that the tire
needs to be changed, so you get out and
change it.

I mean, any kind of problem-solving can
be that way. It doesn't require any kind

of clinging.

And uh the more philosophical detachment, equanimity, and compassion you've got, then then that's that's good. That's the more the better.

So, I think I've answered that question more or less well enough, so I'll move on to Michelle's next question, and I hope he forgives me if I mispronounce his name, because I don't know how the name Mike is pronounced in Iceland.

So, his next question, I assume it's a he,

is as the situation

as the situation is now in Afghanistan, what is your position on this conflict?

So, what is my What is my position on the conflict in Afghanistan?

Um

I'm just observing it with interest, really. I mean, I'm not really picking sides.

Um

It's like the

I mean, it obviously was just bungled.

It was totally botched, the withdrawal.

People just want to blame like Donald

Trump for for even like saying that he

wanted to withdraw his forces, but uh

you know, Obama wanted to withdraw the

forces before that, and uh Biden, I'm

pretty sure he was speaking in favor of

withdrawing forces when he was vice

president, maybe even before then.

So

just withdrawing the forces is no problem. It's just It was just totally botched. It was just an idiotic fiasco the way they went about it. Like withdrawing First of all, just Mhm.

apparently ignoring the the likelihood that the Taliban was going to take over.

And and he And Biden had like intelligence reports saying that the Taliban was going to take over really fast, and he was just like, "Nope, not going to happen."

And uh so it's like the wishful thinking of of liberals.

And that's That's one thing That's one of the main differences between the left and the right, you know, to the extent that left and right are still valid as a kind of binary.

Um the right seems to be more realistic in the sense of fear. They're willing to stick with stuff that is tried and true, stuff that they know from experience is going to work, whereas the left prefers a kind of idealistic wishful thinking to reality. You know, they're like opposed to the way things are, which is reality.

And they just prefer this these ideas

that don't necessarily have much grounding in uh empirical truth.

And so you wind up with something like this where they just, you know, they're flying the the gay pride flag over the the embassy in Kabul just a few months ago. And they just assume that everyone's just going to see the light and convert to some kind of lefty liberalism, which of course isn't going to happen and it just collapses as soon as they leave. And then they just pull out their troops just essentially stranding like 100,000 people that we should be evacuated before the army leaves.

And then they just leave behind all this sophisticated weaponry and so forth. I mean the whole thing was just a a complete fiasco. And then like handing the the Taliban lists of people that's, you know, please let them through your checkpoints so they can be evacuated. But I mean those are like the main enemies of the Taliban. I mean it's it's essentially a kill list if the Taliban chooses it to be that way.

So,

I don't know. With regard to taking sides, I don't really take sides on this issue. I'm I assume the Afghanis have the right to self-determination

just like anybody else and they
I think to some degree they are
justified in rejecting a kind of
ideology that insists upon face masks
and tears down statues and opposes
freedom of speech.

So,

yeah, well, good luck to the people of
Afghanistan. I think uh
the only

I'm not sure I I I I assume that the
Persians conquered Afghanistan. So, I
mean that was in ancient times.

Alexander the Great conquered
Afghanistan or Bactria as it was called
back then without too much difficulty.

Although I think he had to marry a Bactrian princess to uh really clinch the deal.

But ever since then it's been pretty hard. It's Afghanistan's a tough country.

Like The Man Who Would Be King.

Uh yeah, it's it's all rugged, mountainous terrain with like rugged people there and uh probably just best just let them do as they please so long as they're not uh launching terrorist attacks against us. So, I think I'll just move on to Michelle's next question.

Which is, should we take these people take these people in as refugees taking

into consideration how many Afghan men
are

not generalizing

raping and killing. He's He's got like a

uh a link here to ABC News about uh

uh three Afghans in Austria who raped

and killed a 13-year-old girl.

And uh yeah, horrible stuff there, he
says.

So, taking in refugees, this kind of
goes back to the

to the earlier question of uh I mean, if
you see that something obviously is is
dangerous, I mean, it's

it's not necessarily

evil racism or hate speech or anything

like that. I mean, it's obviously just
going with statistics

you're going to be you're going to be
importing a lot of

violent people who do not share the same
values as Western civilization.

So,

yeah, I mean, it's

I don't see necessarily anything wrong
with uh

wanting to very carefully vet immigrants

instead of just opening the gates and

just letting them rush in like is

happening pretty much wherever you've
got

um like people of European ancestry, the
the liberal or the left side of the

population is is essentially uh wanting to commit racial suicide.

Just just for ideological propagandist reasons.

So, yeah, should we take in these people as refugees?

Uh

Yeah, I mean, they should be very carefully vetted. I mean, some of them, I'm sure they were like allies of of the US in Afghanistan. And if they stay in Afghanistan, they're going to be beheaded or worse.

So, it does make sense that they would leave. And uh preferably, they'd go somewhere where they are welcome instead

of just being forcibly transplanted into some American town or some European village where they just are just aliens and do not share the same values as the people around them.

So, maybe uh import them into uh like uh left-leaning cities and uh let the leftists deal with it since they're the ones that are mainly keen on that sort of thing.

So, I'll move on to Michelle's next question.

Which is, what was the position of the Buddha?

Uh presumably with regard to the stuff above that that Michelle was talking about here.

Um I'll just ask the question again.

What was the position of the Buddha? Did he discriminate between northern Indians and southern Indians or just people in general? Is discrimination part of a genuine spiritual path?

Um the position of the Buddha, well, he didn't discriminate between northern Indians and southern Indians. He really didn't discriminate.

Um although by modern or post-modern standards, yeah, he was he was a racist and discriminated and all that. But, um he he judged people individually if he judged them at all.

So,

the main teaching of the Buddha is like a person is good or bad not because of their ancestry, but because of their moral character.

And um

so, like any man of any race could become a monk. He could join the bhikkhu Sangha.

And um

it just turned out that it was mainly men of the upper classes, especially early on,

who were becoming monks. And uh

the Buddha was not discriminating

against like the aboriginal peoples or the Shudras, like the lower the lower castes.

Although, by modern standards, he would have been just a horrific racist because there was not equity in the Sangha, you know, there wasn't racial I mean like um you know, the same proportions of people in the in the national population as there was in the Sangha, presumably. If you read the texts, it it does seem that it was mostly

um

men of the upper castes who were becoming monks.

So, but I mean it was the Buddha just said anybody can enter, and it just turned out that different tribes, different uh ethnicities,

or even different social classes have got different values and different priorities.

And um

it may be that people of the upper classes were more likely to have had their fill of worldliness and have found it wanting and just went in search of something better, maybe.

Whereas the lower classes, you know, they they don't have enough food to eat, you know, they don't have enough money, so they think, "Oh, if I had enough food to eat and I had enough money, then I'd be happy."

But uh a lot of the the upper classes, they get all that, like the Buddha

himself, of according to the according to the legend, you know, he had palaces and and harems and and all this sort of thing, and he still wasn't satisfied because no matter what you do in life, you're never going to be completely satisfied. That's the first noble truth of Buddhism.

And so, often the best monks, the best renunciants, are the ones who came from a privileged background.

And even with all their privileges and their wealth and their their beauty, and their their social standing, and all that, they still weren't satisfied.

And so, they went in search of something else. They went in search of spirit.

So,

let's see.

So, the Buddha, to some degree, he did discriminate, but it was it was on on the basis of moral character, rather than ethnicity or ancestry or any such thing.

And see, the last part of this question is, is discrimination part of a genuine spiritual path?

Um you can say discernment can be.

Um you know, it's just choosing to associate with wise people and choosing to avoid the society of fools. That could be a kind of discrimination.

It's not racial discrimination.

It's just uh discrimination with regard to

uh the moral character of who you're going to associate with. So, some kinds of discrimination, I mean, you discriminate um between good and bad, you know, between what is appropriate and inappropriate. I mean, that can be called discrimination.

Um you may be

um or Michelle here may be uh referring only to like racial or ethnic discrimination, in which case uh uh whether it's uh part of a genuine spiritual path, I mean, that's

debatable. I assume there are some people like Julius Evola who might be able to argue in favor of that. It may be that like Evola was saying that um you know, each each tribe, each ethnicity has its own spirit, and so it would have its own unique path to enlightenment or some such.

Um although even Evola was saying that I mean, you can have a a black man who has the spirit of an Aryan, and so, um it's it's like an in-

Yeah, it's like the spirit of a race is is like such, but then there can be people from other ethnicities who just gravitate towards the spirit of a of a different race than the one they were

born into. So that can happen, too.

So

Yeah, that that's a debatable question.

Is discrimination part of a genuine spiritual path? Es- especially if you interpret it as racial discrimination, um usually not. Although just I would leave the door maybe slightly open just for some possibility that I can't think of.

It may be.

So, let's see. Next question. This is uh I think the last question from Michelle from Iceland.

As you mentioned, the thing that is off the scale, there is no self in the end.

How is it that people identify with nations, tribes, etc.?

Aren't they also ultimately illusions?

Or is reality fundamentally tribalistic and compassion, love, bliss, and all that are just human religious concepts and nature is just violent and comp like the philosophy of the Order of Nine Angels and other esoteric right-wing movements?

So this is kind of two questions.

Um

Let's see. The first part is uh

As you often mentioned, the thing that is off the scale, there is no self in the end. How is it people identify with nations, tribes, etc.? Aren't they also

ultimately illusions? Well, I mean, you can say that uh nations, tribes, etc. are ultimately ultimately illusions, but the books on my bookcase are ultimately illusions. I am ultimately an illusion. That mirror is ultimately an illusion. I mean, you when you're living in the world, it's Maya. It's just this kind of generated um virtual reality that we're living in. A conditional reality. It's not ultimately real. It's just kind of provisionally real.

So, um yeah, the nations and the tribes and so forth are just as real or unreal as pretty much anything else. The the trees and the cars and the cities and

all that,

clouds and mountains.

So, I mean, when you're living in the world, I mean, you have to deal with worldly

worldly reality, quote unquote, conventional truth.

And uh nations and tribes are just as much of that conventional truth as are the clouds and the trees and the mountains.

So,

I mean, it's it's a consideration. As long as you're living in the world, all of that is a consideration.

Um and then the next part of the question here is, "Or is reality

fundamentally tribalistic and
compassion, love, bliss, and all that
are just human religious concepts and
nature is just violent and comp?"

Like the philosophy of the order of the
nine angels. I I've never heard of the
the order of the nine angels.

But um

Let's see. Reality, well, ultimate
reality is not fundamentally tribalistic
or compassion. Um ultimate reality is
just off the scale, like he mentions
above. It's just unthinkable.

But when you're dealing with
uh empirical reality or conventional
reality, then uh

um going with going with Buddhist
philosophy, going with Dharma,

um

nature really is violent by nature. I
mean,

um

I've lived in a forest, not just like in
a cabin in a forest, but just like on
the ground in a forest. And uh I mean,
it is a battle zone. I mean, if you're
living out in nature, it's it's just a
battlefield.

Like um you know, the birds aren't
singing because they're happy. They're
singing deadly seriousness.

And uh you know, everything is out
trying to eat something else. You know,

you're either trying to eat something else or trying to avoid being eaten by something else.

Even the plants have to avoid being eaten by something else somehow or another by growing thorns or having toxic compounds or chemicals in them or something.

So,

yeah, you can say that nature is violent, but

um something like he's got compassion, love, and bliss. Those are coming closer to ultimate reality.

The the more compassion and love and bliss you've got,

the more wise you are, the closer you are. It's like the more transparent you are to ultimate reality.

Like you've got

like

the most hardened psychopath

could be just spiritually opaque. I

mean, if that's even possible. It may be

that no matter how bad a person is,

they're still going to have like a

little glimmer of light coming through

them.

But, you know, you've got some kind of

vampire or something, they're just going

to be opaque. You know, no spirit, no

light shines through them. And then a

fully enlightened being, they could be

like transparent, you know, they're just like a pane of glass and just the spirit shines right through them. But, the average person is going to be kind of translucent, like a bathroom window or like a shower a shower curtain or something, where some light comes through, but it's not perfectly coming through. And the more compassion, love, and bliss you've got, as a general rule, the more light you're going to have be coming through you because in a way it's a worldly manifestation of of of this light or of spirit or truth or reality

um Nirvana, God, Tao,

Brahman, whatever you want to call it.

So,

yeah, I mean, going with the tribalistic

and

the nationalistic stuff, that's just an

aspect of of

a worldly reality.

And if you completely abandon that,

um I mean, if everybody were an arahant,

I assume that would be gone. But uh if

one nation abandons it, as a general

rule, that nation just collapses. I

mean, that's kind of what history shows.

You got too much diversity,

then um you don't have like anything

like you don't have a binding agent. You

don't have anything holding the society together anymore. You've got different parts of the society wanting to go in different directions with different values and so forth, then it disintegrates.

Uh

so,

I mean,

to have compassion and love is good, obviously, and you should have as much of that as you can, but still um you you should have your feet on the ground and look at things realistically and just acknowledge that I mean,

there's a certain amount of
self-preservation.

You should take measures to preserve not
only your individual self and maybe the
people that depend on you, but also just
your community cuz to some degree your
community depends on you, also.

And uh that's where the nationalism or
the tribalism can come in in a valid
way, um

even within the context of Dharma.

But again, I mean, you you anything that
you do that is motivated by anger or
hatred or resentment or revenge is going
to be bad karma. So,

the outward actions of trying to
protect and strengthen your community or

your tribe or your nation should be um
as peaceful as you can manage, and you
should have as at least neutral mental
states. Even if you can't manage
compassion and love, at least there
should be a kind of philosophical
detachment and neutrality rather than
negativity and hatred and anger and so
forth.

So, I think I'll just move on to the
next question. I hope I answered that
one.

And the next one is from Oroboro.

And Oroboro asks, is compassion a form
of attachment? And if so, should we free
ourselves from it?

Well, I've kind of talked about
compassion um

just a minute ago.

Um no, compassion is not necessarily a
form of attachment. It is
somewhat paradoxical to me. I used to think
this I used to think about this a lot
because compassion literally means
suffering with. You know, the calm means
with
and the passion means suffering.

Um so, compassion means you know, you
feel another person's suffering. And if
you've got like a a wise saint who is
above ordinary suffering, then for him
to have compassion or her to have
compassion for a suffering being, they'd

have to be feeling that suffering such
in a way would kind of negate their
their enlightenment or something. But um
it really doesn't work that way. In a
way, you're just transmuting it into
perfection. Like if a saint sees an
angry person, you know, they're not
seeing it in the same terms as the angry
person is seeing themselves. They're
just seeing it as like a just a form of
energy

or something like that. So um but
getting back to the question here, is
compassion a form of attachment? Uh and
if so, should we free ourselves from it?
There is

there is kind of a subtle difference. I mean

um if you see somebody and I I do this a lot. I go out in public and you see people that are just all messed up. You know, they're all crippled up or they're just like messed up on drugs or whatever and just mentally ill. And it can make you feel uncomfortable. And um so you can sort of feel have a kind of compassion that

it's not entirely wholesome in that it's like you want to help that person just to make yourself feel better, something like that.

Um

yeah, that could I mean that could have a certain element of unskillful karma involved.

But, um

compassion in general is a good thing.

The Buddha himself was motivated, supposedly according to the according to the text, he was motivated by compassion, moved by compassion to help others, to help all beings if possible.

So, yeah, genuine compassion, um yeah, it's not an attachment and we don't need to free ourselves from it.

Although, there are certain

um emotions that can mimic compassion

that um

that really are not all that skillful.

Um

I'm trying to think of the word for it.

It's not necessarily sympathy.

Um

Now,

I'm having a mental block, but there is a kind of emotion where it can kind of mimic compassion, but really it does involve attachment.

So, it's sort of like like with love. I mean, there's different kinds of love.

You can have unattached love, which would be like enlightened spiritual kind of love. Or then you could have like the really attached, clingy, really

um like conditional kind of love, which has a little bit of love in it, but is mostly like animal instincts and that sort of thing. So, you can have like an animal instinct kind of compassion that maybe has a little bit of real compassion in it, but is mostly just like animal instinct stuff, like social instincts, that kind of a thing. That uh I mean, that you should uh at least try to transmute it up into a higher level. Um because even though it has some good in it, I mean, it's it's pretty crude. So.

Um

that's a long answer to a short

question. So, I'm just moving on to the next one.

And the next question is from B Pat 427.

Good old B Pat.

And B Pat 427 asks, are you familiar with the writings of Miguel Serrano and or Savitri Devi? If so, do you have an opinion on them?

And I haven't read a single book by either of these people. I've read quotes by both of them.

And I'm pretty sure both of them are of the opinion that Adolf Hitler

um

is a god, like a small g god. I think Savitri Devi, I'm not sure about Miguel Serrano, but Savitri Devi considered

Adolf Hitler to be like an avatar of Vishnu or or some such.

Um

and both of the both of these people, the quotes that I have read seemed very

um

it was in a style that was really alien to what I can really relate to. I just like succinct and to the point when it comes to getting the point across and they were possibly just like products of of like the mid-20th century where they they liked flowery eloquence as almost a substitute for real substance.

And so,

personally, I would be very surprised if
if Adolf Hitler is in a high heaven
realm. And I'd be even more surprised if
he was an avatar of Vishnu.

Um maybe some kind of instrument of of
divine powers in some way,
but um yeah, I just I really cannot
agree with people who considered Adolf
Hitler to have been like a really wise,
enlightened, more almost
almost immaculate person.

Because I mean, he was human. I mean
he had his quirks, he had his hang-ups
like everybody else.

Um

I mean, he wasn't as bad as the
propagandists

um

masquerading as historians would would

uh

um have us believe. But still, I mean,

he he was not a saint.

So,

yeah, I I really am not much interested

in Miguel Serrano or Savitri Devi. I

don't think I'll ever read either

uh a book written by either of them.

Although, maybe I will, who knows.

Uh but yeah, I I do not think that they

were correct. But, I think possibly

Miguel Serrano, especially, was more

interested in just building up the myth

and just going with the power of the

myth. And um you know, that

I doubt that there's going to be any
Hitler cult that's really going to take
off. It's not going to strike traction
anytime soon.

But, uh at least there would be more
grounding in in reality, just uh
emphasizing the importance of the power
of myth to really unify a people, get
them behind a belief so strongly that
the belief becomes virtually true. And I
would say something like like

Christianity is a good example of that.

Where I mean, it was I I mean, any
non-Christian would have to say that you
know, Jesus was not the only begotten
son of God almighty who died for our

sins. I mean, only a Christian would believe that, I assume.

So,

uh we consider that to be a myth.

But nevertheless, it's a very powerful myth that it unified Western civilization for a thousand years and uh really accomplished great things just through the power of that unifying belief.

So, I mean, I might be able to agree to that extent. But, I think I'm going to move on to the next question here.

Also from Bipath427.

And this is kind of going in a different direction.

Are you going to learn G-code for machining at your new job? Also, what kind of stuff do you guys make?

So, he's referring to the job I got 2 weeks ago. The first paying job I have had in more than 30 years.

The last paying job I had before I was a monk was

ended around 1990 and I was working as a fisheries biologist for the University of Washington School of Fisheries.

But, uh now I'm working in a sheet metal shop.

And I'm not exactly sure what G-code is. Some of the machines at the shop do have computers hooked up to them and you program in

like the shape

you know, it's like you get a special order, somebody wants a certain shape of of metal gadget, you know, like uh like a like a gutter is an obvious example, some kind of trim, you know, they wanted a certain angle that isn't in stock. So, you got to program it into the computer and then it it tells you, you know, how to bend it and and this sort of thing. So, whether that involves G-code or not, I have no idea. It's it's it's not really um like a your standard sheet metal shop is not really hyper advanced technologically. You know, there are

some computers and that sort of thing,

but um

it's it's not really super advanced like

like a a factory making auto parts or

something like that. Because really we

are just you start off with just rolls

of of sheet metal and then it gets cut

up into sheets and sometimes we can just

sell just sheets of just flat metal, but

then usually um you know, we're making

um stuff out of the sheet metal, but

it's like rolled or stamped and cut and

that sort of thing.

So, um

yeah, it's mostly like uh

uh like

metal sheet metal construction materials

is mainly what we're dealing with.

So, with regard to the G-code, I don't know, but uh,

there is there are some computer things you have to learn. If if you if you work certain machines, but I'm just uh, entry level. I know, I'm starting from scratch.

And so, I'm just uh, doing lots of fetching and toting. Which uh, is actually good for good for my health.

It's good exercise. It's really a workout. I'm like a professional weightlifter practically at this point.

So, the next question is from Sam Lam.

And he asks a number of questions here.

He is a

new member

of the uh, SubscribeStar team. Of the tribe. The the SubscribeStar tribe.

And uh, his first question

is, "Brainwaves have been studied in meditating monks and in those who watch television.

There are specific researchers that have studied the similarities in brainwaves during the two activities. Please comment on the possible meditative state people may have when watching television."

Well, that's kind of interesting. Um,

I wrote a an essay long ago, which is in one of my books. I think it's in my

first book, Essays in Theravada
Buddhism.

Um,

discussing like how meditation as a
technique got invented in the first
place. I mean, it had to have some kind
of beginning. Had to have a start to it.

And one of the possibilities
is that meditation

uh,

got its origins in just gazing at a
campfire. Because, you know, our Stone
Age ancestors didn't have TV, but they
had like the the Stone Age equivalent of
TV is just a campfire. And anybody who's
gone camping

knows that uh, looking into a campfire can have a real hypnotic effect and it probably that that is an instinct in our species that we are just fascinated by the flickering lights and it keeps us, especially the the little cave kids from wandering away into the dark where the wolves and the leopards are.

And

my my theory is that television, one reason why people are so fascinated by television and just vegetate in front of a TV screen is it's like a misplaced instinct. You know, it's like the instinct of gazing into a campfire at night. And um nowadays we've just got the TV instead

of a campfire.

But um

it's

it's a really crude superficial level of meditation even if you could call it meditation. So it's more like a mild hypnotic trance than anything that would be called right concentration or samatha samadhi in Buddhism.

So it could be that specific researchers have studied the similarities in brain wave during the two activities, but I would guess that they're relatively clueless with regard to what is good meditation as opposed to a light

hypnotic trance.

And there are a lot of a lot of
meditators who just can't tell the
difference. In Burma it's very common
that people will consider

um

like self-hypnosis to be like genuine
samatha samadhi right concentration like
valid Buddhist meditation.

And um

they really can't tell the difference.

And uh like

some some meditation centers, in my
opinion,

um are confusing jhana with hypnotic
trance. Somebody goes into a a deep
hypnotic trance and they see what they

think they ought to see. The teacher's going to The teacher tells them, you know, you should be seeing the mind arising and passing away uh you know, like 13 trillion times a second and you should be able to see your own internal organs and all this or remember past lives, that sort of thing.

And then they go into a hypnotic trance and think that they are seeing these things, but uh they're just imagining what they think they ought to see.

I think there's a lot of that in Buddhism.

But um

I don't consider that to be like genuine

jhana. I could be mistaken.

So, yeah, with regard to this first question, then uh

I think I've pretty much answered it.

But um the the same kind of If you're in the same kind of mental state when you're meditating as when you're watching TV, then you are not meditating very well.

I would just say that. Um to say the least, you know, you're just like in a mild trance state, which uh is not really what Buddhist meditation is supposed to be about.

And so, I'll just move on to the next question. I think there's a little bit more about this a little later on.

Okay. Now, this one This one's kind of a difficult one. It's I'm not fully certain what um

Sam Lam is referring to here, but I'll I'll give it a shot.

His question is,

"Can you address the possibility of those who meditate falling into hypnosis or an influence state from external energies during meditation?

For example, in deep meditation, how would one know if they were being influenced by an outside source unless there was an observer? Further, let's say we can observe hypnosis or just an

influence from an external energy source on a deep meditation, what would you say about this?" Well, I'm not exactly sure what Sam Lam is referring to with regard to external energies.

I mean, it could be like somebody speaking, or would it be some kind of uh like a spirit trying to invade the body or or what? I'm not exactly sure what Sam Lam has in mind here, but um I'll try to answer this question as well as I can. Can you address the possibility of those who meditate falling into hypnosis or an influenced state from external energies during meditation? Well, one handy rule of thumb

with regard to meditation is I mean
there

let's see getting

Okay, I'll just say I if you are
oblivious to your surroundings, then
chances are you're in a hypnotic trance
and not really in a state of
mindfulness.

Like if you don't hear the clock ticking
anymore, you don't feel the mosquito
biting you. You're just oblivious to
everything around you.

Chances are you're in a
a hypnotic trance
and not in what Buddhism would consider
to be samadhi or samatha, which is right

mindfulness.

Because like fourth jhana in Buddhism is purification of mindfulness. I mean that's just pure mindfulness at that point.

And uh if you're purely mindful, you're not going to be like a hibernating squirrel. You're not going to be like in a state of suspended animation where you're oblivious to everything around you.

So if you're meditating correctly, you're going to be in a state of heightened awareness and not just sitting there in a in a stupor.

So that's the first point that I would make.

Um with regard to an influenced state
from external energies, again, I mean if
you are
meditating well, meditating correctly,
you've got um
mindfulness that is still
well developed, you know, you're still
mindful, then you're going to be aware
of whatever happens. Anything that
arises, anything that happens in your
mind, you're going to see it. And if
you're doing um really like relatively
deep meditation, as soon as it arises,
as soon as it even starts to arise, you
just see it and then it just fades back
out again. So, you'd be pretty much uh

impervious to any kind of uh influences. You'd be aware of them, but they just wouldn't have any effect on you. It'd be like your mind is like a mirror. Like a like a mirror. Whatever is in front of the mirror gets reflected there and then as soon as it leaves, it's just not reflected there anymore. It doesn't leave a trace in the mirror. The mirror is just unaffected. It's there very clearly when it's there and as soon as it's gone, it just goes. And um you're in a a state of just heightened awareness when this is happening. Because if you're not in a state of heightened awareness, then you just get caught up into old habits and you just

start thinking and attaching to things
and you know
daydreaming or whatever.

So, let's see.

For example, in deep meditation, how
would one know if they were being
influenced by an outside source unless
there was an observer? Well, they are
you are the observer. Even when you're
in deep meditation, you are still an
observer.

Cuz otherwise, you're you're like in a
trance and you're like a hibernating
squirrel and I don't think you're really
um

Yeah, I don't think you're really

meditating correctly, at least from the point of view of Theravada Buddhism.

There may be like in Hinduism or something

um you may be able to just go into like a state of suspended animation where somebody can hit you in the head with a hammer and you just don't feel anything and you're just fine and and you

I mean, that kind of thing is mentioned even in some Theravada texts. Like there's a really weird Theravada text stuff. Um

I think it's venerable Sariputta who's meditating just in deep jhana.

And uh a couple of ogres or yakshas come by and one of them just he just can't

help. He sees the bald head of the shaved monk sitting there. He just wants to smash it. And he hits him as hard he hits him hard enough to just like cleave a a in half and has no effect. And then the ogre realizes that he just uh smashed the head of a saint in vain. And so, he the ground just open up and he falls into hell. And then uh finally, when Sariputta is done meditating, his his friend Maha Moggallana, who was also a meditation master, asked him, "Then didn't you feel anything just now?"

And uh Sariputta says, "No, but I do have a little bit of a headache."

And I would consider that story just to be a kind of mythology.

I mean, unless you really believe in ogres smashing people in the head. Um probably composed by someone who already, even in ancient times, was confusing hypnotic trance, where you just like a hibernating squirrel and oblivious to everything around you, with purification of mindfulness, where you're in a heightened state of awareness.

Even then, I mean, if an ogre smashed you, I mean, you might not be bothered by it. But cuz you would just be like the mirror. You just like, you know, it it's there and then it's

not there as soon as the smashing is done. It's just gone and you just keep sitting there.

Um so, yeah, I think there is a little bit of a misunderstanding with regard to what

meditation is in Buddhism. And it's not going into a trance, where you're oblivious to everything around you.

Where

I mean, if that happens to you, then you probably are in a hypnotic trance.

And it may be that you are vulnerable to external energy

sources or um just, you know, somebody messing with you or whatever.

But if you are in a heightened state of awareness, like purity of mindfulness, then uh yeah, you're you're pretty much uh invincible, I would say.

So, the next question, also from Sam Lam,

is the idea of karma or the language surrounding it seems to be a problem, especially in the West or maybe everywhere else.

It is karma as a state of mind versus karma as cause and effect. In The Tao of Physics by Fritjof Capra, page 88, it states, "Quote, the world of Maya changes continuously because the divine lila is a rhythmic dynamic play. The dynamic force of the

play is karma. Karma means action where everything is dynamically connected with everything else. In the words of the Gita, karma is the force of creation where from all things have life. The meaning of karma, like that of Maya, has been brought down from its original cosmic level to the human level where it has acquired a psychological sense.

As long as our view of the world is fragmented, as long as we are under the spell of Maya and think that we are separated from our environment and can act independently, we are bound by karma.

Being free from the bond of karma means

to realize the unity and harmony of all nature, including ourselves."

Unquote.

And then Sam Lam says, "Please comment."

Well, first of all, I would say that Fritjof Capra there seems to be going with the more Hinduistic conception of karma.

That in Theravada Buddhism, karma is volition. "Cetanāhaṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi." Which is a famous quote

um attributed to the Buddha saying,

"Monks, I say that volition is karma."

Or if you don't like the word volition for cetana, it would be something like

will. It would be like Schopenhauer's

will. And it is a mental state. Karma is

a mental state. It's not some sort of cosmic law of every action has an equal and opposite reaction, anything like that. I used to believe that before I became a monk. And then studying Buddhist texts, I realized that karma is a mental state. Karma is volition.

And um

or will,

urge,

whatever you want to call it, but it is a mental state.

And so,

yeah, I'm not exactly sure where to take this because I'm not exactly sure what the

the question is other than please
comment.

But um yeah, I would say that Capra is
going with a more Hinduistic and cosmic
understanding of karma that
um would would not be considered a
correct interpretation of it from a from
an orthodox Theravada Buddhist point of
view.

Where

um

like a really simple

um description of karma that uh the
average materialistic normie even could
probably accept is just force of habit.

In fact, I read a

um a translation a long time ago that

translated karma literally as habit energy.

They just called it habit energy. I mean, it wasn't a literal translation when I said literally, but but it was that was the translation was habit energy for karma. And that's a really good translation cuz that is really what karma is. It's like an automatic pilot. It's like when you're not fully conscious, which is pretty much all of the time, then you just your habits and your conditioning are running your life for you.

And that's that's pretty much how karma works in everyday life.

Almost everything we do
is habitual to some degree.

And um that's that's how karma works
just at a really superficial level, but
you get a little deeper and it's like,
you know, the way you dream is also
based on just habits and so forth. And
um

this life you can say is a kind of
dream.

And that's that's how karma works. It's
just the habitual beliefs and habitual
urges and so forth that are creating a
certain world for us.

Um but it is a mental state.

And so I think I commented So I'll move
on to Sam Lam's fourth question,

which is

What if you met the Dalai Lama in a room and asked him a question, what would be the question?

That's a good question.

In fact, I've I've considered this and to tell you the truth, I mean, the obvious question for me to ask him is like, "Hey, how's it going?"

That would be like That would be like the natural first question that I would ask. And if I only got one question, I'd probably just blow it, you know, that would just blow the one question that I got. I'd just blurt out, "How's it going, your your holiness?"

Um but uh let's see. If if I could
formulate a serious question I was going
to ask the Dalai Lama,
then um
maybe I would ask his insight
as to like what is the difference in
spirituality
between like an Asian Buddhist, like an
Asian-born Buddhist, like a Tibetan or a
Burmese person, and a Westerner who's
like adopting
Buddhism as like um
you know, a non-native
um
you know, like a non-native
philosophical or spiritual system.
And you know, what would be the

different uh different approaches you would take with a Westerner than what you would take with with an Easterner, something like that.

That might be a a useful question, although um

and you maybe he would tell me something that I I didn't already didn't hadn't already occurred to me.

Because uh there are some pretty obvious differences.

So, yeah, aside from "Hey, how's it going?" Um yeah, it'd probably be the question of uh you know, what is the difference in spirituality between Easterners and Westerners, and what

would be the different approach in like teaching Easterners and Westerners.

And I already have some insights into that, but I would really be interested in in hearing his take on that.

So, next question and last question from Sam Lam.

If you could say one thing to one of the money-making Starbucks monks that happily have a Starbucks Buddhist retreat, what would it be?

And I would say

to any kind of a Western money-making Starbucks monk, as he calls them,

um if you really want to know what it's

like to be a monk, you really want to

know what it's like to follow Dhamma the

way the Buddha taught it, you should spend at least a few years in Asia. Just go to it and not like some rich monastery in town with electricity and everything, either. You go out into the countryside, into some remote, pretty rough area, and and live there for a few years, and take your bowl and walk into the village for your daily bowl of food, and maybe sleep under a tree, at least a little bit, and just live the lifestyle that is described in the Pali texts, instead of uh just having a having a nice time hanging out in the West with uh Starbucks. And probably most of them would just

wouldn't go for it. They'd come up with excuses, you know, I've got this condition that won't let me live in hot climates or whatever, you know. Can't be too far away from my aging parents or something.

But um

And most of them you really can't tell them very much, cuz they they already know. I mean, if if they have any familiarity with the Pali texts, they know that the lifestyle that uh is described here with the the money-making, and Starbucks Buddhist retreats, and so forth, that uh they're already on the wrong on the wrong track. And uh so

there's not really much you can tell them, but I would say just advice to any monk in the West, who especially one who's ordained in the West, is if you really want to taste what it's like to be a monk like described in the Paly texts, then you go out into a forest in Asia, Buddhist Asia.

And, uh, spend at least 2 years there.

The more the more the better.

So, the next question is from a person who writes his name in Japanese characters,

and I believe it would be transliterated into English as Yuichiro.

And he asks,

this is kind of an interesting one, and I've considered this before.

"Can being an absolute Chad get you into heaven realms? As in being a legendary hero, etc., not just being attractive to women, like Hercules or something."

And, yeah, I've considered that. I mean, that was really how you became a god to the ancient Greeks, probably to just the ancient Indo-Europeans in general, um, in really ancient times. I mean, that was if you wanted to be go up into heaven and become a god yourself, you know, a small g one, then you did it through heroism. You know, you didn't do it through saintliness so much. You did it

through a kind of,
um, magnanimity, just greatness of soul.
You know, you just had like a god-like
character, and that would be enough to
to make you a god. And I think that is
possible. I mean, you don't have to be,
um, a saint necessarily
to to go upwards. It could just be, uh,
I mean, like a Roman emperor like
Trajan,
um, he, I mean, he was, uh, a military
commander. He he was responsible for the
deaths of thousands and thousands of
people, but, uh,
he was a wise and benevolent ruler to to
the Romans and led them in prosperity

and so forth. And so, it may be that he
got a lot more

uh good karma than bad. And that might
be enough just through all of his great
deeds, you know, a really great king
even though he does some bad stuff and
is no saint.

Then uh yeah, it's possible. I've I've
considered that.

Um like uh Savitri Devi, I think uh was
saying uh Hitler was like that. But uh
I wouldn't say Hitler was an absolute
chad.

Um

Yeah, so I do think it is possible.

Although

um

it's just my opinion.

So, the next question from Yuichiro,

"Is transhumanism

satanic?" And he's got satanic in

quotation marks.

And

there's been a lot of discussion of

transhumanism and the technological

singularity on the Discord server

associated with my subscribe star

channel.

And uh lots and lots of back and forth.

There seem to be two parties. One party

is that uh it's just like the the

technological singularity just isn't

going to happen because people just

cannot create superintelligent computers that are going to become more conscious than we are. And then other people are saying, "Well, it's it's pretty much inevitable." I've I'm kind of maybe of the second group. I think it's certainly possible that it could happen.

You just start off with a computer that's just has like a glimmer of of consciousness. And I've been told that even that is impossible. I don't see why it would be impossible for a computer to be conscious just in and of itself. I mean, you could just take a like a a virtual copy of a brain and upload it into a or download it into a computer. Upload, download, I can't remember now.

And um and maybe that would mimic the function of a brain, which would then, you know, serve as like a uh a basis for consciousness even though it's maybe not generating consciousness. I mean, I don't think a brain generates consciousness either.

But, um I think I'm I'm straying away from the question here.

Is transhumanism satanic? And um I don't think so. I mean, whether something is good or bad, it's like I keep saying. I mean, I have to just keep saying this almost every every video every question and answer video that really just outward circumstances are neutral.

Outward circumstances are neither good nor bad. It's It's like your attitude. It's the mental states that that accompany the outward circumstances that make it good or bad. And so, transhumanism, which is like um I mean, to some we've already moved in the direction of transhumanism. Just like artificial parts in humans is is already transhumanism. I guess these glasses are like proto-transhumanism.

I've got a a few uh capped teeth, root canals, that sort of thing. So, that could be like proto-transhumanism right there, and that's not satanic. But, uh you start having I I have I've

read they've already got a kind of artificial blood where you can hold your breath for 2 hours.

Um they've already got it working in rats.

Um

I assume that what uh Yuichiro is uh asking here is with regard to like brain implants and that sort of thing or maybe even just uploading a human brain into a computer like I was already mentioning.

And again, it's whether it's satanic or not depends on the the motives and the the mental states of the people involved.

Um it could be good or it could be bad

and and most likely it'll just be some muddy color of gray like everything else.

So, yeah, I don't think it's necessarily good or bad. It's just what we make of it is going to make it good or bad. And just just our attitude with regard to it.

So, it could go either way. And in most likelihood, it'll just be some shade of gray.

If it happens to the extent that it does happen.

So, the next question.

Second to last question here.

From Tṛimśikā Vijñapti.

This is his first question, I think,

unless he's uh changed names recently.

And he says, "Paññobhāsa, are you familiar with Bhikkhu Bodhi's discussion of the social teachings of the Buddha? If so, what are your thoughts?"

Well, it turns out that Tṛimśikā Vijñapti here posted on the Discord server uh a YouTube video by Bhikkhu Bodhi discussing the social teachings of the Buddha.

But the problem is it was relatively boring talk. And I listened to maybe 15 minutes of it. And the whole thing was about an hour and a half, I think. And so, uh 15 minutes was

plenty. I'm I'm more or less familiar
with what Bhikkhu Bodhi says.

And so, um it seems to me that
he

Bhikkhu Bodhi himself is just like an
ultra left like a woke karate at this
point.

He's uh he's definitely he's not
awakened, he's just woke.

And just really just super left-wing. In
fact, he's even flirting with
excommunication
by endorsing women's reproductive
rights.

Quote unquote. And um
yeah, from a Buddhist point of view,
that is uh

yeah, he's flirting with parajika or
just like excommunication at that point.

Um and I might as well mention this
because um

from the Buddhist point of view, life
begins at conception. A human life
begins at conception. So, any kind of
abortion is terminating a human life,
which is murder. And any monk who even
participates in that, even encourages it
to the extent that it it persuades
somebody that to have it done, that
person is an accomplice in murder. And
they're just kicked out of the monkhood
for the rest of their life.

So, Bhikkhu Bodhi, he seems to uh

put in a lot of cases more importance on leftist politics than on Dhamma, even though I am sure he would disagree with that.

But, um

the social teachings of the Buddha, it it could be that he's cherry-picking this and that, you know, he likes this thing that could be considered leftist.

Like, there is a a sutta in the Digha Nikaya where the Buddha is um or this text attributed to the Buddha is saying that uh crime is caused by poverty and that the a good king should subsidize farmers and give them seed grain and so forth.

And um

it I mean, to some degree, although
there's still going to be I mean, if
everybody has the same amount of
everything, there's still going to be
crime.

Um

So,

yeah, I think he uh he he picks and
chooses what he's going to
use as evidence for supposedly the
the liberal or leftist teachings of the
Buddha. And um it's it's kind of
reminiscent of what I was saying up
above where

um

really, I mean, the point of Buddhism is

enlightenment. And originally, Buddhism was for renunciants.

And the Buddha would advise people living in the world, you know, how to make living in the world more acceptable, you know, less harmful to themselves and others and so forth. But, really, if you wanted to practice Buddhism really intensively, going with ancient Indian society, ancient Indian beliefs, you had to really renounce the world.

And so, the people that weren't really renouncing the world and keeping five precepts and supporting the monks and so forth, they were kind of like quasi Buddhists, you know, they

were they weren't exactly the the pro team, they were like the fans supporting the pro team.

Um

Yeah. So, I mean, Bhikkhu Bodhi, I to his credit, he is possibly the best translator of Pali texts into English that that we have nowadays. So, he is a good translator. Um his editorial notes are kind of depressing.

But, um

and he really doesn't base his knowledge of Dharma on his own personal experience very much.

He's considered not to be a meditator.

He, uh, apparently

doesn't put too much emphasis on following the rules of monastic discipline correctly.

Um just based on what I have seen and heard.

Somebody like Ajahn Thanissaro, um he he practices a lot more intensively. He's He teaches at least partly based on his own experience.

And, um, I don't consider him to be quite as good of a translator because a good translator should be as invisible as possible.

You know, you should be When you're reading a translation, it should be as close to you reading it in the original

language as possible.

And Bhikkhu Bodhi is pretty good at that.

Although Ajahn Thanissaro, it's, uh, he uses all these, um, sort of self-indulgent, idiosyncratic, uh, renderings of things so that it's like his personality is like splattered on every page. It's like every fourth or fifth sentence, there might as well be in parentheses, "Look at me, here I am, Ajahn Sucitto translating this."

But, um

yeah, everybody's got their good points and bad points. And and uh
yeah, Ajahn Sucitto practices more

strictly and uh you know, I assume he's got more wisdom than Bhikkhu Bodhi. And Bhikkhu Bodhi is just like a flaming leftist at this point wearing monk's robes.

Um

he's the SJW rainbow pope of Buddhism at present.

But, uh yeah, I didn't watch the whole video and I really don't care what he says about the social teachings of the Buddha. You If you look through the the text, you can find um teachings of the Buddha that arguably endorse, you know, the the liberal or leftist platform or arguably endorse right-wing platforms, and people

are just going to pick and choose what they like the best.

And it it can go either way.

So, finally

the very last question

is from Chaplin.

And Chaplin asks, "You mentioned before that your family is originally from the deep south

and that they had contact with Edgar Cayce.

Can you tell us more about these connections and how does it feel to be back in the land of your ancestors?"

Okay.

Getting to personal stuff.

So, um

yeah, it is true that my

my grandmother wrote a letter to Edgar

Cayce and uh my father wrote about this.

He wrote a kind of occult autobiography

and he mentions this. So, I'm just going

to quote what my father says in in the

manuscript of this this book that I

inherited after he passed away.

And uh my father said this.

Times were hard and um, I'll just

unquote right now and just say this is

during the Great Depression. This is

like the 1930s.

So, I'll start over.

Times were hard and my father, that's my

father's father, my father is saying

this.

I'll start again.

Times were hard and my father did not get his usual summer job teaching at the teachers college. He was despondent and left home swearing that he was going to find some sort of job. He was gone a couple of weeks. My mother did not know where he was. She did not hear from him. Just over the state line in Selma, Alabama lived a man named Edgar Cayce who was getting some publicity as the sleeping prophet. My mother felt he must be an American Indian as only they had this sort of talent. Anyway, she wrote him a letter asking about my dad.

The letter he wrote back was, quote,
"There is really no reason for me to
answer this letter. By the time you get
this, you will have heard from your
husband. He will be teaching summer
school in Jasper, Alabama." Unquote. The
letter from dad came the day before the
one from Cayce.

So, that was
my family's interaction with Edgar
Cayce, the sleeping prophet.

Um,

let's see. More about the connections.

How does it feel to be back in the land
of your ancestors?

Well,

that's it's kind of a s-

difficult question to answer, I think.

It's like my father came from not far from where I am right now. I'm I'm in South Carolina right now. My father was born in Georgia and uh,

my

my father's family obviously lived in Georgia.

And um, my mother was born in Alabama and then for some strange reason I wound up being born in Alaska.

And uh, even though all of my ancestors who fought in the Civil War were wearing gray uniforms, I talk like a Yankee, and now that I'm in South Carolina, I may have to

um

not only work on my South Carolina man

belly,

but uh work on my accent, also.

Um

But my father believed that I was a that

I am a reincarnation of his own father,

which would make me my own grandpa.

And uh

Yeah, they were uh my father's side of

the family were like relatively well-off

plantation owners.

Um I think it's uh

my great-great-grandpa

on my father's mother's side, I saw his

last will and testament, and it included

an entire page of slaves.

It was kind of interesting that um
the cheapest slaves were um an older
female slave, which was worth only about
\$200.

But um a young male slave was worth
about 2,000, which was a heck of a lot
of money back in the 1800s.

Um

But how does it feel to be back in the
land of my ancestors?

Um

I don't know. I've just been kind of
rootless my entire life.

Um

you know, I I

I've been to the deep South once before

when I was 4 years old, or maybe one more time before that when I was a baby that I don't remember.

But I do remember when I was 4 years old being in Georgia visiting aunts and uncles.

And also Alabama. And um

I really I mean it's it's I'm just kind of a rootless person. Like my home for so long, most of my life has just been this

carcass that I travel around in.

Um

Being back in the land of my ancestors, it's

I mean, the land of my ancestors is just it's just really subliminal at best. I

mean, it's it's not much of a
consideration for me. Just I would like
to to go and see where my father was
born and raised, you know, um Mount
Berry

um Mount Berry, Georgia,
which is not far from here, as I say.

Um

but mainly it's just I I like South
Carolina, living up in the hills.

And my sweetheart lives here, which is
important. And it's uh really pretty.

A lot of trees and animals and uh it's
pretty hot, which is like the hardest
part. It's August, the end of August
right now.

And very sweaty, like when I'm working at the sheet metal shop, there's no air conditioning there and it's just everyone is just drenched in sweat.

Drink about a gallon of water every day, just trying to avoid dehydration.

But um it's good. I I like it here.

And uh

the I mean the the land of my ancestors um

yeah, I mean it's it's not much of a consideration for me. I I really I'm not I've not been a very family-oriented person in my life. Both sides of my family were just not close family. So, I remember when I was in Burma, a monk asked me how many aunts and

uncles I had and I honestly didn't know. I had to like I'd have to stop and like calculate, you know. But um when I told him that, I mean he was just astonished because the Burmese are very family-oriented.

You know, you can have like three or four generations living in one hut.

But um yeah, it's just like my father and my mother pretty much just ran ran off and met in Alaska. It's about as far away from Georgia and Alabama as they could get. And uh yeah, most a lot of my family I've never met.

So, um

I think I answered that question.

Uh

yeah, my grandfather, who supposedly was me in a previous existence. And I don't remember it at all. He was uh a very gentle man.

Had was working on his fourth doctorate when he died.

He could uh read and write fluent Greek and Latin.

Um

my father was kind of ashamed of him cuz my brother my my father was like this macho kid, you know, sort of borderline juvenile delinquent. And the only thing my father or my grandfather, his father could do that my

my

father could really be proud of is that he was really good with horses. He was really good horseman.

And uh

but as I say, I don't I don't remember being my own grandpa.

Um

and uh one one thing that there is sort of a parallel between him and me is that my grandfather was ostracized He was a Baptist minister, an ordained Baptist minister who was ostracized from the clergy for holding unorthodox views. And according to the legend he went to a convention of Baptist clergy and one of the topics for discussion was what to do

about the problem of the Methodists

making more converts than the Baptists.

And my grandfather

uh took the took the stand. He went up

to the podium and said that uh as far as

he knew, I mean, the only real

difference between baptism and Methodism

is that

Methodism baptizes by sprinkling water

and baptism requires full immersion and

he didn't think a good He didn't think

that God would send a good man to hell

over a few drops of water.

And so because of that, he uh

he got ostracized and became the dean of

a boy's school.

But um

I think I'm uh

maybe into the realm of TMI at this point. So, I guess that's it. I mean, we're we're done. I've answered all the questions or at least I've attempted to answer all the questions.

And so, if you have any questions you would like to ask regarding Buddhism or meditation or um philosophy,

Burma, anything like that, feel free to ask.

And you can submit your questions in the questions or the the comments below below the video.

Or if you're one of the privileged few

who is uh

a supporter on SubscribeStar, you can
you can submit your questions there. Or
if you are involved in the Discord
server, there is a Q&A room
on the Discord server where you can uh
submit questions there also.

And so, just hit me with your best shot.

As long as you ask questions, I will
continue to attempt answering them.

And be happy.

Hello and welcome to episode 16 of
question and answer.

I am your host Panyo Basa.

Um also known by other names like John
David Reynolds and uh
even other names besides that. Some of
them so secret that even I myself do not
utter them.

And um

I guess we better off get to the uh
the question answering cuz as usual I've
got quite a few
and uh there's some good ones here.

Including the first two questions from
Fred.

And uh these are short questions with

long answers.

So uh brace yourself. Prepare yourself

and uh maybe you should even go pee.

Pause this, go pee,

come back and then start watching

because

there's going to be some uh

serious question answering here.

And Fred's first question

with the short question but a long

answer

is what's your thoughts on Abhidhamma?

And a lot of people probably don't even

know what Abhidhamma is even though it

is the third basket of the Tipitaka.

The the Buddhist scriptures

um in many sects including Theravada

are called the Tipitaka or the Tripitaka depending on whether the uh the scriptural language is Pali or Sanskrit. And uh Tipitaka means literally three baskets.

The first basket is the Vinaya or the uh rules of monastic discipline for monks and also nuns.

The second is the Sutta which is mainly dialogues of the Buddha or sometimes um

uh it's like sermons of the Buddha or dialogues or um sometimes

uh sermons by some of the Buddha's chief disciples or enlightened disciples.

And then finally, the third Pitaka is

the Abhidhamma Pitaka, in Sanskrit
Abhidharma.

And uh in Burma

they consider the Abhidhamma to be the
most important part
of the Buddha's teachings, although most
Westerners
probably more than two-thirds of Western
monks, for example, just don't believe
it. They do not consider it to be
authentic.

They do not consider it to be
um genuine teachings of the Buddha. And
I was one of those, and I still really
have very little use for Abhidhamma. As
a general rule, the less Abhidhamma you
know,

the better because the less you have to
unlearn in order to really understand
the truth.

I think uh Venerable Ñāṇavīra

uh an English monk

uh who lived back in the '50s and '60s

um who was ordained as a monk back in

the '50s and '60s in Sri Lanka. He's the

one who I think originally said that,

just the less you know, the better cuz

the more you learn of Abhidhamma, the

more you have to unlearn in order to get

back on the right track again.

And um

the very first essay that I wrote

um

way way back before I had a computer or anything, I was writing the way cave people did, all the a pen on paper.

And um

the first appendix I had some appendixes at the end. The first appendix was appendix one, some evidence suggesting the spurious nature of Abhidhamma philosophy. And I won't read the whole thing, but I'll just go over the main points, the main arguments

um

explaining why Abhidhamma probably wasn't really taught by the Buddha.

So, the first point here is that um in the only canonical account of the first Buddhist council, which is uh Vinaya

Cullavagga chapter 12,

um it says that the venerable Upali

recited the Vinaya and then the

venerable Ananda recited the Suttas and

that was it. There's no mention at all

of Abhidhamma.

Even in the uh canonical account of the

second council, there's no mention at

all of Abhidhamma. So, really there's no

um

contemporary or anything close to

contemporary mentions of the Abhidhamma

Pitaka until you get up around the third

council, which is

um

like mid-3rd century BC and so well over

100 years after the lifetime of the Buddha.

And uh see what what I don't want to miss out on any good points here, but um let's see.

Yeah, the the Burmese account for this and also the com- the commentarial uh commentarial tradition accounts for this by just saying that Abhidhamma was uh or they they just change the details of the story and say Ananda also recited Abhidhamma even though there's no mention of it in the oldest accounts. And then uh the Burmese just lump Abhidhamma in with the Khuddaka Nikaya of the the Sutta Pitaka, which uh

is uh still not very convincing.

Okay, so the second point um
describing the reasons or the evidence
suggesting that Abhidhamma really wasn't
taught by the Buddha

is that the word Abhidhamma is seldom
found in the rest of the Tipitaka.

Um approximately 11 times. I think I
read somewhere that the the the word
Abhidhamma is found 11 times in the the
Vinaya and Suttanta Pitakas.

And

when it is found, it's usually paired
with the word Abhivinaya. Like it'll
have monks discussing Abhidhamma and
Abhivinaya.

Which indicates, or at least strongly suggests,

that here it didn't really mean

Abhidhamma Pitaka because there was no

Abhivinaya Pitaka. It just means like

higher points or like fine points of

Dhamma, fine points of Vinaya.

And um

that probably uh

somehow evolved

into uh sort of a commentary which then

became very elaborate and became like

orthodox dogma. And then finally by the

the time of the third council, it just

got incorporated.

Um let's see. The third point is that

many of the terms which play integral

central roles in Abhidhamma philosophy, like Citta Vithi, Citta Vithi, Bhavanga, Javana, Kriyacitta, Rupa Kalapa, etc. etc. are either entirely lacking in the Suttas or found there rarely and in radically different contexts.

For example, the elaborate doctrine of Citta Vithi, which is essential traditional Abhidhamma psychology and is taught in even the most elementary of Abhidhamma courses, is entirely foreign to the first two Pitakas and is mentioned only briefly and obscurely even in the Abhidhamma Pitaka itself because a lot of what is considered to

be basic teachings of Abhidhamma that you learn in like a beginning course of Abhidhamma, like some place like Burma, um that's from the commentaries. It's from the Abhidhamma commentaries because by the time the Tipitaka was closed, Abhidhamma wasn't finished yet. They were still working on it. So a lot of the the basic teachings of Abhidhamma are found not in the Pitaka in the Abhidhamma Pitaka itself, not in the actual canonical scriptures, but in the commentaries to the scriptures.

So moving on to the next point, the fifth book of the Abhidhamma Pitaka is called the Kathāvatthu, which is based entirely on dogmatic controversies

with schismatic sects of Buddhism that existed around the time of the third council.

So,

the most obvious or most likely explanation for the Kathāvatthu is that it was written around the time of the third council or composed around the time of the third council.

Um

although

the Burmese will say that the Buddha could see the future and he was um like giving ways of arguing against heretics. You know, he would see see what the arguments would be by

looking into the future and then explain ways of arguing against them, but the arguments are like proto-logical.

You know, they're not very good arguments in a lot of cases. And uh I think the Buddha could have done a lot better if uh if this uh explanation were the correct one.

So, uh let's see.

The fifth one is really the clincher um for most for most academics.

Um

I think most Western Buddhist scholars just have to admit, you know, just as they would admit that Mahayana didn't exist for the first few hundred years of Buddhism.

By the same token, they have to admit that uh Abhidhamma probably didn't exist for the first more than a hundred years of Buddhism.

And uh the clincher is that um um of the the different schools of ancient Buddhism, and by the time of the third council, there were lots of them, you know, up in the double digits.

Um

each one had its own Abhidhamma. There was like the the Vinaya and the Sūtras are relatively the same amongst all of the oldest the oldest sects.

Um

but the Abhidhamma Pitaka rather is

radically different. I mean, it's like
um the Sarvastivada school of Buddhism
is relatively closely connected or
closely related to Theravada. I think
probably Sarvastivada and Theravada
didn't really officially split into two
different schools of Buddhism until
around the third time of the third
council. And even so, their Abhidhammas
are entirely different. Not a single
book is the same.

So, with regard to Vinaya and the Sutras
um among the ancient schools
they were mostly in agreement. I I'd
guess, you know, maybe 80% the same at
least.

You know, the same Sutras, the same

rules, that kind of thing. But with Abhidhamma, it's just almost completely different.

So, that's that's really the clincher for most of the scholars and and for me also. I mean, it really does. It's like the final nail in the coffin. Although, I move on to another point here that uh just a lot of Abhidhamma just really um

it's just uh just objectively untrue going with, you know, modern science, for example. Like um

in uh Abhidhamma uh they they they just have like a an

ultimately real

essence called nutritive essence. So,
that's like nutrition is just this one
this one element.

And of course, I mean, there's all kinds
of different aspects to nutrition.

Um you know, like a hydrogen atom.

Um you know, I mean, if it's in a if
it's in a molecule of glucose, it's
nutritive or I mean, well, I guess
nowadays maybe people who think that
sugar is poison would say it isn't. But
let's say it's in a

uh a molecule of vitamin C, ascorbic
acid, then it would be nutritive. But
that same hydrogen atom, if it's in a
uh a molecule of, you know, some sort of

toxin, then of course it's it's
non-nutritive. It's it's toxic.

So,

um but even so, in Abhidharma, this
nutritive essence is like ultimately
small particle, you know, it'd be no
bigger than a hydrogen atom.

So, I mean, there's just all this stuff.

I mean, I don't want to just flog a dead
horse here, but um

there's um

lots and lots of evidence.

And to most objective

outsiders who are knowledgeable in

Buddhism, it's pretty conclusive

evidence that the Buddha really didn't

teach Abhidharma. And even the story explaining how Abhidharma existed is pretty fishy. Um like the origin of Abhidharma.

The official story or myth is that one year, during the rains retreat, the Buddha

left a kind of holographic image of himself on Earth, and he flew up into a heaven realm and taught the gods there Abhidharma.

And

so gradually it came back to Earth.

And there was some delay, presumably, where it was kept secret, you know, it was just like higher teachings or something. And um

that kind of explains
probably it's an answer to monks long
ago who were saying,
um you know, why is it all of a sudden
there's these new genuine authentic
teachings of the Buddha that we'd never
heard of before?

So, that would be their way of answering
the question, much like the origin story
of Mahayana Buddhism, where, according
to the legend,
and this is the same kind of legend.

It's just this kind of lame explanatory
legend of how authentic teachings of the
Buddha can just suddenly crop up
hundreds of years after the death of the

Buddha.

Um

according to the Mahayana legends,
um the Buddha realized that people just
weren't wise enough to understand
Mahayana and so the Mahayana scriptures
were hidden under the ocean in a kind of
palace and guarded by Naga serpent
dragons until around the time of uh
Nagarjuna, like 500 years after the time
of the Buddha.

It's the same kind of story. It's It's
just a myth explaining how all of a
sudden you can have new authentic
ancient teaching ancient teachings of
the Buddha that nobody had heard of
before.

So, I mean, uh to make a long story or a long answer even longer, my thoughts on Abhidharma is that um

it was kind of like an old commentary that became canonical. It was so old that it just uh

its origins were lost in the mists of time and it just became canonical.

Or uh or something along those lines.

But um as as I say, most of the

um the different ancient schools of

Buddhism had their own Abhidharma. There were a few that didn't have any Abhidharma at all.

So, it's it's hardly likely

that all of the schools of Buddhism

except one would throw out the most important teachings of the Buddha and then cook up like fake ones.

So, I'll just move on to Fred's next question.

That was a That was a long answer to a short question. This one will be a slightly shorter answer to a slightly longer question. What's your opinion on transferring merit? Is there an energy field matrix in a being?

Okay, transferring merit. It happens a lot in Theravada Buddhism.

At least uh it is attempted a lot.

And what you're trying to do is it's it's mainly has to do with ancestors or just uh helping unhappy

spirits, people who have passed away,
and you're not sure if they're they've
got enough merit to get into heaven, to
get a good rebirth, or something. So,
you're trying to help them by
contributing to their merit so that
they'll

they'll have uh enough good karma to
make it into a better realm.

And so,

um usually what they do in Asia, or in
Burma, especially, is they'll go to a
monastery and they'll
take precepts, they'll donate things to
the monks,
and um listen to a sermon, and then at

the end, they will do a water pouring ceremony where they're sharing their merit the merit that they have just earned by, you know, making the donations and hearing the hearing the Dhamma and keep taking the precepts, and they're sharing that merit with all beings.

But, there is no energy transfer, really. They're not just uh shooting rays of good karma in all directions.

What happens is,

um according to orthodox Theravada, anyway,

the beings that going to benefit have to be present or have to be able to know what's going on.

So, generally it only works for ghosts, you know, spirits, pretas, who can actually be there and witness what's going on.

And then, what happens is that um you know, they rejoice. They're happy that these people are doing these good things, and then because they are happy that someone else is doing something good, that is a wholesome mental state for them, which then raises their their amount of merit.

So, you don't just take your own merit and send it to somebody else. You earn merit, and then other beings see you earning merit, and then they're happy

because they see you earning merit, and then their own happiness is their merit. So, that's that's generally how it works.

Or how it's supposed to work, anyway.

And so, as I say, generally only works for ghosts according to Orthodox

Theravada or any being who can actually witness what's going on. If they're in hell, they're not going to be able to see it. If they're in heaven, they don't really need the merit, anyway,

presumably. And heaven is so much better than here that

they're they're generally not interested and they're not paying attention to what what we're doing.

So, mostly it works for spirits.

So, I'll just move on to the next question here, which is from Baron Sinclair.

And Baron Sinclair says,

"Is a bhikkhu allowed to exercise for health, such as yoga asanas, yogic postures, calisthenics, push-ups, pull-ups, sit-ups, etc., or cardio?" Which he has running.

"I am currently a gym instructor in training, but plan to ordain as a monk in the coming years after I work for a while. I feel like I need to be able to do more than just arms round and walking meditation for exercise.

I have discovered that my body simply requires a workout to stay physically attuned."

Okay, that's uh kind of a good question, I think. Kind of an interesting one, possibly a useful one to a few of you who are maybe considering becoming a monk, but want to exercise, stay healthy.

Um it depends on what the purpose of your exercise is. If you're doing it to be buff, uh if you're doing it for sport, then it's it's a no-no. You're not supposed to do it. Like, there is actually a rule against playing in water, which would include swimming if you don't have a

real need to swim.

Like, if you if if it's the only way to cross a river, then you're you're allowed to swim. Or if you're getting away from like a an angry elephant or something, then yeah, you can swim.

You're in a flood or something.

But, um

exercising in order to look good,

um

yeah, that's that is uh contrary to

Dhamma,

especially for a monk. It's not so bad for a layperson, but monks are really

um

just the purity of your life will keep

you healthy.

And, um

if you want exercise, then you can live a long way from your alms village, your alms resort, do a lot of walking, lots of uh chop wood, carry water kind of a stuff. And, I was I was relatively healthy when I was a monk living out in the woods.

Um to some degree, just the roughness of living that lifestyle uh has like your caveman instincts going, and it maybe raises your testosterone or something. So, I was I was actually pretty fit as a monk when I was living in the forest, anyway.

So, that would probably be your best

bet. I mean, running, yeah, that's
that's not going to go over. Um
especially if you're living in an Asian
culture, a traditional Asian culture,
they're not going to
people are going to think it's very
inappropriate for monks to be jogging or
like lifting weights or or, you know,
doing calisthenics out in public. You
know, in in the privacy of your own hut,
then yeah, you can do push-ups, sit-ups,
that kind of a thing. There's nothing
wrong with that, so long as you're doing
it just for health,
and uh not for the purpose of looking
good,

or for just sport.

And, uh there are the four recollections that monks are supposed to recollect.

Um

one of them is before they eat food, you know, they're supposed to recollect,

"I'm eating this food not to look good, you know, not to beautify myself, not for pleasure, but only to keep this body healthy enough that I can continue practicing Dhamma. And exercise would be similar to that.

So,

it would have to be low-key, probably in solitude, no jogging.

I mean, good luck jogging with monks' robes anyway.

So, yeah, I mean, it's not entirely against the rules, but uh you'd have to examine your motives, and also you should probably consider just um the cultural norms of a Buddhist country if you're living in one.

Or just the the the cultural norms of the people who are supporting you.

So, the next question is from somebody who has

no name other than just a horizontal line.

And the horizontal line says,

"What is your opinion of Advaita

Vedanta? I like Buddhism very much,

except for its doctrine of the Anatman,

or no self, and its vision of
consciousness.

I find Adi Shankara's arguments for the
Atman and nature of consciousness more
convincing, but I'm a bit divided
because for everything else I prefer
Buddhism. This is a theme that I address
relatively frequently. Maybe not every
single Q&A, but uh
probably more than half of them.

Uh I touch upon this
this idea that um

Yeah.

You You've got an absolute,
you know, this formless, infinite
absolute.

And in Vedanta, it's called Brahman.

In Buddhism, it's called Nirvana,
usually, or Nibbana, Nibbana Dhatu.

And

they're trying to explain the same
thing.

I think anybody with an open mind who's
not just a complete dogmatist would be
inclined to agree that like the ultimate
reality that the Upanishads are
attempting to describe is essentially
the same ultimate reality that Buddhist
texts are attempting to describe except
they have to go they they go about it
differently.

And really you've got this problem in
that an absolute

uh is unconditioned. I mean
anything you say about it is going to be
invalid because once you start
explaining it you've got an explanation
you're no longer anywhere near the
absolute anymore.

Um philosophically speaking.

So you've got this you've got this
ultimate this this absolute and you
can't say that it exists and you can't
say that it doesn't exist. You can't say
that it does and doesn't exist. You
can't say that it neither does nor
doesn't exist. Anything you say about it
is going to be invalid.

And but nevertheless human language and
just the human thought process requires

us

to have some kind of handle to deal with it.

And so

most religions take the absolute and say it exists.

And a lot of them will just call it God.

Um

but in Buddhism they they just took the other

the other invalid option of saying it doesn't exist or at least usually

Buddhism uh treats nirvana as just kind of emptiness or void. Something like

that. The the principle of cessation is

uh

a common explanation in Theravada for
for nibana.

And uh so it's it's just like
either way is is wrong. I mean either
way is invalid.

But you have to pick one or the other as
a general rule. So if I prefer that to
believe that the absolute is,
then be a theist or a Vedantist. And
if you want to say that it isn't, then
be a Buddhist. And the Buddhist idea
of isn't is much less prone to
attachment to um dogmas. I mean, still
people get attached to Buddhist dogmas,
but still um
isn't for the absolute.

Um it can lead to nihilism and

materialism, and a lot of people accuse the Buddhists of being nihilists.

But um really it is it's it's you just experience it for yourself and then stop trying to stick labels onto it. That would be your best bet.

Um consciousness.

Yeah, it's like in uh the Vedanta or the Upanishads,

um

the the highest principle is is sometimes described as infinite formless consciousness.

Uh whereas in Theravada, usually consciousness is just a mental

state. There has to be consciousness of something. You know, it's just like a a mundane mental state usually.

But um there are at least two suttas that contain fragments of really old Buddhist poetry that do describe um Nibbana as infinite consciousness.

But as I say, trying to stick any kind of label onto it, you've already missed the boat. Just trying to trying to conceptualize it, you're you're already gone into the realm of invalidity.

So, you just don't think about it. Like the original like the oldest Buddhist text like the Atthakavagga of the Sutta Nipata, you just don't think about it. Don't theorize. You just practice, and

then you experience it directly if if
your practice reaches um the the goal.

And you just don't worry about it. Just
don't try to

you know, don't try to write on the air,
you know, it just doesn't work.

So, the the horizontal line um
asks another question here.

What do you think of Tibetan Buddhism?

They almost join the Vedantic vision in
some thinkers, even if officially they
still reject the Atman of the Indians,
{quote} {unquote}. I think, for example,
the Dolpopa, whose description of the
absolute would be validated by any
Vedantic thinker.

Um I really don't know that much about Tibetan Buddhism. I've never been that much attracted to it.

When I became a Buddhist, I just wanted to know what the Buddha taught and uh to follow that.

And um

Theravada comes closest to that. It's historically comes closest to the Buddha's time.

So, you're going to find like a higher percentage of authentic teachings in the Pali texts than you're going to find in later schools, just because the other schools are later than Theravada. But, the key here is say

I think, for example, of Dolpopa, whose description of the absolute could be validated. Well, there you go. That's it. Description of the absolute. There is no valid description of the absolute. Once you start describing the absolute, it's not the absolute anymore. It's just absolute. It's just this label. It's just this unenlightened concept in your mind, which is just infinitely far away from what you're trying to describe.

So,

um

the Buddhists are better at not reifying the absolute.

If you if you just absolutely can't

stand not reifying the absolute and like
theorizing about it and explaining it
and sticking labels onto it, as though
that were possible,

then uh yeah, you might feel more
comfortable with

um

a more theistic system.

So, I think I should just move on.

I'm I'm answering these questions rather
long-windedly.

Next question

is from Trumpetonshire Gahapati.

And Trumpetonshire Gahapati says,

"Can you provide any citations for
traditional Buddhist views on
homosexuality?"

The context for this question is that I did some searching on the papers available on academia.edu, but all I found were left-wing academics writing what appeared to be tendentious papers about Buddhism being so supportive of homosexuality."

Yeah, that's not surprising at all.

Um

with regard to Buddhism and homosexuality,

uh yeah,

um Buddhism certainly is not all black and white like a lot of uh religions, especially Western religions. I mean, it's like something

is a sin or it's not a sin, you know, if you do this, you'll go to hell or you won't go to hell, maybe you'll go to heaven.

But uh in Buddhism, it just doesn't work that way. Buddhist ethics are psychological. So, two people can do exactly the same thing and one person will be doing something wholesome and the other person will be doing something unwholesome.

And um

yeah, I I I'll spare you the the same example that I give of uh

you know, the the frog and the snake and you chase them away. Well, I guess I'm not sparing you, am I?

So,

you're walking through the forest, you see a frog um being uh constricted by a snake. It's trying to swallow this frog.

This The frog is squealing and

struggling trying to get away, so you chase the snake away.

And if you did it out of compassion for the frog, you did something wholesome.

And if you did do it out of aversion for the snake, you did something unwholesome, even though the action is exactly the same.

The exact same action can be good or bad depending on the mental states accompanying the action.

And so,

Theravada,

um,

Buddhist ethics,

it,

you know, it's not all black and white.

And it's not just this action is good
and that action is bad. In fact, it's
almost all within the realm of gray.

You just got various shades of gray and
just pure white action is is virtually
impossible. Pure black, you know,
unwholesome action is virtually
impossible. There's always going to be
some some shade of gray involved.

And homosexuality is gray.

Um,

the only citations,
like like in the canonical text that I'm
that I can remember. I don't remember if
there's any mention in the suttas. I
wouldn't be surprised if there is.

But, um,

homosexuals,

uh, arguably are not allowed to be
ordained as monks.

And the reason for that is not that
they are necessarily bad. It's just sort
of going with statistics
that they were considered to be more
likely to be depraved. And it's not just
homosexuals, it was also eunuchs. In
fact, it was mostly eunuchs that the

rule applied to.

But,

um, in Buddhist philosophy or just

ancient Indian culture,

um, anyone who wasn't considered fully

male or fully female, anyone who was in

between male and female, like fully one

or fully the other, would be called a

pandaka,

uh, which was the word usually used for

eunuchs. But, apparently homosexuals,

and to some degree even bisexuals, could

be considered not quite fully male.

And uh at least at least

psychologically.

And they were considered to be um

more likely to be like aberrant and um

uh to some degree even depraved.

And I mean there is some medical

uh support for this. I read in a medical journal or not a medical journal but a a diagnostic guide, a doctor's diagnostic guide. I think it was the Merck guide.

That it is not uncommon for a homosexual man to have had more than 1,000 sexual partners in his lifetime.

So there is something backing that up.

But with getting back to just homosexuality itself,

um

really it's it's it's the mental states.

So

um I mean it can be light gray or dark

gray depending on the mental states.

I guess that would be the the best way

of of putting it but but with Buddhism

and because it was based on ancient

Indian spiritual traditions,

all sexuality is considered to be at

least slightly

um immoral. Even if two people are

married,

you know, they still have sex and I mean

if they're experiencing lust and

attachment and and all that, then

there's going to be at least a little

bit of akusala kamma involved. And um

that's one reason why um unlike in many

other religions, probably most other

religions,

uh weddings are just not religious
in in a Theravada Buddhist country
especially because it is
it is just strictly against the rules
for a monk to even participate in a
wedding. And he if he does, he's
committed a serious offense. He has to
take penance for 6 days and 6 nights.

Um

so

homosexuality it's not necessarily I
mean just the act itself, just setting
aside the statistics and the general
trends of ancient India and the beliefs
in all this.

It just depends on the mental states. I

mean it could be

um

more or less unwholesome than

heterosexual sex depending on the mental

states. You know, how inflamed with lust

and attachment and so forth you are

would determine going with traditional

Buddhist ethics

um

how unethical

it is.

So,

in a way that's kind of I mean Buddhism

is

goes much easier on homosexuality than

like the Western religions do as a

general rule. Like Dante's Inferno had

its own circle just for homosexuals.

Uh they had like like there was like flaming napalm raining down on their naked bodies forever and ever.

So, uh

the next questions are similar. So, I'll just move on. And uh so the next questions are from someone whose name is in Japanese characters, but according to Google Translate it translates or transliterates as Yuichiro.

And so, assuming that that is the person's actual name,

then Yuichiro asks the question, is sodomy {quote} {unquote} sexual

misconduct?

Now, that's in a way it's almost a trick question

because sexual misconduct going with just the the standard description of sexual misconduct,

um it mainly means having sexual relations with somebody who is not a free agent, somebody who is living um under the protection or under the obligation of somebody else. So, sexual misconduct

um just in the standard Theravada tradition just has a list of different kinds of females because apparently it was directed towards men.

Primarily although women could

kind of take the the male counterparts of these.

And um, it would just be like a woman who's still like a woman who's married who would be like like a a ward of her husband in India at the time.

Um, or a woman who is um, engaged, betrothed, a woman who is like a a slave of somebody else, a woman who was a prisoner, like a like a a female convict or something who would be like a ward of the state or a ward of the the warden or whatever.

Um,

so sodomy doesn't really fit into that category. I mean, technically if uh, a

man and a woman

um, you know, they they like Greek love

or something. Um,

that

uh, it doesn't really talk about it

much. Not that not that I can not that I

can remember if at all this sort of

thing.

Um,

so again, we just you just go back to

mental states.

If if you have more lust, more

attachment, then going with ancient

Indian

um, Buddhist ethics, then you know, the

more attachment and clinging and and

um, like the agitation of mind and so

forth. The

the worse it would be.

So,

yeah, it's it's just another shade of gray and I'm going to move on to the next question by Yuichiro here, which is an easy one. Finally, I get an easy question to answer.

Should sodomites

be burned at the stake, imprisoned, or legally punished?

And going with Buddhism, no.

No, I mean, it's everyone's karma is their own and people have the right in in to at least to some degree to uh

to live

uh naughty lives.

You know, it's it's really is your own choice.

And so um there's no need to punish people for that from the Buddhist point of view because your own actions your your your your own actions are your karma.

Especially the mental actions. And so I mean the the if there is any punishment to it's going to come back on you.

You know, it's just it's just a natural process. There's no need to for you know, uh police to interfere or anything like that unless it's really a case of people harming other people and then you

know, you got to you know, the king has to do something the police have to do something.

But uh with with regard to something like this as long as it's not rape or you know, child abuse or something like that then uh it's not necessarily any worse than any other kind of sexuality.

So next question from Yuichiro is if there is a loving monogamous relationship between two men, would you consider that immoral or against nature or in some other way inferior to normal relationships besides its non-reproductive nature?

If they abstain from sexual activity,
would that make it better?

Well, I think I've already answered the
first part because really it just
depends on the mental states
that determine what how good or how bad
an action is.

And so just moving right into the last
part here, if they abstain from sexual
activity, would that make it
better? And yeah, I I've already implied
that from the
ancient Indian Buddhist ethical world
ethical universe then yeah, celibacy is
better than than sex because of um the
the desires and so forth that arise
during sex.

Um

So, maybe sort of going off the tracks a little and and uh

bringing up Jesus of Nazareth, he was saying

um

there are three kinds of eunuchs, those who are born eunuchs, those who are made eunuchs, and those who are eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

And uh the third kind is people who are celibate for religious reasons. And then he said, "It's just not for everybody. Not everybody can be celibate."

You know, you can be celibate and then just be like frustrated and horny all

the time, which is still mental states, you know, sexual mental states. So, um in some cases, I mean, if they were able to be happily celibate, then from the traditional Buddhist point of view, then yeah, they'd be That would make it better. But, um as I say, that's not for everybody. And as Jesus said, too, allegedly.

So, uh I'll just move on to the next one here. This is the last question from Yuichiro. In your article on karmic minimalism, were you discouraging merit? Certain things like meditation, teaching Dharma, and supporting your community are

considered merit. Don't monks do this?

Aren't monks supposed to be more morally perfected?

Okay, that's that's a good question.

That's a fair question.

Um there is a little confusion here, it seems like, though. Like, with regard to meditation,

um

it is true that people, especially like Burmese lay people, consider that you're you earn merit through meditation. And if you're practicing a like an elementary level of meditation, that may be the case.

But, as I say, um

karma, good karma, and bad karma depend on mental states, like perceptual, volitional mental states.

And if you're meditating really well, you don't have no perceptual or volitional mental states other than just maybe very, very subtle and refined ones, which means that um your karma is very, very subtle and refined. I mean, it's

um

you know, it's it's getting close to zero.

So, you can call it merit, but again, um what I was referring to in the article is karmic minimalism, which means making as little karma as

possible. And through meditation, you make less karma than if you're not meditating.

So, that's karmic minimalism, and um that's not the kind of merit I was talking about. With regard to teaching Dharma, again, it's it's mental states.

I mean, I This is a This is an issue I bring up

um probably every single Q&A, that people just kind of get locked into this Western utilitarian ethic. It's like, is doing this right or is doing this wrong? And it's mental states. It's the attitude that you have when you're doing something. So, if you can teach

Dharma with just
equanimity, maybe you're just mindfully
watching your mouth move and then
hearing the sounds coming out of your
mouth, then you could call that merit, I
suppose, but it's you're not making much
karma at all.

And that's the point of karmic
minimalism, is to make as little karma
as possible. Supporting your community
for monks?

No. I mean, the community of monks,
yeah, they should support each other,
but uh they're not supposed to be
involved in uh like village politics or
uh village welfare projects or anything
like that, cuz that is uh

that's karma.

Or at least um it is if if you've got mental states going while you're doing it.

So, monk Don't monks do this? Yeah, yeah, there's Most monks are sloppy monks. Most monks are not really conscientiously trying to follow what the texts say monks are supposed to do. So, in Asia especially, monks are village priests and uh you know, marriage counselors and and uh you know, sort of village psychoanalysts or something. They're There's a lot of them. Some of the famous monks in Burma, they're they're

take they're collecting donations and then they're like building hospitals and that sort of thing.

Which is all very good, but then again, monks aren't supposed to be doing that.

Merit is for lay people or at least merit in the form of good karma is for lay people because monks really are supposed to have as little karma as possible, good or bad.

So, let's see. Last question here from Yuichiro or the last part of the last question. Aren't monks supposed to be more morally perfected? Sure, but moral perfection is neutral. Buddhist Buddhist ethics are neutral. I mean, you look at the precepts, it's all don't do this,

don't do that, don't do the other. It's not you should do something. It's just neutrality. It's like karmic minimalism again.

So, that's the moral perfection of a of a Buddhist is he's down to the moral perfection of a Buddhist would be like zero karma.

Okay. Next question is from Era Fascista.

And uh Era Fascista says, "You've probably been asked this a thousand times, but what are some good books for somebody interested in learning about Buddhism?"

All right. With regard to just an intro,

like a uh a primer

on Buddhism, probably the best one I've read and I haven't read a whole lot, but probably the best one I read would be

What the Buddha Taught by Walpola

Rahula. And I don't have a copy of it, so I can't really show you.

But um

on the other hand, if you really want to know what

like

early Buddhism was like, what Buddhism was originally like, your best bet is to read ancient texts, like good translations of ancient texts. And probably the text that converted me to Theravada Buddhism would be the Sutta

Nipata.

And I got one copy of it here. This is Pali Text Society.

K.R. Norman's translation, not the best possible translation, but it's very literal. He's a He's like a linguist.

So, I mean, reading the Sutta Nipata, if you have a good translation, that would be that would be a good good thing to do. Or this is a good This would be a good intro if you if you really want to um understand what early Buddhism was like, this is a translation of the Majjhima Nikaya by Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi. And although Bhikkhu Bodhi is a totally unhinged leftist at this point

politically, he still remains one of the best translators of Pali texts into English.

And uh another book that you can get free, I'm pretty sure um and from various publishers, is uh

Nyanatiloka's Buddhist Dictionary. I mean, this is good for understanding the the terminology and uh the uh like the philosophical jargon of Buddhism.

So, this is I mean, any serious student of Buddhism should probably try to get a copy of this.

And uh if you're more advanced, you really want like a radical explanation

of what the earliest Buddhism was likely to be like, one of the most important books I've ever read is this one.

Studies in the Origins of Buddhism by G.C. Pande. And he takes more or less of a Vedantist approach because he is uh a Brahmin, a Hindu.

And so, he kind of interprets things along Vedantist lines, but um still, I mean, it's really good, but if you don't know the difference between the Samyutta Nikaya and the Anguttara Nikaya, a lot of this is just going to be seen like Greek cuz he just assumes that you already understand a lot of the terminology and understand the Pali

texts to some degree.

And um

uh another kind of interesting one, if you can get this one, this is kind of surreal. It's It's just like a

mind-blower of a book, but it's uh The

Manuals of Buddhism by Ledi Sayadaw,

who was uh one of the most famous

Burmese monks of,

say, 100 or more years ago.

And it's got all kinds of really strange

stuff in there that will give you

um a very interesting and surreal

approach to

orthodox Theravada because he was also

very orthodox.

So, those are the those are the best

ones I can think of, at least with regard to Theravada.

Um the book that converted me to Buddhism to begin with would be Zen Flesh, Zen Bones, which of course is a Zen book.

So, I'll just move on to the next question, which is a strange one by uh someone with a strange name, Flora Fulgurator. Flora Fulgurator.

And Flora Fulgurator's question is, "What is the best thing the Buddha or Buddhism said about fire?"

Which is a strange question because um I mean, fire does get mentioned in the texts,

but it's it's usually in a negative context, just as something destructive, as a like a a parable or a simile for something that is destructive, or also with regard to enlightenment itself, nirvana.

So, like the Buddha's third sermon, according to tradition, was called the fire sermon, where he's just saying the whole world is in flames, the whole world is burning. You know, that's that's sort of the negative aspect of it. And um a more neutral aspect would be the whole concept of nirvana, which is based on the the understanding of fire. Nirvana

um in all likelihood with all due respect to Ajahn Thanissaro, it means blowing out.

Um you know, like the verb form is nibbati

and that means blowing out.

And um

in really ancient text there is uh like the simile of of the fire when it blows out, where does it go? You know, it just it just enters like a formless unconditioned state because in ancient India fire was a god. It was Agni, you know, the messenger of the gods. It was it was in a sense divine. And so if you blew out a fire, it didn't die. It just

it just became formless and and
unconditioned in a sense.

And uh that was like a
a metaphor for understanding nirvana.

So maybe that's the best thing the
Buddha said about fire. He just compared
enlightenment to or nirvana to the the
going out of a fire or the blowing out
of a fire.

But uh yeah, I I I can't think of any
case where the Buddha was actually
sitting around praising fire. I maybe he
did, you know, he maybe there's some
obscure discourse where the Buddha's
listing off the the six beneficial
qualities of fire or something. But uh I
can't think of that what it would be.

So I move on to the next question from Sam-I-Am.

I do not like green eggs and ham. I do not like them, Sam-I-Am.

And Sam-I-Am's question here there is more than one way to deal with external, maybe also internal difficulties, delusion problems, dealing with reality, truth, etc.

Walking away or engage are the two main ones that everyone does. What about a natural balance to this as an ebb and flow of what is instinctually necessary, but at the same time mindful?

Where is that balance for everyone?

Well, I mean I've I've written

I've written about this before
in an essay called uh

See, one of many middle paths.

And

in that I was I was discussing like the
middle path between running away from
problems and just going out looking for
problems.

You know, you don't have to look for
problems. You don't have to like
deliberately accelerate, you know, crap
happening to you cuz it's going to
happen. And um

so long as you have the maturity to deal
with it mindfully with some equanimity,
then you should let it happen. I mean if
you just know yourself well enough to

know that you can't deal with this situation without freaking out, then it's probably best to, you know, withdraw until you're stronger.

And it's sort of like just dealing with temptation in general. If if you can resist the temptation, then you strengthen yourself by meeting the temptation and resisting it. But if if you know that you're just going to cave and give in to the temptation, then your best bet is to avoid the temptation until you are stronger.

But just running away from anything unpleasant is is not going to make you stronger. It's it's uh

No, it's it's sort of like the the Howard Hughes approach, you know, it's like he had OCD, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and uh he was just trying to um because he was very rich, of course, he was trying to just humor all of these these obsessive like compulsions. And so, you know, at at the end, I mean he was just like like a hermit. He he wouldn't cut his fingernails. He would only eat certain prepackaged foods that were handed to him by servants with, you know, like plastic gloves on and this kind of a thing. And it just made him weaker and weaker in certain ways because, you know, he wasn't standing up to the temptation. He was just giving in

to it every time.

So,

yeah, I think I might be talking too

much on this one, but uh

um

really, I mean, if there is

uh like these difficulties,

um you shouldn't go out looking for them

necessarily, but uh if they come at you,

and they they certainly will cuz that's

what this world is.

Um then if you are strong enough to deal

with it uh

wisely, then do so, and that will make

you even wiser. But if you know yourself

well enough to know that you're just

going to freak out or it's going to mess you up or something, then you need to, you know, like skillfully retreat, you know, and uh

work on it maybe with uh lesser cases, easier, you know, do the bunny slope a little more until you're better at it, and then next time it happens, maybe you'll be strong enough to to deal with it.

And I'm not sure if I'm even answering Sam I Am's question here correctly in accordance with what he meant, but uh that's that's my shot at it. So, I'll move on to Sam I Am's next question.

What would a traditional Buddhist say about humans flying into outer space or

to other planets' moons?

Um I've never heard a traditional

Buddhist say anything about such things.

Um I don't think there's anything

necessarily opposed to traditional

Buddhism in that idea because Buddhism

does admit that there are an infinite

number of worlds. It's not like

Christianity, which says there's just

this planet Earth in the center of the

universe, and God made all the stars

just just so that sailors can navigate,

you know, using the stars at night, that

kind of a thing. It's um you know, just

an infinite number of worlds, and um

I don't think there's necessarily

anything in

someone in a spaceship leaving this world and arriving in another one.

But, um

some uh

Burmese scholar monk might uh correct me on that.

So, I'll just move on to the next one.

Also by Sam I Am. "Well-established toxic fertilizer chemicals can be hidden in foods and even passed on and propagated through seeds in farming.

Some plants may be chemically altered through several generations if not for our whole life time.

According to traditional Buddhist thinking, how would karma play out for

the monk who ate this food?"

Well, again, the karma is is a matter of mental states. And, um

it may be that uh you could eat that food with no different mental states

than if the food were just wild type, you know, not genetically modified in

any way or no no chemical fertilizers used in any way. So, I mean, the

question would be like if there are some sort of results coming from the

fertilizer or the the genetic

modification, like you get some sort of health problem,

then going with the the Buddhist uh

Buddhist idea, that would be the

fruition of karma for the most part.

Um

and it would be a matter of your mental states and not it would be more a matter of your mental states than a matter of um genetic modification of of the plants you ate.

Um

so,

Abhidhamma scholars do claim that uh every

feeling that arises in you arises through the power of karma. It's the fruition of karma, kamma vipaka.

And, there are people who will say otherwise, but uh

I've known enough Abhidhamma scholars in

Burma

to know what they say, and that's what they say.

So, it'd be a matter of like your mental states. And, uh if

um yeah, I mean it's just not it's just not an issue in in traditional Buddhism.

Um like I said earlier, like nutritive essence is just one ultimately real

like an atom, subatomic particle that uh you know, they just didn't understand. I mean,

um you know, there's no refined

understanding of nutrition or um like uh

biochemistry, anything like that in uh

in the Buddhist text. So, it's they look

at it more from a religious point of view, and if you get sick, it's uh you know, maybe you ate bad food or something, but still it's your karma's involved.

Um

and it's it's your karma more than the the chemicals that are going to make you happy or unhappy.

So, I'll just move on to the next question here. And this is uh one that I get asked every once in a while.

And it is it is an interesting question.

What do you think about individual or collective manifestation of karma that impacts the mass population, possibly creating a universal karma? What do you

think about the differences between
individual and collective manifestation?

Well, this is sort of like

uh debate about evolution, like natural
selection. Some people say natural

selection occurs with large groups,

you know, entire populations,

but orthodox Darwinian evolutionary

biology says that natural selection

occurs with the individual. Either you

survive to reproduce or you die off. And

karma is sort of like that also. Um the

orthodox Theravadan

um

explanation is there is no group karma,

that karma is always individual.

But, there can be like what is virtually group karma in that people with the similar mental states, similar attitudes, similar problems, who are making similar karma, tend to be born together. You know, obviously, if, you know, you have certain mental states, and you have the karma to live in a certain kind of of culture, then other people with that similar kind of karma are going to be born into that that culture, also. So, in a way, you could say that's like group karma, although it's it's somewhat of an illusion.

At least at least going with orthodox Theravada.

Um

so

Yeah, I think I answered that one.

It's kind of a complex question, but uh somehow I accidentally answered it succinctly. So, I'll move on to the next one. How would a traditional Buddhist address the difference s- between the conscious and subconscious for himself and for others? Yeah, this is something I've thought about rather a lot in that Abhidhamma, which is traditional orthodox Theravada, doesn't really have a concept of the the the unconscious mind or the subconscious. They've got what's called Bhavanga Citta, um which they call the subconscious, but

really that's just like a test pattern.
It's like It's It doesn't change. It's
just this one image that is just showing
on the screen in your mind, so to speak,
if you're completely unconscious, or
it's like in between thoughts, that kind
of a thing. You're deeply asleep, it can
it can be there a lot. Um

but the the whole idea of like like the
Freudian subconscious, um even though to
me it seems fairly likely, pretty
obvious, in fact, that we do have mental
states, perceptual states, volitions,
motivations that we're not consciously
aware of.

And um

orthodox Theravada really doesn't have

much to say about that.

Um

which is which is kind of interesting.

So, how would a traditional Buddhist

address the differences between the

conscious and subconscious? They

wouldn't because

orthodox Theravada does not acknowledge

the existence of something like a

Freudian subconscious

or like uh Jungian archetypes, you know,

the collective unconscious, that kind of

thing that

um

I could I could be mistaken, but I'm

like I say, I've

I've lived in Burma for so long and talked with so many Abhidhamma scholars. I got a pretty good idea what Abhidhamma says and uh

the the subconscious mind just somehow they just didn't think of that. Dreams also is another weird one that Abhidhamma just completely overlooks.

So, I'll just move on to the next question also from Sam I Am who does not like Green Eggs and Ham.

Do traditional Buddhists accept real science or understand enough of it to accept it?

Is there any conflict between the belief in Buddhism and real science in this context, according to the Buddhist?

Um

yeah, well, most traditional Buddhists
are not really uh up-to-date on
science, you know, a lot of them are in
Asia, they're subsistence farmers and
some sub and uh
so forth and uh

but I mean, they like to believe that
Buddhism and science are in agreement.

And for the most part, I mean

you know, there's a lot of overlap.

Let's just say there's a lot of overlap
between um

like

scientific objectivity and empiricism on
the one hand and Buddhism on the other.

I mean, they're not entirely It's not a perfect fit.

Um

so I instead of an explain uh ghosts and and rebirth and uh a lot of other things. A lot of the the the more metaphysical aspects of karma, that kind of a thing.

And uh

and sometimes they just contradict each other like

Abhidhamma says consciousness and like thought arises in the heart and that the brain is like the the commentarial tradition like the Visuddhimagga just says that the brain is just bone marrow filling a large

hollow bone and they didn't even know
what it did. They just uh
uh almost the only
um

effect of having a brain in uh the
Visuddhimagga is that if you catch a
cold it liquefies and drips out of your
nose in the form of snot.

So yeah, there's I mean Buddhism is
pre-scientific by a long shot and it
it arose 2,500 years ago in the the
Ganges Valley. And um
like any other pre-modern religion it's
going to have a pre-modern
interpretation of reality. But uh
a lot of a lot of it, you know, like uh

the cosmology,

you know, the flat earth floating on water and all that is just irrelevant.

It doesn't really have anything to do with Buddhist practice anyway.

Um

so I guess I'll just move on to the next question. I hope I answered that one but maybe I didn't.

Last question from Sam I Am.

Could you say that Buddhism as a religion is incomplete?

Why or why not?

Well, I'm not exactly sure what Sam I Am means here by incomplete.

Um

I mean it doesn't explain everything and

then the Buddha in some sermons or some uh discourses just says, you know, the purpose of Buddhism isn't to explain everything.

You know, it's like uh he holds up a few leaves in his hand and says, you know, what he teaches This this handful of leaves even though all there is that could be taught is like all the leaves in the trees in this forest, you know, they're sitting in.

Um but I mean he's just teaching you uh you know, the nature of suffering and the way to escape from suffering. And so, I mean, with regard to empirical objectivity, it would be very incomplete

because

you know, I mean, it's it's a
specialized field.

Um you know, it's not trying to explain
everything, even though Abhidharma tries
to explain everything and spectacularly
fails, in my opinion.

Cuz it I mean, it doesn't even explain
gravity, for example.

Um see, incomplete could also mean
like if it doesn't get you fully
enlightened. And obviously, I mean, it
doesn't get everybody fully enlightened.
Even people who really sincerely try as
hard as they can, even most of them
don't become fully enlightened. But
maybe you could say that's because the

people are incomplete and not that
Buddhism is incomplete. But then again,
Buddhism is created by people.
Buddhism is created by incomplete
people. And you can say that, well, the
Buddha was enlightened. But then again,
um it Buddhism, this enlightened
teaching, is passing through the filters
of, you know, generations of monks who
are not enlightened. A lot of them are
just like
scholars and and like politicians and so
forth. So, um
yeah, I mean, any human institution is
going to be corrupt and
to some degree foolish.

And Buddhism is no no exception. Not that that I'm saying that Buddhism is particularly foolish, but um yeah, I mean, it's just unavoidable cuz we're dealing with human beings.

So, yeah, I guess you could say that it's it's incomplete. But um as religions go, it's about as complete as you're going to find.

So,
yeah.

So, I guess I better just move on to the next one cuz we've already been going for more than an hour and I still got uh several questions to go although we're well well over halfway done here.

So, I hope you went pee when I told you

to.

Told you.

Okay, next question is from Brian.

Here is the question I was wondering about. I knew from events at a local Buddhist temple that some of the Theravada monks only eat before midday.

Some of them

Uh-oh. Some Buddhists from different groups visit for an annual event they have. So, I was wondering if the monks tend to eat only one meal a day or whether they would have a breakfast as well.

I thought you might know from your experience. I don't know if you have

answered this before in other videos,
but I guess you could put that in one of
your videos in case others are
interested in the answer. Also, do you
think they have the same number of
calories as lay people and non-Buddhists
but just in one meal or two meals or do
you think they are managing on less?

Okay, let's talk about Buddhist eating
habits.

Um in the in the texts, it does indicate
that a monk eats one meal a day always
between dawn and midday.

Um although it it was allowed even in
ancient times

for a monk to drink yagu

which originally, I'm pretty sure it was

just the water drained off of boiling rice. Like in the morning, the ladies would boil their rice and then they just pour off the extra water and some um mendicants, ascetics would go around begging for that. They'd just drink that. And then from that, it got turned into like rice gruel and porridge and um Yeah, it's kind of troubles me a little bit that uh he said some of the Theravada monks only eat before midday when that's just strictly prohibited. I mean, monks just aren't supposed to eat after midday.

Um but nowadays most Asian monks eat twice a day, which is they eat the dawn

meal, the ayon song, and then they eat the nay song, which is the like the right before midday. So, they'll eat like right after dawn, and then they'll eat like around 11:00 a.m.

So, they'll get two meals in. Although, when I was a monk, I just ate once a day for

30 years with very, very few exceptions.

And uh

so, I guess I should move on to the next part here.

Um do you think that they have the same number of calories as lay people with just one meal, or do you think they are managing on less? It depends on the monk. I mean,

um like when when you're eating just one meal a day, you're eating an entire day's supply of food in one sitting, and uh yeah, it's like you your stomach kind of expands, you can really pack it away.

Um so, I I would say that monks that aren't practicing a lot of meditation, uh and they're not just sitting all the time, they're probably eating, you know, about the same amount as the average person, except just in a one big meal instead of in two or three small ones.

Um but if you're doing like intensive practice,

then you can get away with the way less food than usual and way less sleep than

usual, just because you're you're in a more subtle state, you know, you're you're in a way you're more your your vibe is more refined or something, and you don't need so much energy to keep you going.

So, that's possible, too, but that's probably uh

the exception to the rule, because most monks really aren't um

they're not cultivating like really subtle, refined mental states.

Unfortunately, I mean, that's that's their duty, but um

Asian monks, especially, are uh

they're like village priests, like I was saying earlier.

And uh

a lot of them I mean, they tend to be good people.

But um

there's a difference between being a good person and a and a good monk.

Because they don't really uh they're not really following along. It's It's sort of like Christians in the West. I mean, what Christians do and what the Bible says Christians should do is uh pretty radically different in a lot of cases.

So uh

I think I'll just move on to uh the next question from Nardi.

And Nardi says, "Have you ever tried contemplation of sensations? I'm doing this meditation these days. Do you have any advice on this technique?" Uh yes, it's called Vedana Anupassana. It's one of the four Satipatthana's.

And um

yeah, and

you can say that

sensations and mental states are

um

there there's so much overlap that

they're they're practically synonymous.

Um cuz you you can have mental

sensations, too.

But like

um as a general rule, when I would do

Anapana or meditation on breathing, I
would just turn that into Vedana
Anupassana and just uh

um

focus my attention on the the touch of
wind on my upper lip around my nostrils.

I wouldn't be thinking breathing in,
breathing out, breathing in, breathing
out. Or following the air or anything
like that. I would just be noting the
sensation of touch of the wind on my
on my upper lip.

And uh yeah, walking meditation is the
same. If I do walking meditation, it's
usually either a mantra of Om, which
um man, I I must have been a Hindu in a

past life cuz it happens automatically a lot. Or else just uh the sensations of of your your legs swinging, like the oily sensation in your knees, the pressure on the bottoms of your feet, that kind of a thing. That's all sensation.

And it's good It's a good thing to meditate on cuz it's uh you know, it it's there and it's uh pretty obvious and it's easy to keep your attention focused on that.

And uh even when you're you're just being mindful, I mean, usually it's sensations that you're being mindful of like uh

um you know, you can be talking to

somebody

and you can just be focusing your
attention on the movements of your mouth
and like the

uh like the vibration of your throat and
just the the sensation of hearing your
own voice and the other person's voice.

Is everything can be uh turned into
meditation of sensations pretty much.

So, uh yeah, it's a good meditation.

It's it's you're closer to ultimate
reality

by contemplating sensations than through
conceptualizing. You know, like like
with regard to Anapana, you're closer to
ultimate reality

by just being aware of the the sensation
of touch than you are by thinking
breathing in breathing out breathing in
breathing out cuz then that's just like
ideas, it's concepts.

There is no ultimate reality of
breathing in breathing out.

But uh at least according to Abhidhamma,
there is an ultimate reality of
sensation.

So, good luck with your practice. It is
it is a good way to meditate. And um
you could probably pick up more advice
just on a book on Satipatthana. Just
look up the way to do Vipassana part.
And uh it will explain a lot.
I hope if it's a good book.

So, the next question is by the Marquis de Sade.

And the Marquis says, "Greetings from Scandinavia.

As a new Buddhist practitioner, there are some concepts that I find some difficulty in understanding fully.

For example, when considering comma, can killing be morally justifiable if the act itself comes from a place of love?"

Well, that sounds like Charlie Manson.

In say in certain cases of euthanasia or killing for the purpose of protecting yourself or your loved ones.

Okay, that's fair enough. That's fair question. Um

but the thing is as I keep saying

I just harp away at this

that uh

you know, what they what the

the ethical quality of an action depends

on your mental states and especially on

your cetana or your your

your urge, your your will, your

volition.

And so um

killing from the Buddhist point of view

is like the worst thing you can do.

Um personally, I think torturing would

be worse than killing, but um from

Buddha's point of view of traditional

ancient Indian Buddhist ethics, killing

is like about the worst thing that the

ordinary person can do.

And uh so we're dealing again with shades of gray.

So, if you're if you kill somebody like like uh the Marquis is talking about

here, like euthanasia, like

let's say, you know,

the cat gets hit by a car and it's all

messed up and so you take out the pistol

and just put it out of its misery.

Typical example.

Um

that would have some unskillful karma

because you are knowingly killing

another being, but there would be

mitigating circumstances. I mean, it

could be lighter. It's certainly going to be much lighter gray than if you just shoot the bastard just for fun or because you hate cats or something.

So

yeah, so if you're killing, you I mean, there's going to be consequences. If you're knowingly killing,

um even if it's through uh

you know, some some idea of benevolence

or, you know, putting somebody out of

their misery or protecting yourself or

your loved ones. Even so, you're still

killing and there's always going to be a

certain amount of unskillful or

unwholesome karma involved. But, the

more

benevolent

your your motives are,

you know, the the lighter gray it's
going to be ethically.

So, protecting yourself or your loved
ones, um

Yeah, a monk is allowed to strike out in
self-defense, but he's not supposed to
have the intention of killing while
doing so. And he would be parajika
excommunicated for life even if he has
uh

he knowingly killed somebody in
self-defense.

Um

I mean, he can strike out in

self-defense and kill them accidentally.

That wouldn't be That wouldn't be

excommunicatable, what um if that is a word.

Um and with regard to protecting loved ones, that's one reason why monks just do not have families. That's one of the reasons why it was set up that way that monks are

They don't marry. They don't have children. That kind of a thing because then you've got these obligations. Like the ordinary person, I mean, you're married and have kids and somebody's trying to kill them or rape them or kidnap them or something, then you're arguably you're totally justified in

just blowing their head off, you know,
just just doing whatever it takes to
protect your your family. You've got
You've got a duty like as a parent or as
a husband or or whatever.

But, um yeah, that's one reason why
monks they don't have uh
families because um
they're karmic minimalists.

And so, if you're living in the world,
sometimes you have to do some
gray ethically gray actions.

And it's just the way it is. And so, you
got to be man enough to face the
consequences.

Or woman enough.

So, yeah,

in answer to the question, again, it depends on your mental states. When you're killing knowingly, there's always going to be at least a certain amount of unskillful karma. You know, even if you've got the best reasons in the world, still you're knowingly killing somebody and everyone's kind of connected in a certain way and um you know, the effect's going to be there. Um by knowingly killing or knowingly causing suffering to another. But um uh again, I mean, if you if you think you have benevolent reasons, if if you think that you're causing less suffering than if you if you didn't do it, you know,

there would be more suffering then um
then, you know, it's it's light gray,
arguably.

But the thing is, from a Buddhist point
of view, just to sit there and watch
somebody shoot 100 people, that's that's
ethically neutral because you personally
aren't doing anything.

Just to sit there and do nothing is is
karmically and ethically neutral.

At least, I mean, especially if you're
just doing nothing mentally.

But um

yeah, I think I'll just move on to the
next one.

Also from the marquee,

do you have any advice on how to create a daily spiritual routine for a layperson with prayer, meditation, et cetera? How does the daily spiritual practice for a common Burmese layperson look like? I sincerely thank you for your answers and wish you all the best.

Well, thank you. I I wish the same to you.

Um

the thing is, I've never been a particularly religious person. I was more philosophical than religious. I never really liked ceremonies and rituals very much. That's one reason why I became a Theravada Buddhist monk cuz they had about the minimum number of

ceremonies and rituals and the ceremonies were just pragmatic for obvious reasons. You weren't You weren't worshipping anything really.

At least uh those ones weren't uh um required in the texts. Although the culture has come up with all kinds of bowing and chanting and stuff, but um spirit daily spiritual routine, well, you should have some meditation in there.

Maybe meditation when you get up, meditation before you go to bed. Um read you know, read Buddhist texts, do a little study. That was one thing I used to do as a layperson is just uh read a

few verses of the Dhammapada right
before going to sleep.

Um

if you want, you can have an altar.

You can make offerings at the altar,
just light a candle, burn some incense,
maybe sit in front of the altar when you
meditate. Of course, for a Buddhist
layperson, keeping five precepts is
pretty basic.

Um

uh the the average Burmese layperson, a
lot of them like on the Uposatha days,
which is the full moon day, new moon
day, and half moon days, they will go to
the monastery and keep eight precepts.
They'll keep extra precepts,

which includes um not eating after noon,
um

no singing, dancing, uh playing music,
uh watching entertainment shows, wearing
just like beautifying yourself through
cosmetics and and garlands and using
perfume, you know, scents and that kind
of a thing. They stop that, and also
they uh sleep on a mat on the floor,
just a very low small bed.

Um

so

yeah, if you've got like a a monastery
or a temple somewhere nearby, you could
you could incorporate regular visits and
maybe offering food to the monks

or offering other things that they need.

But, uh it should fit your personality.

And uh

I think um

what I've just said is it would be like basics.

And uh if there's other things you'd like to do like chanting, you can learn chants. Some of them are really nice.

Metta Sutta is very nice. Mangala Sutta is very nice.

Um

you could use a mala like a rosary.

Um there's all sorts of things you can do and uh you should

experiment and and find out what works

well for you. What's What makes you feel

the happiest cuz that's that's the point of it.

And uh yeah, good luck with that.

And the next question is from Chaplin.

When can we expect your fourth book to come out? I really enjoyed the first three. Well, that's kind of a good question. I do have

uh two more books worth of material that I can edit and turn into books fairly easily. Um although right now I'm

I'm pretty much pushed to my limits with regard to work and getting other stuff done when I'm not working.

Um you know, I usually I'm still not fully adjusted to being a manual

laborer. And so, I come home pretty tired. And uh I had to take a little bit of a nap um even before doing this video. Cuz I I had to work today and uh I come home tired.

And I got all this other stuff to do. I got to make my lunch for the next day usually if my sweetheart doesn't do it for me. And uh

uh sometimes I got to clean up and I wash dishes and

other things like you know, I got to correspond with people, all sorts of things. So, um right now I just pretty much don't have the time to edit the fourth book, but it's it's there in in nascent form.

And uh

it's a matter of time before I I do it.

It's like uh the first three are are actually increasing in sales lately. So, uh

who knows, maybe there'll be like a demand for for the fourth book, in which case uh I'll find the time.

Um

So, yeah, that's when.

And the next question from Chaplin is, will you be publishing your translations?

Well, actually, I've already published most of my translations in uh volume one, the first book that was mentioned,

which I happen to have right here.

Shamelessly plugging my own book.

So, most of my translations are in this book, which is available on amazon.com.

And um for the for the person above who was asking good books to read to learn about Buddhism, I mean,

this it's not systematic, you know, it's not really like a step-by-step explanation of Buddhism, but it has a lot of aspects of Buddhism that you're not going to find anywhere else, or not together in one book, anyway.

Um

So, most of my translations from Pali into English are, as I say, in this book. And there's one other book that uh

that I have written back in the '90s,
the first published book I ever I ever
wrote, which is this one, the Atakavaga
translation.

And um

this one, I mean, I've always wanted
to make it an edition of this that would
be compact, like maybe half the size
that you could carry in your pocket,
maybe even on waterproof paper, like
some field guides
are made, so I mean, you could just take
it everywhere, just carry it in your
pocket, you sit down on a hill out in
the woods or something, and you just
pull it out, and you just

read a sutta.

Um that was always my vision, but this book, I've

I've always had the idea that it should never be sold for money.

I just want this to be dhamma dana, just for free distribution. So, someday, if uh

maybe if there's enough demand or just some

wealthy eccentric person comes along who wants to publish an edition of this um

yeah, I would uh

I would make it, but it would have to be for free distribution. I don't want to charge money for it.

Because the Dharma is priceless, it should be freely available to all beings.

So

last person to ask questions is Diane.

And she asks two questions, the first of which is is it possible for my dog to be reincarnated?

And the answer is yes.

In fact going with Buddhist philosophy all beings continue to to be reborn.

Um go they go through the cycle of birth and death and rebirth and re-death until eventually they become enlightened.

So yeah, dog can be reincarnated. And when I was a kid we had a dog that was

so human in certain ways that's

I I used to think sometimes it was

possible that maybe it was even a human

being that in a past life and uh

I don't know, I just liked fighting or

something too much and uh

had to be reborn as a dog or something.

But um

yeah.

And uh I've I've come across the idea a

few times in Buddhist philosophy of just

the weird karma that results in like

really like pampered

dogs in the west. You know, like like a

Burmese village dog it really is a lower

realm. Like in Buddhism the animal realm

is like it's a lower realm. It's a realm

that you don't want to be born into, but
um

some some dogs in the west they've got
it they've got it made, you know,
they've got it way better than a lot of
people in the east or a lot of people in
the west for that matter.

Um so yeah.

Going with Buddhist philosophy, your dog
not only not only is it possible, but
it's uh pretty much inevitable that your
dog will be reborn.

And um, I I remember reading
a very strange book called Seth Speaks
by Jane Roberts who's channeling this
multi-dimensional being that calls

itself Seth.

And Seth had this really interesting

idea

that um

that like the karmic stream of a being

can split. And And Seth was saying that

uh just in the recent past, a part of

his karma had split off and become a

dog. And had just started a whole new

uh like a reincarnational

channel, you know, like this whole new

this whole new being.

And uh that's not orthodox Buddhism, but

it would explain

um

why the number of beings just remains

infinite in the universe and it's

um you know, where new beings can come
to replace the the beings that uh
finally make it off the wheel.

Um, but I digress.

And so

Diane's last question, this is the very
last question.

Diane asks, "How do traditional
Buddhists say in Southeast Asia view the
paranormal, like spirits and PK
manifestations we see on shows like The
Dead Files?"

Well,

yeah, if you go to Burma, it's yeah,
it's it's very real there, much more
real than than in the West.

Uh just for starters, you've got uh some monks

who uh presumably have uh psychic powers, especially regard to reading minds. You know, they'll they'll just look right through you and uh they can answer your questions before you ask them.

Um, also the Burmese very much believe in ghosts.

So much that there a lot of them are just afraid to to pass through a cemetery unless they're with a group of people. And also witches. There's a saying in in Burma that every seventh house has a witch living there.

So, yeah, I mean the paranormal it's

just uh

accepted as just ordinary existence in the in in the East, I mean, in like in Southeast Asia.

So,

yeah, so it's it's just very It's It's accepted more than it is in the West.

Like a lot of people in the West don't believe in ghosts, but a lot of I think probably most people in Southeast Asia would believe in ghosts.

And uh lots of other things, monsters and monsters of all sorts, all kinds of things.

Dragons and ogres and all sorts of things. Like for example, um

when I was a monk,
still a relatively junior monk, I was
going to live in a certain forest. And
one of my best friends at the time was a
monk who uh came from that part of Burma
in the south. And he had a degree in
physics. I think he was a high school
mathematics teacher. He was reasonably
intelligent, but even so, he was warning
me, you got to be careful, there's a
dragon there, and there's like this
powerful spirit that lives in this hill,
and I mean, you can't spit on the ground
there, it doesn't like that, and there's
ogres. There's there's like this army of
them. And you I mean, they're very
territorial. Don't try to set up your

own territory there cuz they'll attack you.

And uh they just accept this stuff without question. So, yeah, it's uh it's part of their reality.

It's not just so much like a like an interesting hobby of of watching the shows and thinking, "Hmm, that's interesting." Cuz for them, it's just it's just reality.

And that's the last question. So, uh as always, so long as people keep asking questions, I will keep attempting to answer them.

So, just uh keep them coming in and if you have any

questions,

you are welcome to put them in the

comments below

or if you are subscribed to my

SubscribeStar channel, you can put them

there, especially when I leave an

announcement for an upcoming Q&A. Or if

you're on the Discord server associated

with our channel, then you can leave

them in the Q&A room, also.

And uh

with regard to uh the books, they have

been mentioned a few times. I

shamelessly plug them and uh

the the links on Amazon should be in the

URL links below the video. And uh ask

about whatever you think I can answer,

like especially Buddhist history,
Buddhist philosophy, meditation, that
kind of thing, Southeast Asia, um
monasticism in general, anything like
that.

And uh

be happy.

hello and welcome to episode 17 of a
question and answer

i am your host panyo basa

um

alias john david reynolds

and you may notice that i'm not wearing
a shirt

and that's because i don't have one on

and um

it's uh

shouldn't be too big of a deal

it's just my natural state it just

seemed pretentious to put one on just

for the sake of being on a video

and um

i have set the precedent long ago even

as a monk i did a q a or some other
video

um

with without my upper robe on my my toga
so i hope you're not too disturbed by
shoulders that have no cloth on them
and uh

no worries i won't suddenly stand up and
scandalize anybody

i'm not entirely naked anyway

so let's just uh get on with these

questions because um this is i have kind
of delayed doing this because uh

things keep coming up and um

on weekdays i'm often tired in the

evenings because i work now i'm like a
manual laborer like a professional

weight lifter or something

and um

so i'm a little bit tired even uh even

tonight but i am drinking coffee

which is helpful

so

i should start answering questions

because we've got um as usual quite a

few

um i still haven't wised up sufficiently

to just uh

do a video

maybe once a week

which would have half as many questions

and last half as long

but um

i don't know this this this method has
been working fairly well i suppose
so

the first question is from fred
and fred says what do you know about
um

he has it spelled p-a-n-n-a-t-t-i
which would be pronounced pannati but i
assume

the the n should have squiggles over the
top so it would be panati

what do you know about panyatti and baba
which is spelled b-h-a-v-a i'm studying
patika samupada through the abhidharma
exclamation point

well

um

i suppose i mean

if you want to study predicate through

the abi dhamma i mean

more power to you

um

i don't remember panyatti being

closely associated with padichis

although i really haven't studied

thoroughly the abidama approach to it

but panyatti

it's an interesting term and it's a

useful and valuable buddhist term

it means

um

uh another another synonym for it would

be like

it's a manner of speaking that doesn't
convey reality

but because the whole way we think
doesn't convey reality either is just uh
necessary like in mahayana it's referred
to as skillful means

so you can talk about um you know this
cup

whereas in buddhist philosophy this cup
isn't real

you know it is to believe that it's real
would be um delusion but still

even the buddha would talk about

you know cups people trees

things that um

according to buddhist philosophy don't
really exist they do not have an

inherent self-existence

that um

they are like virtual reality or like
conditional reality

uh so panati is just like a term or uh
uh a word a designation

uh referring to something that

isn't real but nevertheless because

we're all delusional to some degree

um it's just necessary like referring to
people the buddha referred to people

even though buddhism teaches that people
aren't real

so that's what panyatti is and with

regard to bella bhava that's one of the
links in padicha semopana

and

i usually translate it as force of
existence literally it means something
like becoming

or just you could you could translate it
as existence

um

and

in the context of badichismopada the 12
links

the orthodox interpretation

it refers to karma

so it's like the force of existence it's
like the momentum

of

of your your mind the momentum of your
consciousness that's driving you

forwards so that after you die you take
rebirth or it's not even you that takes
rebirth it's just this uh karmic
momentum

that after it loses its form
um

you know in in this
mind-body complex it it assumes a new
form just because of this momentum that
doesn't just
it doesn't just stop
so

it's kind of interesting that according
to the orthodox interpretation of the 12
links there is a kind of short circuit
because there are two

terms

in the uh 12 knee donald theory of

podicious

or dependent core rising conditioned

genesis it has lots of uh

lots of renderings that um

that both of them mean karma and the

first is sankara

so

there is uh

songkara

that's that's in the 12 links and also

and they supposedly

um both mean the same thing except for

the first

the first um mention of karma is

supposedly in your previous existence

and then the second mention of karma is
in this existence although

why they

why the buddha

would have chosen two different words

for the same thing

is uh

kind of questionable

um

but uh let's not wallow in through

dependent core rising so i'm just going

to uh leave it at that blah means um

like

the force of existence it's like the the

mental momentum

of your karma

that keeps you in existence or keeps you
seemingly in existence

so um

i think i'll just move on to the next
question i hope i wasn't too skimpy on
that one but um

just wallowing in in padicha somehow
yeah it can be pretty heavy

so the next question also from fred
can intellectually wanting rebirth
actually land you in another body
well for starters i would say that
wanting isn't so much of an intellectual
thing that it's not the intellect
that causes you to be
reborn

it's not the intellect that really

causes karma

then it's more the

the will

that accompanies the intellect it's uh

more of um

not so much the intellectual content but

just the force

you know like boa the force of existence

is this this

uh urge

this karmic urge

that um really

um results that creates karma and

results in future consequences like

potentially

rebirth

or what a lot of people call

reincarnation

so

yeah i mean

um desire for existence is one of the
three main kinds of desire according to

orthodox buddhist philosophy there's

desire for sensual pleasures desire for
existence and desire for non-existence

and any of those three

including the desire for non-existence

um because it's all desire you know it's

just more karmic momentum

that it can result in in rebirth

so

um

i don't know why they didn't have a

desire for pain or discomfort because i
assume that i mean there are people that
really do desire the opposite of sensual
pleasure

um but maybe it's just because they get
some kind of satisfaction some kind of
um you know perverse sort of pleasure
from hurting themselves

that uh it's still kind of a desire for
pleasure or satisfaction

so um you know the short answer can
intellectually wanting rebirth actually
land you or another body uh yes although
it's really not the intellectual aspect
of it it's the wanting aspect

so the next question also from fred does

the body have a metaphysical blueprint
for

eg ethereal body

um

i have had people say that theravada
buddhism

does

teach that there is a kind of astral
body but there's very little mention of
it

it's sort of um

oh sort of a fringe

teaching within the within the text you
know it's you you can find it in there i
assume

but it's really not emphasized at all

it's much more emphasized in something

like hinduism

where

um you know you have the dream body and

then it's like after you die it's like

this like for example um

people have near-death experiences where

you know they rise up above the the

physical body they look down and they

maybe are seeing the paramedics trying

to resuscitate their body you know and

they've got this other body like their

dream body

um like the astral body

um

yeah i mean

it's you can maybe there's like a mind

produced a residual self image like in
the matrix right the residual self image
um

but it's it's really not emphasized in
buddhism and uh ultimately it's
it's no more real
than uh like a dream

a dream projection something like that
so i'll move on to the next question and
this is uh

this one is kind of difficult for me to
understand exactly

fred says i'm wondering whether
intellect gets transferred so i assume
what he's meaning is uh intellect
that

um like your intellect gets

transferred to the next life if you are
reincarnated if you are reborn

and

the the content of your intellect would
not

in general

you know things that you've learned

intellectually in this life would not

um

would not be taken with you to the next
life

in buddhism they say the only thing that
gets reborn is karma

so

it would be just the the will like

schopenhauer's will just be the force of

existence and

um because

perception and volition

or uh sanya and caitanya in buddhism i

mean they're essentially two aspects of

the same thing because they have to

exist

simultaneously you can't have one

without the other

which

kind of indicates that it really is

um two aspects of the same thing even

though buddhism doesn't teach that but i

mean when you have to have

these two things that occupy the same

point

in in space and time

they have to

and they can't possibly be divided other

than just by the imagination then yeah

it makes sense to say that they are

two aspects of the same thing

but um

still

in in that sense you can say that like a

certain intellectuality

because it's uh like an aspect of

like the momentum of your habit energy

of your mind

something like that you know like if

you're an intellectual in this life

you're gonna get reborn probably you'll

be fairly intellectual in the next life

too because it's just a continuation of
the momentum

so

yeah but the content unless

you you're an unusual person that can
remember past lives or something

then

yeah the things that you learn at school
or in books or whatever

they're not really going to be taken
with you unless it has caused some sort
of

um

like habitual

like um behavioral pattern in you that
is karmic that then could like at least
leave traces moving into the next life

all of this is theoretical of course i'm
really

not speaking about um rebirth through my
own personal experience because i do not
recall

having been reborn

i've been told more than once that i'm a
reincarnation of my own grandfather but
uh i don't i don't recall that

so this is all like uh book learnings

and so i'll just move on to the next

question which is from shawarma dharma

and shwarma dharma

says

i have heard trance-like meditative

states described as illusory and to more

or less be ignored and i have heard them
described as indicators of jhana or near
jhanna can you describe the nature
of the difference between an illusory
trance state and a genuine trance state
well that's a good question and a lot of
people really can't tell the difference
i've i've said more than once
that in burma
not everybody but a lot of people really
cannot tell the difference between
genuine jhana
which are advanced
buddhist contemplative states or just i
mean they don't even have to be buddhist
they're just advanced contemplative
states and hypnotic trans

so

you know a lot of people just can't tell
the difference between hypnotic trance
and like a deep genuine bona fide
um spiritual contemplative state
and i'm not saying that hypnotic trance
isn't valuable or beneficial but you
should be able to tell the difference
seems to me if you're gonna hypnotize
yourself you should know that you have
hypnotized yourself and not
assume
that um
you've got you've attained like you know
third genre or something
or fourth genre so um

and and to make matters worse i think
going back into ancient times there has
been a lot of confusion like
fourth genre is often defined
um or it's described as a state where
your breathing and your heart rate
almost stops so you're essentially like
a hibernating squirrel
with some kind of spiritual
uh qualities added to that but um
i mean yeah i'm i'm very skeptical of
that because um according to the higher
up in genre you get the more pure your
mindfulness is and i just failed to see
how being in a state of suspended
animation where you're oblivious to
everything around you you're oblivious

to the passage of time that how that
could be

purity of mindfulness

um

the uh the scholars that endorse this or
some of the meditators that endorse that
interpretation would say well you're
mindful of this one

object

to the to the extent that you're
ignoring everything else or oblivious to
everything else but

uh it seems to me that mindfulness
doesn't really work that way that's just
samadhi that's there's hardly any
mindfulness involved in that as far as i

can tell

so um

i think a handy rule of thumb if you want to identify like a deep meditative state that is some asamati or right concentration as opposed to just um

hypnotizing yourself

is are you still aware of what's going on i mean if you've got purity of mindfulness then you're still going to be aware of what's going on around you even though you're not focusing on that but i mean if you're just oblivious to the sound of the clock ticking you're oblivious to the mosquito biting you you're oblivious to anyone like trying to rouse you you know they're shaking

you by the shoulder and still you're
just like completely out of it
then i would assume that you are not
being particularly mindful
and that you are probably in a kind of
zoned out trans state and not
in

like an advanced contemplative state
where where you're becoming more awake
really i mean

fourth genre should be about as close as
you can get to being enlightened
um

without without actually being
enlightened

and so you'd be more awake i mean like

buddha literally means awake awakened

so the more awake you are the the more

advanced your contemplative state is

going to be

and if you're really doing genre really

well or just contemplation let's just

forget forget the word genre just if

you're doing contemplation really well

then you're going to be so alert that

when a thought starts to arise

you'll catch it immediately you'll just

see it immediately and just

um

like the mindfulness or the awareness of

it is sufficient to just cause it to

just fade back out again

so

yeah and uh

yeah that would that would be my answer

i mean if you're just

like

oblivious to everything around you

oblivious to the passage of time

oblivious even to people trying to tell

you the house is on fire or something

then yeah i would say that would be

a kind of hypnotic trance that is not a

really right concentration at least not

from the point of view of buddhist um

bhavana or or like mental cultivation

i mean hypnosis can still be useful and

beneficial

but

not in the same way

so i think i'll just move on to the next
question from shawarma dharma and he
says

i assume it's a he

can a monk go home to visit family can
family come and visit a monk that's an
easy one i really do appreciate really
easy questions sometimes

and uh yeah there's nothing at all wrong
with a monk going home to visit family
or family coming to visit a monk
especially if they're his parents
that is um that is most allowable
because in buddhism you really do
there's you really do have like an
obligation to honor your your mother and

father like um there is a famous sutta i
don't remember the name of it so i mean
it's not extremely famous but the buddha
says that you could uh carry your your
parents around on your back
for the rest of their lives and uh still
you wouldn't be paying them back
for what they have done for you
and they don't even have to be very good
parents for that to be true
so yeah i mean for a monk who uh was
married
and had kids for him to
go back and visit his you know his
erstwhile mate and his children
it would depend on his reasons i mean if

it's just nostalgia and like

family attachment then probably that
would be considered inappropriate for a
monk because a monk really is supposed
to just um become without family other
than

just sort of being brothers to the other
monks

um with regard to can family come and
visit a monk i mean anybody can come and
visit a monk

you know prostitute come and visit a
monk it's like uh one of the buddha's
last meals was served to him by amba
pali who was a courtesan

so um

yeah i mean it's

who who comes to visit you is one thing
i mean like the motives are another
thing the motives of the monk also like
the monks reaction
you know it's like i keep saying over
and over again
um the moral quality of an action going
with buddhist philosophy is not physical
i mean it's not determined by what the
body actually does it's it's the mental
states
so a prostitute can come to come to see
a monk and the monk is completely
serene and equanimous and unlustful
towards her and all that then i mean he
hasn't done anything wrong although of

course there are like rules of monastic discipline saying that they shouldn't be sitting alone together or talking alone together or anything like that but let's say she comes with a chaperone you know another man a man comes with her or there's two monks there or something so yeah

i mean people can come and visit monks and monks can especially um there's nothing particularly wrong with a monk visiting his family

so i'll just move on to the next

question which is from mr unofficial

and mr unofficial

asks a kind of interesting question that a similar question was asked um maybe a

month ago

about npcs are there real npcs you know

like uh

beings that seem to be conscious but

really there's there's nobody there

um this is a similar one

mr unofficial asks what are your

thoughts on philosophical zombies or

hylics as described within gnosticism

can a human be devoid of consciousness

but still act as if they did have it

like an artificial intelligence

that is an interesting question

and um

i have

been told by a german monk living in

burma when i was also living in burma

that um

the demons in hell are like this and

unfortunately

more fortunately depending on how you

look at it the celestial nymphs in

heaven

you know the harems of celestial nymphs

that the devas have that they're all

just like generated by karma there's

really nobody there that they're just um

kind of like

dream apparitions or something

and uh

at least i mean just the

the word apparition

uh leads to the idea that i mean any

kind of apparition

would be like this that i mean if if if

it's just your own mind or your own

karma that's causing something to be

there

um

then yeah it's sort of like beings in a

dream if you're dreaming at night

um arguably you would be the only

character in the dream that isn't an npc

and to some degree i mean you can't

really

i mean your own

behavior to some degree is is uh out of

your control in dreams

so um to some degree we are kind of npcs

even when we're awake

uh some people more than others

um

[Music]

so if if there was one of these

um heilix or philosophical zombies um

they would exist only when some

conscious being was perceiving them if

they didn't have their own consciousness

they didn't have their own

um like karma like mental momentum

then they would exist only if there was

some conscious mind perceiving them

and

i think this could be possible i i'm i

haven't entirely ruled out the

possibility that uh like space aliens

like people who have close encounters or
are abducted or so

this kind of thing that um

the beings who are abducting them may

just be generated by these people's

karma

and so they don't really exist except

for they are sort of created by the

power of the person's karma

kind of along these same lines there is

this weird heaven realm according to

buddhist cosmology called the realm of

perceptionless brahmas

who

somehow exist but they don't have any

mental states

so they just are like statues that are
just like stand there for millions and
millions of years and i see no point
i mean it just seems really
um you know
what would be the point of that
they wouldn't be working off karma or
anything because they're perceptionless
so

um it just seems like that would
probably be just made up

in fact i mean the demons in hell and
the celestial nymphs being npcs could
also just be made up by some scholar
monks and sri lanka or something who are
just trying to figure everything out and
sometimes their guesses are

kind of

kind of silly

and one last

i mean this is kind of uh a weird take
on things but uh you could say that one
kind of uh

philosophical zombie i mean that's not a
good way it's not a polite way of
putting it but like somebody who seems
to be there but really isn't there could
be like an enlightened being too

like ram das used to say with regard to
his guru neem karoli baba the more you
knew him the better you got to know him
the more you realize that there really
wasn't anybody there he was just like a

mirror reflecting your own karma back at
you

but referring to enlightened beings as
zombies is probably uh not very
respectful

but according to buddhism yeah there are
um like npcs beings that seem to
have a functioning mind but really don't
and

as i say you'd have to have a conscious
mind perceiving that being

like like in a dream or something in
order to give them existence or give
them seeming existence they wouldn't be
able to continue functioning like a
vampire or something

um

if there's nobody perceiving them
because they don't have their own
mental momentum to keep them going
so next question by mr unofficial
speaking of ai is it theoretically
possible for one to become conscious and
create karma

well

a few years ago i asked a burmese monk
who was an abhidhamma scholar i mean he
was just
practically obsessed with abhidhamma you
know he's just thinking about all the
time he could just sit there and give a
talk for hours on abhidhamma and still
be going strong

and um he said it's just absolutely
impossible you could not have
a computer become conscious
but i really don't see why not
um

like i do not think that the brain
is creating consciousness and going with
abhidhamma even abhidhamma doesn't think
it's the brain they pabidama philosophy
orthodox abhidhamma says that
consciousness arises in a chamber of the
heart

but um
yeah i mean the brain isn't really
creating consciousness it's just acting
as a kind of receiver
of consciousness or or it's like

the brain is sort of like a computer i
mean it's a pretty obvious analogy
and the computer isn't
generating electricity the computer
isn't creating electricity it's just
taking the electricity and complexifying
it and organizing it and utilizing it
and the brain is kind of doing the same
thing to consciousness
the consciousness is already there the
brain is just taking that consciousness
and
like diversifying it and organizing it
and and utilizing it
so i don't see why a computer if it were
complex enough and designed properly

enough why a computer couldn't be the
seat of consciousness also

in order for it to create karma would
have to have

like irrationality you'd have to somehow
program like emotion or

um

show open heart is a will into a
computer

it couldn't be completely passive

so you'd somehow have to but i mean you

could model a computer on a human brain

and i think they've done this to some

degree with more primitive animal brains

so yeah i really don't see why it would

be impossible even in theory

so my answer is see is it theoretically

possible for one to become for an ai to
become conscious and create karma

um

yeah i would say theoretically at least
you know you could make like an
artificial brain

and it functions pretty much the same as
like a meat brain and

you know why not i really don't see why
not

but

going with ai i mean if it mimics
consciousness that's that's

good enough or bad enough i mean when we
hit the scene the technological
singularity assuming that we do

it doesn't really require a computer to
become conscious so long as it is
mimicking consciousness well enough
so

um i'll just move on to

mr unofficials

next question

also it would be interesting to hear
your thoughts on gnosticism in general

if you are familiar with it

how compatible is gnosticism with

buddhist thought

i'm still in the process of learning
about both religions but sometimes i see
touching points mainly the idea of
conventional reality being a delusion i
suppose the demiurge

could be considered what you call a
small g god

um yeah i'm i'm deliberately being nice
and not

pronouncing the g usually um i pronounce
it wrong on purpose i think and call it
gnostic

gnosticism

because i met this gnostic once
and he was uh

he was all gnarled and gnarled like a
like a gnome and he was riding a gnu
but um yeah

um

i really don't know a whole lot about
gnosticism

gnosticism i mean

um

i think that there is some overlap with
buddhism but there is some stuff that
really isn't buddhism like like here
mentioning the demiurge like

um some some gnostic sect
considered

jehovah or yahweh of the old testament
to be like some inferior god he wasn't
like the highest god which explains why
everything is as messed up as it is
and why the the god of the old testament
was such a like a violent bloodthirsty
tyrant

but in buddhism there really is there
really is no demiurge it's just

um

this this universe is generated by

ignorance or um

or like delusion of vija

so um the demiurge is unnecessary i mean

you've got mara but he's not really

creating the universe

and

another difference between gnosticism as

far as i understand it

with with buddhism is that um

gnosticism

not only considered it to be a good

thing to escape from this phenomenal

world but really consider this

phenomenal world to be

um

just sort of qualitatively

bad

i'm just like having a body like a body
was a defilement and

buddhism kind of leans that way to some
degree but um really the defilements are
mental in buddhism

so like physical matter isn't good or
bad

because the like the moral or ethical
quality of something is is
psychological or mental

so that would be one difference um

but as i say i really don't know a whole
heck of a lot about gnosticism

so i think i'll just move on to the next

question which is

from

the person who

has their name all in japanese

characters but i believe

the person's name transliterated into

english is yuichiro

or something along those lines

and yuichiro

says

if other beings have become enlightened

are their teachings valid i never

understood why only the buddhist

teachings are valid and not other

enlightened beings at least some

buddhists say so the buddha wasn't god

so i see no reason to only listen to him
and reject other people who might be
equally enlightened there are even other
fully enlightened buddhas
for example i didn't come to buddhism to
deify someone whose actual historical
reality is unknown i'm pretty sure
buddhism is technically against deifying
the buddha but lots of buddhists even
monks do it anyway even if they don't
they might say only his teachings are
valid and everyone else is wrong i might
as well become a christian and say jesus
is the only way truth and life i just
want to learn what's really going on not
dogmatically cling to what one guy
supposedly said

i don't care if that guy never even
existed and everything is made up as
long as it makes good sense
well

the orthodox theravada buddhist position
is that

um

you can

like

a person who isn't a buddhist can go to
heaven

and hell of course but only like an
unorthodox buddhist with right view
capital r capital v sama dt

um only they can become enlightened so
it's like

theravada buddhism is open-minded
more than most religions by saying that
even if you're not a buddhist you can
still go to heaven but from the buddhist
point of view heaven doesn't last
forever it's not the highest possible
state
and they still kind of
want buddhism or theravada buddhism or
orthodox theravada buddhism to have a
kind of monopoly
on
on enlightenment the attainment of
nibbana
and personally i just
do not accept this i just cannot believe
that only a theravada buddhist can

become enlightened or even only a

buddhist um

like in of the people who lived in the

20th century

that

i would guess were fully enlightened if

that even means anything

my two top picks

of possible enlightened beings are both

hindus and that would be

neem karoli baba and

ramana maharshi who are very different

from each other

one was a rascal and the other one was

just uncompromisingly saintly

so

yeah so the thing is

um like a devout terra botta buddhist

would not acknowledge

that a hindu or a christian

or or anybody else that wasn't a

buddhist could possibly be enlightened

or fully have right view

but again i've really never adopted that

position

and so

i think it's possible that even some

christians could be fully enlightened

like saint john of the cross he

apparently considered his mentor saint

teresa of avila and also apparently

himself to have reached the stage of

perfection from which from a from a

christian point of view from a catholic
point of view which was surprising to me
because until i read saint john of the
cross i just assumed that the official
position

of christianity in general is that
nobody is worthy

you know even jesus in the bible
somebody calls him good teacher or good
master or something like that and jesus
himself says why do you call me good

there's none good except god

and then you've got these

16th century catholics mystics

contemplatives

who are talking about

becoming god through participation where
you

um

mortify yourself well until you no
longer have

self-will and then you are no longer
motivated by your own

volitions it's you just become like a
puppet of god you are you are moved by
the will of god

and that's kind of interesting to me
because

even though the words are very different
it it comes very close to what buddhism
teaches like

um you know the christian catholics they
they mortify their self will

and so they're not having they're not
they don't have will anymore not their
own

and going with buddhism i mean karma is
will and an enlightened being creates no
new karma so it's kind of the same thing
really it's just described differently
and

i'd like to think that they arrived at
the same

ideas independently of each other

whether saint john of the cross had any
exposure at all to buddhism is
doubtful

and even if he heard about it he'd
probably get this really distorted

anti-heathen interpretation of it anyway

so

yeah

you should just uh

you know i mean you can read the the

teachings of others and the buddha

himself

um

you know he encouraged people to be

broad-minded and be familiar with other

philosophies

and um he did acknowledge that there

were people who were enlightened before

him and also other enlightened beings

um

and that were contemporaneous with him

that were his contemporaries and i don't

think they would have all have been his
disciples

so yeah i don't think that
buddhism

really has a monopoly on enlightenment
and i think the buddha acknowledged that
that really

any kind of philosophy or ism i mean
that's really not the point you're not
going to become enlightened through some
intellectual

you know system

it just doesn't work that way so long as
the practice helps you to detach from
all systems

then yeah it's a good it's a good system

it's a system that

eventually

uh sort of devours itself

so let's see

i hope i answered that well enough if i

didn't uh you each here you are welcome

to ask again but um

yeah i've

i've never considered the buddha to be

the only

um

the only enlightened being or the only

um

how to put it

i don't think that buddhism really has a

monopoly on enlightenment let's just

put it that way

so let's move on to yuichiro's next question

i have an interesting dilemma if you misgender a trans person it can cause them serious mental suffering however it would be wrong to call them by their preferred gender because it would be a lie since reality is real

so is it worse karma to cause them suffering by misgendering them or by saying something untrue to avoid their suffering could it be argued that their suffering would be good in this case because they could potentially learn from it

well i mean i am a little skeptical of

this one part here it says if you
misgender a trans person it can cause
them serious mental suffering

um

if a person
who identifies as a woman
is is called hey mister

if that really messes them up and calls
them serious mental suffering they're
kind of messed up already

um

you know it's sort of like a a person
with a big bruise you don't want to poke
the bruise but i mean all you got to do
is just touch it and they're going to be
hurting

um

yeah well

again it's like whether something is
uh good or bad depends on your volitions
like your your motives the reasons why
you do something the mental states
accompanying it so if you're just being
honest and you're not saying something
in order to hurt them you're just saying
it because you consider it to be true
and something that ought to be said
then yeah i mean you can just hurt their
feelings big time and you haven't done
anything wrong because it's really their
own hypersensitivity and kind of messed
up in this that they just can't deal
with reality

um that doesn't mean that you should do
it on purpose in order to hurt them i
mean you should have compassion
definitely

um

i mean you should be kind
you should be you know benevolent
but

i mean you shouldn't get to the point of
you're having to lie in order to
uh foster a person's delusions you know
a person believes that they're jesus
christ it doesn't mean you have to you
know consider them or act like you're
considering to be jesus christ
this is uh
pretty similar

um but with regard to buddhism

uh i mean buddhism is kind of got a lot
of gray it's it's not just black and
white

for example in in burma trans people can
be found even in like really remote
really traditional conservative villages
you know they're not even in the cities
just out in this really remote rustic
area you can find trans people
and

um

they are accepted

i mean there might be a few jokes made
behind their back every now and then but
they are accepted and treated

relatively well you know they're not
persecuted or anything because of the
buddhist concept of reincarnation
and

that reminds me of a saying by my father
who was a hypnotist he did a lot of past
life regressions
and um

he said that uh

every

let's see

every person who was a woman in their
past life but then were a man in this
one has been quote queer as a three
dollar bill unquote

so there's this buddhist concept of
reincarnation or rebirth where you can

make a transition from male to female or female to male and a trans person could be a person who's like in an intermediate state they're making the the crossover from one gender to the next and it's taking more than one life to make the full transition and so when they think about it that way the burmese they they can accept it it makes sense to them you know it fits in with their cosmology and so forth and so they don't really have an issue with that

um and um they can consider

um a person in a man's body who is

nevertheless dressing like a woman and

called by a woman's name and acting like
a woman and declaring themselves to be a
woman

um you know out of consideration and
their belief in in rebirth and so forth
they might um

i think a lot of them just go along with
it but um

nevertheless um

how the person reacts i think they're
burmese trans people are probably just a
lot more mentally tough

you know they're they're not just like
fragile like eggshells or something and
so if somebody misgenders them i doubt
that they're going to have a meltdown
over it

um i used to know um a trans

man in burma who was uh

a woman a fe uh like a biological woman

who just insisted that she was male and

uh

she was a lesbian i believe i mean

a straight guy straight trans guy or

a lesbian

and um

yeah i don't know what public restrooms

he or she

um

had recourse too but um

you know it was no big deal in in burma

it's just not that big of a deal because

of the belief in reincarnation and that

sort of thing

but um

again getting back to the question i

think i've meandered away from it

um

yeah i mean

misgendering someone i mean if you just

think that you're telling the truth and

you're not saying it in order to hurt

somebody then you haven't done anything

wrong

so i guess that's um

that would be the short answer and i'll

just move on to the next question

which is from nardi

and nardi says

are there any differences of following

ways of buddhism among tarawata

countries like the main differences

between burma and thailand for example

and why did you choose burma

yeah actually there are differences in

there

they're largely cultural differences

so the difference between

burmese buddhism and thai buddhism would

be like the difference between burma and

thailand there's going to be cultural

differences

the burmese

belong to like the tibeto burmese

language family they're they're like

genetically more closely related to the

tibetans and i've read the ties are more
closely related to like the mongols and
they migrated southwards
into thailand

so um that would just cause differences
um just
naturally

um

i assume it would be the same in in
with regard to the west and like
christianity like a catholic in spain
would be different from a catholic in
germany which would be different from a
catholic in like venezuela or something
uh so there are differences and
um

some of the differences between burmese

theravada and thai theravada

burmese theravada puts much more

emphasis on meditation and scholarship

whereas thai theravada puts much more

emphasis on following the rules of

monastic discipline and also

the

optional aesthetic practices called

dutanga

so

um

the thais like the vuniya pitaka the

burmese are more into abidama

and like the sri lankans the they're

more emphasis on the sutas

and sri lankan theravada is

just very different from burmese and
thai because there's so much indian
culture there's like elements of cast
and that sort of thing that are are part
of

um sri lanka and theravada also

um

why i chose burma was it was just uh

karmic random chance really um

i uh i wanted to become a monk i didn't

really know much about monasticism i

wanted to be a monk in america

and so

um

i went to this

zen place

in portland oregon and i was thinking

maybe i was i was kind of leaning
towards zen at the time
and
the the roshi there had uh
it was like a directory of
buddhist organizations in america so i
just went through the whole thing and
wrote down the name and address of any
place that looked like it might be a
monastery because i wanted to be ordained
and there was this one
name on the list it was said tung pulus
yap dao it wasn't even spelled correctly
and i had no idea what a tom pelusi
abbot was but uh it
wasn't obviously not a monastery so i

wrote to them and it turned out to be uh
tong pulu kaba 8 monastery

um tom pulu seatto

uh he had already passed away

but um it was one of the few monasteries
in america that that responded to me

abba aguirre didn't exist yet what meta
down in southern california didn't exist
yet

um

so i mean yeah it was just sort of
random chance i guess why i chose burma
although it was a good choice it really
worked for me

uh the the ties are too conformity
oriented they're they're too like
regimented whereas the burmese are more

easy going and so

um

i could just pretty much do as i pleased

which was good because the burmese

weren't as a general rule they were not

very strict and i wanted to be stricter

so

yeah um i think i've answered the

question so instead of just meandering

for another 15 minutes i think i'll move

on to the next question which is by the

marquis de sado

and his first question

is

you have previously mentioned some

weaknesses within the theravada

tradition such as systematization of
enlightenment it being adapted to
ancient india and not the modern west
and so forth with this in mind is there
any value in keeping your religious
tradition pure or should one strive
towards

syncretism well that's a good question
and uh

it depends on

uh it depends on you really like with me
i wanted to keep the religious tradition
pure but in order to do that i had to go
to burma

and live like an ancient indian ascetic
because that's really what theravada
buddhism teaches

is

how to be an ancient indian ascetic

so i mean if if you really want to keep
it pure then that's what you're going to
have to do something along those lines
you're going to have to uh

um

i mean you want to wander around
homeless and all that which is what
theravada teaches then you're going to
have to go someplace probably not in
america probably some place like burma
or or thailand

and

just really try to follow the texts
but um if you're living in the west

if you're not an ordained monastic

um

then yeah there's gonna have to be some
kind of compromise there's gonna have to
be some

syncretism as uh the marquis
says

so you do the best you can and if you
really are persuaded

that a certain system is the one that's
going to get you enlightened

or at least potentially then yeah you do
well to follow it as purely and strictly
as you can

but um again uh i learned

uh through experience that just

trying to live like an ancient indian

aesthetic even though you're living in a
culture that's really not so different
like like burma out like rural burma
even today

is changing fast now but uh like 20
years ago especially it's like it's
really not so different from ancient
india and the buddhist time the culture
um is kind of similar the climate and
the the flora and fauna are very similar
like the irrawaddy valley and the ganges
valley are very similar

um

with regard to biology you know

wildlife and so forth um

and i mean you've got men still taking

their team of blocks out to plow the
fields and the the girl the teenage girl
with the the clay pot balanced on her
head goes down to the well or the river
to fetch water for the hut
it's really not that different except
for you've got rubber flip-flops and uh
radios and now of course you've got uh
cell phones and uh cheap chinese
scooters and so forth but um
yeah i mean you can come very close to
the way the
the monks lived in ancient india if you
go to
um
go out into the the
wilds of

rural burma and possibly thailand too

although

i really am not an expert on thailand

so i can't really say for sure

but um

yeah i guess the answer is uh you know

if you're not willing to just

totally immerse yourself

in in a tradition

then uh yeah i mean you're gonna have to

compromise and you're gonna have to uh

maybe add a little of this and a little

of that and be a little bit eclectic

which is pretty much what i'm doing um

i've never

um well i mean i was trying to live like

an ancient indian aesthetic like i just
said but uh

um i've never just completely become so
narrow-minded that i was only willing to
read like orthodox terribata buddhist
texts i have met a few monks that were
like that a lot a lot of burmese monks
are like that but i have met a few
western monks too that uh you know they
they wouldn't read anything it was
written by a hindu for example or even a
mahayana buddhist but

it's it's good to be open-minded

definitely good to be open-minded

uh narrow-minded dogmatism is is a

virtual guarantee that you're not going
to become enlightened unless maybe

you've got such stainless steel faith
like like some catholic saint that you
can just
muscle through it
so i think i'll just move on to the next
question from the marquis de sado
and uh he says i have found some
confusion in what exactly constitutes
sexual misconduct while some claim it
simply covers adultery and the like i
have also encountered monks claiming
that all sexual activities outside of
marriage would count as sexual
misconduct
what would be the orthodox terrabotta
perspective well the monks that you that

you encountered that the marquis
encountered claiming that all sexual
activities outside of marriage would
counter sexual misconduct that's just
false that is not that is not correct
um

orthodox terra vada i mean marriage
really is not a sacrament in buddhism
and um

it's not necessary to be married in
order to avoid

um the third breaking the third precept
of sensual misconduct
but

um

if you want to be a real stickler i mean
for a monk i mean just even a a sexy

thought would be misconduct

so

um if you're a lay person keeping five
precepts

then um

so long as you're faithful to a person
that you sincerely love and that person
is not already spoken for

then uh

you're doing fine even if you you're
very lustful with that person

because

um the life of a lay person i mean

most people just are not ready to just
strive single hands just single-mindedly
for enlightenment

and that that's just an option i mean to
strive single-mindedly for enlightenment
is an option it's not like you have to
do that even in buddhism and the buddha
didn't say you know you must do that
it's like well i mean if if if it seems
right to you if you're ready for that
then yeah go for it

but um you know the overwhelming
majority of the human race including
most monks and nuns just aren't ready
for that sort of thing

and so uh

yeah i mean there's there's always going
to be a certain amount of um acoustic a
certain amount of uh
naughtiness in us

not everybody can be a perfected saint
and so you just like make peace with
that i mean you just reconcile yourself
if you're not ready
to to strive for just wholeheartedly for
enlightenment
then uh
yeah i mean we're just
we're gonna be breaking
breaking rules that a monk would have to
follow anyway
so let's see let's see if i'm getting
the question right
uh
the orthodox terror water perspective
yeah so for lay people

um the third precept is um

is it's like i already explained i mean
you don't even have to be married really
although uh

um

usually usually that is the case um

at least in uh

buddhist cultures

but for a monk i mean really it was any
kind of

any kind of action or thought that is
motivated by like

sensual desire or passion or anything
like that you i mean you've already gone
off the track

let's see so i'll just move on to the
next question i i hope i answered that

next and last question from the marquee
finally a question regarding anatarika
karma

i then think i think that's spelled
wrong

why is patricide or matricide placed
among the gravest sins a person can
commit yeah according to orthodox
terravada there are i think it's four
i'm getting kind of rusty on this but
there are like four actions that are
just you're just guaranteed of hell in
your next life you're just gonna plunge
right into avicii hell
the lowest pit of hell
if you do these things one is to cause a

buddha to bleed

deliberately i mean if it was accidental

i'm sure that uh the monk shaving the

buddha would just be shaking in his

sandals

um

so yeah to deliberately hurt injure a

buddha so that he bleeds because you

can't murder a buddha i mean um that

that could be used as some sort of

buddhist evidence that the that um

that jesus wasn't a buddha because uh he

obviously got executed but um

yeah to cause to injure a buddha causing

to bleed you cannot murder a buddha

because their karma's too good or

something to to kill an arahant to kill

an enlightened being to kill one of your
own parents

and then the fourth one

usually

i'm pretty sure it's to rape or seduce a
nun

although there's like an alternate which
is to cause a schism in the sangha

it's one of those two

and i've really never been interested in
these kind of lists

the first three are kind of interesting

but the fourth one is is more of a

dogmatic religious thing so

um

but why is patricide or matricide placed

among the gravest sins well killing your
own parents i mean that you gotta admit
that is pretty bad

you know it's not nice guys don't kill
their own mother

and um

i think i said just uh several
minutes ago gosh half hour ago or more
that um

going with uh

ancient indian culture and uh ancient
indian buddhism

that you really do

owe a huge debt to your parents that you
could carry them around on your back for
the rest of their lives and you still
wouldn't pay them back

so a lot of it is just the very family
oriented

um

traditional asian reverence

for one's parents you know filial piety
and that sort of thing which is largely
uh fallen by the wayside in the west at
least to some degree although

um i don't think you could ever
completely eradicate

the strong feelings

sentiments towards one parent towards
one's parents

um a lot of it is just instinctive i think
but um

yeah i think pretty much all cultures

would admit that uh as a general rule
killing your own parents is not good
then it's actually uh
really bad

and so i will move on to the next
question which is from chaplin
and chaplin says

if the buddhist's goal is cessation or
escape from samsara how does this
reconcile with procreation choosing to
give birth to more humans in my eyes is
essentially choosing to cast more humans
into samsara and they don't much have a
say in your decision to bring them in it
seems like procreation and cessation are
two completely contradictory actions
although both would lead to the complete

annihilation of the human species

yeah i've i've heard people bring this

up before

and um

it's it's sort of like i said earlier

that most people just aren't

ready or willing to strive

wholeheartedly for enlightenment it's

like you've got the the mass of humanity

and then every once in a while you know

there's like like this little spark or

something that that flings off

that is like an enlightened being

um

so i mean there's really no danger of

the human race going extinct just from

uh everyone striving for enlightenment
because most people just don't want to
um

with regard to uh

like children like babies sort of being
forced into existence against their will
or

maybe not against their will but uh

you know they didn't choose it actually

i mean from the buddhist point of view

you know they you you do have karma and

so you know it's somebody's karma to be

born

um you know they're going to be born

so

[Music]

that's going to happen regardless

and uh if all of the the people in this
world died out or became
enlightened saints without lust or
something like that then uh i assume
there are plenty of other worlds in this
universe that a person could be born in
alternate worlds or whatever

so

let's see

how does

how does cessation or escape from

samsara reconcile with procreation it

really doesn't but it's just like two

alternatives and most people choose the

procreation route

and uh the escape from samsara is just

for the uh

the people that are just really ripe for
it

which are they're always going to be a
tiny minority so

um even in buddhist countries there's
still uh increased uh like positive
population growth

um

maybe because i'm uh

a little bit tired from working today

i'm i'm really not sure how well i'm

answering these questions

but uh i'll move on to chaplain's next
question which i think is similar

say

what thought process goes through the

mind of a practicing buddhist sitting in
the lotus position really going for it
while at the same time having sex to
make babies well i assume they're not
doing both at the same time that is my
assumption

um

and it would just be a kind of
dissociation it'd be like like an
accountant or or like a corporate lawyer
or something who's doing all this very
non-sexual stuff during the day
and then comes home and makes passionate
love to his mate um
you know it would be something like that
i mean it's like

sometimes you're in this kind of mental state and sometimes you're in another kind of mental state

um

so i mean that would be an easy answer although there may be more depth to this question like um like

i mean if you if you

if you look at this question in light of the previous one

then you'd be like you know how can you reconcile doing like intensive

meditation some of the time and then and then you know like having sex and uh you know impregnating one's mate some of the other time well that's just sort of a transitional state maybe or uh

um i mean it's not even necessarily
unenlightened in my opinion although i
may have just spoken damnable heresy um
i mean you have to know

you have to know yourself fairly well i
mean if you're just a lustful person by
nature

then uh

just trying to be celibate isn't going
to work you're just going to be a horny
frustrated celibate person just thinking
about sex maybe even more than people
who are having regular sex sort of like
a person who's uh

starving you know they haven't eaten in
a week you know they might just sit

about sit around fantasizing about food
all the time and a celibate person can
be similar

so

you just do what you can you know it's
like just because you're sexually active
doesn't mean that you just shouldn't
meditate

even even uh

i mean meditation isn't just for the
sake of

um becoming enlightened i mean it does
increase peace of mind and decrease
uh suffering and just general messed
upness and so forth

so you can find a a suitable compromise
sort of a comfortable compromise

and so finally the last question from
chaplin and the last question of this q
a session

chaplain says

how can one reconcile the buddhist
teachings against passion attachment
lost sexuality with being in a healthy
relationship with a partner some of the
teachings seem very harsh in denigrating
towards how you should view your
romantic partner as a barrier or
hindrance to your own dharma corpse
contemplation and being taught to
imagine women as rotting corpses or
oozing blood comes to mind and seems to
be potentially psychologically damaging

and unnatural aversion training how can
this type of extreme thought be
considered the middle path

well there's kind of a lot to unpack in
that some of it i've already answered i
think

with my alternate

reading of the second question

but um

the uh i mean it's it's sort of

comparing apples and oranges i mean

you're comparing monks with

laypeople

and for a monk i mean they're they're

supposed to be celibate and

they can use some pretty extreme like

mental visualizations and so forth which

generally don't work

um

so yeah i mean in the text

monks are supposed to be celibate so you

you can have some really harsh

strict admonishments

against you know even the slightest

twinge of of like sensuality

but that is for

like just hardcore forest ascetics for

the most part

um

you don't really i mean

it says here you know you view your

romantic partner as a barrier or

hindrance to your own dharma actually

another person isn't really a barrier
it's your own mental state buddhism is
so psychologically oriented with regard
to its ethics

that buddhism really doesn't teach that
women are icky or bad or it doesn't
teach to nuns that men are icky or bad
is it doesn't say that you know having a
physical body sort of like the gnostics
you know having a physical body i mean
it has certain disadvantages but just
physical matter is not icky and bad but
um

it's it's just the
the

if you have mental states that are
sort of leading you in a direction away

from

uh greater clarity and peace and silence
and all that

then uh yeah it's it's considered to be
not the right route to take for

uh like an ordained ascetic who is
really striving for enlightenment and
it's really only the ordained aesthetics
they were encouraged to contemplate
rotting corpses and so forth

so again it's um

a lot of lay people they'll read the
text and they'll they'll take some uh
ideals

that maybe are more suited to monastics
and that can influence their mind

but

um

they weren't really intended for lay
people

i suppose i mean the buddha would you
know teach

um

you know lay people that they'd be
better off as monks but uh obviously it
didn't didn't work in most cases
because most people remain
lay people and they just
it's just natural
to live like a certain amount of
uh to have a certain amount of
sensuality in one's life even i mean
from the buddhist point of view even

putting salt and pepper on your potatoes
to make them taste better is is like
wrong or

um you know it's wallowing in sensuality
you know it's like anything it's

listening to music i mean music and
buddhism is is considered to be immoral
listening to it

even a lay person keeping only eight
precepts

is not supposed to listen to music
so

buddhism is just very finely tuned and
very strict um you know if you really
are

dead set on becoming enlightened then

yeah it's it's very

very rigorous uh asceticism

and uh

it's not intended for everyone and it's

it's just an option it's not like you're

wrong if you're not if you're not a monk

or a nun

you know it's not like the buddha is

saying you know you have to be that way

and if you don't then you're you're you

know

then you're you're bad and wrong and

going to go to hell or whatever um you

know it's mostly lay people them that

are trying for heaven that uh really

heaven is is the goal

of lay people

that uh if you're just a good person
despite the fact that you have a mate
and all that if you're generous and tell
the truth and
love your fellow man and
you know your conscientious person and
then yeah you're doing well even though
you may uh
you may uh
have sex
so
yeah it's very it's very complex you
know there's all this nuance
um
so and the very last part here how can
this type of extreme thought be

considered the middle path

yeah that's that's really uh an

interesting one where

um

a lot of people just

don't

they don't really consider that the

middle path between self-indulgence and

self-torture in ancient india involved

just being homeless penniless wandering

around sleeping on the ground wearing

rags begging for your food in the

streets

um

yeah i mean it's that i mean that would

be just way beyond the realm of

unacceptability you know it's like way

into the unacceptability the red zone
for even most monks nowadays

uh but um

yeah i mean i guess you'd have to take
into consideration ancient indian
culture where there were actually quite
a few people that were just literally
torturing themselves to death for the
sake of the kingdom of heaven so to
speak

um

yeah i have to i have to admit that
celibacy and uh just avoiding sensuality
altogether is not natural but then again
nature is not designed to make us happy
you know nature uses desires and

and even suffering to get us to do what
nature wants us to do which is generally
staying alive long enough to reproduce
our dna sequences

um

so having a

having a romantic partner

is not necessarily a barrier or

hindrance to your own dharma if your own

dharma is not to become enlightened in

this very lifetime and i mean there are

western teachers who are

um like krishnamurti for example i mean

i could i could list off a lot of them

like most

spiritual teachers nowadays in the west

who have a reputation for being

enlightened or also married
so it could be that they're just frauds
or it could be
that maybe they're just overestimating
their attainments or it could be that uh
like the ancient indian
insistence
on strict austerity asceticism
was
uh more of a cultural thing than real
like pure dhamma
but again i'm sort of wandering into the
realm of um damnable heresy by even
suggesting that
but because i'm not a monk anymore
i can uh i can speak damnable heresies

if i want to

and i can't be excommunicated for it so
there

and uh that's the that's the last
question of all and um

i hope i've answered these questions

this i've had this weird feeling

um while answering these that uh

i maybe haven't really fully

correctly answered any of them because i

mean you can just keep going you know so

um if you like you can uh

you can give me some feedback to say i

mean did i did i really answer the

questions or not

ah

maybe i need to drink more coffee

so anyway you're you're very welcome to
uh ask questions that's what i'm here
for is to answer them

if i can or you know at least make a
shot at it

and

you're welcome to leave questions in the
comment section below

or if you are subscribed to my channel
on subscribe star you can ask questions
there

or there's also a discord server
where

it's associated with the subscribe star
channel that you can you can leave
questions there but for most of you i

assume

most of you that are seeing these videos

it may be just

easiest just to leave them below

and

be happy

hello and welcome to episode 18 of
question and answer

i am your host panyo bassam previously
known as panyobasa biku or panyobasa
mahatera and now often known as david
reynolds or even as john reynolds
because technically john is my first
name

but that is all incidental i suppose um
lots of questions as usual i do
apologize that it has taken me
more than a week after putting out the
uh the announcement that i'd be doing
one soon but uh one thing leads to
another
and uh

so it's like a week later that finally i
am recording this and trying to answer
your questions and there are some uh
difficult questions this time
some uh some rather unusual ones and a
few easy ones which i always appreciate
so uh without any further rambling
um the first question is from sam i am
and semi-am says
fun scenario let's say you elevated and
came across the actual path of truth of
the buddha and found out that you were
following mara all along
who was trying to deceive you into a
confused state of knowing
what would you do and how would you move
forward

how would you

know what would you tell people about it

well this is this is really a strange

question i'm not exactly sure how to

answer it or even really how to

understand it see let's say you elevate

it so that would be like became

enlightened or at least became very wise

and came across the actual path of truth

of the buddha and found out that you are

following mara all along well if you're

following mara all along then how would

you be how would you how would it cause

you to be elevated

that's one that's one question here who

was trying to deceive you into a

confused state of knowing yeah well

that's what maura allegedly does

he notoriously is trying to deceive

everybody including the buddha himself

especially before the buddha became

enlightened

so in a way we kind of are following a

path of of mara or at least a path that

has been

influenced by mara

um

but then we managed to uh get elevated

um

what would you do and how would you move

forward yeah again it's like well i mean

you you

you somehow managed to be elevated even

though you were following the path of
mara

um

so i guess following the path of mara in
that respect wouldn't be all bad would
it

huh

what would you tell people about it well
i mean if if after you got wiser you
found out that there was a better path
to follow you know sort of i mean the
buddha was did that i mean he was uh
practicing all these extreme austerities
and cultivating trance states and so
forth
and um

then he found out a better way and he
taught the better way so
yeah i suppose um
how would i move forward gosh
yeah this is it's such a hypothetical
it's such a strange hypothetical
it's really hard to answer although
it's it's kind of a
kind of a weird question just because
you know you're following mara all along
but then you become enlightened or
elevated by doing that
somehow or somehow in spite of doing
that i mean something just slams you
into a state of enlightenment maybe
that's what happens it's like you're
you're practicing and practicing and and

you think you're doing well but maura's
just like you know laughing at you and
uh

just stringing you along or whatever and
then you have like a near-death
experience or something that slams you
into enlightenment

but even then i mean

i mean following the path of mara got
you where you are

so yeah it's it's um

it's just kind of a strange question
that uh

you follow the path of tomorrow and then
become enlightened anyway then what do
you tell people i mean well

if if following mara got you enlightened
somehow then

who knows maybe it would work for other
people too

but

you find the actual path or tr of truth
of the buddha i mean

yeah

then i mean i guess you teach the actual
path of truth of the buddha if that's

what you discovered

so i'll just move on to the next

question

also by sam i am who does not like green
eggs and ham how many buddhist

practitioners do you think would survive
if they were thrown into the jungle or a

wild nature environment for one to three
months with nothing like some of those
survival shows

survival buddhist

if they died because they didn't know
what they were doing with nature would
this be some karma that they would have
to deal with on the next go

people may try to render this
practitioner as a great or wise man even
though he was manhandled by nature
pretty easy what do you think about this
well

if you took

devout buddhists and threw them out into
a wilderness naked with nothing

um i doubt that they'd do much better
than anybody else in fact like us like a
strictly practicing monk like a really
strictly practicing monk there are
stories um like in the wiisuiti maga
about them just

voluntarily dying rather than killing
anything like there's a story in the
wiisuite maga about this monk who's
living out in the forest he's very
strict

and some

robbers

rob his his place where he's staying and
they tie him up with vines and the vines
are still rooted

so the vines are still living plants so

he's all bound up lying there in this forest and somehow they like tip over his lantern or something and they start a forest fire and this monk is so strict that he will not

harm a living plant

even to get loose and then he burned to death in the forest fire and became an arahant

in the process

so

yeah i mean

uh any devout buddhist who's keeping all five precepts and not killing anything i mean

yeah he's going to have a a rougher time

than the people who are just going to
survival mode and are eating bugs and
frogs and things

so

would it be there some karma that they
would have to deal with on the next go i
mean obviously it seems pretty obvious
to me that them dying

in a jungle

would be

less

um

i mean i mean the real karmic thing with
them being thrown into this jungle in
the first place if you're thrown naked
into a jungle i mean that's that's big
karma right there

um

and the fact that a lot of them will die
off like the story of that monk who just
let himself burn to death i mean
whether they die easy or whether they
survive

um it's largely irrelevant to how wise
they are

so they might just say well i'm naked in
this jungle i'm just gonna sit here and
meditate until i can't breathe anymore
or something

you know

or i mean they could just be like going
to survival mode and just kill
everything and just

survive that way just just going caveman
mode or even i mean like cannibalism and
stuff i mean you could survive doing
that

so yeah i mean

whether you survive in nature in like
alone in a jungle or not

um

is large that you're relevant to how
wise you are

and um

yeah and how much karma would you make
or that sort of thing um it would depend
on your mental states

i mean if you died with equanimity then
you'd be making less karma than if you
survived by just going absolute ruthless

killer

so

yeah it depends on mental states what
kind of karma you make it's not it's not
a matter of physical actions as i say

just about every show

so i think i'll just move on to the next
one also by sam i am

will you think about changing or opening
up some of the language to broaden the
attention of an audience or maybe

getting more creative about the subject
matter for example talking about comma
and samsara relating it to the matrix
and using other

b terms i think b might be buddhist here

i don't think many new people will know
exactly what you mean if you do not use
clarifications since you are open-minded
it may work well to do this and it would
attract more people to get into the real
benefits of the path what do you think
um

i don't know i think that the number of
technical terms i use is pretty limited
and i usually do
translate them
or explain them

um

comma like i say is uh

it's like a volition or it's like the
the momentum of your mind
and samsara it is true i use samsara

kind of that big ambiguously because i
do sort of equate it with maya or
illusion

that samsara itself is uh

it implies

unreality

um

orthodox taravana

doesn't entirely

go that far

um

orthodox terrible does think that

samsara like you know the at least the

atoms of which

everything is composed are real

um

but yeah getting back to the question

though i mean

i don't know i'm not really good at

elementary stuff

i mean i like talking about what is of

interest to me and if people also find

that interesting that's great

but um just like trying to change the

way i talk for the sake of attracting

[Music]

newbies

um

yeah i don't know i'm kind of stubborn

um

maybe

you know if somebody has any particular

suggestions um

but uh

i think i'm just gonna move on to the
next question

i'm sorry sam i am i'm not answering
your questions very well although these
are really kind of strange questions

um okay next question also from sam i am
i have noticed a bit of exposure rolling
out of the glory monks

you know the ones that are making profit
and having other issues with knowingly
not following the path correctly but
acting like they do for some kind of
personal gain or cowardice

excuse my rude language this one is only
for the really corrupted ones

maybe they will scatter like roaches
when the light is turned on
what do you think about this slow
movement towards truth do you think
karmic returns will happen in this
lifetime since there is quite a bit of
corruption presently do you think the
rise in a better movement has more ease
to also become corrupted at a faster
pace

well i mean it's always been corrupt i
mean even in the buddhist time i'm
notoriously had like the group of six
monks were all engaging in all sorts of
naughtiness

um

that i mean according to the legend the

buddha had to start making vinnie rules
because

they were

sloppy monks who were just uh doing
inappropriate actions and so you had to
start making rules and um

i mean

i lived i lived in a devoutly buddhist
country when burma may be the most
devoutly buddhist country in the world
and uh yeah the the sangha there is very
corrupt

uh it's it's sort of like medieval

europa where you have some

genuine saints you know old monks and

nuns who are very saintly

and um the the lay people you know the
common villager they're just have devout
just

stainless steel unquestioning faith in
their religion but as a general rule the
ecclesiastical structure is very corrupt
and most monks really aren't even trying
to become enlightened

so i mean the whole corruption thing
it's i mean it's just human nature it's
just always going to be that way or
for the foreseeable future anyway unless
there's some sort of profound
profound change in the in the entire
human race that somehow makes us better
you know we reach the next stage of
consciousness or something

um

one part of the question here do you think karmic returns will happen in this lifetime of course i mean they're always happening in this i mean yeah they're always happening you know karmic returns they they happen in this lifetime in the in the next lifetime assuming that there is a next lifetime you know um yeah i mean that this just it's the momentum of your mind like i said karma is the momentum of your mind as you're as you're creating your reality and so everything that you do is going to influence that

it's not just people think of karma as
you know

you you get killed by somebody because
2 000 years ago you were a roman soldier
who killed people or something but um i
mean that that that can happen

theoretically but um

at the of the at the same time i mean

you can have instantaneous karma you

know you get mad and punch the wall and

then break your hand or something that

would be instantaneous karma right there

so

it's it's happening all the time i mean

your karma is is it reaching fruition

all the time just constantly

so uh let's see

i hope i at least answered that question
do you think the rise in a better
movement has more ease to also become
corrupted at a faster pace well the
wiser a movement is the more easily it
can be corrupted because the more it can
fall

you know like

islam

arguably hasn't become very corrupt
because it was kind of i mean it wasn't
extremely wise to begin with but if you
have something like an enlightened
tradition just like an enlightened
founder
then

chances are

most of his followers are not going to

be enlightened including

the followers who are determining

like what is orthodox dogma after the

founder dies

that happened with christianity happened

with buddhism also

so yeah i mean uh

the higher the movement the farther down

it can fall

and uh probably faster you know

so that's true it's you're very

fortunate if you can have a succession

of several enlightened

disciples becoming teachers who then

have enlightened disciples

i mean

that does happen but generally after

maybe several

you know um

yeah then it peters out and then you

have to wait for

circumstances to cause another

upsurgence

or resurgence you know like a

renaissance

which has happened in buddhism a number

of times and it can't happen again

although there would have to be fertile

soil for that to uh

to uh to grow and uh i don't think it

exists yet in the west or in the east

so uh before i answer this next one i
have to open this red bull

red bull

gotta open this

[Music]

take a drink

and the last question by sam i am is

why are you drinking red bull

do you think the chemicals will cloud

your clarity

well the reason why i'm drinking red

bull is to increase my clarity

because uh i work today

and

i get tired

in the uh the evenings

you know i'm not not completely at my

best

although

i have delayed this q a

long enough that i don't want to wait

until next weekend

and often during the weekends i'm just

like

in like wet rag mode just completely

relaxed and not wanting to do very much

sometimes so it's hard to predict what

kind of mood i'm going to be in so i'm

just going for it and so i just drink

red bull because it has like the same

effect of coffee but

um

or maybe even it's it's sort of a more

gentle than just uh
taking straight caffeine
so and it is supposed to have other
things in it too like uh
taurine whatever that is
supposed to be good for you
so that's why that's why i drink red
bull

yeah i mean it's like a stimulant and it
stimulates it stimulates my mind and uh
hopefully it improves the quality of
this q a by at least two percent
and so the next question
is from eric

and eric says do you have any thoughts
on prayer wheels in general and
so-called digital prayer wheels stored

on the hard drive dvds etc thanks

well um in terrible buddhism there

aren't prayer wheels or at least i've

never seen a teravata buddhist prayer

wheel it seems to be more of a

vajrayana like a

i think it's mainly like a tibetan thing

and

um i mean the prayer wheel itself

whether it's like a real wheel or

whether it's digital

i mean it's just it's just a dead object

it's not generating any kind of

blessings or anything

if especially if there's nobody there to

perceive it so it'd be like a dhamma

book if the dhamma book is just sitting
on a shelf

nobody's reading it

and it's dead it's it's not doing

anything it's not generating anything

it's just sitting there

and uh the wheel can be spinning and

spinning but if if there's nobody there

perceiving it

then i mean it's there's going to be no

real spiritual benefit the benefit is um

from people perceiving it and their own

mental states it's like tarot cards or

something you know or what else like a

ouija board or something like this let's

just stick with tarot cards i mean

um

at the factory where they make the tarot cards they don't have a special machine that injects like prognosticated powers into these cards

you know it's just paper like laminated it's got some ink on it you know for the designs and all that and um you know it's just they just sit there i mean they're just dead objects any just like playing cards or business cards or or whatever

and um it's really the the mental states of the person who uses them that determines whether they're going to be useful whether they have any kind of

um spiritual effect anything like that
so i think prayer wheels are the same i
mean they're just
you know dead matter and until
someone is perceiving them and if you
got someone who really believes in them
and you know they feel really happy and
uplifted to think of all these blessings
radiating in all directions then you
know they can have uplifted mental
states and so forth and that can radiate
out from them
but the wheel itself is just a wheel i
mean might as well be spinning a bicycle
wheel as far as i'm concerned
so the next question
is from the person who always

has his name in japanese characters but
which i think is pronounced yuichiro

and you each hero says

supposing someone like mao

had good intentions and was just

staggeringly incompetent

what would the karmic implications of
that be

in general it seems like ideologies that
have good intentions cause the most
suffering

well and mao himself that's kind of a
good example i assume yuichiro

intended that mao

um was staggeringly incompetent like i

mean he was he was kind of a bad guy too

very ruthless and willing to uh kill people or have people killed that were uh interfering with his agenda but um i think most of the people who died in china under mao just died of starvation because of the incompetence of the way the uh

the agricultural reform was being being done and um

a lot of it was just people afraid to tell mao that his plan his idea wasn't working

um

but yeah i mean you can have

um

you can have people with good intentions that just mess up horribly you know like

jimmy carter was kind of that way i mean
he was people compare joe biden with
jimmy carter but at least jimmy carter
was intelligent and had moral principles
and um but still i mean he was he just
messed things up things america really
did not do well under jimmy carter um or
you could have some like wannabe ashoka
you know the emperor ashoka who um he
took buddhism so seriously that he just
disbanded most of his armies
and um

it was largely out of respect for his
sacredness that the neighboring
countries didn't just invade but um it
could be that you have some wannabe

ashoka who just disbands his armies

because he thinks uh violence is wrong

you know which is

um

understandable

and then he just they just immediately

get brutally invaded by barbarians or

whatever

so

what kind of karma you would make from

that

really is karma is mental states so uh

it could be that uh it would be like the

remorse

of of realizing that his own

his own fuckups essentially uh resulted

in just you know widespread

universal misery

but tom

yeah so long as you have good intentions

and you're acting on good intentions

you're not really making bad karma

somebody's calling me

okay where was i

i need to do

that was kind of confusing

where's the questions

oh here they are all right

let's see where was i

oh yeah yeah so

you just i mean if you have good

intentions and you mess up then the mess

up

uh unless it's caused by like delusion
or something

that's you know that's accompanying your
good intentions

then um

yeah i mean you're not really making bad
karma through that it would be through
your reactions afterwards

so let's say you have good intentions
and you accidentally cause a million
people to die then uh

yeah it's bound to affect your attitude
just the perception that you killed a
million people and then you're probably
not going to be very happy about that so
there could be like a lot of remorse and
guilt and so forth that would then mess

you up that would be the bad karma not
just the uh

trying to do something good and and it
turns out bad

because really the intentions were good
so from a buddhist point of view you
really didn't do anything bad

okay so i think uh

i i hope i answered that one so the next
question is from andre

and andre says the following poem by
walt whitman is often in my head these
days

roaming in thought after reading hegel
roaming in thought over the universe i
saw the little that is good steadily

hastening towards immortality and the
vast all that is called evil i saw
hastening to merge itself and become
lost and dead

unquote that's the end of the poem
is it normal at times to lean more
towards aversion before finally
attaining dispassion and equanimity if
not should i practice more meta
thank you

okay so it's
it seems like there's kind of two parts
to this question first is
walt equipment
and um
i mean i've i've encountered this kind
of idea before where

um good is like growing and trying to
fulfill itself and the evil in the in
the universe is kind of
you know i'm just doomed to to just die
out but um i really don't see things
that way

um

i think uh like
just going with a theistic language
because it's easily understood by
westerners you know let's say that
you've got somebody
let's say a hindu
and they become enlightened
and so they're going to look around
they're just going to see everything as

god you know when you when you when your
eyes are perfect you see everything is
perfect

you know when you become enlightened you
look around you just see enlightenment
so to speak

and so

i mean even the badness

is like

a manifestation of god or perfection

but um that was just me disagreeing with

whitman's palm and uh i think the main

part of the question here

is it normal at times to lean more

towards a version before finally

attaining dispassion and equanimity

um actually the way [__] manga

for what it's worth

it's like the main commentarial work of
theravada buddhism

um it it

it divides people up into six categories
by temperament

you've got um

like greed hate and delusion and then

you've got like the three opposites of
that you know you've got intellect and
and wisdom and

uh i don't remember i don't remember the
other one if i could sit here and rack
my brains in silence and come up with it
eventually but it doesn't make for a
good video

so um

it they do point out that

buddhaghosa the author of the wesuri

maga does point out that people who have
the aversion temperament

um you know the dosa temperament

they often become enlightened more
quickly

than people who have like a loving
temperament

um

or like an accepting kind of temperament
because they have a version for samsara
they want out

and so that can be like

um

like

a motivation for practicing more
more intensely or more sincerely or more
conscientiously so yeah i mean theravada
buddhism orthodox theravada does say
that if you have
um a lot of aversion in your temperament
it can't help you to become aligned
it wouldn't be just irritation with you
know all the [_]
they're like cutting you off on the
highway and that kind of thing but um
you can use your
aversive temperament
um
you know as kind of a tool you know it's
it's sort of like you're using fire or

something and um

so i mean you can use it as a as a means
towards enlightenment by just having a
version for the whole mess massive
samsara

so uh let's see i think that's it should
i practice more meta

um that's that's entirely up to you um
i think most people who practice meta
are kind of faking it or pretending um
i've never been able to practice
meta meditation systematically if i do
um

if i do radiate meta or be meta
at some other being it's usually
spontaneous you know it's just my heart
opens and it happens but just sitting

down and systematically

um you know like you're following some
of the sutras where you're you're just
sending

meta to all beings all all males all
females all

you know all animals all higher beings
you know all lower beings and we're just
dividing the entire cosmos up into
directions you know you're beaming meta
to the west and you're beaming mental to
the east and you know and up and down
and intermediate directions and you know
all

um

yeah i mean it's

i mean

i assume some people can do that and it really works but it seems to me like an intellectual exercise where

um you're just kind of like visualizing beaming yourself beaming meta

um

for me it just doesn't work i mean you can't just turn meta on and off like flipping a switch it just doesn't work that way for me

uh if it works for you then fine i mean if it helps you

helps you to become wiser and better and happier than not go for it

but like i said having a version

in general like in your temperament as

is part of your personality it it
actually can be useful

so another question from andre

uh is it dangerous to tell dhamma
practitioners that getting angry burns
up any good merit that they may have
accumulated

i heard something like that in a dhamma
center once not theravada and it seemed
wrong to me for one thing it would lead
to repression and exploding at one point
because one could not take it anymore
all right

first of all i do think that that is a
false statement that getting angry burns
up any good merit that they may have

accumulated because

it's just adding new karma it's not like
erasing any past karma it just doesn't
work that way

so you can add new karma that maybe is
going in the wrong direction

but um

yeah you're not really

burning up good merit that may have
already accumulated i just don't think
that that is true

um and so

is it dangerous to tell dumb
practitioners that

well

maybe

it can be it can be dangerous because

like i say i really don't think that

it's true

and um

yeah people that try not to get angry i

mean

the best thing to do is not so much

repress anger as just be mindful of it

when it arises just watch the anger you

know just how does it feel and if you're

not a really an angry person through my

own experience i can say that um

if you're usually not an angry person

then when you do get angry it's actually

easier to be mindful of that because

it's so

it's so unusual and it's so blatant you

know it's like bright lights it's like sirens and like police lights and stuff going off so it's really noticeable and then you can really observe what's going on in your body and in your mind and so forth

um

so yeah i'm just trying to repress anger that's yeah that can lead to an explosion i do agree with that and so uh i'll move on to andre's third and last question

can you give the list and reference of the benefits of meta meditation

and that's an easy question to answer

can i give the list in reference nope i can't

i don't know i i assume there are like
lists

of uh the benefits of meta meditation
there's maybe some

suta and the angutara nikaya you know
the eight benefits of practicing meta
meditation

um but i really don't know what it is
you might try the wiisuiti maga again
because it does have a section

describing meta meditation and we'll be
talking about meditation a little

farther down it's the meditation on
usually the translation of mata is
loving kindness

um

it has the same root as the uh

the word mita which is friend

so it's like friendliness friendly

feelings

um

let's see

so can i give the list in reference of

the benefits of meta meditation

um no i really don't know it

and um i suppose i could make these q

and a's a little better by by studying

up you know like look hunting down the

reference or something but um

yeah

like i said i really have never been big

on practicing meta-meditation

systematically if i do generate meta

it's spontaneous

and it does happen sometimes believe it

or not

so the next question is from tyr i think

t-y-r

and uh tyr says do you think it would be

possible for you to describe what it was

like living in the cave how you spent

your days how long you were there etc

sadhu

um

i mean that could be an entire video

because i lived in several caves

and um each cave was different and uh

like what it was like was different how

i spent my days was often different

um how long was i there altogether it
added up to about 13 years in in various
caves

and

i mean i can give you the short version
if people really want to know i can just
do a video talking about various caves i
lived in

and what it was like and so forth but
the very first cave i ever ever stayed
in was in thailand and it was just one
night and it was really like

man it was awful because i still had
like thick wool robes from from america
i hadn't even got to burma yet so i just
get to get to thailand before before
arriving in burma and we went to visit

uwe theresa this legendary very strict
monk he was like a buddhist rambo
and um he lived in this cave that was
i mean i looked into his cable and all i
saw was just pitch black and
he thought it was paradise but he
couldn't keep anything he couldn't keep
soap he couldn't keep books or anything
because the rats would chew it all up he
had to live in like uh he had to sleep
in a kind of hammock just to keep him up
above the rats
and um
he paid me the honor of uh letting me
sleep in a cave near his
and

uh i mean i won't i'm gonna give the whole story but i mean i was he told me that um when you sleep you gotta cover yourself from head to toe where the rats will bite you and it was true i had rats on me that night and i'm all covered up in just these thick wool rubs in in like 90 degree heat in thailand and mosquitoes and there was a big whip scorpion on the wall and it was i didn't get much sleep that night then uh after that i spent about three years it was like four rainy season but it added up to three years of um um it was it was like it was called mandalay gu it was a cave at a a monastery called tong bulu chelsen doya

in central burma and it was just like a
cube it was an artificial cave dug into
the side of a hill it was like eight
feet by eight feet by eight feet
and it was about 20 degrees fahrenheit
cooler

inside the cave than outside but still
when it's 115 outside it's still 95
inside so it was like living in this
sauna

then the next cave after that was i
spent

about two weeks

living in a natural cave

at

the bay eindoya in southern burma in mon

state and um there was a famous seattle
who lived there long before i i lived
there but it was this huge block of
granite that had this notch at the
bottom

and so there was just this notch kind of
like kind of like this where you could
stay out of the rain

and so i lived there for two weeks after
it started raining i was living under a
tree before that

and um

part of the time i was sharing the cave
with a big land crab and um when it did
rain

um there were places where the water
would drip in because the the ceiling

was kind of slanted inwards so you'd
have to know the the dry places where it
was okay to sleep and that kind of thing
and then let's see after that the next
cave was uh

also a huge natural cave at hollando
casaba national park in northwestern
burma and i spent a total of about two
years there

um off and on not all at once

and um

it was huge i mean the entrance was
maybe

oh maybe 100 feet 100 feet wide and
maybe

30 feet high and it went in maybe 30

feet so it was more of like an

overhanging rock ledge

than

than a cave

and it was the whole back wall was just

lined with wasp nests

and i learned a lot about wasp

psychology what wasps like and don't

like they don't like the color blue at

least that species didn't

and uh yeah i got stung a lot there

but um

and then see after that i think the last

cave i like i lived in

was uh at a place called

one bow one bowl wildlife refuge

monastery and that was that was deluxe

that was uh it was a man-made cave dug
into the side of a of a hill
and it had like a corridor that went in
like 50 feet and it had a shrine room
and like three side rooms and had like
this niche where you could put the water
pot and you could do walking meditation
inside and

um

i dug about 20

20 of it because when i got there a lot
of the ceilings were only about six feet
high and i'm like six foot two and it
was just really stuffy in there so i dug
upwards about twenty twenty percent
and had like a window installed and uh

like a screen door to keep out bats rats
snakes and humans

and uh

so i lived there um

about eight years so one of the places
where i lived longer than any place in
my life was in that cave i i named it
which

has a double meaning it can mean hot
cave which it was or it can also mean
like um

like

austere spiritual practice cave

so i i killed two birds with one stone i
feel pardon the violent non-buddhist
metaphor

oh i did live in one other cave

which i had dug

down at the same monastery lower down

and um i only spent a few months there

after see

there were two two monks living at this

monastery i lived up on the hill in in

the big cave

and then there was an old monk named

unandia who lived down by the river

and he kind of kept an eye on the main

monastery which was down below that was

for the well in the dharma hall and some

of the meditation cabins and stuff where

and then he got bitten by a cobra and

died and so i had to move down

to keep an eye on the lower monster

because i was the only monk left
which mainly meant uh trying to keep
villagers from poaching the wild jungle
fowl

but then i got really sick and had to
spend the reigns retreat in in rangoon
so um

yeah it didn't last very long that that
particular cave

so i've lived in several and um yeah
like the the uh

how i spent my days and so forth

um a lot of the time i mean i lived in
caves mainly just as a matter of
survival because as i as i said earlier
it was a lot cooler
inside a cave and outside

and um

really um

in central burma it's just it's very
furnace-like a lot of the time like most
of the year

so it was sort of like being a desert
rat just kind of living in a burrow and
i became largely nocturnal

because during the day it was pretty
much too hot to do much so i tried to
sleep as much as i could during the day
and

i mean there's there's really not a
whole lot to do inside of a cave i
didn't have computers or anything back
then so

i read a little bit but mostly i'd be uh
meditating doing walking meditation
and uh
maybe riding a little lying on my back
looking up staring at the ceiling
thinking about stuff
uh just kind of being a hermit
but um yeah i shouldn't go into too much
details because there's other questions
here i should answer but if if people
really are interested in just uh
my cave dwelling experiences i did do a
video with uh brian rue
probably a couple years ago by now
that was talking about my life as a cave
dweller
so you can try and look that up too

um

so i'll just move on to the next

question and this is from trumptonshire

gahapidi

and trumptonshire gahapadi says

sorry about my ongoing series of

questions about the gay butt sex i do

have other interests i swear

i was thinking about the dalai lama's

statements about homosexuality and

sodomy which were quoted by otomo

in a recent

episode uh and then he's got this quote

of uh his holiness the dalai lama

his holiness i said holiness holiness

the dalai lama saying we have to make a

distinction between believers and
unbelievers from a buddhist point of
view men to men and women to women is
generally considered sexual misconduct
from society's viewpoint mutually
agreeable homosexual relations can be of
mutual benefit enjoyable and harmless
he adds even with your wife using one's
mouth or the other hole is sexual
misconduct using one's hand that is
sexual misconduct that's that's
supposedly the dalai lama saying this my
question is pano do you have any idea
what he's talking about
if they're really is there really a
teaching that homosexual behavior is
okay for people in general but not okay

for buddhist white people or that
masturbation and non-vaginal sex acts
are more misconductful
than the missionary position etc maybe
this is just a tibetan thing i don't
know

well

let's see where do i start where do i
dive into this this gay but sex question
um

yeah with regard to the dalai lama
uh saying that there is a distinction
between believers and unbelievers in a
way that is kind of true i mean like
um somebody comes home from a hard day
at work and they crack open a cold beer

and they just

drink one cold beer because they just

like

something cold and it goes down real

nice and everything

i mean they're not necessarily doing

anything bad you know they're not

necessarily doing anything unwholesome

but

it is against the rules you know it's

against the the precept

of um in taking intoxicants you know

it's the fifth precept i undertake the

precept uh to abstain from ale wine and

any intoxicant which causes cloudedness

of mind or or heedlessness

so i mean you can make a distinction

between buddhist and non-buddhist

because there are certain buddhist rules

that aren't necessarily moral i mean

like like monks i mean they have to

follow all kinds of rules that have

nothing to do with morality like

um

a monk isn't allowed to open or close

the door while holding his bombs bowl in

his hand

or

even just uh you know there's rules say

you have to shave your head at least uh

once every two months or two finger

widths whichever comes first i mean

there's nothing immoral about having

long hair

or monks are only allowed to eat in the morning anyone who takes eight precepts also is allowed to eat only in the morning but um you know there's nothing evil or unwholesome necessarily about eating dinner

so there is that and and that could be a large part of it that is just uh following precepts or just traditional interpretations of things that uh they're not necessarily

uh universal morals so that's that's part of it i assume

um with regard to

the the anal and the oral and the manual stimulation and all that being

sexual misconduct

um my understanding

is that in terra vada buddhism

sexual misconduct is primarily

interpreted as just not having sex with

um somebody who's already spoken for or

you just don't love that person and

you're just being promiscuous that sort

of thing so it's um

it's it's different it's not really

specifying the actual act

and the monks who were composing this

sort of stuff tended to be

um

a lot of them i think were kind of

ignorant of sex in general anyway

and um you know they might not even know
about some of this stuff

um

so

let's see

is there really a teaching that

homosexual behavior is okay for people

in general but not okay for buddhist lay

people well again we're getting into the

the realm of buddhist ethics which um

just setting aside that there are rules

and precepts that have little of

anything to do with morality you know

it's just like etiquette or something

um also there's the the fact that

buddhist ethics are extremely finely

tuned it's not just if you do this it's

bad but if you do that it's good you
know like like in christianity for
example although
in some christianity it's very finely
tuned like
catholic contemplatives you know if
you're a member of some contemplative
order then it can be very finely tuned
there too
but um
in buddhism it's mental states whether
something is wholesome or unwholesome
ultimately depends on the mental states
and um
sex in general
is considered to be

at least a little bit immoral

almost no matter how you do it um just

because

just a rising of desire desire is the

cause of all suffering and sex is one of

the primary causes of desire

so if you're really keen on becoming

enlightened according to ancient indian

buddhist tradition

then you should be celibate although of

course a lot of people who are celibate

are just like

ragingly horny all the time

so there's that too but i mean it's not

just sex i mean buddhism you should bear

in mind that just putting salt and

pepper on your food to make it taste

better is immoral to believe that you
exist

is immoral

to listen to music is immoral which
explains why buddhism has such bad music
as a general rule the hindus have way
better music than the buddhists do even
the muslims have better music

so

yeah there's there's all kinds of things
to consider

and yeah i think what the dalai lama is
talking about is primarily like a
mahayana buddhist thing

in tarawa it is interpreted differently
so

rather than just wallow in in the gay
but sex stuff i think i'm just going to
move on

and the next question is from potila
says

are the brahma-wiharas

one loving kindness or benevolence two
compassion three empathetic joy for
equanimity

in

in order in terms of grosser mental
state to finer

okay so let's just skip out the the
parentheses here are the brahmoiharas in
order in terms of grosser mental state
to finer or is one supposed to hold all
four states as complements so for

instance is the presence of meta then
surpassed by mudita or is meta attained
and then mudita later joins with it it
seems that meta is a less refined state
than upeka and is really a huge focus of
many westerners even though it is not so
important in the texts as much as
equanimity

okay

so the four broadly hearts for those of
you who are unfamiliar with the terms

it is as potila says the first is meta

or or just love

or or friendliness friendly feeling

benevolence

so wishing well to others

just sincerely from your heart not just
intellectually

two

is compassion or karuna

which is

um like feeling the pain of others you

know it's like

um you're sensitive to the suffering of
others

three is mudita or empathetic joy

and that's like feeling happy in other
people's happiness

and and a really good example is that
the sweet little old grandma who makes
banana bread for the little kids

and the little kids are really happy
eating this banana bread and so the the

sweet little grandma is just beaming
with joy at the little kids who love her
banana bread she is happy because they
are happy you know she's happy because
they you know they really enjoy eating
her banana bread you know something like
that would be like muditas feeling happy
is somebody else's happiness just
sincerely being happy when somebody else
is happy you know like your friend
wins the lottery
some people would just be jealous like
why didn't i win the lottery or other
people might have like ulterior motives
like oh great because
you know he might take me out partying

or something

but if you just

you're just happy for him you know

without without any considerations of

yourself you're just happy because

somebody else is fortunate and happy

then that's modita and then fourth is

equanimity and um

the standard little sentence

that is the summation of equanimity in

the text is kamasuco which is

essentially everyone's karma is their

own so as you just accept that whatever

happens to anybody is in accordance with

their own karma

so again you've got

meta

karuna mudita upeka

so

potila here is asking if if there's like

uh

uh like a gradation with meta at the

bottom and they just get higher until

you reach mudita and it's not exactly

that way it's kind of that way

um

the wiisuiti maga which goes over the

four brahma-iharas says that with regard

to the first three

meta karuna and mudita if you practice

meditation you can get up the third

jhana practicing those three

but

you with upeka or equanimity you can get
all the way up to fourth genre which
traditionally in the sutas is the
highest the highest contemplative state
and it does say like in the standard
the stock formula describing the four
genres that fourth genre is purification
of equanimity

now you've got pure mindfulness pure
equanimity

so

it's not that there's a gradation of you
know metta then karuna then mudita then
upeka it's more like the first three are
equal they'll get you up to third jhana
and then upeka is the highest one that's
the most exalted and that'll get you all

the way to fourth yeah

so i think that answers that question

um yeah and the it's

meta is really a huge focus of many

westerns even though it is not important

not so important in the text yeah it's

like just the

the heart thing

and uh

i i'm not exactly sure why karuna and

mudita are mostly ignored

but um i'll just move on to potila's

next question

the talk on donna and western buddhists

was really good and not often discussed

so pochila here is referring to a video

um i did a couple weeks ago i think a
few weeks ago about
the issue of
um supporting western buddhism how
western buddhism
has kind of issues with getting support
so i'll just kind of back up and ask the
question or say this again the talk on
donna and western buddhist was really
good and not often discussed
what are your thoughts about different
approaches or framing
that would help educate or train
westerners into giving more donna
tithing is probably not going to work
a fee schedule
question mark membership question mark

i've run into this same issue at other
dharma centers no one has any money for
a center but can spend gobs of cash on
dharma doodads and books

yeah that is

like like we were saying in the video i
mean that is just uh

um

it is an important issue in with regard
to buddhism in the west especially if
you have monks because monks aren't even
allowed to handle money

um

they're not even allowed to feed
themselves and so you have to have
people that are willing to

support the monks

at least by giving them food

if they're going to live in the west or

else the monks just don't follow the

rules

which in this this whole issue is one

reason why i'm not a monk anymore it's

not the only reason but it is a

contributing factor

um

so

let's see

i think with regard to monks and

monasteries

one thing that should be born in mind by

the monks themselves especially is that

monk should be easy to support like the

meta suta which is uh you know the this
discourse on loving kindness is one of
the most well-known discourses in
terabyte of buddhism

among should be subaru which means easy
to support

and

a lot of a lot of monks in the west they
just assume that you know they should be
provided with a nice dharma center and a
computer room and so forth but um

really the way the monks lived in the
buddhist time

um they were just radical minimalists
and i've met a few monks who really go
for that in the west and it may take

that sort of thing at first like i knew
this one american monk i don't think he
did this for very long but he was
living in a wildlife refuge
on the outskirts of san diego california
and then he would come in every morning
with this bowl to like a soup kitchen
and get food that way and then just go
back out to the the wildlife refuge
and um if there are monks that are that
serious

then there's a good chance i mean
they're going to be generating some
strong good karma i assume
and some people are going to be
impressed by that and just really want
to support them just because they are

such

you know dharmic bad asses

with regard to uh

monks also i mean

uh

it's just it's just been the way it is

that uh if monks are going to live in

the west usually they have to be

supported by asians because asians have

just been

um conditioned from childhood asian

buddhists that you earn merit by

supporting monks that you're gonna go to

heaven

if you donate like the meditation cabin

to a monastery or something like that

um and in the west is uh even western
buddhists they don't take karma very
seriously they don't take merit very
seriously

so it may take

um some obvious benefit to lay people
regardless of what the benefit is
whatever it is that they think is worth
the money that they'll start paying
money like like a dharma hall that isn't
a monastery they just

go there they got a place to go and uh
you know they have their their little
tribe of people that uh kind of share
their interests in their their values
and uh

to some people that may be important

enough and especially
if it deviates from the whole leftist
individuality thing and it becomes more
family oriented and you've got like
you know sort of like a sunday school
for the little kids and
maybe teaching kids this really
elementary meditation
or
just uh
yeah i mean it would have to cater to
the the needs of of the group
and if it does that sufficiently then
there should be support one way one
would hope that people would be
supportive of what they themselves

approve of and what makes them happy

so

um like like the goenka method that's

that's like a standard example of a

success story for

uh what is more or less terrible

buddhism in the west they don't charge

money although they do say that uh if

you think you've gotten benefit from

this then if you do

donate then you're helping someone else

after you

to to go to these free retreats and uh

it works well enough that there are

thousands of going to centers around the

world

and

it has been burgeoning although now that
um sn gwenka himself has passed away and
the place is being run by his
sons i think

and um you know the

the dhamma talks are just like

pre-recorded that kind of thing i'm not

sure how well it's going now but i

assume it's still relatively prosperous

so there are ways that it can be done

and i'm not exactly sure how it would be
done

i i made my i made some attempts and uh

it uh

yeah it's like what portula says here it
is

it is pretty much true that uh

yeah it's it's just

contrary to western culture i think that
you uh

donate money to a monastery or or even
more just bring food and kind of a thing
people might be able to cut you a check
or something but

um they're just too busy to come in the
morning and offer food to the monks and
then you have to do it respectfully with
both hands and

preferably bow and everything and uh

that's just it's so un-american that

yeah i am skeptical of how well it's

going to work in the west i mean it can

i'm not saying it's impossible but uh

it is uh cutting across the grain

so

the big question there is i'm not i'm

really not sure what the best way of

going about it would be

and i assume

it might be different for different

groups because different groups want

different things

so

yeah i mean even just trying to train

them of the benefits

of supporting

um

monks or supporting people that are

genuinely striving for enlightenment i

mean if you can't become enlightened
then at least you can help somebody else
go for it you know and people in the
west especially just they just don't get
it or they don't see it
or they just are so skeptical of monks
they just think they're all just a bunch
of lazy freeloaders or something
um but really it's like you're if you're
supporting a monastery or even a dharma
hall you're supporting like higher
consciousness you know you're making a
donation which you know eventually
indirectly is is causing the like the
the level of consciousness in the world
to go up a little bit
and i mean that and that is good

so

um but then again

it's kind of abstract

so really it's it's going to get to it's
going to have to just realistically be a
matter of people

um they they think they're getting

something of sufficient value

that they're willing to pay for it to
keep it going

and what that's going to be

is is anyone's guess i mean it could
just be

some really charismatic dharma teacher
that makes people feel really good
may not even help them become

enlightened but just makes them feel
really good and that could be good
enough

or maybe there'll be some kind of
uh syncretism

people will come up with a form of
buddhism or terror buddhism that really
kind of

meshes with american culture

and you know they'll have ceremonies
that are especially tailored to be in
harmony with the western mindset you
know and and holidays and this kind of
thing but um

yeah i really can't say what it would be
so i'm just going to uh
go on to the next question here

or i mean getting back to that first
question though um yeah it may just take
an eccentric rich person to just
dump a load of money
onto a dharma hall or a monastery or
something

okay next question what has been the
biggest change in returning to everyday
american life as a lay person
well pretty obviously for me
the biggest change in returning to
everyday american life as a lay person
is having a mate
just being like very intimate with
another um very
sweet soft

loving

little person

that for me is like the biggest change

and in some ways it's it's been a

a big challenge because it's so

different from what i'm used to you know

i've lived so long just

um alone like as a hermit pretty much

and as a monk

you uh

you learn to see others

pretty much as stimuli you know in this

in the scene there's only the scene and

the herd there is only the herd

um and so

like

a monk who's practicing strictly a

person standing in front of you talking
is just like a visual visual perceptions
auditory perceptions and so forth and
you just kind of deconstruct the other
person

and that doesn't work in a relationship
i mean you've got like another me
that uh you know you're forming like
like a symbiosis

and so it is just a radical change for
me and it's it's it's good i think it's
it's very helpful to me

among other things

which we need to get into at the risk of
tmi

so yeah that's that's been the biggest

change in returning to everyday american
life is uh just

um having a mate with whom i am

uh loving and intimate after being a
hermit for so long

so the next question also from portula

you were last in the daily grind 30

years ago what strikes you as being

uniquely different about the america you

left when you ordained

not so much in philosophy but ordinary

life well

when i first came back to america in

2011 the main thing that really struck

me was just everything was digital

and uh it's even more that way now than

10 years later

um

like i mean you used to pay your bills

you'd have to sit down with the

checkbook and envelopes and stuff and

you

you pay your bills and now it's just you

just click on the stuff on the internet

and your bills just automatically get

paid out of your out of your checking

account

or

you know you used to get a paycheck you

know when you work you get a paycheck

now it just

feeds just directly into your bank

account and uh i mean you could go

through life in america now without even
handling money

you know it's all plastic and

just taps on on phones and stuff now

so that would be that would be uh the

most erratically different aspect of

life a lot of a lot of things are pretty

similar to the way they were back in the

late 80s early 90s i mean hairstyles

clothing styles aren't all that

different i mean there's weird colors

more people have tattoos now

um

the music i mean it's worse

but it's really not not extremely

different

i mean a lot of things it's like

with regard to technology and so forth a lot of the digital stuff is continuing to advance but i like like ballpoint pens they're pretty much the same pencils you know so a lot of stuff is just essentially the same as it was before

so yeah yeah it's just everything's digital so i'm going to move on to the next question from motorhead

and motorhead says

what about the theory that it's people's karma that is behind murder and that we have all been guilty of such things without darkness there is no light well that is true it's um

going with

buddhist philosophy especially orthodox

like

abhidhamma

and i i i'm inclined to go along with

this it's like

every

every way to not you experience every

feeling

every feeling that you feel is the

fruition of karma either present karma

or past karma

and um

so and you know anything that happens to

you

is is like the fruition of karma and

there are people that disagree there's

somebody who

tries to correct the statement in the
comments sometimes and i'm just going
with what abu dhabi teaches i mean there
are suitors that will say this and that
you know that some some will say you
know it's also the weather or also like
food or whatever but still

um

so yeah it's like assuming that there is
rebirth

you know this life after life after life
then yeah we've done all sorts of things
we've been murderers we've been murdered
you know we've we've been rapists we've
been raped we've been robbers we've been

robbed

all these things have been going on um

so yeah but um

you can't really justify murdering

somebody by saying that it's their own

karma to be murdered even though that's

true

because although for them it's the

fruition of their karma you are making

new karma by murdering somebody because

every volitional act is making new

caramel

so i mean you can punch somebody in the

nose and say well it's their karma to be

punched which is true

but nevertheless you are making new bad

karma for yourself i mean they're kind

of paying off an old karmic debt
but you are making new bad karma for
yourself which is getting you
more stuck in samsara in all probability
so

yeah i think you can't really justify
doing bad things by saying
that the recipients of those bad things
are just you know it's just a matter of
their own karma and technically that's
true but still i mean

it doesn't justify you making new
bad karma it doesn't justify you being
the one who is fulfilling their the
fruition of their karma
even if you don't do it you know

somebody else probably will

but um you know it's just not a

justification for for being um

immoral

so

finally

the last person to ask questions is

chaplin

and chaplin

says if you could sit down with your dad

today what would you talk about and what

do you think he would feel about your

life path and where you are today

okay well my father died

gosh more than 10 years ago i think

and so if i could sit down with my dad

today what would i talk about well first

of all i'd just be exclaiming on how
happy i was to to see him again you know
giving him hugs and
so first it would be that just the
exclaiming about how how cool it is to
see him again and then probably i'd be
telling him about you know
what i've been doing with my life and um
and how do i think he would feel i think
he would be happy and proud
i really do
i mean he thought being a monk was kind
of extreme you know he was he was proud
of me but he thought i was uh kind of
overdoing it by being a monk
and i'm sure he'd be happy with my my

mate

and um

let's see

plus i'm i'm kind of doing the sort of

work he used to do he was uh

he was a long shoreman he loaded logs

onto ships and i'm kind of i mean i'm

not loading logs on the ships but still

i'm kind of doing uh

that kind of

oh

sort of blue collar work you know sort

of

in kind of a guy job where you wear

gloves and stuff

and uh

one other thing i might talk to him

about if if if it seemed right at the
time

is that my father was a just a democrat
his whole life in fact he was kind of a
socialist he was like uh old school

macho socialist like jack london

and um

i would just like to point out to him

what a

just what a demented freak show what a

what like

a sick cult

the new left has become and uh i would

it'd be really interesting just how he

would feel about the democratic party

now

um you know a lifelong democrat and then
seeing you know what it's like now
but um i wouldn't want to be cruel to
him i mean if i'm just getting to see
him one one more time after he has risen
from the dead

so yeah that would i'd have to feel into
that one

so um chaplin's second question what is
your favorite meal

well i'm tempted to say butter pecan ice
cream i do have that for dinner
occasionally

um

but it's it's kind of not really a meal
i don't know i don't think that's what
chaplin has in mind

so uh

another honest answer is just whatever

my sweetheart puts in front of me

because she's a really good cook

so you know whatever whatever i'm eating

with her at the time is my favorite meal

um

or if if i'm just like up against the

wall and i have to i have to answer

something

uh it's hard to say i mean i like

pan-fried oysters i like salmon

i don't know

pizza is good

italian food in general is good

i don't know i really don't have a

favorite meal i guess

there's lots that i like

and so finally

chaplin's last question and the last

question of the evening

how is your infamous quest for a credit

rating going after living off the grid

most of your life

yeah well i i'm pleased to announce that

just a couple weeks ago i finally got a

credit card and it's it's one of those

secured cards so you have to

have a deposit of like 400 bucks that

that was what i i'd use for a deposit

and then you can't use the credit card

for anything that cost more than 400

bucks

so it's

it's uh it's kind of a wimpy little

credit card which is really all i need

because i just use the credit card

mostly for

ordering something on the internet or

something like that

but at first i couldn't even get a

secured card like one of those

the wimpy ones um

because

um not only did i not have a credit

rating i didn't have three months worth

of bank statements and you had to if you

didn't have a credit rating at all you

had to at least show your bank

statements for the past three months and
i didn't even have that
so i had to wait until i had
started a bank account and kept that
going for three months and then i was
able to get this this credit card but
it's uh i can't get like a normal credit
card that isn't the secured one until my
credit rating goes up right now i'm uh
kind of at the high end of the yellow
zone uh it's like a
649 or something like that and
everything is in everything is a i got
grade a everything except for the age of
my credit rating which is only a few
months
so

yeah i don't know how long that's going
to take

it's going to be a slow climb upwards

but now that i've got the credit card at
least i can uh

i can earn more

more brownie points on the credit rating

so yeah i do have the credit card now

and the credit rating is now

um

moving upwards it's not only existent

but it's uh up into the

high yellow

and inching towards green

that's that's good i assume i mean i've

never had a credit card in my life until

just a few weeks ago

so

but that's another that's another change

um getting back to

an earlier questions like uh

yeah that's that is strange how uh

yeah money is uh

it's it's so

you know it's not just this paper and

metal stuff now it's it's just this

whole it's like a web

it's like this invisible digital web

that everything is all interconnected

it's really strange

so in a lot of places they won't even

take cash anymore which should be

illegal i mean it says right on the

money you know this is

this is legal tender for all debts

you know public and private

and then you've got like hotels that

just uh i'm sorry sir we will not accept

cash you have to have a credit card so i

almost slept on the street in new

orleans

just because um i had plenty of cash i

could have paid for a hotel room but uh

they wouldn't take it and they would uh

they were quite willing to let me uh

just sleep on the street

just rather than then accept cash

but um yeah i do have a credit rating

now and that that is the last question

and so

uh so long as you keep asking i will i
will keep doing these q and a's and keep
answering questions oh wait i am
reminded of something there was another
question

that somehow did not wind up on this
list

and i think it was from potila asking
about

um

let's see

it was about uh live chats on the
discord server whether we're going to
have live chats on the discord server
which is something that uh has been
discussed has been bandied about a

little bit and uh yeah i'm willing

i think it would be good for a lot of

the

the

my supporters on subscribe star and just

people who are on the discord server

that's associated with the subscribe

star channel to interact with each other

so i mean if if people really want to do

that then

i can make a little announcement on the

discord server

um and

people can give feedback on like for

example times and days that would work

the best

because there are people around the
world you know you got people in europe
and people in australia and so forth
that uh trying to get one time that
works

is going to be very tricky
so

um yeah i am willing and um i'm just
kind of shy and uh
you can tell how bashful i am
just just from looking at me
so um

yeah that's um i am kind of i am kind of
shy about getting this kind of thing
going like uh group
group chats and so forth although i am
willing

so um

we can we can work on that

and i do apologize if people have been

eagerly anticipating

group chats on

on the discord server

but we can still do it

so as i was saying now that all the

questions have been answered um

if you have questions about

buddhism in particular meditation

comparative religions philosophy

burma

me

that kind of thing

anything that you think i might be able

to answer intelligently then you are
more than welcome to
submit questions in the comments below
the youtube or bit shoot videos
or on subscribe star um i make an
announcement

usually a few days before i do do the q
a although this time it was about a week
or if you are on the discord server
there is a q a room there where you can
leave your questions

and um

um the

subscribe star and the just now just the
subscribe star i think are in the in the
links below so you can you can see where
that is

and

just feel free to ask questions and

read my books if you want which are also

in the links below

and be happy

you

hello and welcome to episode 19 of
question and answer

i am your host panyo bassam sometimes
known as david and strangely

increasingly known as john because
that's the name on my id

i'm going to take a drink

and i apologize for taking so long

to answer your questions or to answer
other people's questions but um

there's been uh i've been just very very
busy lately because more than one third
of the people

at the place where i work all got sick

at the same time at least one of them i

think two of them hospitalized

and apparently it's a combination of
the chinese coronavirus and some kind of
flu and i think at least two people got
both at the same time

which kind of reminds me of an
australian friend of mine in burma who
had malaria tb and what was the other
one

cholera he had malaria tb and cholera
all at the same time

so i've been working overtime and have
been uh very busy and coming home tired
and late

so it's uh it's taken me a while to
finally get to these questions
but

here i am and i'm going to answer some

questions

and so without any further ado the first question is from julie and this is a question she asked this quite a while ago but she asked the question in a place that isn't the usual place for asking questions like i uh

before a q a i'll go through and collect all the questions that people have asked um

under the most recent q a videos and also

on the subscribe star page under the announcement for the next q a and also on the discord channel and uh

if i

remember correctly she asked the

question somewhere else and so it just

slipped through the cracks i didn't

answer it

but julie asks me what is my opinion of

the goenka system

and

the goenka system

it's like a stripped-down simplified

version of taravana

uh sn goenka

who uh

he was ethnically indian but he was born

and raised in burma i'm pretty sure and

his main teacher was um

ah

now i don't remember

his teacher

uba ken

uba ken was a burmese a burmese wipasana

instructor

and so it's based on burmese theravada

but it's been

modified quite a lot very much

simplified

and the main meditation technique in

going up the goenka system is kind of we

pass on our quote unquote that involves

sweeping through the body it's like

um i mean i've never practiced it myself

but i've talked to quite a few

people who have practiced it and i have

read a few of goenka's books

and you're supposed to go through your

body like sector by sector and you've

wait you i mean you're trying to

experience some kind of sensation before

moving on to the next

part of your body and then you try to

experience some sensation and note it

and you move on to the next so you're

kind of sweeping through your body

uh noting whatever sensation is

predominant

and um

there seems to be a certain amount of

cult of personality involved also with

regard to goenka himself

um

so i mean it's got his it's got its
strength and his weaknesses it's got his
good points and his bad points with
regard to the bad points i would say
partly it is really a stripped down and
very simplified version of theravada
buddhism

and also

i have noticed in the past and i've
heard this from other people also
that dedicated goenka practitioners
often have a kind of jehovah's witness
mindset where they just become fanatical
or they just insist that the goenka
system is the one true buddhism
and if anyone drops out of the goenka

system they get shunned as though they
have died that sort of thing

so i mean that that's not so good but
with regard to the good points or the
strengths of the goenka system

it is difficult they put a lot of
emphasis on

commitment and meditating every day

keeping five precepts if you want to do
uh a retreat

i can't remember what they're called um

it's called something besides a retreat

but if you want to do one that lasts

more than 10 days you have to or so i've
been told

you have to meditate at least two hours

a day and keep five precepts for at

least two years

and there's not a whole lot of people
that are committed enough to do that in
the west

and just because it is difficult i mean
some people would consider that to be a
negative

aspect of the system but when you
accomplish something difficult it makes
you stronger and it also gives you a
sense of accomplishment like you've
really done something

and

that's one reason why people can really
get more or less fanatical about it

um if if they're not careful

and uh see another another good thing
about the goenka system is that
it's one of the most successful
forms of theravada buddhism in the west
and they don't charge money
they sort of indirectly do they'll tell
you at a retreat that if you
donate to the to the system donate to
the retreat center or whatever it's not
for yourself it's just allowing somebody
after you to attend a retreat so if if
you feel like you got benefit if you
feel like it's worthwhile
to do it
then you're helping somebody else to do
it
by by contributing and apparently that

approach has been very successful and
there are hundreds if not thousands of
goenka centers around the world
and um

so it is it is a good way of getting
dhamma

uh out to the masses lots and lots of
people not all buddhists have done
goenka retreats

and it has been helpful to people
it's um

often a kind of stepping stone towards
becoming a monk for a lot of a lot of
men

possibly uh a stepping stone for
becoming a nun for a lot of women also

where they want something deeper you
know you get sort of the stripped down
elementary version of buddhism and after
you've gotten benefit from that you want
something deeper that goes farther
so

the goenka method has
led a lot of people towards
more orthodox
monastic terrible buddhism
so all in all i say it's definitely more
good than bad
it is somewhat stripped down in
elementary and
you know there is kind of a jehovah's
witness-ish attitude towards it with a
lot of people but all in all it's a good

system and so i'll just move on to the next question

and the next question is from daniel
daniel asks

see here what is the classification of mental states related to jhanas

so i mean it's

with regard to jhana there is a stereotype standard stock explanation of jhana which describes the mental states

and just about every single time jhana is mentioned in the sutas it's the same stock formula so i may as well just read it so i'm going to read it out of uh nyanati loka's buddhist dictionary here

under the heading of gianna

and so this is just straight out of the

taxes from any number of polytechnics

any any number of sutas

detached from sensual objects or monks

detached from unwholesome states of mind

the monk enters into the first

absorption or the first jhana

which is a complement which is

accompanied by thought and discursive

thinking

is born of detachment

and is filled with rapture and joy

so that the first genre

is based on

detaching yourself from sensual

pleasures unwholesome thoughts

and are unwholesome mental states

and they're still thinking

there's still

physical pleasure and pain and also

mental pleasure and pain

so second jonah again stock phrase here

or stock explanation after the subsiding

of thoughts and discursive thinking and

by gaining inner tranquility and oneness

of mind he enters into a state free from

thought conception and discursive

thinking the second absorption which is

born of concentration and filled with

rapture and joy

so the second genre

you've

moved on from the first genre and the
main difference is you're just not
thinking anymore

you know the thought process has stopped
you might start having a little bit of a
thought arise and it just fades back out
again you don't have your thoughts

hooked up into a sequence you know a
thought can arise unbidden

but you're not just going to run with it
you know it's not just going to start
leading you astray it just arises and
passes away and then you're back at no
thinking again

so the the third genre is as follows
after the fading away of rapture he
dwells in equanimity mindful clearly

conscious and he experiences in his
person that feeling of which the noble
ones say happy lives the man of
equanimity and attentive mind thus he
enters the third absorption

so the third genre is based more on
mindfulness

and

mental

happiness and unhappiness have faded
away so you're still capable of
experiencing

uh pleasure and pain in your body but
you're not thinking anymore you're not
having emotional ups and downs
and your mind is becoming

unified

or here it has what is it singleness of
mind is

oneness of mind

okay so then finally fourth genre is as
follows after having given up pleasure
and pain and through the disappearance
of previous joy and grief he enters into
a state beyond pleasure and pain into
the fourth absorption which is purified
by equanimity

and mindfulness

so the fourth genre is

like purity of concentration

purity of equanimity purity of

mindfulness and no more pleasure and

pain no more thinking and that would be

the essential mental states of jhana and
if that's not precise enough i'm sorry
because that is the stock explanation
um you might be able to pick up a little
more detail from a book like that we
should imagine
or any number of books by someone like
beku bodhi who are going into further
details but the further details are
um
more commentarial and a certain amount
of conjecture i think or just going with
the dogma of what got cooked up um
by like medieval sri lankan monks
so i'll just move on to daniel's next
question which is

does doing bad stuff without bad mental
states affect karma

and there's a few questions along these
lines

um

that will follow this one

but doing bad stuff without bad mental
states

um technically according to buddhism

there is no bad stuff without bad mental
states i mean you can't do something bad
without bad mental states because the
mental states determine whether it's
good or bad

so

i guess the answer to that one would be
no

does doing bad stuff without bad mental states affect karma yeah or you could just say that it's uh kind of a trick question because

um whether an action is good or bad depends on the accompanying mental states and not the action itself and um i'll be getting back to this uh

because there are at least two more questions along the same lines so i'll just move on to the last question by daniel

is the final mental state before death the most important why and how much uh

yeah i mean usually for most people or

most beings even you could say the final mental state before death is the most important because it determines like your trajectory or your heading you know what bearing you're gonna have um into your next life so it's like the last mental state you have before you die is like the jumping off point to your next existence and so if you have uh like a positive mental state when you're dying or a moral wholesome mental state when you're dying it's going to help you move in a wholesome or moral direction into your next existence um it's not going to totally determine

what your next existence is going to be
like i mean you could be a really bad
person

and you just have like a real like a
really

like a real epiphany when you're dying
just you're in like this expanded mental
state everything's blissful and
beautiful

and so it can cause you to have

um a rebirth you know let's say into a
you know a rich

healthy

prosperous family but then you're still
gonna have all this karmic junk from the
bad life that you live that's gonna mess

that up

or uh alternatively you could you can be like a virtuous person a wise person and then you have like a really bad mental state when you're dying you know maybe you're in a lot of pain you're just kind of you know you just break down you're you know you just like your equanimity breaks down and so forth and so you wind up in a bad rebirth but still you're going to have all this wholesome karma that kind of lifts that up and makes it not so bad or maybe even in some ways shortens it so that you're able to move on to a better life after that

so

buddhists and hindus

a lot of them will say that uh

life is really just a preparation for
death

um

i often point out that mahatma gandhi
when he when he got shot and was dying
as he's falling to the ground he said
hey rom

and it wasn't like oh god they got me
like in the movie it was he wanted his
mind focused on god as he died because
you know

he wanted to be close to god you know
whatever happens after death he wanted
to be moving in the direction of god

so

yeah you can say that it is the most

important

moment of your life in the is your death

the moment of death

and so i'll just move on to the next

question from

i'm not sure how to pronounce his name

it's

spelled t-y-r

so that's tear or tire

and he asked two questions in two

different places

and one of these questions i think

already got answered by somebody else he

asked it in a comment section somewhere

about

um

let's see you mentioned three or four
books

to have a good idea of what buddhism is
and what it is not can you mention those
again with preferred publishers spelling
etc i think somebody already answered
that and i'm not even sure what video
i've got this written down i'm not sure
what video it's even referring to
if you know something about buddhism
already then possibly one of the best
books you can get is studies and origins
of buddhism by gc pandey
and that's published by mojilla bernard

um

i may have already i may have also
mentioned what the buddha taught by
walpola rahula i don't know what the
publisher is i don't have a copy of it
on hand um

beku bodhis and uh nyanamoli's
translation of the majiminikaya is also
really good it gives you a really
orthodox straightforward um
exposure to like ancient indian monastic
buddhism

um

if you can find a good translation of
the sutuni pata i mean my translation of
the atakawaga which is uh available on
the nipahpancha.org website i mean
that's that would be a good introduction

but i think somebody already answered it
so i'll just i'll just move on and if if
you really want to know if if um
if tear or tire
wants me to go into more details i can
do that but um
like i say i think somebody already
answered the question for me so i'm just
moving on so his next question
can you describe your states of mind
after meditation practice as a monk i am
certain that my meditations are
beneficial but as a monk i would imagine
your experiences would be exponentially
so on that note i was practicing several
hours a day at one time with results

sometimes my mood become
as odd as it sounds almost too happy and
throughout the day would find my mood
elevating completely on its own for no
apparent reason i had no motivation to
complete my regular work i found i had
to scale back my practice it seems
meditation and serious enlightenment
would not mix well with mundane life to
be clear i am in no way claiming
enlightenment would want to
continue practice any thoughts on this
well

um it's kind of hard to describe the
states of mind after meditation practice
like when i was
meditating intensively

like um

i'm pretty sure my first 10 years as a
monk i was probably averaging about six
hours a day

of formal sitting practice not including
walking practice

um

mainly it causes your mind to be quieter
and clearer

more focused less distracted

that would be like the main benefits

um you know you're less likely to get
carried away by uh negative mental
states if you do get irritated or
annoyed you tend to be mindful of it
which deprives it of a lot of its power

people that are mindful a lot and you're not usually angry

when you do become angry it's just like sirens and flashing lights is really noticeable and it's very easy to be mindful of it

so those are benefits um

it helps you to be detached from samsara to some degree

um with regard to this middle part about how you were becoming too happy

um i knew this guy

he was a really good guy he uh

he owned a construction company and um

it was his ambition

to renounce the world and become a monk

and unfortunately it was also his

ambition to be among for about five
years until he became a sotapanna then
drop out and become a teacher at some
place like ims

um

but he had this problem in that he would
experience too much pt and i already
mentioned pt is one of the factors of
involved in jhana

you have pt up until um

second second jhana

with third genre you no longer

experience it

but it's a kind of mental exhilaration
or enthusiasm and he would just get
drunk on it if he was doing intensive

meditation everything would just be
hilariously funny and so he wound up
renouncing the world he got rid of all
of his business

he went to burma was ordained at a
monastery there and he was just getting
drunk on meditation he was just like
laughing uproariously and just like
dancing around and just acting silly
until finally he was required to drop
out it's like his teacher told him you
got to go back to america because this
isn't working

and that was that was unfortunate
because he really was a good guy
um let's see

what's the last part here

with regard to uh meditation interfering
with worldly life that's not necessarily
the case like i already mentioned uba
kin who was the teacher of sn goenka
and he was a kind of meditation master
i'm pretty sure

but um he was also like a government uh
like a government minister he was a
relatively high ranking bureaucrat in
the burmese government

and um i mean he wasn't like a military
goon or anything

but he was a conscientious uh like a
government servant

and a busy man apparently but still he
was able to be a meditation master at

the same time i assume it would depend
on what kind of meditation you're doing
like if you're doing some atom
meditation like based on samadhi where
you're just
like silencing and stilling your mind to
just uh you know just crystal clarity
and silence
something like that then yeah that could
interfere with functioning normally in
everyday life but if you're doing
mindfulness meditation where you're just
meditating on whatever arises
like when i'm at work at a sheet metal
shop
um just some of the repetitive actions
of of like

feeding sheet metal through a machine or
something like that can become
meditative just walking can be a
meditation

even talking can be a kind of
mindfulness meditation

so

it's not necessarily the case that
intensive meditation can

is incompatible with worldly life

with some kinds worldly life is more of
a

limiting factor on how deeply you can
meditate and then vice versa

like uh with regard to some atom

meditation if you're really going for

jhana like i was mentioning above

um

yeah just all the distractions of
worldly life it's not very conducive to
that

maybe some people who are very
adept or very talented you just have
like an inborn talented meditation and
there are some people like that maybe
they can swing it but

one of the main reasons for renouncing
the world as a monk to begin with is to
simplify things so that your mind isn't
so distracted and you can meditate more
easily

and that's um particularly true with
regard to

like samadhi based meditations

so i think i'll move on the next

question is from

reconciliation

and reconciliation

says

tell us about your father's stories of

world war ii and if they involve things

like seances

okay well my father

most of his

um stories about world war ii were not

like spiritual or occult or anything

like that

he uh

he was a combat medic he had some kind

of gory stories about uh

really badly messed up soldiers that he

was attending to

um you know like having to amputate a

leg with scissors and this kind of thing

removing

broken teeth with pliers that kind of

thing which he didn't like talking about

and as a kid he especially didn't like

talking about a lot

i mean when i was a kid he didn't like

talking about it a lot he didn't like

remembering it much

um

he was a prisoner of war he was captured

by

hungarian soldiers wearing german

uniforms during

the invasion of europe you know after

d-day he was on he was on normandy beach

also

one of the main stories of normandy

beach was uh

when when you came in

uh you had to run over just this it was

like

there were like corpses that were just

drifted up on the beach there was like

this line of corpses like three or four

deep and you had to run over the tops of

them

and it bugged them because they thought

some of them might still be alive

and uh the first medic station that he
set up was in a pill box that had been
cleared of germans and uh it smelled of
like flamethrower napalm and burnt flesh
that kind of a thing so he had some
pretty gnarly stories but um the closest
thing to uh sort of a seance story
he had with regard to world war ii
is that before the war started he was uh
an x-ray technician
at fort bragg i think is in north
carolina
and um i think it was called camp bragg
back then
and he was studying hypnosis
and he thought it was really interesting
just how hypnosis can be used as an

anesthetic

how you can use it you know as a

you know you can even operate on people

if they're in a deep hypnotic trance and

so when he was um

in europe

during world war ii

he was called the voodoo medic because

he was using hypnosis

as as a way of

you know alleviating pain alleviating

blood loss he found out that a soldier a

wounded soldier who's in shock

is essentially in a kind of trance state

and so you can tell them you won't feel

the pain or you're going to constrict

the blood vessels in your arm to reduce
the the blood loss and this sort of
thing and it actually worked
although a lot of materialistic people
or

normie christian people just consider it
to be like voodoo magic and [_] or
something but that was that was about as
close to uh

like occult stuff that he was doing that
young he was in his early 20s during
world war ii

and didn't really get into seances and
so forth until later in life

so i'll just move on to the next
question which is from scout

he's got two questions here

scout's first question is

would you consider taking a vajrayana

initiation from a tantric guru

and ordinarily the answer would be no

i've

i've kind of had enough of

initiations from gurus

unless i were to find someone who

really i consider to be enlightened or

someone who was really um you know

obviously much wiser than me

and uh yeah i mean that might inspire me

to try to learn more from them

uh and so if they were like a a tantric

vajrayana guru or something that might

inspire me to want to learn more about

tantric vajrayana but um

that would be about it i'm really not in
the market for uh going out in search of
getting like

green tara empowerments or anything like
that

um my my path is somewhat different
nowadays i'm

reconciling spirituality with everyday
life or

um

everyday life of a person living in
america and essentially paying bills
so the next question from scout
also

can you see the veracity of the argument
as to why the tantric vehicle of

buddhism is considered the superior and
quicker path as well as being
the one which is reserved for
practitioners with the sharpest
faculties and intellect

i can hazard a guess as to your response
but i was just wondering if you could
see the rationale behind this claim

um

yeah i to some degree i can see the
rationale behind the claim i think for
some people

a tantric approach is the best approach
possibly the only realistic approach
most

most people just i mean they just cannot

renounce the world and be celibate for
the rest of their life
and so

tantra in that case

um

you know it can still be effective
and for some people it just may work the
best because it is a higher difficulty
setting

so

um you know it's like with a higher
difficulty setting it's more challenging
and some people really rise to the
challenge i've been like that where you
know when i was in school the more
difficult the class usually the better i
was because it challenged me and it

caused me to try harder whereas an easy
class

was just kind of boring and i wouldn't i
wouldn't try as hard as i could

so there could be some of that involved
in tantra also where it's just uh

it's sink or swim to a greater degree
than being you renunciant living alone
in a cave somewhere

uh see what else he has here

the superior and quicker path

well i mean

yeah i wouldn't say i wouldn't say that

that is true in an unqualified manner i

think the buddha was a very wise man and

i think

well obviously

to a buddhist anyway

and um i really think that he set up a
system that maximized your chances of
becoming enlightened

at least for the the maximum number of
people

and if uh

you know tantric practice

was superior to

um you know meditating alone in a forest
then uh

i think there's a good chance he would
have taught that instead but for some
people

um yeah the tantric path

uh is is better

i would assume

so

i'll just leave it at that and move on

to the next question from rakhasa

and also there is uh

some chinese looking idiograms after the

name

which i do not know how to pronounce so

we'll just go with rakasa

and rakasa says the buddha taught that

all things other than those who attain

nibbana are subject to age death and

rebirth it is plain how this applies to

animals humans demons angels etc i have

a hard time understanding how this

applies to the higher planes of

existence

can you explain how death and rebirth
operate on the planes of form and no
form how for example would the platonic
form of a triangle die and be reborn
okay

so first of all i would just point out
towards the beginning here he says that
uh all

all things other than those who attain
nabana are subject to age death and
rebirth i would say even those who do
attain nibana like an enlightened being
are still

subject to age and death at least from
an objective point of view to from the
point of view of an objective observer

even the buddha got older and got sick
and died

even though he was fully enlightened
but um

he didn't attain rebirth supposedly i

mean that's that's uh the official

doctrine that once you become fully

enlightened you are not born again

so i'll move on and it seems that rakasa

here does not understand what the the

realms of form are

for example he seems to be conflating

the the rupa loka in buddhism the the

realm of form with uh plato's heaven of

forms and it's just not the same there

is no

equivalent of platonic

ideals

or platonic forms in buddhism so the
realm of form of the rupa loka is the

brahma realm where it's they're like

devas they're like gods it's just

they're they're more advanced they live
longer

um they're no longer differentiated into
uh two

genders um they're it's a very

uh very subtle form of matter that

they're composed of

and um yeah so they would die the same

as most most devas or small g gods would

die they just uh when their karma has

exhausted itself after a zillion

gajillion years

they uh become dimmer you know their

their uh

luminescence or their glory

becomes less and then their friends

realize that you know it's it's time for

them to move on so they circle around

them and you know they say goodbye and

everything and then

the deva or the brahma

um disappears from whatever heaven realm

they're in and

reappears um in the next

you know according to their comma

um

so yeah the uh like the perfect triangle

in plato's heaven just

it's um

yeah it's just irrelevant to the

buddhist realm of form

and it's similar with regard to the the

realm of no form the arupa loka which is

the highest

series of heaven realms

in buddhist cosmology where you're just

the beings there are just pure mind they

don't have a physical body anymore

and it would be the same thing there

it's just uh

after they've been there for countless

zillions of years and their karma is

exhausted they just fade out there or

just poof out of existence and then

their consciousness takes rebirth in a
different realm

so yeah there's no platonic triangles in
buddhist heavens

so

i think i'll just move on

and the next question is from mjl

and this is very fundamental what are
the worldly benefits of buddhist
practice

and i've kind of touched on that a
little bit above but i might as well

um

say let's see first of all there's

keeping five precepts just being a moral
person

and uh being generous

you know

donating to good causes or supporting

monks and nuns that sort of thing

um

it helps you in various ways first of

all you're making good karma so in the

future good things are more likely to

happen back to you if you do good good

comes back to you that's it's fairly

simple

also

generosity especially it cultivates

selflessness you know it weakens the

strength of your ego by you're having a

feeling of of us of community that sort

of a thing

so there's that too

because the stronger your egos the less

wise you are essentially

um

with regard to meditation practice then

it's it's like what i've already

mentioned it it helps to detach you from

some sorry you're not as stuck

in in samsara

you're less distracted you're less

likely to be on an emotional

rollercoaster ride or even if you are on

an emotional roller coaster ride

you're less identified with it you know

you can

sort of step back a little bit and

observe it

as just nature taking its course

and um it's not like you know i am i am

happy i am unhappy it's just

you know you are

you know if you're anything at all

you're just like the

the observer of the happy and unhappy

and it's just nature taking its course

and so it helps to detach you from the

illusion you know you're getting one

foot out of the matrix

it's it's like that so

um you do good karma and you know good

things happen back to you

more bad things happen to you less

and

there's just an increased sense of peace
and equanimity

and um

just detachment from all the [_]

those would be like the main benefits

there's other big ones i'm sure that i'm
forgetting but those would be the main
ones from my point of view

and so i'll move on to the next question
which is from

yuichiro i think

and yuichiro i think

says i do think romantic love can be
very good

how do you balance this inherent
attachment of it with minimizing

attachments so that's a good question um
love is good if there's i mean if
there's any genuine love
it is good even if it's mixed with all
kinds of bad like somebody might
genuinely love their heroine that they
take
then at least the love part is good even
though the rest of it might be
predominantly bad
and
i said it before i'll keep saying it
that love is
attachment that love is
knocking down
pink floyd's wall
you know

everyone's or most people have got like
this wall around their heart
so to speak
and in order to truly love somebody you
have to knock a hole in that wall so
that there's no more differentiation or
separation you become you just sort of
melt into an us
and
it is true that romantic love
notoriously
is less stable than other kinds of love
like family love
uh generally people don't
divorce their mother
and that kind of a thing

and that's largely because romantic love
is more conditional

you know i'll love you as long as you
keep treating me good or i'll love you
so long as you're faithful to me or
i'll love you you know so long as you
still make x amount of money or whatever
and um but it's a good start and uh you
can cultivate romantic love into a
higher spiritual form of love and it's
it's simple the way to explain it it's
just the more unconditional love is the
pure and more spiritual it is and the
closer it comes to god in the biblical
sense of god is love

so

find a person that you can love

unconditionally

and then love them unconditionally even
if they're giving you a really bad time
or even if they they gain 50 pounds or
whatever

that um

you just love them anyway

you know all their

strengths and weaknesses you know all
the bad things about them and you just
love them with all your heart anyway
and

for some reason i keep thinking of
those dfcs it's he's considered it's
considered to be his greatest novel the
brother is karamazov

where the spiritual brother

al-yosha karamazov

he's encouraged by his guru his

staaret's

father zosima to marry this girl named

lisa who is just a total basket case not

only is she neurotic as hell but she's

apparently demon possessed also

and

that was supposed to be all right my

take on it is that was supposed to be

part of yoshi's spiritual practice i

mean that was just learning how to love

this person unconditionally

no matter what no matter how horrible

things got that was strengthening his

spirit you know it was purifying his

soul and so forth

and um i mean that's really advanced

practice i think you're way better off

finding someone that you genuinely

consider to be a good match for you you

know somebody that you really

um have just

you just hit it off you just

spontaneously the feeling of us

you know that you don't have to work

really hard to get it going you know it

just comes naturally you just drawn to

this person

and love them as unconditionally as you

can

um

i've said before that probably the the
purest form of love that the average
normie experiences
would be a mother's love for her
children because it's less conditional
a mother loves her children whether
they're beautiful or ugly whether
they're good or bad you know whether
they're brilliant or stupid
she loves them anyway sometimes the
worst kids get the most love because the
mother
intuitively knows that they're the ones
most in need of love
but still is even that is conditional
because it's conditional on the fact
that they are her children

but um just any kind of love

can be improved and purified into

unconditional love

and romantic love is no exception

so i think i'll move on to yuichiro's

next question

also in response to the idea that if you

have good intentions but do bad things

it's not a problem

if you had some hypothetical mao like

dictator who actually had good

intentions but still killed millions of

people i really can't believe no bad

karma is created by that

if the intentions are truly good then it

is the utopian delusion ideology he

presumably believes in which is

generating the bad karma i assume is

creating

i assume

see is created by killing millions of

people for the greater good

okay so the main gist here is uh

you try to do good and uh you wind up

killing millions of people

that that would be bad karma

and

i think i explained the last time i was

asked a question about this sort of

thing

that

um i mean the intention of doing good is

good karma

and so let's say let's say you have
someone like mao i mean better than mao
let's say there's someone who uh
implements this agricultural reform
and agricultural reform for whatever
reason isn't working and people are
starving
and like was the case with mao
or what i've read it's just that
everyone was afraid to tell him that it
wasn't working and so he didn't even
know until after the fact
so in a case like that i unless there's
some kind of subconscious like telepathy
or empathy where you're picking up on
the suffering of these people then

really you're not doing anything wrong

it's sort of like

um you have a good king who's got a bad

minister who's doing bad things behind

his back the good king

um you know there might be some

indirect bad karma from just being

gullible and stupid enough to trust a

bad person you know a certain amount of

delusion

but um

mostly the badness is the people who are

deliberately doing bad stuff and not the

person who's trying to do good stuff and

failing

a good example would be let's say a

doctor is trying to save somebody

and they just fail you know they do the
emergency operation and the person dies
anyway

then he really hasn't done anything bad
or it's like the stephen king novel

um

the stand

which uh is is good to read um for
anybody who's uh interested in uh
like uh

um

genetically engineered viruses getting
escaping from laboratories

he's trying to save somebody by doing an
emergency appendectomy he he's not a
doctor he doesn't know how to do it but

he's doing his best to save this person
and the person dies

during the operation

well i mean

the guy stole the camera's name says his
last name

um east texas i mean he hasn't really
done bad karma by failing to save this
person the person died largely because
of the botched operation but the guy did
the best he could he was really trying
to help

and so

he probably got more good karma than bad
and you can say with regard to
the mao like dictator who has good
intentions and millions of people die

it's probably it's going to be a mix of
good and bad

and most of the bad karma he gets
assuming that he gets it is probably
after he realizes that millions of
people died and then there can be like
the guilt and remorse

um which is going to cause most of the
bad karma

just the the awareness that he killed
millions of people and he's just like
torn up over it and just kicking himself
for the rest of his life that would be
where most of the bad karma would come
from not just from the mere fact that he
was trying to

do the right thing and and made the
wrong choice and millions of people died
so i mean a lot of people really do not
grok buddhist ethics where people in the
west are really stuck in a kind of
western utilitarian ethic where
something is good if it causes increased
happiness

of the most number of people something
is bad if it causes you know more
increased increased unhappiness among
the large you know among
the maximum number of people or whatever
and that's really not how buddhism
works that's not how buddhist ethics
works

um just the awareness that you have

caused suffering

can in itself

um cause you to have bad karma through

regret or remorse

or that sort of thing but it's it's not

so much the action that you did is

subsequent actions after you realize

that the action that you did caused so

much suffering or whatever

so

yeah let's see here

i'll try i'll read the question over

just to make sure i answered it see also

in response to the ideas you have good

intentions but do bad things it's not a

problem if you had some hypothetical

male like dictator who actually had good intentions but still killed millions of people i really can't believe no bad karma is created by that if the intentions are truly good then it is the utopian delusional ideology he presumably believes in which is generating the bad karma i assume is created by killing millions of people for the greater good uh yeah i mean certainly if the people died because he was delusional in believing that the system was going to work when it didn't then yeah that could that could definitely be a factor but just you know

millions of people dying doesn't
necessarily create any karma i mean it's
like

um a volcano blows up and kills a
million people i mean the volcano has
made no karma

you know it's just it's just
ethically neutral and so like an honest
mistake where you just assume things are
going to work and then for some reason
let's say you've got this agricultural
reform

right so you've got the mao like
dictator he he starts this agricultural
reform and then just beyond his control
there's like freak bad weather that just

messes everything up and you've got
droughts and famines and stuff and then
millions people die well
still i mean he hasn't really done
anything wrong
until he starts feeling the guilt and
remorse and so forth and from the
buddhist point of view guilt and remorse
are bad karma whenever you feel
remorse or regret
then you are creating bad karma for
yourself
so
still i'm kind of sticking to my guns on
this one
um although what yuichiro says i mean if
if

delusion has caused you to make a bad decision then yeah i suppose the delusion um can be some can be responsible for some bad karma which will then result in more suffering for yourself

but um again if you're sincerely trying to do good you are creating good karma or good karma

it really um

the actual results

are largely irrelevant to buddhist ethics

it's the mental states going through the mind of the person who is the agent he was you know performing the action

that determines the ethical quality of
the action

so

next question is from seeker

seeker celt

i assume you spell c-e-l-t as celt

so secret celt

says

if you create an identity you create

this ease

well that's an easy one the answer is

yes

in fact i'm not sure that i should even

elaborate on that if you create an

identity i mean you can create some ease

too but um

yeah identities are uh

they're trouble

you know it's like the ego it's based on
delusion and anything based on delusion
is going to create a fair amount of
unease or dis-ease

so i'll just move on to the next
question from secret celt

what is emancipation

and that's uh

that's sort of a surprisingly bad or

it's a difficult question to answer

it's not a bad question it's a good

question it's just that it's very

difficult to answer it because there's

so many ways of answering what is

emancipation you could say it's

it's freedom from

greed hate and delusion or it's freedom

from the the belief i am you know

freedom from uh self view or identity or

ego

um emancipation

um mainly from unease

emancipation from the creation of karma

because a fully enlightened or

emancipated being is not creating karma

anymore

um but ultimately emancipation is just

off the scale it's just beyond words so

there really is no

um

completely correct valid answer to what

is emancipation

it's uh

nirvana full enlightenment

so i think i'll move on to the next

question

which is from potila

and potila

says maybe panyo can give some teachings

on the vital importance of donna to help

education

to help educate those new to domo

and this was part of uh

a long back and forth on the discord

server in the in the q a room

about

what to do about

the fact that

buddhism in the west doesn't receive a
whole lot of support

especially orthodox monastic buddhism
like

you know

um

what should i say non-degenerate

buddhism or non-mutated buddhism or

mutated as little as possible buddhism

um

monks buddhist theravada buddhist monks

and nuns

who are practicing conscientiously and

strictly the rules of monastic

discipline aren't even allowed to handle

money

they're not allowed to have their own

money they're not allowed to spend money
they're not even allowed to feed
themselves

monks especially are not allowed to cook
their own food if a monk wants to eat
something on one day somebody has to
give it to him that same morning
without him asking for it
and

it's really difficult because terra vada
buddhism is based on ancient indian
culture and that sort of thing was just
you know

a lot of people knew about that maybe
most people knew about that in ancient
india and in the ganges valley of

6th century bc or 5th century bc but in
america people are clueless including
really sincere western buddhists they
just

don't realize that a monk isn't even
allowed to feed himself he's not allowed
to use money at all

and so

if you want to have buddhism in the west
you have to

support it

and that's one reason why i'm not a monk
anymore i got tired of living in

buddhist asia come back to america and

the culture is so different here

from the culture of

the pali texts where the rules of

monastic discipline are that um really
it was just um i mean that's one of the
reasons why i'm not a monk right now i'm
not the only reason

but

um

yeah it's i'm i'm fairly skeptical of
just how well

like real orthodox theravada can fit in
the west

and it may be the best thing for a
really devout tarabata buddhist in the
west to do is move to buddhist asia
move to thailand or or sri lanka or
burma if possible and then you can live
a

buddhist lifestyle and especially if
you're going to become a monk i
definitely advise

anyone wanting to become a monk to go to
buddhist asia and be one there because
you're not going to be able to live
according to the texts

um

in the west

maybe if you're really

uh sensitive and wise you can get the
gist of it

without the

details but it's just a good idea to uh
go to buddhist asia and live as a monk
just the way fairly fairly close to the
way the

ancient monks in the buddhist time lived
just wandering around sleeping under
trees that kind of a thing

but um getting back to the importance of
donna to help

uh support

dhamma and buddhism in the west

uh that that is a tough one and we've
been wrangling over that for quite a
while there's been all these different
ideas

and uh

none of them really have have worked
very well i mean the goenka method is
like a mutated simplified stripped down
version of buddhism which has prospered

mainly because people are getting real
benefit from it and they
are willing to pay for that
most westerners

you know like i say they're stuck in a
kind of utilitarian western
materialistic ethic
and um

they really don't see much point in
generosity for generosity's sake
they don't have much belief in karma
and so

they just kind of don't see the point of
supporting monks you know they don't
they don't see it as helping to raise
the level of consciousness in the world
they don't really see it as you know

helping others to become enlightened
even though they're not in a position to
really strive for it
and so
it would take a kind of re-education of
western buddhists
to to
get them more in tune with like an
ancient indian buddhist ethic
and just
maybe just reading the texts
and
especially texts to emphasize the value
of generosity and then supporting monks
but um personally i think one of the
best ways of managing this

is to have

monks in the west

live as close as they can to monks in

ancient india where they're they're just

easy to support they're living a very

stripped down ascetic lifestyle

like um the pali one of the polytechs

that is the most well known is the

metasuta

um

lots and lots of people in burma know

the metasuta by heart probably most

monks can chant the matasuta and one of

the things the mettosota says is that a

monk should be subaru which means easy

to support

and so a monk shouldn't have lots of

expenses he shouldn't be a hypochondriac
wanting to go to a doctor all the time
he shouldn't need all these electronic
gadgets he doesn't need
um you know like the the phone and all
that he should really just live a
stripped-down ascetic existence similar
to the ones in in ancient india like uh
ancient indian monks had the eight
requisites
or technically it was like there was
like a ninth unofficial one that all
they were supposed to own is let's see
three robes a belt
a bowl
a water filter a needle

and a razor

and then the unofficial ninth requisite is a sitting cloth and uh if monks can just live that simply the way they're supposed to the way they are exhorted to live in the texts it would be a lot easier to support them and people would be so blown away by how serious they were that they'd probably get more more support and that kind of leads to the whole issue of karma where if the monk has the karma to be supported you know he's he's practiced in such a way in his life that he's got you know the karma of receiving generosity you know

maybe he's very generous before he was a monk

then uh yeah it's going to work out but um

still it's there it is kind of a dilemma for western buddhism that tom

monks really don't get much support

and uh they usually have to break the rules and start handling money and

and furthermore they're not much

inclined to uh live just a

radically ascetic lifestyle

and uh really it's in some ways it's

just illegal to live a radically ascetic lifestyle in the west i mean you can't

really live in a hut

i mean there's homeless people in

homeless

encampments living like that but legally

if you're living in a in a

structure

it has to be up to code you know has to

have electrical outlets every x number

of feet and like a a fire exit and all

this kind of stuff and um

yeah just living in a hot

in accordance with the rules of monastic

discipline even that is

essentially illegal in america

or probably most western countries

so yeah that's uh

the whole issue of how to support

buddhism is just a conundrum and we can

just chew on it later i suppose
if anyone has any good ideas you're
welcome to leave it in the comments
so next question from potila
in your talks on kama you mentioned that
caitanya is will or intention is what
drives comma according to orthodox
theravada what else forms karma or kama
looking at your snake example it seems
that you state that the act of
permitting the snake to kill has no
comma weight
that only the intention carries the
development of kama letting the snake
eat can you expand on this it seems that
anyone could kill or harm others as long

as they had a frame of mind they were helping them like the example of mao or say a nurse who is killing terminally sick people because she doesn't want to see them suffer maybe she is motivated by intense compassion and pity but she is still killing or maybe she is withholding food or medicine for a less direct approach if it is only shaded on that matters to create kama you could justify some very sociopathic behaviors well

according to the sutas

chittana doesn't

on cheetah not is comma that they are identical

so

let's see

yeah it's

chittana isn't what drives comma

not is kama

so

uh again we're back at uh mao

or

people trying to do good and failing

and

like let's say you've got a mercy

killing you know you've got the

euthanasia then they're probably very

probably going to get some bad comma

from the killing

but they're also going to get some good

karma from the compassion

and that's the way buddhist ethics works
i mean there's very very little that is
black and white it's all black or all
white it just doesn't work that way it's
buddhist ethics in reality or shades of
gray

because even if you believe that you are
doing something

then that in itself is bad comma because
that has delusion involved because
ultimately we as individuals do not
exist

so

um

the nurse who is killing terminally sick
people because she doesn't want to see
them suffer

yeah i mean she's going to get some bad
comma

and also some good karma um the bad
comma from the the actual killing and
the good comma from the compassion and
not wanting them to suffer and so forth
and um it would depend on her mental
states and her chijna which predominates
whether it's more good than bad or more
bad than good

i think a lot of buddhists would say
it's just definitely going to
necessarily be more bad than good
because killing is killing
but

um yeah i'm not an orthodox buddhist and

we could go back to um

a more obvious example of the doctor or
the guy in the stephen king novel who
are

like operating on someone it's like
somebody's badly injured or whatever and
you're doing what you can to save them
and you fail

then

you might even know that the chances are
ninety percent chance that that is the
operation is going to kill them but if
you don't do the operation the chances
are more like 100 that they're going to
die

so you do the operation and they die in
accordance with the odds anyway

then uh you've still done something more
good than bad even though

you exp you exercise some ineptitude in
trying to save them

so

again

most of the bad comma from that sort of
thing comes from the knowledge that you
did bad or or not even that you did bad
but that you you messed up you failed to
do what you were wanting to do

uh you caused death or whatever and then
and then the remorse and you're just
haunted by it and that haunting and that
regret and so forth

is really what causes the bad comma

more than

the the well-intentioned mistake

so

um if you really want to know more about

kama from the point of view orthodox

theravada um

abhi dhamma

the abhidhamma philosophy

um doesn't say that chijana and kama are

purely synonymous the sutas say that

chaijna is kama or kama is chitana and

chitana here being like will

usually is translated as volition

but it's it comes close to like

schopenhauer's will it's like the

the driving force of of just becoming in

this world

um

i forgot where i was going with that

let's see

oh yeah uh abhidama will say that there

are other factors but even so even

according to abidama in the commentarial

tradition kama is mainly predominantly

um

or will or volition

intention

but um

yeah you could look up uh

what some of the additional factors are

in uh in tarawa

but but still i mean

people in the west we've just been born

and raised into a kind of utilitarian
ethic and it's

counterintuitive

to uh go with a more subjective
ethic of buddhism

so i'll move on to the next question

this is the last question from paultila

why do you think some forms of buddhism

are popular with certain groups of

people and not others for example

nichiren buddhism like kisoka gakai

international seems to have many more

black followers than zen

tibetan buddhism has many latino

hispanic students than jews

zen seems to pull a certain spectrum of

jews and whites who are well to do types

to its doors etc is this due to past
comma to be attracted as a group to
certain traditions

in the usa some of these groups
desperately want blacks and hispanics to
join them but they don't seem to gain
much traction despite their best efforts
well

i think what i'm going to say is very
politically incorrect but different
ethnicities differ from each other
you know

different ethnicities
you know they differ not only physically
but also psychologically to some degree
maybe some ethnicities are just more

cold-blooded intellectual and they're
more attracted to something like zen or
or theravada
other people
who are less detached from
um you know
worldliness or they're more
maybe
emotionally oriented or something they
might be more interested in more more
devotional forms of buddhism
or i guess okay i'm not exactly sure
what it's about
there are some kinds of buddhism that
are still very
sort of samsara or world oriented
so

people or groups of people that are
world oriented might be more attracted
to that
with regard to
tibetan buddhism attracting more um
hispanic people than jews
um i'm not sure that that's exactly true
my good friend brian roo
yeah he definitely thinks that tibetan
buddhism is pretty much run by jews in
in the west
that's neither here nor there
so yeah i'm just i would just say the
easy answer to that is just different
ethnicities
tend statistically to have different

psychological traits different motives

different

um

i don't know different goals to some

degree i mean it can be subtle and it's

not going to be just radical differences

but

subtle enough that uh

it becomes apparent

at uh and like a large

um you know sort of a large scale

so

yeah i just assumed that would be it

that uh

different kinds of buddhism

have different approaches and their

different kinds of people

will favor the forms of buddhism that
are more in accordance with just their
own approach to existence

um

yeah i don't think there's any
deliberate conspiracies or any such
thing

with regard to

a lot of the elite buddhist groups
trying to attract

uh black people and hispanic people into
their ranks and not doing very well i
mean they're mostly like starbucks

liberals you know like

um neo neo-marxists or something

and um

just their whole approach to life is
radically different from

um

most of the the people that they're
trying to attract for the sake of
diversity so that they won't be so
embarrassed about being a white elitist
movement

well tom

i think i've kind of answered that
question so i'll just uh move on to the
next one from nardi

and nardi says this is kind of a strange
question

nardi says can you do a list of reasons
why not to ordain as a monk

um

see i have just one in mind right now my
case a very very sexual nature
okay

well i mean i could come up with a list
of why not to become a monk but it
wouldn't be a very long list

um the first reason not to become a monk
because if you just don't have a
spiritual vocation if you do not have a
calling to it

you know if you're not really committed
to becoming enlightened in this very
life or at least making as much progress
in that direction as possible then yeah
you're probably better off not becoming
a monk and it's better for the sangha

also that you not become a monk and
that's kind of the way it is in asia
where most of the people who are
ordained there
really do not have a spiritual calling
they're not really trying to become
enlightened they're not even so much
trying to cultivate wisdom
they just want to live an easy life or
they're too lazy and ugly to get a wife
and a job and so they just go to the
monastery or they're sent there as
children
and they just don't know what else to do
in life
or they want the free education at a
monastic school or they just want upward

social mobility and people worshipping
them

or whatever

and

the number of asian monks who really

have a spiritual calling is uh

pretty small you know probably well

below 20

a lot of the women who become nuns you

know they're just not attractive enough

to attract the husband and so they uh

make the best of it by

devoting their life to religion

so

that would be that would be the main

reason if you just do not have a genuine

spiritual vocation you should not be
ordained um another another one is if
the life of a monk just does not suit
your temperament like if you're very
gregarious or like you're you're just a
horny person

or

um

you mean you just cannot tolerate one
meal a day in minimum sleep and hours of
meditation or whatever then

um yeah in fact i used to say that was
the

best reason to become a monk wasn't so
much the desire to become enlightened as
just the the life of a monk is just in
harmony with with your temperament or

your personality

so

um those would be the two main reasons

why you shouldn't become a monk

uh one other

uh one other reason would be just if if

you're disqualified for whatever reason

um

you know you have some kind of uh like

you've been

accidentally castrated or something you

can't become a monk or uh

certain diseases that um

like i think even asthma i think someone

with asthma is not supposed to become a

monk

um

yeah so i mean there are some

um

like physical conditions and so forth or

if let's say

um

you're you still have obligations

to

um like government service let's say

you're in the military reserves or

something then then you're

forbidden to become a monk something

like that

but with regard to personal ethical

reasons i think the the first two if you

don't have a spiritual calling and the

monks life just is not compatible with

your personality or temperament those
would be the two main ones

so i'll just move on to the next
question from nardi

and nardi says

have you ever thought about speaking
about different buddhist traditions and
how a terra varden like you would react
to them like for example your idea on
mahamudra and that particular lineage

i see you as an open-minded man who
could do that for the benefit of many
buddhists from different lineages

may you have a great day and thank you
for your service to us

well you're welcome

and the main reason why i don't talk
much about other traditions is that i
just haven't studied other traditions
i've

immersed myself in taravana

um mainly because i wanted to know what
the buddha originally taught and
theravada comes closest to that in most
respects it's the most conservative it's
the one school of buddhism still in
existence that is primarily based on
ancient indian culture

and so that was really

what interested me i wasn't so much

interested in terra vada i just wanted
to know what the buddha really taught

i mean if you're going to be a buddhist

you want to follow the teachings of
buddha and so you have to try to find
out what he taught
and uh i started with theravada because
that that came the closest to begin with
and then
and then went from there
so i really don't know much about uh
tibetan buddhism at all i do know some
about zen
i was interested in zen to begin with
but um like mahamudra i'm not even sure
what that is
so that's that's the main reason why i
don't do a lot of comparison and
contrast of different schools of

buddhism because the one i'm mainly
familiar with is taravana and i i know
very very little about uh tibetan and
like vajrayana and tantric stuff
like what is a green tara empowerment
i'm really not sure
uh
let's see
so yeah i guess i guess i answered that
question and so the last question from
nardi is pure or total mindfulness
enough to get you enlightened
and
technically
no because
um i mean that's your best bet but
there's no guarantees because you can't

make yourself be enlightened
you're not no amount of effort is going
to make you be enlightened you can't
force yourself to be enlightened like
krishnamurti used to say you can open
the window but you can't make the breeze
blow in the best you can do is
have the window open and then maybe the
the breeze will blow in
but you can't make it blow in
but um just setting that aside let's say
you want to maximize your chances of
becoming enlightened then yeah um pure
pure
purification of mindfulness is about
your best bet

but

um

to purify mindfulness takes a lot of
other things for you to do like
the terror of other buddhist texts will
say you can't purify your mind unless
you purify your morality first
you can't purify your wisdom without
purifying your

um

your morality *nasila samadhi* and *panya*
it's like a progression in orthodox
tiravada first is morality then
concentration and then and then you have
liberating wisdom
um so there's all these different
factors all these different things it's

the noble eightfold path

um you know there's a right action and

right speech and and right livelihood

and

right thought and right effort and all

these things

but uh you can say that they all

culminate in the purification of

mindfulness which is for the jhana

but you don't necessarily have to attain

for the genre in order to become

enlightened

but um

some people need purer

pure mindfulness as a kind of

jumping-off point than others

so i mean in a way yes in a way no
total mindfulness is enough to get
enlightened

like um in the saudi bataan suta
or the mahasaripatana suta

the buddha says that

um if you can be totally mindful for a
week straight

you're guaranteed of either becoming
enlightenment or becoming a non-returner
so that's uh

that's a pretty strong statement to make
and so i'll move on to the next question
from mirror of emptiness

and this is kind of a strange question
what role do the imaginary

superstructures great artists like j.r.r

tolkien build

or religious superstructure used by
devout practitioners like in tibetan
buddhism or catholicism play in their
journey into the hereafter

uh

well i assume

like uh

like mythological superstructures

like tibetan buddhism

i mean everybody has to have some kind
of content of their mind and structures
to their mind i don't know

whether mirror of emptiness here is
specifically interested in like jungian
archetypes of the collective

subconscious or anything like that but
um you know you're gonna have your mind
is like a vehicle you use for moving
forwards through samsara towards
enlightenment if that is your goal
then uh

yeah i mean it's just gonna have like
this uh

i mean any vehicle has to have a
structure

so i mean if you've
uh

you're in a culture or in a religious
system that has this elaborate mythology
that's just going to be part of the part
of the system
and just part of your mind

you know part of your uh

um

approach to enlightenment early buddhism

tried to strip that down to a minimum

you know you weren't supposed to believe

anything really

um

so

the more the more of the content there's

going to be the the more you're going to

be careful about detaching from it but

it does seem that there have been

enlightened beings that really still

um

they still endorse the mythology of

their culture the buddha didn't

completely reject or denounce

ancient indian mythology

or cosmology

um i think saint john of the cross may

have been an arahant he was

he was a very very advanced john a

master very wise person he was despite

being a 16th century spanish catholic

and uh being very devoted to the virgin

mary

you know he read the bible and all that

and believed it

but so long as you're detached from it i

mean there's just the content of your

mind becomes irrelevant

and so just about any kind of

superstructure so long as it's not

serving to be just a flat out hindrance
to wisdom

you know if you're believing that uh you
know you're getting merit by killing
some kind of animals or even other
humans then yeah that could be a
definitely uh

a hindrance moving you in the wrong
direction

but i mean if it's a relatively benign
mythology that's you know it's not
endorsing

um you know immorality or that sort of
thing then

yeah i mean it's it's just something
that is part of the the clutter that you

eventually have to to uh detach from

and i hope

mirror of emptiness wasn't specifically

referring to

like um jungian archetypes because i

wouldn't know how to answer that one

and so i'll just move on to the next

question from chakra gosha

the voice of chakra

and uh chakragosa here

says

in the buddhist time were married men or

fathers of children allowed to become

monks notably the buddha himself left

his family including a young son but

naturally that was before the regular

rules of ordination were established

well i like getting easy questions

sometimes

and this is a fairly easy one and the

answer is yeah i mean you can be married

and be the father of children still

become a monk

the closest thing to that that

is supposed to be

a hindrance would be you have to have

the consent of your parents to be

ordained

that even at the ordination ceremony um

i think you're if i remember correctly

you're asked if your parents consent

um you can be ordained without the

consent of your parents but it's uh

against the rules and

even though the ordination is still

valid the monks who conduct the

ordination um commit

a minor offense by doing it

but um

yeah there's even these some pretty

gnarly stories there are supposed to be

praising monks but there was this monk

who had a wife and a baby and he just

renounced the world and became a monk

and so he's sitting under a tree at some

park and his wife with the baby

uh like hunts him down and she just puts

the baby down in front of him and says

this is your child you take care of it

and then she walks away but of course

um she just kind of hides in a distance
to see what he's going to do
and he just uh in a state of complete
equanimity just in a state of meditative
bliss he just keeps meditating and
ignores the the baby in front of him
until finally after a while the wife
miss comes back and picks up the baby
and leaves because she realizes he
doesn't he's just in a state of complete
detachment even from his own baby
so i mean that's pretty monstrous from
most people's point of view but
in the in the commentaries when the i
think it's in the commentaries where the
the story is found it was uh praising

the monk and his detachment and all that
so it did happen

and uh yeah the buddha himself

um

left his his wife and his uh

baby son and his harem of slave girls i

assume

but um

they were rich i mean they weren't his

wife and son didn't experience any dire

hardship because he wasn't supporting

them because they were

according to the legend of princess

or and a prince

or the son of a prince

so yeah

yeah i mean

that was not an obstacle or it was not
uh

it wasn't against the rules
to be ordained as a monk even if you
were married and had children
so i'll just move on to the next
question from bpat427

and be pat here ask me some kind of
personal questions

he's uh not so much interested in
buddhist philosophy here

his first question is what music have
been you been listening to lately
and um

to tell you the truth i haven't been
listening to music very much at all

um

yeah it was uh maybe a week or so ago i
just felt in the mood to listen to music
and i was mostly listening to the old
stuff that i used to like before i was a
monk like led zeppelin or were talking
heads

um

brian eno and uh
david burns my life in the bishop ghosts
has always been one of my favorite
albums

um

i watch uh every once in a while i watch
an episode of this it's called cowboy
bebop and i like the the intro music to
that

but um

yeah for the past

couple years at least

i really have not been feeling strong

urges to listen to music

um

because

i'm called john at work the boss

sometimes will be singing big bad john

some old song i think it's from like the

50s so i listened to that a few weeks

ago

but um yeah i'm not really much into

listening to music lately so next

question from bpap427 what food have you

been eating enjoying the most

since rejoining lay life

well i was just thinking to myself the other day that my favorite food in the whole world is probably uh butter pecan ice cream and i've been eating quite a lot of that from time to time although i don't have any present which uh is not optimal

um

my girlfriend's a really good cook so just about anything she cooks is really enjoyable

and just eating with someone you love is uh is very nice and makes the food better

but um

yeah

yeah so i guess i guess that's it i've
i've uh

ate some bacon pizza the other day that
was interesting

okay so let's move on epap 427's next
question have you gotten a cell phone
yet if so what kind

so yeah i got a cell phone series right
here

and it's uh like a samsung
galaxy a12 or something it's like the
second cheapest kind because really i
just

i don't need lots of gadgets i don't use
lots of apps i just want something that
will tell the time and be used as a

phone and i can use it as an alarm clock
and

i don't know

it's not that big of a deal i usually
don't even take my phone with me if i go
out if i go to work i do but aside from
that it's just uh

i don't know it's not really important
but i got it almost immediately after um
dropping out of the monkhood and coming
here to uh south carolina

because i had to get internet access and
usually you get like the package of
internet and phone and

um

tv and that kind of thing but uh i
despise television so i just got the

phone and the internet

so the next question

from bpat427

have you seen or spoken to any of your

family members since disrobing

have you met any of your girlfriend's

family yet if so how did the

interactions go also you've previously

mentioned that you knew your lady before

you were both before you were born

ah

could you elaborate on that or is it too

personal conventionally inexplicable

okay well let's just uh

go to the first part of the question

here uh

have i seen or spoken to any of my
family members since disrobing

i've spoken to my brother

so

yeah so the answer to that would be yes

also i have this

i have a niece that i didn't even know

existed until just a few years ago who

occasionally contacts me through email

and those would be the only two family

members that i uh have communicated with

over the past

year

um now my parents are both dead and

i really did not come from a close

family

so

um

most of my

my relatives were on the east coast and

for most of my life in america i was

living on the west coast

and really

didn't even i mean i have to like sit

there and calculate how many aunts and

uncles i had and i'm not sure how many

cousins i have

so

i just do not come from a very close

family neither of my parents were very

close with their respective families

so

yeah so let's move on to the next part

of this question which is have you met
any of your girlfriend's family yet yeah
i met her mom

and uh she likes me

yeah so that's nice

in fact she uh for christmas she got me
these new glasses

so that's that's nice

um

also you previously mentioned that you
know you you knew your lady before you
were born could you elaborate on that or
is it too personal conventionally
inexplicable um yeah i think it might be
too conventionally inexplicable
but there's definitely a very deep
connection where

um you know we're just having the same
thoughts simultaneously and that kind of
a thing

um

just

like even when i was in in california i
could tell whether she was in a good
mood or not just from how i felt when i
woke up that morning you know just
because we were have like this
connection

where um her mood would influence mine
and vice versa we were just kind of like
on the same wavelength and uh
just it's just uh like a karmic thing
from a buddhist point of view

so

yeah also i mean i have i have these

ideas about uh

maybe where we met

in the past like maybe 14th century

england or something

but

um there was a there was like a class

barrier between us at the time she was

too high class for me

so finally we've got three questions

from chaplin

and chaplin's first question is can you

explain contemplation in the ancient

sense and also the buddhist sense

well this is kind of a tough question

because

contemplation

um it can have different meanings like

with regard to buddhism

um on the one hand you can have you know

among contemplating death or

contemplating the qualities of the

buddha or that sort of thing or also you

have

what

um like the catholics call contemplation

which would be at least second jhana

so from uh from the christian point of

view contemplation

is one step above meditation meditation

is you're still thinking but when you

stop thinking then it's called

contemplation you're just sitting there
just wide open and crystal clear
so um can i explain contemplation in the
ancient sense and also the buddhist
sense

um

yeah it's hard to say because especially
in buddhism i mean it's not based on the
english languages based on pali and how
you

you know what you would translate from
pali into the word contemplation

is uh

is uncertain

so when i'm talking about buddhist
contemplation it's pretty much the way i
just explained it i mean you can have

like the intellectual just reflecting
upon

death or reflecting upon

um you know impermanence or reflecting
upon the qualities of the buddha that
sort of thing

or then if you're really practicing
contemplation in the catholic sense then
you've got at least second jonah going
and um

yeah so rather than explaining it in the
ancient sense and also the buddhist
sense i'm more or less explaining it in
the
catholic sense and also the buddhist
sense

so i hope i answered that one
more or less well enough and so i'll
move on to the second question what are
the main differences between buddhism
and new age where new age contradicts
buddhism

ooh that's

and that's that's kind of uh

i mean that could be a very long answer
because there's lots of differences

new age

is more based on hinduism

than buddhism

and it's just wide open i mean

new it's sort of like hinduism where you
can have all kinds of beliefs and all
kinds of practices

included under new age

and most of it's very different from

buddhism i assume the similarities is

i assume new age and buddhism both agree

that there is like karma

that there is

uh rebirth i assume

new age people believe in reincarnation

i'm pretty sure they do

um

emphasis on non-violence

um but

just about everything else is just

really different like new age is um

it's a very faith-oriented system

in that in buddhism they talk about

there are the the two faculties of
faith and reason

and they should be in balance you know
you've got too much faith and not enough
reason you can believe anything no
matter how silly it is you've got too
much reason and not enough faith nobody
can tell you anything because you're
just too skeptical

and new age is just wait like this in
the in the faith because i mean new age
people can believe damn near anything
you know it's like uh healing crystals
and

alkaline cleanses and the virtues of
acai berries and and uh
what else the archangel metatron and

channeling and tarot cards and astrology
and just about anything

it's sort of like um classical paganism

whereas just this hodgepodge of all

these different beliefs where

buddhism especially theravada buddhism

is much more systematic and organized

and clear-cut

and

i think new age

the the ethics of new age are different

from the ethics of buddhism whereas the

ethics of new age are sort of like

western liberal as they swear

so long as you're not actually hurting

somebody

then you're still doing okay

but like stuff like

sex is just irrelevant to morality

for for a new age whereas in buddhism

um sensual pleasures should be

practiced in moderation and

especially something like like sex

so

those those would be some of the the

main differences i think

but it's it's it's really a broad

uh answer to a broad question because

new age really is is just all over the

place

at least my experience of dealing with

new age people

where buddhism is more intellectual and

hard-headed

and precise more scientific

so i'll just move on to the very last
question

not only from chaplin but from everybody

and that is what is a good movie that

portrays dharma and healthy male

role models

and i was thinking about this it's uh i

can't think of a really good buddhist

movie

um

but one movie that really comes to mind

is fearless

and uh i think it was made in the 1990s

i think jeff bridges

is the star of it

and it's a good dharma movie it's it's

got a lot of wisdom to it i think

it's about this guy

who uh

he's afraid of flying but he has to fly

on a business trip or something

and the plane starts having

like serious problems you know the plane

is is going out of control and he sees

this little boy sitting ahead of him

who's obviously scared to death so he

just goes up and sits next to the little

boy to kind of comfort him and then it

turns out that the plane crashes and

almost everybody dies except him and

this little boy and a few other people

if he if he hadn't moved to sit with a
little boy he would have died also

because the guy he was sitting next to
died

and

before the plane crashes this piece

comes over him

and he has like a near-death experience

like a lot of like somebody like eckhart
tolle or uh

who's that that scientist guy

i can't remember now

bad with names sometimes but he has a

near-death experience and he just

becomes fearless he just becomes almost

um you know he's just functioning in a

higher level of consciousness

and he starts having real problems with

the people around him like um

he's this lawyer keeps pestering him

because it's like he was sitting next to

a friend of his before he moved to sit

next to the little boy and i think the

wife of the guy of his friend is trying

to sue the airlines

and

so the

the lawyer and other people i think the

wife also the widowed wife are like

urging him to say how terrified he was

and how messed up he was and everything

essentially to lie and he he just

doesn't want to do it

and he just

it's

he starts having problems with his own
wife and so forth because of his
detachment you know he doesn't have the
same attitude as he had before

and um finally it's just like the
pressure of samsara starts pulling him
back down again

so it's got a lot of good dharma to it
and uh

i assume it's got healthy male role
models

also

um

but i can't really think of a perfect

example but that's the one that

immediately comes to mind

and so that's that's the last question

and uh

i guess i guess i'm done

and if you have any more questions which

i would be happy to attempt to answer

feel free to leave them in the comments

below or if you are subscribed on

subscribe star leave them

there under the next announcement or if

you're on the discord server leave them

in the question and answer room

and um

be happy

Hello and welcome to episode 20 of
Question and Answer. I am your host
Panyobhasa.

And there are a number of assistant
hosts wandering around including
this one who is not wandering around but
is pretty much crashed.

And um

it's kind of amazing that we're up to
number 20 already. 20 question and
answer videos. First ones first six at
least were probably when I was still a
monk in California.

But uh let's just go ahead with this and
start answering questions. And there are
like some difficult questions this time

like subtle kind of difficult

kind of questions. And I'll do my best.

But um it is uh wintertime and the days are short and dark and I've been kind of hibernating all day. So I'll do my best.

The first question is from J Good.

And J Good says, "Hey Panyobhasa, what is your view of the eternal cheeta doctrine taught by Ajahn Mun and Maha Boowa?"

Well,

the some Thai Ajahns do talk a lot about jit or or cheeta.

And especially uh

like in this context there's like this eternal

cosmic mind or something which

um

is emphasized a lot more in Mahayana.

In Theravada, it's not really orthodox.

But some some monks especially like in

Thailand where um

the Burmese invaded Thailand back in the

1700s I think and pretty much sacked

their capital city

of uh Ayutthaya.

And the Thais never fully recovered from

having like not only the national

capital, but like the religious capital

of the nation pretty much sacked. And

so, like the ecclesiastical schools and

all that were pretty much wrecked. And

uh Thailand never really uh

got back on par with regard to
scholarship, not that I'm aware of.

So, a lot of

Thai Ajahns, even though they're
meditation masters, they explain things
in unorthodox ways.

And this is one of them, I guess. I
mean, there is some mention of like an
eternal cheetah

in the Pali texts. It's It's uh like
vestigial. It's like pre-Theravada,
pre-orthodox,

in which it's referring to apparently
Nibbana or Nirvana as infinite formless
consciousness.

And that's the same sort of thing, I
assume, that Ajahn Mun and Ajahn Maha

Boowa were teaching, although I really don't read up much on what modern Ajahns or Sayadaws or Mahateras teach. So, um I mean, it does have some basis in the Pali texts, where you can say that

Nirvana as a metaphysical state is essentially the same as Brahman as a metaphysical state as taught in the Upanishads.

Although, one big difference is that in Buddhism, this like this absolute, the ultimate reality, is not called the self.

That nowhere is Nirvana, Nibbana, and this cosmic mind

uh called a self or soul in Theravada Buddhism. Not in any clear, unambiguous, uncontroversial way.

So,

what they're doing is they're tapping into this ultimate reality, and then, for the sake of convenience or maybe uh through lack of philosophical sophistication or some such they are reifying it and calling it like this existent state.

But

um in Buddhism, especially the deeper philosophies of Buddhism, the absolute just is not reified. It's totally off the scale. You don't say that it exists or that it doesn't exist. It's just off

the scale and you can't really say anything about it.

So, it's just a matter of uh personal choice, I suppose, that they choose to talk about it as like this existent state.

Um it doesn't get a whole lot of mention like that in the poly text, although every once in a while you do have to describe Nirvana as an it, as something that presumably exists.

But um

yeah, I mean it's it's like a new Upanishadic approach to Buddhism. I guess you could call it that.

So, um I think I'll just move on to the

next question. And the next question is from Potila.

And Potila says, "What are your thoughts about a monarchy?"

Pros and cons. Could it work again after the brief republic democracy experiment?"

Well, I think

like an enlightened monarchy would be way better than a democracy.

That to have like an enlightened philosopher king would be possibly the best form of government if there's going to be a government. But the problem is that um

when the the the quality of the government depends on one person and you

wind up with just some bloodthirsty
ruthless sociopaths taking over, then um
yeah, monarchy is worse than than a
democracy.

So, democracy is good because it's kind
of stable. You wind up with a kind of
standardized mediocrity.

Um whereas a monarchy is it can be all
over the map. And even I mean history
has shown that even a really wise and
good and benevolent monarch can have a
son who's totally corrupt and just a
tyrant.

So, that would be the the main con of a
monarchy is um
that it's just so variable.

I mean it can be really good or really bad. Whereas democracy it's more stable and and more

um

it it it gives more protection against some psychopath ruler.

But uh the next part of the question here is uh could it work again after the brief republic democracy experiment?

Well, I mean it worked in Rome. I mean

Rome had a republic

for hundreds of years and then

eventually Caesar came along and you

wound up having uh essentially a

dictatorship.

Which uh actually strengthened Rome

quite a lot at first.

And it can happen again and it might happen again. So, we'll just have to wait and see what happens. But it has I mean it has worked in the past at least with the Rome which in some ways is sort of like a previous birth of of America.

That uh I mean it doesn't rebirth doesn't really work that way. Entire cultures don't um don't undergo rebirth. But um I think a lot of people who live in in the in the west or in America may have been Romans in past lives.

So, next question is also from Potila.

And it says or Potila says, "Would you be willing to engage in debates with other YouTubers about different political or religious ideas?"

And

yeah, I'm willing. Although um there is a certain danger in just getting into debates and you know, like making enemies and, you know, choosing sides. In the Polytexts, it does warn against um debating, especially in public.

But, um even so, I mean,

uh I think I I would be willing and I have been hoping

for someone to come along to debate the whole issue of no self in Buddhism.

Because I'm continually confronted by

reasonably intelligent Buddhists who are so-called authorities on Buddhism who just keep insisting that the Buddha taught some kind of soul, maybe even like an immortal individual soul like like Christianity teaches.

Um

yeah, and so I'd be I've I've really been looking forward to debating that particular issue with somebody, but nobody has really stepped forward willing to uh take debate, so to speak.

Um

but yeah, I really do like uh a certain amount of controversy,

uh a certain amount of back and forth.

It doesn't necessarily have to be a formal debate. It could just be like a friendly discussion with some agreement and some disagreement.

But, um yeah, especially if if there's any uh Buddhists out there or authorities on Buddhism who really believe that the Buddha taught that people have like uh an individual immortal soul,

then yeah, you're welcome to uh do a video with me and we can debate the thing.

Um or if there's anybody who really disagrees with some of the stuff that I say, um yeah, you you you do have the

opportunity to uh

at least uh invite me to debate you and

we can be on the show and uh

you know,

put it out there and let people let the

um audience decide which side they

prefer,

if either.

Probably you're best not really

committing yourself to any particular

side anyway, at least from a Buddhist

point of view.

So, uh uh let's see.

So, I guess the answer to that question

is, yeah, I would be willing under

certain circumstances. I mean, if the

person is uh obviously not in good faith, then I wouldn't really be willing to debate.

It would have to be like a friendly, polite kind of a debate and uh in good faith.

So, the next question, also from Potila.

Do you plan to have a study group on a text you like?

Um

I've briefly considered it.

Uh

I know I think somebody would probably have to twist my arm or really kind of persuade me to do it.

Um it doesn't really call to me very

much. Just partly because I'd be like pushing my own preferences on other people. You know, you can read the text and uh

um decide what what you like or don't like or, you know, what you want to study more deeply, something like that.

Um I do put put ideas out there and people can study that or, you know, if you there wants like we have a Discord server and there's a lot of back and forth on various topics there.

So, I mean, that wouldn't really amount to a study group, but uh yeah, I study groups are uh

I don't know I don't know if it's really my speed or not.

So, um that's just sort of uh a maybe, a definite maybe.

And yet another question from Potila.

Excuse me. Any plans to have a live chat hangout with people from the Discord?

Yeah, this question has come up a number of times and I keep saying, yeah, we're going to do it. And then we we've kind of sort of worked out, you know, I'll put a like a little announcement on the Discord server. And uh about as far as we've gotten as we've sort of agreed that Sundays, like maybe Sunday afternoons my time would be about the best, but there's people all over the

world like Australia and Europe in in addition to North America.

And getting one time that's going to work for everybody is just it's just a non-starter.

So,

yeah, I think I think there is a good chance that we can work out like Sunday afternoons American Eastern Time um you know, give or take a few hours.

Um maybe other days, although Sunday tends to work best for me.

So, yeah, I mean uh

uh I am willing. It's just that uh the momentum really hasn't started going yet. It's like um inertia, an object at

motion in motion tends to remain in motion, and object at rest tends to remain at rest.

And uh the uh live chat hangouts has been at rest, and so it's taking some some pushing to get it going. And uh but I am willing, and apparently there are others who are willing. So, yeah, that's something that we should probably really get get started on.

And uh last question from Potila.

And Potila says, "Kind of a convoluted question, but can you explain why the good or kusala is good in Buddhism?"

As good has no transcendental basis like

in Christian faith God is good and the source of good. In Buddhism because nibana is devoid of attributes and conditions, what makes something good? It is Is it simply because it is conducive to liberation? If so, that means any action that brings one closer to liberation is in fact good. But it is clear in Buddhist text there is some sort of basis to declare something good because the Buddha warns people that they will fall into hell realms for their behaviors or in your view, does this even matter in Buddhist philosophy? Well, in Buddhist philosophy usually

instead of good and evil or good and bad, it's kusala and akusala, which means skillful and unskillful or adept and not adept.

And it can have two meanings.

Um the higher meaning is that which gets you closer to enlightenment. As uh

Potila says, or

um

another another possibility is that it's just getting you closer to heaven realms.

That really

um a monk in some texts, especially some older texts, says that a monk needs to leave behind good and bad. He has to leave behind kusala and akusala because

kusala is a kind of karma and akusala is a kind of karma and uh an enlightened being just doesn't generate karma of any sort.

So, it is kind of a complicated issue.

But I would say that from the Buddhist point of view, good really is whatever gets you closer to liberation.

And the Buddha can talk about how some actions can cause you to go to hell and so forth, but that's because some actions almost necessarily have accompanying mental states that are leading you closer to enlightenment or farther away from it. You know, like um

you know, one of the classic uh examples
of a of an action
that will uh just guarantee hell is
killing one of your own parents
on purpose, not accidentally.

And I mean

the mere act itself really isn't what
sends you to hell, it's the mental
states and it's you just can't
deliberately murder one of your own
parents

with like wholesome mental states that
reduce desires and reduce clinging and
you know, reduce the just the the
muddiness of the mind, reduce the greed,
hate, and delusion. It just increases
it. It makes things worse.

So,

yeah, good What is good from the

from Buddhist philosophy anyway

is that which causes fewness of desires

and fewness of attachments and fewness

of preferences and your mind is light

and

you know, it leads to happiness really.

I mean, that's sort of what Buddhist

ethics are based on is happiness and

unhappiness or dukkha and the cessation

of dukkha. So, whatever is conducive to

the cessation of dukkha is going to be

good from a Buddhist point of view.

And

although the same outward act can be

kusala for some people and akusala for others because of the underlying mental states differing.

Um the underlying mental states I mean, if you've got you know, if you're motivated by hate or greed or that sort of thing, then yeah, it's going to be have negative consequences and it would not be good to that extent.

So, I'll just move on to the next question, which is from Alfred.

And Alfred says, I would like to inquire more about your nimitta experiences.

So, I suppose first I should explain nimitta. Nimitta literally means something like sign

or marker.

You know, it's it's uh

kind of like a a symbol that represents

something. Like a boundary marker

in in Pali is also called nimitta, but

here

it's uh something that you see in your

meditation.

And

a nimitta is associated with what is

called ubhacara samadhi or access

concentration. It's It's like pre-jhana.

The stage right before jhana is this

upacara samadhi and that is when you

when you experience

a a nimitta.

And

in a way it's kind of apocryphal. It's

It's mainly from the commentarial

tradition because uh it's not really

mentioned in the suttas.

And if it's really that important

to experience upacara samadhi and see

nimittas when you're meditating, then

you'd think that the Buddha himself

would emphasize it. But uh apparently he

did not.

And in this case nimitta is something

that you see while you are meditating.

So usually it will be just like a a

circle of light, you know, like a a

white luminous disc or oval. Or some

people will even

uh see images like the Buddha sitting in meditation, something like that. And it's very vivid.

And that uh indicates that your your samadhi is getting stronger. And that the next stage after that will be jhana, which is uh

um

well, I don't want to get into jhana.

It's kind of a controversial issue also.

But it is like the four main stages of deep meditation

that are mentioned many times in the Buddhist texts.

So Alfred here would like to inquire more about my own personal nimitta

experiences.

And first of all, I'd just like to say that I was I've never tried to see a nimitta because like I say, it's not really mentioned in the suttas. It's It's uh largely an artifact of the commentarial tradition.

But I have seen a nimitta at least once. I was just meditating. My meditation was going relatively well. And um just with my eyes closed, there appeared It was like a duck egg, you know, it was kind of this shape and it was white or maybe very light gray.

Um

and it just kind of stayed there and didn't do anything. And it's it's not

really a very exciting story, but Alfred asked about it. So, uh yeah, that was that was my main nimitta experience that I'm aware of.

It is just uh seeing this uh luminous cloud-like duck egg with my eyes closed when I was meditating one time.

Um

but it's uh a lot of people experience it and it is a real thing. But, um I am skeptical as to its necessity if you want to cultivate deeper meditative states.

So, next question is also from Alfred.

And Alfred says, "Can you elaborate on your experience of comma in Burma?"

Also mind states, etc."

Well, that's I mean, that's just a wide-open question. I could elaborate on all sorts of things.

Um can you elaborate on your experience of comma in Burma?

Um

maybe one of my best examples of comma in Burma is the the notion that um if you if you practice dhamma intensively, dhamma kind of protects you.

And if if something bad happens to you, there's going to be mitigating circumstances that make it not so bad.

And so,

uh an example of that

would be

um when I was in Burma, especially
living out in the in the remote areas,
like rural areas,
um associated with like villages,
farming villages,
um I'd be biting into rocks a lot in my
food. Um

they would thresh their rice and beans
on the ground. And so, little white
rocks could get mixed in with the rice
and little brown rocks could get mixed
in with the beans. And every once in a
I'd bite into a rock and there'd be like
this loud crack and it would hurt and
I'd be feeling around in my mouth to see

if I'd broken a tooth or lost a filling
or anything.

And out in the middle of nowhere, I
mean, if you break a tooth, you're
you're pretty much screwed. I mean, it's
it's not easy to get to a dentist.

So,

that happened several times and I never
never really broke a tooth or or lost a
filling or anything. And then I happened
to be in Rangoon, like the by far the
largest city in in Burma.

Yangon, it's called now.

And I was going for alms round this in
this rich neighborhood and this servant
girl gave me some

bean curry that had a little brown rock

in it and I broke three teeth biting into this one rock. It just kind of got in the like in between the teeth, kind of you know, you know, there's like four teeth come together come together, broke three of them.

But as it turned out, that servant girl, who was right across the street from where I was staying, was a servant girl of the dean and rector of the Burmese Dental College. He was like the number one dentist in Burma and he was also the same dentist that the that the military dictator was using. So, he fixed my teeth for free just like the very next day and he became my dentist and

worked on my teeth for free for years
after that, so.

Um it turned out not to be entirely bad.

Or another example of

karma, like even if something bad

happens to you that some mitigating

circumstance makes it not so bad, is I

was hospitalized with malaria twice when

I was in Burma. Both times just out in

the middle of nowhere. It was like 2 and

1/2 hours by Jeep to get to this place.

And um

both times that I that I got malaria so

bad, it was the first two times

uh that I got malaria. Always the worst

kind, too.

Um somebody showed up in a Jeep that

same day that I decided, "Yeah, I need to see a doctor."

And they just drove me right back into town.

In fact, uh

the first time was uh I think it was Christmas Day. Somebody showed up in a Jeep and it's like, "Merry Christmas. I have malaria." And they just kind of loaded me into the Jeep and just took me right back into town.

So,

uh getting back to Alfred's question here, can you elaborate on your experience of comma in Burma? Um that would probably be my best, most obvious

example. I mean, comma is always happening. You know, everything that we're experiencing is conditioned by past comma and present comma and um trying to elaborate on that, trying to uh give

concrete examples of that when it's so subtle and it's just permeates everything is not easy. So, um that's about That's about the my best story about uh if you're if you're practicing Dhamma intense intensively, then Dhamma kind of protects you.

Like um

maybe another another example would be um when a monk goes for alms, he's just supposed to accept whatever people put

into his his food. And a lot of these people way out in the out in the hills, you know, these hillbilly types, um you know, they got no concept of hygiene, you know, or of microbial transfer or anything. I've I've seen this one little kid, he was offering food. He looked like the feral child in the old movie The Road Warrior, just this wild-looking little kid. And he's just coughing into the food. He had some kind of nasty cold. Just coughing directly into the food that he was going to put into my bowl. And and as a monk, I mean, you're just not allowed to even raise an eyebrow. You just, you know,

poke your face. You just
regardless of any kind of aversion of
what's going on, you just watch it go
into the bowl, maybe remember where it
is so you can eat from the other side or
something.

Um one time there was this this lady
in the village, I mean, she just blew
her nose with her hand, just kind of
flung the snot off of her hand, and then
just used the same hand to put my put
food into my bowl.

So,

um

you just have to accept it. I mean, you
really don't have any alternative. You
just

calmly accept it, and you just have faith that if I I'm taking care of Dhamma, then Dhamma will take care of me. And although I did catch colds a lot, I really was relatively fortunate with regard to

you know, not getting anything really gnarly other than the malaria, which wasn't caused by the the food. It was caused by mosquitoes.

So,

yeah, that would be about my best example. So, I'm just going to move on to the next question. And the next question is from Air Rain.

And Air Rain says, "Wondering for the

next Q&A, do Buddhist ethics

differentiate between lying to a human
versus a corporation, the state, a court
of law, etc.?

For example,

a person who declares sovereign
citizenship and lies about paying taxes,
or someone who lies under oath against a
court they view as unjust."

Well,

the main ethical aspect of lying is
you have to have the intent to deceive
somebody.

So, like maybe an extreme version of
this would be like you're going to
download it some sort of software onto
your computer, and of course, you get

the 17 pages of incomprehensible lawyer speak that you're supposed to read, and then at the bottom you say, "Yes, I have read and agree to this.

And it used to kind of bother me because I don't want to read the 17 pages of lawyer speak. I mean, it it it doesn't make much sense anyway. It's boring as hell.

But then I realized that uh in order to really be lying, you have to have the intention to deceive somebody and no human is ever going to read your your your thing that you clicked on saying I agree. It's just it's all computers. It's all AI or whatever.

So, something like that I would not consider to be necessarily a case of lying. But it depends on your intentions. The intention has to be to deceive somebody in order for you to be lying. So, if you lie if you just say something that is false accidentally, then that's not lying regardless of what propagandists will say.

Or, you know, you're you're just telling a joke. Somebody misinterprets what you're saying, something like that, then uh

yeah, you're you're really not lying.

But with regard to uh lying to a corporation or the state,

a court of law, etc., to the extent that you are attempting to deceive other people, it's it's just, you know, lying is lying.

So,

yeah, that wouldn't really matter.

And there may be cases in which lying is justified.

So, there is that.

Um

but still it's lying. I mean, you're going to take the hit for lying. There is a certain amount of akusala comma that's going to occur, but it may be that you get more positive in certain rare cases.

Like one of my best examples of that is there's a famous short story. I think it's like maybe even a Christmas story. Um The Other Wise Man. I can't remember who wrote wrote the story. I've got the book, but uh

I'm not going to get up and and look it up. But it's about um

a friend of the three wise men that go to offer gifts to to the Christ child, you know, in the manger. But he keeps he's supposed to meet up with him at this oasis, but he keeps meeting up with people needing his help and he's helping them, so he's lagging behind.

So, eventually he gets to Jerusalem.

I think no, Bethlehem. Bethlehem or

Jerusalem, I can't remember. And um

I mean, the wise men are you know, the other three wise men have already moved on. You know, maybe they've gone to Bethlehem, he's still in Jerusalem or something. And there's this decree um by King Herod that all baby boys are to be put to death. And so, this wise man, he's got these jewels that he's going to offer to the

to the Messiah when he gets there.

And um the soldiers are going from door to door pounding on the doors and they're going to you know, they're going to kill every baby boy. And this wise man stands in the doorway and he's got

this huge pearl.

And he just offers it to the the
centurion or whoever it was, you know,
the soldier and says, "There aren't any
babies here."

And then

the uh the soldier looks at this pearl
and just uh he decides to accept it and
you know, he just calls out to the other
ones, you know, "Let's move on, there's
no no babies here." And so, I mean,
technically the wise man did tell a lie,
but he told the lie in order to save the
life of a baby. And the mother, of
course, is just on her knees crying with
happiness and thanking him over and over
again.

So, I mean, there could be circumstances
in which

lying may have more good than bad
involved, but still it's lying.

And if you're not going to commit
yourself to

even conventional truth, then ultimate
truth is going to be more elusive and
harder to harder to realize.

So, I think that's enough for that
question.

And I'll move on to the next one, which
is from

Tyre or Tier. I really do not know how
to pronounce this name. It's just
spelled t y r.

And uh Tyre or Tier asks,

"Do you think it would be possible for you to describe what it was like living in the cave? How you spent your days, how long you were there, etc."

Um well, actually I lived in several caves.

Um and each one was different and the circumstances were different.

Um

Let's see. So, that's

Yeah, I mean I I just go through phases.

Like there was this one cave I lived in.

Um and it's uh at the northern edge of Alondra Catapa National Park.

And it was really just this huge overhanging rock ledge.

So, it was uh like the entrance of this cave. It was called Winch Otman, which means belly fall cavern, something like that. Uh it was like 100 ft across and it went in maybe 30 ft. So, I mean it wasn't really that much of a cave, you know, if it's, you know, the wider than it is deep.

But um I was doing really intensive practice there when the weather permitted, when it wasn't just so blazing hot that I just would just lie there

um fanning myself, wiping the sweat off the the arm that was holding the fan every now and then.

Um so, yeah, I was doing very intensive meditation there. Some of the most
Yeah, definitely the most intensive meditation of my life was in that cave.
But then other places I would live uh in different caves that uh
I wouldn't be pushing myself to the limit. It'd just be like everyday life there. Like the one place I've lived longer than any other place in my life, I'm pretty sure, is a cave that uh I named Tippo Guha in northwestern Burma.

Um and it was a deluxe cave. It was man-made. It was dug into the side of this hill.

And it had like four rooms and like a

50-ft long walkway where you could do walking meditation inside in the shade.

Had a screen door to keep out bats, rats,

uh rodents, let's see, snakes, and humans.

And uh

it's um

how I spent my days. When I was living there, um you'd get up at around dawn, a little before dawn, because I'd have to walk to the village to get my meal and be back again before the sun got very high because I just uh cannot take the blazing tropical heat of central Burma.

So, I'd go for alms round very early,

come back, eat.

Um

and most of the rest of the day it just be, I know, I'd read some, I'd meditate a lot, do a lot of walking meditation, just the standard stuff that you do, brush your teeth, take a bath, go to the bathroom, you know. It was just a very simplified, stripped-down lifestyle with uh more meditation than than most.

And uh probably more asceticism than most. Like, when I was living in that cave, I spent a lot of time just sleeping on a concrete floor with a piece of wood for a pillow, and it wasn't for the sake of the ascetic practice of it. It was that was

literally the most comfortable way of sleeping in that cave cuz it was so hot during the hot season that just being on a cool concrete floor was about the only way not to just just try to sleep in a puddle of your own sweat. And the wooden pillow, it was it wouldn't soak up sweat the way a cloth one would.

So,

yeah, it's I I have made videos, at least one, just talking about the various caves I lived in and the circumstances. So, um maybe it would be best if uh the person curious about my

cave-dwelling experience uh look that up.

Um otherwise, maybe I can just do a video talking about caves I have lived in.

So, let's see. I'll go over the question again, make sure that I've kind of answered it at least. Do you think it would be possible for you to describe what it was like living in the cave?

Yeah, yeah, it's and it was various caves. I lived in natural ones and and artificial ones and big ones and little ones and there was there was quite a few of them.

Um, I have calculated that probably 13, at least 13 years of my life were spent

living inside of caves.

And uh it was mainly just a matter of survival because central Burma really is it's just like furnace-like heat much of the time.

And um it was just a matter of surviving, becoming like a a desert rat where you'd be in the burrow during the daytime and come out at night kind of a thing.

Uh

Those were the days.

So, I think I'll just move on to the next question after taking a drink of water.

From the Christmasy mug.

Uh

Next question is from Yuichiro.

And Yuichiro says, "Many schools in the US are teaching secular mindfulness. Do you think this is a good thing?" I think it's probably better than nothing. Yeah, I would agree that it is better than nothing. Um

just

basic mindfulness where you're detaching from your own mental states, where you know fear arises and you just observe it as fear arising. You don't identify with it, you know, I'm I'm afraid, I'm scared. No, it's just fear is arising and just that is such a powerful mental technique to know,

you know, it's it's already separated
you from from the fear so that you are
not the fear anymore and then
eventually, if you get good enough at
it, you can just let it go.

So, I mean, just planting the seeds of
that sort of thing is good. And the more
you practice meditation, if you're
practicing it correctly, then you are
going to get benefits. You are going to
become a little wiser. And maybe when
you become a little wiser, you may
develop better reasons for meditating
and better goals and that sort of thing.

So,

yeah, I I think there's nothing

necessarily wrong with that.

Um

yeah, for I think it's definitely
more more good than bad.

So, next question, also from Yuichiro.

I'm really struggling with veganism
or veganism.

I know that it's cringe from my gut
feeling,

but if it is actually just

But if it is actually just wanting to
reduce suffering of living beings, isn't
that a good thing?

Well,

it depend it depends on your own mental
state. And that's that's the easy cop
out answer, I suppose. But um

you know, the Buddha wasn't wasn't even vegetarian.

Uh just going with the the ancient poly texts. And even the Mahayana Buddhists have these vestigial vestigial meat rules in the the rules of monastic discipline that they don't notice because they don't follow the rules of monastic discipline.

They made up different monastic codes that they follow instead.

Um

even like uh like Hindus Hindu yogis that are really into purity of food and you know, they they stress the importance of a sattvic diet, which is

conducive to you know, wisdom and serenity and so forth. I mean, even that is not vegan.

It's um

it's a sattvic diet is mostly like uh grains, fruits, nuts, and dairy products. So, they they includes dairy products.

And um it is possible to get your animal protein without necessarily uh being cruel to animals.

Like uh Mahatma Gandhi, he was insisting on being vegan, I think, because he he didn't want anyone to be cruel to uh dairy cattle or something in order for him to get some food. So, finally, because his health just really was

deteriorating at the time, um just
through just strenuous persuasion on the
part of everyone around him, they
finally talked him into just keeping a
goat

so that he could drink goat milk,
and which is animal protein, of course,
and then he could see for himself that
the goat wasn't being abused or
anything.

So, um

yeah, it's it

wanting to reduce suffering in living
beings is fine,

but um

I mean, you

there are limitations. I mean, even if you if you're eating vegan, a lot of those uh farmers who are farming the vegan

veggies are wearing leather shoes, and they've got like a leather belt, maybe a leather wallet, maybe they're using insecticides, which is killing little insects.

So, I mean, there's going to be suffering, and you're not really responsible for that. Buddhist ethics really are radically different from just the default ethics of the West. The default ethics of the West are it's like Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism or something like that, where it's uh

um

what just causing suffering is bad, and
and reducing suffering is good, but
that's really not what what Buddhism is
about. Buddhist ethics

um

because Buddhist ethics is based on your
own intentions.

And like I said, the Buddha himself ate
meat, although he wasn't in favor of
killing. It was just that Buddhist monks
were were beggars who just took their
bowls and and ate what whatever people
wanted to give them within reason.

So,

you know, it is against the rules for a

monk to eat meat that he he thinks has been killed for his sake. So, you're not supposed to be responsible directly for the killing. And then, of course, people in the West will say even just buying meat, you know, you that's casting a vote in favor of killing and so forth. But, it's it's really just a matter of of your own intentions. And if you think of it that way, it's like, "Well, if I buy this meat, then I'm voting in favor of killing." Then there you go. You've committed yourself to that that approach, but and if you're just buying meat and obviously the buying of the meat isn't isn't hurting anybody or anything, just

just that act of buying that meat and going home and cooking it and eating it, um you know, you're really you're really not hurting anything. And just from a biological point of view, um think, for example, what happened to the horse population after people invented cars and stopped riding horses and and buggies and that sort of thing. Um there was like a a population crash of horses. And if people stop eating beef and and chickens and so forth, I mean, the species is is going to crash. You know, it's not going to They're not going to go extinct, but still it's uh in in a from a biological point of view,

it's to their advantage to uh
be domesticated and and exploited by
humans. I think the one of the worst
things about meat
is it's it involves a kind of treachery
on the part of the farmer, where like in
Dante's Inferno, treachery is the worst
sin cuz that's that's what Judas He was
He was a traitor, you know, he's
pretending to be the friend of Jesus and
then stabs him in the back. And um it
does seem to me like um
some farmers do that. You know, they
they protect the animals and the animals
trust them and then one fine day they
just come out and and kill them instead.
Which uh

yeah, that's that's kind of
karmic complication there.

Um

as a as a layperson before I was a monk,
I was mostly vegetarian. Although I
would eat seafood sometimes because I
have a degree in biology and I know that
um shellfish, invertebrates like clams
and uh shrimp and crabs, they do not
have uh a nervous system like we do.
They do not apparently do not feel pain.
Like for example, I was working as a a
fisheries biologist
on Japanese longline vessels in the
Bering Sea long ago.

And any any crab that would come up, it

was my duty to to look at it and you know, write down what species and whether it was a boy crab or a girl crab and its viability. See if it was uh injured, you know, see if it was still healthy when it was returned to the sea cuz the Japanese sailors weren't allowed to keep high-value food like uh crabs and and halibut and salmon and that sort of thing. So, sometimes a crab would get uh hauled in and it would have most of its legs ripped off or crushed. And you'd put it into a uh holding tank with with seawater.

And if if the crab that just had most of

its legs ripped off sees a piece of squid bait there, it just goes over and starts eating it. It's like it doesn't care that it just got most of its legs ripped off. It doesn't seem to be bothered by that.

Whereas if you rip three legs off of a mouse and put a cracker in front of it, it would just go into convulsions and die.

So, the whole nervous system thing is different in invertebrates. Like for example, I don't think insects feel pain either. A mosquito might fly out of your way if you try to slap it, but it's sort of like the the automatic door at the

grocery store that opens automatically to get out of your way when you come towards it. It's just a built-in survival mechanism.

So,

yeah, I would never be vegan. I mean, anything that requires me to stop consuming dairy products, including like pizza and ice cream, is just a non-starter. I'm I'm not just not doing it.

Um

and like I said, the Buddha himself apparently ate meat. And you know, like Tibetan Buddhists who don't have much choice ate you know, they eat meat because not a lot of veggies grow well

in the Himalaya mountains.

So, it's just something that I mean, if you feel comfortable with it,

um

yeah, I mean, you have to live with yourself. So, I mean, if you're just absolutely determined that uh not being vegan is evil, then you better be vegan.

But uh otherwise, I just I just don't see it. Being vegetarian, you know, eating the sattvic diet that uh the yogis

uh recommend with with dairy products, you know, eating infertile free-range eggs, you know, that especially if you've got your own chickens or

something, you can see for yourself that chickens aren't being abused.

Um

yeah, I mean, it's it's not evil in my opinion.

But uh if you want to to reduce the suffering of living beings, yeah, that's fine. I mean, there's there's regardless of what you do or don't, there's going to be an infinite sea of of of misery in this universe. Infinite sea of dukkha.

But uh yeah, sure. I mean, if you want to alleviate it in your immediate proximity,

then uh yeah, that's fine.

It's it's good. I mean, you can get uh wholesome karma for that.

But uh making yourself anemic and sickly
because you're not eating a healthy diet
is uh

you know, it it's kind of counter it
counterproductive. You know, it's like
um monks have to do this chant or some
monks do where they're

before they eat, you know, they they do
this little chant, you know, I'm eating
this not for the sake of pleasure, not
for the sake of beautifying myself, but
only for the sake of keeping myself
healthy so that I can continue to
practice Dharma.

And um

yeah, you should eat you should eat a

diet that um is conducive to your health
in addition to uh
conducive to uh
your peace of mind with regard to being
mean to animals.

So, I think I'll just move on to the
next question here.

Let's see.

Okay, this one's from Yuichiro also.

What's the difference between Freud's
Nirvana principle or if you've seen
Evangelion,
returning to LCL?

Yeah, I don't I don't know what
returning to LCL means.

Uh or returning to the womb
and actual enlightenment.

I have a feeling one is cringe and the other is based, but I can't pinpoint exactly why a lot of people mistake enlightenment for returning to the womb. Okay.

So, with regard to Freud, I have no idea what his uh Nirvana principle was, but considering that he was uh like a an atheistic materialist, I doubt that there's much profundity to Freud's concept of Nirvana.

Like his concept of love was like overestimation of the sex object or something. I do not consider Sigmund Freud to have been a particularly wise person. So, um yeah, even though I don't

really know what Freud's Nirvana principle was, I doubt that it was anything particularly profound.

And see, with regard to Evangelion
Evangelion

returning to the womb. Yeah, it's not really

um

Maybe if you wanted to take returning to the womb in a metaphysical sense of returning to the ultimate source of all things, then maybe

that would be a a valid way of of considering it. But just returning to the womb, I mean, that's what you're trying to avoid with enlightenment. I mean, that's birth and death and

rebirth.

You know, you're trying to avoid
returning to a womb.

Um I've seen some theories. I think it
was Carl Sagan was talking about
near-death experiences when people
uh have largely uniform experiences with
near death where they they rise up and
they see their body down below and then
they start going towards through this
tunnel towards the bright light. And he
was saying that that's sort of like uh
uh reliving the birth experience, you
know, going through the the your mama's
birth canal or something.

But um

yeah, I think it's

Western intellectuals just trying to rationalize something that they don't understand and don't come anywhere close to getting.

And uh that would go double for Freud cuz really he was just a materialistic atheist as far as I can tell.

So, let's see. What's the difference between Freud's Nirvana principle, returning to the womb and actual enlightenment?

Yeah, well, actual enlightenment is uh it's off the scale. I mean, it's you have essentially merged with ultimate reality.

You know, you're you're not making karma

anymore.

You're not uh

you're not

attached to an an identity anymore.

Um going with uh St. John of the Cross,

who I think may have actually been an

arhat even though he was a Catholic,

he was uh

saying that

when you mortify your self-will,

you're no longer motivated by your own

preferences and so forth. You're

motivated by by will of God. You just

become like this empty vessel of God.

You become like God's puppet.

So, that could be a way of describing

it.

And uh yeah, I'm sure it's a far cry
from returning to your mama's uh nether
regions or uh
or anything Freud would ever come up
with.

So, I'll just move on to the next
question, which is from Numenius, a man
of many names.

And Numenius says,

"What are the karmic effects wrought by
people embracing either extreme of
sexual puritanism or libertine sexual
debauchery?"

Well,

I would say for starters, the the
standard

answer that the karmic effects will depend on the individual mental states of the person, because the outward mental states or the outward physical actions are largely irrelevant.

So, I mean,

you can say that a Buddhist monastic is really embracing this radical extreme of of celibacy.

Um it's not really prudery so much or I guess you could interpret it as prudery.

It's not like Victorian sexual puritanism,

but it's uh yeah, it's just like total abstinence. You're not even supposed to think about it.

So, I mean, that can
have a person It can help a person
become enlightened or it can just cause
them to become like a a chronically
horny basket case who are just lusting
for every female they see, maybe even
lusting for themselves when they're
taking a bath.

Um you know, it's like
uh some people like a starving man, a
man who's not eating, but and it
I mean, he might just sit around
fantasizing about food all the time. And
some people who are celibate for
spiritual reasons even,

um

yeah, they can just sit around

fantasizing about sex. I've got some personal experience with that one.

Um in the Bible

Jesus says there are three kinds of eunuchs, born eunuchs, and people who are made eunuchs, and people who are eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

And that third kind, the people who are eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, are people who are celibate for religious reasons. And then Jesus says right after that it's not for everybody.

So you have to look within yourself and see if uh

you can handle celibacy, or on the other

hand if you can if you can handle just
uh

like sexual debauchery. I mean, there
are some spiritual teachers, like
Paul Lowe, he's actually one of my
favorite spiritual teachers of of those
who are still alive today.

And uh yeah, he he he would do
he would conduct retreats sometimes
where it's like
you know, if you have any doubt as to
whether you should have sex with another
person in the retreat, just go for it.

Um

you know, you should only not do it if
uh you just are sure that you shouldn't
do it.

So, I mean,
it's possible that
you know, either extreme
um you know, under some
they're not necessarily bad. I mean,
obviously celibacy isn't bad. I mean, it
can be for some people, but uh
uh the Buddha definitely uh recommended
it, I'm pretty sure.

And the other extreme, I mean, it's it's
less likely to be uh
uh kusala, you know, it's less likely to
be conducive to enlightenment, but
apparently, you know, you got the
tantric people and and
maybe some of them are actually handling

it and not just getting sucked up in it or something.

Um

yeah, so so the extremes uh it depends on the individual. It really does.

And so I'll just move on to the next question. Well, I'll read this one more time. What are the karmic effects wrought by people embracing either extreme sexual puritanism?

Um yeah, before I move on to the next question, I would just say that, uh, even though the action or lack of action may seem extreme outwardly. I mean, if inwardly you're still centered and based, you know, if inwardly you're you're living in a state of equanimity,

you know, and your mind is not troubled,
so forth, then you're you're doing
pretty good, regardless of the outward
actions.

So, now I'll move on to the next
question, which is from Scout.

And Scout says, "Does your girlfriend
follow Dhamma?"

And I would say, my girlfriend follows
Dhamma not so different from I do,
although she's not really based in, uh,
Buddhism, but, uh, our behavior is
pretty similar. I mean, being a being a
girl, she's got the prerogative to
change her mind and and so forth, and,
uh,

is, uh,

maybe a little more security-oriented
than me.

But, um,

with regard to lifestyle and so forth,
we're pretty much sharing the same
lifestyle at present, so it's not so
different.

Oh, and, uh, doggies keep knocking
against the table and it's shaking the
camera.

So, let's see. Next question from the
Marquis de Sade.

Which is kind of an interesting name.

Is there a place for honor,

let's see, is there a place for honor,
valor, and glory as metaphysical

concepts in Theravada Buddhism?

Well, as metaphysical concepts, like going with, uh,

like Abhidhamma, which has says that there are 52 ultimately real mental states. Every mental state you have has to be at least one of these 52, I don't think honor, valor, and glory are any of those three.

And, um, so, I mean, from the point of view of orthodox Theravadan tradition, like Abhidhamma philosophy, then that the answer would be no.

Although, there definitely is a place for honor, valor, and glory as ethical concepts in Theravada Buddhism. Not

metaphysical, but ethical. And there are a lot of metaphors of like um the ascetic being like the the true hero, like more heroic than the soldier on the battlefield.

That sort of thing. So, there's a lot of glory, obviously, in being an enlightened being.

And uh the valor, well, that's that's essentially courage or or fearlessness.

So, yeah, there has to be that if you're going to become a an enlightened monk living in a forest, you know, you have to be fearless and all that.

And with regard to honor, that's that's kind of a trickier one. Um following a

code cuz out of a sense of duty, that could be honor. But to honor in the sense of like pride, I think that would not be much of a thing in uh in Buddhism.

So, I'll just move on to the Marquis's next question, which is what is your opinion on the Hindu concept of the Yuga cycles? Well, actually, it turns out that Buddhism also has a concept of Yuga cycles where

um you know, you got the universe is expanding and contracting and uh uh even the human race will go through cycles where

um

usually it it degenerates. I think we're in a a state of degeneration now, and eventually um it's going to get to the point of

people having a lifespan of only like what, 12 or 14 years, and they're cannibalizing each other, and there's absolutely no Dharma left in the world, and then things hit such rock bottom that it kind of inspires people to start looking for something better, and then and they start working their way back up again. And uh the cycles can last a zillion gazillion years.

Um it's it's just a common Indian concept that the Buddhists and the Hindus share. I don't think the

Buddhists have have it like nailed down
into uh

you know, exact you know, where exactly
at this age kind of a thing, but um, it
is a similar concept of uh, time going
in cycles instead of being linear like
which is more of a western approach.

So,

um, I think I haven't answered the
question yet because the question is
what is my opinion

on the Hindu concept of Yuga cycles.

Um, I'm pretty skeptical. I don't I'm
I'm I'd be surprised if there ever
really was a golden age. I think people
have pretty much always been kind of

messed up.

You know, there's always been cruelty and sickness and and violence and all this kind of stuff going on, so

um,

yeah, it could just be an artifact of an ancient Indian idea of time moving in cycles.

So, yeah, my opinion is I don't I don't take it extremely seriously. I mean, obviously to some extent time is cyclical like the the seasons and so forth, you know, the years.

That could be considered cycles, but um, like the longer Yuga cycles, uh, yeah, just the very idea that you're going to have on a

like,
you know, after this Earth is destroyed
by fire or water or something that
there's going to be another Earth arise
that's going to have, you know, Indians
speaking Sanskrit or Pali, you know,
following the same traditions and
everything. Yeah, I I don't think so.
And that kind of segues into
the next question.

I was also This is by the Marquis de
Sade also. I was also wondering what
your general estimation is of Nietzsche
as a philosopher.

And to tell you the truth, I've never
been much interested in Nietzsche. I

think

the only

entire book by Nietzsche that I ever

read was his critique of Christianity

which uh, now I I can't even remember

The Antichrist, I think it's called. And

even that, I liked uh

Mencken's introduction better than than

the book that he was introducing.

Uh I tried to read um Thus Spoke

Zarathustra,

and I got about as far as the the

tightrope walker falling off the

tightrope and

maiming himself, and uh

I was kind of in a transitional state.

Never I just kind of lost interest or or

just stopped reading for a while and just never really picked it back up again.

Um

Some people that I respect consider Nietzsche to be really profound, like Jordan Peterson, for example. He He thinks Nietzsche was really profound.

But um

uh For what little I know about Nietzsche, you know, the concept of the Superman and so forth, his concept of the Superman would be very different from a Buddhist Superman.

You know, it was trying to rise above good and evil, sort of like Raskolnikov

in Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment or Colonel Kurtz in the movie Apocalypse Now. You know, they tried to rise above um the the petty distinctions of good and evil, and they just wind up going insane.

Um

Nietzsche also went insane, although that might have been uh due to uh syphilis or something, I don't know.

Um Yeah, and and Nietzsche also believed in the the cyclic repeating history, which uh yeah, I just I just don't see it.

Um

So, yeah, I think Nietzsche was not a very happy person,

and that's really the best
judgment or the best indicator of
wisdom.

You know, wisdom and happiness go hand
to hand.

Um hand to hand, I just said. Hand in
hand.

So,

yeah, if you got a miserable person
trying to teach you how to live your
life, you're you're better off not
paying very much attention to them.

On the other hand, if you got a like a a
serene,

you know, blissful person, you know,
they've got a clear, shining face, then

even if they're not teaching you anything, you might do well to observe how they're living their life and try to take notes or something.

So,

yeah, my general estimation of Nietzsche as a philosopher is

he had some interesting ideas. He came up with some very influential ideas.

But, um

I really am not much interested in

Nietzsche and I

little I've read of him,

his style is just so bombastic and uh sort of

I don't I don't know how to say it. It's just so emotional that

uh yeah, it doesn't really appeal to me.

So,

uh let's see. I'll move on to the next question, which is from Chaplin.

Is there any Buddhist concept of winter holiday celebrations in the West or do most Buddhists completely ignore Christmas, etc.?

Um that's kind of a difficult question for me because I'm not sure what most Western Buddhists do.

Um I really haven't been much involved in Western Buddhism.

Um

I mean, obviously in Buddhist countries, Christianity is just another day. And

for most of my life,
more than half of it anyway, as a monk,
um yeah, Christmas is you know, you just
look at the calendar trying to figure
out what day it is and say, "Oh,
yesterday was Christmas. That's
interesting."

Nobody really celebrates it other than a
few converts to Christianity.

Um but in the West, yeah, I mean, it's
not really a religious

holiday anymore. I mean,

I mean, for for devout Christians, it
might be, but for non-Christians, they
celebrate it, too, and uh so I assume
lots of Western Buddhists have a
Christmas tree

in the in their house,
um exchange gifts and so forth, just
because it's a nice tradition
that uh
probably isn't really Jesus's birthday,
anyway.

So, let's see.

Yeah, I don't know if most Buddhists
completely ignore Christmas in the West.
And with regard to Buddhism, there's
really no big winter holidays.

Um the end of the rains retreat, um
which is like usually the full moon of
October, is maybe the closest you get to
a
a winter holiday.

And so, finally, last question from Chaplin, and also last question of the night or the day or whenever you happen to be seeing this video, "How are you enjoying your first Christmas back in America since disrobing?"

Well,

it's fine. It's nice. Um I really don't have much Christmas spirit. I think once, like around 1988, I was walking out of a department store after spending lots of money for Christmas gifts, and I had like this giddy, almost dizzy feeling. So, I think that was Christmas spirit, and I I've only experienced it that once. Except for maybe when I was a kid, of course, when you're a kid, you

just want to get up and open presents.

So, that's kind of nice for kids.

Um but for me, it's like every day is pretty much the same, you know, it's like there's there's no real quality in Christmas Day that makes it any different from, you know, 3 days later or 3 days earlier.

Um

yeah, it's not even really the the winter solstice.

So,

yeah, I mean, it's just a it's a nice holiday, you know, it's a nice tradition, and

I'm quite willing to exchange gifts with

people. In fact, this year I made a special point of sending out rubber chickens instead of Christmas cards, which I think is nice.

So, um yeah, it's it's fine. It's nice.

I'm enjoying lots of things, including this Christmas season. And I hope you enjoy your Christmas, too, and be happy.

And I think we're done.

hello and welcome to episode 21 of
question and answer and so we're already
up into
numbers so high that you cannot count
them on your fingers and toes
unless uh
you have um
more than the usual number of fingers
and toes
and i suppose i should start this
with an apology
because i was going to do this q a last
weekend and it was this week is has just
been kind of a weird one
um i'm going to be moving in with my
sweetheart within the next couple weeks

and already we're kind of or i'm

kind of

commuting back and forth so i spent the

weekend at her place

soon to be our place

kind of already our place i suppose and

i was going to do the q a there

and i could not find the adapter

because apple computers don't have usb

ports anymore so if you're going to plug

in like a camera or a microphone with

usb ports you got to have an adapter i

couldn't find it i assumed it was still

at the apartment

so

i was gonna do it on monday

then on monday

um

i went back in the afternoon after work

and i couldn't find it there

so then i'm thinking oh it's probably

just somewhere at the house also monday

morning i was biting into my breakfast

and the cap on my tooth came off

so i was just gonna just do it

snaggleteeth

and just call it the snaggleteeth

edition or something

um

so anyway um my sweetheart

brought she found the adapter

and gave it to me i was gonna do it the

next day which i think we're up to like

uh tuesday right gonna do it on tuesday
and then i realized that i didn't even
have the microphone in the camera here
it was at her house too

soon to be our house so then i had to
wait for another day and then the next
day after that i was just so exhausted
because i didn't get to sleep early
enough

that i just crashed on the couch with
all my clothes on

and uh woke up in a groggy state which
often happens after i take a nap and so
now we're already up to thursday

so it's just the show must go on

i spent uh more than two hours in a
dentist chair this morning getting

fake provisional teeth put up front

so i'm going to get new caps

in a couple weeks

so there's that look forward to

and

before i get started on answering

questions

i suppose i should do some basic stuff

like direct you to the to the url links

below

where you can find access to

all of my

existing

web websites and that sort of thing

and um also there are the links to my

books down there

and uh why should you buy

my books you ask

well

um it's kind of an interesting question

i'll just ask the first question myself

why should you be interested in books

that i've written

and

um

it's it's kind of i mean in kind of a

strange situation as a buddhist because

um

like

with regard to like orthodox terra vada

in in america i could be considered an

authority i know way more about tarabata

buddhism than

not only the average person and not only
the average theravada buddhist but even
the average teacher of theravada
buddhism in the west
a lot of them are really
surprisingly ignorant of orthodox
doctrine
like the average
teacher of theravada in the west knows
some elementary meditation techniques
and some of the jargon which is as often
as not mispronounced
and uh not a whole heck of a lot more
than that if they read books about
terrible buddhism they're more likely to
read books by jack cornfield

or somebody like that than to read
ancient texts for example

so

um from an american standard i could be
considered somewhat of an authority on
terra botta but if i went to burma
where you've got just phenomenal
scholars that are very dogmatic but they
just memorize the texts by heart they're
when i was in burma there were at least
six

buddhist monks who had memorized the
entire 40-volume

poly topitica it's 40 volumes in burmese
in the burmese edition the burmese six
council edition so i wouldn't be
considered much of an authority on

tarabata

like in in burma at all

especially because i'm not extremely

orthodox there are some things that i

just do not take at face value like like

abhidhamma for example the third pitica

of the topitica the three baskets of the

the uh the pali canon

i reject most of one of them and uh

considerable amounts of the other two

so there is that but with regard to what

buddhism was like

in very early times

i i would consider myself to be

pretty much of an authority because i've

studied it very intensively and very

devoutly you could say because i really
wanted to

follow what the buddha taught that was
my original intention as a monk i didn't
become a monk in order to follow along
with some modern tradition or some
medieval asian tradition i didn't become
a monk because i wanted to live like
burmese monks i wanted to live like the
monks in the buddhist time

and so you have to do detective work you
have to read the text very carefully

um

use dating methods similar to those used
by bible scholars

and like like bible scholars um a lot of
uh theology classes or or seminaries

will will tell you that uh you know a
large number of epistles that are
considered to be by paul really weren't
by paul and they use different
techniques like um
for example if somebody
just reliably says bucket instead of
pale when they are communicating
and then you've got this document that's
attributed to that person that just
consistently says pale
then that's a pretty good sign that
that's like not by the person that it's
attributed to just just little things
like that or
um

some scholars have used the damopada
to or they've like analyzed the
dhammapada and they'll say well these
verses here are in a verse form that did
not become popular until hundreds of
years after the time of the buddha this
this kind of thing or another kind of
cynical method is um
uh going with prophecies any any
uh pseudo or text
that has prophecies that are
uh 100 accurate
um
then you you would
like like a cynical and hard-headed type
of literary critic would say well the
the text was written you know after the

fact

and when it gets to the point where the
the the prophecies start becoming wildly
um

wildly what's the word inaccurate then
that's about when it was written this
kind of thing there's all kinds of
there's all kinds of methods all kinds
of techniques

and um

i have i've studied the the
polytechnics mainly with the intention
of finding out what texts are considered
to be the closest to the buddhist time
and closest to what the buddha actually
taught

so

there are probably people that know that
kind of stuff better than i do

but i do have the advantage of actually
living the life and walking the talk and
not simply being an academic sitting in
an ivory tower somewhere that just takes
a purely intellectual interest in the
tax that sort of thing without having
lived the life without having followed
the rules or have living without having
lived in a um

a culture similar to ancient india and
rural burma still is relatively similar
to ancient india

so

you just learn a few things just just

from living in that culture

but um

yeah i mean if

if you would like the point of view of
somebody who really has

um

studied buddhism intensively trying to
figure out you know what the buddha
originally taught

then

and just someone who's maybe kind of
strange and um relatively intelligent
then yeah it might be it might be for
you

also i've been asked to uh tell
everybody because

i am going to be moving soon that if you
have any

packages which does occasionally happen
somebody will try to send me something
um

probably best not to do it anytime real
soon because

i will be moving to a different address
and i don't want to be stating my
address on this video

just because

people who may not be friendly
may exploit that

so anyway i think i've gone over all the
basics and so

um

i didn't tell you my name maybe this

time but uh

you probably already know

so anyway i'll start answering questions

and the first question is from das boot

and dos boot says if we are engineered

by aliens and perhaps even manipulated

right now then what if any implications

would that have for buddhism the buddha

and buddhism as an accurate map of

reality

well i think the main

the main hit that buddhism would take if

if we are

controlled manipulated engineered by

aliens or if or where maybe we're just

living in a simulation or something you

know some

some nine-year-old alien child

developed like uh

a virtual reality of earth with us on it

as a science project for school or

something

the cosmology would really take the hit

i don't think that the ethical

philosophy would take much of a hit

because it has

been

pretty much proven

it has standard the test of time

and um even the aliens themselves would

be subject to dhamma

um you know the second noble truth

remains true

um

my friend brian rood talks about aliens
a lot he's pretty much

um

just shifted his attention primarily to
aliens now

and uh

one of the things that i that i was able
to get get across to him is that aliens
if they are superhuman with regard to
their intelligence and so forth their
their abilities like they supposedly are
telepathic and so forth

then they would be considered devas

by uh buddhist cosmo cosmological

terminology you know they'd be small g

gods because any being that is
significantly higher on the scale than
we are
would be
um a small g god
and uh
the gods the uh the devas
they they were they still respected the
buddha and uh
supposedly um when he was in deep
meditative state they even the
telepathic ones could not tell
upon what his consciousness was resting
they
he became like invisible to telepaths
but um
again we if we assume that it's all just

uh

um

like a virtual reality or something
or maybe the aliens just programmed us
to believe this or something but
yeah i think

um

the only real hit
that

buddhism would take would be the ancient
indian cosmology that modern westerners
most of us don't believe anyway
but um the second noble truth stays true
dependent core rising or dependent
origination

yeah i'm pretty sure it stays true and

that the aliens that are manipulating us
would be just as subject to uh

universal law as we are

so i'll just move on to the next

question which is from

duo

d-w-o-h

i don't know what that is

but duo

asks

what is your best guess to buddha's

ethnicity

some say he was exiled by darius and was

a scythian iranian sage and shakyamuni

was a perversion of sakyamuni

some claim shakya clan was just

scythians

yeah

i know a person who interviewed

some scholar who

is really putting forth this theory in a

very strong way

that the buddha was

iranian like a scythian who was

his family was exiled to india

by darius the great

and

just with regard to the whole darius

thing

and how buddhism has very strong themes

of

anti-zoroastrianism and so forth

i haven't read the book that this

scholar has written and i haven't even
seen the podcast that my friend made
with this scholar because i'm pretty
sure he hasn't finished editing it yet
but he says that this man has very
strong evidence

but still with regard to that part with
regard to the scythians being newly
planted in india by darius the great
um i'm very skeptical mainly because
there is zero support for it that i am
aware of in the polytechs themselves
that the buddha was supposedly
born and raised

um to the to the shakya clan or or in
polits

in what is now nepal like southern nepal

and there's no word whatsoever about
darius or i don't even remember i mean
it might be in there but i don't even
remember any mention of persia in in the
pali texts

uh there is mention of greeks in the
polytechs but um

no

no mention that i can think of persia or
especially of darius the great or darius
or however it is pronounced

um

so with regard to that i'm still
skeptical i'll have to see the evidence
but really it's just crickets if you
read the polytechs with regard to any

kind of support for this other than
maybe

you know maybe he can see that you know
when the buddha teaches this it's sort
of like a you know a

like a roundabout jab zoroastrianism or
something but it's really not

um

otherwise i'm pretty sure people would
have noticed it by now it wouldn't take
a person in the 21st century to finally
notice that

but um

with regard to his ethnicity which is
the main

the main part of the question here um

it could be and i've considered that the

buddha may have been originally of uh
scythian ancestry that there could have
been

like a wave of scythian immigrants
coming in even before the the
indo-aryans because the scythians were
more closely related to the iranians so
they would be

like uh they would be aryan but they
would be like iranian aryan and the word
iran is just a corruption of the word
aryan there was a

like a
province in in persia that was called
arya also

um

so he may have been scythian of scythian
ancestry and he was living on like the
northwestern no northeastern
frontier of vedic culture so he was kind
of an outsider which is one reason why
he wasn't simply uh
um you know a vedic
brominist
you know a proto-hindu
that could be one reason he was just
born and raised on like the the frontier
of of vedic brahmanism
um he could have been
um he could have been [__] and i mean
just because he was cynthia and doesn't
i mean if he was cynthia doesn't mean
that you know it had anything to do with

uh darius or darius the great um

there was uh

the the greeks invaded and conquered

northwestern india

um

maybe around the first century uh before

the common era and the next wave of

barbarians who invaded northwestern

india were called the sakas who were

scythian

and so they were called what the

indocythians or something like that

but that was after the buddhist time but

it does indicate that uh that scythians

who were living sort of to the northwest

of india

could occasionally

uh make inroads into india um and it

could have occurred over centuries you

know every once in a while

you would have i think the kambojas who

are mentioned in the polytechs along

with the yonas who were considered to be

violent barbarians that would invade

occasionally the yonas were greeks

that's yonah or yonaka

is uh the pali

rendering of like ionian

of the ionian greeks who were the ones

that were mostly settled

um

in

near and in

uh india

but the the kambojas or the cambodias

were uh supposedly like uh

an iranian tribe that may have been

scythian

and um

so yeah i mean it is possible but

regardless of whether he was

um of sakian

or uh scythian ancestry or indo-aryan

ancestry i mean he was aryan apparently

um there are some scholars who say that

uh

he may have just been like some

indigenous barbarian tribe that uh was

um

adopted or allowed to uh enter vedic
culture and so they were given sort of
honorary aryan status but um
i i think it's
probable

that the buddha had aryan ancestor he
may not have been pure blooded because
whenever you have an invasion
into a new territory
then inevitably some of the men there's
going to be more men than women at first
in the first wave of invasion and some
of the men are just going to settle down
with

the prettiest and most desirable
indigenous females which
to some degree is a good idea because

then the children will have resistance
to the local diseases and so forth
but

i think in all probability he was
in all probability he was like high cl
high caste you know he was the kshatriya
of the the noble warrior cast

um

according to the legend he was a prince
you know the son of the king

um

so he probably was relatively

um

relatively pure-blooded either
indo-aryan or some sort of aryan uh
possibly scythian but i don't think

there's any way to really know for sure
unless

um i mean there there are certain ways
you can you can test it now

i mean the the saka

the saka tribe the shakia tribe was
wiped out just just a few decades after
the time of the buddha

by king ajata satu i think

so

you couldn't really test the shakyas now
because apparently they're extinct

but um i mean you could do

like dna testing

in you know in and around like where
kapila watu used to be in nepal and see
if there is any significant scythian

element in the

in the genome

but uh ultimately i don't think it

really matters all that much

what really matters

is what the man had to say

so it is sort of similar with

christianity man whether his mother was

a virgin or not and i rather doubt it

but

um you know even if his mother was a

virgin i mean

it doesn't really matter if it's amongst

i mean what matters is what the man had

to say

so

let's see i think i answered that
question which is kind of a long
roundabout

um

semi-educated i don't know

but um he was uh

indo-aryan

or or persian orient one or the other

mostly i would guess

so let's just move on to the next

question by dwoh

duo

another question is do you think you

will

research nirvana in this lifetime oh

he's i think that means reach you think

you will reach nirvana in this lifetime

or is that more or less impossible where
you are

i'm kind of a novice so i get this
might seem silly since i think nirvana
is seen as a big deal in buddhism and
very few reach it

i've kind of answered this question
before

um

if if like regard to the question of do
i think i will attain

enlightenment in this life i don't want
to just say no and close the door in my
own face

because anything is possible but to say
yes is uh

kind of arrogant um

yeah i mean i was pretty arrogant when i

first became a monk i was i had these

ideas oh i'll master jhana within six

months this kind of stuff

red bull because uh i've had a long day

and uh things just don't turn out the

way

they are planned

but um

yeah you shouldn't

i mean it's best not to even think about

it you just do what you do as well as

you can

and

yeah if it happens it happens

there's no way to really force it to

happen anyway

like krishnamurti used to say you can
open the window but you can't cause the
breeze to blow in

so who knows maybe i'll i'll become
enlightened at the moment of death or
something rama maharshi said that that
happens a lot i guess um

eckhart tolle says that too

and uh he's a lay person

so

uh sorry to disappoint and do well with

uh two i don't know

but um

gotta be honest here you know i don't

wanna just to start making grandiose

claims or

alternately slam the freaking door in my

own face

but uh

duo is correct that it

it's the nirvana is seen as a big deal

in buddhism and very few reach it um

especially especially lately there was a

very sarcastic

author who claimed to be fully

enlightened

uh what was his name jed mckenna

or that's that's supposedly his name

there's there's people have tried to

locate this jed mckenna and he's he's

nowhere there's no pictures of him

anywhere on the internet or any such

thing

but um he was saying that

um

spirituality is just uh i mean it's just

one of the the greatest fiascos of of

human creation because so few people

succeed in becoming enlightened you

dedicate your life to following you know

buddhism or hinduism or yoga or some

esoteric

some kind of esoteric christianity or

whatever it is sufism

and um

i mean the percentage of people that

actually succeed in becoming enlightened

even to those who are really trying

diligently to become enlightened is just
a tiny fraction of one percent in all
likelihood

um

but most people just aren't right for it
and

most people even those who are dedicated
and really trying deep down

they just

aren't ready they're they're kind of
afraid of it or something i used to

think when i was a monk in burma that if
somebody somehow

invented an enlightenment pill where you
just take this pill and swallow and you

become fully enlightened you would
attain nirvana that most monks even

would run away from that as though it
were some kind of demon-possessed rabbit
snake

because most people are just afraid of
enlightenment because in a sense it is
it's like death

you know who you think you are
kind of dissolves

or at least you you completely detach or
um

yeah it's it's it's it's sort of like
death

so

yeah

let's just move on i mean you're best
not even really thinking about that sort

of thing because any kind of idea you
have about nirvana is going to be
invalid

nirvana cannot be understood
intellectually it's just trying to
understand the absolute

you know it's like trying to figure out
god trying to draw a picture of god
almighty

it just doesn't work

so i'll just move on to the next
question which is from anonymous
and anonymous says

i would humbly ask ponyo basa to do an
article or video regarding what are the
states of the afterlife how best to
prepare or what is expected to happen

thereafter i understand there are
philosophical epistemological and
semantic terminology outside of my scope
here

this will have to be explained simply
not just for myself or that thing
identify with known as me or self
it doesn't exist but is conditioned by
karmic states

so what happens after you die is
essentially the question i'm pretty sure
um

i can tell you what orthodox
tradition teaches
and that is that um

at the moment of death whatever state

you are in

i mean that's including all of your

karma which is uh

it's um

the momentum of your mind it's like the

momentum of the the flow of

consciousness

um

that as at the moment of death that

disappears you know from your from your

body

and has to instantaneously the very next

moment

reappear

uh at the conception of a new being

and um the new being if it's uh like a

biological being like a human

um you know you have to go through the
gestation inside your mama's belly and
all that but um

hell realms and most heaven realms you
just spontaneously appear

um

that that would be the and it's like

um there has been a little bit of

controversy over the last the last

moment the last conscious moment how

according to abidama

um that imprints

um like

your last conscious moment is imprinted

throughout the rest of your life like if

you are like in a sound sleep your mind

just has this test pattern which is the
last image of your

conscious mind in the previous life

which i am very skeptical of that i

really like i said at the beginning i'm

skeptical of abhidharma i do not

consider it to be

the uh genuine reliable authentic

teachings of gautama buddha

so

um you know there isn't the same sort of

thing like

in

in the tibetan book of the dead or in

the tibetan book of the dead there's the

bardo realm where

it's like an intermediate state where

you go there

and

um you have to like review your life or

or

there's a number of things you know you

have to go and pass through the bright

light and then you're seeing all these

beings and in the the tibetan book of

the of the dead reminds you that you

need to remind yourself it's all just

like mental constructs it's all my

imagination they're not real beings even

if you see the buddha himself or

whatever

then there really isn't that sort of

thing in buddhism although

um

i do think that you could have like an
intermediate state that is just a short
it could just be like a short existence
in in some sort of relatively unstable
non-physical realm

and you know maybe it's your karma to be
reborn as a prince in your next life or
something and um you know it may not be
that there are any uh princes being
conceived at that exact moment

so

yeah

with regard to my own opinion

as to what happens after death um

yeah it's again it's it's like i'm

getting a lot of questions that i

honestly have to answer i don't know
because i do not remember
having died before and gone into any
you know

other other realm you know i haven't
i haven't i don't remember passing
through any afterlives
and so

i think there's a good chance that
um you know there really is rebirth or a
reincarnation which for some reason
buddhists don't like the word
reincarnation they prefer rebirth
although essentially it means the same
thing
um

but i think

it's

it's largely a matter of similarity if

your mind is very similar to somebody

else's mind there's like an overlap

and um

it could be that

your existence just uh is

i'm just getting lost here i really am

it's been a long day i need more red

bull

let's just back up a little and say

technically

the only thing that passes from one life

to the next is karma

which is like the momentum of your mind

and um

i've compared that in the past to like
pushing down a lump in a carpet if the
carpet's got this lump it's an imperfect
imperfectly fitted carpet you try to
push it down in one place it'll just
immediately push up somewhere else
and we are imperfectly fitted in this
universe because we're continually
struggling against it and wanting things
to be different and so forth
and so when we get pushed down at death
it just pushes up somewhere else because
there's this disequilibrium that hasn't
worked itself out yet
and exactly how that works
i cannot say although

i kind of doubt that it's exactly the
way the books say especially the abidama
books

so

uh sorry to be so unhelpful

i can just tell you what the books say
and you can take it or leave that and i
don't fully believe what the books say
or you can just uh

have some meandering

theorization

on my part

but as i say i don't remember having
died before so

but then again in buddhism you die every
moment it's like everything is flashing
in and out of existence a trillion times

a second or mental states are flashing
in and out like 17 trillion times per
second

so

hmm i'll just i'll just go on anonymous
continues here

our karmic state at that point of death
formed through our experiences

is thus continued in a renewed

manifestation based on that state when

either gets closer to what is considered

as enlightened ultimate reality or

further away would this be a correct

interpretation please explain

and then he's got

el i5 in parentheses which i don't

understand

so

let's see

he says our karmic state at that point
of death formed through our experiences
is thus continued in a renewed
manifestation based on that state
one either gets closer to what is
considered as enlightened ultimate
reality or further away

um

i think it would be kind of a simplistic
interpretation

um

i mean the state

the state you're in at the moment of
death it's not just referring to the

conscious mental state because there's
all the latent karma that's there too
it's just below the surface
so all of that would have to be taken
into consideration
and when either gets closer to what's
considered as enlightened ultimate
reality or further away

um

if you are destined to become
enlightened then it seems like whether
you're going to heaven or hell you're
still getting closer to enlightenment at
least

um on the timeline

so that's kind of a

gratuitous little monkey wrench to throw
into this theory

um

this

yeah

our karmic state at that point of death
formed through our experiences is thus
continued in a renewed manifestation
based on that state

um yeah if you take into consideration
the whole stream including the
like the

the currents below the surface
then that would be fairly accurate

i hope these questions get easier
these are some difficult questions it's
like i don't know i don't know

but i have to be honest i mean i'm not
just going to sit here and
decree exactly what happens to you after
death when i myself
really have no
direct experience of what happens after
death at least not at the conscious
level

so next question is from matthew
and matthew asks a very straightforward
question which is appreciated how does
buddhism approach marriage and divorce
i recognize that terebot is essentially
a religion for renunciants but what
kinds of norms have developed in burma
sri lanka thailand that could be said to

derive from buddhism as a layperson how
might buddhism guide when marriage
should occur

sex children love

and when divorce is acceptable adultery
not getting along growing apart
okay

i will point out that there are a few
sutras in which the buddha gives advice
on how to be a good husband how to be a
good wife

um

and

i never had much interested in that i
wasn't much interested in that as a monk
because of course i was i was a monk and
wasn't planning on getting married at

the time um

so i mean the buddha does kind of toss a
bone to lay people and give them
instructions or advice on how to be a
good husband how to be a good wife how
to be a good master of your servants and
slaves

that sort of thing

and

how to be a good slave or servant even
he gives advice to to those people also
but

he doesn't really go into a lot of
details because it was just like a side
issue

um

in fact

in in a country like burma you know

which is

possibly the most devoutly buddhist

country on earth at the

at the time at present moment um

marriage is just uh

it's a purely secular affair it's not

really a buddhist marriage because

there's a song these are rules the

second most

um

serious level of offense for a monk

is to commit sangha di cesa

so he's not excommunicated but he's got

to take penance for six days and six

nights

and go through this elaborate ceremony
with at least 20 monks there other than
him to put him back into good standing
after the after the penance is finished
and it's really a pain in the neck i've
done it before not because i was
involved in anyone getting married but
for other reasons
and

to participate in a marriage is is a
sanggari cesar offense it's a very
serious offense

so

monks do not participate in marriages
the monks are not allowed to encourage
people to get married if they're not

allowed to

um

if a man and a woman get divorced

they're they're not allowed to encourage

them to get remarried although if

they're just fighting they can be

peacemakers with regard to that

but um

yeah it's purely a secular affair

with the actual marriage itself in burma

the villagers will just go to the

village head man

and

sign some papers and that's it they're

married and then after that then they'll

have the big reception and invite monks

and feed monks in order to earn merit

and listen to a sermon in order to earn merit and the monks can bless the marriage after it's a done deal but before the marriage they're not they can't bless the marriage so it's uh

buddhism like tarabata buddhism originally was primarily intended for uh renouncians

you know it was just this radical radical method for renunciation and the lay people were you know they were sort of quasi buddhists they were supporting the the heavy hitters

but uh they were not considered to be likely to become enlightened and even if

they did become enlightened according to
the tradition they had to become
ordained immediately or they would die
so

yeah i mean people really don't
appreciate especially in the west i
guess people just do not appreciate how
like

monk centric

early buddhism was where really like in
the buddhist time it was the the
renunciants were the real buddhists and
the laypeople might support them
but

you know they were like fans supporting
their favorite team
and like nowadays you got someone who

might be really into some sports team
and they'll wear the shirt and they'll
you know they'll they'll pay for the
tickets which supports the
athletes

and um

you know they'll even play ball you know
in their backyard or something throw the
ball around that kind of thing

so there there's they're kind of
you know

doing the sport

but uh not the same level as the
professionals and uh westerners are
often insulted by that especially
americans i think because americans want

the best of everything
if they can get it
and so they kind of i mean
american buddhists can feel insulted
if uh just by the very idea of monks
some western buddhists who consider
themselves to be practicing buddhists
are just
resentful of of monastics because
it's sort of like a suicide people
resent some people resent others who
commit suicide you know it's like
they're it's the coward's way out you
know they're they're throwing away this
divine gift or whatever and um
when a monk is ordained it's it's kind
of similar to to suicide you know

they're they're throwing away what most
people value the most

and uh also it's just kind of a slur on
on western buddhist you know it somehow
suggests that mediocrity isn't good
enough

so

but i've kind of strayed away
straight away from the question here
and i'm occasionally getting twinges of
self-consciousness about the uh

the uh the missing tooth but it's not
missing because i got like a temporary
one put in

this morning

um let's see

yeah i guess

how does buddhism approach marriage in

divorce it just kind of

um

doesn't exactly ignore it i mean i i'm

not even sure if i can't remember

divorce even being mentioned like it was

ancient indian culture and a woman was

just pretty much owned by her husband

so

i mean women were allowed to leave their

husbands i mean nuns

there's a

a rule of monastic discipline that none

is not allowed to

leave her husband and become

a nun until unless she has been

married for

x number of years i can't i think it was
what seven or nine or 12 or something 12
maybe

and uh you know she's got to do her duty
and maybe give give her

[__] of a husband

you know some children before she uh
renounces the world or some such
but um

it really is kind of an afterthought
marriage and divorce because you know it
was the renunciants that were
most of the texts are geared towards the
renunciants and uh
of course they didn't they weren't even

allowed to touch a woman much less marry
one

i assume

men just be encouraged to

leave their wives and be ordained

so yeah it's not really a good model for
uh

basing any kind of

buddhist

family ethic or or

um

i mean monks just are forbidden to even
participate in a wedding so you're not
gonna have buddhist weddings except for
by by the lay person you know you got
this guy named ralph who
um got ordained somehow

uh maybe a zen monk or something and he
just wears lay clothing and uh
you know he can do marriages you know
you're barefoot in the park or something
but uh

like the earliest schools of buddhism
like

theravada and pre tarawada it was just a
complete no-no it was just

um you know if you're if you're a
husband try to be as good of a husband
as you can if your wife try to be as
good of a wife as you can you know be
moral keep eight precepts and so forth
but um

it's about as far as it goes

so i'll just move on to matthew's next
question

and he says

topic

buddhist monks and nationalism the
burmese but especially the sinhalese
monks have in recent years shown a
willingness to engage as defenders of
their cultures if only they had done
that in gandara many moons ago perhaps
afghanistan would be a shining light
instead of satan's armpit

with that said i have never read a
single line of text in the tapitica they
would even be twisted or contorted to
justify support for violence
defensive or otherwise how do we protect

buddhism was buddhism meant to survive
on its own does buddhism require a
non-buddhist kshatriya warrior class
surrounding and defending it
is buddhism and dhamma as we know it one
muhammad part two away from disappearing
as a buddhist should i even care
and then he's got detachment in
parentheses
so that's that's a good question
and uh it is true that in burma
sometimes the monks will do
protests
and uh my experience is that the monks
that are marching in the streets tend to
be the sloppiest most lacks monks who

are getting into politics instead of
minding their own business and just
practicing dhamma

as a general rule i mean it's not like
i'm just

making this opinion

um just pulling it out of an orifice i
mean i lived in burma for many years and
it's it's true that most of the monks
that are political activists are just
really lack sloppy monks

i had a guy just almost hit me once
where he was

um he introduced himself to he was an
american guy he introduced himself to me
as one of the world's leading
authorities on on burma

despite the fact that

he didn't speak burmese

and you know he's an adviser to uh the
us government or had been at some point
in the past

and uh he'd been to burma 20-something
times and he was married to a burmese
lady but i think they got divorced after
i met him

but he was talking about these exemplary
monks

and that he had met when he was in burma
and he's talking about you know
political protests against the the
military dictatorship or there's a monk
who's running an orphanage or there's a

monk who's running a school
or there's a monk who's
fundraising for disaster relief and so
forth and he didn't mention anything at
all about actual buddhist practice like
meditation or following the rules or
anything and i'm just telling them yeah
they might be really good people
you know they might be really nice
people but they're not very good monks
because i mean they're just
going against what they're supposed to
be doing if you're a monk you're
supposed to be striving
single-mindedly for enlightenment
preferably
um in solitude out in a forest somewhere

and just not having anything to do with
politics

it's like um the forbidden animal talk
there's a long list of topics that monks
aren't supposed to talk about and one of
the very first ones is kings or
ministers it's like any kind of politics
is

i mean it's poison for monks supposedly
um let's see

let's see so i'll just have to read the
question again because i've

been rambling here see the burmese but
especially the sinhalese monks haven't
recently yeah sinhalese monks are pretty
pretty lacks too

on average have in recent years shown a willingness to engage as defenders of their cultures if only they had done that in gandara many moons ago perhaps afghanistan would be a shining light set of satan's armpit yeah well in a way they're kind of renouncing the culture if they're

serious monks

with that said i have never read a single line of text in debitica that would even be twisted or contorted to justify support for violence defensive otherwise well that's not exactly true i mean a monk even an ordained monk a serious one is allowed to strike out in self-defense

not with the intention of killing but i
mean if you're just
fighting desperately to save your life
and you accidentally kill the other
person then

yeah you haven't even committed an
offense really

so

it's the intention to kill that's the
i mean if you do that then you're
excommunicated for life if you
deliberately kill somebody regardless of
the reason i mean it might be a
justified reason maybe you're
killing a terrorist who's about ready to
blow up a school bus full of children

and uh by killing the the terrorists you
save the lives of everybody else but um
still um

it is it is forbidden to kill another
human being deliberately

maybe you just jump on him and keep him
from pushing the button or something

so how do we protect buddhism

the standard buddhist answer to that
would be um

have good karma

you know you do good and do right and uh

you're more likely to have good things

happen to you i mean buddhism has been

um

radically pacifist from the beginning

for the most part and um

it still exists after 2 500 years i mean
the numbers have gone down especially uh
you know when uh
islam invaded india
and also central asia which was
predominantly buddhist and then he had
chinese communism
uh pretty much wipe out buddhism in
china but
yeah like the fourth century of the
common era i have read that most human
beings on the planet
were
buddhists at least nominally at least
they were members of a buddhist culture
because

india china and pretty much

all of asia in between was

mostly buddhist at the time

so

yeah how do we protect buddhism um

well you would have to do it through

good instead of bad

so that can be done let's see was

buddhism meant to survive on its own

um buddhism couldn't possibly survive on

its own

um

partly because

um like everybody couldn't just become a

monk you know monks aren't allowed to

even feed themselves they have to be fed

by people who aren't following the rules

as strictly as them

and so there's always going to be

violent people who just aren't going to

be saints or saintly and uh

ideally those violent people will be

patriotic and defend their culture

there are violent people who are

patriotic

i mean that used to be the hero like the

ancient greeks that was like the main

culture heroes were uh fighters

patriotic fighters

see how do we protect buddhism you know

see was buddhism meant to survive on its

own does buddhism require a non-buddhist

kshatriya warrior class surrounding and

defending it well it would be it could
be like semi buddhists where
um you know
like the burmese
military government technically they're
buddhists you know they're they're
soldiers
generals
yeah but uh it's sort of like the mafia
where the mafia are catholic
supposedly you know they might uh
refrain from offending nuns but um
still they're they're relatively bad
guys and uh history has shown that
really devout
followers of a religion can be
just ruthless

violent people

so

i think genghis khan was considering

becoming a buddhist wasn't he

kublai khan certainly did

and uh he was still uh in in massive

conquest mode

so

let's see

is buddhism and dhamma as we know it one

muhammad part two away from disappearing

well that depends on the karma of the

buddhists i suppose

and i think

the sloppy monks that are doing the

protest marches aren't really helping

um and if they want to pick up a gun and
start fighting the enemies of buddhism
they should drop out of the monkhood and
if they succeeded in killing somebody
they would

be

instantaneously expelled from the
monkhood whether anybody found out about
it or not

so as a buddhist should you even care i
would suggest just have faith in your
karma

and do your best you know mind your own
garden

and uh the big picture will take care of
itself

but if it's your karma to be uh

to to enjoy the uh the benefits of
dhamma then it'll happen

okay

so i think i answered that question from
matthew and i'll just move on to

matthew's next question

which is

given that i possess mankind's greatest
pornography library in my pocket i got

one right here pornography library

supposedly

um see where was i

oh how might a modern lay person think
about practicing right action in this

specific context well

i think the answer to that would be

pretty obvious i mean if you're if
you're trying to practice
right action as a devout buddhist and
trying to be as saintly as possible then
you use the phone for making phone calls
and you don't look up porn on it where
if you do somebody some wise guy sends
you some porn

then uh you you see it mindfully and
observe what comes up in your mind and
then you

hit the little delete button

but um

i don't know i think

just going sometimes pornography could
be the lesser of two evils i mean

i've i've considered writing a blog post

about this i used to think about it a
long time ago before i was even a monk
probably how you just
write an article
just pointing out that for some people
not certainly not everyone but for some
people just resorting to porn in your
own right hand might actually be
preferable to
um settling down with a member of the
opposite gender
because i mean
for some people i mean you just
you want to
you want to be on your own you want to
be detached

and um

you could probably do that better

just

wanking to some porn every now and then

then just marrying someone that

deep down maybe you don't feel right

about or something

i mean maybe you just don't feel right

about marrying anybody

so

yeah it could be the lesser of two evils

if if you're just too horny

too lustful

to just go without any kind of sexuality

then um

yeah maybe

but um

if you really want to be a saintly
devout correctly practicing buddhist or
maybe not even saintly but just
following the five precepts and
everything um

yeah well now i just kind of
led myself to looking at porn really
doesn't violate any of the five precepts
that i can think of
even even wanking doesn't for a monk
it's strictly prohibited but um
yeah

spanking the puppy is out
but for a lay person uh you know it's
it's way more liberal if you'll forgive
the word

um

just five precepts is pretty

straightforward

so let's see

yeah so if you're a modern lay person

and you want to practice right action in

this specific context then the obvious

answer is you just don't

don't look at porn

maybe don't even play with your own pp i

don't know

but

as i say most people are

relatively lustful it's a fascinating

subject sexuality

and um

yeah it wasn't easy for me

and i'm very happy that i have a mate

now i have to admit

uh

maybe

it's a string dangerously close to tmi

range

let's see here

what is your person

oh okay i think i already skipped that

one

all right next question

what is your personal opinion regarding

the frequency and ease at which

individuals are described as having

achieved enlightenment during the

buddha's lifetime do you think this is

an example of taking liberties by later
authors to demonstrate the buddha's
excellence as an instructor or do you
take at face value more or less
this is a naughty question
it's something i've considered many
times
i don't think i have it here i'll look
around
yeah i don't think i have it here i've
got a notebook
where i recorded some really outrageous
stuff that i've come across as a monk
and one was um
stories of some buddha of past ages
who delivers the sermon to like
literally like trillions of people and

all of them become enlightened you know
all

10 trillion of them supposedly and uh
yeah i don't think so i don't think the
people in bat could probably even hear
him very well

um

yeah so

um

if you read the text you'll read that
there are lots and lots of enlightened
followers of buddha and
i would guess that is at least somewhat
exaggerated considering the low rate of
enlightenment
subsequently

as we've already discussed a little bit

um

i mean it wouldn't surprise me that he

had a lot of enlightened

disciples

but even the buddha had some very

unenlightened ones like in the

the rules of monastic discipline there's

continual mention of the group of six

who were just really

crummy monks

they're always getting into trouble and

doing bad things and so forth then there

was david data who tried to kill the

buddha

um

so even the buddha didn't have a

a 1 000 batting average with regard to
enlightening his disciples although he
did way better than jesus of nazareth
did

apparently um

yeah so i do i think this is an example
of taking liberties by later authors to
demonstrate the buddha's excellence as
an instructor yeah i have to admit it i
wouldn't be surprised if you know he had
you know a reasonably large number of
enlightened disciples but um

yeah when you're getting up into
thousands and millions and billions and
so forth then

i start getting rather skeptical

and it's it's not just uh
not just enlightened beings i mean the
polytechs grotesquely exaggerate like
the number of people who become aryas
like i think it's in the commentarial
tradition the commentaries say that uh
the uh
the population of sabati
which uh was a major metropolis in the
buddhist time
um
it had millions and millions they had
like a large had like 70 million
populations supposedly and most of them
were buddhist saints
which
yeah i you couldn't even possibly have

um

a population of 70 million in in the
iron age i mean just the logistics of
getting all the food in and the sewage
out and so forth it just wouldn't work
so yeah i have to agree

there is quite a lot of exaggeration
and uh

a lot of it is just for the
glorification of the buddha i mean
there's

it happened in other religions too
obviously i mean most notably
christianity where they deified the
founder

made him the creator of the universe

um

buddhism you read the text and there's
an awful lot of bragging you know the
buddha is just boasting about how
wonderful he is and encouraging people
to worship him and so forth which i am
skeptical of that too
and uh yeah just the
entire multitudes of becoming
enlightened when they hear him speak

um

yeah

so i have to agree on that one although
i'm not just flat out calling it all
lies

um

some of the weird stuff in the text i

mean uh

it's i mean it could be that some
rascally monks were just deliberately
making [__] up although a lot of it it's
just sort of lore

that uh

it gets built up i mean when i was
living in burma as a monk there were
people who sincerely believed that i was
fully enlightened i was told that um
there was a picture passing around in
the city of monuma which was the largest
city uh to where i was staying
of me levitating over the city
and
people just really believed that

and i would tell them well i don't think
it was me i don't remember doing that
but um

yeah so it's like people just want to
believe this stuff

and it's not deliberately lying
you know it may be that uh just
gradually this weird legend maybe
somebody just told something as a
deliberately as like a parable or
something and people took it literally
or whatever

with regard to the buddha bragging i'm
sure the people that added that to the
texts sincerely you know they were just
pointing out that that's the way they
considered the buddha to be and they

just put it into his own mouth assuming
that he really would have said that kind
of stuff which i i seriously doubt
so

yeah so

move on to the next and the next
question is from tear

i think i'm pronouncing that right tyr
which is some uh

germanic a germanic god i think it's uh
cognate with zeus and jupiter and
jealous petri

so he was kind of a for the germans he
was a war god but uh

for uh he started off as a sky god and
uh

a few cultures including greece and rome
turned him into the king of the gods

okay so anyway tears says all right i'm
not done reading your books which i
mentioned and are in

in the url links below

i'm not done reading your books but i
have a question

i recently asked ajan

punadamo in his live stream about
not-self

i wasn't certain what his answer meant

i asked another way but i don't know if
he saw the question the question is if
there is not self

then would you have some existence

i changed it to experience with not self

is there still some kind of experience
because not self doesn't sound fun at
all i know it's off the scale
but if there is no self then who are we
watching on your youtube channel
my apologies in advance if this sounds
disrespectful much respect
sadhu

um

my best explanation
is the parable of the block of marble
which
if you're familiar with what i say and
write you're probably familiar with that
it's like you take a block of stone a
block of marble it's of indeterminate

size

it's it's just out in this barren plane

there's nothing to compare it with so

you can't really say how big it is it's

just it's just this sizeless block of

stone

and contained inside that block of stone

literally is every possible statue

you know every single atom of every you

know this every molecule is already

there right in the right place all you

gotta do is remove the extra rock you

know michelangelo's david's in there all

the

the topless venuses

you know it's like everything even even

impossible statues are in there

so

um all it takes is just
imagination or perception
to see that statue in the rock you know
like a talented artist he'll he'll know
what he wants to make with that rock you
know he'll envision it he'll see the
statue in there and then he'll remove
the extraneous rock

so

i would say
that the absolute or what in
theistic systems are called capital g
god
uh that would be the block of stone and
in fact the dao de ching it was after i

came up with this idea i learned that in
a really literal translations of the dao
tai ching it refers to the dao as the
nameless uncarved block

so

all the statues are in there and some of
the statues are so complicated that they
become self-referential

and start perceiving themselves as

like discrete entities when really

it's just a kind of virtual existence

that they have

so that's one way of explaining it

another way which would be more orthodox

is that a being is like a flame where

the flame exists so long as the

conditions for that flame exist which

according to the boy scout manual is

you've got to have fuel

heat and oxygen

if those three are together in

sufficient quantities you're gonna have

flame

and so if you've got the conditions for

um a being

there then it's gonna be like a flame

and it's it's gonna be

in a constant state of flux

and it's not going to be exactly the

same from one moment to the next and you

just call it the same flame

in regards with regard to the flame

um even though it's completely different

from one moment to the next

but it's just a matter of convenience

just uh

just a handy label that you stick onto

this this continually changing thing

that is completely conditional it only

exists because of other things it

doesn't have an inherent self-existence

it exists only because of these other

conditions that cause it to exist and

even those other conditions going with

buddhist philosophy they're the same way

they've got they only exist

conditionally because of conditions

conditioning them and the whole thing

is just mutually conditioning

virtually existent stuff going on

and we are part of that

so

i don't know maybe i've just confused

you

maybe i'll just uh

if there is not self then would you have

some existence it would be virtual

conditional existence

or you could say that uh the statues

really do exist in that block of marble

you know like i say it's you know every

every molecule is already right there in

the exact place where it's supposed to

be

but

um for some reason

some some of the statues are so
complicated that they start thinking
that they are
self-existent
and uh
they
ignore all the extra rock around them
and don't consider themselves to just be
part of that
all right so
my apologies in advance if this sounds
disrespectful no not at all
it was a good question
and i hope i answered it i mean you got
two two answers one is the unorthodox
heretical answer of the block of stone
and the other is the more orthodox

answer of sort of using the flame as an
analogy where

you know it's constantly changing it's
not the same flame from one moment to
the next but

you just stick the label flame onto it
as just a label of convenience

and it's completely conditional
dependent on

other conditions to keep it in existence
and it doesn't have a self essence of
self existence

it just exists or seems to exist

because of these conditions and those
conditions are the same way they seem to
exist because of other conditions and

the whole thing is this vast cosmic
interlocking
system

and you have an infinite number of those
systems even because

there's just an infinite number of ways
you can have statues in that block of
marble getting back to the heretical
answer

so i'm just going to move on to the next
question

and that is from potila

and potila says

i am considering buying some land with a
space to build a cootie and a coty is
like a little meditation cabin or a hut
so i'll just start over i am considering

buying some land with the space to build
a cootie what do you think of having a
sort of decentralized community in which
one or two renunciants are supported by
a few families

say building a small cabin for them on
one person's land and others
contributing funds to their health food
and other minimal expenses

a family would need to feed them daily
but it would give a serious monastic or
layperson a chance to practice for a
while and the supporting family gets the
benefit of offering donna or generosity
charity and hearing dhamma instruction
many of the centers in the west depend

on large viharas and retreat centers and
think you need big facilities but
starting small might be better
quality over quantity really it is a
question about how to work outside the
mainstream buddhist structure of the
west typically asian communities or
leftist struggle sessions
so that's a good idea and i i agree with
this i mean i've thought of that a lot
where
probably the best way to have
monks
living in the west serious monks
is you just have
somebody that's got
like a big plot of land and they've got

like this little cabin out in their back
field or something maybe a trailer or
something

and they just invite a monk to come stay
there

but

you'd have to have a really serious monk
doing it

um like most asian monks wouldn't i mean
they'd hate it

i mean they like the ceremonies and the
you know the groups coming and listening
to the the discourses and stuff they're
really not so much into

um just

a single

you know like solitary

dharma practice

or if they are into solitary donald

practice they can just stay in asia

where it's much more supported than here

but i do think it's a good idea and

you'd have to

find the right monk i think

because even a serious monk i mean

i mean i don't want to bad mouth serious

monks but a lot of the serious monks i

have met

they're kind of borderline

hypochondriacs they just have a lot of

health issues which may be in part due

to just their

um

just self-repression you know their
their self-restraint
they're not following their natural
impulses which you know just going with
freud even though i mean i don't think
freud was entirely wrong but when you're
like stifling your natural urges they
don't just go away they they kind of
build up pressure until they start
percolating up to the surface from your
subconscious in the form of neurotic
symptoms and that can include
psychosomatic illnesses or even
um i mean genuine illnesses i mean it's
not just all in your imagination so a
lot of monks um

you know they might be very serious and
then you might invite them to stay
at your
you know in your cabin
or something and they're going to be
having stomach problems and they're
going to have to be seeing doctors and
so forth and it's not going to work very
well unless you got lots of money for
that sort of thing or
you you get them on an insurance plan or
something
and uh
yeah i mean you have to use some
discretion in finding the right monk
a lot of monks that are very solitary
and so forth they also may be very uh

frustrated

um

like

you know they're just

maybe better off just being in total

isolation somewhere

they can they can be very serious monks

because they don't have the

all the

the temptations surrounding them

that you find so easily in the west and

is even considered to be pretty much

necessary i mean even just to live in a

hut

is largely illegal in the west you know

you have to have the

this you have to have like the emergency
exit and uh you know electricity and you
got to have the the electrical sockets
you know every every x number of feet
and everything is

i tried this

uh in the west before as a monk and it
it didn't work out very well though it's
probably just that i had not good enough
comma for it to work out

by the time somebody was starting to

um

offer such things for me it was already
uh i'd already reached the point of no
return i'd already made up my mind that
uh being a monk wasn't working for me
very well

especially in the west

so

but yeah if you find the right monk

and uh he can be asian or western

and you just have a place for him to

stay

and um

yeah it has been done before

um yeah it could be a really good really

good a really good deal and then if he's

a really good

monk and a good teacher besides then

people might be very impressed by his

his demeanor and his skill at explaining

things

and uh you know it could uh build up

into something bigger

but i do think that is a good idea and i
i encourage potila to uh go ahead and do
it

so

i'll move on to poteel's next question

do you plan to do more readings of your
favorite texts yeah actually

um i do in fact maybe i should do uh one
of those after i finish this

yeah i've been the thing is

i have to work for a living now i'm not
a member of the leisure class anymore
and

you know i work five days a week and i
come home usually pretty tired and not
at my best

so even though i do i do have
maybe a couple hours of time in the
evenings

a lot of the time i'm tired and my
mind's a little bit foggy just from
you know having worked all day
and so

yeah my my output of this sort of thing
um

it has uh

not been optimal

but uh yeah i'm i've i've written enough
translations that i could read my own
translations

so there's that

and uh i do have some favorite pseudos

and uh

probably do some more mahayana stuff too

just because i there are some aspects of

mahayana philosophy that i have a lot of

respect for

i think nagarjuna rocks for example

so

do you plan to do more readings of your

favorite text yes the answer to that is

yes

just uh

be patient

and i am gradually

um

getting used to working for a living and

i don't come home nearly as exhausted as

i used to my first couple months i was

i was starting to think maybe i'm just going to be like this for the rest of my life just come home just exhausted but i'm getting used to it now i'm sort of building up resistance or something tolerance

okay anyway next question from potila in your readings how does the buddhist term dhamma differ from the vedic hindu dharma you stated that you think the only enlightened saints recently have come out of the hindu tradition what keeps you studying buddha watching or the words of the buddha instead of a hindu tradition that may inspire you well actually that's not entirely

correct

i haven't stated that i think the only enlightened saints recently have come out of the hindu tradition although i have stated

that

in the past hundred years

the two people that i would consider the most likely candidates for arahant or enlightened being status would be two hindus that would be neem karoli baba and ramana maharshi although

um yeah i'm not at all saying that uh that buddhists can't become enlightened anymore

yeah i don't think i'd ever say that i might be skeptical of how many become

enlightened but then i can be skeptical
of how many hindus become enlightened
too

so what keeps me studying buddha
vachanam instead of a hindu tradition
that may inspire you

um

the the hindu tradition is it's a little
garish and

you know too much emphasis on gods

whereas buddhism it's it's very

philosophical and like psychological

and it does mention small g gods but uh

they're they're not to be prayed to or

anything really maybe honored as

superior beings

um but um

let's see

so i mean i have i have said before that

if i weren't a buddhist i'd probably be

like a vedantist hindu

but um

yeah buddhism works for me it really

does it's just a philosophical

system that does not require a lot of

belief in a narrative that you can't

possibly prove

and that includes hinduism i mean all

the talk about the gods i mean you can

you can say well vishnu is a metaphor

but then again that you've already kind

of

undermined the whole

thing i mean you got to have faith in
such a system and i just don't have that
kind of faith

that's one reason why i'm not a
christian it's just you have to believe
that uh i mean even if you don't believe
in adam and eve the garden of eden you
know all the suffering in the world is
caused by a man made from soil and a
woman made from a bone being tricked by
a snake and eating a certain kind of
fruit

um still you have to believe that jesus
is the son of god
and that uh he died
as an atonement for original sin

and uh you gotta believe in him and uh
yeah i just cannot believe that uh
him like uh
a hebrew carpenter like a jewish
carpenter who turned miracle rabbi you
know obviously he was a spiritual person
went and was converted to
a more spiritual life by john the
baptist maybe
and maybe became leader of the group
after john the baptist was arrested
but i just can't believe that he was my
the savior of the world and the son of
god and the logos who created the cosmos
and all that
so it's kind of the same with hinduism
there's just too much of that kind of

faith orientation

unless maybe you get into something

really refined and ethereal like like

vedanta

but um

buddhism works for me so i mean if it

ain't broke don't fix it

so i guess that may be the answer to

that question so i'll move on to

potula's next question

and

the next question is

recently you've written much about

westerners who insist there is a soul

or self in buddhism why do you think

this is so persistent in some westerners

is it just profound attachment to
concepts from christian heritage or
something else did you run into this
position in asia

the more than 20 years that i lived in
asia i cannot recall

any

serious buddhist

claiming that there is a soul in

buddhism it's it strikes me as if not
entirely

a

western position than predominantly one

and and i should i should point out i

should clarify that a soul i'm talking

about like an individual personal soul

you know like in christianity each

person has their own soul i'm not

talking about

some interpretations of mahayana

buddhism where they're talking about the

dharmakaya or the tagata garbha or the

one mind you know the buddha nature or

something that is

it's like the underlying ultimate

reality that is the foundation of

everybody else it'd be like the

the block of stone in the metaphor

of the metaphor and the simile of the

block of stone

that could be the dharmakaya

to a mahayana buddhist

although

from my interpretation

um

you know it's the absolute cannot really

be said to exist or not exist you know

anything that is infinite and formless

it just kind of fades out into something

that is you can't really say is or isn't

so that's my approach i should have i

should have said that earlier on with

regard to the uh the marble

but uh

now i gotta get back here

to

this question

why do i think this is so persistent in

some westerners is it just profound

attachment to concepts from christian

heritage or something else

um i don't think it's necessarily

christian i think christians might

believe that in the west just because

there's already a propensity

to to believe in

like an intrinsically real individual

so that might be why the christian idea

of souls became so popular it wasn't

that uh we believe it because of

christianity it's just that christianity

became popular because it just kind of

fit in with this

predisposition

and i think it's partly just the western

mind is more individualistic

you know the eastern mind is more family oriented where you might identify more with your family than with your own person

but the west has become uh individualistic and also just intellectual where people just insist on perceiving everything and considering those perceptions to be true and

mysticism really never struck much traction in the west you know there were like the mystery cults that you had plotinus you know you had a few mystics

um

in like paganism and then christianity

came along and

mysticism was practiced maybe by a few

isolated saints

and it was starting to get more popular

like around the 15th century and then

protestantism came along and just kicked

it in the head

so

people are just stuck

in in a kind of samsaric intellectualism

and

um no self

really

like like i've been trying to it's like

beating my head against a wall trying to

explain those self because it's really

just a matter of not reifying the
absolute

um and that's i guess that's just with
regard to like the vedantist you know
universal soul the dharmakaya kind of a
thing because buddhism just does not
teach individual souls i i'm unaware of
any text some people will say well the
buddha taught souls because of the
dharmakaya or something but that's just
one soul with all beings sharing the
same one

sub mahayana

teaches that but with regard to saying
that there are ultimately
intrinsically real individual souls with
each being having its own different soul

um yeah i am unaware of any text that
really promulgates that in buddhism
so yeah i just think it's
a combination or my best guess it's a
combination of just the individuality
that is ingrained in us either
culturally or even maybe genetically and
also just this insistence
on
figuring out some sora intellectually
which also is is largely uh
a western thing i think the indians did
that too but they were uh it was it was
largely like indo-european traditions
that led them in that direction
so

what do you think is so persistent in
some westerners yeah i mean with regard
to some individual westerners they seem
to be very vehement about it too
it's not just i hypothesize you know
it's just my personal opinion that we've
got souls it's
some of them i i assume are like that
but some of them are they're just
i had one person in the comment section
to my blog that was just raging against
me saying that i was a satan worshiper
or a moral worshiper that i was just
going to hell because i was teaching no
self which is essentially what buddhism
teaches
and he was apparently a buddhist too but

i don't know some people just get really
worked up over it's just this
maybe it's individualism is just taken
to the point of you have to believe that
you're ultimately real or you just freak
out

i don't know it's it's uh that's my best
guess

i can't really say because i don't
really feel that much

okay next question

oh this is a fun one

also by potila are you now a certified
forklift operator if not when will you
be oh i'm sorry i don't have my wallet
here i'd pull out the card and just

flaunt it

but um yeah i don't have my wallet here

but yes i am i'm a certified forklift

operator

although

there are different levels to it i'm

kind of like a newbie

i can run there's let's see

five forklifts at work

and two of them i can do pretty much

whatever i want then there's two bigger

ones the cats that are mainly just for

lifting really heavy you know multi-ton

coils of steel

and uh

i can use the big ones for various

things but i'm not certified to be

moving around the biggest heaviest coils
of steel and then there's this weird
science fictiony thing called the moffit
it's got three wheels and
it can crab walk it can move sideways it
looks like something out of a science
fiction movie and there's only a few
guys that are certified to operate that
one

but um

yeah i am i am certified

i'm somebody now nobody's gonna mess
with me because i got a forklift
certification

okay next question

also by potila

panyo in one video you mentioned that demons and other beings of the hell realms are manifested by one's own kama in a sense they are npcs beings with no comma or chitana of their own is it possible according to the terra bottle sources that there are humans quote unquote who are manifested in the same way npc looking humans or humans who don't have all the features of a normal human existence we hear stories like this in paranormal settings like the men in black or a ghost warning someone etc

well um i should clarify a little bit um i was just saying that i think it's the commentarial tradition

which i don't really consider to be
authoritative

um

the commentarial tradition says that the
demons in hell that are doing all the
the poking with pitchforks and stuff you
know the cutting with adzes
and the boiling people in pitch and so
forth um they're just they really are
they're not really there they're just
manifestations of the the karma and the
perceptions of the the denizens of the
hell realms

um

and strangely my father
who was a hypnotist hypnotized a woman

and uh

she was like astral traveling or
something and she wound up in what
seemed like a prison where there's these
beings

um human like beings in this prison and
they're just you know crying and trying
to get out and they're just like
you know they don't want to be prisoners
and then the guide

of this woman who was in a trance
just waved his hand through the bars and
then he took her hand and waved her hand
through the bars just to demonstrate
that these bars were just the creations
of the the minds of the people who were
there

imprisoned by those bars of their own
device

but getting on with this um also this
person he was a german monk was telling
me according to the commentaries not
only the beings in hell but
unfortunately also the celestial nymphs
in heaven

are uh

they're like npcs they're just really
nobody there it's just

um like a virtual being that's conjured
up by

by your comma

so yeah i'm not i'm not entirely sure
but uh

i have made the

the statement before

that

technically

you could say that an enlightened being

could be like an npc in a strange a

strange way like a super npc because

they really don't have that they're not

making comma

and because they're not making kama

they're they're really

not generating cheating our will

and so like going with saint john of the

cross his definition of a perfect being

is one who no longer is acting on their

own self-will but is just like an empty

vessel of the spirit of god who's like a

divine puppet and acting in accordance
with divine will

so you could say somebody like that

i mean translated into buddhist

terminology without the capital g god

that um

that somebody like that could possibly

be considered you know nobody there

like ram das used to say about his guru

neem karoli baba who as i have already

mentioned tonight uh

um it would be one of my best bets or

best guesses for a fully enlightened

being who lived in the past hundred

years

ramada said the better you got to know

him the more you realize that there
really wasn't anybody there he was just
like a mirror reflecting your own karma
back at you

so

there is that as a possibility although
i don't think potila had enlightened
beings in mind

um it is possible i mean anything that
you can imagine

is possible and a lot of things you can
imagine are also possible

um

at least in a metaphysical sense

so

let's see let's try and get to the
question so i don't uh answer the wrong

one is it possible according to the
terra bottle sources that there are
humans who are manifested in the same
way

npc looking humans or humans who don't
have all the features of a normal human
existence

yeah um

i think in orthodox terra vada

i mean aside from arahants or
enlightened beings

um i don't think there is mention of
that

it

i don't see why it would be impossible i
mean if it's supposed to happen in hell

and in heaven why not here too

but um yeah i do not recall reading

anything about

um

just like projections or what are they

called in uh

parapsychology like an apparition

yeah i mean just an apparition that

isn't like a a spirit like a ghost but

it's just

um conjured up by the comma of the

person i mean you could say that a

hallucination would be like that or like

the beings that you that you're

interacting with in dreams

i mean that would be at a human level

and uh

yeah some people they can uh
they can be uh operating in a dream a
dreamscape with their eyes open
so yeah i would not say that it's
impossible in fact
now that i've put it in terms like that
i would say that it's pretty likely that
a lot of people are
um
interacting with just figments of their
own imagination
um
although
whether they would uh
weigh something on a scale or not i
don't know

so anyway next question is from yuichiro
i think his name is and this is a
strange one yuichiro is always asking
like the poopoo kind of questions
and this one is uh i know necrophilia is
wrong but i don't know exactly why
why is necrophilia wrong
and uh it is an interesting question
so it's not a bad question at all
it's just that yuichiro has kind of a
strange
set of interests
so he thinks about these things
but i'm not i'm not criticizing uitra
i'm sure he's very nice
so i know necrophilia is wrong but i
don't know exactly why why is

necrophilia wrong and for those of you
who don't know what necrophilia is
it's uh

like sexual attraction to corpses
and uh i think partly

i mean i've never really thought about
why it's wrong at least i don't remember
having thought about it but um

i mean pretty obviously it's kind of
it's very creepy and cringy um just
thinking about it

so i mean

first off it just goes against
like innate human nature

the human being is an animal and we've
got lots of instincts regardless of what

lefties will tell you or even
psychologists throughout most of the
20th century they're saying human beings
don't have animal instincts and we are
just loaded with them like any kind of
emotional response

would be instinctive you know it's
emotional you know boys like girls you
don't have to learn that i mean
it helps i mean you can say that
cats

um

you know they have a hunting instinct
but i mean it's it's sort of nebulous
and if they're raised in a certain way
then they won't chase after mice or
anything but just chasing after a ball

of string or whatever you know wadded up
ball of aluminum foil that's uh or
pouncing on each other when they're
kittens that sort of thing is just
acting out

animal hunting instincts and we've got
instincts we are just full of animal
instincts

and

i am sure

there's an aversion to corpses

rotting flesh and so forth or

a sexual attraction

to

uh a corpse yeah i'm i'm sure that that
would be going against some aspects of

human nature um obviously having sex
with a corpse
is not going to reproduce the species in
fact it's not even pair bonding and
those are like the two main
purposes of sex in the human animal is
making babies and then just like
forming bonds bonding with another human
um those would be the two biological
purposes of it and uh necrophilia
doesn't either is it so it is like
literally unnatural
you know there's really no good
biological reason for it
so i assume that would be part of it is
you're just kind of going against deep
instincts that give you like a guilty

conscience or kind of mess up your mind
to some degree

i think that would be the main that
would be my best my best guess

um i mean obviously

i mean just the last from the buddhist
point of view is

you're already getting kind of
unwholesome

but lust for a corpse is uh i mean

maybe i shouldn't mention this but the
the

the rules of monastic discipline

are so detailed especially with regard
to the most serious

rules

including sex

that there are all these

uh test cases you know like law books

have

and so there's

stories of monks who go to a charnel

field which is where corpses are simply

thrown on the ground to decompose or be

eaten by animals and the monks are so

frustrated so sexually frustrated and

horny that they have sex with the corpse

and that is

uh worthy of excommunication and there's

even these weird cases there's like a

monk finds a severed head lying there

and he sticks his penis into the severed

head's mouth is that

does that qualify excommunication and
according to the text and this is like
ancient poly texts

it's if the lips are still intact enough
that the penis makes contact with the
lips then yes but if there's like no
lips left then it's it's still a serious
offense but it's not really

um

grounds for excommunication

so there's all this kind of weird stuff

um

because they really didn't want to leave
any ambiguity with regard to what is and
is not

worthy of excommunication so they had

all these

stories or sample stories examples that

uh i i guess a lot of them are just made

but uh

getting back to the question why is

necrophilia wrong

um

lust in itself from the buddhist point

of view you're already playing with fire

and uh lust for no good reason other

than just

just lust for lust's sake

is not so good

yeah

yeah let's just go with the human nature

it's just a violation of deep human

instincts that when you go against your

instincts it creates a kind of friction
and turmoil inside which leads to
deep subconscious problems which can
percolate up to the surface or maybe
they just are at the surface from the
very get-go with something like
necrophilia

it may be

that somebody loved their spouse so
intensely they want to just do it one
last time but

so there might be a little bit of love
or something mixed in but as a general
rule it's

yeah it's it's just kind of uh
pathological i think

so anyway let's just move on to uh
something less morbid
and which is yuichiro's next question
i don't know if you've answered this
before but how did you go to the
bathroom while living in caves inside
the cave outside was their toilet paper
i'm just curious

okay well um

the only time i went to the bathroom
inside of a cave
was

um

i i urinate inside the cave when it was
just blazing hot or sometimes there'd be
i'd just be inundated with visitors that
i didn't want to meet with and i just

hide inside the cave and refuse to come
out like the the bear at the zoo
and it was kind of a zoo like uh
feel to it too just people coming and
staring at me and
just watching me i was like the the
weird foreign monk you know the weird
saintly foreign monk living out in the
in the cave
and uh sometimes i just don't want to
meet with them so i just pee in the it
was actually my bath cup it was this big
bowl
made out of aluminum
and then i'd dump it outside after uh
the coast was clear or it had cooled

down at night

but um

yeah i mean there are outhouses as a
general rule even i was one time staying
out in the middle of nowhere in this
natural cave out in this forest

and there was no outhouse

and for a while i was just crapping on
the ground like an animal outside the
cave of course

some distance away you know you don't
want flies and stink and so forth but
then uh within a few weeks

some friendly

villagers offered to dig me a latrine so
i didn't really have a ceiling or
anything but at least there was a hole

and

you know some some boards you could kind
of squat over

but um toilet paper is not generally
used in in asia like like burma you
mostly use water and that's what you're
supposed to do

in in uh for for a monk i mean there's
instructions on everything in life
including using the bathroom and um
so there's there's two main ways of
wiping your butt

according to ancient buddhism first you
use a stick

and then after you've used the stick
which in burmese is called a gnudon

sometimes people would uh
donate to me little bundles of sticks
for wiping my butt
and the best one's got a little bit of
bark on them still so that it's got some
traction

um

and then after you use the stick then
you rinse with water
and

i think most monks don't even bother
with the stick they just use water and
that's i mean it works better than
toilet paper it really does like a lot
of you go to southeast asia like
thailand or burma
and a lot of

bathrooms even in the city they'll have
like a spray gun right next to the
toilet like like a lot of people have on
their kitchen sink you'll have the spray
gun you know this hose and the spray
thing and that works better than toilet
paper because poop really is water
soluble and then
if you're wearing underpants or
something which as a monkey don't do um
then you would dab it and dry with a
paper towel or something
and then stand up and
and go and go ahead with your business
go somewhere else and do other things
so

yeah i mostly did not use toilet paper i was using um you know like i'd have a an outhouse and then inside the outhouse there'd be like a clay water pot and then there'd be like half a coconut shell and then you just go in there and you do your thing and then you scoop some water out and you use the cup with one hand and then you're reaching around the other way with your hand and kind of wiping with your hand and your hand gets rinsed clean at the same time as your narrow place gets rinsed clean because as i say poop is water soluble and that has been the way of butt wiping

in southern parts of asia since
prehistoric times i'm pretty sure the
indus valley civilization did it the
same way

and that's you are instructed to do that
and there's all these rules you're not
allowed to

throw the the butt wiping sticks into
the latrine because then it will fill up
the latrine with these sticks that don't
biodegrade nearly as fast as poop does
which then causes

some

monks from burmese villages who come to
america

to not throw their

crappy toilet paper into the toilet
because technically it's against the
rules and they just throw it into the
waste paper basket or something which is
not optimal in the west

so

uh long story short about uh using the
toilet for monks in uh

who live in caves or forests yeah

there's there's an outhouse that you go
to

and it could be a quite a walk and
sometimes you have emergencies in the
middle of the night unlike

in in the west i mean in the west

the the whole philosophy of using the
bathroom is completely different it's

like you get up and you're sitting in
bed and you're scratching yourself and
just like well what's on my agenda for
today might as well [__] shower and
shave

and then you nonchalantly mosey into the
bathroom and

and do the three s's but uh in burma you
sit up on your mat on the floor and
you're scratching yourself and it's like
well what's on my agenda for oh i got a
[__] now now now and then you it's like
you gotta take these fast little baby
steps like this because you got to like
stay clenched
until you're there

but i think i'm getting way into tmi
territory now

but it's yuichiro's own fault

he asked for this

but i don't i don't mind i can talk
about this kind of stuff

let's see

may you each hero be happy and well

and uh no necrophilia

let's see next question

is from chaplin what are your goals for
2022

well see what are my goals i really i'm
not extremely goal oriented and um i
think on my old

nipapancha.org website which is in the
links below

um i've even warned people against
goal oriented dharma you know don't i
mean just be in the present moment as
fully and as consciously as possible and
you're doing i mean that's like your
maximum potential is fulfilled right
there

um setting up goals usually things don't
turn out the way you plan
although

let's see

this assuming that i have goals you know
this i do have kind of like objectives
or plans

so let's go with that

number one is i'm going to uh move in

with my sweetheart and we're going to
live a long and happy life together
that's one also i'm planning on getting
a glock 19.

and if you don't know what a glock 19 is
then bless your heart

um aside from those those two things

um

yeah i really don't have

i really don't have many goals you know

just continue

doing the best i can

you know

be a good employee

maybe get a raise

um

yeah

i guess

so let's just move on to chaplin's next
question

what

have you developed any unexpected
hobbies since re-entering lay life
unexpected hobbies

since re-entering lay life

unexpected ones maybe chaplin has
something in mind here but i i'm not
thinking of anything

i mean i've i've gotten to the point
where i'm trying to do at least one evil
sudoku per day but uh i started doing
that when i was still a monk
just a few months before i uh dropped

out that was after the great uh
adobe flash armageddon i used to play
video games just little you know puzzle
games and that kind of thing
and
google stopped enabling
the flash player where you played most
of these and uh
so i just resorted to doing sudoku's
which is
not nearly as
as entertaining and satisfying but uh
yeah i've done probably close to 400 of
them solved them successfully the evil
ones the hardest level
bragging there i guess
um but let's get back to this question

here have you developed any unexpected
hobbies

since re-entering lay life

unexpected hobbies

i can't think of anything

as i say maybe chaplin has something in

mind but i can't think of any so i'll

just move on to the next question i'll

probably think of several

after i'm done here

where do you see yourself five years

from now

well i could just make a guess like i

say i don't really have a plan for where

i will be five years from now

um i wouldn't mind still working at the

same job at the sheet metal shop i
really do enjoy it it is it is um
it's a satisfying job and everybody gets
along and is good friends and well
friends
and uh
yeah it's
it's nice although i mean if
the popularity of my books for example
and they're in the links below
you know if that really takes off and uh
you know i'm making enough royalties to
live on then uh yeah i might i might
stop working at the sheet metal shop and
which will give me a lot more time
to uh
to teach dhamma and uh do the videos

like of my favorite readings and so
forth

because really that's um

just a matter of time and energy is is

like a limiting factor time and energy

are limiting factors for me now in a way

that they weren't when i was still a

monk

unexpected hobbies

so where do i see myself five years from

now

i'm guessing what would be most probable

i'll be living in a house with my

sweetheart

and uh we will be

mates

and

maybe still working at the sheet metal

shop i don't know we'll just have to see

how that goes

um

and uh

yeah i'll have a driver's license and uh

let's see

yeah

i don't know

probably

not so different from now except five

years older and uh

certainly better established in lay life

than i have been over the past

several months

and uh

and uh having a mate for

for five years

or actually more than five years

so

yeah these projections for the future

i'm not very good at because um

i just think you just do the best you

can in the present moment and uh

you know i mean you can set goals but uh

yeah i

don't really set a lot of those

so yeah it's i'm sorry i really can't

answer that question very well either

how do i see myself five years from now

just living

um

i hope happy and healthy with my
sweetheart

and we will be a family

with dogs and then chickens and probably
pigs

although uh the pigs aren't allowed
inside the house

and uh

yeah i assume i'll be uh better set up
than i am now although i'm not i'm not
complaining at all

all right and finally the last question
the last question of them all

is from arane

and eran asks can you speak more on the
influence of jainism on buddhism

which is kind of an interesting question

and

actually

i'm only aware of one

big influence of jainism on buddhism

and

before i get to that i suppose i should

um clarify for those of you who aren't

familiar with jainism that it is a

religion

of india there are still supposedly

about 2 million jains

and the the reputed founder of jainism

who is called mahavira by the jains

which is means great hero

in uh in the buddhist texts he's called

nigantan

which is uh niganta means like one

without bonds

and nata puta is is just kind of a joke

name to make him sound silly i think it

means something like son of grandson

um

so it's it's like radically in some ways

similar to buddhism and it has similar

ancestors to buddhism it probably has

roots that go all the way back to the

indus valley civilization

so it's in some ways it's similar to

buddhism in that i mean there's just the

standard indian belief in in rebirth or

reincarnation but the way the jains have

it worked out is everyone has their own

jiva or a soul you know we were talking

about souls earlier everyone has their
own soul and

karma is like a material substance that
sticks to the soul and holds it down on
this earth but if you can purify your
soul of all karma

then your soul

just wafts up into heaven and then you
live uh

in just paradise essentially

and so the jains would uh deliberately
try to get rid of all of their karma and
they've got had some really weird ways
of doing it like i've read some jain
sutras

and uh including some of like the rules

that jane monks were required to follow
and there was one

um because you're not

creating any karma if you need to cross
a river

um you have to go and there's like no

bridge let's say there's just a boat

you're not allowed to go in a boat if

the boat wasn't already going to go over

you can't have somebody take you across

um just for the sake of taking you

across the river because you'd be making

karma that way

so if the boat was already going to go

across and you can get into the boat

then you're allowed to do that but if

the boat springs a leak and starts

sinking midway like you're out in the middle of the river and the boat starts to sink you're not allowed to help bail out the boat because that would make karma because even good karma is karma you're gonna try have to get rid of all of it

so what you're supposed to do is if you're the kind of person that wears clothes because a lot of them were sky clad or just they own nothing they didn't even own a begging bowl they didn't own clothes they were just completely naked

but if you're the kind that wore a robe you were supposed to take your robe off

and fold it up and put it on top of your head

just in case the owner of the boat got so pissed off at you that he threw you overboard and that way your robes wouldn't get wet

and that's actually in in jane sutras these instructions like um jane monks if they were going for alms you know they they'd be begging for food with their cupped hands and they were um they weren't allowed to beg for food where there was like a scroungy dog hanging around because they might be depriving that scroungy dog of food which would be bad karma and they weren't allowed to eat any food that was

cooked for them specifically because that would be karma too they're just supposed to eat leftovers but if there was like um you know the scroungy dog or lots of flies around even you might be depriving the flies of food not allowed to eat that

so

and also they would torture themselves as a way of just speeding up the process of getting rid of their bad karma and the buddha really warned against that because you're just making more karma through your intention to torture yourself that was the middle path that the buddha taught like in the first

sermon the dhamma chakra

you know there's the path of

self-indulgence and the path of

self-torture and nowadays there aren't

very many people taught for themselves

but in ancient india

it wasn't just the jains either there

were like uh

numerous ajivaka sects ajibaca is now

extinct it's a religious system that is

now extinct but um i mean they would

literally torture themselves to death

and once uh the jane monk figured that

he had somehow

um exhausted all this karma he was

supposed to just wander off into a like

a

an isolated area and to squat down and stay in a squatting position until he was dead

which i assume would be uh you'd die of thirst and kidney failure first

but anyway getting back to the

chaplain's last question or airing's

last question here can you speak more on

the influence of jainism on buddhism the

only real influence of jainism on

buddhism other than just mentions in the

texts where usually they're being made

fun of like

i'll tell one of these stories like

mahavira according to the ancient

buddhist texts

mahavira

vomited blood and died because

some of his followers had converted to

buddhism

you know it's probably not true the

jains themselves don't say this

but um buddhism really is guilty of some

uh

anti-unbuddhist propaganda

so

but anyway getting back to the question

that i keep uh not answering the the one

influence of jainism on buddhism one

significant

influence that i am aware of

and i i think the ajahn tenisero is the

one who i learned this from

is that

the word asawa

and it's a very common technical word in

buddhism asawa and if you're an asava

that means you're fully aligned if you

get rid of all of your assaults you're

you're fully enlightened and it's

um

it was originally a jain term

asawa

it means something that flows towards

you

and for the jains that was that sticky

karma that weighs down your your jiva or

your soul it flows towards you and

sticks and holds you down but in

buddhism as is the case with a lot of
vedic terms also the buddha or whoever
adopted the term

changed the meaning of it so asawa

it's usually translated as

well it doesn't even have a standard

translation i think biku bodhi calls it
taint

it used to be called canker

let's see

the buddhist dictionary originally was

calling it bias which i think is good

but my usual translation for asawa is

uh encumbering influence

now influence is also means you know

something that flows towards you you

know it's fluence is flowing and in is

you know this way instead of outward

it's in towards you

and uh

so in buddhism it can really mean any

kind of encumbering influence to me

um just something that you cling to

something that you just adhere to and it

weighs you down it's like a stumbling

block

it's like a burden you know it's like um

in buddhism they say that another word

for a term for an arahant is one who

lays down the burden

and that burden is the is the assault

and um

the the commentarial tradition or even

the like the later textual tradition
talks about the different kinds of
assaults and uh i won't really get into
that but um

um yeah the term asaba according to
ajahn tenisro i think

uh was originally borrowed from the from
the james just like a lot of the uh
the buddhist jargon philosophical jargon
was was taken from the vedic tradition
but jainism and buddhism are non-vedic
they do not accept the vedas as
authoritative and they're not really
offshoots of badism

that apparently they have roots that go
all the way back into prehistoric
pre-aryan indus valley

spiritual systems

and jainism is similar to buddhism and

it believes in karma and there really is

no creator god or highest deity although

they do have like the eternal heaven

that

is kind of similar

but um i think i've answered that and so

that was the last question

and so

we are done and it was

two hours

gosh i mean

two hours who's gonna who's gonna watch

the whole two hours

like i'm uh

joe rogan or something

but anyway that's it and uh

like i said before the url links are
below including the links to my books
and um

i apologize for taking so long i hope
things will run more smoothly next time
and if you are willing to ask questions
if you're curious about anything i mean
ask me anything really although i'm most
likely to be able to answer in
accordance with uh

buddhist philosophy like you know ask
questions about buddhism or what it's
like living in burma or about me
personally i'm i'm i'm more likely to be
able to give an educated intelligent

answer with regard to that sort of thing

but um

yeah hit me with your best shot

you can ask me

poop questions even if you want to

and be happy

Hello and welcome to episode 22 of Question and Answer. I am your host Punya Bassu and these are my co-hosts Saffron and Fallon and the kitty who doesn't care what her name is and so I'm not going to even say it.

And um

no matter how hard I try, it seems like I have been unsuccessful in doing a Q&A more than about once every three weeks, which I think is going to have to be rectified because I'm getting a lots of questions.

So, because of the lots of questions aforementioned I should just uh get straight to the straight to the

answers and so

the first question

is from Holmger.

And uh I hope you will forgive me if I just mispronounced his name.

And Holmger says

what is the comma

or karma of euthanasia? You said in your

previous Q&A that certain actions carry

with them certain mental states. You

gave the example of killing one's own

parents, but what if your father or

mother was 90 and suffered from

Alzheimer's and were unable to recognize

anything or anyone? If they were in an

intense state of mental anguish,

wouldn't putting them out of their

immediate suffering be an act of
compassion and wouldn't that be a rare
example of patricide or matricide
generating skillful karma?

Well, first of all, I would just like to
specify that I'll be answering from a
strictly orthodox Buddhist perspective.

Um my own personal opinion might differ
from this but um

uh I've got to I've got to adopt some
frame of reference so I'll just go with
orthodox Theravada Buddhism.

And uh also I I'll just mention that uh
this issue has come up

um in real life a few times recently.

Like uh a friend of mine has a mother

who's who's very very old and she's fading and he was asking me about you know, what if she wants to she wants uh like assisted suicide or something. He wasn't considering actually killing his own mother um compassion or not, but um still I mean this this kind of issue it's uh it's like a a modern issue to some degree. I mean, obviously, you know, killing uh somebody to put them out of their misery has been around for a long time, but it's it's more subtle now and more humane, I think, than just taking a pillow to them or something.

But um from the Buddhist point of view,

I mean, you're still killing one of your own parents if you are in fact um you know, doing flipping the switch or you know, administering the dose or whatever it is.

So, um

killing one of your own parents is from the perspective of Theravada Buddhism uh one of the few actions that guarantees hell in your next life.

Another one would be like causing a Buddha to bleed, which uh you don't get very many opportunities to do that, killing a fully enlightened being, and the third um I've I've seen two different versions of of the other one.

It's it's either
raping or seducing a nun or else it's
causing a schism in the Sangha. And I'm
not sure which is the more orthodox of
those two.

But that and uh killing one of your own
parents, those are the the four
guarantees of hell
in your next existence.

So,

um here at the bottom, Homegar is
asking, "Wouldn't that be a rare example
of patricide or matricide generating
skillful karma? Well, it could generate
some skillful karma,
but it would just be mitigating the the
unskillful karma of killing one of your

own parents because I don't think it's possible to knowingly and willingly kill one of your own parents without there being some real turmoil going on even if it's subconscious. It's going to be like really serious um mental states going on.

And so,

um obviously,

um you know, if one of your parents is like terminally ill and in a lot of pain and you just pull the plug on the life support machine, that's obviously going to have different karma than like Lizzie Borden with her axe.

But,

um still it's it's going to be
um from the Buddhist point of view
again, it is going to be the very
serious act of causing the death of one
of your own parents deliberately and
knowingly and willingly. So, you'd be
better off letting the doctors take care
of it or or if they're able to pull
their own plug, you know, that's their
choice, but uh doing it for them is uh
playing with uh very big fire.

And uh just from the Buddhist Buddhist
perspective, I would not recommend it.
Don't kill your own parents.

Next question is from Jeremy.

And uh this is one I've I've considered
more than once also.

Jeremy says, if I do not take rebirth
in if the next existence is not me, then
why should I care? Other than a lack of
compassion, why should I live a good
life so that another should benefit.

Humans and animals remain ignorant, but
I think I read somewhere that hell and
deva beings know what karma or
intentional actions got them there. So,
that knowledge may be a contributing
factor, a knowledge of continuity,
{question mark}

So, essentially the question is um since
Buddhism orthodox traditional Buddhist
philosophy teaches that there is no
abiding entity, no ultimately real

abiding self or soul,
then why should we care if our actions
are going to be causing suffering to
some other being,
you know, in in the subsequent
existence?

And I mean, if you really consider it,
then um

there's there's an obvious sort of
counterargument, and that is that if
there is no abiding self or soul, any
separated individuality that is
ultimately real, then I mean, we're not
the same from one moment to the next.

So, why should we even care if our
actions now are going to cause our own
misery an hour from now?

I mean, it's it's the same kind of argument, the same kind of phenomena in play.

So, I mean, there are people that will knowingly and willingly make that decision like uh

what, devil worshipers, I suppose, who are willing to uh make a deal. I mean, I I assume, you know, this is the way traditionally it is interpreted. They make a deal with the devil so that they get what they want for

the rest of their life or 10 or 20 years, and then they go to hell. And then they're willing to make that, you know, they're willing to make a future

them go to hell. And um
it's uh it just strikes me as as
foolish. And just even if you just
consider, you know, your next life to be
somebody else, then callously just not
caring if they're going to be happy or
miserable.

Even though they're very similar to you,
you know, it'd be like even if it's not
you, it's you know, in a way it's sort
of like your brother or your
doppelganger or something.

Um

Yeah, I think uh you should care
just because
you know, if you're knowingly and
willingly causing suffering

even to a future version of yourself,
then yeah, I mean, that's that's bad
karma.

Um it's going to
the bad karma is going to affect you
even in this life. I mean, it's when
you're doing it, it's going to be
affecting you even at that moment.

And so, yeah, just uh don't send some
future incarnation of yourself to hell.

So, this the first two questions were
were really hitting it hard. It's like
don't kill your parents.

Don't go to hell.

Next question

is from Nagarjuna.

And Nagarjuna says, "What are your thoughts on Osho?"

And uh I have written a few blog posts about Osho.

Um

It's uh

I don't know. I could just sit here and and just sort of ramble for half an hour about Osho. Um I do think that he was um definitely a trickster figure.

Um he may have attained some kind of realization.

He could uh deliver a 2-hour-long Dharma talk every day.

And uh even that is is impressive because I really would I've I've had to give like 15-minute Dharma talks every

day, and I'm like scratching my head
after like this first or second week as
to what I'm going to be talking about.

Um

One one idea I've had about Osho

and people like him

is that just because you're at a higher
level of consciousness doesn't mean that
you're more virtuous necessarily or a
better person necessarily.

Um Osho was very rascally, you know, he
got first pick of all the pretty
sannyasins at the ashram and all that.

But um

I've been thinking that you know
a monkey is at a higher level of

consciousness than a sheep.

But nevertheless a monkey's a lot
naughtier than a sheep.

Um just because uh you're you're serene
and and all that. Um

Yeah.

So my thoughts on Osho, um I'm very
skeptical that he was enlightened.

Although I have met a few a few people
that knew him personally. And um there
was this German artist I met in

Indonesia who I asked him if he thought
Osho was enlightened and he he just went
It was obvious. Just obviously he was
enlightened.

And then uh I've met another disciple
who was one of his senior disciples

actually who uh

I mean he was sort of noncommittal, you know, he wouldn't say that he wasn't but uh

he wouldn't he wouldn't exactly say that he was either.

Um

but I I've never really been much interested in Osho. I I generally still think of him as the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh and I have a lot more respect for uh

a person that used to be his right-hand man and that was uh

See Swami Anand Teertha.

I think is what he used to be called.

Nowadays he's Paul Lowe.

And um he resonates his his his teachings resonate with me better than Osho because I've read a few books by Osho and he does say wise things sometimes but it's very glib and I don't always agree with what he's saying.

So, I think that's enough of an answer for that one. And so, I move on to the next.

And the next question is from JT Drake.

And JT says,

"Not sure you see these comments but if you do, do you have any thoughts about this book?" And then he provided a link.

So,

I clicked on the link and the book is

Buddha by Karen Armstrong.

And

um I haven't read the book. So, I really don't have much to say about the book.

Although, I have read two books by Karen Armstrong. Both of them were good. One is um A History of God which is a history of Western monotheism.

And the other one was um a biography of the Prophet Muhammad.

And both of them were good books. But with regard to

the book Buddha by Karen Armstrong, I wouldn't really even want to read it.

Maybe someone who doesn't know much about Buddhism, you know, they want an

introduction, you know, from a Western perspective, it might be good. Karen Armstrong is a good author.

But um she was uh

she was a Catholic nun, I believe.

And um she definitely I mean, she's not a Buddhist. She might be interested in Buddhism.

So, I mean, probably it would be the standard um

you know, biography based on Western scholarship of

what the historical Buddha was like.

And um

she probably wouldn't be very

knowledgeable with regard to the deeper

aspects of Buddhism or um you know, like

the rules of monastic discipline, that sort of thing.

So, if you really wanted to uh know about the Buddha, I think um a book by

a Western Roman Catholic might not be your best bet. But, Karen Armstrong is an intelligent and intelligent and good writer, and she does have some wisdom.

So,

um I'm sure it wouldn't be a total waste of time.

And so, the next question is from Erin.

And Erin says,

"Could it be said in Buddhism that

people who are gifted with psychic abilities or other advanced attainments in this life may be on an upward progression having reached certain spiritual attainments in their prior life?"

Well, it may be So, is that what's Yeah, it may be, but then again, it could be the opposite. I mean, just because you got a person who's got, you know, psychic talent in this life, um it's possible that there's gradually building up, and maybe in their next life they're going to be in a heaven realm as as a deva or something. But, it could be the other way around. It could be that in their past life they were in

heaven, and then they exhausted all of their their good karma or, you know, the good karma that was keeping them up there with all of the, you know, celestial nymphs and pleasure gardens and everything.

So, maybe, you know, they just took a step down.

And um for some strange reason that reminds me of something my father told me.

Um

he was a hypnotist and did a lot of past life regressions and that sort of thing with with other people and also with himself. And he said that um

he never met a guy

who had been a woman in his previous existence who wasn't, in my father's words, queer as a three-dollar bill.

So,

um the reason I bring that up is that

um, like an effeminate man, he may be progressing, like in his next life he's going to be female, or it could be that he was female in the past life and it's just sort of a transitional state. And it could be the same way with these uh people with uh

gifted with psychic abilities or other advanced attainments as in the question.

So, it could go either way. They could be on their way up or on their way down

or maybe they're just holding steady or
you know, there's there's an infinite
number of possibilities.

So, the next question is also from
Airain.

And um, this one is not entirely
serious, me thinks.

Airain says, "If the earliest teachings
taught no soul, can we assume the Buddha
was a ginger? I mean, he was depicted as
a blue-eyed Aryan."

Um,

yeah. Well, uh

Led Zeppelin also says big-legged women
don't have no soul, but um
we we can uh skip the big-legged women,

I guess.

So,

yeah, it's it's not just no soul though,

it's no self. It's no

like intrinsically real

individuality

of any kind. I mean, it's like this

glass of orange juice. I mean, from the

Buddhist point of view, this glass of

orange juice does not have an

intrinsically

real self-existence. It's It's just here

or it seems to be here due to all this

this whole vast unthinkable web of

causes and effects. And so, this

seems to exist because of all the causes

that cause it to seem to exist. And if

the causes ceased, then it would cease.

It's like It's like a fire. You know,

the fire exists so long as you've got

the heat, the fuel, and the oxygen. And

when the heat, the fuel, and the oxygen,

or any of those three ceases to be

sufficient, then the fire ceases.

And um that's the way we are also. So

long as the causes of our existence

persist, we seem to persist, but it's

not due to any intrinsic self-existence,

it's due to the the cosmic web of causes

and effects.

Uh

and um

the Buddha

may have had blue eyes, and uh
there's a good chance he was um
Indo-Aryan.

But um

I'm not sure that he was a ginger.

Although I have read in uh ancient
Hindu texts that uh the stereotypical
Brahmin in India had blue eyes and red
hair.

So, I don't think that has anything to
do with no self, though.

And so, we'll just move on to the next
question.

From Bodhisattva 969.

And Bodhisattva 969 says,

"How useful is this life in times of
Corona when you are still allowed to

work or not go to the cinema or go on vacation?

My strength is slowly exhausted. My well-paying job pukes me, and my fellow human beings who don't seem to be interested in anything."

Um I know enough about Bodhisattva 969 to

be reasonably confident that he lives in Germany,

which is probably much more dystopian

in uh in times of Corona than, say,

South Carolina where I am right now.

South Carolina is almost completely

normal at this point. And uh never

really got out of hand because it has uh

Republican governance.

But in Germany, we're uh

we're we're more in the realm of uh

cyberpunk dystopia.

I don't know what it is about the

Germans.

So, what's the question here? I mean,

how useful is this life? Well, I mean,

anything that occurs to you is is

it's occurring to you because of your

own karma. You know, it's just the

fruition of your own actions and mental

states.

So, you got to you have to learn to face

it and sort of like uh the movie

Groundhog Day, where you have to keep

doing it over and over again till you

get it perfect. So, you have to learn
how to

deal with with equanimity with with
anything that comes your way.

So, this is just a test, it's a trial,
and uh you have to maintain your
equanimity to some extent,
at least your mindfulness.

Um

yeah, I mean, that's it, really.

I remember

in uh Eckhart Tolle's first famous book,
uh he was saying that uh you know, being
mad at other people is like standing in
front of a mirror and being mad at your
own reflection because really, you know,

whatever's going on around you is the
fruition of your own karma. It's it's
really uh ultimately your own doing.

Even though ultimately we don't exist as
intrinsically real individual beings.

So,

yeah, I can just uh wish you luck and uh
just uh

yeah, do your best, maintain equanimity,
try to live a dharmic life,

don't lash out, don't resent your
unhappiness if you're experiencing it
onto others,

Especially people close to you.

And

try to maintain some mindfulness, some
level of mindfulness.

And good luck, especially in Germany.

So the next question is from Das Boot.

And

Das Boot says,

"For me it's quite something to have an outlet for thinking aloud and asking about anything even remotely connected to Buddhism completely without having to censor myself in any way." Well, that's good.

So onto the next weird question.

"For me it seems like the WEF and and it turns out that's the World Economic Forum. I had to inquire about that. I didn't know what it was at first.

So I'll just start over.

For me it seems like the WEF, AI, and internet of bodies psychopaths are trying to construct something that to me feels like some type of forced materialistic hyper samsara.

Would that actually be possible to kind of ensnare people's souls or whatever that is a composite phenomena perceived as such and actually keep them in this state for a a long time span? Would Buddhism need to add a realm for that even?

Um I don't think Buddhism would have to add a realm for that.

Um

gosh, where do you even start with this

one?

So apparently you've got like the

globalist,

you know, whatever you want to call it,

globalist elite

who are trying to

essentially control the human race by

controlling their thoughts, by

controlling the information, you know,

the propaganda, Ministry of Truth and

all that.

Um in order to just keep people locked

into this

false narrative,

semi-true at best,

um in order to keep them docile and, you

know, producing

money for the the elites.

And uh you know, helping them stay in power and so forth.

Um

yeah, I mean, that's the thing. It's just been the the status quo for humanity. I mean, if it if it's not um you know, the World Economic Forum and and um

you know, the internet and then TV and all that, it's you just it's

you know, fanatical priests or, you know, giving fanatical sermons, you know, it's

just or it's just just like the taboos and narrow-minded

uh cultural traditions of of certain cultures.

Uh

yeah, I I really don't think that

I mean, there is some truth to the the saying in Ecclesiastes in the Bible that there is nothing new under the sun. I mean, obviously, the internet seems pretty new,

but um

still, human nature remains the same and the situations we find ourselves in have parallels or analogs to to past states.

I really don't think that anything is really all that different now. It could be that in the future, everyone's going

to have to have the chip in their neck
that's going to, you know,
keep their brain under control or
something, but um

yeah, I think those of us who have
better karma just won't wind up in that
that particular version of reality.

And that that version of reality,
there's there's an infinite number of of
worlds. So, places like that already
exist,

I assume.

So, I'm not even sure if I answered this
question. Would it Would that actually
be possible? Yeah, I assume it would to
some degree, although I mean, you can't
fool everyone all the time.

There's always going to be a certain resistance, people that are red-pilled or whatever.

And

to ensnare them and uh actually keep them in the state for long time span.

Most people just spend their entire life that way anyway.

Just normies, you listen to normies conversation. Depends on the normies, of course, but you know, the working class guys,

you know, they'll they'll just talk a lot about

music and sports and video games.

Maybe food sometimes.

You know, that's that's just sort of the
the

virtual reality that they're in.

Bless their hearts. I mean, they're they
can be really, you know, good guys.

But um

still it's like the average person is
not red-pilled, you know, they're
they're in the matrix and they don't
know that they're in the matrix.

So,

yeah, I think

something like what um

Das Boot here is talking about. I mean,
that's just the everyday reality of most
beings in the universe, I would assume,
to some degree.

So, let's move on to the next question.

And this is from Potila.

And this is kind of a difficult one,
even though it's a simple one.

What political figure, alive or dead,
do I most admire?

If if I were Haru,
and some of you probably know who that
is. I know what the answer would be
already.

Um

Yeah, I I I don't know if I really have
I don't have like a designated favorite,
you know, it's like ooh, this is my
favorite. But, um

I think one of the most interesting

political figures would be Julian the Apostate, who was the last pagan emperor of Rome.

I I have my heart goes out to people who fight for lost causes, and he fought a lost cause of trying to uh trying to defeat Christianity and and maintain Roman paganism.

And uh obviously, he did not succeed. He was only emperor for a few years, and he may have been murdered by a Christian Roman soldier.

He got He got his liver pierced by a spear while fighting the Persians.

Aside from Julian, I don't know.

Most admire.

Yeah, that's the admire part. I mean,

um like Charles II of of England of of
our Great Britain.

Um

Yeah, he was really interesting. He'd be
fun to hang out with, but I can't really
say that I admire him.

So, yeah, let's just say

Julian the Apostate, and I'm sorry to
disappoint anyone who
was expecting me to say Ashoka or
something.

So, let's just move on to the next
question, also by Pol Tila.

Another question, "Since moving to the
South, how many times have you been
invited to church? I think you should go

to a mega church service and just take in the experience like an anthropologist. Get to know your neighbors sort of thing."

Uh surprisingly, the number of times I have been invited to church here in in the Bible Belt of the USA is zero.

Although, uh

um I've been told that um

people do ask other people to come to church, and it's it's uh you know, it's not like they're trying to convert you so much as, you know, they're being friendly.

You know, they're just uh inviting,

"Come along to church with us, you know." But, um

I think most people that I know know
that I'm a Buddhist, and so I think
they're not even uh

you know, that dog just won't hunt.

But, um if somebody did ask me to go to
church, I might just out of curiosity,
sure. I'm open-minded.

But, uh all the the Jesus, Jesus stuff,
it's uh it's hard for me to follow
because you have to believe the story
that you couldn't possibly prove, and
maybe you won't even know if it's right
or wrong after you die.

I'm just I'm just don't have that kind
of faith.

I do have a deeper, nonverbal kind of

faith, but believing in a narrative
in a book

that um you just couldn't possibly prove
one way or the other.

Um yeah, it just doesn't appeal to me at
all. I just don't get it.

I got

click something here. Okay.

So, let's just move on to the next
question.

This is also from Potila.

And it is a meditation question.

"Can you please elaborate on the idea of
establishing mindfulness in front of
oneself?" Excerpt from uh Majjhima
Nikaya 10, which is I assume,
if I remember correctly, the

Satipatthana Sutta.

"It's when a mendicant gone to a wilderness or to the root of a tree or to an empty hut sits down cross-legged with their body straight and focuses their mindfulness right there."

Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu araṇṇagato vā
rukkhamūlagato
vā

Um, okay.

I think it is fairly straightforward,
but I have you encountered several
different interpretations and would like
to hear your thoughts.

Um, okay. So, the question is what does

it mean? I assume, this is my interpretation.

The question is what does it mean to establish mindfulness in front of yourself?

And I had a Sri Lankan monk ask me about this once, too.

And

personally

I mean,

um, some people will say, "Oh, you're supposed to focus, you know, on the like here or here, which is in front of your face, you know, the front of your face, you focus on that." Um

I think that it's just a kind of a figure of speech in Pali, very ancient

Pali, like the Atthagavagga. Um, you know, to prefer something means you set it before you.

It's like a a figure of speech and it's used several times in very ancient

Buddhist texts that if you are

preferring something or favoring

something, you put it in front of you.

It's just a figure of speech and I

assume that's what they're doing here,

where you put mindfulness in front of

you. I mean, that is your

um

What what's the word?

You know, you you are just favoring

mindfulness, you are establishing it as

your priority.

That's what I think it means.

So,

I think I'll uh

move on to the next one.

And uh

maybe I'll flatter myself in uh

in congratulating myself that I answered
that one so quickly.

So, Potila has another meditation

question. Sorry, but it's long. This is
about vicikiccha

or usually translated as doubt or

um

indecision, something like that. It's uh
not being able to settle your mind, you
know, you've got two conflicting ideas

and you can't really settle on one of them, something like that.

In the Dhamma, unlike many god-based religions, there is a path in which vicikiccha is uprooted and removed. A tangible result of practice is the removal of doubt, indecision, something that happens gradually as a side result of realization, or is there a specific approach to remove vicikiccha? In the theistic paths, there is an immense focus on the importance of faith, but it often is spoken about as something that the god blesses you with. There is no process to remove doubt, but as the Buddha Dhamma is a path to replicate,

all the pitfalls have been examined in detail and the resolution of vicikiccha seems very important to make higher progress. What helped you to uproot vicikiccha?

Well,

there there are ways of going about it.

I mean, obviously, just satipatthana mindfulness, you know, it arises, you you note it and you let it go. Every time it arises, you note it and you let it go. So, you're not feeding it and strengthening it, and gradually it just fades out.

Yeah, it's sort of like um

with no offense to the co-hosts here, uh like a stray dog. You know, if it if it

hangs around, if you feed it, it's just going to stay, but if you don't feed it, it might hang out a little longer, but gradually it's going to hit the road. And um you know, vicikiccha or any kind of unwhol- unskillful mental state is the same way. If you don't feed it, it'll starve or just go away.

Um

Let's see here.

Scroll down

already before answering the question.

So, I mean, through insight, it can just poof out of existence. I mean, you'll have some

some insight that's a really radical

and it'll just shift your consciousness right there. And then I mean, it just it can just fall away. That's a possibility, too. There's it's not just one way that it can happen.

Um

just like following some of the teachings of like the Buddhist sutras like uh the removal of distracting thoughts, you know, there's several different ways of going about that.

Um I mean, obviously, you're not going to have much vicikiccha if you're just not thinking.

So,

um you know, just getting into meditative states where you're not

thinking and or and then you can get
have insight arise from that, you know,
it's like if you so long as you're not
thinking these absurd thoughts, then you
know, you're you're liberated from
from just all these
just really self-inflicted
unhappy mental states.

So,

yeah, I guess I would I would say that
uh you know, there isn't just one
possible way and the standard way in

Theravada

um

or the two standard ways

would be just mindfulness, just mindful

noting how that you just note it and let it go, note it and let it go. Every time it arises, you note it and let it go.

And then so that you're not feeding it, you're not reinforcing it and then the the karma just gets weaker and weaker and fades out.

Um

or just through deep meditation.

Although, in the text uh vicikiccha can be a hindrance to or uh uh an obstacle

to deep meditation in and of itself. So, you'd have to get past the vicikiccha at least temporarily to get into the deep mental states. And then you can see from your own experience the the benefits

of not only not thinking these worrisome
and like

uh

indecisive thoughts. I mean, just
thinking itself is is just inferior to
to just sitting in silence with your
mind wide open, clear clear like glass.

Although thinking is uh necessary
sometimes.

Especially if you're like
trying to solve a Sudoku or something.

Okay. Next question.

Also from Potila.

Potila's last question. This one is
about demons or dark forces.

Did you ever encounter non-human beings,

demons, ghosts, petas, etc. during your time of practice? I mean, something categorically different than just fear, a sense or presence of a being around you or trying to influence your behavior. You noted one story of a ghost interaction, but did you ever have the feeling of something more hostile?

If so, what did you do? Many texts say to meditate on metta as a protection and antidote. Was this your approach?

As a monk, I can't recall um any kind of encounter with some sort of hostile supernatural being. I mean, there's there's the time that I got attacked by ogres that uh some of you may know of about that I've I've written

about. Which personally I think may have just been a waking dream.

And I won't go into the the details.

But um

And it wasn't it wasn't me who said that

I was I was attacked by ogres. It was

just I explained what happened to this

Burmese monk who was very superstitious.

He had a degree uh like a university

degree in English, but he just had like

these protection tattoos all over his

body to protect him from, you know, the

evil eye and hexes and and ghosts and

everything. And he he he was just

convinced that I'd been attacked by

ogres because there were supposedly

ogres in this this forest.

Um

So, yeah, I

the only time I can recall

of feeling a a presence of like really

just a

like a dark

negative kind of feeling, I was about

20 years old, I think. And I'd just

moved into this crummy little apartment

over the summer.

And um is that apartment just had like

this really bad vibe to it. And so, I

was already um interested in Buddhism at

the time. So, I just tried to exercise

whatever it was. You know, you you know,

you light the the incense and the

candles and do some chanting and read
sacred texts and that kind of thing. And
uh

it apparently worked.

But, um that's that's about it. Um

But, there is there is another thing.

It's like maybe one reason why I didn't
have any problems like that is um
because I was just a a monk doing
intensive practice.

Um

I I have a friend I I used to have a
friend, a Balinese monk,
who uh mostly lives in Burma.

And when he's in back in Bali, he has an
attendant named Noman.

And Noman would say that one reason why he has so much respect for this monk is cuz he can see spirits. Noman can.

And he can see he can see spirits and most people have got spirits kind of hovering around them trying to influence their behavior, but the spirits just stayed away from this monk. They wouldn't come near him and that's one reason why Noman had so much respect for this monk. It's like his Dharma was so good that the spirits knew they couldn't really influence him or or manipulate him and so they just left him alone. And who knows, maybe um when I was practicing intensively, that sort of thing was uh

going on with me, too, and that's that's my excuse for not having demons attack me. I don't know.

So, I'll just move on to the next question.

And this is from Yuichiro.

And Yuichiro says, "In your experience, have you been able to talk to trees, animals, etc. or feel their energy? A lot of yogis say they can communicate with nature by being aware of its energy or something. I just want to talk to trees. They seem nice."

Well,

I don't think trees would even have any

kind of

conceptual

mental process.

When I think of trees, it's like if you go out into a forest, like a primeval forest, you're out in some big national park away from the other people, just these huge trees all around, there's just this feeling of presence. You know, just this vibe. And that could I mean, that could be

you know, you're you're you're tapping into the mental states of a tree because I don't think that they're sitting around or standing around, you know, philosophizing or thinking about, "Gee, is this nice and sunny today, isn't it?"

I think that they just have this you know, it could just be like a carrier wave or a hum or something if they have any consciousness at all. And Buddhism does

uh allow that plants do have a very simple kind of consciousness.

They're called Ekaindriya Jiva, which is one faculty of life.

They don't think, they don't see or smell or hear, but they have the sense of touch.

According to uh according to ancient Buddhism.

Uh so, with regard to trees, um yeah, if you just get a feel in the

forest, I mean, that could that could be it. Just some very subtle, deep kind of a feeling. That might be as as intellectual as trees get.

Um talking to animals, though. Have I been able to talk to animals or feel their energy?

Um I think just about anybody, if you're not just a sociopath, just completely closed off, you're going to have a certain amount of empathy with especially if you got a dog. I mean, cats may you know, they're they're different, but you know, like the dogs, you you just kind of tap into each other's energy.

Um

there was one time in particular when I was in Burma, that it was it was practically it was like tap telepathy or something.

Um there were these two dogs at this monastery, just scroungy burly's monastery dogs.

And

they were brothers.

And everybody liked one of them, and it was like almost everybody just did not like the other. Like, I remember once this novice is calling the dog. He had a piece of meat or something he wanted to feed the dog. The wrong one came, and he hits that one, and then and then the

other one comes, and he feeds him, you know, it's like

um even even the dogs' names, one was called Po Sho, which is like dear little rascal, and the other one was Ngwe Day, which just means like scoundrel.

And I liked scoundrel. I mean, he I liked him way better than the other one. It's It's like my heart goes out to like the troublemaker kind of dogs.

Um

just the rascally ones or something.

They just can't help it. They don't know any better and they need love.

And so, I liked the scoundrel called one.

And one time, just, you know, I was just

hugging him, just giving him a hug.

And all of a sudden, I just got in this rush of just joy and pleasure. And I looked down and the dog was obviously feeling the same thing. It was just like this connection happened. This sort of like love flowing between us or something. And he I'm sure he loved me because I was practically the only being in the world that really like cared about him, you know?

So, yeah, it can happen. It's like but I I think it happens with everybody to some degree, unless they're just a total sociopath.

So, I'll just move on to the next

question. Also from Yuichiro, is telepathy possible?

And I would say, yeah, it's possible. I mean, anything is possible.

Anything that can be imagined is possible. A lot of stuff that can't be imagined is possible.

So, yeah, telepathy is possible.

Even if scientists can't explain it, and they probably never will explain it correctly.

And so, the next question is also from Yuichiro, have you felt your own chi or energy? Well, that's kind of similar to the one about the animals. It's like, you know, everybody feels their own energy.

Um I haven't felt it in accordance with like Chinese medicine, where it's going through the special channels, you know? The spleen channel and that kind of thing. I I haven't really experienced that, but I mean, obviously we feel our own energy.

I'm not exactly sure what chi is supposed to be. It's really not um like an Indian Buddhist concept.

I think the Indian Buddhists have got something else like pran prana, which would just literally means breath, but it's also like uh the life force or the energy of life or that sort of

thing.

But I think we've all felt it,
especially when we were younger.

I mean, when you're when you're like a
kid or a teenager, it's just uh you're
It's like you're high on chi
a lot of the time.

So, I'll just move on to the next
question. I may have not have answered
that one very well, so I'll just hasten
on to the next one.

And this is from heyitstig.

And heyitstig asks, "Have you considered
doing a full show on Upandita?

I know you have a section on him with
Hareru,

and it was so interesting. I read your

article a fellow Upandita Rama back when it was available, and I'm sure I'll have a chance to read it later. But yeah, I'm just wondering if you're planning on doing a show about it."

Um

Yeah, Upandita was He was uh one of the world's

foremost meditation masters

when he was alive. He died several years ago, I think.

Um I spent a few months at his place. In fact, he uh he participated in my ordination well over 30 years ago.

Um

and

yeah, I mean, there's I I could talk for half an hour easily about Upandita.

Um

I just have bad karma with regard to teachers, I think. Like, some people they they go to Upandita, and and he would just I mean, you know, they would just make all this progress, and you know, you have these famous meditation teachers in in the West claiming to be disciples of Upandita.

And I went to Panditarama and he's just like an angry old man. I mean, he's just uh

just he would he would get angry pretty much daily.

And uh just sort of irrational and just

hostile a lot of the time.

So, it was like I would see a different

U Pandita than other people would see.

So, I mean, there could be just uh as many U Panditas as there were people who experienced him.

But, I think another

um option which might even be better, if

I were to just do a whole video just

talking about it, would just be the

Mahasi method in particular, in general.

I mean,

because U Pandita was a teacher of the

Mahasi method.

He was a disciple of Mahasi Sayadaw.

So,

and most Western

um Theravada Buddhist meditation

um is based either on the Mahasi method

or on the Goenka method. Like uh

the IMS

places, you know, the so-called um

you know, Insight Meditation Societies,

um they're largely based on the Mahasi method.

So, that might be uh even better cuz U

Pandita being a teacher

of the Mahasi method and a disciple of

Mahasi Sayadaw himself,

um you know, he he he'd fit right in.

And Mahasi Sayadaw, it's like a lot of

people in the West have never heard of

him, including people that consider

themselves to be serious Theravada
Buddhists, but uh

he is one of the most famous monks in
Burma.

There are Mahasi centers all over. It's
like in America, you got a Chinese
restaurant in every town. Um in Burma,
you got a Mahasi center in pretty much
every every town worthy of the name of
town.

So, yeah, it's possible. I think I could
I could do that.

Especially people keep pestering me to
do it.

So, I'll just move on to the next
question. That's from Matthew.

And Matthew says, "From your understanding of archaic pre-Theravada Buddhism, did it describe the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path?"

Well,

if you go all the way back to just primitive Buddhism,

then um like the oldest texts, like like the Anguttara Nikaya, it doesn't really mention the Four Noble Truths.

But, the Four Noble Truths are very early.

Um the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta is considered by tradition to be the Buddha's first sermon after his enlightenment, and it's largely about the Four Noble

Truths.

Um plus the middle path.

Um

so, I would not be surprised if the historical Gotama Buddha himself taught the Four Noble Truths.

But,

I do not think that originally the Fourth Noble Truth, which which is Magga Sacca, or the uh the truth of the path.

I mean, I I might as well just start at the beginning. At the beginning of the First Noble Truth is Dukkha. Dukkha Sacca. The truth is that, you know, any conscious being in this universe is going to suffer. Is not going to be

fully satisfied.

You know, there's a certain amount of unease that just permeates uh individual or seemingly individual existence, conscious existence.

Um as an individual being, it's just built right in that you're you're going to be at least slightly unhappy.

Or slightly uncomfortable. That just pure bliss just isn't an option.

So, that's the first noble truth. The second noble truth is the cause, samudaya sacca, the cause of suffering, and that is desire or clinging. And clinging or um

what's the word?

Upadana in Pali.

Um in a way, it it could be interpreted as just insisting upon things being a certain way.

And that that or just craving in Pali, tanha, which literally means thirst, are considered to be the cause of suffering. Whenever you're unhappy, it's because you want something. That's one of the most important things you can learn from Buddhism. If you only know one thing about Buddhism, it should be the second noble truth, which is if you're unhappy, it's because you are desiring something.

And that desire is volitional,
ultimately. I mean, it may be that
you're just doing it through knee jerk
knee jerk reflex,
and you don't realize that you have a
choice, but ultimately, you have a
choice.

Third is nirodha sacca,
the the truth of cessation,
and that is just logically
uh it logically follows from the second
noble truth. The second noble truth is
um suffering is the
desire is the cause of suffering. Third
noble truth is if there is no desire,
there is no suffering. That's the
cessation of suffering. Is the cessation

of craving or desire or attachment.

And finally, you've got magga sacca,

which is the path leading to the

cessation of suffering. And I think

originally, it was not necessarily

eightfold. The Buddha may have taught

there is a path,

and that would be, you know, practicing

dhamma and self-restraint,

um self-discipline.

But if you look in the the sutras, there

are there are

there's also a tenfold path where you

got

right liberation and and the I can't

remember what the other one is.

And there seems to have been some uh
uh a certain amount of mutation going on
before they settled on um the Noble
Eightfold Path, which is so let's try
not to embarrass myself here by getting
it wrong. Right view, right thought,
right speech, right action, right
livelihood,
right effort,
right mindfulness, and right
concentration.

So, I think the formula of the
eightfoldness of it may be later.

It may I I it's pretty likely that it
came after just the idea of there being
a path.

And whether the Four Noble Truths really

go back to the historical Buddha, um
I can't really say for sure. The like
the the texts that are considered to be
the oldest are more into don't believe
anything.

And then like the formulas and that sort
of thing um
came a little later in the history of
Buddhist philosophy.

Um

but it is very early and uh I wouldn't
be surprised if the Buddha did teach it.
And even if he didn't teach it, it was
it's very early. But, the eightfoldness
of the path I think is is later than uh
the Four Noble Truths.

So,

move on to the next question.

And this is from

the Marquis de Sade.

And the Marquis says, "What is your

opinion on Islam as a spiritual system?"

Islam.

Well,

it arose in during the Dark Ages in a

barbarous culture and so it is kind of a

Dark Age-y barbarous kind of a religion.

Um

at least they're honest about the

prophet Muhammad

in that, you know, even just the Muslims

themselves admit that he was uh

you know, a bandit and a rapist and so

forth.

Um

But, I mean

there's going to be people with

spiritual talent

born all over the world and people with

spiritual talent born into a Muslim

culture

are in all likelihood going to be

Muslims. And so you you do have wise and

good Muslims.

Um like the the book that I mentioned

earlier um

by Karen Armstrong. I mean, she she

pretty much um

tries She'll She'll make apologetics for

Muhammad just saying, you know, he is just a product of his culture, you know, and the culture was very barbarous. But, in in the other book uh A History of God that I that I read by her, she she does mention that uh there was there have been some very wise Muslims.

Um

So,

I could I personally could be a Muslim more easily than I could be a Christian simply because there's less of a a story that you have to believe. Like I already mentioned, you know, um I'm not good at believing narratives that you can't really prove or disprove. And there's

less of that in Islam. I mean, all there is essentially is

God is one God and Muhammad is his prophet. I mean, you believe that and uh you do the the bowing to Mecca and so forth and

that's good enough.

Do the hajj if you can afford it.

Sacrifice a camel.

That's one That's one thing that a lot of people don't realize is that Islam is one of the few

major religions nowadays that still promotes animal sacrifice. If you If you do the hajj to Mecca, you're supposed to cut the throat of a camel. Although, I

think nowadays, camels being expensive and all, um they mostly substitute it with a goat.

But, um

Sufism, you know, is I think one reason why Sufism has as much wisdom as it does is cuz it borrowed a lot of stuff from Buddhism and Hinduism when uh they came in contact like in Northwestern India.

So, yeah, um I mean, if you really want to live a spiritual life, I think you might do better to choose a different religion than really any of the Abrahamic ones of the West.

But, um

I mean, some people just have a personality or a character where it just

fits, you know, just something just resonates. It just works for them.

You know, then maybe they're just got a like a devotional kind of temperament.

They They need to worship somebody. And so, you know, Jesus might really work well for them.

Um

So, I'll just move on to the next question. I don't want to badmouth Islam so much that uh

I get banned from YouTube or something.

Uh so, let's see. Num Next question from uh

the Marquis de Sade

is, "What are some of the teachings in

Mahayana or Vajrayana you see as useful
or complementary to Theravada?"

Um

Well,

I think some of the most useful
teachings of Mahayana, and I really
don't know all that much about
Vajrayana, but in Mahayana, you got the
what

Prajnaparamita? Prajna? I I used to
pronounce Prajna, but then

I was talking to a professor who who
taught Sanskrit.

Who uh

He he said it's Prajna.

Prajnaparamita.

Of course, he could be wrong. He was

wearing these weird pajama-like clothes
when I met him. We were at an ayahuasca
ceremony.

So, anyway, um

yeah, that and like um like Nagarjuna's

Mūlamadhyamakakārikā

is um

in a way, it

it complements early Theravada. Like the
teachings of the Atikavada that I talk
about all the time.

Um

Madhyamaka

Madhyamaka philosophy of of Mahayana

Buddhism

um

it's it's very similar in certain ways.

Like the Atikavada has been called
proto-Madhyamaka.

And uh

N- uh Nagarjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā

it uses

like ruthless logic

to just destroy any kind of

philosophical idea so that you wind up
with emptiness.

And that can be useful. That can be
helpful.

Again, with regard to Tibetan Buddhism,

I really don't know enough about it to

uh

pontificate on the subject.

And um

anything that really doesn't agree with
Theravada,

then which is a lot of a lot of

Mahayana, like the Pure Land stuff, for
example, um

yeah, but if it if it's

is like an elaboration on early Buddhist
philosophy,

um then I think that that could be very
useful because

um Theravada arose before formal logic
really became established in India.

And so, the logic of Theravada Buddhism
is pretty shaky sometimes in in the in
their philosophy.

But by the time Mahayana was developed,

they had a much more sophisticated

um

like uh logical philosophy established in India. And so, Mahayana Buddhist philosophy can be very subtle uh to the to the extent that you just don't see in Theravada except in in like a very simple archaic kind of form in the very oldest texts.

So,

yeah, with with regard to uh this question here, what are some of the teachings of in Mahayana or Vajrayana I see as useful or complementary to Theravada. Yeah, I would say um you know, like the the perfection of wisdom

sutas or sutras and also um Nagarjuna's
Mulamadhyamakakarika, some of the some
of the other um

Madhyamaka philosophy

is uh

it can be very helpful to help you kind
of wrap your head around certain

Buddhist concepts or or just stop even
trying to wrap your head around
anything, which is even better.

So, next question also by the Marquis de
Sade,

would steroids and antidepressants be
prohibited in the fifth precept?

Also, do you follow the fifth precept
strictly?

So, technically speaking,
the fifth precept is
uh I undertake the precept to abstain
from ale, wine, and other intoxicants
which cause cloudedness of mind or
heedlessness.

Anything that makes you stupid and
semi-conscious
um you should avoid.

So, let's see, steroids and
antidepressants, if they make if I mean
if they make your mind cloudy, make you
put you into a stupor, then yeah, I mean
they they would be included in the fifth
precept. But if they don't, I mean
steroids like Red Bull, I think has
steroids in it. At least the the Asian

version, like the Thai version, had
steroids in it. I mean

um

maybe you're talking about anabolic
steroids or something. I'm not sure what
kind of steroids were in Red Bull.

Pretty sure even vitamin D is a steroid,
technically speaking.

Antidepressants, again, um
not necessarily. I mean if it doesn't
put you into a stupor or make you
semi-conscious or just like, you know,
sloppy and careless
like uh alcohol can do,
then uh yeah, I don't think it would be
included.

Um also, do you follow the fifth precept strictly? No, I do not. I do uh I mean this is just orange juice, but I do have the occasional beer.

Come home from work on a hot day, cold beer goes down real nice.

Uh so, I have

been

mildly

inebriated

since I dropped out of the monk hood.

For recreational purposes, not just medicinal.

So, yeah, I fess up to that.

So, let's just move on here. Next

question, Bpat427

asks,

"If one dies in a state of equanimity due to drug or alcohol-induced delusion, how would that influence their karma and rebirth?"

Well, a state of equanimity due to drug or alcohol-induced delusion. Yeah, equanimity, I mean there's there's right equanimity I suppose and wrong equanimity.

Um like a cow is is pretty equanimous.

And uh it could be that you're you die in some kind of blissful stupor.

You might just get in reborn as a cow or something.

Cuz they're they're pretty blissful a

lot of the time, it seems like.

Anyway, they got equanimity.

So,

yeah, I mean, I don't think that there's much chance of, uh, getting into heaven from dying in a a drug-induced blissful state. I'm I I've never taken heroin, but I've been told that it's going to be very intensely blissful.

But, I don't think you're going to get into heaven by, uh, shooting up.

So, yeah, yeah, the answer to that one is, um,

I mean, if the equanimity is essentially a stupor, then you're going to, uh, you know, you

you're going to be generating sort of stupor karma that may land you in some existence that is even more stuporous than this one or stupid than this one.

So, I'll just move on to the next question from Chaplin.

And Chaplin says, "Can you explain the processes

Let's see. Can you explain the process and requirements of being ordained as a Theravada monk

and your own ordination?"

Well,

there are some who claim that, uh,

Theravada monks are not even ordained.

They just declare themselves ordained,
but that is certainly not true.

Um, in the Buddha's time, according to
tradition, he would just say, "Ehi
bhikkhu, come monk." And that was it.

That was you were ordained if he if he
called that out to you.

Um,

but

after the after the the death of the
Buddha,

there they had to establish like
protocols for ordination procedure and
so forth.

And

in the Ganges Valley, which is where you
know, Buddhism began,

there has to be a
an ordination ceremony with no fewer
than 10 monks participating. But outside
of the

the middle region, which is the
the Ganges Valley, outside of that,
which would include the USA, Europe,
Australia, Southern India, wherever.

All you need is five.

Five monks in good standing to conduct
the ceremony. And which would include
the preceptor. Also, there should be at
least one monk who is an expert on the
rules of monastic discipline, so he'll
know how to do everything properly.

And then there's a questioner

who

before a person is ordained, he gets questioned because there are certain disqualifying characteristics that can prevent the ordination from being valid.

For example,

you have to be a human being.

So like uh

non-human beings just shapeshifting and assuming human form can't be ordained.

You have to be a man if you're if you're going to be ordained as a monk, which also means you have to have the family jewels intact.

Um

there there are a number of of rules

like you can't be a runaway slave, you can't be like an AWOL soldier, you can't be anybody who still has obligations to the government, you can't be a debtor.

Um

you have to have the permission of your parents if they're still alive.

Um and also there's certain diseases including leprosy that if you have those, I think tuberculosis and uh a few others.

Um epilepsy, for example. If you have those, you're not supposed to be ordained. But, some of these um it's like the the ordination is still valid. Like, somebody who has epilepsy,

if they are ordained, or if they don't have the permission of their parents, they get ordained, it's just the monks conducting the ceremony commit a very minor violation. It's called a dukata offense offense uh an offensive wrong doing, but the ordination is still valid. But, if you're not human, or if you're if you're not a fully intact male,

then uh it's just not it's just the ordination is just null and void.

And um

some monasteries, especially like in Burma, you can just walk in and be ordained, just boom.

But, um a lot of places they'll require

you to be uh

uh like a monastery attendant for a while. That was the case with me.

Uh I was a monastery attendant for like 2 months, you know, washing dishes and driving the monks around and that kind of thing.

And uh

then you do the the the ceremony where you have to have the eight requisites before you can be ordained, which is three robes, a belt, let's see if I get this right, the the bowl, your your alms bowl,

a razor for shaving your head and face, a needle for mending your robes, and a

water filter.

So, you have to have those intact, and then the ceremony itself lasts, I don't know, maybe 20 minutes. And then you're a monk, fully ordained.

Um on the other hand, to drop out of the monkhood, all you have to do is just tell somebody that you're not a monk anymore, and mean it, and they have to understand what you're saying, and then you're just not a monk anymore. So, um monks can't ordain themselves, but they can uh they can drop out of the monkhood themselves, so long as, you you there has to be one other person that they tell,

but the other person really doesn't have any say in the matter.

So,

I think I got the basics of that.

So, I'll just move on to the last question from Chaplin, which is also the last question of the evening.

And that is,

who is the Samana Johan character that likes to spam all over your blog articles?

Well,

long time ago when I was still a monk,

I was contacted by someone

calling himself Samana Johan.

And he was asking me to participate in

some Dharma forum that he had going, but first of all, his English was so horrible that I mean, I could hardly understand what he was trying to say.

And secondly,

um he was just struck me as like a really just a rigid dogmatist.

And I got really don't have much use for that. Just

people that think they know something when all they're doing is just parroting books.

And you can find that in all traditions.

It's not just Theravada, obviously.

So, I I uh

didn't join, and then he took the

liberty of joining me up himself, and I

started getting spammed. Like my inbox
is being spammed by this sort of
gibberish semi-English

Dharma

essays or something.

So, I just started flagging them as spam
until they stopped coming because to to
unsubscribe was such a complicated

Byzantine process that uh

it was just easier to just flag them as
spam.

But um later he started uh like right
when I announced that I was going to
drop out of the monkhood, he just went
into a a spamming frenzy of
um just delivering admonishments and

scoldings and so forth because he apparently very much disagreed with my plan of dropping out of the monk hood.

And uh

I wrote a blog post partly about him.

Um

And uh after a while he sort of apologized and stopped scolding me.

And then just recently he started up again.

He just He just can't hold it back. But

um

I I don't know. It's like

some some people, I mean, they can be fundamentalist Christians or they can be Buddhists or Muslims or whatever. They just They've got it in their head that

they have been

you know, they have seen the light and they they know the true way and anyone who disagrees with them is just plain wrong and they do not hesitate to let you know that.

And uh I do not consider that to be

um

symptomatic of wisdom.

But of course they certainly do.

And so there's not really much you can say.

And uh so I just don't want to really wallow in this and I have no ill will towards this person.

Just uh answering the question and that

was the very last question and so uh

I think we're done.

And uh be happy.

Hello and welcome to episode 23 of
question and answer. I am your host
Panyo Bassaw.

And as it usually happens, I wait until
I've got a fair amount of questions to
answer and then I think, "Oh, it's time
to do a Q&A soon." So I put up the
announcement that I'm going to be doing
a Q&A soon and anyone having having a
question should ask it and then I get a
whole bunch more. So we got like whole
lots of questions to answer.

And so uh
without any further ado, like uh telling
you about the strange morning I had.

Um

Ah, what the hell, I'll tell you.

I got up. I'm sitting there on the couch for about 10 minutes looking at emails and so forth and these two little next-door neighbor kids come over and invite me over to their house and I'm over there and they're like exercising their uh

um insistence upon me, like, you know, they're getting me stuff to eat and showing me their rocks and their their uh

little dinosaur collection and this kind of thing.

And uh I was appointed king of the uh the back porch, so I appointed their dog prime minister and uh came back home. So

I guess the dog is now in charge over there.

Anyway,

I'm going to uh exercise the uh
awakeness I have on this very relaxed
Saturday

and answer all these questions.

And so the first question is from Hey
It's Tig.

And Hey It's Tig says, "What is the
purpose of the fan that I see certain
Sayadaws pictured with?"

And yeah, I do think it's mainly a
Burmese phenomenon where you see a
picture of some famous monk and they've
got their robes done up in a certain way

a lot of the time, like with the big collar around their neck and they're holding a big fan, often with like the name of their monastery or or something on around the the edge of it.

And

it's one of the few one of the relatively few possessions that monks um commonly own or um traditionally.

And obviously, the main reason for a fan is uh if it's hot, and it often is in Burma, you fan yourself to uh thermoregulate.

But um

the main reason

up until relatively recently, I think,

one of the main reasons was um

I have I have read that 100 years ago or

more, like even back in the 1800s,

when a sayadaw or senior monk would give

a dhamma talk, he would give the dhamma

talk behind the fan. You know, he'd be

like hiding his face with the fan, and

the purpose of that was to avoid

distractions from seeing pretty girls or

something in the audience.

Um although now it has pretty much just

degenerated into a kind of accessory.

Um

I mean, it's not really used very much.

It's just something traditionally that

Burmese monks, especially Burmese dhamma teaching monks, have. You know, it's just part of the uniform.

And there's a lot of that in Burma where um I mean, there's a lot of that everywhere really, where people do things that don't necessarily make much sense just because that's what you're supposed to do.

And so, holding a fan while posing for a picture or giving a dhamma talk

um is just part of Burmese tradition, I think.

And uh even I did it sometimes, although mostly I would carry a fan around for thermoregulation purposes.

So, the next question is from Seeker
Selt or Seeker Kelt.

I'm not sure on on the pronunciation.

And Seeker Kelt or Selt

says, "What's your thoughts on rays of
light emanating from the awakened one?

Is it in sūtra?"

Well,

there's uh

bur like Theravāda Buddhist tradition. I

don't know about Mahāyāna,

where

there's like a multicolored

nimbus of light radiating from the head
of the Buddha.

And those colors are what are

represented on the the Buddhist saosana flag.

And uh I'm not going to try and name all the colors because really I'm not much interested in the mythological stuff.

And uh

I would guess that multicolored lights emanating from the Buddha's head would be more mythology than history.

Because a lot of people would see the Buddha and they just think he was an ordinary monk or just some ordinary person.

So,

I mean, if he really was 27-ft tall with multicolored rays of light emanating

from his head, um yeah, I think people would be impressed by that and be not quite willing to diss him very much.

So,

uh Seeker Kelt Selt is asking, "Is it in sūtra?"

And I'm not 100% sure. As I say, I've never really been much interested in that, and so it doesn't really soak in even if I read it. But, there is a strange sūtra in the Majjhima Nikāya, which is full of all sorts of miraculous stuff about the Buddha, even like when he was born, you know, his mother was standing up holding onto a tree. He was born without any goop on him at all. And

immediately he just takes off walking
like seven steps towards the east, I
think. It was like a lotus blossom
sprouting under his foot at each step.

And he's saying, you know, I am the
greatest. This is There's no further
rebirth for me, and so forth.

And uh I think that sutta may have the
the multi-colored rays of light. And it
may be elsewhere in the Dīgha Nikāya. It
wouldn't surprise me. Um

but I can't I can't say for sure because
I do not recall

um

clearly if it really is in the Pāli
suttas, but I I get a feeling that
there's a good chance that it is. And um

I'm too lazy or uninterested to try and research this and look it up.

But um

there is a a sutta, and I don't even remember the name of it. It's just uh uh yeah, I don't I don't even remember the name.

It's in the Majjhima Nikāya, though. So, there's only 152 suttas there, so you can find it, I'm sure.

Uh

next question is from Caveman.

And Caveman says,

"Can you elaborate more on your personal experience with celibacy and semen retention and how it affected you? I'm

curious how long you went without sexual release and how difficult it was."

Well, this is uh

uh a topic that uh a lot of people are really interested in. I knew this or I had this reader, this uh

cyber follower,

who uh actually started a like a a blog or a a website just on this particular subject.

And some people take it very seriously.

Uh with regard to semen retention and celibacy, how would it affected you?

Um, let's see. I guess those are like two different things, so I can start with celibacy. How it affected me was uh it made me frustrated a lot of the time.

Um, sort of like um

a man who is fasting.

And I've I've experienced this also. You

fast for 5 days and uh

you spend a lot of time just imagining

what you want to eat when you start

eating again.

And uh

I think celibacy has that effect on a

lot of people where

um

you know, it just

the celibacy is only partially

successful.

Because even though physically you're

not doing it, there's still the desire

there and it keeps percolating up into the consciousness and turns into like pornographic thoughts and so forth.

So

um I mean, I was

technically celibate for 30 years and uh

I managed not to get excommunicated,

although um I was

um I mean, I never really stopped liking

girls and uh you know, being just

essentially instinctively heterosexual.

So that didn't go away and um I don't

think it ever completely goes away

except in certain cases where

maybe you have like just a massive uh

shift in consciousness, shift in

perception due to some crisis or maybe

you just uh never really liked girls or
had much of a sex drive to begin with,
something like that. Um I've noticed
Burmese monks tend uh
not to be uh
um particularly obsessed with uh
with sexuality. Like uh I was I stated
this uh big school monastery once. I had
uh
during the rainy season, there were 600
monks and 900 novices all staying there,
plus like 100 scroungy dogs. And
sometimes there'd be like this uh little
flock of
um Burmese girls dressed in their best
clothes, you know, just walking along.

And um

you know, I'd be watching the monks.

There'd be a group of monks in front of me. They'd walk by them, and there not a single head would turn, you know, they were just completely uninterested.

Which was probably not due to their holiness so much as just um they just weren't interested. Which is maybe one of the reasons why some of them became monks in the first place.

Um I remember

there was this one monk that I knew.

And sometimes we'd travel together with a a bunch of other monks.

And in Burma, you're driving along, and by roadside wells, you know, the village

people would just go there to take a bath. And sometimes you'd see, you know, young women taking a bath, and they'd have, you know, they'd have like a bathing sarong on from their armpits down to below their knees, but still they'd be wet and clingy and shiny and so forth.

And it was this one other monk was the only one that I ever saw whose head would turn, so he could watch as we went by.

So,

that's uh kind of getting off the the subject of uh how it affected me.

But um yeah, I I never completely

mastered celibacy.

And uh I am no longer celibate now.

Uh with regard to semen retention,

the way it worked with me was uh

every

two to three weeks,

I would just have a pornographic dream.

And uh so the semen would uh be

released. You know, the pressure

would be released. It's like you don't

explode.

Um

if if you really need that to happen

then it's going to happen

somehow or other like in your sleep or

whatever. Sometimes you can just

overflow.

So

how long I went without sexual release?

I assume that means an orgasm or
emission of seminal fluid.

Up until like my early to mid 40s

it was like I just said it was every few
weeks at least every few weeks I would
have a wet dream nocturnal emission.

And after that as my blood cooled a bit
it was longer and longer. I no longer I
mean after my early to mid 40s I stopped
having

wet dreams and I kind of missed it. You
know, it was like the only
the only semblance of action I was
getting anyway.

But

it was it's difficult. Celibacy can be

difficult for someone who is uh

just instinctively

like uh

What's the word?

Uh

Uh

I'm trying to think of a word and it's

not coming. But if you just naturally,

you know, it's just built into your your

character or something that you are

heterosexual, you know, you're attracted

to attractive members of the opposite

sex then uh

Yeah, I mean it's not going to be easy.

But um it does does definitely have its

advantages I suppose. I mean if you're
living a spiritual life of a renunciant
um

Yeah, I mean

living in a cave

and meditating a lot and so forth uh

it it doesn't work as easily if you have
a mate who uh

wants to be comfy

you know, being an ascetic it doesn't
work so well.

So for 30 years

it seemed uh

worth it. And uh

yeah, I got I got benefits from it,
obviously. At least obvious to me.

So, I guess that's enough on that question. Um I'm not sure how well I answered it. Um

I suppose I should just go over the question one last time here. Can I elaborate more on my personal experience with silk? Yeah, I mean there were times when I was just extremely frustrated, just wanted to cry or howl like a dog or something.

Um curious how long without sexual release. Yeah, okay. Um yeah, not excommunicating myself was relatively easy. And for a monk, it's um a very serious offense, not excommunication, but one notch below excommunication, even to

deliberately have an orgasm, to have an orgasm on purpose.

And um

there were

maybe four times in 30 years when I was

you know, it's just

um you know, you're not exactly spanking

the puppy, but you're petting it a

little bit, and um it just goes off,

so to speak. And um when that happens, I

mean, you just have to just freeze and

just let it happen. You know, you can't

do anything to help it along. And uh

there were a few times, like four times,

when I would there was just in doubt,

you know, you have to psychoanalyze

yourself afterwards. It's like, did I do that on purpose? And did I do like the motions to that that helped it to happen, you know, like when it when it already started. And um so I would I would go through the penance and everything uh like four times because of that.

And uh yeah, it it it can really be a problem for for certain certain monks. But uh enough of that. Let's just move on to the next question.

Also from Caveman, if there is no self, how does karma persist from one life to the next?

What is it that connects my current life with my past life? Yeah, this is a this

is a common question. In fact, some some question along these lines is asked almost every episode of of Q&A here.

Um

how does karma persist from one life to the next? It's just the like the momentum of the karma itself.

You can refer to it as uh something like uh

a spiritual equivalent of the law of conservation of energy, something like that. It just

um you have this momentum and when the the body that this momentum is um apparently inhabiting dies, it

immediately has to appear in in
Theravada Buddhism, that stream of
consciousness has to su- that just
immediately has to appear the very next
moment.

So, there is no limbo or anything in
between lives. It's like the moment of
death. As soon as your mental process
ceases finally in one life, the very
next moment there has to be a
reappearance in in a different
existence.

And uh it could be a brief one, you
know, something similar to a
the bardo realms mentioned in the
Tibetan Book of the Dead.

Or it could be uh

you know, another human or whatever.

But, um

it's uh the karma is just this process.

It's not really an abiding entity. It's

it's changing.

And you know, sort of like a flame.

And um

I mean, you can refer to a flame as, you

know, one flame, but um it's a

completely different flame from from one

moment to the next because it's just in

this constant state of change and flux.

So, what is it that connects your

current life with your past life would

be

the similarity of this of the like the

direction and uh

just overall momentum of uh

the volitional processes of the mind.

So, I'll just move on to the next question.

From Yuichiro, should we hate evil? And the answer is no. I mean, you should avoid evil if you can,

but um hate is itself from the Buddhist point of view, hate is itself um if not evil, at least it's unskillful, unwholesome. It creates bad karma regardless of what it is you're hating.

And um

I've noticed

a lot of

Christians

um

including like ancient Christians,
they would uh you know, in the in the
New Testament, Christianity is it
teaches, you know, you should love your
enemies, but then they would still, you
know, the hate kind of runs deep in some
people. So, they would they would not
hate their enemies, but they would still
hate enemies of the church or enemies of
God, which could be, you know, most of
the human race.

But um

and then and then there's like Mahatma
Gandhi's idea of you don't hate the

sinner, you just hate the sin, but the sin and the sinner cannot be separated.

You know, you take away

um

one and the other one really isn't there, either.

Um

is hating the sin without hating the sinner?

Um I mean, it's like uh

trying to

um hate a person's behavior

while not hating the person. I mean,

their behavior is part of them, so

you're hating part of that person

anyway.

So, no, you shouldn't hate evil. I mean,

you should avoid it. You shouldn't do it. You shouldn't wallow in it. But if you were encounter it, then you should try to maintain equanimity and um probably best not even to really stick the label of evil onto it. Just see it as a an unskillful form of energy that uh you know, sort of like fire or something. You should be careful with it, not let it burn you, but um as other than that, I mean, hate is hate whether regardless of what you're hating. It may be um less bad for you to hate evil than to hate good

or to hate uh black licorice or
whatever, but um
still hate is hate and uh
you should avoid this like greed, hate,
and delusion are the three poisons or
the three fires that uh keep us in
samsara.

So, even hating evil is is hating. So,
I'll just move on to the next question
here from Marshall.

And Marshall says,

"Is there much of a vegetarian tradition
in Theravada Buddhism
either amongst lay followers or the
Sangha?"

So, I really can't speak for other
Theravada Buddhist countries,

but I can speak for Burma.

And in Burma, some monks and some lay people

are th- that look, which is their equivalent of vegetarian. Th- that look means um not killing breathing life, you know? And that's really the the vegetarian tradition in Theravada is just based on ahimsa or non-harming.

That uh

people will avoid eating meat just sort of like um a lot of people in the West would be vegetarian. They just don't want to kill animals. Or Mahatma Gandhi who said he didn't want an animal to have its throat cut just so he could

have a good taste in his mouth.

So, yeah, there is some of that. It's

not real common,

but um

some monks in Burma and some lay people

in Burma are th- that look. With regard

to Sri Lanka, I assume it would be more

common because it's there's more of a a

Hindu element in the culture there.

That uh Theravada Buddhism is is

more strongly Indian culturally in Sri

Lanka than in Burma or Thailand. And uh

vegetarianism is a big deal in India.

So,

yeah, I'll just say yeah.

So, we move on to the next question,

which is from Motorhead.

And Motorhead says, "If we are all
living in a dream of a dream of a dream
and nothing is real and the spiritual
realms are beyond comprehension,
question mark question mark question
mark.

Oh, what if we are all living in a dream
of a dream of a dream? Um
well, I would just say that spiritual
realms are beyond comprehension
regardless
whether we're living in a dream of a
dream of a dream or not.

Um like the ultimate truth is is just
beyond comprehension. I mean, you can't
understand it like mentally. It's not

something you can wrap your head around.

And so, if you go into a deep spiritual state where you're wide awake and not thinking anything, you're just experiencing

this experience

this uh

pure consciousness if uh if you really get advanced in your meditation.

Um

you you sort of transcend it. It's

irrelevant if you're in a dream of a

dream of a dream anyway because I mean,

samsara or maya, it's all illusory. It's

it's based on delusion. Greed, hate, and

delusion are the three fires or poisons

that keep us here. And so, samsara

really is based on delusion and it's not ultimate truth. You know, any samsaric fact is really not ultimately true.

And ultimate truth, again, you cannot understand intellectually. It's not a matter of concepts.

It's just uh

you know, there are no moving parts, so to speak.

So,

we're we're all living in a dream, at least, whether it's a dream of a dream of a dream, um it's hard to say. I mean, when we're dreaming at night, it might be a dream of a dream.

Um

so,

if nothing is real, well,

that's

I mean, that would be like radical
nihilism or nihilism.

Um

nothing is real. I mean, I I don't I
don't know if that's even possible that
nothing is real, because even an
illusion has to be based on something.

I mean, the illusion can't just be pure
illusion. Like even a like a mirage,
you know, you see some guy in the desert
sees the uh

the oasis off in the distance,

and uh

you know, that's a mirage, it's not

really there, but the the mirage is caused by something. It's caused by, you know, convection currents and uh distortion of of like light rays through the heat and so forth.

And uh you know, the dream is based on um based on an underlying reality.

And uh really, like mysticism, going into a profound mystical state, you're penetrating through to the ultimate or to the underlying reality.

So, that's that's like the purpose of it.

So, I'll just move on to the next question. We got lots of questions. So,

the next question is from X Emporium.

And X Emporium says,

"At first, I mistook Mahasi in your title." Cuz he was um commenting on a um blog post I wrote about the the Mahasi tradition.

At first I mistook Mahasi in your title for Mahasati,

which was a method designed by a Thai Theravadan monk Luangpor

What is this? Tian looks like.

Have you heard of this?

Similar to noting but there are required movements.

This particular monk and the tradition or method that he founded I've never heard of before. I mean Mahasati just

means great mindfulness.

Great recollection.

So yeah, I understand the term. I may

have seen the term before but um

this this monk and and his

um

his method I have never never heard of

before. So that wasn't easy question is

just nope.

Now I'll move on to the next question

which is also from X Emporium.

And he says

These questions came to me in a dream

and you might be able to help given your

biological and Buddhist backgrounds.

First, do all the cells in our body die

to be replaced during our lifespan so that we may be said to live multiple lives during this time?

Second, I vaguely remember hearing that brain cells are not replaced. So are we looking at one brain mind living in multiple bodies while assuming the same I identity?

Well, with regard to cells and dying cells and cells being replaced, I'm not an expert.

I assume that the cells in our body would be like protozoans where they they reproduce by dividing and maybe it's like

um

they have some some way that's evolved

into them of you know, there's like the old broken down cell that dies and the the other the other half is is healthier or you know, some so I guess your spleen our bone marrow can create cells. So yeah, I mean obviously your your blood your blood cells red blood cells white blood cells die and are replaced by new ones.

Um

brain cells yeah, they tend not to regenerate very well.

Um

but there even that I mean there is neuroplasticity and so forth.

So I guess I'm just doing a roundabout
long-winded way of saying that I really
am not an authority on

um

the life cycles of of the cells in the
human body.

Um

but I mean in a way it's from a Buddhist
point of view it's it's largely
irrelevant. It comes from the Buddhist
point of view um you know, is your a
different person from one moment to the
next even even assuming that person is a
valid designation.

Um

a one brain mind living in multiple
bodies while assuming the same I

identity.

Um

I would I would say no because your brain mind is different from one moment to the next just like a flame is different from one moment to the next.

It's just the similarity

um of the past brain mind with the present brain mind causes them to um be conflated into the same thing when really they are not. They're just similar enough that we call them by the same name.

So in a way I've just sidestepped the the main gist of this question and and just answered it from a different angle.

But uh

yeah.

So I'm just going to move on to the next question.

This is also from X Emporium my

um by the way. Might the cells

themselves be considered sentient beings at some level?

Sometimes I scare myself. Well, the cells of our bodies

um you know, we're you know in a way we are a very complicated colony of protozoans.

You know, we're we're single-celled animals that evolved to form a

like a colony with specialization of of function.

I mean that from the evolutionary point of view that is how multicellular life evolved. We started off as colonies of single-celled organisms.

And

a single-celled organism I would consider to have a very very simple form of consciousness. I think it may be that everything in the universe

every phenomenal

um entity in the universe has some kind of consciousness. You know, even like a hydrogen atom would just have like this elemental, you know, absolutely primitive kind of consciousness to it.

But um

it would have I mean obviously they wouldn't be thinking.

You know, I don't think a an amoeba or a you know, a muscle cell

or or a hydrogen atom actually has thoughts. They don't I mean they're I don't think they're they're nearly complicated enough to do that.

So it's more like uh

this this little spark of of

consciousness and it takes something

like uh a brain or something

performing essentially the same

function as a brain like uh you know, do

act as like a computer to take these

this consciousness

and complicate it and and organize it

and utilize it.

So I don't think the brain generates consciousness. It just uh uses consciousness the way a computer uses electricity.

Um so the cells of our body, you know, they are in a sense individual beings.

You know, they're like

like a white blood cell is essentially amoeboid. It's like they're like little amoebas.

Um

but I think their sentience is of a very primordial and very elemental primitive sort.

So let's move on to the next question

from Tier.

And Tier says,

"I feel that spiritual truth or
off-the-scale truth should and does
encompass practical truth
or red pill truth.

How can someone know ultimate truth if
they're not even able to recognize
practical truth?

Like in so-called Western Buddhism,
sadhu."

Well, I would say that

practical truth is of an entirely
different order from ultimate truth.

I've already mentioned that ultimate
truth is just inconceivable. I mean, you
cannot contain it in concepts. It's not

intellectual at all. It's just reality,
just the experience of reality. And
reality is When I say reality, I'm not
talking about the phenomenal world with
books and bookcases and and so forth. Um
I'm talking about just uh
um what in Buddhism would be called
nirvana or nirvana dhatu or in Hinduism
is Brahman, you know, Tao.
Um some theists would call it God.
And so there are an infinite number of
possible
phenomenal
um like
manifestations. You know, every like God
itself is like the block of marble. I've

talked about this lots of times. You got this block of marble and contained within that block of marble are every possible statue. You know, every statue is already in that block of marble in potential form or virtual form. You know, every molecule is already in the right place and the artist, the sculptor, just carves away the excess, but it was already there. You know, nothing was added. You know, it's already there. And it's an infinite number depending on how the sculptor decides to carve the rock. And I do consider the phenomenal universe to be that way. So,

I'm quite willing to accept like the multiverse hypothesis, the many worlds hypothesis.

And so,

getting back to like

practical truth or what in in Buddhism is called

conventional truth,

sammuti sacca,

it's really not it's really not true. I mean, it it's true just because people accept it as true.

You know, people agree that it's true, so that makes it conventionally true.

But ultimately, truth cannot be spoken.

The name that can be named is just not

the eternal name and so forth.

So,

how can someone know ultimate truth if they're not even able to recognize practical truth?

Um

I do think that like an enlightened being who experiences just the the no moving parts ultimate reality, still I mean, they're not going to be able to understand Chinese necessarily unless they were born into a Chinese culture. They may not know the the square root of 51.

You know, they they won't know how many hairs are on the head of everyone who walks by.

You know, there's all kinds of truths that they won't know.

Um

Some some people like the Jains especially would say that a fully enlightened Jain like a Tirthankara, he is just omniscient. He just knows everything simultaneously.

And in Buddhism, the Buddha also was considered to be

like volitionally

uh omniscient, which means if he wants to know something, he can know it, but he's not like knowing it all the time.

Like he's not knowing everything all the time.

But again, conventional truth isn't really ultimately true at all.

And it's largely uh just conditional.

You know, if these other things are true, then this is true. That's the way um dependent co-arising works.

It's it's all conditional. This universe we're living in is conditionally real.

It's virtually real. So, like if we accept that that this, that, and the other are true, then this other thing also is true, but it's um

it's more a matter of coherence than like uh being based on some underlying reality.

Except just that anything can arise from this basic underlying reality, just like

any statue can be carved from the rock.

So, it's sort of like um

more than 100 years ago,

there was uh in epistemological circles,

there was um

somewhat of a debate on, you know, what

is truth?

And the main theory, which is still the

main theory, which has pretty much taken

over, is the correspondence theory of

truth, which is that in order for a

statement A to be true, it has to

correspond to some

reality.

Whereas um there were some Hegelians

like F.H. Bradley who preferred the

coherence theory of truth.

And the coherence theory of truth is that statement A is considered to be true

if it isn't not contradicting any other statements that have already been determined to be true. And I do think that's how conventional truth works.

And then there was a third version, a third theory that died out relatively quickly, which was founded by William James and a few others, which was pragmatism is just it's just true if it it practically works.

But, uh that's not taken very seriously anymore. But, I do think the coherence theory of truth really is true for some

sorry conventional truth.

So, I think that enlightened beings like the Buddha, they can still endorse um just traditional mythological um

beliefs like the flat earth floating on water, for example. That um an enlightened being born into a culture, assuming the enlightened being really means anything at the conventional level,

um they tend to just follow along with their tradition. I'm not saying Jesus of Nazareth was necessarily enlightened, but he was born in Jewish culture, and so he followed a Jewish point of view

with some modifications. The Buddha was born into largely Vedic culture, and so he adopted a largely Vedic point of view with some modifications. And um and so on.

So,

I do think that enlightened beings, um even if they unders- even if they have experienced ultimate reality, they won't necessarily um know conventional truths because there's an infinite number of possible conventional truths that are largely arbitrary, just like the statues in the in the block of marble. Just because you know the block of marble doesn't mean that you know what statue

um the sculptor who's looking at it is envisioning in that block of marble.

So, I guess I'll just move on to the next question. That was a good question, though. I liked that one.

The next question is from Eraflashista.

And Eraflashista says, "Thoughts on metal, black metal in specific.

Well,

um

people listen to music

um in order to evoke certain emotions.

Music is like an emotional language.

It's not really a verbal language except for the lyrics, of course, but it's it's like these patterns sounds that elicit

emotional responses in the hearer.

And um

some some kinds of emotions I like more than others.

Like rock and roll, I really like in general just because it has this feeling of intensity and power that uh you know, it's like it's invigorating.

It's like a stimulant.

Um other kinds of

music like experimental electronic music or um like what is it? Um

techno, like trance music, stuff like that. It just takes you into a kind of disembodied unusual otherworldly kind of state which I which I like. It's sort of a disorienting

almost like ego-dissolving kind of music.

But other kinds of music I've just never liked because it evokes um emotions that I don't like very much.

And And like dark

uh what is this? Dark metal.

Um or black metal, death metal, thrash metal. It's It's got a lot of negativity in it that um

uh I mean, it can be good music, but most of it

has so much sort of dark, like a dark negative kind of vibe that

and it just doesn't appeal to me because I prefer more uplifting or

um

yeah, I guess uplifting.

More upbeat kind of music.

With regard to uh

black metal,

about my favorite

my favorite one that I've listened to is

Mountains of God's Depression by

Dominia. You can look it up on YouTube.

And one reason why I like it is it

starts off really mellow, you know, like

like piano. There's a little violin and

it and then it just switches over into

just the raging you know, guitars and

the the throat screechy stuff. And um

it's it's a nice balance and I really

like listening to mellow music written

by like heavy metal bands just because you can feel that it's like they got the brakes on all the time. There's like this repressed intensity that they're like holding back. You can just kind of feel that behind the scenes.

So, I like that. But the throat screechy stuff especially I just do not like. I do not consider it to be any kind of improvement on actual singing. Sort of like rap music I've never liked.

And

I mean it's not an improvement on singing. It's not it's not really singing. And it it doesn't sound better than singing. It's not more musical than

singing.

So,

I do consider that aspect of of black metal, just the throat screechy stuff, to be sort of um a kind of degenerate a degeneration of music, sort of like rap.

And I I may have just offended uh people who like black metal or rap, but we all have our own preferences.

I think I'd much rather listen to Rock Lobster by the B-52s than just about any any kind of black metal.

Whereas my sweetheart is the exact opposite. It's just she just can't take it seriously. It's like being at the

carnival with screaming kids all around.

It's just too hippity hoppity for her taste and she likes the the dark metal stuff.

So, it's just a matter of personal temperament, I guess.

Um there is kind of an interesting video I saw a few years ago.

It's uh by Dr. Steve Turley. And this guy, I mean, you you wouldn't expect this from him. He's he's like a uh like a conservative Christian guy with conservative Christian commentary, like political commentary.

And uh about 3 years ago, he did this one video called the post-globalist

aesthetics of extreme heavy metal music.
And um he's just talking about how some
of the the like the dark metal stuff, it
evokes like pre-modern imagery and
pre-modern modes of thought that are in
a way sort of a a reaction against
globalism,
which is interesting.

But um

yeah, if I like some heavy metal.

And you know, I like intense rock and
roll, but this the really dark vibe, you
know, the negativity and the throat
screechy stuff, I just I just don't like
very much. And music that relies too
much on lyrics, I it's I mean, I can
still like it, but um usually when I

listen to music, I go into like right hemisphere mode. It's like non-verbal. So, the the lyrics are just like one of the instruments. There's like the vocalist is he's just might as well just be another instrument that adds to the music.

I really like Led Zeppelin, but that's not black metal. You know, I have I have read that uh Led Zeppelin II was the first heavy metal album, but um I'm not sure about that.

So, I guess that's enough about black metal.

Um yeah, some some metal I like, heavy metal I like, but black metal not so

much.

Next question is from Diane.

And Diane says, "What are the precepts that are common to most religions?"

And that's kind of interesting question because

a lot of people will say you know all religions are teaching essentially the same things, you know, it's like do good, don't do evil, tell the truth and so forth, don't kick puppies.

But if if you look at the the world's major religions, there is a lot of disagreement even on basic morals.

Like Islam and like biblical Judaism are about two of the main ones that uh say that it's it's okay to kill people

if you figure you've got a good reason,
you know, if if they're going against
God or something.

Um some religions say you shouldn't
drink alcohol

like Buddhism and Islam.

But Jesus drank wine so the Christians
aren't much inclined to uh
to outlaw that. I guess some sects of uh
Protestantism um
like I think the Mormons maybe are
opposed to drinking alcohol.

But um

So you can always find exceptions but
the main ones

um

not killing

I mean even Christianity sees nothing wrong with with killing animals.

But at least murder

tends to be like on on the list of ethical

you know, especially if if they you know, they haven't done anything wrong, you know, somebody's minding their own business. I mean that would be basic ethics, you don't go kill them.

Um

no stealing, I think pretty much all religions

would say you shouldn't steal.

I think all almost all religions would say you shouldn't lie although um

in the the Old Testament there seems to
be some some lying involved by uh
by some of the uh
the sages
of uh
early
Hebrew times.

So, yeah, like the basic precepts of
Buddhist like the first four especially
would be pretty close to like a
universal ethic. Um no killing of other
people anyway.

Um

unless it's like deemed um like
necessary for some reason. You're
protecting your family or you're you're

a soldier just obeying the king or something. There can be a loopholes for that sort of thing.

Uh stealing is

yeah, I mean that's that's pretty basic ethics. Although like in Islam, I mean even the Muslims themselves allow, you know, they admit that the their prophet was uh essentially a bandit uh when he was living in Medina because he had to support his followers and himself. So, they would be doing pirate raids on caravans. That's sort of thing.

So, you can find uh

exceptions pretty much

to to any moral precept, but um yeah, the basic ones don't kill, don't lie,

don't steal, and uh usually there's some sexual ethics in basic religions, you know, don't commit adultery, you know, don't don't rape.

That kind of thing. Although

um getting back to um the prophet, he was uh he was a little rapey sometimes.

So, yeah.

But those those are the basics, I think.

And then a lot of the rest uh some of them are largely arbitrary or like cultural things. Like all of the rules that about monks, you know, the robe robe material and the colors that the robes have to be dyed and how it's cut and sewn and that sort of thing is

largely arbitrary Indian ancient Indian culture.

And a lot of the rest is is the same way. Like um

modern Jews

um they converted um a precept in the Old Testament, "Thou shalt not boil a kid in its mother's milk."

And the later tradition turned that into uh a Jew is not allowed to eat meat and dairy products at the same meal.

Which is I I don't really don't see the point in that.

I mean the the "Thou shalt not boil a kid in its mother's milk" is uh one of the few attempts the Old Testament made to be uh humane to animals. You know,

sort of like "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the grain."

Uh and then it just got distorted into just a meaningless rule that people have to follow just because they think God said so or whatever.

So, I think I answered that one.

Uh so, I'll move on to the next one. And this is from Inmanis.

And Inmanis, he's uh

he's an intellectual kind of guy. He

he uh

writes complicated questions. So, I

better just dive into this here.

What can be said of quality with regard to impermanence?

Yes, seemingly all states and
conditionality can be observed as in
flux and motion
of rise to fall, but qualifiers never
seem to end with respect to their
flavor. Bear with me as this is a hard
question for me to phrase. And the
various qualities are prompted and
conditioned for each being differently
as the focusing lens of that being where
it finds expression is so varied from
being to being, but those qualities just
seem to be.

You won't experience them in a constant
way, but when they arise, you will know
it's their genius or flavor, and they
come in different magnitudes, which is

also conditioned. This isn't a question of the being time experiencing, but more of that which is experienced. These qualities seem to have been with us from the start to time, almost as if they are perturbations of mind, and they must follow various laws. Just as if a pebble hits the water surface, ripples occur. Just as there are many frequencies of the electromagnetic spectrum, so too there seem to be mental qualities.

Abhidhamma speaks some of what I am asking, chitta and chittasika, uh which is mind and mental state.

Notice how they have uh categorized all

of these qualitative mental factors, and
the factors are kind of set in stone.

This various The various permutations
and manifestations occur in myriad ways,
and the ensuing states rise and fall,
but these qualities or mental factors
are not subject, it would seem.

Otherwise, wouldn't the quality itself
end and fall beyond the scope of all
experience? They do not, apparently.

Okay, well, it seems like Inamatus is
somewhat of a Platonist

here, in that um uh

those of you who uh

kind of got lost

um

while I was reading this, it's

essentially he's asking, you know, like in Buddhism teaches that everything is impermanent, but like like laws of nature um tend to be permanent.

That's um

there is sort of a permanence underlying things with regard to at least the rules that everything follows.

And um I'm I'm really not a Platonist. I don't think that uh

there's um let's see, what would be a good example?

He talked about throwing a a stone into a pond that makes ripples no matter where you do it. So, the So, the

uh impact on the water surface causing ripples could be something that is permanent, but um

I don't think that the causing ripples is happening is like in some sort of Platonic heaven that is always that that the law is always some substance or essence that's always in existence. And so, it exists only when it's being perceived.

So, I'm kind of a radical uh what like a nominalist. I think that's what it would be called. I really don't believe in universals. Like like Plato believed that

you know, everything that appears in the earth is an imperfect manifestation of

something that's

like uh eternal up in heaven. So, like a dog, there's just the dog is permeated by dogness.

And so, dogs come and go. Dogs are impermanent, but that that perfect dogness is in heaven constantly.

And I just I just don't think so. I'm not much of a Platonist.

Um Neoplatonist maybe, but but Plato I really not had a whole lot of use for him.

So, it seems to me that um we're relying on human psychology to make the declaration that these laws don't change. It could be that some

other species that has a very different way of perceiving things might be experiencing very different um so-called eternal laws or laws of nature or something.

So, it's a matter of human perception.

And so, when we are

uh seeing uh a rock fall or let's say an acorn falls from a tree

or the the apple falls from the tree.

So, um that's impermanent, but the the law of gravity is is just always there.

But, it seems to me that

um

it's all conventional truth and the conventional truth is a matter of perception. And so, the law of gravity

doesn't really exist unless there's some conscious mind perceiving it.

And for each conscious mind perceiving it, it's it's not necessarily the same thing. It's just a different perception.

Um

So,

you can say that there's a a semblance of permanence in these things, but still they only exist if they're being perceived. Like uh George Berkeley used to say *esse est percipi*, which is to exist is to be perceived.

So, if if something isn't being perceived, it just it's just not there.

The tree falls in the forest and there's

nobody around. Not only does it not make a sound, but there is no tree.

Unless the trees themselves are conscious, you know, there's some kind of

you know, some kind of other organism experiencing the tree.

So,

yeah, I'm

I can see where he's coming from and there is a certain amount of truth to it, but still I would say that it's all a matter of perceptions, individual perceptions.

And um

yeah, even even that is not something that is eternal and

unchanging.

So, I'll just move on to the next question. I hope I answered that without just totally mystifying everybody.

Um the next question is from Mussolini, not the famous one, but a different Mussolini.

Do you know anything about the origins of the veneration of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, which eventually became so widespread in much of Asia?

I've heard it said that Avalokiteshvara shares traits in common with the Hindu god Shiva.

And um Avalokiteshvara, I'm pretty sure

got mutated into Guanyin in China.

Um so Guanyin, who is a female deity or

Bodhisattva,

um is trans, essentially.

Um

she started off male in India and I

think it was Avalokiteshvara.

And yeah, I I just I haven't really

studied the history of some of these

concepts in in Mahayana Buddhism.

Um including the origins of

Avalokiteshvara.

Um some of the the mythological

Bodhisattvas in Mahayana Buddhism

started off as

um a few I think were Yakshas or like

almost like demonic entities or like

minor deities in various parts of India.

Um

I think even even the Greek Heracles or known in in English as Hercules, um I think he got conflated with the Bodhisattva Vajrapani.

Uh or is it Padmapani? Like is one of the Panis.

So with regard to Avalokiteshvara, it could be that he was uh at least in part based on the Hindu god Shiva.

Um but most of them were based on um just traditional minor deities that uh got um glorified.

They got uh just recruited into the

Mahayanist Bodhisattva Pantheon.

So because I really don't know the answer to the question, I'll just move on to the next one, which is from Erin and this is kind of similar.

Erin says, "Is Mahayana kind of similar to the Unitarian Church in Christendom? This is the impression I get, lots of new age style relativism elements. Do you find a general difference in the types of people who are drawn to Mahayana versus Theravada.

Um

Well, I mean ethnically um I think whether you're a Mahayana Buddhist or a Theravada Buddhist, I mean traditionally before it moved to the

west,

um

I mean it's just a matter of what country you were born in, what culture you were born into, what religion your parents followed. So, it would be pretty similar, you know, you'd have the same kind of personality types in both religions just because

um

I mean you really didn't have the choice of Mahayana versus Theravada.

Um

Mahayana does seem to be more uh at least certain schools of it more faith-oriented.

Um maybe a little less

intellectual. Some Some schools of

Although some schools of Mahayana are
just like very rigorously intellectual.

Um

So, I would just

in

Yeah, the Unitarian Church I mean, I'm
not sure how the Unitarian Church
started.

Um it could have been a kind of
progressive movement. And Mahayana
Buddhism, I'm pretty sure could be
called a progressive movement in
Buddhism and also like in Indian
culture.

So, it was progressive. It was like

trying to change um Buddhism in certain ways. Although um some aspects of Mahayana were like a reform movement trying to get back to the early teachings of Buddhism, like uh Prajna or Prajnaparamita and uh even Nagarjuna and his uh Madhyamaka school. Um

In certain respects, they were like reform movements trying to get back uh to early like primordial Dharma and away from all the like the technical philosophy that was being cooked up and a lot of the mythology also.

Some of Mahayana was a reaction against

Abhidharma, which is very understandable.

Um so I would say that Mahayana is uh like it's more progressive than Theravada. Theravada is very um conservative.

The uh the Theravadans after a certain uh burst of virus-like mutation in the early century first century or two or three, uh it became very locked down and conservative and people not wanting to change anything.

Although it changes anyway just because if it moves into a different culture, it's going necessarily going to have to absorb elements of that culture.

With regard to

Mahayana versus Theravada in the West,
like in America,
um the types of people who are drawn
to it I I would say that
some types of Mahayana like Zen
or like Dzogchen in in Tibetan Buddhism,
um they're they're similar to Theravada
in that they're largely based on
meditation
and uh
pretty much no-nonsense.

So um
yeah, I've I've haven't really noticed a
large difference in personality types
between Western Zen Buddhists and
Western Theravada Buddhists. I think it

could just be a matter of uh
uh which the person got exposed to
first.

I was originally um

I originally liked Zen Buddhism and was
considering very seriously becoming a
Zen monk.

Um

but then you got the other other schools
like Pure Land or Soka Gakkai,
Nichiren, that kind of thing, which are
just very faith-oriented
and uh the likes of which is
very rare in Western Theravada. And so
that would um attract a different sort
of person, I think. So you'd have
probably s- statistically significant

statistically significant uh
difference in personality types
attracted to like Theravada Buddhism or
something like Soka Gakkai.

But, um getting back to the Unitarian
church nowadays it's just completely
progressive. You know, it's like uh
little kids encouraged to stand up front
and declare themselves the opposite
gender and so forth. Um just very
strongly leftist.

Um based on what I've seen of it. You
know, the
uh flying the the gay pride flags out in
front of the church and so forth.

Um

Mahayana in general

Yeah, I mean it Mahayana some aspects of it could be considered that sort of general trend, but uh not necessarily.

There are some uh like reform genuine reform aspects of early Mahayana anyway.

And uh Zen is uh

pretty no-nonsense and and based on on practice, meditation and so forth.

So, I hope I answered that one.

And so, next I move on to some questions from Matthew.

And Matthew says, first of all, "Kindly describe the difference between samatha and vipassana conceptually and as a practice."

And this is

it just kind of butts up against uh a
certain

preference that I have of I really don't
even like the term vipassana

um the way it's usually used as a kind
of method. It's like you don't practice
vipassana. You don't do vipassana.

Vipassana literally means insight.

And it arises spontaneously

um

like often after you've done samatha.

Like

one of my favorite suttas

um

in the Majjhima Nikāya is the Lesser

Discourse on Voidness where uh the monk

practices samatha. He goes into very
advanced

um contemplative states, you know, just
very deep mystical states.

And then finally he gets to the state of
neither perception or non-perception or
the signless perception of mind, it's
called, the signless perception of mind,
which is beyond even fourth jhana,
apparently.

And that's like the highest
that's the highest contemplative state
you can attain.

Is the signless contemplation of mind.

And

then he realizes after he's come out of
it that even that is not enlightenment,

even that is not nirvana. And then it's just something clicks. It's like he realizes that you know, nothing that you can

you know, cultivate is it. You cannot cultivate nirvana. At least you can't get to nirvana. There is like the path does not end at nirvana. You know, you don't follow the path until you get to the gates of nirvana. It doesn't work that way.

And so samatha and vipassana are not really opposed in that sense.

Um vipassana,

what be much more accurately called satipatthana or just mindfulness

meditation. You can say samatha is based on concentration or samadhi.

And vipassana is based on mindfulness or sati.

And uh

conceptually

you would say that samatha

is what you're doing is you're just

stilling and clarifying your mind. If

you get to fourth jhana, you're just

wide awake and your mind is just crystal

clear and silent.

And then, after you get out of that

state,

then, which is also called purification

of mindfulness in the text, after you

get out of that state, then vipassana

can arise due to the profundity of the experience you just have.

Um mindfulness, on the other hand, is you're not so much focusing on a single object to the exclusion of everything else, or even getting to the point of just having an empty mind.

Just wide awake and not thinking anything. That That would be more samadhi.

But mindfulness is you're just you're you're focusing on a moving target.

You're you're focusing on whatever arises. So, it might be that both the samatha and the the mindfulness

meditator start off meditating on on the breath, like the the the touch sensation of air at the nostrils.

Um but

the main difference would be uh the samatha meditator, if their mind starts to wander,

um they just bring it right back to I mean, if anything else comes up, that they just, you know, single-mindedly bring it back to the uh

the sensation of touch at the nostrils.

Whereas, the mindfulness meditator, someone who's practicing satipatthana, they would uh they wouldn't necessarily bring it back. I mean, if it's like you got pain in your knee, which happened a

lot when I was at a Mahasi center,

um

just or more than once, I mean, you you meditate a lot, you can get pain in your knee, especially if you're meditating more than usual for prolonged period. Um you know, just the pain is always there.

So, you can just start

contemplating noting the pain. You know, you just observe the pain.

Or whatever it is. It's like you know, itches or there's some weird sound going on outside. You know, you're not thinking, "Gee, what's making that weird sound outside?" You but instead, it's like you're hearing it. And so, you're

just seeing it as you're just observing
the sounds the sensation of sound.

Or you know, it's

doing the the auditory equivalent of
observing.

So,

I think it's a false dichotomy where a
lot of people like even in Burma people
ask which Sasana do you belong to the
Samatha Sasana or the Vipassana Sasana
as though there are two Buddhisms. But
really they're not in conflict. You're
supposed to be practicing mindfulness
when you're not practicing Samatha. So,
one thing about mindfulness is you can
do it no matter what you're doing
anytime like you're walking or brushing

your teeth or doing anything you can you can be mindful you just like Ram Dass used to say be here now. You're just focusing intently on whatever is coming up and um not really trying to interpret it. You know, you're not thinking about it. You're just observing it as it arises and letting it go as it as it passes away and just observing whatever comes up next.

And the purification of that would be um like you'd see in the Bahia Sutta of the Udana where in the scene there is only the scene in the heard there is only the heard. You know, it's like um some sound

comes up. You're just
observing the sound. You're not trying
to interpret it. You know, you're not
saying oh that's a dog barking. You
know, it's hearing the sound as sound.
And that that would be uh
some some fairly good mindfulness.

And uh

Vipassana itself the insight that arises
not not the method necessarily but the
insight that arises is

um

eventually what

uh slams you or

uh enlightens you

uh into the state of enlightenment.

But,

even if you're practicing samatha
intensely,

it's going to be the the insight that
arises as a result of that.

And I mean, some powerful insights can
arise through practicing intense
samadhi. Just

Like when you get to the point where you
can just sit there and not thinking.

You realize that

you get the insight that you are not
your thoughts, and which might be more
powerful for intellectual guys than it
is for maybe more feelings-oriented,

heart-oriented people. But, when you can
just sit there and not thinking,

and um

you know, in a sense, you're still
there. You know, you haven't just ceased
to exist. That uh
when you stop thinking, it's not just
like black nothingness.

That that is I mean, that's a powerful
thing to to realize. So, that would be
like a minor kind of insight.

Um

it doesn't work so well for
for lay people living busy, distracted
lives, however.

So, um

the main option, the most practical
option for lay people, people living in
the world, is

vipassana, although I really don't like the term for mindfulness meditation.

But, just you know, being wholeheartedly, you know, in the present moment with whatever you're doing. Even if you're remembering something, you can still be aware of the sensations of of memory, you know, remembering.

You know, it's not you're not you're not lost in the content, but you're still there in the basic phenomena.

And it's even with with regard to um breathing in and out, doing breathing meditation.

Um

it's not being extremely mindful if you're thinking breathing in, breathing out. I mean, it's it's good it's good as like an elementary practice just to get your mind focused, which in itself has in samatha or samadhi elements.

But, um if you're just observing the touch of air at the nostrils, just feeling the sensation in the in the felt there is only the felt, then you're getting closer to reality because breathing in and breathing out are concepts. But, this touch is not a concept. I mean, you can turn it into one, but you know, it's it's like a sensation, which is more basic. It's closer to reality because there's

not all this symbolic interpretation
getting in the way that it it has to be
filtered through.

So,

I didn't really explain that in order.

Um but, um

that's that's essentially it.

And, uh I think I'll I'll move on to

Matthew's next question,

which is, "What is your practical advice
for putting a right speech into

practice? More specifically, how might a
layperson living in the world improve

their application of right speech in the
workday hectic three screaming kids

moment

by moment realities of life?"

It seems relatively straightforward. I

mean, first of all,

um your practically my practical advice

for putting right speech into practice

is is uh

first and foremost, just don't tell

lies.

And, um if if you're living in the kind

of context where just telling blunt ugly

truths is going to get you in a a pack

of trouble, then um you might want to

learn how to talk more like a lawyer or

a politician, not so much to make you

dishonest, but just to avoid having to

just say blunt truths, you know, you can

kind of

pad it a little bit or avoid the subject. You know, don't say anything, but just flat out lying is is worse than uh

you know, being diplomatic. I mean, you don't have to lie to be diplomatic.

There are ways you can It's like sometimes

like somebody invites you over for dinner or something and you don't want to just flat out say, you know, I don't feel like coming over to your house. I got other things I'd rather do, which is the truth.

But uh just telling them that might hurt their feelings, but um

I mean, there's there's other ways you
can come up with something
that that won't require you to lie.

Um you know, something something else
has come up, you know, just leave it at
that.

Uh or I mean, one thing to bear in mind
is you can say anything with metta in
your heart, you know, you say anything
with a a certain amount of brotherly
love

then people can take it more easily. You
know, then maybe even then it's like,
you know, I I just don't feel like going
anywhere tonight, you know, I'd just
rather just stay home.

Um if you say that with

you know, like a a friendly
amiable tone of voice, then it's is much
more palatable to the other person than
saying, I don't want to go to your
house.

You know. So,
that sort of thing it just takes maybe
takes some practice.

Um and some cultivation of of some uh
so-called loving kindness, which is a
strange

a strange uh translation of metta.

Metta literally means something like
friendliness.

So, let's see.

Yeah, that would be my practical advice

for putting right speech into practice.

Plus, there are the other three kinds of wrong speech. You know, there are four internal bottom woods and there are four kinds of wrong speech. One is just lying. So, don't tell lies.

Second is

Let's see, what is it?

Parusavaca or Pisunavaca. I can't remember the order now. Let's just say it's Parusavaca, which is harsh speech.

And that's, you know, you're not telling someone off to their face. You're not calling someone names. You're not saying, "You're You're stupid, you dumb ass." You know, that kind of talk.

Um

it it's just you just have to like be
mindful enough that you don't go into
knee-jerk, you know, habitual responses.
And then you if you're in control of
your own mouth,
then you just don't say that kind of
stuff.

And it may be the force of habit
will be leading you in that direction,
but then you have to be mindful
enough that you can just turn off the
automatic pilot to some degree and just,
you know, say what is appropriate rather
than just blurt out what uh years of
conditioning have
have caused you to just blurt out

habitually.

So, that's parushavacha. And then next

is pisunavacha, which is

saying bad things about someone behind

their back in order to um turn someone

against them or or that sort of thing.

It's especially badmouthing people

behind their back. And again, it's like

you just have to be

um you have to consider that to be

important

and make it somewhat of a priority, and

then just train yourself not to do it.

And to some degree, I mean, warning

someone, let's say you know someone is

dishonest and they're trying to sell a

used car to another one of your friends,

you might want to warn him, you know,
it's like, "Yeah, I'm You might not want
to trust him too much."

But you're not doing it
because you dislike the first person,
it's because you're trying to help the
other person.

So, your motives are important with
regard to this sort of thing.

And then finally, there's uh
samphappalapa,
which is uh usually translated as idle
chatter,

which is like gossip, that kind of
thing. And if you're living in the
world, I mean, it's very difficult to

avoid. Uh you know, you're at work and some kind of work gossip comes up or something like that, you know, so you just got to be careful. So, just being mindful and just um you know, being aware of what you're going to say before you say it.

That kind of thing is is your best bet at uh

at at just practicing right speech.

You know, it's like before you say something, you you should go through the little filter, you know, is this appropriate? Is this, you know, unethical or unskillful or unwholesome? That's sort of thing. And just don't don't be an automaton that's just going

through life uh through force of habit,
just through conditioning.

So, let's see. I guess I guess I
answered that one. Next question, also
from Matthew. What does Buddhism have to
say about living with fellow monks who
you rather despise? And what lessons
might we draw from that as lay people?

Well,

I think there's different ways of going
about it and it you have to go on it
uh at a like a a case-by-case

um

Yeah, you just have to do it
case-by-case. Like, for example, in
Buddhism, like if there are people that

are just like bad people, you know,
they're just troublemakers, they're
they're fools,
um your best bet would just be to avoid
them if possible.

Like um in the
the Mangala Sutta, which is one of the
most well-known uh Theravada Buddhist
texts,
it's uh chanted as a protection chant in
Asia.

Um
it's a list of 38 blessings in life, and
blessing number one is
uh not associating with fools.
Because mental states are contagious.

So, if someone really is just a fool, a

crook, you know, just a real troublemaker, your best bet, if possible, is just do not associate with these people. Or like if you have to, you have to associate with them you know they're like like a colleague at work or something then you just keep it you know kind of formal you know you can still be friendly to them or polite anyway but you know you just don't engage any more than you have to. Um see what else?

Other ways like if you've got someone that that really bugs you and it's your own fault let's say you've got some issue you know they remind you of

someone that that was like a bully in
in school or something if if I mean if
you know yourself well enough to know
that you don't like this person that's
because of your own issues then in in a
case like that
or even in the case of the troublemaker
there is the option of of just
practicing meta cultivating meta sending
meta to the other person and if they're
such a a bastard that you it's just you
can't bring yourself to do it there is
what is called the pebble method and
I've I've mentioned this before I think.
Where you just take this cute round
little pebble and you get like a little
glass you know a little tumbler and

every day you you put you put the pebble
in the tumbler and you you pour cold
water into it and
you just think you know as
just as this little pebble is surrounded
by this cool water may so-and-so you
know whoever the person is may they be
surrounded by peace and serenity you
know and uh usually I mean difficult
people tend to be difficult cuz they're
unhappy people and this just unhappiness
is overflowing and and sort of making
trouble with others
like a a genuinely happy contented
person isn't going around and making
trouble for other people.

You know if if you're a happy person
it's live and let live as a general
rule.

Uh it's usually only if you're miserable
that you want to lash out and make other
people miserable too.

So, a certain amount of compassion for
for people that are are real just butt
holes.

Um

And and you can also there was I can't
remember the sutta, unfortunately. I
think it's in the the sutta No, what is
it? It's not in the sutta, it's in the
Visuddhimagga.

Where there's like instructions on how
to deal with difficult people. And one

is just uh see them as, you know, conditioned mind and matter, that kind of thing. You can just deconstruct them into uh into elements in your mind or some such.

But um yeah, the two main the two main ways of dealing with them is uh you know, detach from the the the difficult people as much as you're able and uh try to uh

have some compassion and and love, you know, loving-kindness towards them.

Especially if you can't detach from them. You know, they're just part of your life, you know, a difficult family

member or something.

And uh it really does have power. You

can If you send metta to someone

sincerely,

um I've I've come across a number of

cases. Like there was one woman who was

having real difficulty with like one of

her managers at work and she tried I

think it was the pebble method even

where she's sending metta to that person

and just within uh like 2 weeks that the

difficult manager actually

um came to that person and sincerely

apologized, you know, I I realize I've

been acting like a like an ass and you

know, I'm sorry, that kind of a thing.

And uh you know, mental states are

contagious. You send love to somebody
and it's uh

it's going to have an effect.

Maybe if they're just a a hardened butt
hole, then it it won't be a noticeable
effect, but um

in that case uh

send them love and and just be polite
and detached and uh be about the best
you can do if you can't just go away.

All right. So, the next question.

Also from Matthew.

And this is his last question here. What
is the appropriate right view on the
current issue in Ukraine for a monk?
Should they be supporting one side or

the other with deep convictions about the outcome or should they simply view it all as impermanence and be above or beyond the current manifestations of Dukkha

or some other mode of engagement? Yeah, well, a monk is supposed to renounce society. And there's a list of animal talk, Tiracchana Vacca, um that monks are supposed to avoid. And it involves like kings and ministers and wars and this kind of thing, politics in general. A monk I mean, you renounce the world and uh so I mean, you should just be off in the forest meditating.

For monks. So, the Ukraine conflict is just one of, you know, countless

conflicts that have occurred
uh in the human world and um
it's just it's just more
um you know, artificially generated
Dukkha, unhappiness.

Um still I mean,
I mean, if you have as a especially as a
layperson or just a monk who's just sort
of viewing the craziness of Samsara,
um I mean, you could you could see that,
you know, both sides have their have
their reasons.

You know, just
um you know,
like the current issue, Ukraine versus
Russia and

um

especially in the West, you know, Russia is being demonized and dehumanized and Putin is like Adolf Hitler and uh but I mean, he's got his reasons, you know, I mean, America has bombed who knows how many countries.

And uh

you know, we're the good guys though, so it's okay if we do it.

Um and I think part of Putin's reasons are just he doesn't want a a NATO country with military bases with missiles aimed at Russia just right on his border. And there's been a a lot of talk about Ukraine becoming more westernized, becoming part of the EU,

becoming part of NATO, and so forth.

But uh I'm not pretending to understand

um

Putin's reasons, but I think that's

probably an aspect of it.

So,

yeah, I mean it's wrong to to just

launch an aggressive attack on uh a

neighboring country, you know, not even

really defensive except for maybe an

ideological or

uh preemptive kind of way. So, I'm not

trying to uh

endorse

Putin's uh or Russia's invasion of

Ukraine, but both sides have got their

their reasons and everything, and that's one reason why it's best not to be uh picking sides too much. I mean, you I mean, it's just human nature that you're going to have preferences and so forth, but um the people whose preferences are different are not necessarily uh demonic entities or or Nazis or or commies or whatever.

So, so

uh sometimes I'm I'm answering questions, and when I get to the the end of the answer, it's like, "Wow, did I really answer that question?"

I don't know.

All right, so I'm just going to move on

to the next one, and I apologize

sincerely to uh Matthew if

I really didn't answer the question very

well. Well, with regard to monks, yeah,

it's it's very clear-cut. I mean, the

monk shouldn't give a damn.

But um

for laypeople watching the news and

everything,

this is this is just being a human

being. It's just the way humans have

been. I've read a lot of history, and

it's just been, you know, one war and

barbarian invasion after another.

And it's been really awful. We've been

We're really lucky

that uh

we've been living in a relatively peaceful age, uh at least, you know, going back to you know, post-World War II, the world has been relatively abnormally peaceful.

And this is uh kind of a minor outburst, it seems like, or at least it's minor thus far. We haven't had any nukes go off, anyway.

So, anyway, getting back to the next question, which is from B Pat 427.

And B Pat 427

says, "Do you think that something like Hinduism could be more practical than Buddhism for a faith-oriented layperson

looking to cultivate positive mental states due to more focus on things like mantras, ritual, and sacrifice, as opposed to dedicating many hours to meditation?"

Well, it's possible. I mean, Hinduism and Buddhism have a lot of similarities. They both believe in karma, for example. They both believe in enlightenment. They're very similar. And the Buddha um if a non-Buddhist wanted to be ordained, he had to go through a waiting period, but Hindus were the equiva- like the the analog of Hindus, like the Vedic Brahmanists of his day, um they didn't have to go

through the waiting period because they believed in karma and stuff already, so um

So, there is that.

Um but yeah, Hinduism can be more faith-oriented. Yeah, you know, there can be the worship of deities or the uh devotion to the guru, which are definitely more based on faith.

Um there's there's more, you know, chanting. Well, not necessarily more chanting, but there's more like singing and uh group activities like that.

Uh what is it, kirtan? That kind of thing that uh really appeals to uh some new age types in the West.

And the new age types are very faith

oriented. They're really not uh
uh like philosophical intellectuals as a
general rule.

But yeah, I mean you should try
you should study various religions.

And

to become what in Buddhism is called
Bahusuta having heard much and then you
can make a more
more intelligent decision with regard to
what system works best for you either
within Buddhism or or outside of
Buddhism. I mean for some people in
Christianity

um

you know there have been some genuine

saints, meditation masters in in
Christianity.

And

I guess just uh

the faith in the in the narrative

uh appealed to them or just worked for
them. And uh

so

I'm not the sort of person who says uh

you know if you're not a Buddhist or a

Theravada Buddhist you have a wrong view

and you're going to burn in hell.

Certainly not.

Um

I've studied various religions enough to

know that there have been great saints.

Very good saintly wise people in just

about every tradition.

And so I mean once you get to the ultimate reality that underlies all the stories the stories become irrelevant.

You can still like I would mention earlier I mean you can still endorse the cultural traditions.

But um you know that's that's largely irrelevant to the underlying ultimate that uh

uh an enlightened being presumably has experienced.

So let's see here.

Yeah so I'd say uh

the answer to that question I would I would say is yep. So now move on to the

next one.

Do you plan on getting a flashlight for your Glock 19 and do you plan on getting a carry permit?

Well that's kind of a change of pace.

Glock questions. Yeah, I haven't even gotten the Glock yet. It's just so many

February was

there was all kinds of like property taxes and and and all kinds of weird expenses. I got like two fake front teeth and everything and

so

um yeah, I haven't got it yet. I am planning I I sincerely hope I will get the pistol within a month and uh

I'm getting to the question here. Do I

plan on getting a flashlight for the Glock 19? No, I I am not planning on getting a

like a mountable flashlight for it. It has 16. I think a a Glock 19 has a magazine that holds 16 rounds. So, if necessary, I can just spray bullets if I can't see in the dark.

Um

and the next part of the question here is do you plan on getting a carry permit? Yeah, I will get a concealed carry permit, which is one reason why I want to get a Glock 19 because it's it's a a very compact little pistol.

But, still relatively accurate and uh

I I have a few friends who are gun
bunnies and uh
uh

they tell me that the Glock 19 is
like approximately the perfect pistol
because it's so easy to it rarely
misfires. It's easy to maintain, easy to
take apart and clean, you know, holds a
lot of rounds, more than a revolver, and
it's small and compact and still
accurate. So,

um yeah, I think that answers the
question. I I I did a straightforward
non-roundabout answer to these
questions. So, no, I'm not planning on
getting a flashlight for the Glock and
yes,

I do plan on getting a concealed carry permit.

So, the next question also from Bpat427.

Yeah, Bpat427.

Do you still have a daily sitting practice? If so, have you seen your focus hindered at all since rejoining lay life?

Um

when I was a monk, like my first 10 years as a monk, I had it worked out that I was averaging 6 hours a day of meditating. At least 6 hours a day. I was meditating a lot.

And

like after I'd been a monk for more than

20 years, I just stopped making progress. And it was just becoming really frustrating. Just sitting there and just

I mean, it was like

it was like a struggle just just trying to keep going.

And so, after I

after I disrobed, or even like a few months before I disrobed, yeah, I just stopped regular sitting practice.

And I do not sit in meditation every day. In fact, I have not sat in meditation for quite a long time.

Um

if so, have you seen your focus hindered at all since rejoining lay life? Um

yeah, my focus has been uh and there's just so many more distractions. And what's more important, I think um is that when you're living a lay life, you have to dedicate so much of your energy into just the practical necessities of of living a lay life, like like working that um if you can't somehow make that a spiritual practice then it's using up a lot of of your energy and distracting you, so that it's just sort of you have less energy to direct towards spiritual things. And so, I think that has been I mean,

just sitting in meditation

um it's not necessarily significant. It

It can be very useful. I I mean, I did
it a lot.

But um if you can if you can maintain
mindfulness you you can stay centered

um

whether you're sitting or not, then
you're doing fairly well if you can keep
your the clarity of mind and just be,
you know, in the present moment.

And um

sitting meditation, if you if you're

good at I was never really good at

meditation. I had to work so hard just

to get into what states I had attained.

But by nature, by by disposition, I have

never been a really good meditator. I think my my brain is just hyperactive, like a lot of Westerners who are just compulsive thinkers or something. So I had a lot of adiccha or mental restlessness.

So

yeah, I still I still try to uh

to be mindful and uh

you know, just keep spirit in heart, but

uh sitting cross-legged with my eyes

closed on a cushion

or on the floor, um yeah, I've I've

pretty much stopped doing it.

So I'll just move on to the next

question, which is let's see, also from

the Pat427.

Do you have any suggestions for a layperson getting to get their significant other into Dharma?

Well, you could try harping at them incessantly, you know, preaching at them, but it's not going to work. I think your best bet

in in helping anybody

to get uh interested in in Dharma is just be a living example. You know, if they can see that you're into Dharma or or Dharma

and that you are a happy, serene person, you know, you're just uh

um you know, it's like the benefits the benefit of it is just obvious. It's

just, you know, right there for them to see

then uh yeah, they might make the connection between

your serenity and, you know, morality and so forth uh and the fact that uh you're practicing Dharma.

I think that would be the I mean the best

the ways that I have helped people the most, I think as far as I know, at least some of the times I've helped people a lot has been unintentionally.

Like I've had a few monks

um I was living in a big school

monastery I mentioned already tonight.

With lots of monks there. And there was a dining hall and you know, food was served there every day, but I never went there. I never went there once. I would always just take my bowl and and walk through the village and get my food get my food that way through uh what's called pindapata.

Through alms round.

And um you know, I didn't you know, I wasn't doing it ostentatiously. It was just my own preference. But then uh I remember one time a monk came up to me and sincerely thanked me. I didn't even know who he was. He was just kind of you know, just a casual acquaintance. You see him around, but he came up to me and

just sincerely thanked me cuz uh he said
he was inspired by seeing me going for
alms round every day. And so he started
doing it and he felt really good about
it. You know, it made him really happy.
So, I mean that's the the best way or
one of the most effective ways of
teaching someone is you know, you're
just living
your

Dharma, you know, you're a living
example and then they can see that
through you that that that has benefits.
If you're if you're practicing
correctly, I mean if you're not
practicing correctly and you're still

um you know, a miserable person and you know, prone to fits of road rage and so forth then uh

yeah, you're not going to be very persuasive. I remember

there used to be a public service announcement a long time ago back when I was a a long-haired

uh eco-hippy type

and there was this uh guy who looked like the stereotypical football

like a high school football coach

and it's like you know, he has the egg and says this is your brain and he cracks it in the frying pan and it's

like sizzling and popping and says "This is your brain on drugs." And then I

mean, he has this just

indignant, angry look on his face. And

he's like, "Any questions?"

And And I would always think, "Yeah, I

mean, if if I stop getting high, will I

Will I be as happy as you?"

Because I mean, he obviously wasn't a

happy person.

I mean, he might have just been acting,

you know, for the for the public service

announcement. But still, I mean, it's

it's not a good way of persuading people

that your way is the best way if you're

obviously just like a miserable, cranky

kind of person.

So, yeah, just be a good example.

That's That That would be your best way.

And uh I don't know, maybe if you if you go to a temple or something, you might uh you know, invite them to come along or something.

But uh

still, just be a good example.

And so, I'll just move on to the uh next question, which is from Chaplin.

And Chaplin says,

"Do you plan on doing more forest Dharma talks or readings? Really enjoy them."

Um

yeah, I mean, it's not really on some kind of schedule that I have written up.

But uh

yeah, I'm sure it's going to happen

again. Yeah, I did a few um videos where I'm reading favorite texts in a forest setting.

And uh yeah, I can do that again.

I mean, originally my plan was when I came to South Carolina, it was maybe uh doing like forest retreats. I still think it's an excellent idea, especially in the West, where you just go on a a short hiking trip, you know, into the woods somewhere to some, you know, really nice forest area, maybe like by a river or something, and uh just have the meditation retreat there, where everyone just has their own

little place where they spend the day meditating.

And uh then you sit around the campfire in the evening and have the Dharma talk and a lot of it might be

talks on just uh

overcoming fear. Just living alone in a forest, just sitting under a tree, it can be kind of scary at night. Like, you know, you're you're sitting there meditating in the middle of the night and you hear a twig snap nearby.

It's like, "What was that?"

And uh

you know, how do you deal with that? You know, just get up and run. I mean, it's dark, you can't see any anyway and if

it's a dangerous animal, it probably runs faster than you anyhow, so you just sit there and you just observe the fear or observe, you know, whatever it is, you know, you feel your heart beating faster and these worried thoughts continue to arise. You just watch them and let them go.

You know, being being scared isn't going to help.

And just learning about like asceticism, austerity, you know, just that kind of thing. I think it could be really helpful

uh in the West, in America and it'd be a cheap way of doing a good meditation

retreat. You wouldn't have to rent a venue and you wouldn't have to charge a lot of money and that kind of thing. I mean, you could even be a So, it could be fasting, too, so you wouldn't even have to worry about food.

I did that a few times when I was living in Washington state as a monk. But, it uh I have to admit, it never really caught on. There's um most of the the Vipassanā people, the insight meditation people are boomers with uh health issues and uh they're just too westernized to really want to uh hack the discomfort and hunger of uh a forest fast.

But, uh I still think it would be a good idea if it could only catch on, get some

traction.

And so, I'll just move on to uh

Chaplin's next question.

"How are you liking the new beard and will you keep it?"

She's referring to this this this hair on my face.

And uh this is literally the first beard I've ever grown. This is the longest beard I've ever had in my life.

And uh one reason why I grew it is uh at work, I work at a sheet metal shop in South Carolina um at present.

And there's like 15 guys there, and I was one of the two guys that didn't have a beard.

You know, it's I don't know what it is.

It's like uh

down south, it's guys in the working class, and you know, they I'm not getting the tats all up and down my arms, but uh I did grow the beard. And uh the boss really likes it. He's complimented me on a couple times.

But um

I will probably shave it off when it starts getting really hot.

When then when it starts getting real sweaty and drippy and stuff, I'm probably shaving it off.

But um I might grow it again next winter.

Who knows? I don't know. I I'm not

really

um

I don't really make like plans like that. I just kind of go day by day with regard to certain things like beard growing.

So, finally, last question from Chaplin, and last question on the list.

And that is

really liking your new spiritual right project videos. Do you guys have any plans for future content there? Well, we're going to continue making videos.

There is a

um

a group that I have been invited to

join, and uh I'm in it, called spiritual right. And um it has uh a website, which is still under construction. That's one of our main uh obstacles at present. And uh YouTube videos, we've got a YouTube channel.

And um

I think there's a presence on Twitter that I'm not in control of. And there's even a presence on Tik Tok, which I've never seen before.

Um

I I would like us to get on to uh the the new uh what, Rumble and uh Truth Social.

But I might have to take charge of that in order for it to happen. And I'm I'm

really not into uh a lot of tech stuff.

But, um

yeah, if if you're if you're interested

in spiritual right, I can leave the

the uh

the YouTube link below along with all of

my other

my other and like uh

internet my URL links,

which should be below below here in the

above the comments.

And also uh

the links to my uh three books.

Probably before before very much longer.

So, uh yeah, the spiritual right

project, when we get the the website

fully going, there's going to be
articles there, also.

And um we're just we're just going to
continue making
uh videos.

Um

like really short ones that uh they can
put on TikTok, and then longer ones. And
the short ones and long ones will be on
on YouTube.

And um

so far, it's been good.

So, I guess that's it. I'm done. And uh
be happy.

Hello and welcome to episode 24 of
question and answer. I am your host,
Panyo Bassaw.

And usually I start off by apologizing
for taking so long to make one of these
videos, but this time I'm not
apologizing. I'm not sorry.

So I'm just going to get straight to the
questions cuz there's quite a few as
usual.

And I'm going to crack a Red Bull
to uh
fuel my brain.

Cuz I worked hard today. I am a working
man now, blue collar and all that.

Okay, so the first question

is from White Malcolm X.

And White Malcolm X says,

"When you were in Burma, did you see any evidence of veneration of Avalokiteshvara?"

"I thought I heard somewhere that there's some residual attention to that Bodhisattva in Southeast Asia."

Well,

no, not really. Um

there is some veneration of Avalokiteshvara after he transitioned into a female because it's my understanding that Guanyin is like a female more Chinese kind of version of Avalokiteshvara. I think she is based on

the Indian Mahayana Buddhist Bodhisattva
Avalokiteshvara.

So, um in Chinese Burmese like um
Burmese people who are ethnic Chinese,
you know, they speak Burmese.

Um

there's there's a lot of them that are
still like they've got a lot of ethnic
Chinese um
ethnicity.

And so on their shrines they all they
may have a a an image of Guanyin, but um
the Indian Avalokiteshvara I I haven't
really seen. I think the closest I've
seen to that other than Kuan Yin is one
time

I was taking a bus through

uh

what's it called Mahamyaing?

I think it's called Mahamyaing. It was

just the great dense forest in uh

northwestern Burma.

And um

we had to have a soldier

on our bus an armed soldier on our bus

because there were bandits that infested

this area.

And uh we stopped off

well before we got into the deep forest

we stopped at this little shrine that

was to Bet No Mae which means black

Vishnu.

So um there is a certain amount of

veneration of Indian

like non-Buddhist non-Theravadan

deities.

But um with regard to Avalokiteshvara

other than um after the the sex change

to Kuan Yin I haven't seen it. And Kuan

Yin is mainly venerated by

uh people of Chinese ancestry who's got

like a a Mahayanist streak to them.

So I'll just move on to the next

question also by White Malcolm X.

And he says is there any form of

ecclesiastical hierarchy in Southeast

Asian Theravadan

Theravada? I know that in Sri Lanka

there are Nayakas and Mahanayakas who

are regional leaders. If so what do they do? I never really understood what their job description was supposed to be. Have you ever had to interact with this sort of hierarchy? If so what was that experience like?

Well um

it's relatively well known that in Thailand they are led by the Sangharaja you know the king of the Sangha who is really only the king of the Thai Sangha not uh

any other any other Sangha in uh Southeast Asia or South Asia.

Um and then there's I really don't know that much about Thai Buddhism, but um, they do have like an ecclesiastical

council.

And um,

I think one of their main purposes

is um,

to like uh, root out heresy. Like if

there you've got some Ajahn in Thailand

who's teaching stuff that's really not

endorsed by the Pali texts, you know, he

may be uh, warned. And uh, if the

warning doesn't doesn't work, I've I've

heard of them actually

uh, forcing monks to disrobe, which is

kind of iffy. I mean, they really don't

have that authority, but if uh, the

person assumes that they have the

authority, they may go along with it.

Um, in Burma, they do have the Nayakas and Mahanayakas that uh, what Malcolm X here mentions.

Um, it's it's similar, although um, the leader is just the Sangha

Mahanayaka Sayadaw,

which is the uh, the Sayadaw or master or teacher

of of the you know, the great, you know, the highest teacher of the Sangha or the highest master of the the leader of the Sangha. And I've actually met with him.

I I had lunch with him once.

Um,

he was very friendly. I can't remember what he told me. He told me some strange strange uh,

story about supernatural things, but I I
can't remember what it was. And um,
they're they're mainly bureaucrats.
They're sort of intermediaries between
the government and uh,
the uh, the faithful congregation of
Buddhists.

Um,

I've I've had some interactions with
Nayakas, too, which are like the
regional leaders of the Sangha. And um,
like
if an abbot is going to be appointed to
a monastery, he has to have the okay of
the Nayaka Sayadaw of that area. And uh,
like making new ecclesiastical

boundaries, simas they're called. Um
possibly even founding new monasteries,
the nayaka generally the nayaka Seattle
generally has to uh
to approve.

And there is an ecclesiastical council
and uh they do what I was saying about
what they probably do in Thailand where
they will uh send warnings to monks that
are deviating from uh orthodoxy and uh
um

yeah, that's about that's really they
really don't do very much, tell you the
truth.

They're uh
just bureaucrats and uh I I just walked
out of a uh

a nayaka Seattle's monastery. He was
he lived uh in northwestern Burma and uh
some some faithful good intentioned
villagers took me to see him
and uh

he was

he was really keen on me handling money
for some reason. I was I was relatively
strict in that regard. I didn't handle
money.

And um

he just uh had some novice
bring a plate from some cupboard and set
it down in front of me and then
announced to everybody that uh
um

you know, they would earn merit if they donated for my traveling expenses cuz I was traveling at the time and I didn't like it and the monk that was with me knew that I didn't like it. And uh so I'm just kind of kind of scowling and then he started telling them that uh you know, they should pray for nibana when they're offering the money and that was just too much. I just got up and walked out.

Uh

but yeah, I mean, they can they can be they I mean, they're not really chosen for their uh moral rectitude or their wisdom. I think it's largely um politics

more than anything else.

So uh I think I'll move on to the the last, the third and last question of White Malcolm X.

How do you say politically incorrect Dharma in Pali? I think it might be something like nicca nicca dhamma. I was going to look this up. I'm going to Just a minute.

The Pali-English dictionary.

And I can't remember if it's aranna or rajanna.

Let's see. Let's look it up here.

Oh my goodness.

rajo rajadi

rajana

Okay, here we go. Okay, r a j j i or r a
j j a

is

raja

which means

like kingship

and um

I don't know. That's back in those days

that was pretty much what government

was. So, my guess it would be like

micca rajadamma. You know, um

wrong

you know, wrong dhamma of government or

something like that.

Um

Yes, or what goes against the the king

or something. I don't know.

How do I say politically incorrect
dhamma in uh
in Pali?

Yeah, maybe what Malcolm X is uh
got it better except he's he says he has
nicca instead of

Yeah, no. What what he has got written
here couldn't It wouldn't even be a Pali
word. He's got a long i before a double
consonant.

And it starts with n which uh yeah, I
don't think that's really a word.

Maybe he typed it wrong.

But it would be something like micca
rajadamma or something like that.

But um

I'm not exactly sure. I don't know if there's really a concept for that. I mean, technically there would not be be Pali word. There's just a lot of things that there are no Pali words for. Pali has a relatively small vocabulary because it's largely based on um the Theravada Buddhist texts. You know, there's not much beyond that. And what is beyond that is based on the vocabulary of the Theravada um uh the Pali texts. Um there there was one monk who uh wrote a Pali to English dictionary. He was inventing or maybe it was English to

Pali dictionary. He was a a Sri Lankan monk. And um excuse me.

He uh he was like coining new words for modern things, but uh yeah, I even he didn't have an idea for politically incorrect Dhamma, I'm pretty sure.

Uh um maybe I'll think about it.

And uh come up with something.

So, anyway, I'll just move on to the next question, which is from Urlog, I think is the name.

And Urlog says, "As a former marine biologist, what are your thoughts on the neurological complexity of fish

and other non-mammalian marine life?

I was a vegan for 4 years, but have recently become pescetarian, essentially veganism plus seafood, as I realized that most marine life is relatively neurologically simple and some are analogous to biological drones like mussels, which are like fleshy plants, which I consider ethically okay to eat."

Um

really,

I mean, a fish is a relatively stupid animal, most fish anyway.

Um there are there's some kind of fish like uh

there's a freshwater fish called the mormyrid,

uh members of the family Mormyridae,

which um

uh are more intelligent than the average

fish. Sometimes they'll actually play,

like um

they'll they'll form a circle and

they'll be like pushing a rock back and

forth amongst them, that kind of thing.

But, um their their nervous system is,

you know, just a very simplified version

of our nervous system. You know, we are

supposedly evolved from fish.

But,

um

the uh the invertebrates, like mollusks

and crustaceans, they just apparently do

not feel pain the way uh vertebrates do.

Their their nervous system is designed very differently from ours. It evolved you know, independently of ours, except for maybe at the very beginning of uh of the evolutionary uh you know,

whatever you call it.

And they they really do not even have, technically, a central nervous system, not in the the sense of like a human being.

And, um I I've I've mentioned this before. I've talked about this before, I think. I used to work as a fisheries biologist, and one of my duties, I worked on Japanese longline vessel,

which means they would put out 20 or 30
mi of

of line with a baited hook about every 3
ft.

And then they spend the rest of the day
reeling it in.

And it was relatively high quality,
because the fish wouldn't get all
squished in the net and so forth.

But, it was very labor-intensive. But,
one of my duties was any crab that came
up

would have to be investigated. I have to
look at it to see if it got injured, you
know, damaged, and uh what species, and
you know, how big it was, how much it

weighed, male or female, that kind of stuff.

And so, I'd be busy with other things.

So, we had a big holding tank with seawater there. And sometimes a crab coming up um on the line would have most of its legs crushed or ripped off.

So, um a crab is a decapod. It's got 10 legs, including the the pinchers.

And uh sometimes, like seven of them would be just ripped off. It'd have like one leg on one side and two legs on the other side. But, when it got tossed into that holding tank, if it found some squid bait there, it would just stop and just start eating the squid bait. It seemed not not to care at all that it

just had most of its legs ripped off.

And, um

they gradually do grow new legs.

So, um they just apparently don't feel
pain

the way, um a vertebrate does. And so,

um I was largely vegetarian before I

became a monk, and uh I would eat like

uh shrimp and and oysters and that kind

of a thing cuz um

apparently, they just don't feel pain or

or fear or that sort of thing like uh

um

we vertebrates do.

So, uh I think I'll move on to Urlog's

next question,

which is

"Can you please elaborate further on your political views as a classical libertarian?"

As I understand it, the ethos of this path is do what you will so long as it doesn't infringe upon the rights of another. A glaring downside to this approach, in my view, is that most people are functionally [__] and telling intellectually and even morally inept people what they can do whatever they want to do is surely asking for societal collapse and widespread, largely self-inflicted suffering.

Wouldn't skillful, benevolent authoritarianism be more sustainable and

ethical?"

Um yeah, that's

um I think the

the political

uh orientation that most closely

resembles my orientation would be

something like classical liberal, um not

liberal in the Western sense, but um or

the the American sense, but more liberal

in the European sense. You know, like

John Stuart Mill, that kind of thing.

Um

I do agree that that pure libertarianism

is just It's recipe for disaster because

uh

I mean, it would just there would be not

enough social cohesion. You know, if everyone is has got a different belief system, for example, you know, everyone is just a free thinker and they just follow their own way. And um you know, it's just they're just going to be going in different directions, which isn't going to pull the society apart. You have to have some kind of shared um

shared values.

And we used to have that up until relatively recently.

You know, it's now it's American values.

It's uh

you know, if a leftist is talking about American values, they're just talking

about, you know, communist values essentially. And just somehow um assuming or supposing or pretending that communist values are the right values that, you know, any right-thinking American American would have, which is nonsense.

So,

um I do think the system set up by the founding fathers, you know, minus slavery,

uh was a pretty good system. And um it was to some degree eth- ethnically homogeneous, which increases the odds that it will be ideologically homogeneous, so that people will just

voluntarily

adopt the same belief system.

But when you've got multiculturalism,
then uh

um

yeah, it makes it much more difficult.

And then allowing

um

people who are not

um

politically educated or politically

aware to vote is is I mean, is yeah,

it's it's not a good idea. And when

people living on the dole vote, they

just vote for bigger doles.

They just vote for more handouts.

So,

and I do agree it's like uh with regard
to the uh

yeah, most people are functionally

[_]

Um, and intellectually and even morally
inept. Um,

yeah, most people are, are, you know,
average. You know, they're not like
retards, but there are a lot, you know,
there's as many retards as geniuses.

So,

um,

yeah, it's like, like uh, Thomas

Jefferson said

that, um,

if you don't, if you don't want somebody

controlling you, you have to control yourself.

It's like, uh, what, the price of freedom is eternal vigilance? Something along those lines. I think that's a, the quote from, uh, Thomas Jefferson.

And, uh, yeah, I mean, you, you have to have,

uh, moral principles and, and that sort of thing. And and the post-modern Western world is really opposed to that, seemingly.

Uh, you, you have to kind of knuckle under to what you're told. You have to follow, you know, the what, what the, what the elite say, or else you're going to, you're going to be

punished.

And, uh, if we just had a better elite,
you know, a wiser elite,
then that would work best. Like, um,
I really think it's possible that, um,
the best governmental system would be
like an enlightened autocrat.

Some enlightened emperor, the god
emperor.

But, the problem is that,
um, like in the case of Marcus Aurelius,
you can have the philosopher king, but
that's no guarantee that his son won't
just be, uh, a sociopath.

So,

um, democracy, some form of, of limited

democracy is, uh,

probably, uh,

the safest. And it, it's more of a
recipe for mediocrity, but it's a, like
a stable mediocrity instead of,

um,

very good with the, uh, possibility
that, uh, the next leader will be very
bad.

So,

that's uh

my political views in a nutshell.

Very small nutshell. So, I'm just going
to move on to the Uurlaug's next
question.

What are your thoughts on Dharma centers
and monasteries requiring vaccine

passports to attend retreats or even to enter the grounds for a day visit? Is it unskillful for monks to turn away serious practitioners, especially those of us who are interested in ordination due to ethically and logically unsound state pressures? Yeah, that's I mean when I was a junior monk, I was told to read Mahakassapa's verses in the the Theragatha.

And

um I've I've talked about this before, too, but it's it's a good story where Mahakassapa was walking for alms in a in a town.

And

uh a leprous beggar saw him, and he seemed so serene and majestic that this this beggar with leprosy was inspired with respect. And he wanted to offer something from his own his own alms bowl. So, he goes up to Mahakassapa.

And

he uh

you know, offers some some food into Mahakassapa's bowl. And when he does it, one of his fingertips just breaks off into the bowl.

And um Mahakassapa just doesn't raise an eyebrow.

He accepts it, and then he goes on his way. When he gets enough food, he sits

down at the the base of the wall, like
the city wall,
and uh probably on the outside, and
starts eating his meal. And the the
beggar with leprosy follows him to see
what he's going to do because he's
mortified. You know, he's
he's really worried. And Mahakassapa
doesn't even take the fingertip out of
the bowl. He just moves it over to one
side and then, you know, eats from the
other side.

And um

that was um

encouraged

uh for me to emulate. That's really I

mean,

the monk has the idea that, you know, if you look out for Dharma, Dharma looks out for you. Christianity has something similar. But seriously, I mean, just worrying about getting sick, that kind of thing, it's uh it's pointless because in a place like rural Burma, in villages of Burma, I I've had people with leprosy offer me food. I've had just I remember one time

there was this kid who looked like the feral child in in the old movie The Road Warrior, just wild hair, just dirt. And he before he offered the food, he had this bowl of food his mother probably gave to him to offer to me. He just like

sneezed directly into it. And then offered the food. And a monk's not supposed to He's not supposed to raise an eyebrow, you know, it's like Maha Kassapa is the ideal. And um you know, you just accept it. And uh I've had this one village lady blow her nose with her hand, you know, just like this, fling the snot off her hand, and then just immediately after use the same hand to offer food into my bowl. And again, I mean, you can't refuse it. You're not You're not allowed to refuse it. Sometimes it's just a a battle of will just not to make faces when they're putting something totally disgusting

into your bowl. And um usually I you know, if there was a cold going around, I'd usually catch it because there was little concept of uh you know, microbial transfer, hygiene, that kind of a thing.

So, yeah, I mean, you just being being that paranoid about uh

um

like the coronavirus is really it's it goes against Dharma. A monk should have enough faith in his practice to assume that Dharma is protecting him, his good karma or just Dharma in general is kind of looking out for him and is not going to let really bad things happen to him.

So, yeah, I agree with that.

So, I'll move on to Urlog's next question.

What are your thoughts on Hellenism being directly branched from Vedic Brahmanism sometime back in ancient antiquity?

Could Hellenism be restored to its former glory based on preserved religious artifacts and literature as well as contemporary knowledge of Vedic Brahmanism or Hinduism?

For example,

Logos is Brahman, Indra is Zeus,

Asura are Titans, et cetera. The Jews

want Europeans to forget trad-

traditional Hellenism and embrace their

Uh well, maybe I shouldn't

Yeah. Uh

Abrahamic tales to fulfill their

psychopath Oh, man.

Because they're still salty about

ancient Greek occupation and

Hellenization of the Levant.

Uh Hanukkah, for example. And they're

just wholesale Semitics premises as can

be seen in their scripture.

Well, it is true that the the Hebrews

consider themselves to be God's chosen

people.

If for some strange reason

with a certain amount of intolerant

fanaticism,

similar to what's going on with the left today back in like the Roman Empire, um they pretty much drove to extinction, persecuted to extinction every other religious system with a few like vestigial left hanging like remnants.

So,

I hope this question

um doesn't get me banned from YouTube.

but uh Hellenism, I mean that's

essentially just like Greek polytheism.

Um it's not like Hellenistic

a the Hellenistic age, which was

um after Alexander the Great.

You know, the civilizations like the the kingdoms, the little empires that uh the

Alexander's generals founded after he died.

Um Hellenism

um yeah, I do not believe that it is directly branched from Vedic Brahmanism.

That um they do have a common ancestor, but it goes way back before then.

Vedic Brahmanism uh see how do I explain this?

You had the the Proto-Indo-Europeans probably living north of the Black Sea and

um

maybe 3,500 or bef- more than 35 like

3,000 BC before 3,000 BC.

Um you had the ancestors of the Greeks

like probably migrating across the

Danube and then through

um

what is it uh the Balkan Peninsula.

And um

and then the there were some that

traveled further into uh

um like Anatolia and became like the

Phrygians and and um

and so forth.

But then the the ancestors of the

Indians were they were they migrated

eastwards

and um

uh they were uh

uh yeah, it was it was just a very it

was very different. I mean,

they're both derived from the same

Indo-European homeland and then the

ancestors of the Greeks migrated in one

direction, the ancestors of the Indians

migrated in a different direction. And

uh

um the Indians and the Persians were

were were similar.

Um they're they're more closely related

than the Indians and the Greeks.

Um

The The Hindus did have

a version of Zeus

called Dyaus Pitri,

a sky father.

But even by the time the Rigveda was composed, he had already been reduced to the status of a minor deity. He doesn't have very many hymns dedicated to him, not nearly as many as Indra or Agni, the god of fire.

The Asuras are essentially the same as the Titans.

Um

Logos as Brahman.

Uh I really don't think Logos and Brahman would be even the same.

Um

I I've I've considered, you know, trying

to Indianize

um classical

uh polytheism. So, you'd have like Zeus

as

as like Brahman. And in Indian

philosophy or Indian theology, you got

Brahma and his consort is Maya,

which is like illusion, the the

generatrix of the world. So, maybe you

could appoint uh

Hera

as sort of the mother of of all things,

you know, like

um

Brahman is just undifferentiated, but

Logos seems to be more of a a

differentiating force, just sort of

um generating the 10,000 things as the
Tao Te Ching um talks about.

So, let's see.

Yeah, I mean

I don't think that the Hellenistic or
the Greek religion is directly branched
from Vedic Brahmanism. They do share a
common ancestor.

And I think it would have been to the
benefit of

uh Greek religion to have adopted some
some more Indian

uh elements. And um you could turn it
into something valid. Like Hinduism is
um you know, it still exists today. It's
It's um mutated a lot since ancient

times, but um

uh

I mean, it's it's still a valid
religious system. It's one of the few

um

like living

Indo-European polytheistic

uh spiritual systems still in existence.

So, I'll just move on to the next
question.

Also from Urlog. This is his Urlog's
last question.

I assume anyone with a name like Urlog
is probably male.

What is the karmic impact of killing
zombies?

They're hostile undead creatures, but

there's also a faint spark of animating
consciousness in their base cerebral
regions,

so they can move about and hunt. Does
this count as taking a life or unlife?

Well, the way

Buddhist ethics works is that it is
psychological and largely subjective,
and so

um the reason why killing

is immoral is not so much because of the
suffering you're inflicting on another
being, it's because of your own hatred
and anger and and aggression.

That is like your own mental states

that that are uh infecting your your

behavior and your actions.

So, if you're killing zombies just full of full of hatred, just die die die, even though maybe they're already dead, um you know, then yeah, you're going to be getting bad karma for that.

Um

So, yeah, I I assume it would be um unethical to kill zombies unless you can do it with uh complete serenity, which seems kind of unlikely.

Uh but then again, when you're living in the world, you're not you don't have the luxury of being a renunciant, you know, you maybe have uh uh people that that depend on you to defend them or protect them,

then uh yeah, you're probably better off killing the zombies.

Yeah, I mean, if zombies start attacking your house, I'm yeah, I I wouldn't blame you at all for uh bringing out the shotgun.

So, I'll just move on to the next question, which is from John S.

And John S. says,

"For formerly venerable, okay, still pretty venerable in my opinion, Panyo Bodhicaryavatara, what is your take as a former Theravada monk and presumably still a Theravada practitioner of Mahayana sutras and Vajrayana tantras or anybody else who would like to give

their personal insights on the question?

I'd be interested in your thoughts."

Okay. Um

some Mahayana Buddhist texts I really

like, like uh the Prajnaparamita

sutras, like the Diamond Cutter, for

example, the Heart Sutra. Those are very

profound, and although they are

apocryphal,

they're probably not uh

quotes of the Buddha, they're probably

composed hundreds of years after the

Buddha's time. Nevertheless,

um I think the Buddha would have largely

agreed with much of what they say.

Uh more so than some of what the Pali

texts say, because the Pali texts are

not entirely reliable either, in my opinion.

With regard to Tibetan Buddhism, I really don't know that much, but I am um very much

um an admirer, I very much respect the Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation, uh attributed to uh

Padmasambhava, I think, which is also very profound, and I think the Buddha would uh I mean, even though it's not

um you know, what the historical Buddha said. Nevertheless, the in spirit it comes pretty close, in my opinion.

But with regard to the pure land stuff

and all the

um, the Herukas, you know, the the the
the benevolent and the wrathful deities,
you know, all that stuff that the
Tibetans talk about sometimes. Uh

Yeah, I really I really don't know that
much about it and have never been all
that interested in it. Green Tara and
black Tara, that kind of thing. Uh

Yeah, I'm I wanted to uh
when I became a Buddhist, I wanted to
follow what the Buddha taught, you know,
what this enlightened founder of the
system taught. And so, I really wasn't
interested in later mutations.

Although, as I say, some of the later
mutations were attempts at reform and

getting back to what the Buddha taught when Theravada, for example, and the other pre-Mahayana schools were drifting into Abhidharma and just, you know, elaborate commentarial systems that were uh obscuring the original spirit.

So,

um,

let's see. What is my take on Mahayana sutras and Vajrayana tantras? Yeah, I'm I mean, I'm not an authority on Mahayana or and I'm certainly no authority on on Tibetan Buddhism. But, uh some of the some of the older texts that are um you know, philosophical and not

devotional are very profound.

So, I'm uh

I would take them by a sutra by sutra

um, basis

and uh judge them individually.

So, that's uh John S's question. Next is from Potila.

And Potila asks,

"Does South Carolina have open carry?

I know North Carolina does. Yeah, that's uh

Potila asks that because I recently got a a Glock Glock 19.

So, um

I looked this up and apparently South Carolina does have like a limited open carry where strangely kind of ironically

um in order to be able to carry a gun like in a holster on your side like a cowboy, you know, in plain sight so it's not concealed, you have to have a concealed permit.

So, if you have a concealed carry permit, you can also open carry, but if you don't have a concealed carry permit, you you can't open carry either for the time being.

Although uh red states like South Carolina are going more and more red.

So,
it's uh something to look forward to, I guess.

So, Potila's next question, also a

defense question.

According to orthodox Theravada, does carrying a weapon incur any karmic tendency to encounter violence?

So, if you have a weapon, do you think that it invites more violence than if you didn't? Could be a knife, gun, whatever.

Again, um

karma

is

it's a mental state, you know, it's it's volition or or will, you know, cetana in Pali.

And um

so, I mean, just carrying a weapon is itself ethically neutral. Regardless of

the fact It could be a nuclear bomb or something, but it's just in it's just like an inanimate object.

So, it is morally neutral. It's It's your own mental states that are that are generating the karma.

And um

so, I mean, if if you're carrying a gun, but uh you know, maybe it's just your duty or something or you know, you're just not giving it a second thought, you know, you you've got a serene mind otherwise,

then uh uh yeah, I don't think that it wouldn't necessarily

um

incur any karmic tendency to encounter violence.

Although, it could be subconscious stuff is going on and uh that could uh somehow condition someone who sees you with a gun and then they become more violent or something, but uh yeah, I I I don't think so.

So, let's move on to the next question.

Which is uh change of pace here.

I believe that dark forces or beings sometimes called demons are real. I've encountered them.

How does orthodox Theravada teach one should reject or manage such beings?

What if our metta or samadhi isn't strong enough

uh to not feel fear or other negative emotions

if they interact with us? Chant parittas?

Um yeah, it's like the the the um what is it? Panacea?

Uh in Theravada, this I mean, it's like the cure-all for for being bothered by demons and ghosts is

uh the metta sutta, to chant the metta sutta.

Um

if your metta or samadhi isn't strong enough,

then uh what the Burmese do is they uh get somebody who they think does have

metta or samadhi strong enough to come
and chant the metta sutta and other
protective chants.

So,

um if you think that your own

uh

chanting of protection chants isn't
strong enough, then uh yeah, you might
want to call in some big guns,
you know, like professional
exorcists or uh
you know, chanters of parittas or or
whatever.

Um

but uh it is true. It's like uh it does
depend on your your karma, and you
should have faith in your own karma.

Should have faith in yourself. Sort of like the Christians talk about having faith in God, you know, think uh you know, give no thought for tomorrow, you know, what you will eat, where you will sleep, that kind of a thing. Um it it's it's the same basic principle in Buddhism, too, although with a difference uh you know, there there is no God looking out for you. It's just your own mental states and your karma that are generating your reality.

So,

try to have good mental states and uh if demons cause you to feel fear or

other negative emotions,
if they interact with us,
really the best you can do is the best
you can do. And uh
if if your own efforts are insufficient,
find a wise and um benevolent person
to uh
to intercede on your behalf and help you
out.

That would be my advice.

So, the next question is from Matthew.

What are your thoughts on Jordan
Peterson and how might an understanding
of Dharma strengthen his arguments?

Yeah, I've given some thought to this. I
saw Jordan Peterson
shortly after I came back to America,

like uh January of 2019, I think it was.

Before he uh

got strung out on

Valium or or whatever it was that

happened to him.

And uh

this was in San Jose. I saw him there.

And interestingly,

uh what he what he was talking about has

some bearing on this question because he

was doing his best to try to

explain

how morals

um are just inherent in our psychology.

And he's talking about like rats, how

even rats have a rudimentary concept of

fair play. Like you got a big strong rat and a little weak rat, and they'll play, the big strong rat will let the weak rat win sometimes. Like if they're wrestling,

the big strong rat will just let the little one win sometimes just so that the little one will still want to play.

You know, if the little one just gets its butt kicked every single time, it's going to just stop.

But, um so the big rat lets the little one win sometimes. But, um yeah, I was thinking

uh that night and and subsequently that if you just understood Buddhist ethics, you know, he wouldn't have to rely so

much on experiments on rats.

Um he is somewhat of a scientist, I

suppose, but um

still,

from the Buddhist point of view, like I

was already saying, your your mental

states are conditioning your reality.

You know, it's like uh

in a way, it's conditioning the way you

are

um just sort of generating a path

through samsara.

In a way, it's like a you're you're

you're dreaming.

Although, we don't really have control

over our dreams, as we know from uh our

experiences at night.

So, yeah, I think Jordan Peterson would do well to

study Buddhism, but not study it purely intellectually. That's That's one big mistake that a lot of academics make is they they try they study something like Buddhism and they just cannot get out of intellectual mode.

You know, if he I don't know if Jordan Peterson has any mysticism to him, but uh

um

it would be good. I mean,

I it's my experience from what I've seen and read that some really brilliant people,

like uh

uh what's his name? Stephen Hawking.

He was He was really intelligent. I

mean, he could he couldn't play

basketball, but he was really

intelligent. And uh like uh

Bertrand Russell, also. They were really

down on mysticism because they were so

locked into an intellectual

understanding that they just couldn't

make sense of it. It was just nonsense

to them.

Or, you know, something a lot something

fairly close to nonsense. And so,

whether Jordan Peterson has a mystical

uh streak to him or not, I don't know.

Um if he doesn't, then he's pretty much doomed to just trying to understand reality intellectually.

And you're never going to understand reality by thinking about it.

So, I'll just move on to Matthew's next question.

Buddhism has a practice whereby you meditate on the disgusting parts of the body, pus and phlegm, etc., and other similar recommendations as a countermeasure to lustiness.

By all accounts I have heard from lay people and monks alike, these techniques are minimally effective.

What did you find to be the most effective methods for remaining true to

the vinaya in regard to the demands of one's wiener schnitzel?

Related, uh

beyond mere vinaya compliance, did you find anything that actually worked on a deeper level to bring the procreative demands of the body to a place of tranquility and equanimity?

Well,

just putting on robes and and going through an ordination ceremony doesn't cause you to stop being a man or a human. And I mean, you it's largely um just going with biology is largely just built in. You know, you've got hormones and like areas of the brain and so forth

that are going to make sure that you're going to want to reproduce.

So, it doesn't just go to way go away.

And um

so, for me,

um

just vinaya itself, just uh like a monk is required to follow the rules of monastic discipline.

And um

for example, if a monk masturbates to orgasm deliberately, you know, he he wants to have an orgasm and he makes effort to have an orgasm and the orgasm occurs, then he's going to take uh penance for 6 days and 6 nights. And then, at the end of the 6 days and 6

nights, plus however many nights or
however many days he concealed it before
he confessed it,
then after after that,
he has to go to a ceremony with at least
20 monks in good standing present and uh
go through this elaborate ritual to to
have himself taken off probation, out of
penance, and and replaced into a into
good standing again.

And

for me,

there were there were a few times when

uh

uh

you'd be uh not exactly spanking the

puppy, but kind of petting it a little bit, and then it just kind of accidentally goes off.

That happened several times. I mean, it was Yeah, I mean, yeah. So, you you like psychoanalyze yourself. It's like, "Well, did I do that on purpose?" It's like, you know, was I making movements to help it happen? You know, like like deliberately, not you know, in order to make it happen. And there were times when it would be so difficult to tell for sure that I would go through the the penance just to make sure.

And uh it's really a pain in the neck. I mean, it's it's really difficult. Like, one of the the aspects of the penance is

you have to make confession to every monk at the monastery every day.

And sometimes, if you're living in a big monastery, there's monks coming and going and you you go to make you go to make confession to so-and-so, and it's like you're told, "Oh, he took off today. He's not here today." So, that day doesn't count. You didn't you didn't make confession to that monk before he left.

And so, there are some monasteries in Burma that specialize in monks doing penance, where it's just a quiet little secluded place without much coming and going. They have to be at least five

monks there though to do the penance too. And then they'll invite more monks for the big ceremony at the end with 20 monks. So, just just knowing what a pain in the neck it was to do the penance.

Um that caused me to behave a lot better than I would have otherwise, I'm sure.

Um

with regard to

uh other techniques that were effective,

I mean just like sleeping little and

eating little,

you know, just um being an ascetic,

living a rough life, and uh you know,

avoiding temptation, which is kind of a

second-rate way of uh

not doing bad things to avoid the temptation, but still it's it's important until you're just immune to the temptation.

So, yeah, it's like you're going to be less lustful if um

you know, if you if you're just eating enough to stay healthy and just sleeping and just the minimum amount and meditating a lot

and uh I do agree that um

contemplating the foulness of the body

doesn't work for me. I went to see

autopsies, that kind of a thing, and uh

as a biologist, it was just interesting

to me. It's like the human body is just

a miracle of of engineering.

So, it it it really didn't gross me out.

It's uh it's not foulness, in my
opinion.

Um

and I'm sure like a coroner can uh do
autopsies on you know, young women and
then come home and doesn't make him any
less lustful for his wife, not
significantly less anyway.

So,

I think your your best defense is just
like strong faith that you shouldn't do
it. Or if if you don't have uh just like
the awareness that you shouldn't do it,
you know, just if you can't see clearly
that you shouldn't do it, at least you

can have like faith in the texts, in the scriptures, faith in your teacher, that sort of thing, and and that can get you through. Like

a lot of Roman Catholic saints,

you know, they uh

they just they were saints because

they'd had absolute stainless steel

faith in their religion, and uh they

thought if they weren't a saint, they

were going to burn in hell forever and

ever.

And uh as a result, they were saints,

but also they were pretty hysterical,

some of them. Just uh kind of nutty,

neurotic, just from the all the

repressed urges that they had.

Like uh

Freud says, and I I don't think Freud was right about everything, but I think he was largely correct about this. It's like, if you repress your urges, you just, you know, just through force of will or just cultural conditioning or whatever, you just don't, you know, act out your urges, they don't just go away. Like your sex urges don't just go away. They just get like pressed down inside your subconscious mind, where they they build a pressure until finally they start percolating up to the surface as neurotic symptoms.

So,

I guess as a review here, um
how to uh avoid being so lustful,
um yeah, I mean, if if you're ordained
and you're strict and you want to be a
good good monk or a good nun, good
monastic, then that can be a strong
motivation to force you to behave
yourself.

Um you know, just doing the practice is
a good way of uh uh uh uh

I mean, for example, it's it's uh very
strictly against the rules even for a
monk to be sitting down alone with a
woman.

Um

I already mentioned the the the
masturbation thing, that's out. Sex is
out, masturbation's out, at least
masturbation to orgasm.

Um

and then just uh
you know, stay kind of underfed and and
under under-rested, you know, deprive
yourself of food and sleep to some
degree and uh
that that will help like lower the
drives to some degree also.

But uh I agree that yeah, contemplating
foulness or looking at dead looking at
corpses and that sort of thing it that
really does work very well.

So, I'll just move on to the next

question.

From Dos Boot.

And Dos Boot says, "I wonder about one thing. Should See, most should be familiar with how dreams and most of the mind does their own thing when having a fever, food poisoning, or similar.

Sometimes the quality or theme of these things seem to be connected to the specific physical process, at least in my case. Is this phenomenon produced by the brain only? Is it a mix of the physical state and karma, or is it something different altogether?

Are there any other perspective on that that are worth mentioning from a

Buddhist Theravada perspective?"

Well, for starters, I would say it's very interesting that um the Abhidhamma philosophy of Theravada Buddhism, which some Burmese monks will claim just explains everything, you know, it's like the Buddhist theory of everything, but it it has almost nothing to say about dreams, which is interesting.

Um

yeah, there's really not much mention of dreams in Theravada Buddhist philosophy, which I think is uh an oversight.

Um but getting back to this question, is this phenomenon produced by the brain only? No, it is not. I mean, if you want to you want to just stick to orthodox

Theravada, the brain isn't even really what generates your thoughts.

Um

I shouldn't get too much into that, but it's you know, the hadaya vatthu or the the heart base, you know, it's like thought arises in the heart and not in the brain. They really didn't know what the brain was for.

Um Buddhaghosa in the Visuddhimagga just came to the conclusion that the brain is just a

uh a large amount of bone marrow encased in a large hollow bone, the head bone.

And uh he was hard put to find a use for it.

Um

But yeah, even from my point of view,
I'm not a materialist. Even though I I
can talk about biology and and all sorts
of things like that, you know, technical
materialistic-sounding stuff.

Ultimately, our reality is uh
is generated by mind. You know, the very
first verse of the Dhammapada, you know,
mind precedes all things. You know, it
is the it is chief, it is all things are
mind-made.

And so, um yes, the mind creates the
brain
more often than the brain creates the
mind.

So,

yeah, it's it's largely karma working itself out. That's another teaching of of Theravada Buddhist philosophy is uh your experiences are conditioned by your karma. And so, you know, if you if you get sick, that's conditioned by karma. And if you're having weird dreams or weird waking mental states. I mean, I've had uh I had uh pneumonia really bad when I was about 20 years old.

And I remember hallucinating while I was still awake. It was like I was lying on my back in bed coughing. And it was like a a little oil derrick would there'd be

like two or three of them sprouting out of my chest at the same time. When it got to full size, it would burst and a cough and then I would cough. You know, every cough would be like one of these things on my chest growing up and boom. And I would cough and then another one would get full size and boom and I would cough.

That was strange. I've I have hallucinated in a waking state from just from being sick.

But um

going with uh you know, strict Buddhist spirituality, it's uh it's more mind than matter.

There are some um,

who will, uh, really take the materialistic stuff seriously. And Theravada technically does claim that, uh, physical matter is ultimately real. That's one one thing that I would disagree with, uh, Theravada Buddhist philosophy. But I think I'll just move on to the next question here.

Uh, I'm Well, maybe I shouldn't. I'll I'll try and see if I answered the question more or less.

Um, is this phenomenon produced by the brain only? Is it a mix of the physical state and karma? Is it something

Yeah, I mean, I'm not a materialist, so

I do not think that physical matter is ultimately real.

I mean, it's it's relatively real. It's it's conventional truth.

It's, uh, conditionally real, but not ultimately real.

Uh, for that matter, even even karma it wouldn't be ultimately real, but

I think I can, uh, just move on to the next question rather than,

um, confound everybody with all my, uh, metaphysical gobbledygook.

So, the next question is from Yuichiro.

And Yuichiro says,

"I'm a metal enjoyer, but I think black metal is stupid.

The only interesting argument I've heard for why black metal is good is basically it's a spiritual experience attuning the listener to dark forces and meditating on them. This reminds me of foulness meditation. Could black metal be used for something like that?"

Um,

I don't think it would work that way. I mean, foulness meditation, you're not like becoming one with the foulness.

It's like you're you're observing the foulness and kind of having this that's icky

feeling, and then it kind of it it
distances you from the foulness. You
know, you you in a way you're you're
distancing yourself from what you are
identifying as foul, like the human body
for example.

Whereas with music

I mean, you really absorb the the music
in order to really experience it
more or less fully.

And so, the black metal it's it's music
is like an emotional language. You know,
it's pattern sounds that elicit certain
emotional reactions.

And black metal is eliciting
just like kind of darker,
more

not necessarily violent, but not violent
in the sense of wanting to hurt people,
but violent in just the sense of just
the vehemence and just

I don't the aggressiveness of it. And
again, aggressiveness not in the sense
of like wanting to hurt others, but uh
just you know, wanting to beat your head
against the wall
just for the fun of it.

And uh

that's one reason why I do like rock and
roll music. It elicits feelings of like
power and exhilaration that I like.

But the black metal stuff, yeah, it is
just too

um it's too negative for my tastes. I prefer more upbeat positive kind of stuff.

So, yeah, I my answer to that would be uh

could black music be used for something like that?

Theoretically, I think anything's possible, but

it wouldn't work that way for me.

You'd have to be detached from it and uh listen to the music the way like a speech therapist would be listening to somebody stutter. You know, in order to separate yourself and and see it as as something that uh

um

yeah, I don't I don't think it would work very well.

I I there are better ways of going about it.

So, the next question is from Airain.

And Airain says,

"What is the dharmic way of dealing with dishonest people you are forced to interact with in everyday life? A common occurrence in my life has been in the presence of friends, neighbors, co-workers, or family members, people you would like to maintain relationships with, and they will lie to or mislead another person right in front of me when they know that I know they are lying,

almost making me a surprised and unwilling accomplice to their lies if I say nothing. This puts you in a no-win situation where you are faced with disassociating with them, confronting their lie by telling the truth and not going along with it, or going along with it,

uh or remaining silent and allowing the third person to be misled while I do and say nothing in order to avoid confrontation, anger, and embarrassment on all sides, and most likely ruining the relationship with someone you need to deal with in life because of work or family obligations, etc. Obviously, disassociation would be the clear answer

for casual acquaintance.

Like you have mentioned before, the small lies are the easiest to tell and most dangerous since they can add up to so many.

It seems like so many people in the world are used to operating in such a dishonest manner without even thinking twice that I have found myself suddenly sucked into the scenario far too many times with no clear answer on how to deal with it.

Okay, well,

the more saintly and uncompromising in your ethics you are,

then

you the more you're just going to tell
the truth and damn the consequences. You
know, let the chips fall where they may,
which um it it works better for saints
and uh like renunciant like ordained
hermits

where um

you know, it's like I had the luxury as
a monk where I could just tell the truth
and if people didn't like it, they'd go
away and I'm not supposed to care if
they go away or not. I'm not supposed to
be attached to that sort of thing.

And um

it does have the advantage of it
attracts a higher quality of friends to

you.

Although with regard to family, yeah,

I'm

um my first many years as a monk, I can only really remember telling one lie and that sent me like an Easter card or something and she asked me if I still had it. And um I said, "Oh, I think that's in the pagoda now." Which it was, but it was like in a garbage can in the pagoda, you know, I read it and tossed it. I didn't want to hurt her feelings, you know, so um when you're dealing with people in ordinary life

it is very difficult always to tell the truth.

And um

course sometimes you have the option of remaining silent and remaining silent is uh ethically neutral even if somebody's telling some outrageous lie.

If uh

you just don't do anything, then you're not doing anything good or bad.

So, there is that, but um

I think in a lot of cases like let's say it's your next-door neighbor or something and your next-door neighbor is uh

a rascal or a troublemaker or a crook or whatever,

then um

just uh try to have meta. Really, I I have found that you know, anything you do with love in your heart is going to be positive and you can say things to somebody

that uh I mean, if you said it in a bad mood, they'd react very negatively, but if you could say the very same things with like sincere love in your heart for the other person, then they'll take it in a different way cuz it has a whole different vibe to it.

So, the more upbeat you are and the more uh considerate and caring you are, um you know, even if it's just like a a

really difficult person, you know, have a certain amount of compassion, you know, realizing that uh they are that way. And like like a happy person isn't going to be messing with people.

Um happy people tend to be you know, live and let live. You know, they're not trying to make other people unhappy.

It's unhappy people that are trying to make other people unhappy.

So,

a little bit of compassion, a little bit of loving kindness, um it can go a long way.

But um

yeah, I mean, sometimes it's it's a a no-win situation as Erin says. I mean,

that that's right there, no-win situation.

So, I mean, if you're not going to win no matter what you do, damned if you do, damned if you don't, then uh at least uh don't contribute by uh you know, agreeing to the lie. You can you can remain silent.

Um you don't necessarily have to speak out against it for reasons that I already said, but um yeah.

I remember one time

I was working or I was working I was a monk at a monastery.

And there was a a nun there who was just

uh textbook case of schizophrenia. She was very difficult to deal with. Just she saw no reason why she should cooperate with anybody, which is one of the symptoms that you see in the textbooks.

And um

finally the uh it was like the the board of directors of the monastery. This was in America. They decided to just like evict her.

And uh

so they just uh took all of her stuff out of her room. I mean, just asking her to go away didn't work. She just would refuse.

And so they just uh one day when she

wasn't there, they just went into her room and took everything out and put them into bags and put them in the garage and lock the doors so she couldn't go in.

And one of the
the members of the board of directors was standing next to me.

And she was concerned. I mean, she was a soft-hearted person.

And she said, "Sometimes it's hard to know if you're doing the right thing."

And then I said, "Sometimes, you know, you just

there is no right thing. You just have to choose between two wrong ones." And

that's one of the reasons why the Buddha
came up with monkhood and renunciation
to reduce
um the opportunities for the no-win
situation to arise.

So, if you're living in the world, I
mean

that's just part of the territory. And
having as positive a mental states as
possible

is can at least help you to get through
it.

So, I think I'll just move on. I mean,
that's

how do you deal with a no-win situation
is is really hard to advise
other than uh

have positive mental states or at least serene ones.

So, the next question is from Bpat427.

And Bpat427 says, "How much bad karma would one gain from making a habit of constantly laughing at other people's at other people's expense as a coping mechanism for not getting angry at those people all the time?"

Well, it's hard to say how much bad karma you would gain because it depends on your mental states. Karma is a mental state. And so, I mean, if there's kind of if it's like sneering laughter, then that's not so good. Sarcastic laughter, maybe not quite so bad. But if it's like

laughing with the person

then yeah, that could be positive. It depends on what your attitude towards the other person is. If you've got aversion, then that's going to to the extent that you've got aversion then you're making bad karma. If you've got uh

maybe even attraction I guess from the Buddhist point of view. But um

if you've got ill will towards the person or you're sort of dehumanizing them that sort of thing then uh

yeah you're you are making bad karma but how bad it is

it depends on your mental states. I mean how bad do you feel

um you know when you're mocking somebody
or or laughing because they make a a
dumb mistake or something. Um
deep down at that
I mean deep down you're going to feel
it.

It just reminds me of uh the old movie
uh A Clockwork Orange where you got the
droogs, you know, the these gang members
who just go out and they're they're like
beating people beating people up and
raping women and and so forth and
they're laughing uproariously, you know,
but but their laughter isn't
good-hearted laughter. It's more like
hooting like like

like lower primates or something. And so
it's just

the laughter is just sort of like a
pressure relief valve. Just all the
outrageousness that they're doing is is
sort of

um you know, they don't want to like
look too closely at what they're doing.

They don't want to actually feel
compassion or empathy.

And so they're just kind of covering it
over with laughter.

And uh that is uh not really a good kind
of laughter to to indulge in.

So

um

you you got to like

look at yourself. I mean it could be another no-win scenario where um your only choices are going to be um unethical or very unethical and then you just choose the lesser of two evils I suppose.

Um but it's true. I mean I I give people hard time sometimes. It's like

um there's a guy at work who um he just gets teased a lot and he's fun to tease. You know, we just blame him for anything. I mean, the weather could be crappy that day, we'll we'll blame him for it. That kind of a thing. And he goes along with it. I mean, he's

he kind of gets exasperated a little bit at being the butt of jokes, but it's it's really um, one reason why we do is cuz we do like him. You know, he's he's he's just fun to tease.

So, I mean, that's a possibility too.

I've had friends like that more than once where they're just fun to uh give a hard time sometimes. I just kind of come from that sort of uh social circle or something.

So, I'll just move on to the next question.

From Chaplin.

Assuming there are basic Christian concepts like grace, forgiveness, sin, etc. What would be the equivalent in

Buddhism? Does Buddhism even have corresponding principles that align with those of Christianity?

All right. Oh, wait. Is Is this part of the same question here? Okay. No, that's the next question.

So,

basic Christian concepts, what are their equivalents

in Buddhism or do they even have them?

And the three main examples here are grace, forgiveness, and sin.

So, we'll start with grace cuz this is an interesting one. Um,

like divine grace

in Christianity, as far as I understand

it, is that I mean, everyone's a sinner, nobody is worthy of heaven, supposedly.

And so, it's through divine grace that you get into heaven. You can't really get there through yourself. You know, it's not up to you. You don't decide.

It's It's God who decides whether you go to heaven or not. And the closest I could come to that in Buddhism, obviously, there is no God who is deciding whether you get into heaven or not. No no God to have the divine grace.

Um,

there nevertheless, you're not going to become enlightened through your own efforts. It's It's not effort that causes enlightenment because effort is

karma.

And karma is you just create It just generates more karma. It's not going to liberate you from karma, you know, like deliberate effort is not going to get you off the wheel of samsara because that just creates more karma that keeps you on the wheel of samsara.

And so, all you can do is just be as ready as possible. Like Krishnamurti used to say, you I mean, you can um, you can open the window, but you can't cause the breeze to blow in.

And um, becoming enlightened is like that. It's uh There's no guarantee. You can get really close. Some people have

to get closer than others. Um, some people might have to get all the way to fourth of jhana where their mind is just crystal clear and silent for, you know, hours at a stretch in order to uh, get uh, ready, you know, to be ripe for it, you know, to to allow it to happen, this this inexplicable enlightenment. And other people, I mean, they might be in the middle of like the marketplace.

You know, like there's some stories where Like there's one Zen monk, according to the story, he's just walking through the market and hears this lady asking a butcher, "Give me the best piece of piece of meat you've got

in the shop." And the butcher says,
"Every piece of meat in my shop is the
best." And that just caused this click
for the monk and he became enlightened.
So, he obviously didn't have to
cultivate deep trance states or at least
he wasn't in one at the time.
But, I mean, there's It's sort of like
grace in that
something inexplicable, something
mysterious beyond your control is uh,
allowing the enlightenment to happen.
So, that would be the closest concept to
uh, in Buddhism to uh, Christian divine
grace. Next is forgiveness and that's
straightforward. I mean

um

in in Buddhism probably the closest to forgiveness would be something like conti which is acceptance, patience. Just forbearance.

And

you know that would involve forgiveness.

Um so it's definitely a virtue in Buddhism forgiveness to forgive people their their trespasses.

And with regard to sin

yeah sin is not a Buddhist term.

But sin is just doing wrong.

And in Christianity of course it's doing what God doesn't want you to do.

Supposedly although he's all powerful so if he really didn't want you to do it

you probably wouldn't be able to do it.
But in Buddhism it's just akusala karma
bad karma. Which is
based on a a psychological ethic. It's
like if if you do something motivated by
hatred or or um
a version
or anger
then you're already poisoning yourself.
Just your own mental states are are just
toxic and they are poisoning you.
So it's it's different from sin in that
regard.

Um

Yeah so I think I answered the question
at least with the three examples. But um

as the Buddhist ethics are very similar to Christian ethics in many respects and I've I've given the example of St. John of the Cross

who was a very great mystic. I think he may have been wiser than the founder of his own religion. I do think it's possible he was fully enlightened and it's almost certain that he was a master of what a Buddhist would call fourth jhana.

And the practices that he set out or that he described in his in his like spiritual books spiritual guidance uh are very similar to Buddhism, although he has a whole different way of explaining it, because

of course he's a he's a Catholic.

So, the theory may be radically different, but the practice is very similar.

And uh that's kind of how Christianity and Buddhism

compare. I mean, at the most advanced levels of all religions, you know, the higher you get, you know, the closer they converge.

But, um they may have wildly different um

theories to account for, you know, why you should practice.

So, um I'll just move on to Chaplin's second question here. Is it ethical for

me to work for a corporation whose values do not align with my own?

Well, that's a good question. I think a lot of people do that. And unfortunately, um you work for any corporation is obviously a profit is the bottom line. They're they're out there to make money. And uh most corporations are out there to make as much money as possible.

And um that may involve unethical activity, and it usually does, I think, at least sometimes.

So, uh whether it's ethical for you to work for them or not depends on your own

mental states. This is uh the common
refrain in my questions and answers.

Um

you know, really ethics from the
Buddhist point of view are uh they
depend on your own mental states. So, if
you can maintain um you know,
benevolent, honest mental states, and if
you can stay honest while working for
these people, you know, they're not
requiring you to lie to people, not
requiring you to rip anybody off, then
you can still be doing pretty well. And
I'm glad I'm not in sales. I'm uh like
in production where I'm working. So,
it's an honest job for me, regardless of

what the sales people are doing. I have noticed that uh the sales people will try to sell people stuff that they don't need.

You know, like they get a like

um

they might

get talked into ordering a just getting a big crate to put their stuff in. You know, we we build crates to put some of the stuff in. And sometimes it's just completely unnecessary, but the sales person talks them into it just to get more of a a profit and then they get like a commission or something. And yeah, that's that's getting kind of

unethical and I wouldn't want to do it,
but uh

that's their own decisions to make and
I'm not really trying to badmouth
anybody here.

All right, next question
is from David Odysseus.

Wondering what you're doing at the sheet
metal shop and how do you feel going
back to more normal life? Do you ever
feel beneath something so menial
as you had been living a very very
pretty ambitious life before taking alms
and seeking enlightenment? I need to get
a fairly basic job myself so I've been
traveling a number of years and I feel

reservation of getting trapped. I'd love to hear how you take it.

Well,

yeah, it's it's it's sort of uh

almost paradoxical the situation of a of a monk, especially a monk who practices very strictly and is revered by uh devout Buddhist people.

Like

you know, a monk is called venerable lord and people will bow to you and and uh

you know, you're you're treated almost like a god,

but at the same time a monk is supposed to be a beggar. I mean, that's what bhikkhu the

the Pali word for um a monk is bhikkhu, which literally means beggar. Bhikshanam bhikshati bhikkhu, which means, you know, he begs for alms, therefore he is a bhikkhu.

So,

um the founder of the tradition in which I was ordained, now venerable Tong Pool Seattle, said a monk should be as humble as a foot wiping cloth.

So, on the one hand you get revered and treated like a god, but on the other hand you're not supposed to care about that at all and you're supposed to be as humble as you can possibly be.

And uh furthermore, uh a monk is

supposed to be an ascetic. And I was
ordained in in an ascetic tradition, the
Tong Pool tradition which was largely
based on
um forest asceticism.

And so, uh for me it's sometimes working
at a sheet metal shop, it's it's like an
ascetic practice.

You know, just getting up early in the
morning is an ascetic practice for me.

And then just the hard work. And uh as I
as I said at the beginning, I worked
pretty hard today. There is a lot of
physical exertion involved.

Um

yeah, I mean it's you can just see it as
a kind of ascetic practice.

Um I'm not sure how a job like sitting
at a desk or frying hamburgers or
something would be, but uh it's like my
karma just uh

plus uh my sweetheart's advice got me
this job that uh really just fits my
my my karma or my character or
something. It's uh

it's it's sort of an ascetic kind of a
job, which I like. And uh

I don't know. It's like with regard to
being humble or exalted or anything like
that, I I mean I'm just me. I don't
really think about it much.

Um

yeah, I mean I I get treated fairly well

at work. You know, the other guys like me and all that or seem to anyway.

So,

yeah, I mean for me it's

most of the changes in my life, like having to work for a living, they're largely peripheral.

Like

the phenomenal external world are largely peripheral that that really the the me in the center

is almost the same except now sort of the me in the center is very close to another me in the center who is you know my mate but I mean that's like the only really radical change that I can think of um other than just the peripheral

stuff on the like the phenomenal outside
world which um

you know a monk is supposed to be you
know equanimous no matter what you know
you can be living in a in a jungle
uh you know rat infested cave or
whatever and so

um

yeah I mean working in a sheet metal
shop is uh

it's really not that radical of a change
for me

but I've I've been spending so many
years just kind of centering myself
where you know you you're you're sort of
tuning out the external world as much as

possible a lot of the time I mean just
living in a in a cave and sitting in
silence and looking at a blank wall um
you know there's not a whole lot of
you know external stuff going on a lot
of the time and so

um you you stop considering to be so
important there are people there's
completely stuck at the superficial
level

but um the more progress you make
the less you identify with the
superficial stuff

and uh I've I'm kind of like that I mean
you can kind of get sucked into you know
work

you know it's like having a having a bad

day or something

but um

yeah I mean it's really not all that
different I'm still I'm still the same
me I got a beard now wear shirts that
kind of thing but uh

it's it's not it's not that big of a
deal it's in the the difficult parts are
just the grist for the mill it's it's
like ascetic practice

so the next question

is from John no not John Doe, it's Joe
Doe.

I have been wanting to ask if in Burma
and or in Buddhism, if they have a
flexibility program. Sitting in the

lotus comfortably takes good
flexibility.

Well, in in Burma

and throughout most of Buddhism

um most people just don't sit in the

full lotus. I sat in the full lotus, but

uh

most people don't. Most Buddhists don't.

Most

Burmese Buddhists don't. It's pretty

It's pretty rare, actually.

And so, um if there's one tradition in

Burma

it's uh

I

thedo, no.

Uh

I'm having a a mental block. The Ingu, the The Ingu tradition where a person may have to sit several hours in the full lotus.

And um it's done without the flexibility program. So, it's just like excruciating agony. And that's part of the purpose of doing it is just teaching people to uh go beyond the agony.

Um I assume, you know, it's just sheer brute willpower just remaining sitting in the full lotus when your your knees and ankles and are just screaming in pain.

But um

there in in yoga, like Hindu yoga, they

do have the you know, the stretches and that sort of thing to make it easier. In yoga magazines or something, you can find that sort of thing, but uh I never came across it in Burma.

For me, it was just uh just gradually sit longer and longer.

You know,

um

I remember seeing this old guy in San Francisco. He went to one of the talks that I gave and he could just flop into the full lotus.

Yeah, he hardly had to use his hands at all. And he just looks around smiling says, "It only hurts for the first 5 years."

Which is about right.

Okay.

So, I'll move on to the next question
from JT Drake.

And JT Drake says,

"Did I understand that you do not
believe in an objective reality? What do
you think of reality presented within a
simulation? Do we live in a simulation
and what would that mean spiritually?
Even if not, how does our intelligence
filter change

I see, how does our intelligence filters
change physical reality
with our internal models?"

Okay.

Well,

I suppose I should get into a little epistemology if you'll be patient and bear with me.

Um I've talked about this sort of thing before. I've talked about most of the things I talk about before.

And um

in epistemology, like 100 years ago, there were two main theories about what is true.

And there you had the correspondence theory and the coherence theory. The correspondence theory is what most people go with, what science goes with mostly, and that is that um something is

true, like the statement the apple is on the table is true if it corresponds to an apple really on the table.

That um

correspondence theory of truth is that a statement is true if it corresponds to some objective reality.

The coherence theory, which was endorsed by some Hegelians mostly,

like um F. H. Bradley,

is that something is true if it's

in agreement with everything else that you've already determined to be true.

And um

with regard to the

re- what my what I consider to be

reality. Then with regard to ultimate reality, I'd go with uh the the correspondence theory that ultimate reality is uh is just an objective ultimate reality, so to speak. I mean I mean, you've transcended subject and object. But, um I mean, there really is an ultimate reality, but it's just it's formless and infinite.

And it's like uh the simile of the block of marble that I've talked about before. It's like you've got a block of marble and contained within that block of stone are every single possible statue in existence.

You know, every possible statue is

inside that block of stone that you just have to carve away the rock, but they're already in there.

You know, every single molecule is already there in the right place for that statue.

It's just that um you know, the excess rock just has to be dispensed with.

And um

but they're in there potentially and uh virtually already.

And I consider um our a-

you know, the samsaric world, you know, the phenomenal world to be that kind of reality. It's uh it's conditional, it's virtual,

but it's um in in it's kind of
potential,

but it's not ultimately real.

So, we're living in a kind of
simulation, but it's uh generated by our
own mind

or uh

generated by ignorance.

So, in a way we do kind of live in a
simulation. We're sort of in the matrix.

But, it's

I mean, in it has ultimately it has
ultimate reality underlying it. So, it's
not like totally fake, it's not totally
illusory.

It's just that it's uh

uh a conditioned version of a limited

reality.

So, what would that mean spiritually?

Well, I mean, read uh

Buddhist texts or like Vedantist texts I

read the Upanishads

and uh

yeah, that would it would you'd get some

indication of the the spiritual

indication or the spiritual implications

of it.

See, how does our intelligence filters

change physical reality? Yeah, and like

I say, I really am skeptical of the very

existence of physical reality. I am not

a materialist.

So, that answers that question, I think.

And then finally, the last question is from Teresa.

How is it clear what is the right thing to do even when it's so hard and painful?

Okay.

How is it clear what is the right thing to do? I mean, sometimes um like I was mentioning earlier um

I mean, you may not have a right thing to do. You just have to choose between two wrong ones in the sense that whichever you choose is going to not result in perfect happiness. I mean, there's nothing you can do that's going to nothing you can choose that's going

to result in in just being happy all the time.

So

um sometimes you just have to choose the lesser of two evils or the lesser of two samsaric paths.

And um

you just have to make the decision as wisely as you possibly can. You know, you might take a lot of introspection um just sitting alone in a quiet place, you know, going out to the to the beach or into the mountains or into a forest, just getting as clear as you possibly can and contemplate

and just come up with
what you consider to be the best thing
you can do. Not necessarily the right
thing because as I say, I mean, one
might be a
just less wrong than the other one.

I mean, some people get into situations
in life, most people actually where
sometimes you just you know, you just
have to choose the lesser of two
um unhappinesses.

At least uh two paths that are going to
cause a certain amount of unhappiness.
But, the thing is, once you have made
the decision as well as you can, then
no regrets. I mean, you just go ahead
and do it. I mean, regret

is really it's uh it's a kind of poison.

And uh

that's that's one thing about Buddhist philosophy I have taken to heart that regret is always bad karma. It just makes things worse.

So, once you have made the decision as carefully as you can that this is really what I should do, then uh

really no matter what, you shouldn't regret it. I mean, it may be that circumstances will change or you'll get some sort of insight or you know, whatever it is that you may see that uh you know, you should do something

different. Maybe you should have uh
chosen the other way, and then you can
try to rectify your course, maybe. But,
still there should be no regrets. And uh
if if things are really difficult and
like uh you're just very unhappy, then
uh

um I mean, I've been in situations like
that. Everybody has, with extremely few
exceptions, I think.

Then uh

in in times like that, it's just uh
try to do something positive. You know,
try to get some kind of accomplishment
going every day.

Maybe sleep a little extra, but don't
stay in bed all day. And uh

yeah, I mean, it it could just be like cleaning your room or something. Just try to accomplish something positive every day.

And no regrets.

So, I think that's the last question.

I'm not sure if I was uh helpful with that one. It's uh

not an extremely

um

easy question even to fully understand the implications of it.

But uh I hope I helped at least a little bit.

And that was the last question.

So

Um that's it. And you're all welcome to ask questions for the next one.

And

just leave them in the comments below or if you are subscribed to subscribe star or are on my discord server, you can leave your questions there also.

And um

Um also I suppose I should hype my stuff just uh

down down below this video

are my URL links and also

my books that can be ordered on Amazon.

And uh

be happy.

hello and welcome to question and answer
number 25

and 25 if you didn't know is is kind of
a big number we're getting up there

i am your host panya basa

and before doing this show my sweetheart
asked me to try and look alive and perky
but um the thing is for the past week or
so i've been uh

um

feeling kind of washed out i think it's
like the

spring has sprung and the pollen in the
air is thick

and so my body is dealing with uh clouds
of pollen in the air or something but

i'll try to look alive and if i don't
look alive that's you can just consider
that to be uh some sort of error in your
own perceptions or something
and we've got
not like a huge number of questions but
uh we're into double digits easily and
some of these questions are complicated
i'm not entirely sure if i understand
the question
so let's just dive in here and
see what happens so the first question
is from matthew
and matthew says
there seems to be two ways of explaining
not self
one is that reality is we perceive it is

an illusion and thus all we experience
is essentially a simulation or
two

that it is a practical way to
differentiate between a false sense of
certainty about perceived phenomena
and the underlying reality that can be
properly experienced when not self is
properly understood and in parentheses
he's got c panchavagi five brethren also
known as the anata nasuta the discourse
on the not-self characteristic
the first approach seems more exoteric
while the second approach is more
grounded do you agree that this
dichotomy exists

and if so what do you think is the more
useful for lay householders
well technically there are more than two
ways of explaining not-self
like the uh anatalakan asuta pretty much
goes with the idea that if you don't
have complete control over something you
can't really say that it's you
so since we don't have complete control
over the five condas which is our body
our feelings our perceptions uh
let's see our volitions our karma
formations and our
our uh consciousness since we don't have
complete control over any of that we
can't say that any of that is really our
self

but there have been other ways of
interpreting no self for example one of
the most
famous ways is the simile of the chariot
where you've got
a chariot is composed of parts
and
um
i mean none of those parts is really the
chariot if you took all the parts apart
and had them in a pile that also
wouldn't be a chariot you can swap out
parts and it's still considered to be
the same chariot
so
the the chariotness of the chariot isn't

abiding in any particular part
and it's really just a term of
convenience for a certain assemblage of
parts

so that's considered to be one of the
the standard explanations of not-self
although

abhidhamma

went uh with the idea that anything that
can be divided into smaller parts is not
self

um still it's it's sort of uh

it creates the problem of any elemental
particle could be called the self even
though according to abhidhamma it lasts
it's only about a trillionth of a second
but um

there you are and then uh in mahayana
even those elementary particles can be
divided

in the imagination you know there's like
the top half and the bottom half of the
elementary particle which could be
considered different from each other and
so forth

and then also mahayana went with what
matthew here says is the first

uh interpretation is that reality as we
perceive it is simply an illusion and
that is uh

implied in a lot of terra vada buddhism
also

so um

so matthew has this dichotomy that
not-self is due to the fact that you
know the whole world is an illusion or
that we are just perceiving the world
incorrectly

but you know that it amounts to the same
thing really i mean there's at least a
lot of overlap between these two
interpretations

and uh

really my interpretation of no self just
goes back to my standard simile of the
block of marble where reality
is just this

formless now reality is formless and
that it is perception that is dividing
things up and creating duality and the

perception is imagination essentially

so

yeah

um let's see what do you agree that this

dichotomy exists um kind of sort of

and if so which do you think is the more

useful for lay householders whichever

whichever interpretation resonates

you know some people just have different

characteristics different characters

different personalities and so different

approaches to the same issue

will resonate better with different

people so

whatever works best for the individual

there's several different

interpretations of no self which does
indicate that it is a difficult concept
to understand
mainly because it's just not
intellectual the intellect works in
terms of duality so once you start
intellectualizing or trying to figure it
out you've already lost because
i mean the best you can do is sort of
some kind of kantian
recognition of the limitations of your
own perceptual system or something
so yeah i'll just go with
whatever works best for you to help you
detach
from whoever you think you are
because you are not that

so the next question

is from joe doe

and jodo says pano can you tell any
stories of supernatural powers you may
have come across yourself or in other
monks

in your next q a

well i really don't have a lot of

luck with supernatural powers um

supernova supernatural powers in myself

what might be called supernatural powers

have tended to be

just um i'll say something that another

person just happens to be thinking at

that moment

and you know it just happens

quite a lot sometimes

and um you know it's it's i don't know

it's just it's like a weird

synchronicities or something

and um

so there is that i mean when i was a kid

we had a poltergeist in our house

and uh the most famous story of that is

uh

my father was hiring a housekeeper for

the summer

and we were the three of us were sitting

at the kitchen table my father at one

end i was at the other end and the

housekeeper was like sort of kitty

corner from my father and on the corner

of the the kitchen table was an ashtray

and my father was explaining to the
housekeeper that if she finds any kind
of broken glassware or crockery broken
dishes in the cupboards anything like
that don't immediately blame the kids
because there is a poltergeist in the
house and dishes and glassware and so
forth spontaneously

just

deconstruct

and while he was explaining this to her
her eyebrow like one eyebrow is starting
to go up and she's like starting to get
this slow grin on her face like she
can't decide whether he's joking or
crazy

and then within five seconds i've been
reaching the end of the sentence
explaining how there is a poltergeist
the ashtray that was on the just right
there in plain sight made this sound
like zinc and just split in half and the
two halves split and just kind of slid
like an inch apart from each other
and then she immediately stopped smiling
and tired started taking him seriously
um

although with regard to supernatural
powers of like sages and so forth
um i heard that shui um in seattle in
burma

um who has now passed away
that he could read minds and um i've

been told that there's a really famous
monk in thailand who can read minds
although i've never met i never met any
monk personally that um
well i did meet schweighumanciato once
but he didn't read my mind at the time
so

let's see i saw an apparition once
uh could have been a ghost could have
been some kind of weird you know some
sort of aberration in my brain at the
moment i don't know

um

gosh yeah that's about it i really i
don't have very good luck with regard to
uh

cultivating supernatural powers except
for as i say

um like weird coincidences happen
the more you practice spiritually the
more weird coincidences are going to
happen

um at least that's my experience

um

yeah so really i don't i'm sorry to
disappoint joe doe here but uh i really
do not have a rich

uh repertoire of supernatural power
stories

um

in my case as i've said it's it's
usually spontaneous and just without my
conscious control or knowledge it just

happens

so i think i'll just move on to the next

question and this is a

uh from in manus who

asks complicated questions so uh

let's see how it goes here

in manis says

how do did they translate ancient

languages like pali how can we be sure

that the meaning or connotation is

accurate

from the time that the language was used

more commonly compared to how we

translate it now

and how should people who have never

studied ancient languages approach any

translation

suppose the first translation that all subsequent translations is based was off on just a handful of key terms suppose our own knowledge paradigm

had also in a sense influenced the original thought paradigm which the old language arose even if the translators were well intending in their efforts the practice will sort it out perhaps so that's the first question which really

it boils down to just how can you translate

pali or any other ancient language and be sure that the translation is more or less correct

and i would point out that even like
shakespeare there are passages in
shakespeare that are hotly contended
that nobody's really sure what
shakespeare had in mind so there could
be uh

just uh figures of speech that were used
in ancient times that just fell out of
fashion and uh is difficult to
understand um one thing i've noticed is
the commentaries

really are relatively clueless with
regard to flora and fauna and probably
customs that are peculiar to northern
india because the commentaries were
written in sri lanka and southern india

by monks who maybe had little or no
experience with northern india

but

on the bright side a language like pali

there is a living tradition extending

all the way back to the buddha so you

had monks

who were

you know reading understanding

interpreting the poly i mean in the

early times they probably spoke poly

fluently

um

and so the tradition just continues and

so the commentaries are probably

mostly correct mostly reliable

um

even though they're probably composed
mainly by scholar monks who didn't
meditate much but they were relying upon
older traditions that were passed down
for

um you know many centuries

so

some of it you can verify for yourself
some of it is just common sense some of
it you really can't be sure about like
in uh in the vineyard the rules of
monastic discipline sometimes there's
just um a word in the pali language that
appears just once in the entire
polytupica and you can't figure it out
just from

context you know it's like a monk is
forbidden to use such and such but it
doesn't really explain what such and
such is

and sometimes

excuse me

the commentators will just make wild
stabs in the dark and sometimes the
commentators are wrong and sometimes
they're spectacularly wrong even with
regard to basic

philosophy although i hope that is rare
like the term papancha

um it's it's a it's an important
philosophical term in buddhism
that um

the commentators like buddhaghosa really

they really didn't know what it meant
and so there was a monk
oh i can't remember his name i've got
the book behind me on the shelf but i
don't want to interrupt myself
but it's called um
let's see
uh something in reality gosh maybe i
should get it just a second
oh
let's see here
here we go
ah
almost fell down
kicked the chair
okay concept in reality an early

buddhist thought by bikunyan

where he

uh does this really

deep

scholarly analysis of the term papancha

and concludes that it means something

like diversification like taking

something simple and artificially

complicating it with all these

connotations and so forth and that is uh

a symptom of

ignorance really in buddhism

so i guess with regard to uh i'll see

there's another part of the question

here how should people have never

studied ancient languages approach any

translation

um

i have found with regard to

paulie texts

the best translations into english are

going to be by western monks

like westerners who are just scholars

it's it's like an alien tradition for

them they haven't lived the life they're

going to be making lots of wild guesses

and using sort of

you know western liberal semi-christian

common sense to try and interpret

ancient indian buddhism and it doesn't

always work out very well caf rhys

dauids is a spectacular failure in that

regard

in my opinion

and then uh

like asian monks who translate usually

have more of a medieval faith-oriented

mindset where those slaves shall be

followed the commentaries

and uh

they'll just tell you what the

commentary says

even if it says something different from

what pauli says

you know it's like if the buddha says

red

and the commentary says well when the

buddha said red what he really meant was

blue

then they'll just follow along with blue

as a general rule

so a western monk is usually the best

transit be kuboti i mean regardless of

his uh leftist hysteria and so forth

um he's one of the best translators

we've got bikunyana molly is a really

good translator his friend bikunyanovira

was a good translator although he didn't

publish any large works but his

translations were good

ah john tenisero

is good although he's kind of

self-indulgent in his translations and

kind of follows some idiosyncratic

renderings especially in in when he

translates verses

but um

yeah um you just have to have faith in

in dhamma that uh

you know the gist of it will come across

even if you miss out on a few terms

um you know the the genuine original

meaning is has been lost even some terms

like namarupa

um i really do think that namarupa

originally was as it is literally

translated name and form

you know as you got the form of

something

you know you see something and

you sort of focus in on the form of it

and then you slap a name onto it you

give it meaning first you see the object

you focus on the object and then you you
attribute some meaning to that even if
it's just uh you know what the hell is
that still is it's some kind of meaning
so uh

uh later on the tradition changed
namarupa to mind and matter but i think
originally and some of the oldest texts
do seem to bear this out in a new
panasonic tradition it's uh it's like
this also that it really does
it's like um

a description of how perception works
like papancha

is another it's similar where papancha
is you differentiate and then sunk is

you attribute some kind of significance
to what you have differentiated out from
the plenum of the sensory field or
whatever

so

um one good thing that you can do is
just read the text i mean if you can
learn poly that would help

but you read the text and um
don't rely too much

on

like preconceived notions or
commentarial traditions and just
let it fall to place in your own mind
and make sense of it i mean

um in some respects it's better to trust
your own common sense in reading

something than relying slavishly on the
commentaries

because the commentaries aren't always
right

especially in in the ways that i
mentioned before

but uh let's just move on to the next
question from in manus which is a uh
a complicated one and it's about
mysticism

so

the first part of this one

is metaphysics as compared to practical
mysticism could pano explain the primary
differences

well

metaphysics is very different from
mysticism because metaphysics is
intellectual it's an intellectual
attempt to understand ultimate reality
whereas mysticism is not intellectual
and the purer it gets is not even
perceptual

it's just wide open consciousness and so
it's essentially formless
in the pure state so
like

any jonic state any genre above first
jhana where you're no longer thinking
could be called mysticism so a fourth
genre would be like the perfection of
mysticism for an unenlightened being
and metaphysics is is philosophizing is

trying to use the intellect to
understand ultimate reality
and other two mysticism is far
preferable because you're just
experiencing reality directly instead of
filtering it through perceptions and
just intellectuality and so forth
so the next part of this question on
mysticism

by in manus

also i have heard you mentioned
before when perhaps discussing venerable
nano moly that he hated mysticism and
that mysticism cannot be systematized
correct me if i'm off what exactly is
practical mysticism then is practice not

in any way systematized also what do we
make of the various seemingly systems of
categorical categorical practice that
are so prevalent in buddhism

for instance with regard to practice
there are the bojargas or factors of
enlightenment and also the formula of
purification laid out in the for right
efforts to name a few

so before i continue with the uh the
question

i'll i'll address this part

uh first it wasn't yanamole who hated
mysticism zenyanovira and janavira was
just a towering intellectual he was
trying to interpret

dhamma

more or less in accordance with 20th
century existentialism or late 19th
century like kierkegaard
there he's very strongly influenced by
the existentialists
and he had this
this radically complicated intellectual
understanding of dhamma
that he it was it was weird it was like
he said that anybody who is
unenlightened has this problem and then
he just launches into this complicated
stuff that most people couldn't even
fully understand and supposedly even a
frog
has these subtle

you know just mal adjustments of
perception or some such he uh he
actually thought that he had become um
a sort of just by walking back and forth
philosophizing just doing his walking
meditation just trying to to figure out
um dhamma

so he hated mysticism just because it
wasn't logical mysticism is not logical
like um you know he just absolutely
insisted

on you know the aristotelian laws of
thought you know you have a is a which
is the law of identity a is not not a
which is the law of what is it
difference i don't remember and then
there's a has to be either

b or not b something like that which is
the law of excluded middle and he just
said if you don't think according to
these rules

you're [_]

essentially you're wrong

and then he said mysticism is like that
because mystics talk in

paradoxes mainly because they're trying
to get you to stop thinking like a zen

koan

you know it's like does a dog have

buddha nature

it's um

i mean there is no answer to it really

you know well the answer that joshua was

moo which is uh

or or an original chinese it's woo

which uh could just be that he was

barking like a dog for all i know but um

it just means like no but it's not

knowing that a dog doesn't have buddha

nature he's just like no don't ask the

question

so let's see i've gone off the track

here let's see

uh yeah nyana vera hated mysticism

because he was just a hardcore

intellectual

he had zero use for

um any kind of mystical state so

apparently he had zero use for jono

anything above first gianna

let's see

mysticism cannot be systematized well

intellectually the states

or intellectually pure mysticism cannot

it doesn't fit the system because

pure mysticism would be like god it

would just be formless and infinite and

thereby paradoxical

but um what can be systematized is the

practice you know how to cultivate genre

states for example

see what exactly is practical practical

mysticism yeah it would be just the

cultivation of of mystical states which

would be through meditation

um i mean

there's other ways you could go about it
through you know taking

um you know entheogenic substances so to
speak or in the west often it happens
accidentally through like a near-death
experience or some such

so the practice can be systematized

but the

a pure

um

how do you say just like a pure mystical
state yeah i mean it really just defies
systematic systematization like nirvana
defy systematization

let's see

so okay all right i think i answered
that part so i'll move on to the next

part of the question here i believe
there should be a balance of mysticism
with practice and while intellect can
also be taken to an extreme which is
probably the case with most westerners i
feel mysticism can also be taken too far
with the middle way i think balance
between the two are probably most
helpful mysticism is generally arrived
at as such experiences are conditioned
most whirlings come from a position of a
predominant intellect and sense base and
must use those faculties to also quell
those faculties to penetrate to the more
formless and refined planes of mystic
experience

um

it's not exactly a question this part

but uh

i can comment on a little bit i mean the

zen practitioners seem to go with the

idea of

a balance of mysticism and practice

it's possible even

like some of the early texts like i

think it might be the very first verse

of the samudini kayak the buddha is

talking about

um you know not running and not sinking

and um it's sort of a

it's sort of like a paradox you know

what's the meaning or not a paradox like

an enigma what did he mean you know you

don't run you don't sink

and um

i think it could be you're not running

just um you know running through some

sorry

some sorry states you know just you know

thinking living in some sort but at the

other hand on you know on the other hand

you're not sinking into like this blank

trance state

that you have to balance those and

ramana maharshi um

he was a hindu but uh he was a very

advanced hindu

and he couldn't talk for the first few

years after he reached his experience

his enlightenment experience supposedly
it took him a few years before he was
able to start integrating

um you know worldly states with this
formless bliss that he was experiencing
for a while i mean he could hardly eat
people would just have to put food in
his mouth

he was really out of it for a long time
because he he really didn't know how to
how to integrate you know the two they
seemed so just diametrically opposed or
just so alien to each other

um

so i mean if you're going to function in
the world a balance between the two is
helpful

but it's more a matter of i mean be as
mystical as you can because mysticism is
really

like direct experience of reality

if it's if it's like the you know high
contemplation as uh the counseling
mystics call it

um

so let's just move on to the next part
of the question here

how would a mystic be able to declare
that he knows or has attained to it
would be it has been stated that once
the aspirant practitioner has made it to
fruition of any of the stages of
enlightenment then in most cases they

know

also such types generally see the causal factors which lead to that knowing in the case of a disciple they would know that their teacher and the teaching was right and good and this bolsters their faith to a conviction that is unshakable well most of the people that i have met who consider themselves to be arya's um in my opinion were mistaken so there is that but with regard to knowing and just believing samsara is just a matter of belief any kind of perceptual knowledge is just belief it's not the same as knowledge

knowledge is direct experience of
reality and you're starting to get some
of that

in in a mystical state

so you're gonna it's just gonna be like
a different level

of reality you know just a whole just a
whole different dimension

and it's going to be true knowledge as
opposed to the beliefs that you've been
wallowing through you know since you
know infancy i suppose

but

um with some people they just can't they
just can't deal with it it's like um
you know you have sort of a mild

mystical state every time you sneeze you
know it's like you're wide awake and
you're not thinking anything
but it's so brief and it's just so
normal i guess
that
people really can't integrate that into
their understanding of reality
so finally in manus at the end of the
mysticism
question and with regard to mysticism
what is the extreme
is it the bavanga consciousness being
lived in and indulged in a conscious a
conditioned stupor or perhaps a
schizophrenic
yeah it would be none of those the

extreme of mysticism would be

essentially nirvana

that would be the extreme just being god

or whatever

um the bavanga consciousness that's just

like um it's like a test pattern

according to abidama your last conscious

thought

before you die is going to be like the

test pattern of your mind

um

in like your subconscious mind

throughout your next life

so if you're thinking of your your

family

when you die

whenever you're unconscious supposedly
you're in a deep sleep or something it's
just going to be this test pattern of
the the images of of your family in your
previous life so that's obviously not
mysticism

a condition stupor no

mysticism is expanded consciousness it's
like when you're when you're perceiving
something you're limiting your
consciousness to what you are perceiving
but when you're not perceiving anything
and you're still wide awake i mean just
the consciousness is just wide open your
mind is like a mirror or like a
like a cheap camera where everything is
equally in focus but you're not really

picking out anything

and schizophrenic i don't know i don't

know what the mind of a schizophrenic is

like i don't think it's particularly

enlightened

you know a paranoid person is not

particularly enlightened

so yeah what is the extreme of mysticism

it would just be

um like maybe ramana maharshi right

after he had his experience when he was

just completely zoned out i mean it was

to to an external observer

he might have been in a complete stooper

just totally out of it but um his

experience would just be like you know

formless bliss

you know it's just infinity

because perception is what creates

limits if you don't have limits if

consciousness is not perceiving

something assuming that you can even

have consciousness without perception

then uh it's just formless and if it's

formless it's infinite

so the next question is from yuichiro

and this is a short question but it's uh

i don't fully understand it here where

it's it's just kind of a strange one why

is solipsism wrong from first principles

just sitting observing couldn't

everything just be your own imagination

and then i asked him when he asked me

this question what does he mean by first principles then he says basic axioms which uh

um it didn't really clarify it for me so why is ellipsism wrong from first principles

shouldn't everything just be your own couldn't everything just be your own imagination well your perceptions could be your own imagination but if you just get beyond the perception like like in the mystical state

then uh

the illusion really can't take hold because there's nothing for it to take hold of

so i mean from the buddhist point of
view solipsism is not necessarily wrong
i mean there have been buddhist schools
like one of the two main mahayana
schools is the the yogachara school
which um i mean there's ellipsis
you know everything that you experience
is the fruition of your own karma and
it's sort of like leibniz is monads
where

um

how do i explain this it's like
you know it's like a monad is like its
own little universe and if all the other
monads disappeared it wouldn't i mean
the the first monad wouldn't even notice
because it would still be living the

whole world because it's all

internalized

and um the the yogachara buddhist like
this it's like your karma causes you to
experience this certain world but there
are other people whose karma is like
overlapping with yours and it overlaps
enough that it can seem as though
they're interacting with you
so mahayana took it that far and um you
know the seeds of that are already in
terra valla
a lot of mahayana's principles
um
you know they
they're just developments of

ideas that are found in terravotta but
not really elaborated upon

so

yeah in a way solipsism is i mean it's
it's not wrong i mean we are living in a
slipsis world especially with regard to
our interpretations of things because
that is just you know the meaning of
something is just purely internal it's
just in your head you know there's no
meaning out there i mean like this book
i mean this is

even to just call it a book is is like
you're attributing significance to this
and i mean if there was no perceiving
mind there wouldn't even be a this you
know it wouldn't even get that far it

wouldn't even be a something
so in a way we are living in a slips
this world but um it's an infinite
universe and they're an infinite number
of beings and there are enough beings
experiencing a universe similar to ours
that we can seem at least to be
interacting with them and um
also
this isn't
some teachers say that this isn't true
but my own experience seems to indicate
that it is true is that if you have any
kind of intimate connection with another
person
then in a way your karma is sort of

blending together and you're in a way
creating a new being like an us you know
it's like you're you're very much in
love with another person and that person
is very much in love with you and you've
got a good relationship going so you've
got this person that person and then
there's this third being which is the us
and then that can even be taken to
higher levels like an entire nation
could sort of form an us
at a loose level or something so in that
sense solipsism wouldn't be correct but
at the level of the individual
yeah we are pretty much living in a
solipsism at least with regard to the
significance of everything that we

perceive

but aside from that i'm not sure how to
answer that question

so the next question is from the arya
swasti project

and the arya swasti project says
greetings panyobasa question

could you elaborate a bit more on
mindful meditation or being mindful in
all activities i am aware that being in
the now is important for a number of
reasons not ruminating nor wasting time
in daydreams old memories etc

but

how can it have a significant impact on
our spiritual evolution it seems like a

convenient practice since it can be done
almost anytime and anywhere can being
completely mindful

at a given time facilitate some level of
enlightenment warm regards sadhu

well one really early

kind of koan like interpretation
of

mindfulness

is in the bahia sutra of the udana where
the buddha is telling the the wanderer

you know in the scene there should be

only the scene in the herd there should
be only the herd

in the in the felt there should be only

the felt in the mentally sense there

should be only the mentally sensed

and

um you're trying to be as close to the
original datum as possible

it's you're not attributing significance
you know you're not

interpreting it like you hear a dog if
you hear a dog mindfully like it dogs
barking outside

if you hear the dog mindfully you're
just aware of the the auditory

sensations you know you're not

interpreting it as that damn dog just
won't shut up you know the neighbors

should make and be quiet you know just

on and on you can do all this kind of
stuff but if you're being mindful and

you hear the dog barking
it's just auditory sensation
um if you're not that good at being
mindful then you can attribute some kind
of significance to it as just
sound or hearing you know you want to
keep it as basic as possible because
you're trying to keep from just spinning
off into papancha spinning off into
attributing all these slip cystic you
know interpretations um ultimately
delusional interpretations
um and so it's keeping you closer to
reality like in in terrible buddhism the
the senses you know just hearing is
ultimately real but the
the significance you attribute to the to

the sounds are not ultimately real so
just going with um you know abhidama
philosophy by staying at the level of
hearing and seeing and just feeling
physical sensations and so forth um
you're at the level of ultimate reality
um in mahayana maybe not so much
but still um
it is keeping you from spinning off into
what is grosser delusion than uh you
know just the hearing and the seeing and
so forth
so that's one of the most important
reasons of it
and it is convenient practice since it
can be done anytime like if you're if

you're walking

um you know just

be aware of like the oily sensation in

your knee joints or just the the

movements of your legs the muscles in

your thighs tightening and loosening or

the pressure of your feet against the

ground and so forth just focus on that

sort of thing

and um i mean it's still not the highest

level of meditation but it is

um much more

um advanced than just thinking about

what you're gonna have for lunch while

you're walking or whatever it happens to

be driving the car you know you're

feeling the you know the steering wheel

against your your hands and you know the
seeing sensation and

you know the vibration of the car and
everything

or brushing your teeth i mean anything

anything you do can be done mindfully

some things are harder to do mindfully
than others

um

apparently it seems to me and i think it
says this in the text also

pleasure is it's harder to be mindful of
pleasure than of pain because you want
to kind of detach from the pain

but the pleasure you know you just
naturally want to wallow in it

but um yeah i mean it brings you closer
to reality and therefore it brings you
closer to uh enlightenment in in a
number of ways just in the moment you're
closer to enlightenment just because
um you have reduced the amount of
just deluded
perceptions that you're that you're
wallowing in and considering to be
reality and also um
you're just getting out of the habit of
that you know the more you restrain your
thoughts
the more you just get in the habit of
having restrained thoughts
so i think i'll just move on to uh the
arya swasti project's next question

and this one is i this one is a little
bit confusing for me
regarding state of mind and then he's
even got mind and parentheses so it's a
state of and then mind and parentheses
and then the whole thing in quotes
and being responsible for our own state
of mind or more specifically suffering
i hope this doesn't sound too simple
nope
but
is body feeling such as happiness or
freedom of care solely emotion and not
linked with state of mind or is it an
accurate gauge of state of mind
let me say that sometimes i have some

control over my own emotions energy
emotion particularly with regular
meditation and right diet and prefer
happiness or joy to lower and darker
moods my hope is that joy is an
indicator of state of mind and that it
is not independent of mind
i would qualify lastly that joy i'm
speaking i was independent of material
gain or other outside events much
respect sadhu

um there seems to be some confusion here
it's like let's see up here is body
feeling such as happiness or freedom of
care solely emotion and not linked with
state of mind
well i mean

emotion is a state of mind

i mean you can say that there's a

physical element too but any kind of i

mean let's let's just go with abidam i

mean

probably you have an idea if you've

watched my videos they don't have much

use for abhidama but just going with it

is orthodox theravada it's the third

pinnacle so

in

in

orthodox tarot bottom you've got four

kinds of reality

you've got mind

mental states

uh

consciousness

and nibona

so

consciousness is just like i mean they

really have a terrible really has a

difficult time defining consciousness

they really don't do a very good job of

it in my opinion but the mental states

is anything that's it's the form of the

consciousness anything that the

consciousness is conscious of is a

mental state

so that would include all your your

weightedness all your feelings all your

perceptions you know everything anything

that you experience is going to be a

mental state unless you can somehow
attain the paradoxical state of having
pure consciousness with no mental states
in which case you're in a pure mystical
state

so

i don't fully understand the question
here because he's

um the arya swasti project

seems to be assuming that emotions are
different from mental states in which
case i'm not exactly sure what he means
by state of mind

but i will say that happiness is not
just

a state of mind

you can say i mean happiness you know is
mainly a state of mind you can say or or
love for that matter but also
you have to have the consciousness
underlying the mental state it's like
um this isn't exactly orthodox you know
a disclaimer here but um
like
consciousness is like
water and
mental states would be like waves you
know it's
um mental states are like the form that
the consciousness assumes
so if you've got like a big mental state
you're going to have more consciousness
behind it if you have like an expanded

mental state like love or joy then
there's going to be more consciousness
backing that up you're more conscious
when you're happy than when you're
unhappy as a general rule there may be
exceptions to that
but still

when you're wide open your heart is open
you know you've got less restrictions on
your consciousness

you know less restrictions on your heart
so to speak

then

yeah i mean you're going to be more
conscious and so it's not purely a state
of mind happiness or unhappiness are not

purely states of mind because there's
also the underlying consciousness which
is the same consciousness but it can be
you know expanded or contracted like a
state of depression would be like
chronic contraction of of consciousness
you know you've got a small
consciousness going
and just the more conscious you are the
happier you are until finally you reach
uh you know infinite bliss when your
consciousness just merges with the
consciousness of the universe so to
speak
and uh for those buddhists out there
please forgive me for talking so much
like a hindu

so

i think i pretty much answer that one as well as i can it's kind of a confusing question for me

so i'll just move on to the next one from chaplin

and this one's down to earth this is a down earth question

coming up soon on your one year

disrobing anniversary are we going to get another transitional update video

well that's possible yeah if people want to uh

find out how it's been not being a monk for a whole year which will be uh

may 16th would be my uh

anniversary for uh

leaving

the ordained biku

so yeah that's possible i think there's

a good chance of it

so i'll just move on to the next

question from uh chaplin and that is

looking back over the last year since

disrobing what three words would best

describe your new life what three words

well i think this would be in order of

importance would be

love

work

food

those are like the three biggies that

would be the three words that best

describe my uh

my existence

love work and food or if there was a

word that could combine love and

intimacy just being really close to

another person

um

yeah i would use that word instead of

love but let's just love is a good word

um

yeah

so i guess i answered the question i

mean i could elaborate but uh it might

be tmi or something so i'll just move on

to the next question from chakra gosha

and this is a naughty question

how do you say the 14 words in pali

seriously

um

for those of you who aren't um

into

national socialism or or whatever

the 14 words i had to look this up so i

mean it's not like an authority on this

but i looked it up and it's we must

secure the existence of our people in a

future for white children

and i'm not even going to attempt a

translation i'd probably butcher it

because my poly is pretty rusty now

and uh

yeah

i mean

we must secure the existence of our
people in a future for white children
gosh yeah i'm i'm not even going to
attempt it i mean
chakra gosha you know some poly i think
you can uh give it a shot yourself there
i think you're just being a naughty boy
that's what i think
so the next question from chakra gosha
there is a passage in the submutani kaya
in which the arahat chana apparently not
the same person as the famous charioteer
chooses to commit suicide to an
incurable painful illness given the
third noble truth wouldn't an arahant be
free from suffering even when undergoing

a painful illness being free from
suffering why would he choose to kill
himself on the other hand it seems like
maybe the traditional view is that chana
was not an arahant yet when he chose to
kill himself but only achieved full
awakening in the last moments as he bled
to death i'm not sure how plausible that
interpretation of the story is
well um chakra gosha seems to be
overlooking

the famous story in mahaparinibana suta
describing the buddha's own death
where the buddha was having really
painful like
abdom really just piercing abdominal
pains and he had to go into jhana in

order to bear the pain more easily which
is had me thinking like i mean an
arahant shouldn't really experience
suffering

you know i mean they still experience
pain but then the pain wouldn't bother
them because they wouldn't have aversion
for the pain

so why would the buddha or china in this
case

resort to some uh

you know some method of not feeling the
pain

and

the best the best answer i could come up
with is that um your body and your mind

are still linked you know like if you're really sick it's gonna have effects on your mind like you know just if you're if you're sick with whatever you know you might things may taste bad i've had fevers where you know even water tastes bad everything tastes bad and

um yeah even an arahant i mean he might not be attached or identified with his body but still when the body's all messed up the mental states accompanying that body are also going to be messed up even though the arahant isn't really identified with that anymore so that could be a way of answering that question

but um yeah the buddha himself did
something similar he didn't kill himself
but he went into jhana when he was
having these really intense pains
so there is that
and finally
the last question from chakra gosha and
also the last question
tonight
is
on an old episode of the right-wing
dharma squads podcast the guys argue
that it is virtuous or better than
neutral for buddhist lay people to have
children because birth as a human is the
most fortunate kind of rebirth so by

having children you are giving more
sentient beings that opportunity
furthermore since you are a buddhist
your children are virtually guaranteed
to have the opportunity to hear about
dhamma which is even more fortunate what
do you think of this argument as having
children kusala

well

um it's pretty obvious from the buddhist
point of view that uh

if you're able to be celibate then you
should be celibate i mean there are
pseudos for the buddha you know just
said if you're able to be celibate be
celibate and even if you're if you're
not celibate you know it's like um the

very least stay away from the wives of
other men

so

um

yeah i think they're they're pushing it

they're in a way it's sort of

justification or what's it called

casualty is that what it is casualty

where you're trying to uh

justify you know pretty much anything

you want to do

and um whether something is moral or

immoral really does depend upon the

individual's mental states so i mean two

people can can have children you know

one person over here and another person

over there can can each have you know
their children and one person will be
just a lousy father and make all sorts
of akusala the other person will be a
good father and make all sorts of merit
but um

yeah i mean there is there are a lot of
warnings like the dania suta in the
um you know it's like mara wants you to
have kids

you know it's like uh children are like
a huge attachment

i had a friend of mine a long time ago
when he had a kid a little kid and he
said when when a toddler even walks
towards the street you know he can be
still you know 30 feet back but i mean

there's just this visceral just you know
this this dread of the little kid just
splattering you know just jumping out in
front of traffic or something and so
yeah i think um i think they're trying
to justify what they would prefer
uh anyway

um

but i mean if you're gonna have children
i mean there should be no regrets and uh
to some degree it can be a rewarding
experience and uh a valuable aesthetic
practice in certain respects
but um yeah your attachments are going
to increase almost certainly

um

so there is that

so i would say i mean some people they
might do better with children than
without children

and uh some people won't it depends on
the individual which is

kind of a cop-out answer but uh it is
true

and um let's see regards to these last
parts here um

by having children you're giving more
sentient beings the opportunity of human
birth i

yeah i mean you could twist that around
and you know a murderer could say you
know it's their karma you know like
you know they're help i'm helping them

to pay off their karmic debts

you know it's it's it really doesn't

work that way it's it's

um it's it's abstractifying your karma

whereas your actual karma like the the

wholesome or unwholesome quality of it

is just you know what's going on in your

in your mind it's is your

your will

and not like any kind of abstract future

possible possible states

so i mean if you can have children and

uh

you know stay relatively detached or

um

you know you're you're cultivating more

love and and care and compassion and so
forth than you know the negative or
unskillful states then uh yeah it could
be it could be beneficial although
i think for most people

um it it kind of

keeps them more firmly in samsara

as a general rule

so that is uh the last question and uh

before i sign off i'll just remind you

all to uh

look at the url links in the bottom and

uh

subscribe to this channel if you haven't

already and smash that like button

and stuff

and

be happy