

Okay then.

Hello and welcome to question and answer number 201.

I am your host Po Bosa. And 201 is not a prime number. It is in fact $3 * 67$.

And I got to put the little paper umbrella back into the beverage.

Introduce the beverage. Don't want you guys thinking I'm uncivilized.

Don't use paper umbrellas in my beverages. Now I throw it away again because we're having kind of some technical difficulties and I've been looking into the cause of said technical difficulties and uh according to Grock

what's happening is

uh I've got either a sample rate

mismatch or a performance issue with the

CPU overload causing encoding lag. And

that does seem to be what's probably

happening because my CPU once it gets up

to about 50% in fact I think it's

lagging a little bit even now it's at

28% my CPU it's like you know the the

brain of my computer is at 28% I guess

of capacity

and it causes a lag so that my voice and

the movement of my mouth are not in

sync.

But I have a little bit to say about

that on like a a philosophical plane

that's [clears throat] going to come up

here before I actually start answering questions.

So, I seem to remember that right as I was ending the Q&A last weekend that it was like two people got some questions in right at the last minute as I was ending it and I didn't notice. And so then I like apologized in the the comments under the Q&A and said I'd answer the questions next time, which is now. But it turns out that there's only one un answered question at the end now. And I don't know if the other un answered question disappeared or not because some of the comments in the chat did in fact disappear.

It's just all kinds of weirdness go on when I make these videos. Disappearing comments, lag between sound and mouth movement. Um, recently I had a few videos where it sounded like I was talking from the bottom of a well. Just the the audio just stopped working. I had to delete my video processing software and upload like an updated version of it just to get it to work again. I hope it's working now.

And before I started using OBS, I was using the default uh video recording software on the computer. And it was there was one time I had to record the entire Q&A three times because it said it was recording. You

know, you see the little clock going,
all that stuff. Looked like it was
recording. Said it was recording. And
then I get to the end,
didn't record.

So, my recording of Q&A videos has been
just as a I mean, as just a regular
occurrence, there's all this technical
difficulty stuff coming up that
I I'll have a little bit more to say
about it in a minute.

But first,
um, it seemed like the live stream went
pretty well last weekend and despite the
the lag that's wanting to happen now,
the CPU is up to 52%.

I don't know. I mean, should I talk slower? I don't know. I should probably just get a new computer that's got more oomph to it.

This is a relatively old computer. So, I think probably next year after I'm richer than I am now with my new job, I'll just buy a computer that has more guts to it.

But, as I was saying, the Q&A worked. It seemed to go pretty well, and I'm getting used to it now. So, I may start doing Q uh live stream Q&As's uh more frequently in future, but it seems to me that 2:00 PM American Eastern time probably is too late because I have a lot of people who watch my videos in the

Eastern Hemisphere

and they were like going to bed. They're like saying good night everybody, you know, in midafter afternoon my time. So, I suppose I should probably [snorts] if I do live streams in the future, maybe like around noonish.

I'll let you know before it happens, but I think around noon would be possibly ideal. I get up earlier now because I have to get up at the god ungodly hour of like 4:00 to go to work now. And it looks like it's not going to be getting any better soon.

I mean, that's 4:00. Guess I' I mean there have been many more times I've

gone to bed at 4:00 than getting up at 4:00. I would much prefer I mean if I had my brothers, which I don't, but I would prefer to go to bed at 4:00 a.m. rather than get up at 4:00 a.m.

But it's the curse of Adam. We must get up at 4:00 a.m. and [snorts] uh earn our bread through the sweat of our brow and all that.

So, let's see here.

Oh, we're getting back to what I was threatening you that I was I was going to get back to, and that is certain philosophical reflection on the technical issues that have plagued my channel, especially these Q&A videos. Like I've told you before, it's like a

lag between, you know, the audio and the video aren't in sync

or a few videos in a row. Just recently, it sounded like I was talking from the bottom of a well because the the audio soft or the the video like processing software just the audio just died. I had to like delete the the software and upload like a different version of it.

Before that, I was using completely different um audio record or video recording software that sometimes didn't work at all. On one infamous occasion, I had to do the same Q&A three times before it finally recorded. It said it was recording and everything, didn't

record.

And

to me, doing these videos is a kind of spiritual practice. You know, it's like I'm directing my mind towards dharma in a way that I usually don't at other times. You know, just being mindful or spontaneously coming or refraining from killing and lying and stealing and all that sort of stuff. I mean, that's just kind of chronic a kind of uh baseline dhamma practice, but when I'm doing these Q&A videos, it's more overt. You know, it really is a significant spiritual practice for me and possibly for some of the people that listen. And because I view these videos

through a kind of spiritual lens, at least a philosophical one, then my philosophical view that everything has to remain in balance. You know, for every positive, you have to have a corresponding negative just to keep the cosmos in balance.

So you've got goodness, you've got to have badness to balance it with. You know, you've got beauty, you have to have ugliness just to compare it with so that there is a kind of cosmic balance.

You know, that's how duality works.

And I do think that just the the strange technical difficulties that continually happen with my videos are a kind of

cosmic balance. You know, there's like the good aspect of me answering people's questions about dharma and then it has to be balanced out with some kind of negativity which manifests in the form of crappy production quality.

And I accept that. I mean, for me, the purpose of these videos is, as I say, kind of spiritual practice, sharing what I've learned, that kind of stuff. And and I'm not doing it to get to make money or to get famous, that kind of stuff, you know, I'm doing it as a kind of public service.

And so when like negative stuff, you know, with regard to, you know, recording values or what is it

production values or lack of production values, when that kind of stuff is happening, then I just kind of accept it philosophically. It's like well you know it's like Mara the evil one you know the cosmic balance you know everything has to to balance out so the goodness of sharing dharma just kind of gets counterbalanced by all these glitches and complications and technicalities and stuff.

So, I just kind of accept it philosophically.

And it may be that, you know, George Gerchef, I don't know if you're familiar with George Gerchef, but he was um a

western philosopher who kind of was teaching eastern philosophy through a kind of western approach.

And he believed that

you sh I mean, you shouldn't get your dharma too easily. you know, he he made his books deliberately difficult to understand because he felt like you shouldn't just have dharma handed to you on a platter. You shouldn't have any kind of profound truth or anything of value just given to you on a platter without you having to make any effort.

And so,

um, I mean, I can kind of I can kind of relate to that. I mean, it's it's sort of like you listening to these Q&A

videos. You have to exercise a little bit of patience or a little tolerance of my mouth not moving at at exactly the same time as the words coming out or I sound like I'm talking to you from the bottom of a well.

I mean, if it just doesn't record at all, then I just have to record the whole thing over again so you don't see it. I mean, this is like the third or fourth attempt even just this evening trying to get the the lag, you know, the the the get the the audio and video synchronized better has been it's been taking some time and it seems like it's going pretty well right now. It's within

a second anyway.

But on the bright side, bright side,
just next year I'll probably get a
better, stronger computer and then we
can have like some totally new kind of
[_]

interfering with these videos.

But it's going to have to be something.

That's just it just seems like that's
the way it is. And I sincerely believe
in, you know, this cosmic balance idea.

This sort of dependent core rising in
Buddhism kind of works that way. Yin and
Yang and Dowaism works that way. Um,
karma to some degree works that way. And
there is a question about karma kind of
along those lines uh coming up. And uh I

suppose I should uh just start answering questions then.

My golly, there's not a whole bunch of questions this time. I guess everyone's just basking in the the afterglow of the live stream number 200 last weekend.

But one of the questions that was asked at the end of the Q&A that I didn't get to is apparently from someone named Yatish.

And Yatish says, "Should one be optimistic or realistic about the future or should one not think about future much altogether?"

And if you're doing intensive practice like really intensive dharma practice

then as a general rule you should be in the present moment. Be here now as Rahm Doss used to say or the power of now you know Eckhart Tolle's first famous book.

So yeah, I mean if you're doing intensive practice, you should be mainly occupied with the present moment. And the Buddha as well as Jesus of Nazareth taught, you know, give no thought for tomorrow, what you will eat, where you will sleep, you know, let tomorrow's problems happen tomorrow. You know, you can deal with them then.

So even if you are like doing intensive mindfulness practice just be here now and you have to think about the future or you have to remember the past for

whatever reason then still there's this
mindfulness going on of now where it's
like I'm thinking about the future now
remembering the past now you know
there's still this now even if you're
thinking about the future or remembering
the past [clears throat]
but if you're not doing intensive like
like intensive practice
then you may have to think about the
future more often. Let's say you work
for some company you know you're like in
the environment health and safety
department of some in like industry.
So it's your job to be like
extrapolating into the future and seeing

what could possibly go wrong so that you can like prevent it from going wrong.

So, in a situation like that, you're going to have to think about the future.

I mean, sometimes you just have to think about the future or the past.

But if you're doing mindfulness really well, it's thinking about the future now. Remembering the past now, but it should be kept to a minimum. To be in the present moment as much as possible is an invaluable spiritual tool.

But with regard to Yatish, Yates's first question and this is actually two questions. I just noticed that I don't know how [clears throat] that can get

past me. There's two question marks. So the first part of the question is should one be optimistic or realistic about the future? And

I mean

to be realistic it's probably better. I mean to be optimistic that's like being hopeful. I mean to the to the extent that being optimistic is being hopeful, you know, hoping for the best, just kind of having faith that things are going to turn out like well. Um the Buddha did teach that monks should not be hopeful, that hope is a kind of desire for the future.

So I mean you can give the future the

benefit of the doubt and that's about as optimistic as I would recommend. Or you can be optimistic in the sense of like whatever happens to me is going to be the fruition of my own karma. Again, we're we're like seeking equilibrium.

You know, karma is like water. It just kind of seeks its own level, so to speak in a sense.

So, it's like whatever happens to you is like

what should happen to you. I mean, from from a Buddhist point of view, it makes perfect sense. People that don't have much appreciation for dharma will say you're victim blaming. You know this kind of stuff. But really

um

even if something bad happens to you,
it's like paying off a karmic debt
so to speak.

So I mean that's a kind of optimism you
can have that would be valid from a
Buddhist point of view. Just bear in
mind, you know, whatever happens, you
know, everything happens the way it's
supposed to happen. That was almost like
a mantra for me. Sometimes it still
comes out sometimes just spontaneously.
Everything happens the way it's supposed
to happen, which is kind of optimistic,
but you know, it's with regard to
realistic. I mean, that's just sort of

being objective. I think it might have been uh a better choice of words to give the choice between being optimistic or being objective

[snorts] and you can kind of be both at the same time so long as you bear in mind you know everything is just happens the way it's supposed to happen and you know I you know there there's a lot of optimistic things you can say you know like um you can say that like you never get what you're not ready for that you maybe you have some karma that something bad is going to happen to you but it's like the universe postpones it until you're I mean you're ripe for it in a sense that you're more able to deal with

it

which sounds kind of woowoo and all that
and we shouldn't really dwell on it but
there is that

so getting back to Yatisha's first
question should one be optimistic or
realistic about the future. I mean,
realistic is probably the best your best
bet, but realistic isn't pessimistic. I
mean, realism and optimism are not
opposites.

You know, the opposite of optimism is
pessimism. You shouldn't be pessimistic.

I mean, to remind yourself that you're
not going to live forever, that you're
going to die someday. I mean, that's

more realistic than pessimistic. You know, sort of like a lot of people accuse Buddhism of being pessimistic because, you know, the first noble truth to exist is to suffer, but that's just observing the way things are.

So, you can have a certain philosophical optimism. You know, everything happens the way it's supposed to happen. It's the fruition of my own karma, that kind of thing. But aside from that, you're better off just being objective and not like

slathering value judgments all over everything. You know, optimistic is sort of like putting a like a positive spin on things and positive and negative have

to balance out.

So you're better off just leaving like the facts of your existence as unadorned with value judgments as possible.

And with regard to Yatish's second question, should one not think about the future much altogether? I pretty much pretty sure I already answered that one more or less. So I'm just going to move on to the next question.

And if there was another person who asked a question at the end of last week's live stream and the comment just disappeared because some of the comments did disappear.

I remember uh somebody suggesting that I turn that fan on. And I I addressed it in the video. I pointed out that the ceiling fan's already going, so it's not necessary to turn that one on. And then I was looking for it to see who who it was that made that that suggestion and it was gone. But I I distinctly remember seeing it in the in the comments in the chat and responding to it on the video. So it's it's just who knows

[clears throat]

it's just weirdness.

But getting back to sea of action cipad zena his question is thoughts and he uh included a a YouTube short video of salvage zek. I don't know how

to pronounce the names. I mean I I
understand the salvage part because he
kind of like [clears throat] sprays when
he talks. the zizek I'm not sure about
but he it's just him
discussing
um like introspection
salvage says that you mean you
shouldn't introspect too much you
shouldn't look inward too much because
you're going to find deep [__] in there
and so he says this is actually a quote
he says the only way to overcome
yourself is to identify with the mask,
you know, like the public persona.
And he also says, this is also a quote

from Salivage, in your complete identification with another, you can find freedom.

So, it's like you've got like the the outward projection of an image. You just identify with that and that's that's who you you really are or at least that's who you pretend to really be. And according to Salivage, that's the best way to go about things.

And one thing you should bear in mind with with Zek, I don't know how to pronounce these names, is that he is one of the few communist philosophers that is taken seriously in Western civilization lately over the past few decades.

And I don't know what kind of communist he is. I don't know if he's a Marxist or just sort of like a like some kind of rehashed neo-Marxist or if he was just never, you know, he's just not a Marxist at all. I don't know what kind of communist he is, but he does not strike me as a particularly wise individual. Intelligent, sure, but intelligence and wisdom are not the same. And I remember when I first started watching some of his videos, I did watch some of his videos, not because I'm a communist, but just because, you know, they come up on the feed and I was curious just to see what he'd have to say or he'd be talking

with someone who wasn't a communist or whatever. And back just like 10 or so years ago, he was just continually like pulling at his shirt and like rubbing his nose. I mean, he couldn't get a sentence out without like tugging at his shirt and like like compulsively, habitually just like rubbing his nose and pulling on it and this kind of thing, which indicates that he was not being mindful. You know, he's just his arms are just doing all this nervous stuff without him being like fully in control of it.

But he has stopped doing that. And I've noticed that he doesn't tug on his shirt or or like pull on his nose anymore in

his in the videos where you see him lately. So I he has at least like been practiced enough mindfulness to train himself to stop doing that. But I mean just when he's discouraging introspection, you know, it's like Socrates saying allegedly the unexamined life is not worth living. Well, Salivage would say pretty much the opposite.

Just fake it. Just be like this fake persona and identify with that. And that's that's how you find freedom according to him. which I mean it kind of makes sense if he's a communist because communism

does not strike me as a particularly wise like economic or social system. It just is not in harmony with with human nature the animal instincts of the human animal which go by the name of human nature.

So yeah, my thoughts on Salivage is uh he is not he does not strike me as a wise person and he just prefers ideas that he comes up with in his head to any kind of empiricism apparently.

I don't know how anyone could still be a communist after over a century at this point of stagnant and failed economies, totalitarianism, and occasional genocide.

I mean, there's really no excuse for a communist nowadays.

Anyways, I'm just going to move on to CEO of Action Cadet's second question.

He says, "Do you believe there is a moral development of societies that is objective or are people and societies over time not any more moral than we were thousands of years ago?" And I'm going to check the uh the CPUs at 36 36% so that the uh the lag is minimal.

Just just keeping you updated on on the CPU usage.

But getting back to sea of action cipad zera um well I mean one thing that immediately comes to mind are are let's

see are people and societies over time
not any more moral than we were
thousands of years ago well think about
northern India in the Buddhist time that
was definitely a more moralitybased
culture than we've got going now I mean
morals are almost obsolete in western
civilization morality any kind of
systematic morality has been replaced by
unrefined feminine sentiment. You know,
don't hurt anyone's feelings.

Overindulgence in any kind of sensuality
is just fine and dandy. That has nothing
to do with morals anymore.

But getting to the top part of the
question, do you believe there is a
moral development of societies that is

objective?

Well, I mean morality

whether it's objective or not depends on

your definition of morals. So I mean you

could define morals in a sense that it

could be objectively like quantified

morals you know it's like crime rates

that kind of stuff then

yeah you could objectify that. I don't

know how you you'd have like an

objective

um like measurement or critique of

morals in society without like defining

it in some way that could then be

applied to the data.

So let's just say

moral development of societies. Gosh, I mean how would you quantify that? I mean how would you objectify

like the morality of a society with regard to crime rates you know like what would be the murder rate and like the the rate of like theft you know assault that kind of stuff but I mean you don't really have good data for the Ganges Valley 200 years ago

so

let's see it seems to me with regard to this that I mean you're always going to have this cosmic balance of good and evil that kind of thing you know it's just when if you're living in dualism which is the way samsara works you're

living in a dualistic world then
opposites tend to balance out so you've
got morality and immorality they're
going to balance out
regardless of the society it seems to me
but with regard to I mean look at the
Buddhist time you know northern Iron Age
northern India the Ganges Valley you
know 500 BCE 200 years ago
and you had a lot more saints and sages
then but at the same time you probably
had a lot more sociopaths and like
bandits and serial killers and that kind
of thing. you know, was you read the the
text and it was dangerous to go alone,
you know, through the forest because

there's bandits, not just tigers and leopards, but bandits, you know, nuns, like Buddhist nuns were not allowed to live in the forest just because it was too dangerous. And then you had like not only like outlaws like bandits, but you had like neighboring kings that I mean they're they just invade, you know, plunder this kind of stuff. Like in the list of dangers in that's found in the the rules of monastic discipline several times. Like for example, there are the the 10 reasons why it's okay to abbreviate a formal ceremony. like the potty mocha recitation, you know, it's like the stereotypical list of 10 dangers. Number

one on the list is kings.

And it's, you know, I mean, it could be even your own king who's just sweeping through and just like forcibly recruiting any man of military age to go and fight. or it could be the king next door who's already done that and is now invading.

So, I do think that nowadays we're living in an age of spiritual or moral mediocrity.

You know, there's fewer saints and there's fewer of the opposite of saints.

So, it's like in the Buddhist time, you had a lot of of like wisdom and

goodness, and you had a lot of badness
and foolishness, and that was pretty
much how the balance worked out then.

Now, it's just sort of like lukewarm
mediocrity across the board.

And so, it all adds up to the same zero.

It all balances out to the same zero.

[sighs]

Yeah.

So I mean even in like I mean there are
some societies that were just like cruel
and ruthless. It's like Huns or Mongols,
you know, back in the day when you know
they were like conquering large areas of
territory. Um I mean they were they were
pretty awful, you know. It's like
um like the Mongols, you know, 13th

century. They'd come to a walled town and they would demand immediate surrender. And if they didn't surrender immediately, they would completely destroy that town, just level it to the ground and just leave this big mound of severed heads outside of where the city used to be as a as a a sign, you know, you better do what we say or we're going to [__] you up. And they just seem to have no compassion at all. You know, there's there's stories of like when the the Mongols made it to I think it was around what what nowadays would be Hungary, you know, it's like around the Danube

region, you know, they were the the towns people would just flee and hide in the woods and the Mongols would call them out and say, "Come on, you can just go ahead and and go about your business." And then as soon as they had harvested their fields and everything, then they'd all be slaughtered. And the the Mongols just thought it was funny. They didn't care. So, there is that. Although they they sort of had other like counterbalancing virtues. I mean even just like fearlessness and courage that kind of thing could be considered virtues but um it's yeah I mean I don't want to do

an entire cultural anthropological survey but it does seem that you could you could say that some cultures are more virtuous than others or more moral than others.

seems that way anyway. But overall, it seems to me that the modern like post-modern world is no more virtuous than the Ganges Valley in the Buddhist time. It's just that we're kind of weak and soft, you know, feminized and, you know, so I mean, there's less violence, less aggression, not so much because people are restraining themselves, but just because they're just incapable of it anymore. You know,

it's kind of they've degenerated,
if you will.

So yeah, I think overall that people are
no more happy than they were 2,000 years
ago. Overall, no more virtuous than they
were 2,000 years ago. Except 2,000 years
ago, you had more of a a broader
bell-shaped curve

because now it's just sort of like
lukewarm mediocrity is predominant.

So, I think I'm just going to move on to
SEO of Action Cadet's next question. And
it does seem that the lag is more or
less under control. And I hope I don't
sound like I'm talking from the bottom
of a well. And I do hope that it's
recording. It does seem to be.

So, Sioatza

says, "Would Arans still have an unconscious mind or do they have a complete understanding of the mind?" And this falls into the category of second-guessing the mental states of a fully enlightened being. I get asked these kind of questions fairly frequently. You know, what is what is it like to be fully enlightened? And even if a fully enlightened person were to explain it to an unenlightened person, the unenlightened person still wouldn't get it because like a uh like Bert and Russell says, you know, when a stupid person hears what an intelligent person

says, they have to translate it into something stupid that they can understand.

So Bertrren Russell, I think it was in his history of western philosophy, he's talking about how he would rather be um he he would rather have his philosophy described by his most virilent enemy among philosophers than to have it described by some normie who didn't really understand philosophy but was sympathetic to Bertrand Russell just because the that philosophical enemy is more likely to get the main points correct even though he disagrees with them than the normie who just doesn't really

understand and so he has to like take
this you know sophisticated philosophy
and translate it into something stupid
so that he can understand it and I think
um Burton Russell was referring to
Xenophon

um in his biography of or his account of
Socrates that he didn't consider
Xenophon to be particularly really uh
reliable as a source with regard to what
Socrates was like because Xenophon was a
normie according to Burton Russell. He
was not philosophical you know he just
kind of dumbed things down in order to
understand it better even though he
apparently was a competent general.

So let's get back to the question though which I've pretty much ignored thus far. Would Ara still have an unconscious mind?

Um, I have heard it said that they wouldn't. That when you're fully conscious, that means you're fully conscious. You are fully awake. You are awakened. And so, they would no longer have a subconscious mind. They would be um aware of all the workings of their mind theoretically.

[snorts]

And the wiser you get, the less subconscious you are. Like getting back to Salvage Zek, you know, it was like when he is like tugging on his shirt and

rubbing his nose compulsively,
you know, 10, 15, 20 years ago. I mean,
that was like subconscious. It wasn't
fully conscious what he was doing. But
then as you as you become more mindful,
I mean or as he became more mindful, you
know, he

he like brought it up into the conscious
into his conscious mind in order to deal
with it. And so um even if an arahant a
fully enlightened being from the point
of view of some unenlightened

psychologist

or psychoanalyst if he he still has some
kind of subconscious mind he's going to
have a hell of a lot less of it than the

average person. I mean, you could say that most animals, it's pretty much all they've got is a subconscious mind other than maybe some really simple, superficial stuff. Most of what they're doing, like instincts, like a bird building a nest. That would be just like subconscious urges. They don't know why they're doing it. They just have this urge to do it, so they just act it out.

Sort of like salvager tugging at his shirt.

So yeah, I mean it's just another one of those questions of second-guessing the mental states of a fully enlightened being.

[snorts] So I think I'm just going to move on to the next question. This is from Romeo and Romeo says, "Western culture stands apart from the rest of the world in emphasizing the freedom and autonomy of the individual rather than conforming to one's tribe or group. How and why did western individualism develop in Europe rather than in other parts of the world? And that's a good question. I mean, it's it's kind of an anthropological question, I think. You know, why is it that individualism just kind of flowered in the west and nowhere else really?

And I think there's a possibility it

could be genetic. You know, there could just be some genetic quirk in the European

ethnicity or family of ethnicities that are just more individualistic because

[clears throat] it's like the the

Greeks. I mean, they weren't as

individualistic as we are now, but still

they were much more individualistic than

say the Persians next door, which is one

reason why they were able to kick kick

ass on the Persians.

And then like the Romans, the Romans

were kind of conservative, but still

they allowed more individualism. I mean,

they had a lots lots of different like

religious cults and so forth, different

philosophies. you know, you could just pick and choose which one works best for you as a general rule.

You know, they were definitely not opposed to innovation.

Um, and then but the thing is you had Germanic tribes north of the Rine that also were very individualistic and it was like after the Roman Empire had pretty much degenerated into a kind of demoralized dictatorship where like um individualism wasn't as valued as it was like during the the glory days of the republic. Then you had these Germanic tribes who conquered the collapsing Western Roman Empire and sort

of revived these ideals of individual rights and so forth.

So that would seem to indicate that the Germanic tribes north of the Rhine I mean they didn't inherit that from the Greeks.

You know it was it just seems like it's a European thing and Europeans are the most like physically diverse group at least with regard to appearance. you know, you've got sort of dark like swarthy European types, very pale European types, different hair colors, different eye colors that I mean, other ethnicities just don't have that as a general rule. I mean, like they might be kind of lighter skinned or darker

skinned within the range of their own, you know, ethnicity, you know, in the bell-shaped curve and all that, but different eye colors, different hair colors, that's like a European thing.

And it's kind of indicates there's more individual variation

not only with regard to appearance but also with regard to the way people think and behave.

So let's see what's the actual question.

How and why did Western individualism develop in Europe rather than in other parts of the world?

Um [clears throat] yeah I mean it could be genetic. It seems like it's either

genetic or maybe even like some cultural inheritance from the Indo-Uropeans that conquered so much of the Western world. You know, it may have been just some sort of ideal that they brought with them. I'm not sure what kind of individualism you had before the Indo-Uropean expansion into Europe and in like northern um northern India and Persia and places like that. I don't know if it'd be interesting just to see like where innovations like stone age innovations came from like new patterns for making stone arrow heads. I mean, did the Europeans, the stone, the cave people of Europe, were they like ahead of the cave

people of China or or southern India or
I mean I don't know.

So that would be interesting. I mean
that would be a step towards answering
the question I guess. I mean, if there
was a lot of um innovation
found primarily in the west that then
trickled eastwards and southwards,
then I mean that would be a good
argument for maybe some genetic
component that causes Europeans to be
more individualistic
than than other ethnicities
historically.

And I am happy to say that my coffee is
now pretty much cold. So it's uh not

causing me to be all persspiry anymore.

So yeah, I mean I mean you can only guess with regard to this this question.

How and why did Western individualism develop in Europe rather than other parts of the world?

it would seem to be something about our ethnicity

um is just less conformist than most other ethnicities. And I do think it's possible that there is a genetic component, but I don't know what it would be. But it seems like I mean how else would you explain it unless like I said it's just something that was introduced as a cultural element from like the Indo-Uropeans.

So I'm sorry I really can't answer that question with any any degree of certainty.

So I'm just going to move on to Romeo's second question which is a followup on the first one.

Is western individualism sustainable over the long haul in terms of ensuring the survival of European people?

Wouldn't it seem

Wouldn't it seem a less effective group survival strategy compared to cultures that emphasize the group over the individual and are thus more unified?

Um, well, I mean, just look at history.

Um, I think it was John Stewart Mill. I

was considering getting the quote just so I could read it to you. But John Stewart Mill has this quote. I think it's in his essay on liberty uh which is sort of like a classical liberal manifesto written in the 1800s. And he was talking about how like the Chinese were living in palaces and wearing silk when our ancestors in Europe were still wearing animal skins and just living in like huts.

But

due to their like their adherence to conformity and lack of imagination and western individualism, it's like the Europeans conquered the world.

And even if they didn't conquer the entire world militarily, although they came pretty damn close during the colonial era, still I mean you go to communist China. I mean the communism they derived from from Europe, you know, like the the economics and the the political ideas that they're following originally came from Europe. You know, you look at Chinese people, they're wearing western style clothing, they have western style hairds, they've got western technology, and the only way they can even come close to rivaling us with regard to technology is just by spying and

stealing Western ideas.

So, Western individualism thus far has been much more successful over the long haul in terms of ensuring the survival of European people. It's it's not so much individualism that is causing Western civilization to go into decline. It's just good times make weak men, weak men make bad times. You know, like I was saying that we're in a state of like lukewarm like mediocrity.

I mean, we are definitely decadent and it's because we were so successful, we got soft and weak and lazy.

It's like Theodore Roosevelt had this famous quote that I saw on X a few days

ago. It's the curse of all civilizations, all great civilizations that the men eventually become unable to fight just because of materialism and luxury and security just makes them soft and weak and lazy and they cannot stand up to uncouthed barbarians that sweep across the border. In fact, nowadays they're just a lot of them are just inviting the barbarians in. Come on, sweethearts.

here's stay in this luxury hotel we'll we'll provide for you.

So the individualism I think has made western civilization just predominant on this planet.

It's just that there are other factors you know like moral decline that are more um dangerous to us than individualism. I mean it is good to have enough like conformity that everyone is pretty much on the same page or most people in the country share the same world view to some degree or at least the same ideals. You know, civic nationalism is what kept America strong for more than 200 years.

But when you get so much individualism, I mean, no, I [clears throat] don't I don't know if you can even call it individualism where people are just like splintering and break it's becoming like tribalistic and so forth. That's not so

much individualism. That's just conforming to a smaller group.

I mean, people are they're they're a social animal. People have got the herd instinct.

So, yeah, maybe that Europeans have a little bit less herd instinct than most humans,

but I think I answered that question.

Yeah, I don't think that it's a less effective group survival strategy compared to cultures that emphasize the group over the individual because the cultures that emphasize the group over the individual are conformist and they tend not to have much imagination. They

do not dare to deviate from what everyone else is thinking and doing. And that's why the Europeans with their sort of liberal ideals and individualism and so forth that I mean the Greeks had it to some degree, the Romans, the Germanic tribes.

It just seems like a European thing, not like specifically owed to any region of Europe.

So

yeah, I think I mean a certain amount of conformity is necessary just to hold the society together so it doesn't just fly apart in all directions. But still a society that has like individuality like individual rights and so forth is

going to be stronger as a general rule all else being equal than people that are just conformists. You know, that's one reason why the Greeks were able to defeat the Persians in battle because the Persians I mean they were essentially I mean to some degree you could say that they're like slaves to the king, you know, and and it's like they just followed the rules. That's one reason why Alexander the Great was able to conquer Persia as easily as he did with relatively few soldiers because the Persians were so predictable. They just they fought in the same way. You know, it's like you read Xenophon's Anabasis

where he's talking about the march of the 10,000 through Persian territory and the Greeks realize it's the Persians. They always tie up their horses outside the camp at night. You know, they just don't fight at night. It's just they didn't think about it. They just why would anyone fight at night? So, they didn't even prepare and they just left their horses outside the camp. So, the Greeks just went in and helped themselves with the Persian horses. Suddenly they got cavalry and they were able to fight their way all the way back to Greece.

And I I I assume that Alexander was familiar with with this book and got a

lot of inspiration from it. It's uh I mean without individualism and individual thought, you're going to have a lot fewer ideas and a lot less innovation and a lot less improvement.

But I'm just going to move on this question. This is from Nigelbick.

Nijb. It's NJBK.

Ninj.

And Nijbik says, "Have you ever met any arroant?"

Do you think you could identify them as such if you met them? Are there any monks today whom you think are?" Well, that's three questions. Listen, I got to divide this up. So, we got a few more

questions than I thought we did just because I failed to divide them up before starting this video.

So, have I ever met any orans? I don't know. I mean, how could you possibly know? But I'm kind of getting ahead of myself. Um,

sometimes you you see this wise old monk who lives alone out in a cemetery or something and the villagers around consider him to be an Arahant, but that's no proof. I mean, he could just be putting on a show identifying with the image like Salivage Zek was advising.

Um, and just because you have a reputation for being enlightened doesn't

mean anything because I had a reputation for being enlightened in certain areas of Burma.

So [sighs] have I met any arans? Maybe.

But I mean again I think an arant would be a kind of paradox

because escaping or transcending samsara within a samsuric context doesn't necessarily mean anything.

Meaning is samsaric. So anyone who transcends meaning I mean it just becomes meaningless.

So I am somewhat skeptical that that full enlightenment

is even a thing in a samsaric context.

And like I mentioned relatively recently

in a Q&A that there was a school called the Yogachara Logicians or the Dignaga School which was a medieval Buddhist school that specialized in logic and their classic example of a problematic premise is that such and such person is fully enlightened.

There's no way you can prove it. I mean the fully enlightened being might know that they're fully enlightened but they can't prove it to anybody else.

I mean, if you got psychic powers, you could display those, but just because you have psychic powers doesn't mean that you're enlightened.

So, maybe I mean, my best bet and an Araan I mean I did meet in Seattle who

had a reputation for being very wise.

Um, met a few other seats that seemed wise, but I mean, you can't really tell.

I mean, how could you know? According to the text, only an Araant would know if another Arahant was enlightened. And even then, maybe not. Like, if you're a dry visioned Araant who doesn't have any psychic powers, you can't look into the mind of the other being, how are you going to know?

So, with regard to have I ever met any Arahans,

maybe if that even means anything within the context of samsara.

So, Ninjic's second question. Do you

think you could identify them as such if you met them? And I've pretty much already answered that question. It's like, how? I mean, you couldn't really know. I mean, if you were another Araant, maybe. But if you're not an Araant, how are you going to know? I mean, sometimes you could see that they aren't Arahanss, you know, if they're just like, you know, screaming drunk and like picking fights and this kind of stuff. They're like stealing and lying. I mean, that would be a fairly good indication that, you know, they they're involved in sex scandals and this kind of stuff, fairly good indication that they're not

fully enlightened. But who knows? I mean, if if full enlightenment doesn't even mean anything or or maybe somebody like Jay Krishna Mertie is right about being enlightened where I mean, you're not like enslaved to morals if you're fully enlightened, which means you're like liberated.

I mean, how are you even going to define enlightenment in a case like that where there's like there's like this whole spectrum like terra Buddhism is at one extreme end of the spectrum with regard to what an enlightened being is like.

Terravada Buddhism insists, orthodox terra insists that in order to

have purity of mind, in order to I mean
in order to become enlightened, you have
to have purity of mind. And before you
can have purity of mind, you have to
have purity of morals, which means you
have to have perfected morality, which
means you are a saint before you can
become a sage, like an enlightened sage.
At the other end, you've got people like
Paul Low or Jay Krishna Murdy or maybe
Eugi Krishna Murdy where it's like
anything goes. There's no rules. If
you're enlightened, you're no longer
you're no longer like subject to these
limitations. You can I mean whatever.
So
yeah, I mean I [clears throat] don't

know how an unenlightened person could possibly identify an Arahant even if they meet them. Even if you're sitting in the same room with them, you know, it's like you got a fool in the same room as an Arahant. The fool is going to be looking at the Arahant through foolishness colored glasses and they're just going to be dis maybe even scoffing and sneering. Maybe the orant has some physical peculiarity or he speaks with an accent or something and the other person just might be mocking him because of this.

So

I mean there are people in the Buddhist

time who despised the Buddha.

They didn't know he was enlightened.

They thought it was all [_]

People are like that.

So I think I'll just move on to Nijbik's
third question. Are there any monks

today whom you think are Aras? I have no
idea. I mean like I said I met Shu um in
Seattle but he has passed away. He is no
longer alive. And of the the monks that
I have known

I really I really have no idea. I mean
it's possible
but I have no idea.

So I mean who today I mean there are
people that have a reputation for being
arrogant. Ehart Tollola for example

he has a reputation for being enlightened. There are quite a few of those kind of people. There was Andrew Cohen who was he had quite a following back around the time that I became a monk around 1990. You know he was luring people away from weasa and it was like just lots of people were following Andrew Cohen. I think his teacher was uh Harilal Punga in India and Andrew Cohen was I mean he didn't deny that he was enlightened or considered himself to be enlightened until finally um his own disciples started pointing out to him man you're not acting like an enlightened being. I don't remember what

the scandal was. It could have been some kind of sex thing. I don't know. I didn't really keep up with it. But eventually he came to the conclusion, well golly, I'm not really an Arahán after all. And then of course you've got Daniel Ingram. There's a lot of people like that in the West. Probably a lot of people like that in the East too who claim to be fully enlightened and maybe are just like in some cases just overestimating their own attainments. So from the point of view of monastic discipline, if a monk overestimates his own attainments, he thinks he's enlightened and [clears throat] he says he's enlightened even though he isn't,

he's not parajiki, he's not
excommunicated because he was sincere,
you know, he just overestimated his own
attainments. Whereas a monk who knows
that he's not enlightened and says that
he is, then he's excommunicated for the
rest of his life. he's committed a
parajika offense. The worst thing a monk
can do is to deliberately lie about
having attained superhuman mental states
which includes enlightenment itself.

So I mean assuming that being fully
enlightened even means anything in a
samsaric context and all meaning is
samsaric

then maybe

there could be enlightened monks. It wouldn't surprise me assuming that it's possible. I'm assuming that there are fully enlightened monks out there. And in a lot of cases, they'd just be hermits living just humbly living alone out in the woods. And you know, maybe the the local villagers who are putting food in their bowl, you know, consider them to be fully enlightened, but nobody else knows about them. They're not famous. I remember one time um there was a monk see Bodhi no wait what was his name it was Bodhi bin Seattle or something like that and he [clears throat] was considered to be fully enlightened and um some of his

supporters

um very much wanted me to meet him so they drive me to Bodhi bin I don't No, I can't remember the name of it. It was Bodhin Seattle, something like that. And so as we're going there, you know, they're very keen on me meeting this this Araant. And I I asked the driver, you know, are you sure he's enlightened? The driver say, "Yeah, I'm sure. Yeah, he's enlightened." All right. Although there's no way the driver could have possibly known if he was really enlightened or not. So we get there and the place is like a it's like a circus. there's like pagotas and statues and

everything being erected all over the place. You know, it's sort of like a a Buddhist amusement park or something and you've got, you know, there's like uh alchemists wearing the the white robes and the long beard and the beads and and just, you know, it's just like this spiritual, you know, it's like a a Buddhist kumba or something going on there. And I remember everyone's waiting for the the arant to come out to eat his meal. And he doesn't come out to eat until it's like a quarter to 12.

So there's no way he's going to be finished by by midday. So that he's going to be breaking a rule. Um which, you know, it's neither here nor there, I

guess. But he comes out, you know, it's like 11:45 a.m. sits down to to eat his meal. One of the first thing he does is he he blows his nose into his hand and then just wipes the snot on the wall next to him. And it's like is this people think this this person is enlightened? I mean, who knows? Maybe he was and he was just sort of like the the Krishna Murdy kind of enlightened being, the Osho kind of enlightened being, you know? It's like, who knows? Maybe they're right. and and an arroant can behave in really weird ways but um yeah I I can't really name any famous

monk or even a nonfamous one or or you know even like a like a Hindu swami or anything like that. I don't I really if I had to [clears throat] guess, you know, who is an enlightened being nowadays, you know, if I had to make had to name one enlightened being or at least my best guess, I would I mean, I'd be at a loss. I don't know who it would be. I mean, Echart Tollah maybe,

but he's a lay person, but I just I'm not really familiar with who the famous monks are nowadays. And those that are famous enough that I know about them, you they may be wise. They may be good people, virtuous, wise people, but fully

enlightened, I really

I mean I just have seen no evidence to support that. Although who knows exactly what the evidence would be

and I suppose I should just move on to the next question. This is from King Kung

and King Kung says, "Did you have any physical altercations in your monk life and do you do any wilderness stuff now also?" Oh, this is three questions again.

Okay.

So, I got to separate three questions.

It is good that people are limiting themselves to three questions. That's

that is commendable.

So you get merit for that. King Kung's first question, did you have any physical altercations in your monk life? And if you read my latest book, Memoirs from Myanmar, I'm pretty sure there's a chapter in there, it's like the one time I assaulted another monk. I had one serious [snorts] physical altercation as a monk, and that was I mean, I don't want to give the whole story. I mean it would take half an hour at least to give you all the the relevant details. But there was this Burmese monk who tried to just move in and take over the monastery where I was senior monk at the time and he obviously just did not follow the

rules of monastic discipline. He was obviously a rascal and a troublemaker and I just told him he was he wasn't going to stay there that you know he was going to have to leave. He was like a visiting monk who just decided he was going to take over and become the abbot there.

And

um I mean the way the final altercation occurred is I just made up my mind that he was going to have to go. He was like a a cousin or something of the other monk who lived at the monastery. There was only two of us at the time. There was me and there was old Unandia.

And I mean I wanted to kick him out before then and I went up to Unanda and said that new monk wants to stay here but I don't want to let him stay here. I want to kick him out. And then Unandia looks up at me and says he is my brother. But the Burmese, especially Burmese village culture, they'll call someone their brother when they're not really their brother. And there was probably at least 30 years difference in age between these two. But we did have a kind of agreement that if some new monk was going to stay at the monastery, both of us had to agree. You know, if I agreed but he didn't, the person couldn't stay. If he agreed but I

didn't, the person couldn't stay. And I was just finally made up my mind. I'd seen enough of his rule breaking and so forth that even if old Unandia didn't like it, I was going to kick him out anyway. So

I go down to to have it out with this visiting monk and he's sitting there like out in this this clearing at the monastery reading a book and I go to Unanda who is hard of hearing. So I had to yell in order to for him to hear me and he said that I I said to him you know that new monk wants to stay here. I don't want to let him stay here. I'm gonna kick him out. And Unandanda looks

up at me and he just gives me this delighted grin because apparently he didn't like [clears throat] him either even though they were like relatives, like cousins or something. And so he said, "Is he here?" And I said, "Yeah, he's just right out there reading a book." So, um, I went out to him and, uh, asked him, "Did you hear what I just said to Unadia?" And he said, he kind of looked up at me and says, "No." which probably wasn't true because I was yelling to this halfdeaf old monk like 30 feet away. So I told him that he was he's going to have to he was going to have to go. And this visiting monk just said, "I'm staying."

And what he was doing is he's like pretending to still read the book. He's he's pretending like he's already the abbot. I'm just this, you know, trouble troublemaking foreigner who is just a visitor there or something. So he that was one of his mistakes was not looking at me cuz he's just like pretending to still read the book, you know, and I'd say, "No, you're really going to have to go." And he's I'm staying.

And then I tell him, [clears throat] "If you don't go, I'm going to have to throw you out myself." And he's like, "No, you won't." And he's not looking at me. And if he was looking at me, he would see

that I was starting to get kind of worked up. In fact, I I even kind of started to lunge at him a couple of times. you know, I'm practically vibrating at this point because he really was a troublemaker. I'm I'm leaving out all the stuff that happened before this.

And so he's just saying, "No, you won't. You're not going to you're not going to kick me out." And so finally, he just says like, "This is my place now. You are just a visitor now. Go, you know, he he wasn't even like looking at me. He's like pretending to still read the book. You just kind of now go, you know, and that was it. It was like I

snapped and the physical alternate altercation lasted maybe half a second because all I did I just lunged at him, grabbed him by the front of his robes and just slammed him to the ground like an enraged gorilla.

And then I kind of leaned over and said, "You are the visitor." and then stomped off to fill a bucket of water at the well and it was like maybe 60 feet away. I turned around and looked, he was still lying on his side on the ground. I was told he had a lump on his head from where his head hit the ground. But it was like the whole altercation, the whole physical contact lasted about half

a second. And the [clears throat] next day he was he was being belligerent, you know. He was just like he was following me around the monastery like clapping his hands trying to make me like jump, you know, trying to startle me or something. And I'm just like thinking, how am I going to get rid of him? Am I really going to have to beat him up in order to get rid of him? And it's like I'm like pacing back and forth in my cave like like a caged leopard just, you know, not knowing what to do really. You know, it's I'm just these crazy ideas coming up. I could like get him into a double hammerlock and fling him into the river, but he might his arms might

dislocate and he might drown or something, you know? It's like what am I going to do? And then finally it dawned on me the obvious solution just appeal to the villagers, my my supporters, you know, just when I go for alms round the next morning, all I got to do, my people, my friends, I need your help. there's this visiting monk who refuses to leave and he's causing all kinds of trouble and and so I did that the next day and there's all these appreciative gasps from the village ladies, you know, hearing about what's going on and a few of them came up to me and said, "Don't worry, we're going to we're going to go

tell the village headman about this."

And so within a short time the the two village headmen from the two villages came and there was a bunch of sort of like village elders showed up and also there was uh a few like young bucks you know young village guys just in case any manhandling was required and they just said don't worry about anything we'll get rid of him for you and I was after that I was just like cackling like how could it be this easy you Oh, and that they did. They just when they I asked if you want me to come down to the lower monastery with you and help participate in this, and they said, "No, you just stay right here. We'll take care of it."

And they just

essentially perpwalked him out of the monastery.

And so that was that was gratifying. I knew I once I realized that all I had to do was just appeal to the village because I mean the villagers, they really supported me a lot. You know, they were kind of proud that you had this western man. You know, it's according to Burmese villagers, in their opinion, America is like paradise. You know, everyone's rich and beautiful and happy and Christian. And I renounced all of that in order to live in poverty and follow their religion at a more sincere

level than they were following.

And so they were like they felt vindicated and proud that they had this serious western monk living near their village and they were getting all kinds of merit by offering alms food to me in the mornings and this kind of thing. And so yeah, it was it was pretty easy to get rid of him once I realized what I had to do.

But I had [clears throat] already assaulted him once before that before that came to pass. And that was really the only time I really got physical with another monk. There was a few other monks that I had some like heated disagreements with.

But he was the there was there's one old monk um Makuda who I mean he was I mean I don't know even why he was a monk. He became a monk. He was a farmer who became a monk in his old age. And he just continued farming. You know, he was raising chickens and, you know, growing crops out in front of his cabin and all this. And uh one time he he snuck down to my the area of my cave where the only bamboo at the monastery was growing in order to cut some bamboo. And I just went down and just grabbed the machete out of his hands and just drove him away. Just yelling at him to, you know, go away.

I had to give the machete back. But

[sighs]

but when you're when you're like a

serious monk, I mean, at a time like

that, you know, I'm I'm a foreigner

living in just this strange land of

people that just don't speak my language

and don't think like me, don't look like

me. And I'm like trying to practice

dharma at a relatively intensive level

so that you become sort of like a an

emotional pressure cooker. You know, you

become like like a a hysterical basket

case, you know, going with with Freudian

language. You know, this hysteria is

caused by like repressed urges and so

forth. And a seriously practicing monk

or nun is going to have more repressed urges than Joe Blow, you know, living in in suburbia.

So, I mean, there's there's always the possibility of of stuff like that happening. I've had a few friends. There was one Australian monk I knew who said that he was chased around the monastery by a monk with a machete once. I think he was a Thai monk chasing him around the monastery in Thailand with a machete. Although the Australian monk said that he could tell by the look in his eyes he wasn't really going to hack him or anything.

So I mean that kind of stuff does

happen. But in my case there was only that one altercation where I slammed some troublemaking visiting monk who refused to leave. Just grabbed him and slammed him to the ground.

[snorts]

But if you want to read the full story, it's it's in my my most recent book, which can be ordered on Amazon. Uh the link is below in the comments now that I'm shamelessly plugging my own book.

So anyways, King Kung's second question, do you do any wilderness stuff now? And I'm sorry to say that I don't. Before I was a monk, I did a lot of backpacking. I lived in the Pacific Northwest, which

is like ecotopia. Like in Washington State, there's uh a number I mean, I grew up just like just below the southern boundary of Olympic National Park, you know, miles and miles of hiking trails, you know, elk and deer and bears and all this kind of stuff. And then when I moved to Bellingham, it wasn't very far away from the Patan wilderness area, which is like one of the wildest areas in Washington State. Pretty much the only area that still had grizzly bears and grey wolves and caribou and moose, porcupines.

So I did a lot of backpacking. And then

as a monk in Burma, I was pretty much camping all the time.

is I'd spent a lot of time out in relatively wild remote areas as a monk.

But then coming back to America, especially coming to South Carolina, I

had this idea of hiking to the top of

Paris Mountain on the outskirts of

Greenville. I haven't even done that. I

haven't done almost no hiking at all.

I'll just go for a few little walks with

my sweetheart. You know, just walk

through a park and and we don't do that

very much even,

especially now that we don't live near

Paris Mountain.

[sighs and gasps] So, that's kind of

unfortunate. It might be not until I uh retire that I'll really start like going on camping trips again.

But, who knows? I mean, I wouldn't even know the good places to to hike or camp in in South Carolina.

So, yeah, there is that. And finally, the third question from King Kung. How are your snails doing? Well, depends on which snails I've got. I mean, that tank that's in moonlight mode back there, I'll harvest rams horn snails out of the pond and put them in there, but they don't last very long because there are loaches, zebra loaches, *bia strriata* in there that

specialize in eating snails. And so when I put snails in there, they eat algae and detritus for probably less than 48 hours before they get found by a a a zebra loach that then feeds on them. On the other hand, I've got another aquarium over there. That little 10gon there. Put this back. I mean, I really should do an aquarium video, but [clears throat] there's like a population explosion of of snails in that 10gon tank because there were some fish that died in there and they just kind of disappear into the into the plants and everything. I don't see them as a general rule and then the

snails feed on them and it just causes this population explosion of snails. You can also take like a an algae wafer and put that in there, you know, for feeding like algae eating fish and so forth. Put that in there and it causes a population explosion of snails, too.

And uh my wife, there's a an aquarium, little fish tank like right off camera right to my to my right that has got these little freshwater puffer fish in it. Then they also feed on snails. So, there's no snails in that tank either, or not very many.

And then I've got a big fish pond out in back that's just loaded with snails. So,

the most prosperous snails I've got are
the ones out in the fish pond.

Lots of them out there.

So, let's see. Oh, I should say also
mention that that 10gon tank over there,
there's a great big mystery snail in
there called Righteous Fist of Heroic
Effort, who is by far the largest snail
I've got.

See, how do I set this thing? I think I
might have

How do I do this? It was so easy the
first time. I think I know what
happened.

One moment, please.

Okay, I think I'll stop detaching the
camera to show the 10gon tank.

[snorts] So, enough of snails. Enough of gastropod mollisks, if you will.

So, let's see here.

I'm just going to move on to the next question. This is from Fred.

And Fred says,

"Just a minute.

continually having to wipe my eyes

because if I don't take a shower or wash

my face thoroughly at least once every

24 hours, then it's like the skin oil

from my eyelids gets into my eyes and

starts burning. [clears throat]

And it's not even funny.

So, just excuse me. I'm going to go take a shower for half an hour. I'll be right

back.

or not. Let's see here. Next question is from Fred.

Fred says, "Is deep trance near Nibbana?"

And it is [clears throat] kind of interesting that in the some upanishads, which are not Buddhist texts, but they come pretty close to Buddhism, some of them do. um that it talks about how you've got the three states of consciousness for a normal person which is just waking consciousness, dreaming sleep and dreamless sleep. And according to at least one of these upanishads, dreamless sleep comes closest to like enlightenment or Brahman.

And I just don't see it that way. I mean deep trance in which you're like oblivious to everything around you. I don't see how that would be a state of superconsciousness.

I don't see how you're more awake, you know, a fully enlightened being is awakened.

So I don't see how being fully awake is comparable to being completely unconscious. And even terra Buddhist monks like I spent a few months at Pandita Rama and Mahasi Upandita was giving a dhamma talk in which he said nibbana is like a dreamless sleep

and it's like how the hell is being
fully awake like being asleep? How is
being awakened? How is being fully
conscious

similar to being completely asleep?

I just I just don't see it that way. I
think that nibana it's just like pure
consciousness.

So [snorts]

I mean if if a deep trance is somehow
more conscious than waking consciousness
then maybe

But personally, I just don't see it that
way. I don't see how I mean, nibbana
would transcend all the different
worldly samsaric states. You know
there'd be there'd be like enlightenment

present in any of the three mental
states of the the normal person you know
waking dreaming sleep and dreamless
sleep that I mean what would be the
mental states of a fully enlightened
being who is sound asleep would there
still be this consciousness that is sort
of observing the sleep

I think it's possible

But again, second-guessing the mental
states of an enlightened being is a no
no or at least it's it's just futility
of futilities.

Vanity of vanities.

So personally, I do not think that a
deep trance is necessarily near nibana,

especially if it's like a hypnotic
trance where you're just oblivious to
everything except the voice of the
hypnotist, that kind of thing. I
remember one time my father who was a
hypnotist hypnotized my little brother
and my little brother is just like in a
trance in my father's lap and then my
father just claps his hands really loud
right next to my brother's ear
he was just oblivious. So I mean how is
that a superconscious state?

I just I do not see it that way.

Although apparently

some Hindus might agree with Fred
and in the idea that a deep trance
is near nibbana. I mean going with

orthodox terravada fourth janna is

I mean at least in some sutas you get the idea that ancient Indian Buddhists some of them considered fourth Janna to be a kind of jumping off point into nibbana. You like when the Buddha died, he went into parinana from fourth Janna.

So what is fourth Janna? I mean is fourth Janna a deep trance? A lot of people seem to think so. A lot of people think in fourth Janna you become like a hibernating squirrel where you almost stop breathing and your pulse rate almost stops like your heart slows down so much that you know it's almost undetectable. That kind of thing. But

how is being fully awakened

similar to being completely oblivious to one's surroundings like a hibernating squirrel?

So fourth Janna in my opinion is a state of heightened consciousness. Even though you might be sitting cross-legged with your eyes closed, you're not oblivious to everything around you. You'd be in a state of heightened awareness. Even though you might look like you're in a trance because you're just sitting there with your eyes closed, not moving.

Or [snorts] it's possible, for all I know, you could be in a heightened state of awareness while at the same time your body is like a hibernating squirrel. I

don't see how that would be possible,
but just because I don't see how it's
possible doesn't mean that it's
impossible.

So

in answer to Fred's question, is deep
trance near Nibbana? Depends on the
trance, I suppose.

But as a general rule, I would I would
say no. I would say a state of
heightened awareness. Like someone who's
racing a motorcycle or rock climbing on
a vertical cliff face might be closer to
nibbana than somebody in a deep like a
hypnotic trance because you are in a
state of heightened awareness.

So I'm just going to move on to Fred's second question. Is samsara and nibbana a duality? Well, from a samsaric point of view, it is because samsara is dualistic. And so, nibbana is just an idea in samsara and samsara is just an idea in samsara. And they're sort of like practically opposites. I do not consider nibbana and samsara to be opposites. You know, some schools of Mahayana Buddhism say that samsara and nibbana are ultimately the same. And I can appreciate the sophistication

[laughter]

of that idea.

I do not think Samsara and Nibbana are opposites. But from the point of view of

a lot of people, Samsara and Nibana is it's like this duality. It's like yin and yang.

[snorts] You want to deal with like nibbana as it really is then it's not the opposite of anything because there are no opposites in nibbana you know opposites are found only in samsara and nibbana is off the samsaric scale so in answer to that question is samsara and nibbana a duality within the context of samsara where samsara and nibbana are both concepts then in many cases, yes. But in reality, I think not. And so, I'm going to move on to Fred's third question. How many questions more

so I don't get in a pickle? That's it.

That was your third question. So, you don't get to ask anymore.

And I'm just going to move on to the next question. This is from Visser. And it seems that my live stream caused uh a number of new people to ask questions, which is good. I suppose maybe that's that's another good reason to do it more live streams. I'm not exactly sure why more people watch live streams. I guess some people just want to watch something live and just click on the live stream thing and my video came up my live stream one which isn't going to happen this time because this is going to be pre-recorded

isn't it?

Anyhow, Visser says I have a question that is simple and very likely has asked before but the question is how does a monk keep his head bald?

This is just one question. The thought process that led me to this question equals, does the monk do it himself? And is the monk allowed to possess a razor alongside his bowl? Well, um, how does a monk keep his head bald? Either he shaves it himself or another person shaves it, usually another monk.

So [snorts] um the eight requisites of a monk every monk is supposed to have eight requisites. There's like a sort of

like an unofficial ninth requisite too which is the sitting cloth. But the eight requisites of a monk are three robes, a belt for holding up the lower robe, the alms bowl, a [snorts] water strainer, a needle for mending his robes, and a razor.

So, every monk has to have a razor at your ordination ceremony. At any monk's ordination ceremony, he's supposed to have all eight requisites plus the unofficial ninth requisite of the sitting cloth, you know, right there.

And if he doesn't have it, his preceptor is supposed to make sure, you know, help him to obtain these things before his

ordination.

So, every monk is supposed to own a razor. And I used a single blade shik injector, which is the best razor I have I ever found for shaving my head. It has to be single blade though cuz if you go a week without shaving your head and you use one of those double blades or now it's it's like up to like five or six blades on some of these disposable razor things, it just plugs up with hair. You know, you get about an inch and it's all plugged up and then you got to like unplug it with your thumb or un swish around in water or something. It's just it just doesn't work very well.

Oh, [clears throat and snorts] I just noticed he's got parenthesis. He's got the first parenthesis and then he doesn't end the parenthesis. So, it's still going after his question is over.

The the parenthetical

um expressions just continue.

So, in my case, I'm usually shade my own head. Like one of the first sentences I learned how to say in Burmese was deta

which was I would say that toenda

who was like the designated head shaver at the monastery where I was ordained.

So he just took upon himself you know

he'd shave anybody's head if they wanted their head shaved. All you had to do is

just go up to him and say,
which means today I want and get my head
shaved, venerable sir.

So

yeah,

sometimes the monk shaves his own head
and sometimes somebody else will shave
his head, especially if you're in Burma
and you've just got like a straight
razor. I never dared to shave myself
with a straight razor. I just I just
assumed I'd probably like gash myself
trying to shave with a straight razor.

So, yeah, I had I had the the
single-bladed shake injector, which I
still have. I shaved with it just a

couple days ago.

It's still good.

And anyone who wants to shave your head, I mean, maybe you know of a better one, but a single-bladed shik injector is is uh I mean, you really don't go wrong with that one.

So, let's see here. Oh, I might as well add that according to the rules of monastic discipline, a monk is required to shave his head [laughter] and face at least once every two months or two finger widths, whichever comes first.

And so you can look like a sailor. I mean, you can have a beard, I mean, longer than mine as a monk and not be breaking any rules. But in Buddhist

Asia, it's just the tradition as a general rule that you get your head shaved and your face like once a week. You know, it's like some monasteries, it's like Thursday is headshaving day. And some monks, like Southeast Asian monks, don't have a lot of facial hair. And so they'll just use tweezers to pull out the few hairs that they've got, which is against the rules of monastic discipline. You have to shave it and not pluck it. On the other hand, Jain monks have to pluck it. You know, like in the the story of Mahavira renouncing the world, if I remember correctly, he pulled out his hair and beard in five

handfuls when he renounced the world,
which probably hurt like hell, but he
didn't care.

So, let's just move on, shall we? Next
question is from Master Poe.

We've been going at it for a little over
half an hour and a half. Although I've
been going at it for probably more than
2 hours due to like three false starts
just trying to get the lag to to not
lag. And we seem to be doing pretty
good. The CPU is at 34%
capacity
and I don't think it starts really
lagging until like 50%.

So I think we're doing okay. Master Poe
says, "Was Nagarjuna or actually he's

got Naranjana

was Naraganjina a real person?" And I

assume he means nagarjuna

because I've never heard of Naraganjina.

So I assume master po is saying, "Was

Nagarjuna a real person?" And from a

Buddhist point of view, nobody is a real

person. There is no self. Nobody is

ultimately real. There is no ultimately

real essential, you know, self-existent

individuality.

So from the Buddhist point of view,

nobody was a real person. God gaba

Buddha was not a real person. I am not a

real person. You are not a real person.

But let's just go with worldly speech

you know vvara

within a samsaric context like was Nagar

a historical

real person then it seems pretty likely

I mean the the moola majamaka karaka is

considered to be like his most essential

work you know that's sort of like

central to his philosophy it gave rise

to majamaka philosophy I mean they had

to have an author presumably somebody

had to write it and it was attributed to

Nagarjuna. Um but just because a work is

attributed to Nagarjuna or to anybody in

particular doesn't mean that they really

wrote it. You know like most Mahayana

texts are attributed to the Buddha but

it's hardly likely that very many of

them really were spoken or taught by the Buddha.

And there are quite a few texts that are attributed to Nagarjuna that most scholars would say no that's that's not true. Like there's the uh

there's some shastra that's attributed to it's the pragnya paramita shastra I think that is attributed to Nagarjana and there was an editor or a commentator on the book uh Kenada Ramanan I think is his name who said that Nagarjuna may have had a disciple who was also named Nagarja who was the author of that book or it could just be that it's just falsely attributed to Nagarjana.

um like the the awakening of faith
shastra

I think it's a shastra the awakening of
faith it's a famous mahayana text it's
attributed to ava

although in all likelihood it wasn't
really composed by ava

because um the book that I read claims
that the awakening of faith shastra was
originally composed in Chinese and and
then like afterwards kind of retconed
and translated back into Sanskrit.

or the sutra of Hui Nang is attributed
to Hui Nang. But in all likelihood uh
based on another a book that I read the
editorial notes of a translation by a
guy named Yam Pollski that in all

likelihood the sutra of Hui Nang was not really authored by Hui Nang but was authored by a disciple of Hui Ning with a name like uh what was it Ning Shui or something like that.

So Nagarjuna was in all likelihood a real person although every text attributed to him probably is not really composed by him. The Mula Majamaka caraka is generally considered to be authentic. Some of his letters I think he had some devotional verses um but most of what traditionally is attributed to Nagarjuna is [cough] a kind of forgery.

>> [sighs]

>> So if we are real people, Nagarja probably also was a real person. I mean he has somewhat of a biography. I I think he was like South Indian maybe. I think he was supposed to be like a Brahman from South India or maybe I'm just confusing that with Bodhi Dharma. But he did teach at Nalanda University and uh I think he did spend a lot of time his monastery when he wasn't teaching at Nalanda was in like the southern half of India.

Anyways,

oh I probably should have worn the fez, the majamica fez, but too late now.

And the next question is from RP A or Arpad.

And RP A or Arpad says, "You mentioned that monks are allowed to kill in self-defense. Do mosquitoes count? I wouldn't even think of slapping them if they didn't make a purpose of attacking me. And considering the diseases they tend, carry, and spread, a mosquito's bite could be fatal. Yeah. Well, I mean, I've said before that the most dangerous animal in the forest is not a tiger. It's not wild pigs. It's not leopards. It's not even humans. It is the anophles mosquito.

But I don't think I really did mention that monks are allowed to kill in self-defense. A monk is allowed to

strike out in self-defense.

But a monk isn't allowed to deliberately kill even in self-defense. I mean, he can do whatever. He can be a monk can be like Kyle Writtenhouse and just do what is necessary to eliminate the threat.

So it may be that a monk is defending himself and striking out in self-defense and then inadvertently without the the conscious intention to kill his attacker winds up killing his attacker and then he would not be guilty of a parajika offense.

But if he's deliberately trying to kill his attacker, then he's still he's still culpable and has committed a song uh parajika offense and is excommunicated

for the rest of his life.

Excommunicated from full ordination in the song. He can no longer be a beu.

And so, do mosquitoes count?

Technically, you could strike out in self-defense,

but if I mean, it doesn't take much intelligence to realize that striking a mosquito generally kills it.

So, I mean, it is kind of ironic that I really didn't start slapping mosquitoes until I was just going full blast as a monk, just living under a rock ledge at the northern boundary of Alando Kasapa National Park. There was one year I went almost the entire year without entering

a building,

without going under a roof.

And mosquitoes at first I could endure.

You know, I was taking malaria

medication which didn't work very well.

I always got malaria anyway, but the

mosquito bites I could kind of endure. I

didn't like it, but still it was

tolerable. But there was like these I

call them vampire flies. I think it's

like a sand fly. It's not as big as a

horse fly, but it's bigger than the

little black deer flies. I mean, they

get like an inch long. And when they

bite, I mean, they're like biting chunks

out of you. It hurts. And I just could

not sit there with saintly like boine

equanimity

and just be bitten by like horse flies
and and these vampire flies. And so
eventually I started like swatting them
with my sweat wiping rag. You know is
the absolutely necessary sweat wiping
rag of a western monk in Southeast Asia.
It was just like a washcloth and you use
it for all kinds of things. I mean you
use it for drying yourself off when your
when your head is shaved. It doesn't
take much cloth. Doesn't take much of a
towel to drive dry you off after you
after you bathe. And also it's for
wiping sweat. And also it's just as a
flail to keep like the the blood sucking

insects from settling on you.

And these these little vampire flies as I call them. I think they're some kind of sand fly. They're they are hard to kill. You can smack them even desiring to squish them and they just fly away and then they just come right back again cuz they're very determined. They're like little terminators.

But I got really good at it. I just I just eventually got too good at at slapping these vampire flies. So that the trick is, you know, you got one on the side of your arm here. You you swat from the other side so that the tip of the the rag just has like a whiplash effect and really smacks it and they

would be stunned or dead. And then I would try to compensate for the demerit of killing deliberately killing an insect or at least trying deliberately causing grievous harm to this insect, even though it was a blood sucking parasite by feeding it to an ant lion. There were like ant lion pits in this under this rock ledge where I lived. And those of you who don't know what ant lions are, it's a kind of insect that has like this funnel-shaped pit that it digs into loose sand. And anything that falls into it, like an ant, they they'll like start throwing little bits of sand at it to knock it down to the bottom.

And it's got these big pinchers that grab it and pull it under the ground and eat it once it gets to the bottom of the pit. So I would compensate by feeding a poor hungry little ant lion if I did manage to kill one of these creatures. But you know in a case like that where I mean some I guess it was Ajan Cha bered some monk for slapping a mosquito. was like, "Does is one drop of your blood so valuable that you will kill a living being?" But I mean, a mosquito, what kind of consciousness do they have really? I mean, I doubt that a a mosquito is any more conscious than, you know, a parramium or a plant. You know, they they will act in, you

know, they will react. you know, a swatting hand, they might fly away, but it's just like automatic reflexes, sort of like the automatic door at a grocery store.

I don't know if they even have really a brain,

and they don't feel pain. I'm pretty sure that arthropods, like all insects, crustaceans, and so forth, I really don't think that they feel pain.

So, I eventually because I'm living out there, I've had malaria so many times and just being eaten alive by blood sucking parasites really isn't my style. And those mosquito nets that some of the

Thai dutonga monks use, it's so fine.

It's it's like panty hose where it's so sheer. The holes are so small to in order to shed rain that there's almost no air circulation. And I remember there were times I one one year that I spent there one time less than a full year. Um I brought one of those tie it's called a crot or a glot. It's a a great big umbrella with a detachable handle and you hang mosquito net onto it and then you can stay underneath and be relatively dry and not be eaten alive by blood sucking parasitic flies.

But I mean, there was almost no air circulation at all. So, it's like I'd be sitting under that till I couldn't stand

it anymore. And then I'd move it aside and be bitten by mosquitoes and flies until I couldn't stand it anymore. And then I'd get back under the mosquito net again till I couldn't stand it anymore. And it would just keep keep going back and forth like that until it became nighttime and the bats came out and the flies just went away and the mosquitoes. But I mean, I'm just sort of rambling and babbling all over the place, not really answering this question. So, let's just get back to the question. Um, monks are really not allowed to kill in self-defense unless it's inadvertent. They're allowed to strike out in

self-defense. And I mean, I would use that as a kind of justification. You know, monks are allowed to strike out in self-defense. This mosquito is literally attacking me and it could be threatening my life if it has some disease. And like I say, I had falsif malaria seven or eight times,

which is the worst kind of malaria. Most people who die of malaria die of falsiferum malaria. Once it goes cerebral, you're done for.

And when it goes cerebral, that means that I mean malaria is a blood disease.

The parasite like it invades your red blood cells and reproduces inside the red blood cells and then it breaks the

blood cell open as the the new baby tripanosomes, I think they're called, come out. And so you got this wreckage of destroyed red blood cells going through your system. And what happens is with falsipro malaria, they start causing little localized strokes. You can have like thousands of localized tiny micro strokes or you know like blockages all through your brain from the like the capillaries getting plugged with this red blood cell wreckage. And once that happens, it's very difficult to cure somebody, especially if they've got like 106 degree fever besides.

So in a case of mosquitoes, I mean, you just have to
you I mean, you have to take into consideration
all the possibilities, all the options.
And in some cases, you may just decide it is worth my while to break this rule under this circumstance.

So, I was I was owning it. I mean, I wasn't trying to like
claim that I wasn't guilty, you know, like just fighting just self-defense, you know, just kill the mosquito in self-defense. I mean, I wasn't I wasn't trying to
indulge in that kind of sophistry.
It's like I was confessing the offense

of of slapping mosquitoes when I was slapping them. And it was only as a general rule when I was staying in that one place out in the forest where I just was just like completely vulnerable to mosquitoes and horse flies and deer flies and just yeah I just could not sit there and be eaten alive. I just it was just beyond me.

So let's see here. I mean, I stayed at one place, Migadawan Monastery, up in the hills. It's on the ver the edge of the Shan Plateau, like 45 miles east of Mandandalay up in the hills. And during the rainy season, I mean, it was

it was awful. I mean, you'd have to if you're going to if you're going to pee outside, you had to be like marching in place, like stomping both feet while peeing, which is it it takes some getting used to. I mean, it's it's a a skill that has to be learned, I think, because if you just stayed motionless for just a few seconds, the mosquitoes would just be clustering on your feet and ankles.

So anyways,

I mean there are some some monks I mean like for example I mean I'm just completely just leaving these questions behind in the dust at this point but pa monastery pa doya in southern Burma in

Mon state um the pao method has a reputation for being one of the strictest with regard to following vineia rules the rules of monastic discipline

and P al got infested with bed bugs. You know, the the the meditation cabins, most of them were infested with bed bugs. And so

the the the Abbott, venerable Paul Aliato himself

said something to somebody and you had like exterminators came to kill off the bed bugs. And this one Australian monk, who's the same Australian monk that I mentioned, who was chased around a

monastery with a um
another monk wielding machete,
he just put his foot down and he said,
"Nope, you're not going to kill my bed
bugs. You're not going to kill the bed
bugs in in this cabin." You know, he
just defied them. But I mean, it gets to
a certain point where you have to do
something. And even monks are allowed to
at least spread their bedding out in the
sun to get rid of bed bugs, which kills
the bed bugs. You know, it's like bed
bugs aren't going to survive in blazing
sunlight. And generally, an ant colony
will find them anyway. I've done that
before. Spread out my my bed buginfested
bedding out in the sun, and within a few

minutes, you've got this highway of ants carrying bed bugs back to this hole in the ground.

>> [snorts]

>> But

I mean,

I guess you could use the argument that killing is not your your your purpose, that you're just defending yourself. So, I mean, striking out in self-defense could theoretically be used as a valid argument.

It's just that and like for example I mentioned this before there are certain times in Burma like at the beginning of the rainy season there's just like these

little gnats just completely cover the ground and you cannot walk without squishing them but you're not really committing. You're not breaking a rule by walking around squishing them because that is not your purpose. That is not your intention. You're not walking in order to squish these insects. You're just trying to get from point A to point B. For a Jane, that would be problematic. But for a Buddhist, if I mean, that is not your purpose, you're really not guilty of breaking the rule. So, I mean, if your purpose is just not being eaten alive by mosquitoes, maybe.

But it would depend a lot on who you

talk to, who your preceptor is, that kind of thing with regard to whether you really are breaking the rule by slapping mosquitoes. And in as a general rule, I just owned it cuz I really was. I mean, sometimes you just get pissed off at the little bastards.

And [snorts] so, I'm just going to move on to the next question.

This is from Trzasquez.

And Taskis is says, "Have you ever noticed in a group meditation or just within a group of monks that there are no mosquitoes on some people and one person has all of them biting him? It's

an exaggeration." He says in parenthesis,

"Um, no, I've never really noticed this because if you're in a group meditation especially, you're not really paying attention to what other people are doing. I mean, you might notice if you are being bitten by mosquitoes, but I mean, obviously, you're not going to be looking around seeing if people are getting bitten by mosquitoes when you're supposed to be meditating.

I mean, some people apparently taste better or smell better to mosquitoes. I mean, I have noticed that where some people, like, for example, in my case, I was like a horsefly magnet. If if I was

in a group and we were like walking through the forest, then the the horse flies would come after me because the Burmese are adjusted, you know, they're evolved to live in a tropical climate and so they wouldn't be covered with sweat, but horse flies are attracted to moisture. Like you may have noticed in the west you come, you go swimming like in a river or a lake, you come out, that's when the horse flies come after you when you're all wet. They're attracted to moisture. And I would just be drenched in sweat. The Burmese would be fine. I'd be all sweaty. So the horse flies would come after me.

But with regard to meditating, yeah, if if you notice other people are being bitten by mosquitoes, when you're in a group meditation, then you're obviously not meditating. You're just rubbernecking and looking around, see what other people are doing.

I remember when I was at Pandarama um there were there were some mosquitoes in the meditation hall and it was just something that you just had to endure you know I I wouldn't even be slapping them you know right in front of everybody you know it just doesn't look right doesn't look good and there was only a few anyway so it was just and it was in Rangon so it was

not endemic with malaria anyhow it was just inconvenient and uncomfortable and itchy

But then somebody donated a bunch of um like little mosquito nets, you know, they were just like a round mosquito net and you'd sit inside of it. It wasn't like a long one like went over a bed. It was just enough room for you to sit inside. And there was a a Bangladeshi monk there who was just delighted, you know. He was he was like a kid on on Christmas morning, you know, wideeyed. It's like, is are can we use those are those for us? And I didn't even want to use them just because, you know, I

wanted to be the aesthetic, you know,
but I don't I don't remember if I even
even use them even though they were
available. Just just some macho thing, I
think. Just sit there and get bitten by
mosquitoes just in order not to be a
wimp. [snorts]

Anyhow,

I'm just going to move on to the next
question. This is from Ethiopian fake
TIG. An Ethiopian fake TIG says, "You
have on various occasions said you would
not explain dependent core rising. And
recently, as I have tried to read Martin
Heidegger, I became across a sort of
definition of my own and wanted your
thoughts on it. Since everything is

impermanent, then nothing can't last forever."

Meaning something is born and it dies and becomes nothing. But since impermanence affects everything, nothing itself must become something at some point. Could this be a definition for why there is something now and how it won't exist soon and how it will exist again in the future?

And I have to admit, I don't fully comprehend this question.

It's it's uh let's see since everything is impermanent then nothing can't last forever and

I mean it seems like that might be bad

English. It might be that something or anything can't last forever because everything is impermanent. So I mean everything can't last forever. Nothing really can last forever.

Meaning something is born and it dies and becomes nothing. Well, that's not necessarily true. I mean, just because something is impermanent doesn't mean that it becomes nothing. You know, it can just dissolve into its constituent parts. Like when a person dies, they're dead, but they're they don't become nothing. You know, there's still, you know, their karmic momentum has passed on and become um oh, what is it called? Something relinking consciousness, birth

relinking consciousness, something like that. you know, their body is still there decomposing, you know. So, it's not like if something is impermanent that it just suddenly becomes nothing. Like this cup is impermanent, but [clears throat] probably what's going to happen is it's not just going to poof out of existence. It's going to break and get thrown away and become shards of a cup in some landfill somewhere. So, it doesn't really become nothing. It just changes form until it no longer is identified as cup or living being or whatever.

Let's see. But let's let's continue

here. Since everything is impermanent,
then nothing can't last forever.

[clears throat] Meaning something is
born and it dies and becomes nothing.

Well, we already discussed that. But
since impermanence affects everything,
nothing itself must become something at
some point. Okay. Well, that's kind of
I mean

nothing itself I mean once once you're
saying nothing itself, it's not nothing
anymore. I mean nothing itself I mean
you've already identified it as
something. It's just something that's
called nothing. Nothing itself. But
still, you're calling it an it. You
know, you're you've labeled it. I mean,

it's obviously something, at least conceptually.

The human mind can't deal with nothing.

So, we're again, we're we're dealing with samsara

and symbolism, [clears throat]

perceptions,

and dualism. So, something and nothing or nothing and everything, you know, they're they're opposites.

But it's it's kind of like nibbana and samsara. It's it's uh so long as you're in dealing with samsaric dualism, then yeah, they kind of counterbalance each other in a way. They're sort of opposites at least from some points of

view. So again, a nothing and something.

I mean even nothing is a something if you've named it and are dealing with it as an it.

So anyways let's continue here. See but since impermanence affects everything nothing itself must become something at some point. Yeah from from like the the psychology of some sorrow. That might be true. Although even nothing is already something if you've named it and are calling it it. You know it's like zero. Zero is still something.

You know it's at least it's a number.

Could [snorts] this be a definition for why there is something now and how it won't exist soon and how it will exist

again in the future? Well, I mean it could be a definition or a kind of explanation. maybe a kind of vague explanation.

Um,

golly. I mean, not everybody would explain things in the same way. So, not everyone would explain it that way.

Maybe the Buddha would not have explained it that way. But, I mean, it does seem to be plausible as a kind of explanation. Could this be a definition for why there is something now and how it won't exist soon and how it will exist again in the future? Well, you need stuff changing all the time. So,

there is that. I mean, dependent core
rising requires change.

I mean, if if nothing changes, that's
death. And if everything is changing,
then that's meaningless chaos. So, you
have to have a dependently co-arising
balance between like stasis and and
change,

which I mean, I've tried to explain this
before.

Maybe I shouldn't try and explain it
again.

Gosh, this is taking a lot out of me.

This this Q&A,

could this be a definition for why there
this is a difficult question. Could this
be a definition for why there is

something now and how it won't exist
soon and how it will exist again in the
future? I mean if you consider that to
be the way dependent colising works
where you always have to have some kind
of contrast
in order for the to have a world of
multiplicity
you have to have contrast
you know again I bring this up
frequently Hegel's
like Hegel's logic begins with the first
thesis antithesis and synthesis the
first thesis Hegel's philosophy at least
in his logic starts with the thesis of
pure being.

And then the antithesis of pure being is pure non-being.

And according to Hegel, they just merge together. They're they can't be differentiated because neither one of them has any like distinctive characteristics. You know, there's nothing discernible in either of them. They just merge. And for the rest of Hegel's philosophy, he just assumes that everything and nothing are synonyms. They're interchangeable. Everything, nothing, the same. So then he has to have the synthesis, which is contrast. There has to be a contrast between like some perceived distinction between this being and and like not

being. You know, it's like this is the
this is a everything else is not A. So
you have to have that contrast between A
and not A in order for anything to exist
at least in a perceptual sumsic context.

So

everything has to be changing too. So
you have to have some kind of
impermanence. I mean the world is just
some sorrow is designed that there has
to be some kind of impermanence going on
and contrasts.

So yeah, I mean it all works out that
way, but it I think it might be beyond
my capacity to fully explain exactly how
it happens,

especially just sitting here not having
not being able to just sit here and and
ponder it for five minutes in silence
before giving an answer.

But I mean it's it's it could be used as
an explanation for how things happen.

Not that something becomes nothing. You
know, it's like just because something
is impermanent doesn't mean that it just
poofs out of existence.

It just like changes form until the form
is no longer identified with what it
used to be.

You know, matter and just going with
physics, you know, matter is neither
created nor destroyed. it just changes
form.

Although, of course, you know, in quantum physics, you got particles and antiarticles that appear out of nothing supposedly. And then, but we don't need to get into that. And so, I'm just I'm just going to move on to Ethiopian fake TIG's second question.

He says, "You mentioned having tried various substances in the past. Have you tried MDMA?

And how do you like it compared to other compounds? And is MDMA the same as ecstasy?

I mean, whether it is or not, I haven't taken MDMA or ecstasy. Ecstasy was just starting to come into fashion around the

time that I became a monk. And then after I stopped being a monk, I just never encountered it. never encountered any any opportunity. Nobody I knew had any, you know, I wasn't particularly even looking for it. So, just for whatever reason, ecstasy and or MDMA, uh, it's a substance that I've I've have no experience with personally, so I can't really compare it to other compounds. I've heard it's very nice. you know, people like back when people were going to raves, there was a lot of that going on, but I've never been to a rave either. Just I just missed out on all that. So, I'm just going to move on to Ethiopian fake Tig's third question.

He says, "Having heard all your talks, you speak a lot about your dad, but not about your mom. Could you perhaps talk more about her and what sort of person she was and her general temperament towards you?"

Okay. I mean, one reason why I don't talk about my mother much is I don't want to seem like I'm like denigrating her because I mean, [clears throat] how do I put this? It's like spiritually she was a child. My father spiritually was relatively mature. My mother spiritually,

I mean, she was this kind of a a normie and she just kind of got her her she

didn't have a spiritual or religious or philosophical bone in her body, just normie.

And she was raised in poverty during the depression as a as a child. Um, she married the first man that that proposed to her just to get out of like a a dysfunctional family and then he was he beat her and so forth. She had eight children that I know of, most of whom I've never met. My mother was married five times. My father was also, incidentally, so that's 10 marriages between my two parents.

and she just did not have much depth to her as people go. I mean, she wasn't stupid, but I mean, she had a ninth

grade education

and she said that she dropped out of school just cuz she was ashamed of just wearing ragged clothes and stuff. I mean this is she came from a poor family during the depression you know it was just

um watched a lot of TV

and she was she tried to be a good mother at least to my brother and me. I mean most of her kids she did not raise to adulthood you know she'd move on to a different husband or something.

Um, but see, I mean, you may understand now why it may seem that just describing my mother may seem like I'm like

disrespecting her, but I mean, she
[clears throat] did the best she could,
the best she knew how, made a lot of
mistakes in her life. Didn't learn very
much from a lot of those mistakes.

And uh my father prophesied a long time
ago that she she would die alone. You
know, she had eight kids and none of her
kids were taking care of her. I was a
monk in Burma at the time. I couldn't
really take care of her well in her old
age.

And one day

she uh I mean as she got older her
balance was not so good and she just
fell down in a parking lot, you know,
walking out to her car. She just lost

her balance, fell down, hit her head on the pavement and that was it. She was no longer in this world. And now I hear about this when I I was in Rangon, Burma at the time. And um it's like in a way I was

I was kind of grateful that she died so easily. You know, it was just quick and and merciful, quick and painless, which was about the best you could hope for. I remember my father once told my my father's told me once. He told my mother that there's a lot worse things that can happen to a person than dying. And my mother thought that was the stupidest, most ridiculous thing she'd ever heard

of. What could possibly be worse than dying? You know, she was afraid of death. You know, she was just in and of the world.

And so it was like a small mercy that when she did die, you know, it was just fall down, hit her head, boom, and that's it. You know, no prolonged illness, no prolonged suffering, you know, it was just quick and painless.

And so, I mean, I had a certain gratitude for that.

Um, you know, not that I was happy that she died, of course, but that she was able to go so mercifully, so to speak.

[sighs]

But I mean,

she really I mean, I don't know how to say this. It's like Edgar Casey used to say that you tend to have a strong karmic connection with one of your parents but usually not both. And my strong karmic connection apparently was with my father and not with my mother. My mother and I were pretty much on different planets about when I reached about the age of 13. I kind of kind of outgrew my mother's attitude when I was like 13 years old. My father and I remained like not only father and son but friends. You know, we could hang out and have interesting conversations and so forth. And my mother and I, we were

just not on the same planet
fairly early on.

And with regard to me being a monk, she
just did not comprehend it at all. She
she would much prefer to have
grandchildren to spoil. I mean, she just
did not understand Buddhism at all. In
fact, she wouldn't even say Buddhism.
She said, "Do you think you'll always
belong to that religion?"

And I mean, she just didn't understand
it. And she just kind of had a certain
humble, respectful
attitude towards me. I mean, she didn't
understand me. She knew I was smarter
than her. Not that I'm trying to brag or
anything.

And I remember one time I was a monk
just visiting uh my family. I was
staying at my dad's house and my mother
came to visit me and I was trying to do
something on the computer and I was a
little bit sort of impatient with it and
so I was kind of frowning when I saw my
mother come in mainly because I was
already frowning at, you know, some kind
of [__] on the computer. And she saw
that when she came in I was frowning at
her. She just said, "I'm sorry." sorry.
You know, she she just offered to leave,
you know, and then
it's uh you know, I have to like say,
"No, it's okay. I'm just just frustrated

with what's going on on this computer.

It's please stay." You know, but I mean, she was she adopted this really kind of humble

I mean, I don't know how to really express it, you know. She was just kind of very differential to me um in in my adult years.

She couldn't she I mean she could not understand me.

[snorts] And like I say, we were on different planets.

But I mean I really um I appreciate that she did do a good job as my mother um as well as she could. I remember one time I was like maybe 13 years old and I shoplifted something from a store and my

mother found out about it. You know, she was like doing detective work. You know, she's she she figured it out that I that I had shoplifted this thing. And when when she found out, first of all, she started crying and ran from the room, which made me feel like about this big. You know, to make your own mother cry just with like shame over you is not good. And then she she made me take it back and apologize, which is something a good mother would do. I mean, she did try to be a good mother within her somewhat limited means.

Anyway,

[snorts] I think uh that's enough
reminiscing about my mom.

I hope she's in a better place now. I
really do. I hope she did. Um
uh

I mean she made a lot of mistakes in her
life, but I do hope that she was had
like more positive than negative on the
ledger, you know, more merit than
demerit or just was able to progress in
this life so that she's kind of in a
better situation than she was.

So, I think I'm just going to move on to
the next question, which is the last
question.

And this is from Yoshi Buouie, who
submitted this question under Q&A number

n 119. So, it's almost a coincidence.

Well, maybe not, but I I did I mean,

it's not necessary that I will notice if
someone

leaves a comment to an old an older Q&A.

Usually if I'm like

collecting the questions and putting

them on the list, you know, I just go to

like the most recent videos and look at

the comments under that and then go to

the the uh the [snorts] Discord server

and if anyone emailed me a question, um,

usually more often than not, I'll

remember that and and go to the the

email or go to my inbox and get that.

But um if you do ask questions, it's

best to leave them under the most recent Q&A because if you leave them under an older Q&A, there's less of a chance that I'll notice it. So that that having been said, Yoshi Buouie says, let's see, quote, karma can be viewed as retribution, although it's not any kind of a conscious purpose behind karma.

It's just the way it works out a lot of the time," unquote. And I assume he's quoting me from a previous Q&A. So then he continues, "Is this similar to how we see certain electromagnetic frequencies as colors when in reality there's no color to it? It wasn't meant to be color, so to speak."

Um, well, I [clears throat] mean, I can

just go off on a complete tangent with regard to this, that people have been seeing colors. People have been perceiving colors much longer than people have been perceiving electromagnetic frequencies.

And so from my unorthodox weird point of view, I think that the color may have come first and then just as people start looking deeper and investigating more deeply, they have to create some deeper foundation for color and so they come up with electromagnetic frequencies or or wavelengths of electromagnetic radiation.

So, it may be that electromagnetic

radiation didn't even really exist until
it got like nailed down by physicists
and got kind of got locked in to our
world,

locked into our version of some sorrow.

But let's just set that aside. Let's
just assume for the sake of argument
that materialistic scientism is true
at least at the samsaric level and that
light is visible light is really just
certain bandwidth of electromagnetic
radiation

or if you prefer photons.

Soh

[sighs] my view of karma where it can be
viewed as retribution although it's
really not any kind of conscious purpose

behind karma you know it's just just the way it goes. It's just the way it works and it can be interpreted that way and it seems to work that way sometimes in some contexts.

Um and there's something I could say about karma and I might as well. So, let's just digress wildly again. I've got this idea about karma. There's a certain person who asks questions on this Q&A on these Q&As's who doesn't believe in karma, especially the whole retribution aspect of it. And I have to admit that I don't think that like karmic retribution is really the way a lot of people see it where it's like you

like you you commit murder. I shouldn't say the word on YouTube. I guess you perpetrate a homicide, which means you're going to have to be the victim of a homicide in the future in like some future life if not this one. You know, let's say somebody is becomes deceased in this life and then you can have some psychic say, well, it was because they were a Roman soldier in the 2nd century AD who like was like like homiciding or like what's the word? Retiring barbarian villages. And so this is the retribution of that. And I don't think it necessarily works that way. It's like you are creating your own reality. And so if you are creating a kind of violent

reality with lots of dishonesty and and
insensitivity to others and stealing and
so forth that you're just creating a
world that contains that and so it's
more likely to be happening to you or
it's like

a foolish person is like a bad driver.

So, a bad driver is just more likely to
get in a wreck because they're just
using less intelligence and less
insight,

less caution,

less situational awareness.

So it's like your foolishness causes
these bad things to happen just because
of like sloppiness

and like recklessness more than you know
I did this and therefore it's going to
have to happen back to me in in the same
way just because I did that and so it's
like that act is going to have to happen
back to me. I don't think it necessarily
works that way.

It's just you create a world with
violence in it, it's more likely that
that violence is going to come back on
you. You create a world with dishonesty
in it through your own lying, for
example, then you just put it out there,
you're living in a more dishonest world
because you are creating this world
through your own perceptions. And so it
just comes back at you sooner or later

just because it's there. You've contaminated your own environment.

So, you know, it's sort of like in dreams. You might have a dream where something bad happens to you. It doesn't mean that in some other previous dream you did that same bad thing to some other being. It's just your own mind is creating it. And because you're not entirely wise, not entirely conscious. You just create nightmares sometimes.

And I think that in our waking state, we some people without necessarily having done evil deeds create nightmares for themselves just through lack of skill at like driving the vehicle of their own

samsaric being.

But let's get back to the question at long last.

So, is this similar to how we see certain electromagnetic frequencies as colors when in reality there's no color to it? It wasn't meant to be color, so to speak. Um, I mean, yeah, I I could say there there's a certain analogy that could be made that, you know, just because something is seen a certain way doesn't mean that it was intended to be that way through some conscious decision. is just kind of a byproduct, a secondary characteristic, that kind of thing.

[sighs]

So

yeah, maybe I mean you could look at it that way that uh karma is just a kind of you know it's

it's it's sort of like a byproduct of human psychology or just worldly psychology.

is just sort of a like a a symptom of how our mind works. Like duality, you know, that's that would be like another symptom. Multiplicity is like a symptom of how our mind works.

Impermanence is is like a symptom of of how worldly samsara functions. You know, it wasn't like nobody decided that it was going to be that way. it just works

out that way.

So, I mean, there might be more

like appropriate analogies that could be made,

but

I don't think I want to sit here and try and think of one.

But I mean [snorts] it's kind of similar to how we see electromagnetic frequencies as colors or colors as electromagnetic frequencies which I think might be a little more accurate.

[snorts]

Oh my golly. This is for some reason this has been kind of a strenuous Q&A.

I've been exercising my brain muscles in

this Q&A. But now we're done because I'm
I'm finished. And so if you do you have
any questions you think I can answer,
feel free to ask no more than three
questions per person per episode. Please
like and subscribe if you have not done
so already. Check out the URL links
below, including the new book that has
me attacking another monk for half a
second.

And uh be happy.