



FUNDAMENTAL WISDOM OF THE MIDDLE WAY BY GLEN SVENSSON

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Glen Svensson

Originally from Australia, Glen attained a BSc in IT at the University of Queensland. After four years working in Brisbane, he spent the next eight years working and travelling around the world. Having 'bumped' into Buddhism during his travels ("I read a book about Buddhism and it seemed so logical and many things resonated extremely well with my innate beliefs") He attended his first Dharma teaching in Dharamsala, India in 1995.

He completed the two following Kopan November courses in Kathmandu, Nepal and joined the seven-year Masters Program in Advanced Buddhist Studies of Sutra and Tantra at the Lama Tzong Khapa Institute (Pomaia, Italy) in 2004. He graduated from the Masters Program and completed his studies with an eight-month retreat at Oseling Center in Spain. Since 2005 he has taught and led meditation retreats in India, Europe, North America and Australia with a teaching style emphasizing clarity and stressing the integration of philosophical view, meditation and daily life conduct.



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-- by **Glen Svensson** --

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(transcript of the video)

TMMC Staff: Glen is originally from Queensland, Australia. He has been a student and practitioner of Buddhism since 1995 and graduated from the seven year master's program in **Advanced Studies of Sutra and Tantra** at the **Lama Tzongkhapah Institute** in Italy in 2004. Since 2005 he has taught and led meditation retreats in India, North America and Australia, with a teaching style emphasizing clarity and stressing the integration of the philosophical view, meditation and daily life conduct. We are very happy to host you again, sir. And today Glen will be speaking on a beginner's guide to the **Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way**. So, we please request you to teach.

Glen: Good evening everyone and welcome here to Tushita and welcome to this evening's talk titled: **The Fundamental Wisdom Of The Middle Way**. So we've got, I think, two hours this evening. And so I'd like to go through a number of points. First is: what is the **Middle Way**, what we mean by the Middle Way? And then what are the 'two extremes' that we're trying to find that Middle Way between? Why is this wisdom important? Why do we need to cultivate this wisdom of the Middle Way? Then we'll look at how do we establish the Middle Way view? How do we go about developing that view? And then how do we realize that view? How do we bring that into experience?

And then there will be time for some question and answer at the end. Also, in there, there'll be a break. So we'll have a little break sort of halfway through, and after the break also, a short meditation relating to this topic.

So let's begin. So first off, what is the Middle Way? To answer that, we can look at first what's called the **Three Turnings of the Wheel** - teachings of the Buddha. Initially, of course, we can talk about the **Four Noble Truths** teachings, I think everyone's fairly familiar with those - the foundation of all Buddhist traditions. And in the Four Noble Truths, teachings, the sort of fundamental ignorance that is the root of all our suffering, is said to be this grasping onto 'Self'. So we are to come to realize 'no-Self', if we want to overcome all of our mental afflictions and suffering. And so within these teachings, how we see the world is not a problem.

From the perspective of these teachings the **Four Noble Truths**, there is an independent objective world out there. It's only how we see ourselves as a person is a problem, we're grasping onto this self. So here, we can say that everything's real, there is an independent me and independent objective world, no problem. Whereas in the second turning of the wheel, the **Prajnaparamita**, the **Perfection of Wisdom** teachings, the Buddha went a bit deeper and said: "Well, actually, nothing's real. There is no independent me, independent world". So he talked about this idea of **Emptiness**.

But then, of course, when we hear this, it's very easy to misunderstand that, thinking: "Well, nothing's real. So nothing really exists". And so to fall to the extreme of Nihilism. So to avoid that, we have the third turning of the wheel, the Sandhinirmocana Sutra, which basically says: some things are real, that everything's coming from the mind, so the mind is real, but there is no real independent world out there. So also, we have this idea of Emptiness here, but not the same understanding as the Emptiness toward here [*Glen is pointing to the Chart*].



So we see a number of different ideas here about how we exist and the world around us exists. And from these teachings, we have four philosophical systems evolving in ancient India. Vaibashika, Sautantrika, Chittamatra, Madhyamika. The Vaibashika and Sautantrika philosophical systems are coming from the 'Four Noble Truths' teachings. So, in these philosophical systems, again: everything's real, there is an objective world, it's just how we see ourselves as a person, there's a problem, grasping onto this "self".

The Chittamatra philosophical system - sometimes called in English "Mind Only" - is coming from the third turning of the wheel, that: everything's coming from the mind, that everything's "Mind-Only. Meaning: nothing's actually external to the mind. So here, there is no external world at all. There seems to be a physical external world but if we look closely, we will come to realize it's all within the mind, in the nature of the mind, so 'Mind Only'. Whereas the Madhyamika philosophical system, in English: Middle Way, is coming from that second turning of the wheel of Prajnaparamita, Zperfection of Wisdom teachings, to come to realize (that) there is no independent me, no independent objective world. So this evening's talk, this "Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way", is coming from these teachings here, [pointing to the Chart] the second turning of the wheel, the Prajnaparamita, the Perfection of Wisdom teachings.

And specifically, this philosophical system of **Madhyamika**, really started to develop on the basis of the texts that we will be referring to this evening, this '**Mulamadhyamika-karika**', the Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way, from **Arya Nagarjuna** from the second century. So it was this text that he wrote on the basis of the **Prajnaparamita**, the Perfection of Wisdom teachings, that we have this Madhyamika system being formed.

And so we're going to be focusing on this philosophical system. What do we mean by "nothing is real" and what is this: 'Middle Way' that we're talking about in here. So that's what we're going to be looking at this evening. And I'd like to start by reading from the beginning of the the text were Nagarjuna begins his text by praising the Buddha and he says the following:

"I pay homage to the perfect complete Buddha, the best of teachers who taught that Dependent Arisings are neither ceasing nor produced, neither annihilated nor permanent, neither coming nor going, and neither different nor the same. And who taught the peace that is the complete pacification of elaboration."

And another quote from later in his text in chapter 18, verse 11, he says:

"The nectar of the teachings of the Buddhas who are the protectors of the world has the meaning: Not same and not different, not annihilated and not permanent"

So here, we see that he's talking about this 'Middle Way' that is beyond the two extremes. And here the two extremes are: existence and non-existence. And for us, of course, we're stuck in these two extremes. Because it seems like there's only two possibilities: either something exists or it doesn't exist, no other choice. So we are stuck here, you know, things really exist, or they don't exist. So how can there be a Middle Way between those two? So that's what we're going to be looking at here.

And it's not easy to find this Middle Way. In fact, there's another quote here from Nagarjuna in chapter 15, he says, verse 10:

"To say 'they exist' - is a conception of permanence. And to say 'they do not exist' - is a view of annihilation. Thus the wise should not abide in either existence or non-existence".

So we're not allowed to say: "things exist" and we're not allowed to say: "things don't exist" - they're the two extremes. But it seems like that's the only two options.

2 extremes	Antidote
1. existence (independent)	emptiness
2. non-existence (nihilism)	dependent- arising

And therefore, generally, we are mainly stuck in this **extreme of 'existence'** now, that things are real, there is a me here and independent world there. And if we start to undermine that idea, then for us now, they just seems to be "Well, if things don't exist, then they're not existent at all". So we just flipped to the other **extreme of 'non-existence'**, nothing really exists. And so we fall from one extreme to the other.

And so this Middle Way view is very difficult to understand. And so therefore Nagarjuna in chapter 24 of his text, he says:

"If their view of Emptiness is faulty..." (and Emptiness means: things are not independently existent, so things do not exist independently. He says:) **"...if their view of Emptiness is faulty, those of little wisdom will be ruined. It's just like handling a snake in the wrong way or accomplishing a knowledge-mantra in the wrong way. Thus knowing for the weak minded this Dharma is difficult to fathom, the mind of the Sage completely turned away from teaching this Dharma."**

So the Buddha only really taught this Middle Way view, this Madhyamika idea to very few people, who could really appreciate it. Because otherwise, we can easily misunderstand it and just fall from one extreme to the other. And so therefore, he taught about how things exist, in stages. And we see this in one of Nagarjuna's verses in chapter 18 verse 8, he says:

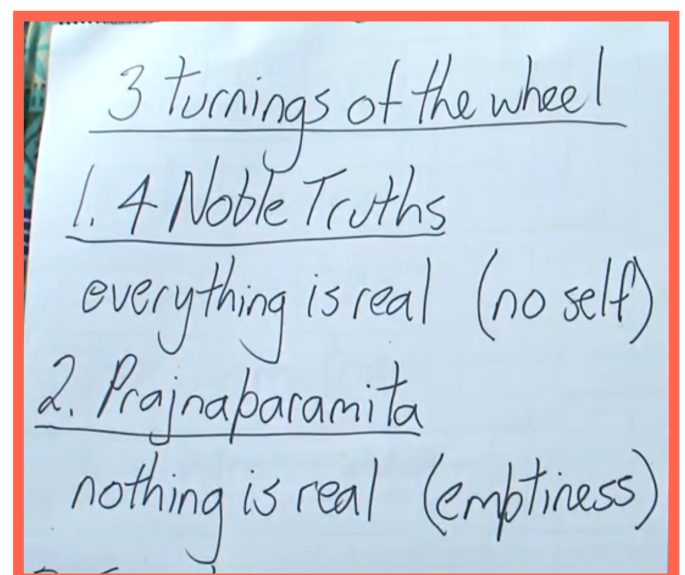
"Everything is real, everything is non-real, there is the real and the non-real, there is neither the real nor the non-real. These are the subsequent stages taught by the Buddha".

So he's saying here that the Buddha taught in four stages to help people to come to the Middle Way view. So let's just go through those four.

So the first statement is: everything is real. And so we saw that in the Four Noble Truths teachings, this is exactly what the Buddha taught, that in the Four Noble Truths teachings, problem is how we see ourselves as a person. There's no "Self", but everything's real. So he taught this for novices to instill faith. Because if you taught this from the very beginning, people would go: "Oh, no, no, that doesn't sound right" - and reject it. But if he says: "Yes, there is an objective world there" - that matches our experience, we go: "Yep, the Buddha seems to know what he's talking about" - so it instills faith. So this is the first stage, to instill faith into novices. But of course, on teaching that, what happens then is we end up with attachment to things, because they're real.

So then to overcome that the next stage he taught: "everything is non-real", meaning: nothing is real. And so these are the teachings from the Perfection of Wisdom teachings. So this, of course, helps us to overcome attachment, because if there's nothing out there to grasp, hold of, then you can't have attachment. So this can help us to overcome attachment to things. But of course, there is the danger of misunderstanding that and then falling to the extreme: "Well, nothing's real, therefore, nothing exists" - so we fall into **Nihilism**. So to help overcome that, the third stage, the Buddhist said: "There is real and non-real" - realizing: things exist but they do not **inherently** exist. So that's helping us to overcome Nihilism. But that teaching that 'things exist, but nothing exists inherently' - we could misunderstand that and grasp on to Emptiness as something real.

So we can fall into the extreme of grasping onto Emptiness as the only real thing. To overcome that, the fourth stage is: "neither real nor non-real". "Neither real" means: nothing exists independently, inherently and Emptiness does not exist inherently either. So that's helping us to overcome that. So these are the stages that we can go through in our understanding to come to appreciate the Middle Way view. So it looks quite profound, quite difficult to understand.



So then you might ask: "Well, if it's so difficult to understand, why do we even bother with it? Why is it important to develop this middle idea? Why is this wisdom of the Middle Way necessary, in fact?" And the answer to that is, again, a quote from Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamika-karika in chapter 18, verse 5, he says:

"By extinguishing actions and mental afflictions, there is liberation. Actions and mental afflictions arise from misconceptions and misconceptions arise from elaborations. Elaborations will cease through cultivating Emptiness".

So let's try and understand what he's saying there. So in that, quote, he's identified a sort of a process of how we're stuck and how to break free.

And the first stage of the process: we have what's called "seed of ignorance". And here, I mean, in general, ignorance is a mind that is confused about something. But here, we're talking about a specific ignorance, we're talking about the ignorance that's confused about how things exist. It's the mistaken belief, in fact "grasping" onto **'independent me, independent World'**. And "seed" here means: "habit". So we have the habit of grasping onto 'independent me, independent world', or in other words, the habit of being in the **'extreme of existence'**. And we've had that habit since we were born and well before, according to Buddhism, it didn't arise newly in this life, we've had it always.

And whenever we look out on the world, everything that appears to us appears to exist completely independent of us. But this Middle Way view is saying, "things are not existing as they appear". In fact, this appearance we are receiving is called **"dualistic appearance"**. There seems to be **subject-object duality**, independent, me independent world. But this Middle Way view is saying: things do not exist as they appear. So this appearance that we are receiving is called **"mistaken dualistic appearance"**.

Now, everything has always always appeared to us in this way, we've never seen things in any other way. So there's no reason to question these appearances, so we never do. And of course, if we ask anyone else, everyone else will agree with us: "Yes, this world appears to exist independent of me". So since we always have this appearance and we have the habit of believing these appearances, we never questioned them, we just accept. And when I say 'accept' it's not intellectual, it's instinctive. We're not intellectually doing this. It's instinctive. And so instinctively, we're just grasping on to 'independent me, independent world'. So this is step two: **ignorance**. Now, every time we experience something, there is a mental factor, one mental factor that's always present, and that is the mental factor of **"feeling"**. And in Buddhism, the word "feeling" doesn't mean "emotion".



This mental factor is: simply experiencing things as either pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. So let's say we're looking at these flowers here. They appear to exist independent of us, we have the habit of believing that, we accept it. "Yes, there are some flowers existing there, independent of me".

And let's say when we look at these flowers, we're having a pleasant experience. That pleasant experience together with the belief that those flowers exist independent of us, will naturally lead us to the third step, which is that naturally lead us to assume there must be some attractive quality there that's causing my pleasant experience.

So we see these flowers as inherently attractive, attractive from their own side. And of course, according to this, Madhyamika, Middle Way view, this is a misconception. Or if I'm having an unpleasant experience, together with the belief that these flowers exist independent of me, will naturally lead me to assume: there must be some unattractive quality there that's causing my unpleasant experience and will see them as inherently unattractive or unattractive from their own side.

Or if I'm having a neutral experience - neutral just means neither pleasant or unpleasant - will naturally lead me to assume there must be something inherently neutral, neutral qualities. Once we get to step three, step four easily follows. So let's say again, I am having a pleasant experience when I'm seeing these flowers. I like pleasant experiences, I want pleasant experiences, those flowers seem to be causing my pleasant experience, - I want those flowers! So that's **attachment**.

Or if I'm having an unpleasant experience, I don't like unpleasant experience. I don't want unpleasant experiences, those flowers seem to be causing my unpleasant experience, : Get them out of here! - **aversion**. Or if I'm having a neutral experience that simply reinforces my mistaken belief that these are **inherently neutral**.

So that here is **ignorance**, we're just reinforcing the mistaken belief that these flowers exist independent of us.

But often here, we see the word "**confusion**", rather than ignorance. But confusion here doesn't mean we're confused whether they're flowers or not, we're confused about how they exist. So the word confusion here is just another word for ignorance. So these are the three core mental afflictions often in Buddhism called the "**three poisons**".

And all other mental afflictions such as anger, jealousy, craving, anxiety, fear and so forth, come out of one of those or a combination of them. This is what's driving our behavior. And every action we do, based on a mental affliction, the Buddhist assertion is that it has a result, a consequence, and the results of our actions are our various experiences. And, of course, the Buddha described the experiences we have, in the first noble truth, the **Truth of Dukkha** often translated as "**suffering**".

So this is the process of how our mistaken view of reality, our grasping onto independent me independent world, ie being stuck in the extreme of existence, leads to our mental afflictions and suffering.

And so this is what Nagarjuna is saying here, he says:

"By extinguishing actions, and mental afflictions, (if we get rid of this and that's including ignorance) there is liberation. (we are liberated from suffering). Actions and mental afflictions arise from misconceptions and misconceptions arise from elaboration. ("elaborations" is just another word for "ignorance"). "

So this is exactly what Nagarjuna is saying is: that our actions come from our mental afflictions, our mental afflictions come from our misconceptions, our misconceptions come from our distorted view of reality, this ignorance. And then he says in the last line:

"Elaborations will cease through cultivating Emptiness."

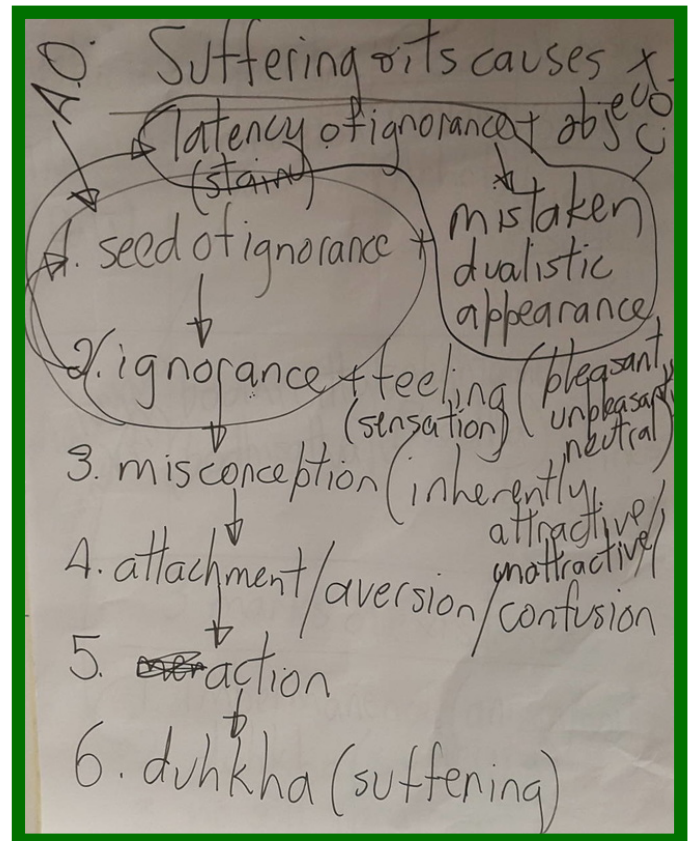
So we get rid of ignorance by cultivating Emptiness, the Emptiness, of course, is the Middle Way view: that nothing exists independently, nothing exists **"inherently"**.

So through cultivating this Middle Way view, we will eliminate **elaboration** or ignorance, thereby eliminate **mental afflictions** and suffering and achieve **liberation**. And there's another verse here in Nagarjuna's text, which says more or less the same thing. He says:

"Attachment hatred, and confusion, (which are these three) are said to arise from misconceptions and misconceptions originate in dependence upon the pleasant, unpleasant and mistaken."

So he's also saying: this is the process here, this is in chapter 23, verse 1, he says that. So this is why it's necessary to cultivate this fundamental wisdom of the Middle Way, the Madhyamika view. Because if we don't, we're stuck in the two extremes that will lead to mental afflictions and suffering.

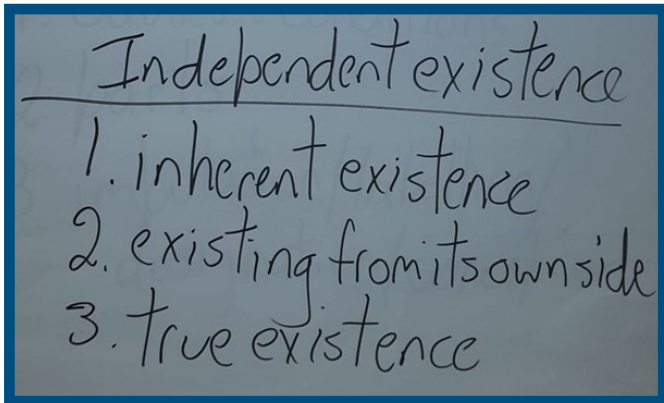
So, then, how do we establish the Middle Way view? And so for this, we have two very well known quotes from Nagarjuna's text in chapter 24 verse 18, and 19 he says:



"That which arises dependently and relatedly is explained simply being empty and that which is empty is dependently designated. This is the Middle Way path. Because there is not one single phenomenon that is not a Dependent Arising, there is not one single phenomenon that is not empty".

So here he is establishing the Middle Way view, this view of Emptiness, on the basis of the reasoning of Dependent Arising often said to be the **"king of reasoning"**, that things are **empty of inherent existence**. And of course, this is another way of saying:

"things are not independently existent". So inherent existence is just another term for **independent existence**, you'll see a number of terms used here synonymous with independent existence: **inherent existence**, **existing from its own side and true existence**, those three terms mean independent existence. So here we're saying things are not independently existent.



Or in other words, things are empty of inherent existence, they lack inherent existence. Why? Because they are dependently existent. And here in these texts, we see this term "Dependent Arising".

Dependent Arising means..."arising" means: "coming into existence", that things come into existence "dependently". So, effectively here very simply were saying that **"things are not independently existent"**, because they are **"dependently existent"**. So this term here, "empty of inherent existence", this is Emptiness, or in Sanskrit: **Shunyata**.

So Emptiness again, is not saying "things don't exist". Remember, that's the other extreme. So we're saying: things are not "existent", but they're not "non-existent", because they are Dependent Arising. So we avoid the two extremes here, through this understanding of Dependent Arising. So even though we're negating the extreme of existence here, we're not saying: "therefore nothing exists". We say that there are things that are Dependent Arisings. So therefore, to understand this Middle Way view, it will be helpful to understand what do we mean by Dependent Arising? What do we mean by the fact that things exist dependently?

The first way in which things are Dependent Arisings, exists dependently, is that things exist depending on **causes and conditions**. For example, this laptop here exists depending on causes and conditions.



One of the first conditions necessary for us to have this laptop here, someone needed to think about designing this laptop, then all the raw materials needed to be gathered, they needed to be refined, the various components needed to be manufactured, and they needed to all be assembled. And then of course, also all the people in factories and so forth involved in that process also necessary. So all of those causes and conditions were necessary for us to have this laptop here today. I think that's fairly straightforward. I think we can all appreciate that at some level.

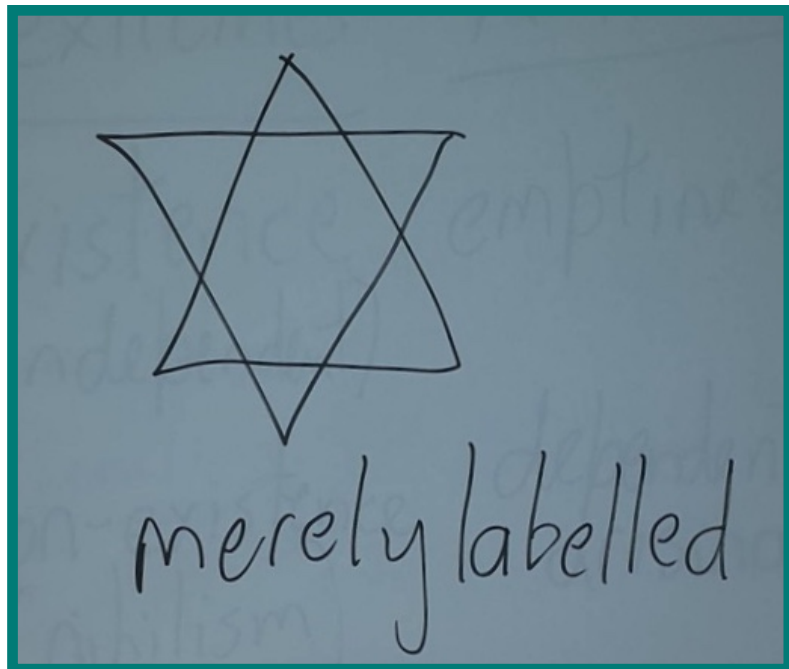
But also, things exist depending on their parts. Again, this laptop here exist depending on its parts, because without the **screen** without the **metal casing**, without the **keyboard** without the **electronic components** without **battery**, without all of these parts there would be no laptop. So laptop exists, depending on its parts.

Again, fairly straightforward. But remember, what we're saying here is that: because things are dependent, they're not independent. But I think most of us here are probably quite happy to accept that this laptop exists depending on causes and conditions, exist depending on its parts. But also, we're probably quite happy to accept that when we walk in the room, there's already a laptop here existing on the table. True or not? I think so. No? When we come in here, we see it, we think there is a laptop existing there completely independent of me. But that should be impossible. Either the laptop is independent, or it's dependent. It can't be both.

So what's going on? Because we accept this dependency in this way, yet at the same time we accept that it exists independent of us. But actually, that's illogical. The reason being is, that we only understand these two ideas very superficially, we don't really understand them at the deepest level. To understand these two ideas at the deepest level, we have to go to the third way in which things are dependent. That things exist depending on **labeling, designation, conception**. All of these three words mean the same thing. So if you understand one of them, you understand all three. And if we look at that, we may think: "yeah, I think I know what that means. It means there's a thing here that we're calling a laptop".

Again, that's quite superficial understanding of this idea. To understand this idea at the deeper level, what we can appreciate is that when we look out on the world, were receiving a mass of sense-data, particularly visual data. And we have to make sense or meaning out of all of this, otherwise we can't function. And so what we do is, we draw lines around various collections of data and create meaningful objects. And we do more than that, because we're not living in this world on our own. In order to communicate with others, we have to give names to the things we we've created, to be able to communicate. If we didn't need to communicate, we wouldn't have to give a name, we just create the meaningful object and then we could relate to that.

But for communication purposes we need to give names to these things we've created, to communicate. So "labeling designation conception", is this process, it's this process of drawing lines, creating objects and then giving a name. And how we do this, is not fixed. It's completely arbitrary, depending on the meaning that we want to get out of the world.



For example, how many objects are here? How many things are here? Most often probably, we would draw one line around all of that data, create one object and call it a star. Maybe most meaningful in most cases. But on other occasions, it may be more meaningful to draw two lines, to create two objects and say there's two triangles there. Or on other occasions, it may be more meaningful to draw six lines, create six objects and say there's six triangles there. Or on another occasion, it may be more meaningful to draw seven lines, create seven objects: six triangles, and a hexagon.

Another occasion, it may be more meaningful to say there's simply a collection of 18 lines there. So is there 1, 2, 6, 7, or 18 objects there? How many things are there? We decide! There's no star there, independent of our conceptual framework. We bring the star into existence, through drawing a line, creating one object and calling it a star. That's the only star that exists, the one we've created in our conceptual framework.

So based on this, we have two terms that are often used here. First one is "**things are merely labeled**". "Merely" means "only, just" means: things only exist within our conceptual framework, there's nothing beyond our conceptual framework. And another term is often used is "**things are not findable**". Meaning: you cannot find the objects in the basis. Meaning: that if you search there is no star to be found here in the basis. Because the only star that exists is the one that exists in our conceptual framework. There's no star to be found in the basis here.

Now..... we need to draw lines and create objects, otherwise we couldn't function, it would just be meaningless, we wouldn't be able to function. So there's no problem with drawing lines, creating objects and giving names, we have to do that. The problem is, **we don't realize that's what we're doing**. The problem is: it seems like the world is already divided up into many separate, discrete objects, already. And it seems to us as if we are in no way creating anything. It seems like everything's out there, existing independently of us, already.

So what we've done really is: we've turned the line we've drawn into a boundary, a hard boundary. We're seeing the world as made up of many separate, discrete things, independent of our conceptual framework. But then you might ask, "Well, what's the problem with that? What's the problem with seeing the world as already divided up into many separate, discrete things?"

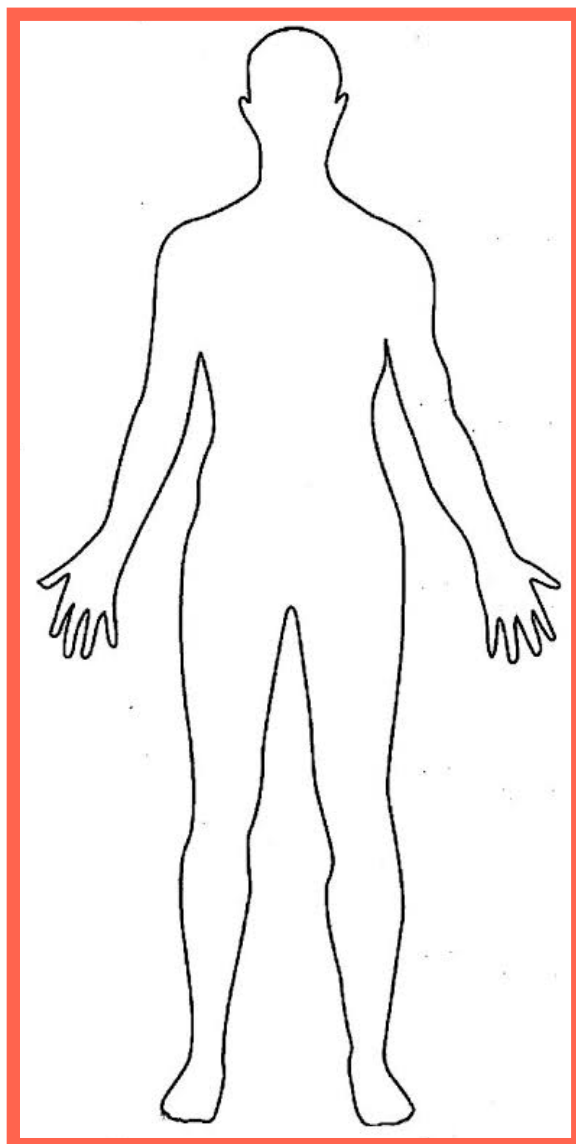
The problem, of course, is this: [*pointing to the whiteboard, the six-step process*] This is the result. If we see the world as already out there separate discrete things, this is what happens. That's why we suffer.

That's why we have attachment to pleasant things, aversion to unpleasant things and we suffer. Because we've turned our lines into boundaries, we've grasped onto things as existing independent of us.

Now, very often, in our experience the very first line we draw is we draw a line around here. And we create **me, the experiencer**. Because it's only **single experience**.

And in single experience, there's two aspects to every single experience: there is **experiencer**, and **experienced**. And we have to distinguish these two aspects of experience, otherwise it will have no meaning. And I think a newborn baby can't even do that. They don't have a sense of themselves, distinguishing from things that are not themselves.

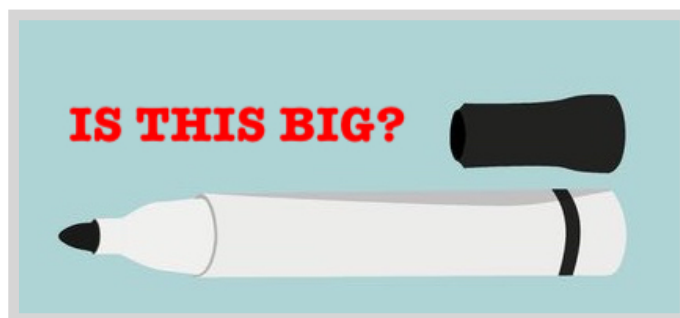
So we have to do this, we have to draw a line, create the me and thereby create the experiencer, no problem. But the problem is, of course, we turn this line we draw into a boundary, we grasp onto the '**me**' part of the experience, as if it's somehow independent of the experienced. So we're splitting ourselves off from the world of experience, grasping onto an independent me. But this is completely irrational.



To highlight this, we can ask the question: is this big? [*Glen is holding up a marker-pen*] Is it big? Doesn't make any sense, does it? Because big, can only exist relative to small, you can't have: 'big'. And: 'small'.

[Next, Glen removes the lid of the pen and holds them separately in each hand]

They exist relative. Like that you can only have up with down, in with out, like that, you can only have 'me' relative to 'not-me'. Or in other words, experiencer relative to experienced or subject relative to object.



But what we do is, we grasp on to the 'me' part of the experience, and see ourselves as independent of the 'experienced'. But that's just like saying this is "BIG", it's completely illogical, irrational.

But that's how we see ourselves. And that's how we see the world. And so what we've done is we are completely out of sync with reality. We're fighting against the interdependent nature of reality. And if we fight against the interdependent nature of reality, we have mental afflictions and we have suffering, as we saw. And very often in our behavior, we have this **self-grasping** strong, we often have a very strong sense of "me, doing this", "me going there", "me saying that" - it's always Me, Me, Me with this grasping to 'independent me'. So we are very much out of sync with reality. That's why we have so much mental afflictions and suffering.

But sometimes in our experience, this self grasping is not as strong. For example, when we're absorbed in reading a good book, absorbed in watching an interesting program on TV, absorbed in fixing a problem at work. On those occasions, we are not so much focused on the 'me' the agent who's doing the activity, but more on the activity itself. So we have more focus on the activity than the agent.

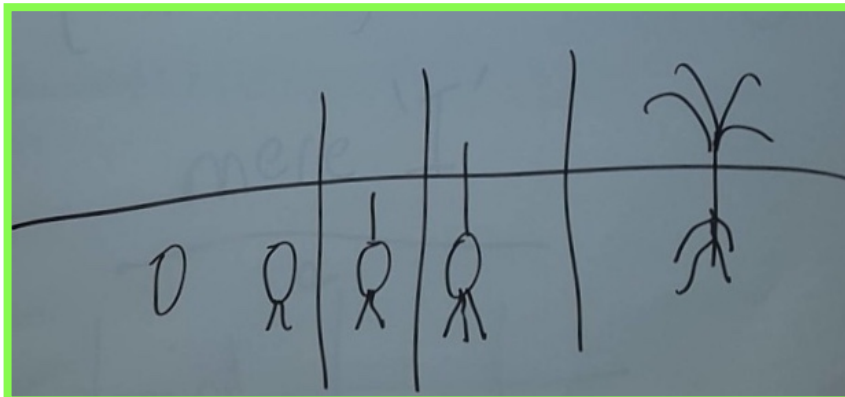
So the self-grasping is less. And we know from our own experience, in those occasions, time seems to go very quickly and things seem to flow quite well. Why? Because we're not fighting against reality so much, because our grasping is less.

And this is very much further exemplified in people that have developed a high level of focus in their activities. For example: professional musicians, professional athletes, who spent thousands of hours of training in their activity, developed a high level of focus in their activity. So much so, that often when they're doing their activity they often say that they're "*in the flow*" or the "*in the zone*" or "*the flow-state*". Even to the point where they often report that "Well, actually, there was not even a sense of me, there was just the music happening", "there was just the activity happening". Not only that, but also in that state they report peak performance, optimum performance. Why? Because not fighting against reality, because they're much more in harmony with reality, due to less grasping. But that's only due to focus, improved focus, temporarily grasping less.

Here, we're talking about eliminating the grasping, by realizing that there's no independent me, independent world, and thereby be in complete harmony with the interdependent nature of reality, thereby have no mental afflictions or no suffering. That's what we're doing here, establishing this view and then realizing this.

Now, just to finish off talking about establishing this view, before we take a break, let's go back to this idea of Dependent Arising again.

And let's go back and have a look at causes and conditions and parts, based on this understanding of labeling, designation, conception, and see if we can understand this at a little bit of a deeper level.



So this is a timeline, this is a seed, this is the plant that it produces. So we say that the plant exists depending on causes and conditions. The underlying cause of the plant, of course, is the seed. The conditions are: soil, sunlight, water and so forth. So we need those causes and conditions to get the plant. Now

we believe things exist independent of us. If that's the case, then it should be a fixed obvious point where the seed becomes the plant. So in this timeline, at what point does the seed become the plant?

At what point? And when we look at that, we can appreciate the point at where the seed becomes the plant is the point at which this configuration of data stops looking like our concept of seed and starts looking like our concept of plant. And we all have slightly different ideas, different concepts of what it means to be a seed and what it means to be a plant.

So for some of us, the point where the seed becomes a plant is already: - here. For some of us: it's - here, for some of us: - here, for some of us: - here. We decide when the seed becomes the plant.

Another point: We say that the seed and plant are in a 'cause and effect relationship'. And if two things are in a cause and effect relationship, by definition, they cannot exist at the same time. If two things are in a cause and effect relationship, they cannot exist at the same time, by definition. So here's the the question: Does the seed stop existing before the plant comes into existence? So does the seed stop existing before the plant comes into existence? It can be only two answers: yes or no. Which is it?

Most often people say: no. But no implies: therefore the seed exists at the same time as the plant, which is illogical, not possible. So 'no' is illogical. But then if you say: yes, the seed has ceased to exist - where's the plant coming from? Seed has ceased to exist. So "yes" is illogical. So 'no', and 'yes', are both illogical.

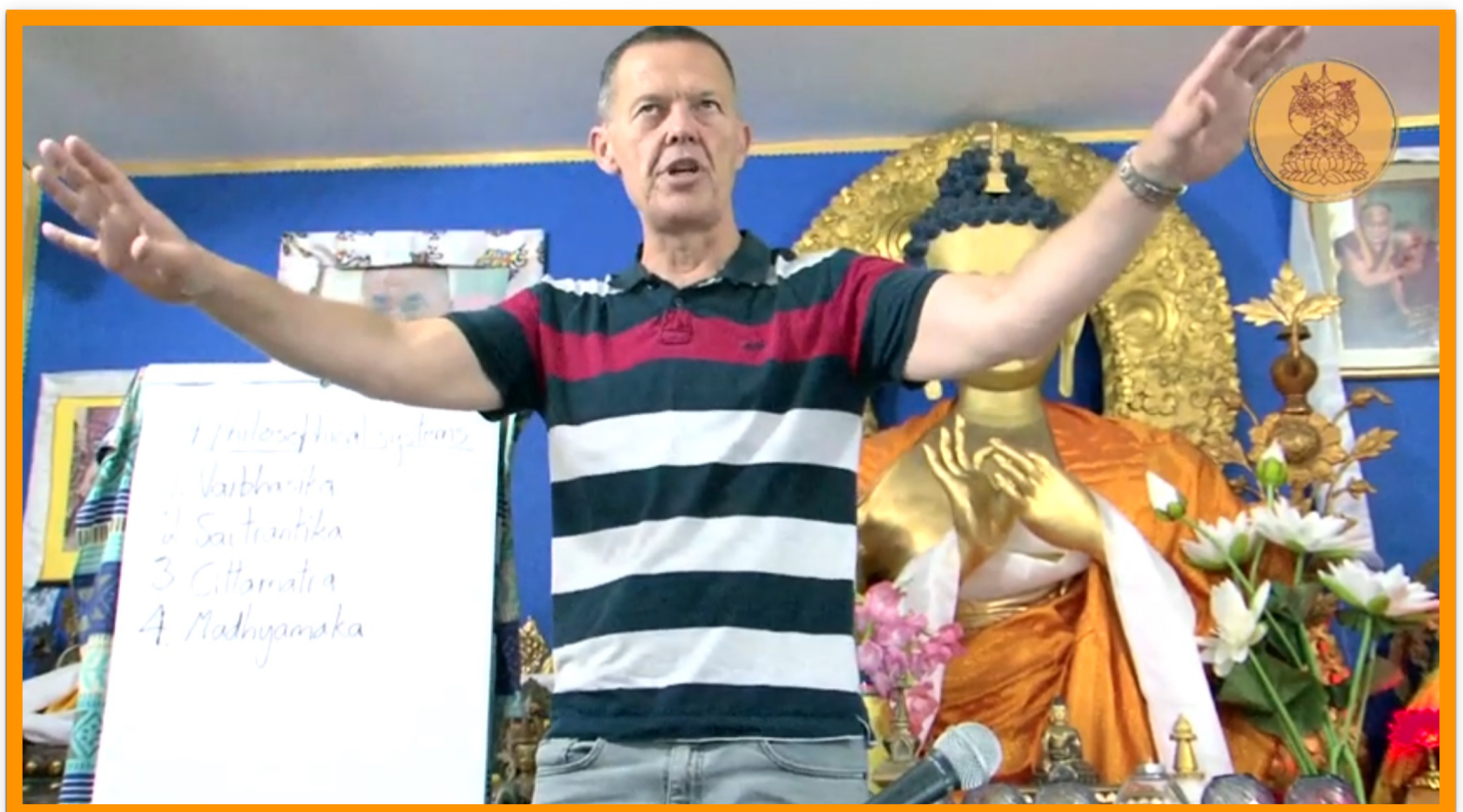
Which means: our common sense idea of causality based on independent existence, is completely illogical. It cannot work. It's impossible.

And so these are sorts of arguments that Nagarjuna uses in his *Mulamadhyamika-karika* to eliminate the extreme of existence. He says: "You believe in independent existence? What about causality? What about agent and action, fire and fuel and so forth? How do these things work?" And when we look at it, they become completely illogical. They just don't make any sense.

And similar to that, we have this idea of **impermanence**. And I think we all have an appreciation of impermanence. And often it's explained as: 'things changing moment by moment'. So we have this idea that we have a thing in the present moment, in the next moment it becomes something different, and the next moment becomes something different. Is this impermanence? Impossible! Impossible! Because if we have something existing in the present moment, that moment has duration. No? Otherwise, it's not a moment. Correct, no matter how short it is, this duration. And if there's a thing existing in that present moment, it means during that brief moment of time it is not changing. So it's *not impermanent*.

And then why would it all of a sudden change? If for the whole duration of that moment it didn't change, then it's all of a sudden it changes? So this is not impermanence. This is irrational for a similar reason.

So impermanence is this: There is nothing you can point to and say there is a "thing" existing there in the present moment. So this is Emptiness. So in fact, if we can understand impermanence, well, we're 'this close' to understanding Emptiness, very close.



One other point here: The plant exists depending on the seed. In other words: the result depends on the cause. But (in) this Middle Way view, Madhyamika view here, is also saying "the cause depends on the result". How does the cause depend on the result? How does the seed depend on the plant?

Student: You get more seeds from the plant.

Glen: Well, you do but that's not the answer. That's true, but that's not the answer to the question. The answer is: you can't call something a cause unless you have the idea resolved. Otherwise, what does "cause" mean? You can't have the idea "seed" if you don't have the idea of "plant". Because otherwise what does "seed" mean? It doesn't mean anything. Whether or not it produces it, is irrelevant.

Okay, last point, and then we'll take a break: Parts. We say: things exist depending on their parts. This pen exists depending on its parts. But can you find a pen here anywhere? Is there a pen to be found there in the basis? [*Glen is disassembling the pen and then starts reassembling the parts again slowly, one by one*]

Is that a pen? Is that a pen? Is the plastic tube a pen? No. Is the ink inside a pen? No. Is the metal piece a pen? No. Is the round ball on the end a pen? No.

Where's the pen?

"Oh, that's easy. It's the collection of the parts". Here we go. "Oh, no, no, no, in a certain shape". So you have to tell me when the pen comes into existence.



No one's yet?

And again, when we look at this, we can understand: the pen comes into existence **only** when this configuration of data closely enough resembles our concept of pen. And our concepts usually have at least two parts: appearance and functionality. So when this appears closely enough to our idea of pen and it seems to function according to our idea of pen, then there's a pen, not before. If there is a pen to be found here in the basis existing there from its own side, independent of our conceptual framework, it would mean: if a caveman walked in here, they'd pick it up and start writing with it. I don't think so. They probably pick it up and start stabbing with it and think it's some sort of weapon.

And if a dog came in here, they'd see maybe some chewing stick, something to chew on. And if some tiny ant came here, they may see some home to live in.

So is this a pen, a weapon, a chewing stick or a home? From its own side, none of those things. From the side of the observer, all of those things. So the pen exists: depending on it's parts.

The pen is not the collection of the parts, because there is no pen to be found in the parts, there's no pen to be found there. So what we're saying is: the pen exists "depending" on it's parts. And that's something very different than saying: the pen "is" the collection of the parts. Very different. And what we tend to do is: again, we draw a line, we create an object. Good. We have a label pen, apply the label to that. Good, we can communicate, all good. But what we do, or what we fail to realize is: we're doing that. We fail to realize (that) we're creating an object and we're applying a label to that basis. Our line becomes a boundary.

And what do we say in English? "This is a pen". So what we've done through our language is: we have fused the label to the basis - "There is a pen" "This is a pen". So the way we speak reinforces that false thinking. And what makes it worse is: the basis is **impermanent**, it's constantly changing. No? We know that. The **label** "pen" is not changing. And when we fuse the label to the basis, suddenly the basis appears not to change, because the word, the label "pen" doesn't change. So then we are grasping onto this as not really changing.

So this is how in this text, that Nagarjuna has establishing this view, I mean, he's using many different arguments, why causality and so forth. But what he's saying here again is:

"That which arises dependently and relatedly is explained as being empty; and that which is empty is dependently designated. This is the Middle Way path. There is not one single phenomenon that is not a Dependent Arising, there is not one single phenomenon that is not empty".

2 extremes	Antidote
1. existence (independent)	emptiness
2. non-existence (nihilism)	dependent-arising

So he's using the reasoning of dependency to establish the view of Emptiness, that the Middle Way is that things are empty of independent existence - overcoming the **extreme of existence**.

Because they are Dependent Arisings - overcoming the **extreme non existence**. Things are Dependent Arisings. This is the Middle Way view.

So we're looking at now how to establish the view. And we're establishing this Middle Way view, beyond the two extremes of existence and non-existence.

Particularly using the reasoning of Dependent Arising that we're overcoming the **extreme of existence** by realizing nothing exists independently - in other words: "Emptiness" - everything is empty of independent existence because: they are dependently existent. Thereby helping us to overcome the **extreme of non-existence** - because: they're Dependent Arisings.

But finding this Middle Way view is not easy. And sometimes I even hear people who've supposedly been following these Emptiness teachings for quite some years, talking amongst themselves, and I hear them sometimes say: "Well, it doesn't really matter, because everything's empty". This is completely the wrong understanding., this is **Nihilism**, this is falling to the extreme of non-existence.

Or they say some things like: "If things were empty, they couldn't work, they couldn't function". So again, that's the extreme of non-existence. And so Nagarjuna has a quote or two quotes on this, he says, in chapter 24, he says:

"Whoever invalidates the Emptiness of Dependent Arisings, invalidates all the conventions of the world".

So actually, Emptiness and Dependent Arising, in other words: Emptiness and functional world are like two sides of a coin. Emptiness means: "functioning world", functioning world means: "Emptiness". So what we should be saying is: ***"Because everything is empty, things matter. And because things are empty, they can function"***.

Because if this pen existed independently, (if) it existed from its own side, it existed inherently as a pen, it couldn't change. If it was a pen from its own side, you couldn't create it, you couldn't destroy it, it couldn't function. But because it's not a pen from its own side, it has no unique nature of being a pen from its own side, therefore it can change, it can function we can create it, we can destroy it.

And so another quote relating to that, Nagarjuna says:

"In a system where Emptiness is acceptable, everything is acceptable. In a system with Emptiness is not acceptable, nothing is acceptable".

So Emptiness means "functioning world", functioning world means "Emptiness". And so this is the measure of having understood the Middle Way view, is that understanding: Emptiness means "functioning world", functioning world means "Emptiness".

And this is summarized here, I'm quoting now from **Tzonkhapah**, great Tibetan Master, who says:

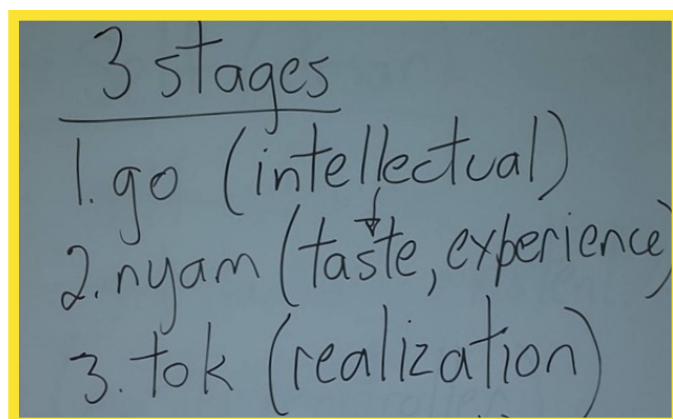
"As long as the assertions of appearances, being undeceiving Dependent Arisings and Emptiness are understood as to be two separate things....." So again: as long as we think that there's Emptiness here and functioning world there, and we see them as somehow contradictory or separate - he says: **"...you have still not understood the intent of the Sage. When without alternating, as soon as the ascertaining consciousness merely sees Dependent Arisings as non-deceptive and all modes of grasping to the object are destroyed, then your investigation of the View is complete"**.

Meaning: our view of Middle Way is complete if simply by observing appearances, that induces an understanding of Emptiness, that is the measure of having the view. Now they seem contradictory. When we see appearances, they seem really like they're existing independent and Emptiness seems to be contradictory to that. But if by observing appearances, that deepens our understanding of Emptiness, then our view of the Middle Way is complete.

But of course, "complete" doesn't mean: "that's it, we're done". That just means: the view is complete, then we apply the view in meditation. Because even if we have a very good understanding of the Middle Way view, that's not really going to change our life. In fact, it could make us more miserable. Because if we really feel like now we've got a very good intellectual understanding of the Middle Way view - according to Buddhism is the antidote to mental afflictions and suffering - and then we noticed that our mental afflictions and suffering are not reducing, we may become very depressed. Because we think we've got the answer, but our life is still a mess.

In fact, we could be the smartest Buddhist scholar on the planet and be completely miserable. Because it's not our intellectual understanding that's going to change our life. In fact, our behavior is not driven by our intellectual understanding at all. Our behavior is driven by our instinctive habits. And our instinctive habits are telling us: "there's a me here and a world there" - no matter what our intellectual mind is telling us.

So, therefore, we need to go through three stages of practice. And here I like to use the Tibetan words because they are very short. The first one is "**Go**"., "Go" in Tibetan means "intellectual". So first, we gain an **intellectual understanding** of the view, the Middle Way view, using Dependent Arising reasoning and other reasonings - to gain an understanding, intellectual understanding of the view of Emptiness, the Middle Way, view.



Emptiness, Dependent Arising being two sides of a coin. Because this is the basis for our practice, but what we need to do for that, to have some positive impact in our life, we need to bring that intellectual understanding into experience. So that's the second stage, in Tibetan "**Nyam**" means "**taste**" or "**experience**". So we sit down and meditate as we're actually going to do very shortly.

Investigating how things exist - coming to see that things do not exist independently, coming to have a taste and experience of Emptiness in meditation. And if we have a strong experience of Emptiness in meditation, that experience can still affect our mind a little bit after the meditation maybe for a few minutes, few hours, few days. During that time, now we are more experientially in harmony, a little bit like the other example of being focused on the activity, less grasping here. There will be less grasping because actually we're temporarily eliminating or significantly reducing grasping through our experience of Emptiness that is still lingering, maybe for a short time. So during that time, our self grasping will be less, which means: you'll notice you'll have less mental afflictions, you'll have less suffering and you'll feel a little bit closer, more kind and compassionate to people.

But that'll wear off and we'll go back to our normal suffering ways and selfish ways and so forth. So what we need to do is go to the next level, because we want to have that experience stable and long lasting, and that is "**Tok**" in Tibetan or "**realization**", - is: when we realized Emptiness, we fully penetrate nature of reality, we have a direct experience of Emptiness in meditation. And that's a very stable experience, a long lasting experience. To be able to move from a merely a little taste of Emptiness meditation to actually a direct realization of Emptiness, here we need for this, we need a very stable and clear mind. We need what's called the "**Mind of Shamatha**". Shamatha is "single pointed concentration".

That if we haven't achieve this level of concentration called **Shamatha**, our mind is not stable and clear enough to fully penetrate. At best we can have some taste, which will be helpful but it'll wear off. If we really want to get to realization, we need to have this mind of Shamatha. And this wisdom practice of Emptiness is sometimes in Sanskrit called "**Vipashana**". So we need to unify the two, we need to unify Shamatha and Vipashana. Unfortunately, in a lot of Buddhist traditions in the modern world, there's a lot of talk about Vipashana but not much talk about Shamatha.

So people put a lot of effort into Vipashana but don't get very far, because their mind is distracted and dull and they don't get really anywhere, anywhere at all. In fact if their mind is completely distracted or dull, doing a lot of Vipashana they may not even have a little taste or experience. But certainly if you want a stable experience, a realization: you need Shamatha.

So we need to work on both of these aspects of practice of Shamatha and Vipashana and actually unify them. Then we can have a direct realization of Emptiness and start to eliminate mental afflictions and suffering.

So what we're going to do now is a meditation, a Vipashana practice to investigate how things exist. And it's very often recommended when we begin this practice - because we can investigate anything, we can investigate ourselves, our body, our mind, the laptop, anything we want. But it's often very much recommended when we start the process of this Emptiness practice is: investigate "**me the person**". Where is this "me" that seems to be here, this **independent me**?

Because that's where the process starts to go wrong. Because remember, we draw the line, we create the "me" but then we grasp on to it as if existed independently.

So we're going to do that meditation now. And look for this "me" that seems to be here. Before we begin the meditation, just one piece of advice is - and this is where often people go astray in this practice, is: **often people turn this practice into an intellectual exercise**. Because most of us tend to have some sort of belief system in who we think we really are. And, you know, often if people come from a Christian background, they go, "Well, I'm really the soul because the soul goes to heaven and hell".



Or, you know, if people are in touch with some of the more modern New Age systems, often they say that everything in the universe is subtle energy, subtle vibration.

And so and then, if you've studied Buddhism, and often in Buddhism we talk about the **subtle mental continuum** going from life to life. So then we identify: "that's me". So often, what happens is: when we do this practice, we start to look for the "me", then people based on the belief system, the intellectual mind goes:

"I know the answer. I'm the Soul", "I am the subtle mental continuum", "I'm just subtle vibration, subtle energy - because that's what I believe". Then we're not doing the practice. Because this practice is: we're being an empirical scientist. If a scientist allows their belief-system to contaminate their experiments, they're not being a true scientist. So whatever belief system we have, whether it's Buddhist, non-Buddhist, whatever it is, **throw it out!** We're not interested in our belief system. We're interested in reality, the fact, how things exist - **through direct experience**.

That's what we're interested in. So when we do this practice, just look and let the intellectual mind have a holiday. And just look. So let's do the practice and see what we can find.

*** **Meditation begins here** ***

We begin by preparing the body. So keeping the back nice and straight. And at the same time, allow the entire body to become completely relaxed, completely at ease.

And if you notice any areas of tightness or tension in any part of the body, then use the out-breath to relax and release that tightness or tension.

And bringing your awareness to the area of your face. And soften and relax all the muscles in the face, the mouth and jaw, soft and relaxed.

And all the muscles around the eyes, soft and relaxed.

In this way, allowing the entire body to become completely relaxed.

Allowing the breathing to settle into its natural rhythm. Not trying to control or regulate the breath in any way. Simply allowing it to flow naturally and effortlessly.

And then give yourself permission to let go of any hopes or fears, worries or concerns about the past or the future. To give yourself permission to let go of all of these things for the duration of this short meditation.

And simply allow the mind to come to rest in the present moment.

And simply become aware of the rhythm of your breath.

Noticing if it's long or short, deep or shallow, regular or irregular.

Without trying to control or modify it in any way.

Simply becoming aware of the rhythm of the breath.

Maintaining an ongoing flow of mindfulness of the rhythm of the breath.

Now, do you have a sense that there is a "me" here who is meditating?

A "me" who is trying to relax the body and focus the mind on the breath? A "me" that seems to exist from its own side and doesn't seem to depend on anything else to exist.

Do you have this experience, of this "me"?

Can a "me" who is meditating here, be found anywhere?

So first, thoroughly search every part of the body. And look for the me who is meditating.

Is the meditator somewhere inside the head?

Is the brain, is that the "me" who's meditating?

Or is the brain simply something which I possess, something which "me" the meditator is using?

Is the whole body itself, is that the "me" who's meditating here?

Or is the whole body itself simply something which I possess, something which "me", the meditator is trying to relax?

Can the "me", the meditator be found anywhere within the mind?

So again, search thoroughly every part of the mind. And look for the "me" who is meditating.

Are any of the thoughts or emotions or memories or concepts in the mind, are any of these the "me" who's meditating?

Or are thoughts, emotions and concepts simply things which I possess? Things, which "me" the meditator has?

Is the whole mind itself, is that the "me" who is meditating here?

Or is the whole mind itself simply something which I possess? Something which "me" the meditator is using to focus on the breath?

Yet other than the body in the mind, what else is there, here?

If there's nothing more than the body and the mind here, then where's the "me" that possesses this body in mind? Where is "me" the meditator?

If you can't find "me" the meditator, simply rest in the experience of **"not-finding"**.

And even if you didn't find **"me the meditator"**, isn't there someone who's experiencing all of this? So there is a "me" here meditating.

But how can this "me" exist if we don't seem to be able to find it?

The "me" exists as something merely labeled on the basis of the body that is sitting here and the mind that is focusing on the breath.

The merely labeled "me" is sitting here, meditating.

We can bring the meditation to a close.

*** **Meditation ends here** ***

In this meditation, we used a very sort of classic approach, in not only looking for the person, but the line of investigation we used was: if there is an independent me here, it must be findable, Which means: it must be either the same as the body and the mind or different than the body and the mind. So we use this reasoning of what's called: **"same or different"**.

So we looked in the body for the "me", we looked in the mind, for the "me". We didn't find it there, then it must be something in addition to the me, it must be different than the me, other than the body and the mind, the "me" must be something different. But then we saw this actually, there's nothing above beyond the body and the mind here. So then if we look in those two places, we don't find, then we simply rest in that experience of "not-finding". That experience of "not finding" is an experience of Emptiness. So we rest in that experience as long as we can.

Usually what happens, of course, is that if we have that experience, very quickly we start thinking about something else or we just become spaced out and dull. If that's the case, we go back and do the investigation again, we don't find, we hold that experience. Actually, it's more than not "simply not finding", it's realizing that the "me" **is not findable**, we can't find it anywhere, because we've looked everywhere.

Now, very common three main experiences in this practice when we begin: one is we're just completely confused and we're lost. And that's usually because our mind is not very stable and clear, so we start to look and then we get distracted by

something. And so that's a sure sign that we need to do some Shamatha practice. Because we're just not focused enough. It means the same as if at work, if there's a complex problem at work and we're completely distracted or half asleep, there's no way we're going to solve that problem. So therefore, if you find in this practice you just getting completely lost and all over the place, good idea to do some more Shamatha practice. That's just one experience.

The other experience, as I've already mentioned, often people turn it into an intellectual exercise. And the intellectual mind goes, "I know the answer, I am the subtle mental continuum, because that's what I learned in Buddhism, or I'm just subtle vibration, because that's what I believe, or I'm really the soul because that's what goes to Heaven".



I can guarantee that when you get angry, you're not identifying with subtle energy, the soul or subtle mental continuum as the "me" who's getting very angry. So therefore, that's the other thing. So just leave the intellectual mind out, leave belief system completely out of this.

And the third very common experience is: when we do this practice fear arises, existential fear, like: "Oh, I don't really exist "or "I am going out of existence".

So if this experience arises: very good, it's a good sign. Actually, it means you're doing the practice well. But you're misinterpreting the **not-finding** to mean there's no me at all. So we're just flipping to that **extreme of non-existence**. So that's why at the end of the meditation I brought in the dependency, I said at the end: "Well, actually, isn't there **someone here who's experiencing** all of this? That is a "me" that's **merely labeled on the base** of the body and the mind.

So that's helping to overcome that. And of course if you have fear arising, you can simply ask the question: "Who's having the fear,?" Because if you don't exist, there can be no fear. So the fact that fear's arising proves that you exist. But the way to overcome the fear is to understand that not-finding doesn't mean: "No, me", it means: **"no independent me"**.

So if the fear is arising, it means: our view of the Middle Way is **not complete**. We are misinterpreting or misunderstanding Emptiness to mean: nothing exists, really. So we have to work a bit more on **Dependent Arising** to help overcome that.

So that's all I really wanted to cover this evening. So just finish with a quote here from Nagarjuna and then it's time for some questions. And he paid homage to the Buddha at the beginning of his thing, and at the end he also pays homage, he says:

"I pay homage to Gautama, who through fully holding loving concern, taught the holy Dharma for the sake of abandoning all views".

On that note, so, any questions about anything this evening?

Student: To me, it's, like a process of thinking about it, thinking thinking about....

Glen: I didn't ask you to think. I said "Look!" That's why I said at the beginning: leave out the intellectual mind, we're not thinking about it! When a scientist runs an experiment, they don't think. They run the experiment and observe the results, don't they?

Student: So, what is there to observe if it's not your thoughts?. When you are when you're meditating? What is there to observe if not your your thoughts?

Glen: You can observe your body.

Student: Trying to realize Emptiness, it's your thoughts that you're observing about Emptiness?

Glen: No. So remember, we're looking for the "me". We're not looking for an intellectual idea of who we think we are. If we're doing that, we're not doing the practice, because then we'll always find an answer: "I am the Soul, I am the subtle mental continuum".... So then we're not doing the practice, we're not being a scientist. So that's why at the beginning of the meditation, I said: ***"Do you have a sense that there's a 'me' here who's meditating, 'me' who's relaxing the body and focusing the mind? Do you have this experience?"***

So the idea then is: just sit quietly and look at that experience of "me". Not think about it. Look at it directly! That's the "me" that we are identifying within our behavior, that's the "me" we need to look for. So as a beginner, it's often good to just sit in that experience, maybe for the whole meditation, just to become familiar experientially, with our sense of how we see ourselves. Not think about it, just just sit in that experience.

Because if we don't have a clear picture of that, the rest of the meditation is not going to work. It's like the example: let's say we're looking for a particular person in a crowded room. And it's quite dark. And we don't have a clear picture of the person. I say: "Look for this, Joe" and you don't really know what they look like. Are you going to be able to determine whether Joe's in the room or not? No! Why? So same here: if we don't have a clear picture of how we see ourselves, then when we look, what are we looking for? Are we looking for something vague idea of who we think we are? Then we're not doing the practice.

And when we look, we look directly, you know, if I give you a picture of Joe, and you see the picture of Joe, and a clear picture of him, when you search the room you don't think about Joe, you don't go: "Well. I wonder how old this Joe is, and where they come from? And I don't know, I don't think he's going to be here in the room, because he's not (the) sort of person that would be here."

I mean, is that going to help? No! You don't do any of that. You just look. Don't you? "Oh, there he is" or "No, he's not there". So same in this practice, we just look directly. But if we don't have some **Shamatha**, it'll be like: I give you a clear picture of Joe..... - one is that: if your eyesight is bad and you're looking: "Oh, what does he look like?" And then it's dark in the room..... and you're looking and you go: "I don't know.... maybe...." That's what we're doing now. Shamatha is like: good eyesight, clear room.

Student: I think I understand the concept of it. I mean, it makes sense. However, my question is.... But the question that I'm trying to ask myself over and over again, is that my understanding of myself, for example, if I think what you said, the picture of Joe, right, it's a very visual image.

And I'm able to sort of identify that visual image with the visual images I see. But my understanding of myself is either an intellectual understanding or physical understanding. But what, how do you define this?

Glen: But when you're getting angry, you have a very clear sense of "me". Don't you? Is that a physical thing? I mean, there's a physical aspect of being angry, you feel something in the body. But that's a side effect of the "angry me".

Student: But that moment there is only anger... There is nothing else except anger.

Glen: No. You don't have a sense of a "me"? You've identified with anger, but there's the sense of, "I am angry" - isn't it? You have a sense of me.

So you're not just seeing "anger". If you just saw anger, fantastic! The anger would completely dissolve because you're not identifying with it. See, the thing is: the basis of the person is the body and the mind. Correct. And what we do is, we wrongly identify with some aspect of the basis, as "me". So if we're doing something physical, we say "this is me".

But either "you **have** a body" or "you **are** the body". You can't have something and "be it". But we wrongly identify and go: "this is me". Don't we? Or as in your case: anger. Do you have anger? Or **are you** anger? You have anger, so you can't be anger, but you wrongly identified with anger as "me", this is the problem. We are wrongly identifying with something that's not me, as "me".

All of these things are the basis for the label for "me". So we're applying "me" on those bases, That's good. But then we're identifying. It's like, we're applying the label "pen" to the basis. Good. But we say: "this **is** a pen" - then we got a problem, then we're grasping: "this is a pen". **It's not a pen!** Pen is something we're **labeling** on this basis. Similarly, "person" is something we're labeling on the body and the mind. And if we identify with any aspect of the body and mind as "me", that's grasping.

Student: What is this Shamatha practice?

Glen: Shamatha is the the Sanskrit word is "**Samadhi**", just means: "concentration practice". In the Theravada traditions they usually call it "**Jhana** practice". In the Mahayana traditions they often call it Shamatha practice. And it's just the practice of developing single pointed concentration, it's a concentration practice. And very often in many Buddhist traditions that's through mindfulness of breathing, just focusing on the breath, to cultivate a calm, clear and focused mind.

Student: Did the Buddha teach Emptiness or is it from Nagarjuna?

Glen: No, no. Remember it was from the Perfection of Wisdom Teachings in the Prajnaparamita, which were the teachings the Buddha taught mainly in the area of Rajgir, close to Bodhgaya where he achieved Enlightenment.

So the Perfection of Wisdom teachings.... and there are many perfection of wisdom Sutras, and of course the most famous one is the **Heart Sutra**. It's a very brief one. So that's the subject material that the Buddha taught that Nagarjuna based his texts, on those teachings.

Student: In the meditation, can someone use a mantra?

Glen: For Shamatha practice?

Student: Yes, for relaxation.

Glen: There are many objects we can use for this. The one that again, is most emphasized in most Buddhist traditions is: the breath.

But in some texts, they say: "Oh, you have a problem even just to focus on the breath? Okay, find yourself a stick or a pebble, put it down and look at it!"

So you can start with a visual object or repetitive sound: chanting mantra. This could help you get into the practice. But a sensory object, like a sound or a visual object is a very coarse object, you will only about to get so far and you won't get anywhere there. You'll have to move on to a more subtle object. So they often say: that if you're starting with a visual object, you can do that to get a little bit more stable and clear, then switch to mental image of that.

And "sound" similar, you'd have to move to something eventually. That could only take you so far. But it could be useful to start the practice, to use a visual object, a repetitive sound. Yeah. If you started verbally, you would you do it mentally, you would turn to a mental object.

Student: When I was getting into the meditation that you were guiding, I could not relate to the word "Mind", so I gave it up.

Glen: So again, with this practice we're not trying to intellectualize. We're just looking. So I mean, "Mind" is just the **space where all of our experiences appear**. And so just look there, basically. And of course, there's a lot to be said about the Buddhist theory of mind. But again, the key in this practice is to look, in our direct experience. And we can look at the mind without having a good intellectual understanding of the various aspects. We just know. We're just looking, we see, we see thoughts, we see images, we see memories and when we see these things, that's all. That's all we're doing in this practice. With it, we don't have to have a very elaborate conceptual idea of the mind. I mean, it could be a little bit helpful, but it could actually get in the way because we start then intellectualizing instead of looking directly.

Okay, I think we've just about run out of time. So any last question? Otherwise, we'll finish there. Okay, so let's finish this. I'd just like to thank you for coming along this evening and hope you got something out of it and hope to be back again, actually later this year.

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