

Understanding Reality, IIT Delhi, 2016 - Glen Svensson

I'd like to welcome everyone here this evening to this talk, titled: "**Understanding reality, and its integration in daily life**".

So some of the points that we're going to be going through in this session: I'm going to begin by giving a very brief introduction into the view of reality from a Buddhist perspective. We're going to look at why is it important to understand and realise the nature of reality. And we're going to have a brief look at how to explore the nature of reality, particularly by focusing on consciousness itself. And then we're going to practice a very short meditation based on that exploration, how to explore reality by looking at our own mind. And then we're going to look at how we can integrate these insights into our daily life. And then there'll be time for some questions at the end of the session. So I think we've got about an hour and a half, two hours. So let's begin.

Okay, so what is the nature of reality or the view of reality, from a Buddhist perspective? Within Buddhism, there are a number of different philosophical systems. And of course, they have their own assertion about what is the nature of reality. There are two philosophical systems called by *Vaibashika* (and) *Sautantrika*, who basically say that there is an objective world out there. And this objective world is made up of very subtle particles. So, they are more or less sort of classical physics approach: there is an objective world there that can be measured.

There is another philosophical system called *Chittamatra* in Buddhism, that rejects this idea, that in fact, they say: there is no external world whatsoever. There appears to be a material world there, but if we look very closely, (we) will come to realise that the world is internal to the mind. And they use the analogy of a dream to back up their assertions. Because in a dream, there also appears to be a material world in the dream. But if we become lucid in the dream, we will really directly realise that these appearances are deceiving us. So they say: likewise, if we closely investigate the nature of reality, even though there appears to be a material world, external to us, (we) will realise that this is an illusion, that the world is actually internal to the mind. So their assertion is: there is no material world, whatsoever. This is an illusion, it's internal to the mind.

CLASSIFICATION OF TENET SYSTEMS

Source: *Clear Crystal Mirror* – Losang Gonchok
(extracted from *Buddhist Philosophy* (Cozort and Preston) pages 89-90)

TENET SYSTEM	DIVISIONS		
NON-BUDDHIST (Outsiders) Attempt to prove the existence of the referent object of the view of a permanent, unitary and independent self	PROPOSERS OF A VIEW OF PERMANENCE Make superimpositions with respect to hidden phenomena		
	PROPOSERS OF ANNIHILATION Propound that beyond mere manifest appearances there is nothing		
BUDDHIST (Insiders) Refute the existence of the referent object of the view of a permanent, unitary and independent self	PROPOSERS OF TRUE EXISTENCE Assert the existence of truly existent things	PROPOSERS OF OBJECTS Adhere to the true establishment of external objects	VAIBHASIKA (Proponents of the Great Exposition)
			SAUTRANTHIKA (Proponents of Sutra)
	MADHYAMAKA (Proponents of non-nature) Refute the true existence of things	CITTAMATRA (Proponents of Mind Only) Adhere to the true existence of the internal mind	
		SVATANTRIKA (Autonomists) Adhere to the inherent existence of things	
		PRASANGIKA (Consequentialists) Refute the inherent existence of things	

There is another philosophical system, the one we're going to be looking at this evening, called my *Madhyamika* or Middle Way, And they say there is an external world there. But that external world is not existing independent of the observer, there is a dependent world. That, in fact, their assertion is that nothing exists independently. And this is the idea, what's called in Sanskrit: "*Shunyata*" or usually translated into English as emptiness.

That everything is in the nature of emptiness, that nothing exists independently. There is no independent me here. There's no independent objective world out there. So that's what we're going to briefly introduce now.

So therefore, if nothing exists independently, therefore things exist dependently. So if we can understand what they mean by "things exist dependently", we can better understand the view of emptiness or "*shunyata*". So let's have a look at what the *Madhyamikas* say about how things exist dependently. So, they say that everything is a '*dependent arising*'. "Arising" here means: 'coming into existence'.

So how do things exist dependently? We can talk about that in three ways: That things exist depending on causes and conditions. For example, this laptop here exists depending on causes and conditions. One of the original conditions necessary, of course, someone needed to think about designing this laptop. And then of course, all the raw materials are necessary. They needed to be refined, the various components needed to be manufactured, all of those components needed to be assembled, plus all the factories and people and everything else involved in the process. All of these conditions were necessary for us to have a laptop here today. That's straightforward, I think we can sort of appreciate that.



Also, of course, everything exists depending on its parts. This laptop, without the casing, the screen, the keyboard, the electronic components, the battery, without all of these parts, there would be no laptop. So laptop exists depending on its parts. But remember, here, what we're saying is that the fact that everything is a dependent arising, should be overturning our idea that it exists independently. But I think most of us here are quite happy to accept that this laptop exists depending on causes and conditions, and it exists depending on its parts, yet, at the same time, I think most of us here are quite happy to accept that when we walk into this room, there's already a laptop existing here on the table. True or not?

Student: True.

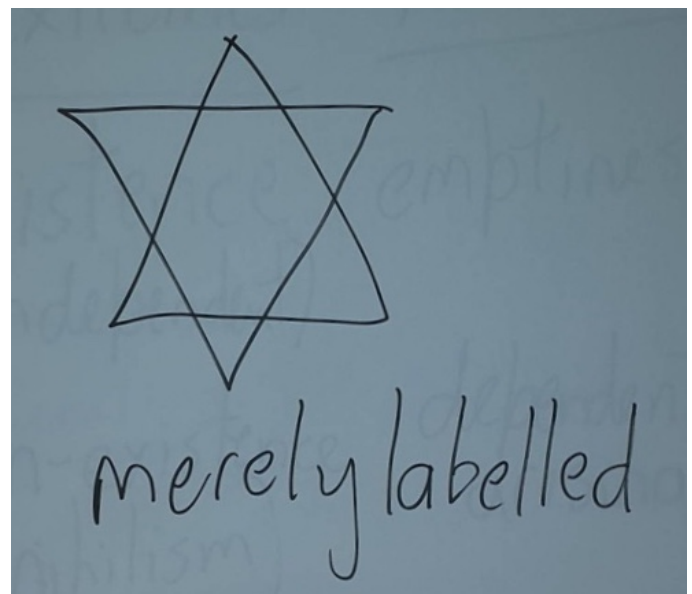
Glen: That shouldn't be possible. According to this reasoning, it's either existing dependently or independently. But these ideas don't seem to be overturning our idea that when we walk in the room, there's already a laptop existing here independently. Why? Because we don't understand these ideas, we only understand them at a very superficial level. To understand these ideas at a deeper level, we have to go to the third way in which things are dependent. That things exist, depending on imputation, labelling, conception, these are three different words for the same thing.

So if you understand one of those words, then you understand all three. So when we see this, we think: "I know what that means. There's a thing on the table that I'm calling a laptop". Again, this is fairly superficial understanding. To understand this at a deeper level: What we can appreciate is that, when we look out on the world, what are we receiving is a mass of sense data, particularly visual data. And then we have to make sense or meaning out of all of this data. So what do we do? What we do is, we draw lines around various collections of data and create meaningful objects.

If we didn't do that, we couldn't function, it would just be a mass of colour and shape, we wouldn't be able to function. So we draw a line, create a meaningful object. But then, of course, we do more than that, because we live in this world with others. So to be able to communicate with others, we have to give names to the things we created, so we can communicate. This is what this means. This is the process of drawing lines, creating objects, and then giving the name.

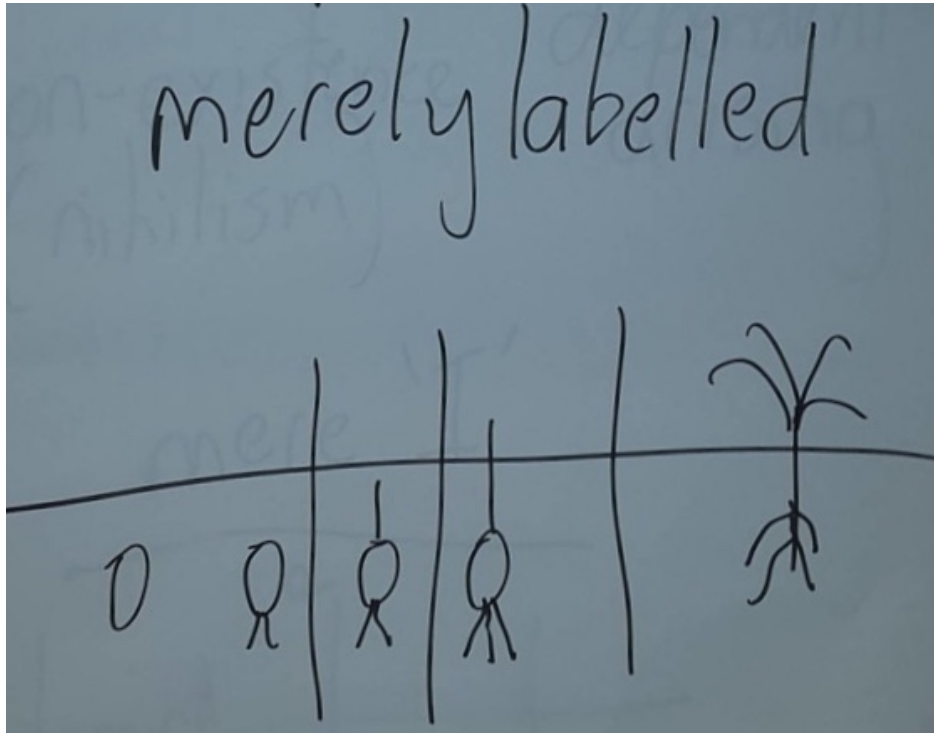
How we divide up the world is not fixed, it's completely arbitrary, depending on the meaning that we want to get out of what we experience. For example, how many objects are there? How many things are there?

Most of the time, for us, it would be meaningful to draw one line around all of that data and create one object and call it a star. But in other situations, it may be more meaningful to draw two lines, and say there's two triangles there. Or on another occasion, we can draw six lines and say there's six triangles, or seven lines saying: six triangles and a hexagon. Or we could say they're simply a collection of 18 lines there. So how many objects are there? Is it 1, 2, 6, 7 or eighteen, how many objects are there? We decide! There is no star existing there from its own side, independent of our conceptual framework. We bring the star into existence by drawing the line and creating one object and calling it a star.



Therefore, what we say in this philosophy, this *Madhyamika* philosophy is, there is no star to be found there in the basis. Because the star only exists within our conceptual framework. So what we find is a couple of terms. That 'things are not findable', meaning you cannot find a star there from its own side, independent of our conceptual framework. And 'things are merely labeled', meaning: things only exist within our conceptual framework. So again, there's no star to be found there in the basis, independent of our conceptual framework, We create the star. This is what this means.

So based on that, let's go back now and have a look at these two ideas, and see if we can understand them at a deeper level. So this is a timeline. This is a seed. And this is a sprout that it's producing.



So the sprout or the plant exists depending on causes and conditions. The underlying cause is the seed, conditions are the soil, sunlight, water, and so forth. So we need the seed and all those conditions to produce the plant. And we believe these things exist independently of our conceptual framework. If that's true, then it should be a fixed obvious point at where the seed becomes the plant.

So who can tell me at what point does the seed become the plant in this process? At what point?

And when we look at this question, what we can appreciate: the point at where the seed becomes the plant, we decide!

When this configuration of data stops looking like our concept of seed and starts looking like our concept of plant. That's the point. And we all have slightly different concepts of seed and plant. For some of us this is already a plant. For some of us it's here, for some of us it's here, we decide when the plant comes into existence. So the plant only exists within our conceptual framework, as does the seed. Here is another question to think about: If two things are in a cause and effect relationship, by definition, they cannot exist simultaneously. Correct?

Student: Yes.

Glen: Good. The seed and the plant are in a cause and effect relationship. The question is: think about it! Does the seed stop existing before the plant comes into existence?

So think about it, does the seed stop existing before the plant comes into existence? There can only be two answers: yes or no. Which is it? Yes or no? Does the seed stop existing before the plant comes into existence? If we say no, that means they're simultaneous. By definition, this is impossible. So, 'no' is illogical, it cannot be.

If we say 'yes', the seed does cease to exist, where is the plant coming from? 'Yes' is also illogical. So both: no and yes, are illogical. Therefore, our common sense idea of cause and result, based on our assumption that things exist independently is completely illogical. It cannot work.

So what the problem is, of course, is that underlying assumption that 'things exist independently'. And actually the founder of this *Madhyamika* philosophical system, *Nagarjuna* from the second century, great Indian Master, has his classic text on this, called '*Mula-madhyamika-karika*', where he has 27 chapters of these arguments. He says,: "You believe in independent existence? What about cause and result? How does that work? How does agent and action work? How does fire and fuel work?"

All of these common sense ideas become illogical, based on the assumption that things exist independently. So these are very powerful arguments to cut the false view that things exist independently. Another point here: We say that the result, or the plant depends on the seed. In other words: the result depends on the cause. But this view is also saying that the cause depends on the result. How does the cause depend on the result if it precedes it? The answer is: Of course, you can't call something a cause, without the idea resolved. You can't call something a seed without the idea of a plant. Whether or not it produces it, is irrelevant. So you can only have 'cause' if you have 'result'.

Let's look at parts. Pen exists depending on its parts. But is there a pen to be found here anywhere? Can you find a pen here? In the basis, independent of our conceptual framework? Is this a pen? Is this a pen? Is this a pen? Is the plastic piece on the end a pen? No. Is the tube a pen? No. Is the ink inside 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 all of that. There's a collection. Oh, no, no, no, no. In a certain shape! You have to tell me when the pen comes into existence. No one yet? No, no takers yet?



Student: Now!

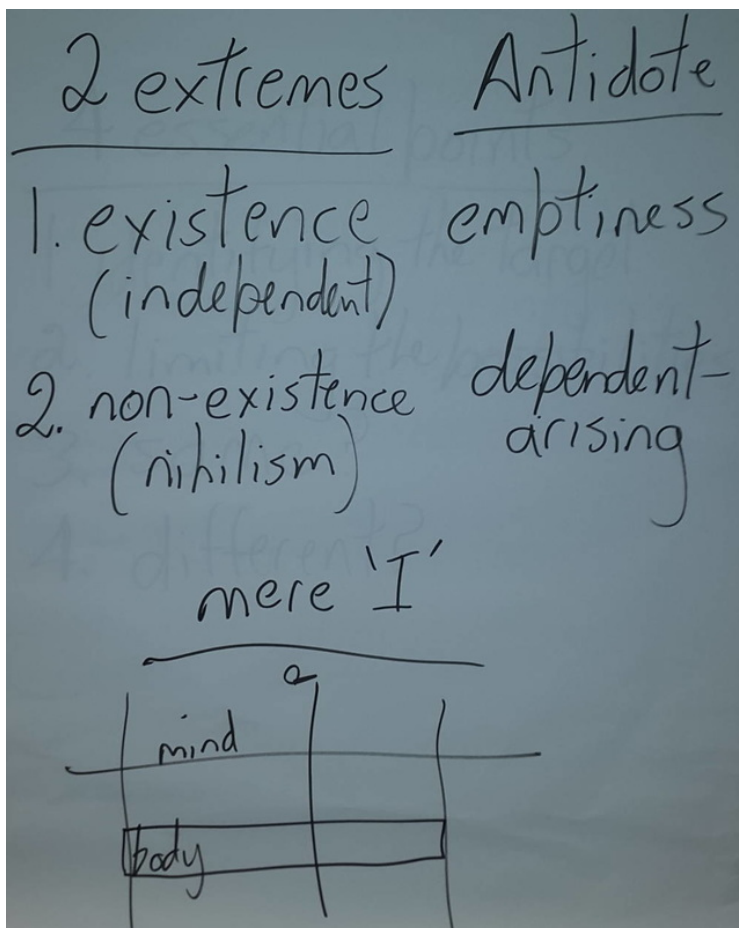
Glen: So again, when does the pen come into existence? Only when this configuration of data closely enough resembles our concept of pen. And our concepts usually have at least two parts: appearance and functionality. So when this appears closely enough to our concept of pen, and it seems to function according to our concept of pen, then there's a pen. Not otherwise! We bring the pen into existence. So again, the pen exists depending on its parts, or in other words, the whole depends on the parts.

But this view is also saying: the part depends on the whole. How does the part depend on the whole? Again, the same idea, you can only call this 'part of a pen' if you have the idea of pen. Otherwise, its nonsensical. Whether or not the pen exists is irrelevant, you can only have part of the pen if you have the idea of pen. So the part depends on the whole, as well. And this is a measure of our understanding of this - or the flip side of the idea of emptiness - is if we can appreciate, these two statements are not saying the same thing. And the two statements are: usually we say "this is a pen". Or in other words, the pen is the collection of the parts. But this view is saying: that's false! That the pen is merely labeled, depending on the collection of the parts.

So again, the two statements are: "the pen is the collection of the parts" versus: "the pen is merely labeled, depending on the collection of the parts". If we can understand: those two statements are not saying the same thing, we're beginning to understand something about this, something about this idea of emptiness or *Shunyata*. Because if the pen did exist from its own side, independent of our conceptual framework, it would mean everyone who looked here would see a pen. So if the caveman came in the door here, they'd see pen, and they'd start writing with it. I don't think so. If the caveman came in here, they may see some sort of weapon, stabbing, to stab things with.

And if a dog came in here, they may see some sort of chewing stick, and if a tiny ant came here, they may see some home to live in. So is this a pen, a weapon, chewing stick or a home? From its own side, none of those things. From the side of the observer, all of those things. We bring things into existence in our conceptual framework. Things do not exist independent of that.

Now, with this view, and the flip-side of dependent arising, of course, is this idea of emptiness. In Sanskrit: '*Shunyata*'. Again, emptiness means: 'nothing exists independently'. Because everything is dependently existent. Now, the difficulty with this view here - and this is the view, that's the basis of this *Madhyamika* philosophical system, that really began with *Nagarjuna* in the second century, great Indian master - is that we are stuck in what's called the 'two extremes'. We are stuck in the two extremes of 'existence' and 'non-existence'.



For us, we're stuck here now. Meaning, we believe that everything exists from its own side, everything exists independently. There's an independent me here, there's an independent objective world there. But if we investigate, and we come to realise that there's nothing to be found there, then often what happens is, we simply click to the other extreme: non-existence or '*nihilism*'. Because for us now there's only two possibilities: either there is this real, independent functioning world, or there's no world.

Because the only world that we've experienced is the seemingly independent world there. And if we start to undermine that, through this investigation, then we just flip to the other extreme and go: "Oh, I can't find the laptop there in the basis, therefore there's no laptop at all, it doesn't exist. I don't exist, nothing exists". So we flip to the extreme of *nihilism*.

Because for us, there seems to be just two possibilities. But again, this philosophical system in Sanskrit: *Madhyamika*, Middle-Way,

is to find the middle way, between those two extremes, that there is a possibility. And the third possibility is that things are merely labeled. There is a dependent world, there's a dependent me.

And this is why I think so many of us in our modern world struggle with this view. Because in our modern world, we're all in the intellectual mind. We want to figure out everything. But actually what we can understand from this, it's our intellectual dualistic mind that created the problem. And so, like I think Einstein said: "You can't solve a problem at the level you created it at". So you will never get an answer to this question of what is the nature of reality using our intellectual conceptual mind. Because that is the problem. It's our dualistic thinking that is the problem. So you can't find an answer within that dualistic thinking.

All we're going to do is, we're going to flip from one extreme to another, because that's the only two possibilities within our dualistic thinking. So if we want to find out what the nature of reality is, we need to go beyond this dualistic mind. And even if we somehow intellectually appreciate this idea - and we can be the smartest philosopher in the world, with this - we can still be completely miserable. Because the Buddhist assertion is that: if we come to realise the nature of reality, we will be liberated from all mental afflictions and suffering.

Because the Buddhist assertion is: the reason we have mental afflictions like: anger, jealousy, craving and so forth, is because of our distorted view of reality, because of grasping onto independent me, independent world - that leads to our mental afflictions and suffering. And if we want to overcome that, we need to gain a correct view of reality, but intellectual is not enough. For example, we all - I think - intellectually accept: things are changing moment by moment: the idea of impermanence. Science has conclusively proven that everything is changing moment by moment. We learned that at school. I think all of us intellectually accept this fact. None of us have a problem with this.

But is that intellectual understanding of impermanence, is that helping us in our daily life? Not really, because our behaviour is not driven by our intellectual understanding, our behaviour is driven by our instinctive habits. And our instinctive habits are telling us: this laptop is more or less the same laptop that was here yesterday, it will be the same laptop tomorrow. And that's how we relate to things, as if they're actually stable and enduring.

But this is completely out of sync with reality. Because there is nothing stable and enduring in the physical world level. In fact, if we look very closely at the physical world - in fact, if we don't look closely at the physical world - there appears to be things moving through time. If we look closely: is there any thing moving through time in the physical world? Any thing? No, no, is there, there's nothing at the physical world level which goes through time, nothing. There is just momentary change. There's just a flow of change.

We know that intellectually, yet, experientially that's not how we relate to the world. We relate to the world as if there are things moving through time. With that, of course, come certain expectations, which of course, I never met, because there is no things moving through time, there is just a flow of change.

And in that flow of change, we have to make sense of that flow of change. So we develop concepts like impermanence, to help explain, and we create objects out of that flow, to help

understand the flow. But the problem is: we don't realise that's what we're doing. We don't realise we are creating this world of objects, based on that flow. We turn these lines - that we draw - into boundaries.

We create boundaries, meaning: we turn these objects that we create into separate, discrete things as if they exist there independently, independent of us. Of course, this is completely out of sync with reality. And when we relate to things in that way, we're completely out of sync with reality. And therefore we are fighting against reality. And if we fight against reality, we create mental afflictions, we suffer, and the people around us suffer.

So what's the solution, is to come to realise how things exist. But again, we need to realise this directly. Not just intellectual, because intellectual is not enough. Because our habits are very in-ground, we need a very strong antidote to that. We need to internalise these intellectual ideas, we need to meditate, we need to come to realise this in meditation directly, then that will have a very, very strong impact on our mind.

And thereby, outside of meditation, we will start to experientially see things as simply: 'being a flow' as simply existing within our conceptual framework. And then we will overcome our mental afflictions and suffering. So, very briefly, why is it a problem to see the world as existing there independently and it's made up of many separate discrete things? What's the big deal with that? What's the problem there?

The problem is: that if we believe that there's a world existing independent of us, then when we have, for example, a pleasant experience, let's say: I'm looking at this laptop, and I'm having a pleasant experience. Then that pleasant experience - together with the belief that that laptop is existing independent of me - will lead me to naturally assume there must be some attractive quality there, that's causing my pleasant experience. So I'm going to see this as inherently attractive.

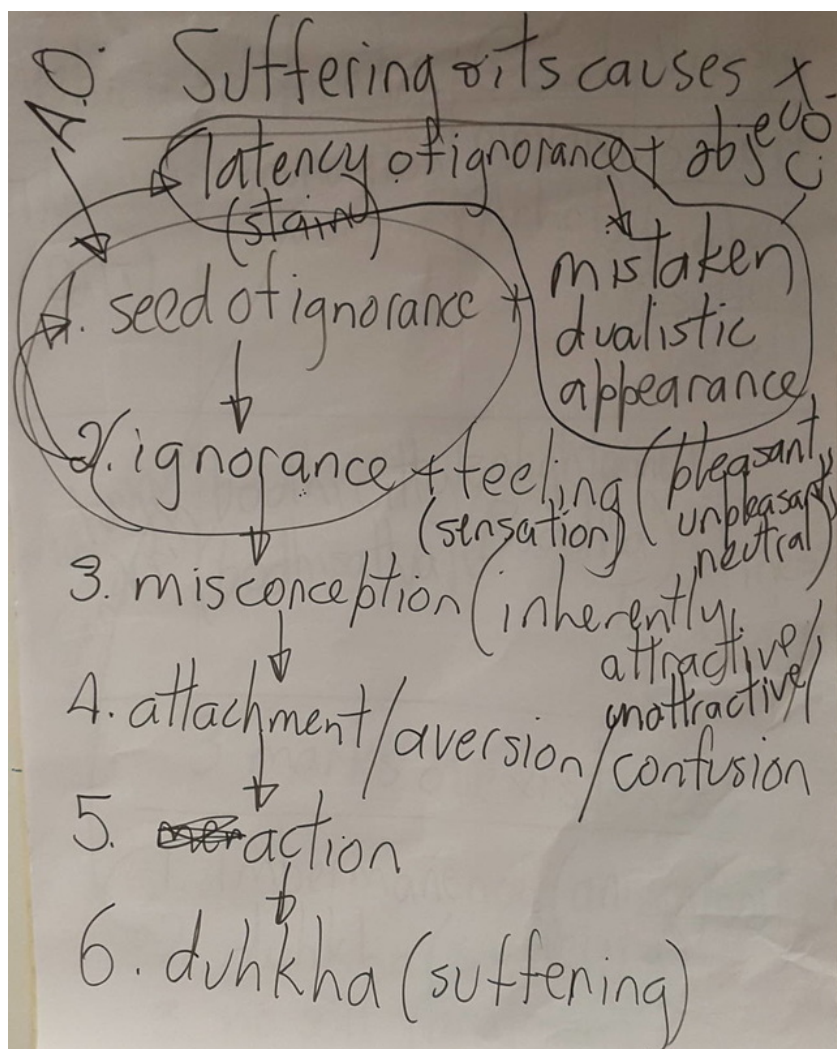
Or if I'm having an unpleasant experience - together with the belief that that laptop is independent of me - I'm naturally going to assume there must be some unattractive quality there, causing my unpleasant experience. Now, let's say we're having a pleasant experience when we're seeing his laptop. And we're believing that it's inherently attractive, there's some attractive quality there, that's causing my pleasant experience. I like pleasant experiences, I want pleasant experiences, that laptop seems to be causing my pleasant experience. I want that laptop! - attachment, craving.

Or if I'm having an unpleasant experience, I don't like unpleasant experiences, I don't want unpleasant experiences, that laptop seems to be causing my unpleasant experience, get it out of here! - aversion. So if we have this false view of reality, then what happens is: we end up with craving and attachment to our pleasant experiences, aversion to our unpleasant experiences, and then the whole mess begins. If we realise emptiness, if we realise: that laptop is not existing independent of us, its simply existing within our conceptual framework, and then we have a pleasant experience when we see the laptop, then, experientially, we are going to see that "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder".

And we hear that expression often. Intellectually, we may accept that now, we may accept that "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder". Is that helping us in our life? No. But if we can

experientially see things that: it's beauty in the eye of the beholder, then what's to crave, what's to have a craving and attachment to? Which means: if we have a pleasant experience - and we have realised emptiness - we're not going to have any craving and attachment for that experience, plus we're going to enjoy that experience much more than we do now.

Because it's our craving and attachment, which interferes with our enjoyment of pleasurable experiences. And we know this well, if we have strong craving attachment for something, that agitates the mind. And if we don't get it, we get frustrated. Even if we get it, we get worried about not getting enough of it, or we're losing it. And then when we do lose it, we get upset and craving more. So craving and attachment actually interferes and destroys our pleasure or simple pleasures. If we can realise emptiness, and realise directly that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, we are going to enjoy pleasurable experiences much more than we do now.



And conversely, with unpleasant experiences, and we have aversion to that unpleasant experience. Our aversion - if we have particularly strong aversion - all that does is it magnifies the discomfort and suffering we experience. So again, if we realise emptiness, and we see an unpleasant experience, we will not magnify the suffering we experience. And very often the suffering, the most of the suffering we experience is because of our aversion. So we're going to enjoy simple pleasures in life much more. And we're not going to induce suffering, if we realise emptiness. But this, of course, is at a very simple level.

One analogy before we go on to how we do the practice, and then we'll have a short meditation. This view of emptiness is very subtle, very difficult to appreciate. And again, most often when people start to investigate this, we just flip to the other extreme of 'nihilism'. And I

hear that a lot. You know, even people who studied this for some years, and think they know what emptiness means. Often I hear people saying, you know: "Oh, it doesn't matter, because everything is empty". I mean, that's completely the wrong understanding. That's nihilism.

The correct understanding is: Because everything's empty, everything matters, everything can function. That's the correct understanding of emptiness. So emptiness and functioning

world, or dependent arising are two sides of a coin. If we appreciate that, we have the correct view, *Nagarjuna* would be very happy with us if we had that idea. In fact, there are a number of modern-day philosophers, very smart people who read *Nagarjuna*'s work and say: he's a nihilist. Very smart people. So this view is not easy to appreciate. And again, to really understand it, well, we have to internalise it. Because again, if we want to figure it out intellectually and conceptually, (we) will never get the answer.

Because the answer, the Middle Way, is non-dual. Non-dual experience. So if we investigate this in meditation, and we come to realise the nature of reality, if we come to realise emptiness in meditation, and we come out of that experience, and someone says: "Oh, show me what you saw, what's the nature of reality!" You'd go: "...oh..., oh..., it was sort of like this, sort of like that...." You would not be able to explain it.

Because emptiness means: no subject-object duality. And of course, our conceptual mind is stuck in dualistic mode. So therefore, the answer is that: there is no subject-object duality, there's no independent me, independent world. And to appreciate this view of emptiness, often a number of analogies are used in the text. And one analogy that I find very helpful is the analogy of a dream.

Now, when we're dreaming, there appears to be a dream-me here. And there appears to be an independent dream-world out there. And if we see something pleasant in the dream, we react with a craving, unpleasant: aversion, maybe fear anxiety, we see a monster in the dream and so forth. But if in the middle of the dream, we suddenly realised we're dreaming - so what we call: 'lucid dreaming' - of course, we wake up in the middle of the dream, and we realise that we're dreaming: then there will still appear to be an independent dream-me here, there'll still appear to be an independent dream world-there.

But because now because we are lucid in the dream, will realise that these appearances are deceiving us. And we will never buy into those appearances. Which means: now if we're lucid in the dream, and something pleasant or unpleasant occurs in the dream, it would become very difficult to react with attachment or aversion. And we would enjoy the dream a hell of a lot more.

This view of emptiness is saying: our 'waking-world' is like a dream. Because now there appears to be an independent me here, there appears to be an independent world out there. We see something pleasant: we react with craving and attachment, unpleasant: aversion - the big mess starts. But if we become lucid in the waking state by realising emptiness, there will still appear to be an independent me here, they'll still appear to be an independent world there. But because we're lucid now, because we have realised emptiness, we will realise directly that these appearances are deceiving us, and we'll never buy into them.

Which means: it would become very difficult to develop craving and attachment for the pleasant experiences, develop aversion for the unpleasant experiences, and we would enjoy our life a hell of a lot more. So this is an analogy I find very helpful to understand the idea of emptiness and dependent arising. What I'd like to do now, as we're starting to run short on time a little bit is to explore the nature of reality by focusing on mind or consciousness itself.

When we investigate the nature of reality, we can investigate anything. We can investigate the pen, the laptop, the body, the person. In fact, the classical approach, in many Buddhist traditions, is when we come to investigate how things exist, start with 'me the person'. Where is this independent me that seems to be here? That's a very classical approach. And we use very logical reasoning to investigate, to see if we can find this independent me here. But what I'd like to do now is to do a little bit of an experiment, a little bit of investigation, looking at the mind.

So before we do that, just briefly, what is the mind from a Buddhist perspective? A very simple definition of mind, in Buddhism we often see, and of course, here mind and consciousness are synonymous those two terms of synonymous. Mind or consciousness is: "that which is clear and knowing", Or sometimes translated as: 'clarity and awareness'. The word 'clear' here, the first word in the definition is describing the entity of the thing itself. And the second word is describing the function. What does this thing do?

For example, the simple definition of fire is: "fire is hot and burning". So what the entity of fire is: heat. What does fire do? It burns. So here, mind is 'clear and knowing'. What's the entity of the mind or consciousness? Its clear, or has clarity. What does the mind do? It knows, it is aware. So the word 'clear' or 'clarity' here implies two things at least. One is: the mind is not the brain. So the Buddhist theory of mind, of course, is not the same as the scientific materialistic theory of mind, which basically, is: that the mind is the brain or a property of the brain, emergent property of the brain or function of the brain. So here in Buddhism, our mind is not the brain, is not emergent property of the brain. The mind is not physical. So 'clear' means: its not physical, it's not energy, its not matter.

So, within the Buddhist theory, there are two types of phenomena: there's material phenomena: matter and energy; and mental phenomena: the mind. And here, when we're talking about then, of course, the mind and the brain, we're not talking about a sort of a dualistic view. Were talking here.... and this is something actually very interesting. I was watching today, a video on YouTube, from a professor of cognitive science from University of California, Donald Hoffmann. And he is doing a lot of work in this area, about the nature of reality, for many years. And now is sort of working assumption - and of course, mostly in the scientific community, the basis is that matter, or material is primary. And that somehow mind is some sort of 'epi-phenomenon', or emergent property of that.

That's the assumption they're working with. But through these many years of scientific study, he's now come to the point where his working hypothesis is, that the material world is not primary. Consciousness is primary! And he's working on that basis. And he's now working on a mathematical.... he has a mathematical formula or basis for consciousness, a mathematical model of consciousness. And now he's trying to show, using that mathematical model of consciousness, how things, like: quantum mechanics did come out of that. So, very interesting research he is doing. So if you get a chance to watch any of this, I highly recommend it. Donald Hoffman is his name.

So here, again, in Buddhism, consciousness is primary. It's not the brain, its not the property of the brain. Of course, they're closely related. And the function of the mind is that it knows, it is aware.

Of course, this is a huge topic. But I just wanted to briefly mention that before we jump into a little practice. So what I'd like to do now is a little sort of taste of investigating the nature of reality by observing our own mind. So we're going to do a little meditation now.

And one thing I'd like to mention before we do this meditation is that, of course, as a true scientist, we are to do empirical investigation. We are to observe directly the phenomena in front of us. And not allow our intellectual beliefs to pollute that. If we're really doing empirical study. So what we don't want to do in this investigation is (to) allow the intellectual mind to come in, because intellectual mind is full of belief systems, and that would contaminate the empirical investigation.

Because if we allow the intellectual mind to come into this investigation, our intellectual mind of course, always has an answer. Because we all have, we have some sort of belief system in who we think we are, and how things exists. And so if we allow our intellectual mind to come into this investigation, it'll say: "I know, I know, I know, the mind is this or the mind is that" - or whatever our belief system is. Then we haven't done any empirical research, what we've done is we've agreed with our belief system. So we want to be scientists here, we want to do an empirical investigation. So therefore, when we do this practice, we're going to look directly in our direct observation: What is there? How is it there? Okay, so just keep that in mind.

So let's do a short meditation and see what we see and see what we can come up with as our investigation. So let's do that shortly and then a few more things to say after that, after the meditation about how to integrate, and then plenty of time for question, answer then. But let's do the meditation first.

(meditation starts)

So just find a nice comfortable posture, sit comfortably, keep your back straight, and just relax the body.

Simply allow your awareness to descend into your body and simply become aware of sensations throughout the body.

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, as best (as) you can.

And then bring your awareness to the area of your face and soften and relax all the muscles in the face.

Keeping 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, completely at ease.

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 with each out-breath letting go of any thoughts that may have arisen.

Happily releasing them.

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

By focusing on the sensations of the breath, throughout the body,

wherever you can most easily notice any sensations associated with the breathing.

Now narrow your focus

and focus

on the sensations of the breath in the area of the abdomen.

So focusing on the sensations of the rising and lowering of the abdomen, as you breathe.

Of course, we're using our mind to focus on the breath

in the area of the abdomen.

But where is this mind located?

So, using your direct observation,

see if you can pinpoint the location of the mind.

Is the mind inside the body somewhere?

Is the mind located inside the head?

Again, observe directly.

Is the mind located at the place where the sensations of the breath are occurring?

Does the mind have a centre? A central point?

Does the mind have any physical characteristics whatsoever?

Again, observe directly.

How big is the mind?

Does it have a particular size?

Is in fact there is physical limit or boundary to the mind?

Is there in fact, anything outside of the mind?

And now simply let go of all investigation,

and allow the mind to come to rest

and simply rest in the stillness of the mind.

And then we can bring this meditation to a close.

(meditation ends)

Just one comment and then maybe actually, we can do some question-answer because there was a few other things I wanted to talk about, that maybe I think it's good to do some Q&A now.

But one point before I open up for question-answer: With that investigation - and maybe some of you didn't find it so easy to investigate. And of course, the reason generally is because we of course, we're using the mind to investigate the mind here. But our mind as a tool of investigation is not very functional now. So just like a scientist, if they want to run an experiment, they need to have equipment that functions well. Otherwise, the results will be inconclusive.

Similarly here - if we're using our mind as the tool of investigation - to investigate the mind or to investigate the laptop, or the person or whatever we're investigating, if that equipment is not functioning well, the results will be inconclusive. And generally now, the equipment of our mind is not functioning very well. Unfortunately, we're caught up in a lot of obsessive, compulsive thinking, easily distracted, half asleep, our attention skills are generally not very good. So if our attention skills are not very good, this investigation process won't work very well at all. It will be like using faulty equipment.

So therefore, we need to get our equipment functioning well. So, to get our equipment of the mind to function well, is one of the core practices in Buddhism, often referred to as: 'Shamatha' practice, or developing our attention skills. Developing the ability to have a calm, clear and focused mind. That's the tool we need in this investigation.

And this investigation, of course, in Buddhism is often called 'Vipassana' practice or 'Insight' practice. So the basis of our Vipassana or insight practice is Shamatha, is a calm, clear focused mind. (If) we don't have that, this won't work very well. So therefore, if we really want to do this sort of investigation into reality, we need to work on developing a very calm and clear and focused mind. Then, with functioning equipment, we can do this investigation well and really come up with some conclusive answers and experiences. So that's the very one point I wanted to mention. So maybe now, if there's any questions about this practice, or anything I've said so far, you can ask away.

Student: What I just I had been going through a short meditation session. So there was a point where I couldn't feel the entire body. Only like the breath, that when you were asked me to concentrate on, yeah, I lost my arms and everything. So but, but what this really means this is some sort of some sort of spiritual discovery also biological, biological, I mean, all of our body and most of the time it is controlled subconsciously..... (rest of question unintelligible)

Glen: So, the whole purpose of this is not just so that, we can say: "I know reality, you don't". I mean, the Buddha was not a philosopher, he was a doctor. The whole purpose of all of this is to overcome our suffering. To overcome our mental afflictions, like craving, aversion, jealousy, and so forth, and all of our physical and mental suffering.

So, and the Buddha said that, to achieve that we need to..... the reason we're stuck in this situation is because we have a distorted view of reality. And this is what he discovered. This is a reality, he didn't intellectually make it up. This is coming from his direct experience. And so he said: "This is what I discovered. Don't believe it, just because I told you, you have to check it out".

So, our job is to check it out. And the test, of course, is whether or not it's valid is: are our mental afflictions and suffering reducing or not? If it's not, then maybe it's not valid, maybe he just sort of made up something. So this is really the test here is: by doing this practice, and coming to realise the nature of reality, are our mental afflictions and suffering decreasing or not. If it's not, then maybe this is just some illusory idea and it's not helpful. So this, I think, is really the check, the test of whether or not this is the case. Because again, there are many interesting philosophies in the world. And many of them are very smart and very intelligently conceived.

But unfortunately, for many of them, either we have to accept or reject. There's no way of validating or testing them. The Buddha said, "This is my theory. And this is how you test it empirically, through doing this sort of practice" Unless we do this, it's just another theory, which may or may not be correct, may or may not be useful. And if we just leave it as a theory, then, okay, it may sound nice, and it may appeal to us. And we think "Yeah, that sounds good. I like that idea". And then, of course, it's not helpful.

So again, here in Buddhism, at least, when we have all these theories of reality and mind, and so forth, there is a method empirically to test and validate that. But it's up to us to be the good scientists to do that work. And of course, like in science, we can do peer-review. You know, the peer-review process, of course. Because there are many people who've done this investigation over centuries. And we can draw on their experience and receive peer-review.

And this is something very important in this investigation, because we're using the mind to investigate. And there's so many places where we can go astray and make up all sorts of fabrications. So just like a good scientist, we need the peer-review process, and other people who've done the work to go: "No, no, no, this is where you've gone astray, you've really misinterpreted this, or you're not doing the practice properly".

Like...., you know, like recently there, someone in CERN thought they found something that went faster than the speed of light. Remember that? And then a peer-reviewer said: "No, no, this is where you went wrong in your calculations or experimentation". So that was proven invalid.

So likewise, here for us is, we need to have the functioning equipment, we need to do the investigation. And we need the peer-review process to make sure that we're on track and that we're not sort of making up some wild ideas based on our own experiences. So this is very important. And the bottom line is: are our mental afflictions and reducing or not? If it's not, then maybe it's just some crazy idea that the Buddha made up.

Student: So I might be little bit confused, but is "non existent" mean: "it's not labeled"? - because everyone labels it.

Glen: But again, you're saying: "it".

Student: But I am not labelling it.

Glen: But you're saying you're using the word "it". So you've already created it. If you say "it", it already exists, whether or not you've given a name. No?

Student: But you can see it.....

Glen: So there's one object here? There's one thing here? From its own side? So you're saying, labelling "it". You're saying there's an "it" already there that we come along and label. But is there one thing there, from its own side? Independent of our conceptual framework?

Student: (comment inaudible)

Glen: So, it's more than one thing. So it's not each we're labelling. It's a collection we are labelling, actually.

Student: But it exists!

Glen: But again, you're saying the word "it"! Yeah, I mean, this is what we do. We...., that's what we instinctively do: "it". It's there! No? Just like..... Its there an "it"? Is there one thing there? Before, outside of our conceptual framework? Is there? No! So how is there an "it" there, outside of our conceptual framework? So you can't say: "label it". If you say "it", you've already created an object. It's already existing within our conceptual framework, if you say: "it". "It"!

No? So....., and this is this is the real thing: when people ask this question, they say "Oh, but if I go out the door, "it" will still be there, won't it?" The real question here is: Who's going out the door? Because whenever people ask this question - same as the idea of the tree falling in the forest, no one's there to watch it or hear it - what happened?

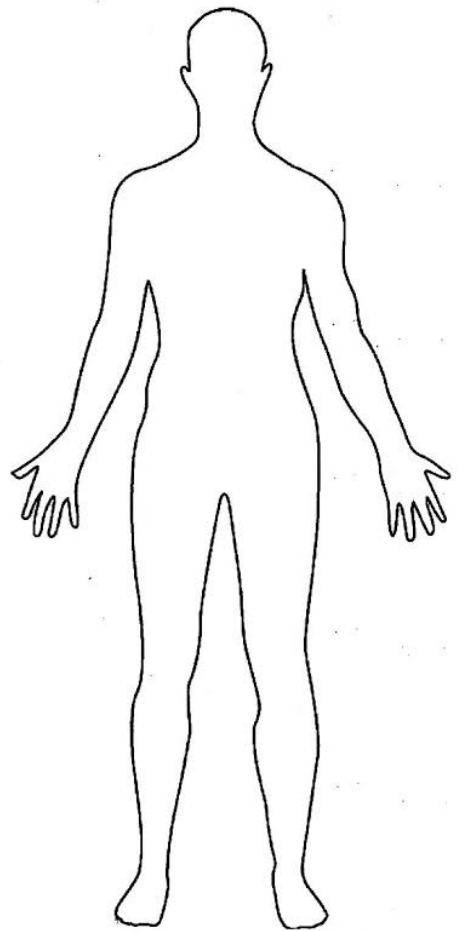
The real question is, the real problem here is: when people ask this question, they say: "But when I go out the door, it will still be there". The question is: who's the "I" going out the door? Because we always had the assumption: there is an independent me going out the door. So if we have if we believe that the world exists, and we believe there's an independent me, then by default, there must be an independent world.

So the answer would be: "Yes, the laptop exists when I go out the door - if there is an independent me. Correct! The question is: Is there an independent me going out the door? So again, as at the beginning, I said, when we look around the world, it's just a massive data. And we have to draw these lines, and create objects, we do that to make sense of all this. And how we draw the lines will depend on the context and the meaning we want to create. And we might go and create one object here, but some other times you might create two, whatever. And we have to do that. If we don't draw the line and give the name, then there will be no meaning we couldn't function. The problem is we don't realise that's what we're doing.

We believe that "it" - is there already, prior to the conceptual framework. And we've turned the line that we draw here, we turn it into a boundary. There's already a separate, discrete, there's "it" is there already.

But in our experience, generally, the very first line we draw is we draw a line around here. And we create 'me'. Because there's single experience, isn't there? Single, singular experience. And in 'singular experience' there are two aspects: experiencer, experienced. And we need to conceptually identify those two aspects. Otherwise, we couldn't make any sense. And I think a newborn baby can't do that. They have to learn to do that, to conceptually create themselves as distinct from the world of experience. Otherwise, you can't function. We have to do that.

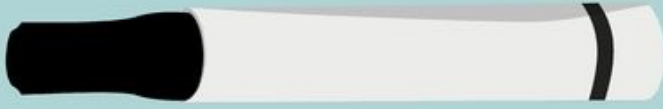
But again, we don't realise that what's we're doing. We believe there's already a 'me' here, independent of the world of experience. And there's the problem. And this is called 'self-grasping', grasping onto independent me. And from a Buddhist perspective, this is the root of all of our problems, this false view. And this, this idea, there's an independent me, is completely illogical. And to really highlight that I can ask you a question: Is this big? Is it big?



Student: Unless you compare it to something.

Glen: So you can't have big on its own? Yeah? You can't have: "big". And "small". You can only have big, relative to small. Correct? You can't have "big". And "small". It just doesn't make any sense. Like that, you can only have: up with down.

IS THIS BIG?



In with out. Like that, you can only have: me relative to not-me. Or subject-object, experiencer-experienced. You can't have me on its own, it's just illogical. That's just like saying: "this is big". But that's how we see ourselves. We see ourselves as an independent me.

But again, if we think about it a little bit, it's completely nonsense, it's completely illogical. It's like, the way we see ourselves is like saying: "this is big".

I mean, just doesn't make any sense. We can only have me, relative to not-me, the experiencer relative to experience. Therefore, me also exists within the conceptual framework. That's how we exist, as a dependent me. If we can understand that, not just intellectually, experientially, from a Buddhist perspective, we would never have any mental afflictions or suffering.

IS THIS BIG?



Student: You take the reality exists.... (rest inaudible)
(portion of question unintelligible)

..... So therefore, according to quantum physics, laptop only exists relative to observer?

Glen: Well, first, - and I don't claim to know anything much about quantum physics - but definitely seems like there are a number of different interpretations. And certainly one group of physicists' interpretation of quantum physics, their interpretation is very close to this Buddhist view. I think there are other interpretations in quantum physics, which differ. But they would be more of a sort of physicalist-materialist interpretation.

So I think one interpretation is, you know, we talked about this sort of 'super-imposition state' and this 'wave function collapse'. And so I think this interpretation is saying this is also, this only exists within the mind of the observer. Not as some separate thing, that then collapses when there's an observer.

But I really don't know much about quantum physics. But this is what this - I think this Donald Hoffman I mentioned before - is. This is his sort of view now. He also tried to show other views in terms of: that matter was primary, the brain was primary and the mind was somehow like coming out of the brain. And he couldn't really make sense of any theories with that. And now his working hypothesis is actually: the consciousness is primary. And so now he's developed a mathematical representation, basis of the mind, to represent the mind, and from that he's now trying to show how quantum physics, quantum mechanics can come out of that. So that's what he's doing at the moment. Very interesting research.

Student: (question inaudible)

Glen: Dualistic mind, of course, is the mind which thinks: there's me here and independent world there, subject-object duality. And so this view of emptiness is saying: there is no duality.

Student: (question: inaudible)

Glen: So again, we're talking about the entity of the mind. An analogy we can use here is: glass. Glass is clear by nature. But often it can have a lot of dirt on it. Can't it? Same, the mind is clear by nature, but often it has a lot of dirt on it. So this is one analogy that you find in Buddhism too.

Because there are of course some modern theories, which say that part of the inherent nature of the mind is anger, jealousy, craving, that's it, you're stuck with them. And there are many modern theories that say that. But the Buddhist theory says that, no. That all these mental afflictions like anger, jealousy, craving - very strong and habitual - but they're not part of the nature of the mind.

Just like dirt is not part of the nature of glass. It's covering, and therefore what we see is dirt, we don't see the clear nature of the glass window until we clean the dirt. So, literally for us now, our mind doesn't look very clear, it's full of dirt, full of mental afflictions. But we can remove these mental afflictions by doing this, then we will see this directly, just like you'll see the clear nature of glass if we removed the dirt. So that's often the analogy used.

Student: What is the physical location of the mind?

Glen: Based on this, there is no physical location, because the mind is not a physical phenomenon. So it has no spatial properties. Of course, generally, when we go: "Where's the mind? We say: "its in here". Why? Because our belief system is based generally on scientific materialism, that the mind is an emergent property of the brain.

And definitely, we can empirically show that the brain is here, we know that. Therefore, based on our belief system, because the brain is here, we go: "And the mind is a property of the brain, therefore the mind must be here". This is the materialistic, scientific-materialistic view, of course. But here, we're saying that the mind is not physical, according to Buddhism. It's not matter, it's not energy, it's not physical. So, because it's not physical, has no spatial qualities at all, no location, no size, and so forth.

And that's what we were trying to do a little bit in this meditation is, in our direct observation: Can we see any physical properties of mind? Because if the mind is like a property of the brain, and is physical, then we should be able to see some sort of physical properties if we look at that object. But I think if we look in our direct experience of the mind, you will never see any physical properties, you will never see a colour or shape, or location for the mind. And that's what we were trying to do a little bit in that meditation.

Student: (question inaudible)

Glen: Yeah, but again, it's that concept. I mean, even "time" is a concept, isn't it? That we have developed to make sense of this flow. So likewise, all of these things are concepts. I mean: "Higg's Boson" - isn't it a concept? - that I think he's himself developed to explain why things have mass? No? It's a concept. And then, of course, they have some data, that seems to suggest or validate that concept. But it's just a concept. An atom is a concept.

You know, a "quark" is a concept, time is a concept, these are all concepts that we've developed, to make sense out of everything. And we have to make these concepts, otherwise we can't function. But the problem is, we don't realise they're concepts. We turn the concept.... And and this is something I really like a lot, this idea. There's a term in psychology called: "cognitive fusion".

And 'fusion', of course, means sticking two things together, making them one, and cognitively, to mentally do that. And we do this in so many different places, and it always creates problems. And here, 'cognitive fusion' is: we have the basis. So the basis is a collection of atoms, changing moment by moment. No problem, okay? Then we have the label: "pen." And we are applying the label to the basis.

Is the label the basis? No, it can't be. It can't be the basis if you're applying it to basis, by default. So the label is not the basis. This is not a pen! Pen, is something we are labelling on the basis. But we do this cognitive fusion, we fuse the label to the basis and we say: "this is a pen", then we're in trouble. Because then we feel that there's a single thing there, existing independent of our conceptual framework. So if we appreciate: pen is merely something we're labelling on that basis, then there's no problem. But what we do is: this cognitive fusion, we are using the label to the basis, making them one thing when they're not. You have a basis of designation, and you have the designated object.

They can't be the same thing. And if we appreciate that, we will understand this, and there won't be any problems.

Student: You mentioned that mind cannot understand the nature of mind.

Glen: It can, it does! I mean that's what we're using to understand the nature of the mind. What I said was that: "The dualistic mind can never figure out the nature of reality". Because the nature of reality, emptiness, that experience is a realisation: - 'there's no subject-object duality'. So that experience of emptiness is a completely non-dualistic experience.

And our mind is dualistic. So we can never know emptiness directly, without dualistic mind, it's impossible. Because it's our dualistic mind, that is the problem. It's our dualistic mind that thinks: there is a me here and an independent world. That's the problem! So like Einstein said: "You can't solve a problem at the level you created at that". So we have to go beyond the conceptual dualistic mind to realise emptiness.

This is a non-dualistic experience. So, as I said before, if we come to realise this in meditation directly, and we come out of that, and someone says: "What did you realise? Please explain to me emptiness!" You'll go: ".....ahhhh, hmmm,...erhhh..."

You won't have words, because it's an experience beyond duality, its beyond conception. It's a 'non-dualistic' experience. You can't use dualistic conceptual language to directly describe this. You can use similes and analogies and things to point people towards it. But then we have to come to realise it ourselves, directly.

Student: If you focus the mind, then you can actually go from dualistic mind to a non-dualistic one?

Glen: Yeah, focusing the mind is just creating the equipment, the tool. So the Shamatha practice or the concentration practice is just making functioning equipment. That's it. It's just like the scientists make sure that their equipment is working 100% correctly, that's Shamatha practice. Then we use that equipment, the Shamatha, the very clear, sharp mind, to penetrate the nature of reality, to do this sort of investigation. To come to see and realise directly: there's no findable me, there's no findable laptop and pen.

And that not-finding, that 'not-finding' experience in meditation is an experience of emptiness. And we hold that experience as long as we can. And if we do that well and at a deep enough level, that experience is a completely non-dualistic experience. In the experience, in the middle of that experience, there's no sense of: "me, the meditator experiencing this emptiness". There's just the experience. It's only when you come out of it, you go: "Oh, I've had a direct realisation of emptiness, just then. If we're having an experience, then we're going...., in the middle of the experience we go: "I'm directly realising emptiness..... Hundred percent proof or not? Hundred percent proof. It's impossible to have thought at that time, it can't. If it's a valid experience. I think we're running out of time. Is that right? Not? Okay.

Student: How long takes you...?. (rest inaudible)

Glen: Yes, I suppose, this evening I've given a little bit of my sort of own experiences in there. So maybe I can mention a couple of things. First is, mainly my experiences been where I've gone wrong, and understood that and corrected myself. First, of course, when I first came to this, I thought this was a great idea. And I was very intellectual, my background was IT. So I wanted to figure it out. So I spent a lot of time and effort trying to figure it out. And I got some sort of vague idea of this.

But then it's like, sort of, you know, you're trying to grab something that's not grab-able, and then you just get frustrated. And then so that's first happens, I let go of that.

And then, of course, I thought: "Well, okay, then I need to really sort of try and meditate on this". So I tried to do some Vipassana insight practice. And of course, it wasn't working very well, because I didn't have this Shamatha. I didn't have working equipment. You know, because (in) all Buddhist traditions, one of the core practices is the Shamatha practice, to develop a functioning equipment, to develop a calm, clear focused mind. All Buddhist traditions say: this is one of the three core practices.

But if you go and look at all the Buddhist traditions in the world today, what they are actually practicing? It seems to get left out. Because a lot of traditions talk about Vipassana. In the Tibetan Buddhism, they talk a lot about this 'Emptiness', they talk about 'Bodhichitta', talk about all sorts of practices.

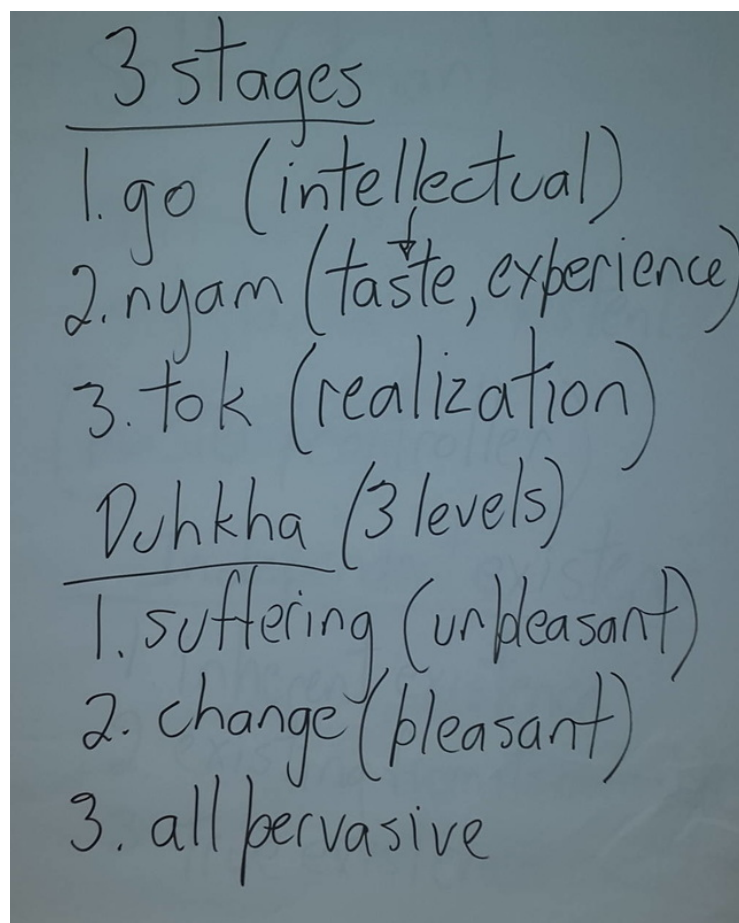
But where is this Shamatha practice that makes the mind functional? So we can do all of these practices, it seems to get left out. And so I also left it out, largely. So I was doing these practices and not really getting anywhere. And then I thought - and this is, particularly when I came into contact with Alan Wallace, who really emphasises so much, and now I do a lot as well.

Because it's the basis of this. If we don't do this practice, we can do a lot and not get anywhere. It's like a scientist running an experiment again, and again, and again and again with faulty equipment. I mean, you never going to get a a decisive answer with faulty equipment. So fix the equipment, make it functional. So that's what I learned. So I put now a lot more effort into the Shamatha practice. And now of course, the other practices were starting to work a bit better.

And one more thing I'd like to add, is: with this, particularly this emptiness sort of practice, you go through stages. And here, I like to use the Tibetan words, because they're very short. This "Goh" is intellectual, "Nyam" is experience, "Tok" is realisation. So if we want to have our Vipassana practice, to get to the level of realisation, which is a stable experience, we need a very calm, focused mind. This mind of Shamatha. And how much effort do we need to put in to get this?

There are various different assertions in the original meditation texts. But Alan Wallace, who does a lot of this practice, he was suggesting that modern studies show that in any technical area of expertise, whether it's a physical or music or any technical area of expertise, if you want to become an expert in that technical field, you need minimum 5000 hours of practice, across the board, any field. If you want to become a master at it, you need 10,000 hours of practice in any field. So he's suggesting: maybe it's the same amount of effort we need here. That's his idea.

Why not? In every other field it seems consistent. Five to 10,000 hours is needed, if you want to become efficient, why not here? That's his idea. So I've still got quite a lot of work to do.



But what I do find is that the Shamatha practice, the more and more you practice it - not only would you have direct benefit, because your mind will become more calm, less stressed, more focused, more effective - in everything we do in our life, much less mental afflictions, you have all of these direct benefits, and generally a lot of physical health benefits.

Because a lot of our physical illnesses in our modern society are suppressed mental content. And we can release that, so often, people who do this practice well, have a lot of improvement in physical health as well. So there are a lot of immediate benefits from the Shamatha practice. But then on that basis, you can really go deeper into this practice. So that's what I'm sort of trying to do now. I don't know if we're running out of time, maybe.....

Student: This emptiness is the final state, or what after this thing?

Glen: Yeah, so of course, now, if we meditate on this emptiness, we can have a "Nyam", which is called a taste. And sometimes people have this sort of spontaneously, without meditating. You know, often this can happen if we go out into nature, and we have a strong experience of nature.

And then through that strong stimulus, this grasping onto me, me, me, me drops away sometimes. So we have, often people have this 'oneness experience with nature', this is a little taste of emptiness. And this can be very strong and have a strong profound impact on the person. And then usually, for a little, few hours or day, they're much more calm, there're much less mental afflictions, they seem more connected with others.

And then it wears off, and then they're back to the normal. Same with meditation here, is that we can have a little taste. And then out of meditation, we can feel more calm or connected and less mental afflictions. And it will wear off. That's why we need the Shamatha practice, the concentration practice so that this taste can turn into a realisation. Then, if we realised emptiness directly, we can really start to wipe out mental afflictions. But one realisation of emptiness is not enough, we have to keep doing that again and again. And then eventually, over time we can - the Buddhist assertion is - we can overcome all mental afflictions, we can clean the dirt off the mind, and then the mind will be completely clear and pure.

And then we've achieved liberation, we've achieved what's called 'Nirvana', this goal of liberation from suffering. That's the Buddhist assertion. But that will require a number of many direct realisations of emptiness, to do that. So this is the practice to get that goal.

Student: The mind is not material, so what is the relation or connection to the body?

Glen: Again, a little bit like this Donald Hoffman's saying is, that we, in the scientific materialistic view: particle or matter is primary and sort of mind is like a sort of, property of that or function of that. Whereas there are some that talk about, you know, like Descartes's famous dualistic idea of 'mind-body'. And so this is often the hard problem, how's the mind-body thing working? If we have this duality, dualistic idea, mind and body or material world has been two separate things?

Whereas like Don Lockman is saying and this is the Buddhist view, is a 'monistic' view, is that: consciousness is primary. And the material world comes out of that.

This is a very radical, different approach. But this is what Donald Hoffman's coming to now, after many years of his own research. And this is the sort of the Buddhist view, that consciousness is primary. It's not like this...., you know, how do these two things work together, is consciousness is primary - and the material world comes out of that. That's sort of the Buddhist assertion.

Student: (inaudible)

Glen: Yeah, what you find, and in meditation, of course, you have many different experiences. And the thing is, if we meditate, if we really relax the body, and we calm the mind, we start to notice a lot of things that we've never noticed before. I mean, now, the sensations going on in the body all the time, isn't there? Do we notice them? If it's strong pain, yes. But we don't notice the sensations. But if we sit down quietly, and we just observe here, for instance, suddenly we notice all these subtle sensations there? Did they magically appear now and they weren't there before? No.

Same with a lot of things, you know, you can like even hear the heartbeat in your ear. You can feel, you can have the subtle sounds in the air. These are just things we notice now. Because our mind is more calm and clear. That's all, its nothing mystical. Fine, maybe a last question. And then we need to finish.

Student: (question unintelligible)

Glen: Well, the meditation you were describing was mainly this Shamatha practice, which is just to develop a calm, clear mind. Which is - to use the analogy of a scientist - that is simply making the equipment functional. So that so far, the scientist hasn't proven anything, they haven't run any experiments yet. All they've done is they've made sure that their equipment is now completely operational. So that's the Shamatha practice, just to calm the mind and focus the mind. And that has immediate benefits in our lives. So that's not what I was talking about here. That's the basis.

Because what we were talking about here is the Vipassana practice, the emptiness practice. Which is, using that functional equipment to run the experiment. So what's the experiment we're doing here, is - in the meditation we were looking at - how does the mind exist? You know, is there, has (it) any physical properties? Can we find the mind? Is it located somewhere? That's the experiment we were running.

So that's what I was talking about here is: running the experiment with functional equipment to work out, to come to see the nature of reality. And here this Middle Way, between the two extremes, is to overcome the extreme of existence, to come to experientially see that nothing exists independently - that's one extreme. And the other extreme is, that nothing exists. And the Middle Way is: emptiness and dependent arising; that things exist, but only within the conceptual framework.

That - to use another analogy - is that there's no: "Big". And "Small". So, that's this realisation. But big and small exist, don't they? But they only exist relative, dependently. There is big and small. So it's not nihilism. But there's no, big. And small. So that's the two extremes. The two extremes is: Big. And: Big doesn't exist. But there is big and small. The Middle Way is realising that: that big and small exist, but only dependently. Not independently. That's what we were doing in this investigation.

Student: So when you see "oneness"..... (rest inaudible)

Glen: It's when you're investigating, let's say you're investigating the mind or the body or the person, and you come to see (that) it's not findable, it doesn't exist independently, that 'not-finding' is an emptiness experience. The 'not-finding' is the emptiness experience, we hold that as long as we can, to allow it to penetrate deeper into the mind.

And the flip-side of that, is the realisation "Therefore, everything is interdependent". Because there's no independent "big", therefore "big" exists dependently. So that's the flip-side of emptiness. So they are synonymous but the experiencing meditation is simply the 'not-finding'. And then in daily life, the flip-side is that we see that everything is interdependent. It's the same meaning. They're like two sides of the coin.

Okay, I think we've run out of time there. So I just like to finish by thanking the people responsible for putting on this event this evening. I'm very happy to come along here. And hopefully I can come again sometime in my future travels through India. And if anyone wants to listen to any more talks or courses that I lead, I got my own website.

There's a lot of materials and audio on there. Also my schedule's on there. And then in the next time, I'll be leading a couple of retreats in Bangalore in January. And then I'm hoping to.... I just come from Tushita Meditation Center in Dharamsala, just spent the last two months there, running courses and retreat. And I'm planning to be in again in the autumn October, November next year. So if you want to come up for a 10 day course, time will spend. So, I see up there next year then, so thank you very much.

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Checked and edited by J. Smith
Sydney 2019

