Misunderstanding re. the Self, Karma and Transcendence

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Bhante Bodhidhamma · 54:46

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa — Homage to the Buddha, the blessed, noble and fully self-awakened one.

Some of these questions are really to do with self and awareness and all that. So it's important to know where the speaker is coming from. When I'm speaking, I'm always coming from a transcendent position. That's not true for every teacher in the tradition. If you belong to the Mahāyāna schools of Zen, the Tibetan schools or not, it'd be very difficult not to be a transcendentalist.

But the thing about Theravāda and its scriptures is that it has an interpretation which sometimes confuses you and you can end up being a materialist without any problem. This happened to me when I was in Sri Lanka where I was reading and trying to work out, at a deeper level, the Theravāda position — the five *kh andhas*, the five aggregates, all that. And I came to a point where none of it seemed to make sense to my own personal experience. So I thought basically *Nibbāna* was just a very subtle form of annihilation. That's what I came to the conclusion. And this is what, of course, the Christian missionaries came to. They just thought it was just playing around with words, really. *Nirodha* — blackout, finish. When the flame goes out, there's nothing there. So what is that?

So I wrote quite a long piece, an essay, trying to express all this, and sent it to Bhikkhu Bodhi, whom I'd met briefly. And he very kindly read it and sent me a letter. I had occasion to go up there, and he himself was a transcendentalist, you see. So it took me quite some time really to establish that transcendentalism in the Theravāda scriptures. The language is so negative in a sense — the flame goes out and all that — that it's very difficult not to see it as some form of annihilation.

Now, what's happened is, of course, the strength of scientific materialism, which basically has the tenet that if something cannot be discovered by science, it frankly just doesn't exist. That's it. That's the platform. That, in so many words, is what Bertrand Russell said. And that's the position, really, for people who come into Buddhism with already an established faith in that, a belief in that position.

And so you'll find the speakers whom you get, for instance, on Dharma Seed — some of them will be coming from the position of materialism and really just talking about how to make this life bearable. And then when it's gone, thank heavens for that. And often it moves towards psychotherapy. A lot of the teaching is really just about purifying the heart and making your life much more pleasant through this understanding mainly of dependent origination.

And then there are, I think, a lot of teachers who haven't made up their mind yet, who perhaps haven't had an experience either one way or the other. And so you get this business of teachers who are hanging about, really, waiting. And that's mirrored in the people who come to Theravāda Buddhism, *Vipassanā*, that school. You'll find that there are some who are transcendentalists, some who are materialists, and many of them just — it doesn't really matter. It doesn't really occur to them as important because they've come into Buddhism to find a better way to live. And so it doesn't really matter to many people whether *Nibbāna* exists or not, or whatever it is.

So anyway, whenever you're listening to me, you know you're listening to a transcendentalist. And I think I've tried to make what that position is as I answer some of these questions.

There are clusters of these questions. The first lot are: Could you explain what is understood by self in Buddhism, particularly around caring for ourselves as we explore not-self? Is it correct to say that there's a little self — the ego and thinking mind — and a big self, awareness? When we meditate, can we see awareness doing the meditating? And if we see awareness as an object, how can we actually be awareness? Is it the case that over time Buddhist practice changed focus from the experience to the experiencer? Did the teachings change?

So this is all really about awareness and self. Now the first thing to understand is that this word *attā* has been translated into English as self. But the word *attā*, as used in India and Hinduism, is rightly translated as your eternal soul. That's what it actually means. So when the Buddha is asking, do you have a self? He's really asking, do you have an eternal soul?

And that's where he's asking you, well, if there is an eternal soul, A, it must have complete control over itself. It must be happy. I mean, it must determine that it's going to be happy. No point in having an eternal soul that's unhappy. And it can't arise and pass away. It can't change in that fundamental way. And so that's his questions when it comes to what's traditionally known as his second discourse on not-self.

So he asks these five companions — he looks at the five *khandhas*. He's first of all cut the human being into these five heaps: material, physical stuff; all the stuff around feeling in the body, emotional and mental; all the perceptions, conceptual stuff; all the habits, mental habits, physical habits that we have; and then finally this consciousness, this ability to know.

And then he says, well, choose any of that. And he says, is any of it under your direct control? Of course, we do have small direct control. I can wave my hands about like this, you see. But I don't have any real control over the length of my arms, et cetera, et cetera.

So the next business — when he says that, the next thing is: do you see anything which is not transient rather? Is there anything that you experience which is not arising and passing away, which is not changing? And then he says, well, if it's changing, does that create a sense of safety? Does that create happiness, or is it an unhappy state of always having things changing?

So you can't control stuff, and of course the five who've become disciples now very dutifully say, "Well, yes, no, Bhante. Yes, no, Bhante." They agree with him entirely. There wasn't any argument there, was there? So he's asking us to look inward and see if this eternal soul actually exists.

So this business of not-self is a teaching tool. That's right. It's not a statement "there is no self." That wouldn't make any sense because everybody experiences a self. So what he's saying is, is it real?

So that's the first thing to grasp about that. And then as we progress in our meditation, the first thing that we begin to realize is that everything's an object. So we're looking at stuff and everything is an object. And this business of an object means that there must be a subject, there must be some perceiving going on to perceive the object.

And that business of pushing ourselves away — I'm sure you've heard me talk about these little babies. When we're born, we just get this flood of information, and through stretching and banging rattles and doing all sorts of silly stuff, this outer world gets pushed out from that and it becomes an objective outer world. And the little being comes to realize itself as an integer — like it's me. And so that business takes about three years in total, it seems, especially that separation from mother, which actually never ends. I don't think it ends. But it ends to a point where you realize you aren't your mother. That's important.

So what we are doing, of course, is pushing the inner world out. We're making that an objective thing to observe, you see. And as we're doing that, it occurs to us that something is looking at that, is investigating that, but has taken a position in which it's not part of that process.

So Nyanaponika in his book — what's it called? Ah, dear me, it's gone. Okay. Now, in his book, he calls it the observation post. So it's somewhere inside us where we take this position of being seemingly quite separate from everything that's happening. And it's from that position that we can see these characteristics of not-self — by which we mean everything is shifting, it's moving, nothing remains permanent. Everything is an object and in that position, definitely not under our control. The psychophysical organism is just manifesting.

And then we realize that if we form any relationship with it of "me" or "mine," then suffering, some sort of unsatisfactoriness, some sort of stress arises. So that's this slow pulling away of awareness from its confusion with the psychophysical organism.

And there comes a point where you're aware of being aware. So in some of the Mahāyāna literature, they talk about awareness of awareness, which I think can be a little confusing. The way I put it, of course, is the observer. So that's the sense of somebody observing. So there's an awareness of being aware, right? But in our personal experience, it feels like the observer. I am the observer. I am the feeler.

Now, that separation that takes place between the observer and the observing — that sense is, of course, the core spiritual insight. So what's happening there?

Well, this consciousness the Buddha talks about — and I think I've mentioned this in another talk — he's having to work with words that mean certain things. Like our word "self," you see. To say "not-self" is very confusing. The word "soul" is very confusing because it has Christian overtones, et cetera. So he's having to work with words, and in a given conversation they take on slightly different meanings.

But the one meaning that seems to make most sense for consciousness is when he talks about it as a mirror. So something like a screen — I prefer the word "screen" myself — where it's receiving information from the mind. And that's the only thing you can be aware of. You can't get behind consciousness and you can't peek behind it and find out what's causing all this rubbish. You can't look over it, through it. That's it. What we're actually experiencing now is that screen of consciousness.

And you can see it has no boundary itself. The boundaries are created by the room you're in. If there was no room here, you'd have the sky. So it's completely open, entirely, of course, dependent on the senses, but it is a mirror.

Now, the awareness is in the five *khandhas*. It hasn't separated out completely, normally speaking. When I'm speaking now, my awareness and the five *khandhas* are hopefully in unison. If my awareness was elsewhere, then I presume I'd stop or talk gibberish. Something weird would happen.

But when you sit in meditation, you pull yourself out and suddenly you're aware of sensations down there in the body, images and stuff in the mind. You're also aware of being this observer. Now that sense of the observer is a double take. You're aware of being the observer. So you're saying to yourself, "I am aware of myself as an object." So that must be a mirror image of awareness itself coming back from that mirror.

And so to separate that, of course, means that the awareness completely pulls out of the five *khandhas*. And that's what we mean by a *Nibbānic* experience. And you can't do that by will. This is the unfortunate thing. You can get to that position of the observer by will, by just keep looking at it, pointing to, noting. But you can't actually go beyond that particular thing by will, or at least I've never been able to, because it's basically a mirror image of the constant presence of the awareness.

So that's this business of the observer and awareness. And you can see that in time, the accent shifted. So from the Buddha's teaching, what he's specifically interested in is getting people to experience *Nibbāna*, the experience of *Nibbāna*, which is, in his words, *suññā* — it's empty. Empty of what? It's empty of whatever the heart, mind, thoughts, our psychophysical organism can produce. It's empty of that.

And then later on, of course, the movement is towards, well, if there is this experience, what is it that experiences it? And that's where the Buddha himself wanted to keep off. Because once you start talking about an "it" that experiences, you're into the old terminology of soul, self, et cetera, et cetera. And he seems to be very shy of that.

But of course, he does come close to it because he has to make some sort of declaration about *Nibbāna*, about what that experience is. So every evening I say, "There is an unborn, an undying, an uncreated."

And I'm using the word "an" — in the Pali, it's just past tense. There is unborn, undying *Nibbāna*, and so on and so forth. You see, there's no "a" or "the." So it leaves it very open. And then he says, if there were not this, there'd be no escape from birth and death and so on and so forth. So that's one of the very famous verses that come from what's known as a collection of his inspiring verses, the *Udāna* Sutta.

And the other one is the *āyatana*, which you can translate as a dimension. So remember, the *āyatana* are your six sense bases and each base is discrete. It's separate from the other. You can't see through your nose, although people have tried. And they're completely separate from each other. And you can talk about them as different dimensions of experience, different spheres of experience.

So then he says that there is this sphere where none of this exists, where there's no coming, no going, no standing still, there's no time, there's no space, there's nothing. He's saying that just this is the end of suffering. So it's not as though he doesn't try to get across some idea of what *Nibbāna* is, but he's very coy of turning it into a soul or a self or anything like that.

And I think that was because of his time and place where the other sects were quite clear. The Jains, the Brahmins — all those were quite clear that there was this soul, an eternal soul. The Hindus now of course talk about "I am that. I am that." So that's one way of neutralizing it without creating too many concepts. "I am that."

So that gives you, I think, some pointers hopefully. There is of course the lovely verses from Huineng. Huineng was the sixth patriarch. He was a very poor fellow — he ended up working in the kitchens and stuff. And the master was retiring and so he wanted somebody to take over the heir to his monastery, or to the tradition rather, the whole Zen tradition, or Chan, as they would call it.

And so he asked people to write their understanding. Well, there was a monk within the monastery who was considered to be the successor by everybody, and he wrote this verse. He says, "The body is like the bodhi tree, the heart is a mirror bright. Every day wipe it clean, so no dust may alight," you see.

And when Huineng saw that, he reckoned he hadn't quite got it. So without putting his name to it, he wrote, "There is no bodhi tree and the heart has no stand. There's nothing whatsoever. Where can the dust alight?" And the master then realized that he was, of course, the sixth patriarch. So he had to escape. He told him to go and hide himself because the other monks would have killed him, I think.

So there you've got a materialist view — basically, it's just the mind. You're polishing the mind to make it perfect and beautiful and wonderful. And then you have a transcendent point of view where it says that there's something else beyond that.

So then we come to the next section of questions. Things like: Could you say more about intentions and why it's good to note them? If memory is a part of perception, then how are past lives experienced transferred via rebirth? If these memories transfer and form the new *saṅkhāra*, then what is the difference between them? Does Freddie the pheasant have Buddha nature?

Looking very strange. How can it have karma when it has no conception of right or wrong?

And then the final one which is a bit... It says that—I asked the person who wrote this but he couldn't remember—but he says that Thich Nhat Hanh says that the idea of rebirth was only included in Buddhism to make religion palatable to Hindu society at the time. That's basically the argument of the materialists. But a recent book by Analayo, who is now the sort of doyen of Buddhist studies on rebirth, proved without a shadow of a doubt it was the Buddha's teaching. He definitely taught rebirth one way or the other.

And he also makes—so as to make Buddha's unpalatable to the common people and he gives them a reason to live meritorious lives. Well, that sounds awful to me. It's like you're kidding people just to make them live well, and then they're going to annihilate. I mean, it's just weird. But instead, I think he said the energy of the being simply returns to the greater energy when we die. Well, that's very much a Hinduistic idea as well. So I don't know whether Thich Nhat Hanh said that or not. It's definitely not. Whoever says that, I think the book by Analayo created quite a commotion really because it makes it quite plain. It's just part and parcel of that teaching.

So now how is it that karma is so important? Well, we have to go back again to this sense of self, because it's through that sense of self—the mirror image of a sense of self—that you enter into the world of the mind, the heart mind, the body heart mind.

I'm sure you've all heard my use of the Narcissus myth, where he's looking in the pool, he falls in love with this very beautiful young man, and when he goes to grasp him, he drowns. And water is usually creativity in myth. So basically what—I mean, normally that myth is about self-love or self-pride and whatnot, but it works perfectly as a spiritual image because that's what we're doing. Awareness becomes aware of itself only through the phenomenal mind, through the body and mind. And in so doing it forms a relationship with that very same body and mind. And that relationship is me. That's where this idea of me turns up. My body and mine, me and mine.

So because of that, it forms a certain relationship with it concerning to make itself happy. Remember, all we want is to be happy for heaven's sake. And so it tries to do that by accumulating things, because it recognizes that when it enjoys something it's happy. So remember with the food—we don't often eat food for nourishment, we normally eat food because we want to feel happy. Like when you're traveling and you see a cafe, you don't go in there for a cup of coffee for the benefit of your body—to raise your spirits and all that.

So you form a relationship with the world whereby you're accumulating things, those things that make you happy. So it can be all sorts of things—it can be friends, it can be fame, it can be riches, whatever you feel makes you happy. And of course it's often determined by your talents. I mean, if you're good at making money, then you're going to make a lot of it. If you end up making friends, you try and make a lot of them. And so it goes on.

And eventually you've got this accumulation of stuff which makes you feel happy. And you're now saying, "I am my feeling." So we know that when I'm thinking, I'm saying, "I am my thoughts," but you're also, "I am my feelings." That's your romantic position. In our history, the Enlightenment was about "I think, therefore I am"—Descartes and all that. And it was all about rationality. And the movement against that is what we call romanticism. And they brought us back to the heart, to feeling, to nature and beauty and all that. And so for them, it was "I feel, therefore I am."

And you get that today, don't you? You get some people who say, "Well, I think," and the others will say, "Well, I feel." And they don't like each other. The person who feels thinks thinking is rigid and all that. And the person who thinks thinks that feeling is some mushy intuitive rubbish. They don't meet very well. So you've got this... I've lost me train of thought now. We've been... romanticism—where was that? Karma—thank you. Keep saying the word karma, I'll get back online.

So once you've accumulated stuff, of course then you're going to find other people want the same stuff as you. There's always that bit where either nature—like you might love walking in the hills and you get up one morning, it's just rain, rain, rain, and you feel disappointed for it. So nature, everything, is not always at our service. Friends are not at our service. So all these things that we've accumulated sometimes don't work. And that's when we either change position and seek something else to make us happy, or try and get rid of something that is upsetting me. So that's where your aversion comes from.

So there's your duality. As soon as you enter into this relationship with the world that we experience of wanting what is pleasant, holding on to it, maintaining it, developing it, pushing away what is unpleasant, you're into this constant contradiction. This contradiction or this conflict with the world as it is. Sometimes it works, but then it just gives—you can't hold on to what's making you happy at any time. So you can see, if we keep on going that way, then life's just going to get more miserable, especially as you get older, because all those things that used to make you really happy begin to disappear.

So the effort then is to seek out how—not why, how—we're creating suffering. This is the Buddha's question. He's not into metaphysics. He's into how do we create suffering?

So the one phrase about to see and understand suffering, things as they are, is actually to see and understand how things come to be. That would be the more direct translation of it. It's a past participle. To see and understand how things come to be. And that's why he gives us all this teaching, to look at ourselves from various standpoints, from the khandhas, from the ayatanas, the six sense bases, through the dependent origination as process. And he wants us to understand exactly where the kernel problem lies. And it lies in that moment of attachment of a wrong desire. And that's the word *tanha*, which is translated, because there's no words for these things—there's no direct words—it's craving. But as you know, it can be the simplest of desires, which can cause a lot of heartache because you're not getting what you want.

So that process is creating karma in the sense of future problems. So that as you run through the

dependent origination, you'll see when something comes up, which is pleasant or unpleasant, there's this reaction and then there's that reaction—identity with it. So remember it's see, I scream, I scream see, like, want, I, see there's the I, and then get. See, nothing happens until the I comes in, which empowers the process into an action. And once the action is done, then you have the beginning of it, the whole process, and the end of it.

But then, of course, you have the sankaras, which are sitting underneath the whole process, which are our conditionings. And every time we act in a way which is unwholesome, it reinforces a certain karma. So you've heard me say that emotions are like balloons inside us. They're not actually attached directly to the object that we're averse to. The balloon of attachment is not directly connected to the object we're attached to. It's our own internal reactions. And therefore it can be displaced anywhere. And the slightest pinprick can send out this huge addiction or this huge anger process.

So that whole process is the process by which we create karma in the sense of consequence. The sense of consequence. So that's why it's so important to catch these intentions. Because remember, an intention is a possibility. Nothing's actually happened. So if I get this thing about a cup of tea, if I'm aware of that, then I can make a decision as to whether it would be good for me to have a cup of tea or not. I haven't come across any time when it's not been good for me, by the way.

So it's a case of recognizing, all right, okay, now I have a choice. I can either let that desire burn out and therefore liberate myself from what might be an unwholesome habit, or I can reinforce it by acting upon it. That's the importance of noting the intention. Once it's moved into an act of mind, a thought pattern or speech or an action, then you've sent out a certain wave of energy which will have consequences.

And these waves of energy, this karma, not only is outwardly, especially through speech and action, so it affects other people and they might respond in ways that seem completely out of sync with the way that you had expressed yourself. It also has an internal wave. So it comes back into that attitude, that balloon, and it reinforces it. So remember, there's the other side too, which is all the beautiful things that we have inside us. And so when we see an intention, which is wholesome, our intention is then to empower that. And so that particular conditioning then becomes reinforced and just very slowly the heart begins to be purified and becomes more beautiful.

That's the process of recognizing intentions, catching them before they activate, and then having that moment of choice. That's the only bit of free will, inverted commas, that we've got. We haven't got a choice of no conditioning. We haven't got a choice of choosing one conditioning over another in any given moment—every given moment comes up with a conditioning, a sankara. And all we can do is have a look at that and see whether it's wholesome or not. And then we have that choice. And that choice is coming—the choice itself, the act of will is neutral, it's how you use it. That choice is coming from our discrimination, which is the level of our wisdom. And if people don't have that wisdom, then of course they just run along with their emotional states. And that's what makes people so blind sometimes.

The understanding is that when we die, the mental body rises out of the physical body. And it's the mental body that will seek another rebirth. What's actually seeking is the awareness, but it still has this mental body. Now, unfortunately, we have to use words which are pretty debased these days because of science and whatnot, like the word spirit and ghost—a disembodied entity. There's all sorts of ways of trying to describe that. But that's what happens. So you're actually carrying your sankaras, you see.

And then when you find rebirth in another being, those sankaras come with you. And in a sense, they're purified of their history. What you're actually carrying from one birth to the next are your attitudes. And so, for instance, it says in the scriptures, if you're stingy, you'll be born poor. Now, if you take these things literally, it doesn't work. But if you take it as a mental attitude, it does work because before you were stingy because you thought you didn't have enough. And when you're reborn, whatever you have, it's never enough. You're always born poor. A stingy person is always poor just by nature. Just that sense of poverty is with them all the way. So it's the sankaras that come with you.

Now, these sankaras do contain memories because people do have past life recall. And that's all you can say. It's been studied. And again, it's up to you to decide whether these things are true or not. In his book, Analayo does point to the works of Professor Stevenson, who did a lot of work researching children's past life memories. Because often children have it round about the age of three, four or five. If they have them in the West, of course, they're told to stop dreaming or something. But in the East, they're taken a bit more seriously.

And if you read his book, there's some remarkable things. The one that comes to mind—I barely remember it really—was a five-year-old who wouldn't call his parents his parents. He said they lived over in such and such a place. And it turned out to be true. He knew all about the family.

I've put a YouTube thing on the website about this little boy in America who, at the age of three or something, going around a museum seemed to know everything about aeroplanes. And it turns out that eventually, as the memories came back to him, he'd been a pilot in the Pacific War and had been shot down. And the Japanese take him out there and he's visibly upset at the place where the previous self... And he went to see the sister of this particular airman. The sister of this particular airman was alive and he was telling her things that only she would know, only family history and stuff. So that's on YouTube if you want to get over it, it's pretty well known now.

And that's pretty extraordinary to have such a clear recollection. Normally they're just flashbacks, but the one telltale characteristic of a past life experience is that the person experiences it as that person. You're not you, as you know. It's not a memory. Just for a moment, you are that. And in that sense, that's the same as bringing up a trauma from this life. You can have a past life memory from this life. So if a trauma comes up from childhood, you'll actually be that child re-experiencing it. You see what awaits the meditators. And it's usually—maybe that's too big a statement—but if you think of the mind as something much bigger than what we've experienced in this life, then the mind becomes pure by getting rid of its

turbulences. So often in meditation, when people meditate, what actually comes up are past lives which are not pleasant at all, which have to be expressed and blown out to the system.

Now, if there wasn't that process whereby the awareness became more and more aware of its nature, which is the process of wisdom, there'd be no way really of escaping this constant rebirth. I mean, that was, remember, the obsession of the Buddha's time. The idea that he'd be constantly reborn, reborn, reborn, back as a human being, or if he did something wrong, he'd come back as a buffalo and stuff like that.

That reminds me of a story. Some of you may have heard it because I've told it a few times in past talks. But there was a very famous case in Burma when I was there. Actually, no, I shouldn't say that because he was thought to be an Arahant. He had died and a few years after that, not so long after that, farmers were talking about him, two farmers, and this buffalo moved towards them. So they became rather suspicious, they moved away and tried it again, and every time they mentioned his name the buffalo came towards them. And so the rumor went around the whole village that in fact this was... and that was horrific for the family because he was a good man. So then there was a case. They brought a court case against defamation of character.

And so he's saying that this is the story. In court, the defendant said, "Well, we'll bring the ox, the buffalo to the door and it's up to you, judge. You call out the name and see what happens." So the judge calls out there and the buffalo comes. Case dismissed. That was it.

So anyway, how does that happen? You see, if you heard that story you'd think that's a lot of rubbish, right? But not in Burmese folklore, not in Burmese understanding. If you fall in debt to somebody, you have to repay the debt. And if you die in debt to somebody, you have to come back as one of their chattels. So here's this man, he's gone to Yangon to earn a load of money and he's died. And his last thought, which is meant to have tremendous power in your rebirth process, he has this sense of guilt: I've got to go back and pay this debt. And that's how he becomes reborn as a buffalo.

So there we are. I always tell another one too, actually, just to counteract that. There was an elderly woman came to see a monk and she said that her niece was having a baby. And she would dream, a very clear dream, that the energy was going from her heart to the niece's womb. And he told her, "Well, that's where you're going to do your next rebirth." So she didn't want to do that. So he said, "Well, you must pull it back mentally. You must pull back the energy to yourself." And as the story goes, the young woman had a miscarriage. So who knows? So all these tales from the East.

But you can see the logic of that *karma* in that particular story about the man who went to Yangon. So in a sense, what we're talking about, first of all, is a sort of cosmic moral justice, just as there's a law, subatomic laws and laws of chemistry and biological laws. There's a sort of moral law within the universe whereby a being begins to cleanse their karma and eventually liberates themselves from suffering. And you can only do that really through rebirth, with the idea of rebirth.

Again, they don't like using the word reincarnation, which brings in the idea of this eternal self. See, the Buddha doesn't like personalising it. He doesn't like personalising that process. He tries to remain completely impersonal.

So what about Freddy? Freddy the Pheasant? How's he not going to be born a pheasant again? Do you remember, you might have read the biography of this nun. What's her name again? Mechi Chow. Yeah, Mechi Chow. And she has this ability to talk to animals. And I've also got a link on the website to a woman. I think she's a South African woman who is able to communicate with animals. And there's this cow being very badly treated and dies. And she comes to her and says, "I'm really fed up. How do I get to be born a human being?" And it's very difficult, very difficult for a lower being to move to a higher level. But she doesn't explain how or how it might happen.

There's also YouTube, I think I've got it on the website too, which asks the questions, do animals have a morality? And definitely the higher animals, the apes and stuff, they definitely have a sense of shame and a sense of guilt, it seems, when they do something which is harmful to one of their own.

With old Freddy, well, who knows what... Freddy's making decisions all the time. He made a decision to stay here. So he's got that feel for a meditation centre. So it might be that as he dies, he thinks, oh, got to find a meditation centre. Might not be verbal. They have to be verbal. Animals think, remember, they just don't have the verbal, but they definitely have images. And I mean, a dog remembers who their owner is, things like that.

It's not as though they aren't also building up *sankhāras*, but of course they don't have this ability to reflect and that of course is a bit of a drawback when it comes to trying to become liberated. So it's just the general understanding that over time the chain of being just moves upwards, one way or the other. But again, that's not really explained. The process whereby that happens, the Buddha doesn't explain.

So that... Oh, look at the time. So that brings to an end our business of karma.

Well, just as a little aside to that, is the five hindrances are related to the *sankhāras*. The five hindrances, they're all *sankhāras*. So they're all our habits. They're just the negative ones, just as the seven factors of enlightenment would be our positive ones.

And then it says, could you explain the heart base, the physical base for the mind consciousness? How do we use it in practice? Well, I was very relieved to hear that the heart base was something that was concocted by commentaries. It's not in the scriptures and it's not in the Abhidhamma. And what they did, what the commentaries, whoever was writing the commentaries thought, well, seeing the process of vision has a physical base, the eye and so on and so forth. So the mind itself, the heart mind must have a base. So they decided it was this phial of blood, which is in the heart, the physical heart, which nobody can find, of course.

And the Buddha doesn't say what the base is. So I think the mind base is the whole body. It's the whole

thing, the emotional, the thought thing. It's all within the body itself. I've tried to find out, but I don't think the ancients knew what the brain was for. I mean, if you think about it, the brain doesn't feel anything. So for instance, like my father had a stroke. He didn't say my brain. I mean, we now know there's something happened in the brain, but that's not what he experienced. He experienced a loss of movement and stuff on this side. So if you don't, if people know that there's this grey floppy stuff up in the head and it falls out and you can see it, I mean, you wouldn't think much of it, would you? You'd think, well, what is that?

Because remember, people before, well, Westerners really, before the rational sort of Enlightenment period, thought and feeling weren't separate. In the East, you often get people saying, "I think," meaning they're coming from their heart base and their mind is expressing what they feel. It's not, they're not so head-based. I think that's probably more and more untrue as they become more and more sort of Western educated in a sense, by which I mean, the process of rationality and stuff.

So the heart base is the body. It doesn't say.

And that gives rise to, see it says, the question is, how does consciousness give rise to body and mind? That's the wrong, it's not put quite rightly. They are dependencies. For the body and mind to arise, consciousness has to be there. That doesn't mean to say consciousness creates body and mind. It just means that you don't know you've got a body and mind until consciousness arises. So when you're in deep sleep, there's no consciousness, right? So you don't know whether you've got a body and mind. So that dependence origination is dependent. No, it's not caused. It's not caused by anything. It's dependent on this. This arises dependent on that. And that's the whole business about how everything arises dependent on so many other factors.

Yeah. So you have to be slightly careful with the language there. The Buddha talks about it as two sheaves of hay, how they would stack them after being cut, leaning against each other. So that's it, it's consciousness and body and mind. The one is dependent on the other. That's his sort of image for it.

So I think we'll have to leave it at that. I've not missed out... Yeah, the other bit gets a bit... So what I'll do is I'll finish off this on tomorrow evening. I'll tell you afterwards what I said.

So I can only hope my words have been of some assistance that I've not created even greater confusion and that by your devotion to practice you will be liberated from all suffering sooner rather than later.

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