The Sweet Essence - Part 1 (Madhupindika Sutta)

Patrick Kearney · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Patrick Kearney · 56:14

Tonight and tomorrow night we're going to look at the Madhupindika Sutta. Madhupindika is usually translated as "the honey ball," though I translate it as "the sweet essence." This is a quite famous discourse, and we're going to take two nights to unpack it. The talk is going to be abstract, technical, intellectual, obscure, serious, mysterious, and difficult. So you can all start taking a nap right now and just tune out.

Madhupindika—M-A-D-H-U—means "the sweet essence," and Pindika is P-I-N-D-I-K-A. This is number 18 in the Majjhima Nikaya.

Our story begins with the Buddha visiting Kapilavatthu, staying in Nigrodha's park outside the city. He's in the park meditating when a wealthy man, probably a merchant, comes walking through. This man's nickname is Dandapani. Danda means stick, pani means hand—"stick in hand"—and he was called this because he was famous for his walking stick, which was made of gold. So he was wealthy, ostentatious, and quite well known, with an image of himself as being very interested in Dharma.

He's wandering through the park on his constitutional when he sees the Buddha sitting under a tree. He thinks this is the opportunity to ask a question. So he walks up, stands leaning on his walking stick, and asks, "What does the Samana teach? What does he declare? Here you are sitting under this tree—what's your teaching?"

The Buddha replies: "Friend, I teach so one does not stand arguing with anyone in the world, with its devas, its maras and brahmanas, its samanas and brahmanas, its rulers and peoples. I teach so that no perceptions underlie a brahmana who lives detached from desires, without confusion, with worries cut off, free from craving for any kind of becoming."

The first part of his answer—"I teach so one does not stand arguing with anyone in the world"—represents a quite typical move of the Buddha. He's asked what we could call a philosophical question, and he responds with an answer that belongs in the realm of ethics: how one lives. Basically, he describes the ethical result or expression of the teaching—how one lives if one is free from compulsion, free from drivenness.

This is important because for the Buddha, the teaching is always about how we live. That's what the Buddha is always interested in: broadly speaking, ethics. He creates theory, which can be quite elaborate—and we're going to go into it tonight and tomorrow night—but it's all about shedding light on

how we live and changing how we live. It's all about ethics.

His first response is about ethics and is directed precisely at the situation in which he finds himself. Dandapani is standing, leaning on his stick—not very respectful. Incredibly disrespectful. You can tell that he's not a Buddhist when he doesn't address the Buddha as Bhante or the Blessed One. He says, "What does the Samana teach?" Samana means the reverend, the philosopher, whatever. But his attitude is very aggressive. He's standing above the Buddha, leaning on his stick, as if to say: "So, you down there, what's your trip? What are you on about?"

We don't know whether he realized who he was talking to. Maybe he did.

I mean, the Buddha was quite famous. But if you hadn't met him before, how would you distinguish him from any other person in rags sitting under a tree? And so the Buddha was alone—no, he was alone. And this is his hometown? Yeah, he visited a number of times. We don't know. We never know. All we get is that he's living in Kapilavastu. So we never know which visit it was. We don't know. Can't tell.

So the Buddha's first response is to turn Dandapani's attention inwards to his own condition. You pretend or purport to be interested in Dharma, and yet the way you behave indicates you're completely alienated from that interest. So what drives you? Why are you acting in this way? What is the source of your arrogance?

It sounds to me like he's saying, why are you spoiling for an argument? Because the Buddha says, I don't argue. But why do people argue? What's underneath that? And so the first sentence is about ethics and the second one is what we might call depth psychology. Now the Buddha goes into the depths of the psyche—why it is that people live in conflict.

So he says, "I teach so that no perceptions underlie a Brahmana." This is a Brahman, but here it would mean practitioner, not a member of the Vedic priesthood. So no perceptions underlie a Brahmana living detached from desires, without confusion, with worries cut off, free from craving for any kind of becoming.

So the Buddha moves into the underlying source of what moves us, what shapes our chosen way of life. And here he's saying we are formed and moved by the underlying perceptions. I teach so that no perceptions underlie someone who lives appropriately.

So here we have the first technical term. There's a number of technical terms in this discourse: underlying perceptions. First of all, perception, which we've mentioned briefly. Perception is the recognition of a situation as being familiar. So perception gives us our familiar, meaningful world. It creates our sense of normality. And what we perceive, we take for granted as being real, what's really out there. And perception is habitual. It's a product of repetition from the past.

So, for example, if you hear someone speaking in your native language, you just hear them giving you a

message. But actually what the ears hear are a whole series of sounds, and it's the perception that turns it into a message. We recognise those words as containing these meanings. But if it's our own language, it's so deeply habitual that we don't even recognise it happening. We just hear the meaning. So it's a shortcut.

If you ever try to learn a second language, you discover how much work and how much time and effort it takes to develop that perception. It's not to be taken for granted. But because perception is habitual, in fact we do take our perceptions for granted. We don't look further. We don't investigate what underlies our perceptions and above all we don't understand that our normal everyday perception is a product of drivenness and delusion and therefore cannot be trusted. So this is the Buddha's perspective.

Actually, one example about perception—how it works in a meditation retreat—it hasn't happened here but often if you're teaching Dharma to a group of meditators, sometimes you get the challenge that comes up which clearly in the mind of the challenger is a brilliant, profound and unassailable challenge, and they say: "Ha ha, but what about the real world? What about that? What about the real world?"

Well, this "real world" is the product of perception. What the person is talking about is their habitual perceptions. And that's what appears to us to be real.

And it's usually for most people not to be questioned. If you do challenge these habitual perceptions, often the response will be aversion.

Underlying perception, or anusetti, refers to the deepest and most habitual movements of what we would call the unconscious mind. The Buddha talks about the anusaya, the underlying tendencies. This is the closest that he gets to talking about what we would regard as the unconscious mind.

The underlying tendencies are the potentialities deep within the heart-mind. They represent a potential for something to happen, something to arise, given a suitable trigger. If you're a long-term meditator, you might have had the experience of feeling that you've definitely grown out of some particular obsession. Then years later you're meditating away and suddenly—bang! There it is. You think, "That has been skulking in the background for the last ten years, and now here it is. It hasn't disappeared."

This might be an example of the underlying tendencies. Actually, it hasn't been skulking down there. It's a potentiality, not a real thing. But there's this potential, this pattern, such that given the appropriate conditions coming together, this will arise, this will pop up. These are the anusaya, the underlying tendencies.

Here the Buddha is talking about the underlying perceptions—the deepest, most habitual, most unconscious way in which we perceive ourselves and our world. What he's drawing attention to is the fact that we do not see these underlying forces. These underlying tendencies dominate the way that we live. They dominate what we think is going on, who we think we are, who we think other people are, and what we do about it.

What gives them their power is the fact that we don't see them. They're invisible. We are like puppets on strings, and of course what makes a puppet a puppet is the fact that they don't know that they're puppets. They don't know that they're being manipulated by the strings. We are being manipulated by these underlying perceptions. They are the deep habits that create our sense of reality, of normality, and they're associated with craving, drivenness, and delusion.

That's clear enough, isn't it? Not too complicated?

So awakening is being spoken of as a life in which no perceptions underlie the practitioner. There are no perceptions, no underlying perceptions. Nothing underneath the surface that's skulking and ready to jump up and condition us. For the practitioner who is in that condition—for whom there are no underlying perceptions—lives detached from desires. This means a life that is no longer driven, no longer obsessed.

But to find this we have to penetrate beneath surface appearances. These are very deep, and to get to them, we've got to go very deep to expose them.

Basically, what the Buddha has just done—if you think about the situation—is this: he's minding his own business. This arrogant fellow comes up, stands over him, treats him disrespectfully, and asks him a question. The Buddha, as they say in the Zen world, opens his mouth and shows his liver. He just gives him the whole teaching all at once—hits him with the full blast of the Dharma.

This is very interesting because he would not have done this unless he had seen some potential in Dandapani. For all this surface arrogance, there was someone who had the potential to be moved by the teaching. Otherwise the Buddha wouldn't have bothered with him.

So Dandapani actually does have some potential, but he is not interested and he walks off. I have to look up the sutta again, but he kind of waggles his eyebrows and twirls his stick and strolls off. Basically, I think his response would have been, "I've got absolutely no idea what you're talking about and I'm out of here."

Dandapani blows it. He blows his chance to be transformed—not because of his initial arrogance. The Buddha accepted that and addressed it directly. But he blows it because of his failure to stay and ask a question. He didn't stay and say, "Okay, you've just taught me something and I have no idea what you're talking about. Could you explain it to me?" He responds to his own inability to understand what's going on by concluding this is not worth taking seriously and walking away.

This is quite a common reaction.

It's very easy when faced with a situation like this to walk away. It's the easiest thing to do.

So in the evening the Buddha comes back home. The way that they would live, they would camp out somewhere. In the morning after the alms round they have the meal and then they go out and scatter and people do their own practice. They come back in the evening and they share stories, Dharma talks,

questions and answers and so on, have a social time and then crash out for the night and get up early in the morning and head off to alms round and so on.

So the Buddha comes home in the evening and he tells the bhikkhus the story of this encounter and he repeats what he's told Dandapani: "Friend, I teach so one does not stand arguing with anyone in the world. I teach so that no perceptions underlie a practitioner who lives detached from desires, without confusion, with worries cut off, free from craving for any kind of becoming."

But it turns out that it's not just Dandapani who is confused. The bhikkhus have absolutely no idea what the Buddha is talking about. None. This goes straight over their heads. But their response is quite different. They actually ask for an explanation. Could you expand on this? Could you explain what's going on here? And so the Buddha does.

You get the second teaching: "As for the cause through which we are harassed by concepts of perceptions coloured by proliferation, if there is nothing there to delight in, welcome and hold to, just this is the end of the underlying tendencies to obsession, aversion, views, doubt, conceit, desire for becoming and delusion. Just this is the end of turning to violence and weapons, to quarrels, fights, disputes, recriminations, malicious words and false speech. This is where these evil, unwholesome states cease entirely."

So this is the Buddha's expansion on his initial teaching. First of all, the idea of the underlying perceptions—these have been expanded into concepts of perceptions coloured by proliferation. *Papañca saññā saṅkhā*.

So we've seen that perception is what gives us our normal everyday world. It gives us our sense of normality. Once we think we know what's happening in the world or in any given situation, at that point we stop paying attention because we already know. This is why it's so easy driving a car to space out. Because I know how to drive the car. Compared with my first driving lesson when push this, press that, turn this, look here—so I really have to pay attention. But once it's habitual, I can just turn off and think about something else and just do it.

So this is perception. Once we decide we know what's going on then we don't look again because we think we know.

Now this is where perceptions become concepts of perceptions. So perceptions already freeze the world but then they get doubly frozen through concepts of perceptions. And the concepts are even more frozen and more divorced from what's actually happening than the perceptions. And these concepts are closely associated with *papañca*, usually translated proliferation, could also be translated as complication. And we're going to look at this later.

Now, the Buddha addresses the cause or condition. As for the cause or the condition through which we are harassed by concepts of perceptions coloured by proliferation, the term he uses here is *nidāna*. And the bhikkhus would instantly recognize this term. This is a key technical term, and it's always used in the

context of dependent arising.

Dependent arising is all about conditionality. If something is happening, something else is conditioning it. And we've been talking about this in the practice all the way through. So we've been saying if I'm investigating an experience, one way I can do it is I can ask the question, what's feeding this? So what's happening to cause this? Something is happening, or something else must be happening to stimulate this. Otherwise this would not be happening. And in turn, what does this feed? If I cultivate this, what's the result? There will be a result. So what is it?

So when we ask what feeds this, in technical terms, we're asking what is its *nidāna*?

When we ask what feeds this, in technical terms, we're asking what is its *nidana*. And when we ask what does this feed, we're asking what does this function as the *nidana* for.

So *nidana* introduces the idea of conditionality. A *nidana* is something which is caused by something else and in turn causes something else. A *nidana* is something which is caused by something and in turn causes something else. So it's part of this network of conditionality. And as soon as the Buddha drops in this term, everybody knows he's talking about dependent arising.

So as for the cause or the condition through which we are harassed by concepts of perceptions colored by proliferation—what's causing this? How does this flow?

"If there is nothing there to delight in, welcome and hold to, just this is the end of the underlying tendencies to obsession, aversion, views, doubt, conceit, desire for becoming and delusions."

If there is nothing there to delight in—remember we talked about delight before when we were talking about craving? *Nandi*. Delight is the gratification that comes from satisfying a desire, but it's always associated with agitation. It's like, "That was good, I've got to do it again." So it's stimulated, excited, agitated, and it seeks repetition. Once is not enough. Twice would be better. Twice was good, but another would be even better. So seconds were very good, but I've got to go back for thirds. The thirds were great, except it's getting a bit heavy, but I'll try the fourths. Damn it, it's all gone. These greedy bastards were ahead of me.

So this is delight, and it's always associated with restlessness, agitation, and therefore repetition. So it's actually painful although it feels like it's good, but if we look at it closely, it's actually painful.

And holding—"If there is nothing there to delight in, welcome and hold to." Holding indicates the state of being stuck. Can't move on from it.

When the Buddha says, "if there is nothing there," the "nothing"—well, what he's talking about so far is the process of what we've called the constructed state, the flow of constructed and conditioned events, *samsar a*. When he says, "if there is nothing there," that nothing indicates the unconstructed, the not-born, the not-become, *nibbana* itself.

So in this teaching, in this bit, he says: As for the cause through which we are harassed by concepts of perceptions colored by proliferation, if there is nothing there underneath it, then that's it. No more problem. Colored by what? Colored by proliferation or complication. We're going to get to proliferation later on.

Is this making any sense at all? If it's making sense, you're way ahead of the *bhikkhus*, because the *bhikkhus* are still completely confused and they still don't know what's going on, except that they're too embarrassed to say so because the teacher has just explained it to them and it's kind of disrespectful to say, "Mate, we've got no idea what you're talking about."

I find that a little bit strange. Some of them would be fully awakened. Maybe these were particularly dull because they get scalded later on. But not by the Buddha. It could be the newbies. He could have just ordained a new bunch. It's quite possible. Isn't it even possible though that *arahants* who aren't particularly intellectual wouldn't grasp it? Yes, that's quite possible too.

So the Buddha, having explained this, gets up and leaves. He goes into his hut, settles down for the night. But the *bhikkhus* are left with this problem that the Buddha has just given them a teaching and it sounds very profound, but they've got absolutely no idea what it's about. So they need someone to explain it to them.

"Who will expound this in detail?" they ask. And so they decide upon Venerable Mahakaccana, who is in part of this camp because of all the disciples, Mahakaccana was the most skilled in explaining in detail what has been taught in brief.

And this actually introduces us to a basic structure of the Buddhist teaching. Often you get teachings which are very brief and need to be unpacked, which is what we do in these dharma talks. So this is commentary. And the process of commentary would have begun in the Buddha's lifetime—here we see it. We see an initial teaching, very brief, condensed! Then we see it unpacked and expanded—commentary. And then we're going to see this one expanded and unpacked even more—commentary on the commentary. This is typical of the Buddhist traditions.

Much of the intellectual firepower over the past two and a half millennia has been devoted to unpacking these teachings and explaining in detail what has been said in brief. As you can already tell, the suttas are often very compressed. It's like they're composed in shorthand, meant to be unpacked. The Sanskrit term sutra (sutta is Pali), and later on, centuries after the Buddha, this system became highly developed among literate Indians. You would compose a sutra absolutely packed with meaning—in fact impossible to figure out without a commentary. The person who composed the sutra would also compose the commentary. A classic example is Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, if you've ever looked at them.

So the bhikkhus go up to Venerable Mahakachana, tell him the whole story, and ask him to explain what's going on. What's the first thing he does? He scolds them. "You had the Buddha sitting right in front of you.

You could have asked him, but you've come to ask me? What is the problem with you people?" The bhikkhus are all embarrassed and shamefaced, but they say, "Well, what to do? He's gone and you're here, so could you just explain it?"

So Mahakachana says, "Okay, okay." And this passage is particularly famous, often commented upon. Mahakachana says, "Depending on eye sensitivity and forms, visual awareness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. Contact conditions feeling." Have you heard this before? Yes, Monday. So we've gone through this before.

And then he adds: "What we feel, we perceive. What we perceive, we think about. What we think about, we proliferate. Because of what we have proliferated, we are harassed by concepts of perceptions colored by proliferation, regarding past, future and present."

He continues: "Depending on ear sensitivity and sounds, depending on nose sensitivity and odors, depending on tongue sensitivity and tastes, depending on body sensitivity and tangibles, depending on mind sensitivity and phenomena, mind awareness arises. The meeting of the three is contact, contact conditions feeling. What we feel, we perceive. What we perceive, we think about. What we think about, we proliferate. Because of what we have proliferated, we are harassed by concepts of perceptions colored by proliferation regarding past, future and present."

So this is the teaching which we'll go through. Of course it goes through the six sense fields which we talked about last night—and the six sense fields are all about the immediacy of experience and the feeling that is always part of that immediacy. The realm of affect, of stimulus and response. We are touched by something and we respond. That's built in.

So depending on eye and forms, visual awareness arises. The meeting of the three is contact, contact conditions feeling. We are moved to do something, to respond, before we make any kind of choice about it.

It's just automatic, it just happens. And so this is at the very basis, this is ground zero of experience. What Mahakachana is describing here is natural process. There's a sensitivity, there's a corresponding object, there's the corresponding awareness. They meet and feeling arises. This is just natural process.

It's not good, it's not bad, it's just nature. Today it's been raining. Previously it was sunny. It's not good, it's not bad, it's just nature. It's just what happens. That's it. There's no problem and there's no person who has a problem. It's just natural process.

Then the second sentence: "What we feel, we perceive. What we perceive, we think about. What we think about, we proliferate."

The first thing you notice is that here, someone has just appeared. There's no "us" in the first sentence. There's a sensitivity, a sense object, awareness—bang, they come together, feeling. But in the next sentence, there's someone there who is feeling. Someone has just appeared. This is the self. "What we feel,

we perceive." So it's no longer physical and mental events arising and ceasing. It's someone who is feeling and perceiving.

From feeling comes agency. There's someone around. There's someone doing something. And from feeling comes perception. So our recognition of what's going on, of our familiar world, emerges out of our affective responses, or we could say, speaking broadly, our emotional responses. They are what create or condition the perceptions.

In other words, first comes the heart's response, then comes the head's understanding. First comes what we would, in our culture, normally call emotion. Then comes reality. I think this is a very important principle, particularly in a culture which overvalues reason. We're all supposed to be operating on reason. Fine. Except reason is based on emotion. So if we don't address that, the reason is skewed.

So what we feel, we perceive. What we perceive, we think about. We are presented with a world that we recognize, that is familiar, that makes sense. And then Mahakachana says this includes vedana, so we're already responding, we're already engaged, but we don't leave things there. We need this world to mean something, and so to create meaning, we start thinking about the world, about this world which is created by feeling and perception. So we start thinking about what we perceive, our normal perceptions.

Have you ever done that? Once or twice, perhaps? So what we perceive, we think about. Now we're creating this world of concepts that sits on top of the perceptions. We've got the contact, the feeling, the perception, and on top of that, the thinking.

What we think about, we proliferate. Or we complicate things. This is papañca.

And this is the mind going into hyperdrive in its determination to read more into the experience than is necessary or even useful. Have you ever thought about something much more than was necessary or useful? This is proliferation. This is papañca. Complication.

We do this because we're driven by affect, by feeling, and everything that comes with it. So this proliferation creates a world which is distorted, complicated, and a product of craving and delusion.

We've got two steps in. And then the third sentence: "Because of what we proliferate, we are harassed by concepts of perceptions colored by proliferation regarding past, future and present."

Notice in the second one, we feel, we perceive, we think. There's someone there making choices. There's agency. We are doing something. But when the process matures in this third sentence—"because of what we proliferate we are harassed by"—we are no longer doing it. It's happening to us. We are now the victims of circumstances beyond our control.

Have you ever had that feeling, that sense, as thoughts are rampaging through the mind: "I'm not doing this. This is happening to me. If I had any choice in the matter I would stop, but I don't"? This is what Mahākaccāna is talking about. We're completely driven by forces out of our control in a world that seems

separate and alien from us. This is our normal everyday world in which we live.

What dominates now are concepts—in Pali, saññā—and these are fixed ways of experiencing and labeling the world. What's happened is we've lost touch with the directness of experience and we're living in a world of shadows. Notice that we're no longer in a world of perceptions, but in a world of concepts of perceptions. There's an extra layer put on top of the perceptions.

The perceptions themselves are already the product of habit. But now on top of that there's an extra layer—concepts of them. So there's even more alienation. It's like a kind of cling wrap that covers everything.

Sometimes meditators will have the experience that they're trying to do something really simple, like follow the breathing, for example—directly experience the body and the mind—but we find ourselves somehow not connecting with it. It's like there seems to be some barrier. "I feel out of touch, separated somehow from the experience, isolated, not completely with it."

Sometimes we don't even notice this until somehow we stumble into an experience where we're genuinely intimate with the experience. We're simply with it. "Wow, this feels good." And then we lose it. And then we realize just how alienated and separated we normally are from simple experience.

So these are the concepts of perceptions, colored by proliferation. Does that make sense?

"What did you call it before? Did you call it saṅkhāra?"

Saññā. The concept is the translation of saññā, which is very similar to saṅkhāra. It's a different... S-A-N-K-H-A. From the same root, saṅ with khā.

This is an old Indian technical term that the Buddha would have inherited. It's an old term, a pre-Buddhist term. It basically means classification, enumeration, classifying, conceptualizing, analyzing—making sense out of something through some kind of system of classification. Here it's being used in a general sense of concept.

"Patrick, where do the unconscious potentialities sort of seep into that hierarchy of proliferation?"

They're way at the bottom. That's part of the dependent arising—that there are certain things operating so deep that they're generally invisible. In the standard formula of dependent arising, there's a standard twelve-fold formula, and the Buddha says delusion conditions constructions, constructions condition awareness.

So with awareness, we see what's going on. At the bottom is delusion. These conditioned constructions, and this process of the delusion conditioning the constructions—this will be down in that subconscious level. And what we get is the finished product. We get a sense of something happening at the level of awareness. But there's already something going on before we get to it, before we notice it.

You can tell that in your meditation practice. It's like there's something under there. We talk about going deeper in the meditation. It's like taking that awareness and going deeper down and then noticing things that previously we never saw, that were unconscious.

"Because of what we proliferate, we are harassed by concepts of perceptions coloured by proliferation regarding past, future and present." You notice that with concept we have a world of experienced time. Past, future and present appear now at this point with concepts. This is what the Buddha calls permanence, and only concepts provide permanence.

So let's take proliferation, papañca. Let's say I'm sitting meditating and my mind is in a spin. It's just pouring off thoughts. Now for this group, obviously you have to just imagine that there are some meditators who undergo this. Obviously you can't call upon direct experience, but just imagine that someone's going through this process.

This process is the manifestation of impermanence. It's a very good manifestation of it. It's constantly changing. It's constantly moving. It doesn't stay still for a second. So the proliferation is directly experienced as change.

But the concepts created by the proliferation are perceived as permanent and containing time. "It's always been like this for me. I always thought this was going to happen and now it's happened and it's going to be like this forever." So we have time—past, future and present—but it comes about through the concept.

The experience itself is just right now and it's changing all the time. But the concepts of the experience tell us, no, this is all about what's permanent. This is all about what happens, what survives from the past going through the present to the future.

So I'm lost in thought. The actual experience is constantly dancing and changing. What's permanent is the concept about it. "I always get lost in thought and it's always like this." Does that make sense? So where there's concept, there's time. Where there's no concept, there's no time.

What Mahakaccana is presenting here is how it happens that from the natural process of the immediacy of experience, the mind creates, gets into this process which ends up with our minds running completely riot. Our minds are totally out of control and therefore our lives are totally out of control. And we're lost in drivenness and delusion.

So what Mahakaccana has done is give a particular view of how the constructed world of the constructed is constructed—of how it works, how we built it. So we have built this world in which I'm here and I've got a problem and this is the real world and I'm stuck because this is reality, this is normal, this is me. He's laid out how we create the problem, and then he starts laying out how we create the solution to the problem. We'll look at that tomorrow.

"I've noticed in my environment that we spend so much time thinking that concept, when we skipped over

perception and gave that just hardly any attention, jumped over it to then get lost in the thinking about what's not there."

Yes, because it's so familiar. We talked before about the power, the attraction of narrative—the narrative power of an experience. And we tend to go for the drama, basically. We like the drama. Something nice and juicy to chew on. Exactly. And especially when the result is so satisfactory. Viz me.

"Would it really be possible to exist and live just with pure perception? I mean, we kind of need procedural memory..."

We'll get to that tomorrow. So let's have those questions tomorrow, because this is Mahakaccana. He's laid out the problem. Tomorrow he'll lay out the other side.

So tonight he's been laying out the *sankhata*, the constructed, and tomorrow he'll lay out the unconstructed. So we get a sense there. So did they understand the six dimensions? Well it's not over yet. We'll find out tomorrow.

I think all the wisdom traditions have some story like this. This is interesting because of the psychological structure of it. It's very detailed.

You asked if from feeling comes agency—is that a kind of chicken and egg problem? Do you need agency to have feeling? Feeling precedes agency for sure. It precedes everything except the actual touch. And it precedes meaning as well.

The other question was about the unconscious—if it's what we don't know we don't know, is the process of meditation really just looking at the coloring? You mentioned perceptions having a coloring—coloured by perception, coloured by proliferation. So is it about becoming more sensitive to that coloring?

Yes, becoming more sensitive to what emerges out of the unconscious. As you say, if it's unconscious we don't know. But what the Buddha pays attention to—the Buddha does not pay attention to the unconscious because it's not part of empirical experience. He's only interested in empirical experience.

What we know is this arises and it ceases. We can expand that: this arises when that arises, and this ceases when that ceases. So remember the model of the four truths? There we had craving and *dukkha*. So what we have is what arises into view, into awareness and how that plays. That's all we've got. That's all we can ever have. If what's underneath is—who knows?

So he doesn't actually say there is an unconscious mind, because there's no empirical basis for it. What he says is you can experience the fact that there are these deep potentialities because sometimes, bang, something comes up and you realize, "Oh, I was caught in that fifty years ago." And it's happened in the same way.

And this is the Buddha's radical empiricism. If it's beyond experience it's just not going to go there.

Whatever you say about it is just blah blah blah. So don't even waste your time.

I told you it would be abstract, technical and obscure and I was right. Thank you very much.

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