The Mirror of Dharma Part 4

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So this is the fourth in our series on insight, looking at Mahasi Sayadaw's approach to understanding how insight works in particular. Tonight we're going to talk about awareness and how that plays into the emergence of insight and understanding. We'll also go back to the beginning of the retreat, where we talked about how the practice that we're doing centers around awareness, or some people would say consciousness—in Pali, viññāṇa.

Now, we defined awareness. What do we mean by awareness? Awareness is the presence of that which is present. We compared it to light. Imagine stepping into a dark room at night. What is present? Only darkness. Then we switch on the light and suddenly the room itself and everything in the room are present. Awareness is like light. It is what makes the room itself and the contents of the room present to us.

We have the expression "he saw the light," but actually we don't see light. We see the world because of light. Right now, are you seeing? If you're seeing, that means you are experiencing awareness, visual awareness. So what are you seeing? You're seeing the room around you. You're not seeing light. You're seeing the room illuminated by light. And how do you know there is light? Because the room and what's in the room are present to you.

We can compare awareness to light, and we could say that awareness is both the most obvious aspect of our experience and the most mysterious. It's obvious, first of all, because we cannot have experience without awareness. Are you experiencing something now? Then your experience includes awareness. But awareness is also mysterious, because awareness is not a something, but the presence of something—not a thing, but presence itself.

We can see from our experience that awareness always has an object. Where there is presence, there is something which is present. When we are aware, we are aware of something. When we are seeing, we are seeing something. When we are hearing, we are hearing something. When we are thinking, we are thinking something. Experience comes to us always as a package—you could say a dyad—of awareness and its object. They come and go together.

In fact, the Buddha defines awareness largely by its object. This is one of the ways in which he defines it. He says, "Awareness is defined by whatever condition dependent upon which it arises. When awareness arises dependent on eye sensitivity and forms, it is reckoned as visual awareness. When it arises dependent on ear sensitivity and sounds, it is reckoned as auditory awareness," and so on. He goes through the six senses, including mind as the sixth sensitivity.

When we start a meditation practice, we are given an object to be aware of, and we're given something clear and obvious. When we ground awareness on something clear and something readily available, such as some aspect of the body, then the awareness of that object can become clear. At least this is what Mahasi Sayadaw says. So we have the basic instruction: note something clear and obvious. This is, of course, the grounding object or the primary object.

Awareness and its object always go together, and when we start, the emphasis is on the object. But there's also a sense in which awareness can be differentiated from its object. Take, for example, the practice of what we call open awareness, which we did at the end of the first week. We began by grounding awareness on some clear object, such as breathing. Then we stepped back, as it were.

to allow different objects of experience to come and go within the field of awareness. Instead of holding tightly to a single object and regarding anything else as distraction—therefore something to be pushed away—we allow awareness to wander. It goes on its journeys away from and back to our meditation object. We allow that, and we don't get in the way. However, what we're doing is maintaining awareness of these journeys. We watch awareness move from one object to another. This is what we could call open awareness.

You notice that in this style, the interest has shifted. We're not so much interested in our chosen meditation object. What we're interested in is whatever awareness chooses to be aware of. And what this reveals is a lighter relationship to the object of awareness. We're no longer heavily invested in any particular object. In fact, over time, we may find ourselves more interested in awareness itself rather than what we are aware of. At some point we may even begin to wonder: is my meditation object awareness itself, rather than what I am aware of?

To get a sense of this style of practice, imagine yourself sitting in a train at a window seat, facing the window as the landscape rolls by. Now, what you could do is look at the passing view—first there's this house, then that yard, then this road, then that park as they're moving along. Or you could rest your eyes and just receive the passing landscape without trying to examine anything at all.

You can see that these are two different relationships to seeing. In the first one, looking, what's at the center of our interest is the object of visual awareness—what we are looking at, even if it's only momentary. In the second, receptive awareness, what's at the center is awareness itself rather than what we are aware of. So we have two different relationships to visual awareness and two different experiences emerging out of those relationships.

This brings us to mindfulness, which, as we've seen, translates the Pali word *sati*, literally meaning memory. We compared mindfulness to the signs we see at railway stations: "Mind the gap." What the sign communicates is a reminder to remember the gap between the train and the platform—not some hours after we've finished the journey, but in the very act of stepping into or out of the train. The sign is asking us to remember the present. And this is mindfulness.

So how do we know we are mindful? If we're doing the practice, how do we know that mindfulness is developing? Mindfulness presents as the felt continuity of awareness over time. Mindfulness, you could say, is awareness extended through time. This has a very distinct flavor to it, which you're all familiar with—quite different from normal everyday awareness that jumps from one thing to another.

To get a sense of this mindfulness as memory, we gave the example of driving down familiar streets and suddenly realizing that we have no memory of the previous three blocks, even though we went through a set of traffic lights. If I'm in that situation and I ask myself, was I aware during those three blocks? I would answer yes, because if I was not aware, I'd be dead or seriously injured. But if I asked myself, was I mindful during those three blocks, the answer would definitely be no.

We see the same movement in the ordinary, everyday experience of distraction when we're meditating. I'm sitting, tracking my meditation object, when suddenly my mind slides into thinking. What is remarkable, when I notice it, is that I don't know that I've just made this slide. I'm thinking, but I don't know that I'm thinking. Then suddenly, I know I am thinking. I know I'm distracted.

So what happened when I slid off into the thinking? I forgot. I forgot my meditation object, or I forgot I was meditating. In that forgetting, I slid into habitual thinking without noticing. Then, sometime later, I realized I was thinking. What happened just then? I remembered. I remembered my meditation object, or I remembered I'm meditating.

Mindfulness training is training ourselves to remember this now, this present experience, by tracking experience continuously over time. When we look at this experience of distraction—which has a huge amount to teach us—we can ask: when I was lost in thought, was I aware of thinking? I'd say yes, because later, looking back, I can remember that I was thinking.

and perhaps even what I was thinking. However, at the time, while I was in the distraction, while I was aware, I was not aware of my awareness.

Then later, when I realize I'm distracted, when I remember the present, when I am mindful, I'm not just aware of my thinking—I am aware that I am aware of my thinking.

Notice the difference between these two situations, and what remains the same. In both of them, I am aware. But when I'm lost in distraction, I do not recognize my awareness. I am not aware that I am aware. I am not aware of awareness itself. Once I recognize that I am distracted, however, I am aware of what is happening in my distraction. I recognize my awareness. I am aware of awareness itself.

This awareness of awareness is an aspect of mindfulness. It's built into it. We could say that mindfulness always has this recursive quality. And we could sum this up by saying that when we are distracted, we forget our awareness; when we realize we are distracted, we remember our awareness. Mindfulness contains this awareness of awareness.

But how can we be aware of awareness itself? How does that work?

It works, perhaps, because awareness functions like a field. This field can be very wide or very narrow, but within it, we find a whole range of experience. We get a sense of this in ordinary, everyday meditation experience. Let's say I'm sitting, being aware of breathing. In the background, I can feel my body posture, I can hear sounds from outside, and I can sense thoughts drifting across my mind. All this time, I have a background sense that "I" am sitting here, practicing. This is a very ordinary experience, where a number of different things are happening, apparently simultaneously.

What we're recognizing here is a field of awareness in which we find a whole variety of physical and mental activity. This is how we can speak about awareness of awareness, or awareing awareness. Of course, language can be misleading. Saying "awareness of awareness" can be very misleading because it treats awareness as some kind of solid object. But is it? Or do we experience awareness as a field in which more than one event can be found?

We may also find layers or depths of awareness. Let's say breathing is my meditation object. I am aware. I am aware of breathing. I am aware of being aware of breathing. I am aware of awareness. These are, in a sense, different layers of awareness, and we find different flavors in the experience of awareness.

So this is awareness—both very obvious and very mysterious. According to Buddhist tradition, one very important thing we discover in our practice is that it is the nature of mind to aware. This is what it does, and it does it without asking our permission. It's just nature. The mind simply awares.

And again, notice the dyad. When mind awares, there is something that appears to it as what is awared. This is what we call the object of awareness.

When the Buddha speaks about this process, the phrase he uses is *nāma-rūpa*, sometimes translated as "name and form." We have, first of all, *nāma*, a Pali word cognate with our English word "name." What it refers to is the mind's reaching out to aware. And *rūpa* refers to what the mind reaches out to.

If we start with *nāma*, the Buddha gives a definition. He says: feeling, perception, choice, contact, and attention—this is called name, *nāma*. Here we have a list of psychological qualities, and what they all describe is our active engagement with the world.

So feeling tells us how we are feeling about and responding to an experience. Perception tells us the meaning of the experience. Choice gives us what to do about the experience, including the choice to be aware of it in the first place. Contact is the impact between the sense object and awareness itself—all three coming together to create the elemental level of experience. And attention is the directing of awareness towards its object.

So this is a very brief summary, but this is how the Buddha defines name, nāma. The key point to notice is how nāma is complex and active. It's the collective process of the mind reaching out to the world to

encounter it and to make sense of it.

Now, when the mind reaches out to the world, what does it find? It finds rūpa, form. This term rūpa is another technical term, and it first appeared in the Upanishads, way before the Buddha, where it referred to the visible world—in other words, the material world that we can see. So rūpa is often translated as body.

Using it in that meaning, let's see how the Buddha defines rūpa. He says, "Why do you call it body? It is impacted. That's why it's called body." Now in English that doesn't make much sense, but in Pali it's basically: "Why do you say rūpa? Ruppati, therefore rūpa." It's a play on words. This is very common in the Indian tradition—they will define something by playing with the sounds.

So why do you call it body? It is impacted. That's why it's called body. What is it impacted by? It is impacted by cold, heat, hunger, and thirst. It is impacted by contact with snakes, wind, heat, mosquitoes, and gadflies. It is impacted. That's why it's called body. Ruppati, therefore rūpa.

The point here is that rūpa is something which is impacted, struck by something. And so when rūpa refers to the physical body, it's what is impacted by cold, heat, rain, mosquitoes, and so on.

Now, because rūpa originally in the Upanishads referred to the material world in the sense of what we can see, it could be translated as body, and in some contexts that's the best translation. But the Buddha extends this meaning to appearance—what appears in the visual field. So a Buddha statue, for example, is a Buddha rūpa. It's a solid object, so body in that sense. But mostly it's called rūpa because it's a visual representation of Buddha. It's a Buddha rūpa, a Buddha appearance—how a Buddha appears.

And then we get a further extension of the meaning of rūpa. It is appearance itself. Whatever appears to mind is rūpa.

What the Buddha is presenting here is a first-person model of experience—experience understood from inside the experiencing. We begin with awareness, the quality of presence, and as part of the experience of presence, we see that the mind moves towards something, its object, and impacts it, making it present, bringing it into appearance.

This is the intentionality of the mind, summed up in those five qualities that make up nāma: feeling, perception, choice, contact, attention. The basic point the Buddha is pointing out is that mind is active and it entangles itself in experience. Mind actively awares its object, and in so doing it understands it. It names it and establishes a relationship with it.

So rūpa, form, represents what is being aware, what mind impacts, what is being named. Rūpa is what appears when awareness impacts something. We have nāma-rūpa, and it could be translated as "named appearance."

When there is awareness, something appears. An object is present. And if there is something that appears,

if there is an appearance, then there must be the activity of mind aware of it and naming it. So they always go together.

Now, you notice that what the Buddha is not presenting is a dyad of me here and the world that I'm living in, which is what we assume is happening. What he's presenting is reality. There's only mind and what mind awares. That's it.

We have been developing this perception during this retreat. For example, we've talked about how normally we are interested in what we experience, rather than the experiencing itself. In other words, in most situations, what we're interested in is the appearance, rupa, not the naming of it, nama. However, as the practice develops, we start to become interested in the activity of awaring itself, not just what we are aware of.

We practiced this in tracking the thought stream, if you think back to that first week. And what we find is that experience emerges as a relationship between awaring and the aware, experiencing and the experienced. These two always arise together, and they're always working together. Each depends on the other. And once we start to recognize this, it opens us to a new way of perceiving ourselves and our world.

In our normal everyday life, our assumption is that what we aware is more important than our awaring of it. The awaring itself fades into the background. Normally we don't even notice it. When we're caught up in thinking, for example, we assume that what we are thinking, the story we are telling ourselves, is what's important. It's certainly more important than the activity of thinking itself, which we don't even notice. We assume that thoughts are more important than thinking. And as a result, we miss what's going on.

Remember the story about the two fish? There are two little fish swimming in the ocean, and they're quite happy. It's a nice morning. But in the distance, they see this big, ugly, aggressive, mean fish coming towards them. There's a moment of panic. What do we do? Will we get out of here? No, it's too late. He's already seen us. If we run away, it will just really attract his attention. Just ignore him. So they keep swimming and the big ugly fish gets closer and closer. They're quite taken aback when, as he passes, the big fish says, "Morning boys, water's beautiful this morning, isn't it?" And off he goes. The two little fish move away, and when they feel completely safe, way out of earshot, one of the little fish turns to the other and says, "What the hell is water?"

This is the situation we're in most of the time. Think about air. We forget about air. We don't notice it, although without it we're dead. But we notice it when it disturbs us in some way, when it impacts us. Then we notice it. Like the Buddha's example of rupa as body, we notice it when it is impacted, or when it impacts us—cold, heat, and so on. Otherwise we forget it, because it's always here. We just forget about it. And this is what happens to awaring itself.

We just forget about it, because it's always here.

And the Buddha is saying that actually, when we pay attention, what we discover is that we live in a world made up entirely of the dyad of awareing and the aware—but we don't notice this. And in particular, what we fail to recognize is that in this partnership, the work is done by the aware-ing.

Imagine you're talking to a friend, and your friend suddenly looks away and says, "Look over there." How would we respond normally? The body would turn in that direction, the eyes turn in that direction, and you may even feel your awareness moving in that direction. This is an example of how mind moves. It's active, it's dynamic. The object that is aware is what mind bumps against.

We have the two opening verses of the *Dhammapada*, which are very famous—actually, famous partly because they are among the most misquoted texts of Buddhism. There's a whole website devoted to misinterpretations, misquotations, and just downright fantasies of what the Buddha said, and these two verses always get a mention. Both *Dhammapada* 1 and 2 begin with: *mind shapes experiences; mind is first; experiences are made by mind*. This brings up the activity of mind—that what's dominant in an experience is the minding, the awareing.

When we start to notice this, the role of awareing, we discover a world that consists of a partnership between awareing and the aware. And this world is new. This world is quite different from the world we're used to living in, where what matters to us is what is aware, along with the assumption that there's someone back here who is doing the awareing—and this, of course, is the self.

When awareness is habitual, conditioned heavily by the past, the world appears in the familiar ways that we take for granted as real, as normal. The world appears to be a solid, unmoving world that exists independently of us—a world that was waiting here before we became aware of it, and that remains unchanged after our awareness moves on to something else. In other words, not only are we habitually focused on the aware, but because of this we project all our sense of reality into the aware and lose touch with the awareing that brings it into presence in the first place.

In its extreme form, this results in materialism—the belief that only the world which is aware and can be measured is real, whereas awareing itself is not real.

But when we penetrate into the actual experience of awareing, the object that we aware changes. It's no longer the second-hand world of concept, characterized by a sense of the permanence of solid objects out there, independent of us. It's the first-hand world of direct experience. And what we find is that this world is being shaped, formed by our awareing. We discover a dynamic world which is continually being shaped by our participation through the quality of our awareing. Change the quality of the awareing, and the world itself changes.

So we live in a partnership, a dyad, of awareing and the aware, where mind is active while the aware is receptive. Mind is shaping our experience while the aware is being shaped. Mind is constructing our experience while the aware is being constructed.

As mindfulness develops, we experience a widening field of awareness that takes in both the whole process of awareing—what the Buddha calls *nāma*—and what is aware—what the Buddha calls *rūpa*. We could translate this as name and appearance, or simply named appearance. And of course, named appearance, *nāma-rūpa*, is held within a wider field of awareness.

When this becomes clear, it also becomes clear that both awareing and the aware are changing. They are beyond our control. They come and go according to conditions. In other words, we enter into the world of the three characteristics: *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā*. And this is the world of insight.

Mahasi Sayadaw directs our attention toward this world by having us learn to recognize mind in its activity. Remember how earlier in the retreat we raised the question: how can we know mind, given that mind is not physical? We cannot see it, we cannot hear it, we cannot smell it, we cannot taste it, we cannot touch it. How can we know mind?

We know mind through its activity—what it does. And what it does is bring a world into presence. In other words, aware it.

Mahasi Sayadaw directs our attention to this process, beginning with what his English translators call "intention"—although it's a somewhat inadequate translation for what he's communicating. As we practice, the object of our awareness, our meditation object, becomes clear. And as this develops, what also becomes clear is the movement of awareness toward its object—the activity of awareing itself.

And this movement becomes part of our experience. So let's say breathing is the meditation object. What we realise we're working with is not simply breathing, but awareing breathing. The practitioner becomes interested in this movement of awareness, and we begin to discover that our object of awareness is not so much an object, but a dynamic and natural relationship.

But we begin by clarifying the object. And as our object of awareness becomes clearer, so too does the awareing, the knowing of it. The mind that is aware emerges along with the object of awareness. They manifest together as a dyad, a pair, a partnership. As mindfulness and concentration grow stronger, it may be that our awareness of awareing itself appears to be even more important than the object of awareness. We may become more interested in the experiencing rather than what we experience.

Mahasi Sayadaw speaks of this entry into seeing mind and its activity as noting intention. What he means by intention is twofold. The first is the choice to aware something—in other words, to direct awareness toward it. And secondly, the movement, the actual movement of awareness toward that something.

If we ask what is the source of each action of awareness, what is the source of what Mahasi Sayadaw calls noting, some people would say effort. But no, it isn't. It's choice or decision—the choice made now to aware this. Notice that we're not talking about effort. We're not trying to choose to aware. We are choosing to aware, or choosing to not aware, as the case may be. It's like switching on the light of awareness. We either make the choice to switch it on, or we don't, because we're making another choice.

But we're making a choice. Effort comes later; effort appears as the commitment to continue this choice over a period of time.

This choice sends awareness on its journey. And when we see this choice, when we feel this movement of awareness and recognize the object of awareness, the world we are aware of becomes less solid. It doesn't so much consist of things as relationships.

Let's say my meditation object is breathing. As mindfulness and concentration develop, the sense that I had in the beginning—that breathing is something in the world that has its own existence—this fades. Instead, what I recognize is a choice to aware and the different sensations that then appear within awareness when I make that choice, sensations that I could name "breathing." And of course, what also appears are all the events that accompany breathing. I'm beginning to recognize that my sense of reality is no longer as solid as I assumed it was. It's made up of awareing and what I aware, and these are dependent upon each other, and both of them are arising and ceasing with each moment.

Those of you who are familiar with the classical sixteen ñāṇas of Theravada Buddhism that describe the path of insight will recognize that what we're talking about now is the first ñāṇa: nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa, understanding the distinction between awareing and the aware. With this understanding, we have well and truly entered into the world of insight and understanding—vipassanā and ñāṇa.

As our experience of this world deepens, things may become radical because we become familiar with this relationship between awareing and the aware. It may be that at some point the penny drops: this is all there is. There's nothing other than this. I've always assumed there was someone behind it all who's watching this, and that someone is not part of this process. But when it clicks that there is only this process and nothing outside it, that's when the understanding becomes radical. This is the entry into the world of insight. And once we enter into this, everything else will naturally arise.

[END CONTEXT]

"Can we have some words, please, on delusion and its effect on awareness?"

Ah, what is the effect of delusion on awareness? This is a very good question. I'm not sure that I have an answer. What it does is it obscures awareness. People describe different things. Sometimes it's experienced as dullness, heaviness, absence of clarity, fogginess. Sometimes it has a quality of restlessness to it, agitation. Confusion.

Delusion is complex, so it manifests in different ways. Attraction and aversion are relatively straightforward—attraction is "I want," aversion is "I don't want." But delusion is more complex, so it has different flavors. Varieties of not knowing, from ignorance through to total misunderstanding, and from dullness through to restlessness and agitation. It covers the whole territory.

That's the very nature of delusion. When you're caught up in it, you don't know. Not only don't you know, but you don't know that you don't know. Everyone says that when you're greedy, you know it. When you're hateful, you know it. But somebody has to tell you you're being delusional. And they generally don't like it when you tell them. They tend to take it personally. So if I were you, I wouldn't tell them.

"I'm trying to look for a way out of being stuck in delusion."

The first thing I would suggest is keep it very simple. In the context of the meditation practice, keep it really, really, really simple. Go for something which is clear and obvious and just stay with it. Don't be tempted by all these glittering little things at the outskirts of awareness. Just stay with that. Otherwise you'll be lost—lost among the glitter.

Everybody's delusional except me. Yeah, well, actually, I think you're wrong. I think everyone's delusional except *me*. I don't know how you made that mistake. I think it's evidence of delusion.

"So in this model, there's awareness and then there's the object of awareness. How does it account for the awareness of the absence of something? This afternoon I was walking down the road and I was aware of the absence of the sound of a car, so then I knew it was safe to step into the road. If there's awareness of an object, how does it work when there's an absence of an object?"

In this case—I'm repeating this for the Zoom audience—you notice you're walking along the road and you notice the absence of the sound of a car. That absence is also an object of awareness. In other words, you've named it: "There's no sound of a car." So that is *rupa*, it's the appearance. Now it's much more subtle, because it's not a something, it's the absence of a something. Generally it's harder to notice an absence than it is to notice something which is present.

This is one of the reasons why the understanding of not-self can be so tricky, because not-self isn't a something that we notice—it's the recognition of an absence. We expected something to be there. So the sense that you have of the absence of a sound is itself an appearance. Again, "object" doesn't quite work as a word because it's too solid. But I think you could see it as the appearance.

"How about mind object?"

A mind object is the older translation of the Pali *dhamma*—in Sanskrit, *dharma*.

When you look at mind as a sense, and therefore it senses something which is the object, "mind-object" actually means the sense object corresponding to the mind. But it sounds like it's something solid bouncing around inside the mind. I find that expression doesn't quite fit. So I prefer to translate *dhamma* in this context as "phenomenon"—mind and phenomenon. This is what I've consistently used in the translations we've been going through throughout this month. A phenomenon is something which arises within experience and then, of course, ceases. To me, "mind-object" strikes me as some kind of mental billiard ball. It's never made any sense to me.

A question came from the group: "You talked about the analogy of light with awareness. Sometimes in meditation practice people experience lots of light. Is that simply because they're becoming very aware of awareness itself and nothing else?"

This definitely happens, and it's associated with concentration. For some people, when the mind becomes concentrated, the light becomes very strong. It's a light generated by mind. So it's not awareness itself—awareness would be the presence of the light, the fact that one recognizes, "Oh, there's light." At least this is the way I'm using the terms. I would say that light is a phenomenon, or mind-object, that appears within the mind. Sometimes people actually use that as a meditation object, but not in this approach.

There was a time when I used to teach regularly in Malaysia, and Malaysian meditators overall have very good concentration power. For a number of years it was astonishing how many people were seeing light—it was the fashion at the time. Once I noticed that one of the meditators, in this big hall where walking meditation was done at the back, was doing walking meditation wearing sunglasses. I asked her about it in the interview and she said, "Well, the light was so bright, I thought it might help if I put on sunglasses." I asked, "Did it?" She said, "No. It didn't work."

So it definitely happens. It's definitely an experience. But it's generally taken to indicate stronger samādhi, stronger concentration. And it doesn't happen to everybody.

Another question arose about being aware of the absence of things, because the Buddha talks about being aware of the mind being free of anger, free of grasping, free of delusion—whatever the hindrance or defilement might be. How does one note those sorts of things?

The meditator reflected that it requires continuously watching mental phenomena. Having been watching mental phenomena over time, they said, "I know for myself I started doing that at some stage years ago. And how did it work? I just don't know. It's simply an awareness that those hindrances weren't there."

Did it have a good effect? Is that why you did it?

"I don't know, but it was..." Yeah, that's where the Buddha talks about it.

So the discussion centers on how the Buddha sometimes talks about seeing the absence, for example, of a hindrance. Seeing when greed arises and seeing the absence of it when it doesn't arise. He moves between presence and absence, presence and absence. Seeing the absence of something is very much a part of the practice. But again, it tends to be more subtle. People tend to miss it, unless maybe reminded of it.

But it is an interesting thing to do. The exercise we did at the beginning of the retreat where we were watching for thought and where thought came from—the experience of watching for a thought and then no thought comes. That was a really clear example of noting the absence.

Here's another example. We had a thunderstorm recently, and a meditator was talking about how when

she's tracking breathing, one of the things she hooks onto is the sound of the breath. But there was so much storm going on that she couldn't hear it. This created a whole new experience, which was somewhat discombobulating, it sounds like.

"Yeah, so I was trying to make the storm a meditation object."

So the storm became a meditation object. It was a very strange sort of loss—losing your anchor. The loss of that sound was the loss of an anchor.

I was reading something not too long ago about a room they had designed—I can't remember why—but they designed this room with no sound, absolutely no sound. And nobody's lasted more than 54 minutes in that room.

What happens to them? Some bizarre experiment. What happens after 54 minutes? Do they come hammering at the door to get out of there? I don't know about that part. That's all they said—that the total absence of any sound became unbearable.

Anyway, we're wandering onto the esoteric fields of scientific speculation. And I was thinking of putting a sign up above the meditation hall: "No Science!" Exclamation mark. But I restrained myself. Because Buddha says restraint is good.

Okay, it's getting late. How have you done?

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