

Being completely human – secular buddhism, and beyond

An eight-part course using recorded talks by Stephen Batchelor & Roshi Joan Halifax given at Upaya Zen Center, Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA, 25 through 29 March 2015

Discussion 8 of 8

Parts 11A (66:55) & 11B (18:52) Stephen Batchelor and Joan Halifax: The fourth task – acting

Part 11A

1. In his reference to common origins of *theravada* and zen lineages (notwithstanding differing historical accounts) and Batchelor's own training in the Tibetan gelugpa and Korean sŏn traditions, he lays out his reasoning for advancing a secular Buddhism which has as its authority the Buddha's teachings as recorded in the early Pali canon. What value if any, do you see in this endeavour? What deficiencies if any, concern you?
2. How is it that the four tasks or sequence of four tasks do not conform to a mould, or a didactic framework of ordered steps? What does Batchelor claim is accomplished by holding this syncretic view of the path and goal?
3. If through your own training, what you've understood to be the goal of the path is discordant with the view that '*nirvana* or non-reactivity is not the goal of the path; it is its very source and origin', what is the essence of that discord?
4. Batchelor offers several descriptors to convey the sense of path and the goal as dwelling in emptiness. What descriptor or analogy evoked for you the sense of path and goal as being of the nature of emptiness? How so?

5. Consider the sequence of somatic metaphors beginning with the stopping of reactivity (nirvana); so entering an opening (the gate); one is led onto a path (the eightfold path); one enters the stream (gaining conviction in the path). How are these metaphors somatic and illustrative of ease or flow? What does the metaphor of Mara (aka Namuchi) illustrate with respect to the path and goal?

6. In defining what constitutes entering the stream the Buddha characterised a stream enterer as one who is independent of others. What is it to be independent of others?

7. In defining what constitutes entering the stream the Buddha characterised a stream enterer as one who has: lucid confidence in awakening; lucid confidence in the dharma; lucid confidence in the sangha. How does Batchelor define these three in light of the metaphor of the stream?

8. In defining what constitutes entering the stream the Buddha states that it is marked by the loss of the three fetters of:
 - 1) vanity or personality view or view of self;
 - 2) doubt or uncertainty;
 - 3) attachment to rites and rituals or attachment to virtues and vows or attachment to moral rules.

How does Batchelor describe the felt sense of the falling away of the first fetter, vanity?

How does Batchelor describe the felt sense of the falling away of the second fetter, doubt?

How does Batchelor describe the nature of the discernment that emerges with the falling away of the third fetter, attachment to moral rules?

9. Batchelor remarks that the translation of the Pali *samma* as 'right' is the wrong translation. What is a more accurate translation? Why is this the case?

10. Making the point that path is to be cultivated (i.e., *bhavana* – to be brought into being), one seeks to cultivate an integrated life, developing and refining what is valued. How is

it that this cultivation of the eightfold path not only benefits oneself but also benefits others? What is 'cultured' through this cultivation?

Part 11B

1. Following on Batchelor's response to the questioner who, about to return home, asked how he could be a part of this culture of awakening, Roshi Joan commented on the value of individuation, expressing her admiration for individuals who take responsibility for their own lives, engaging in 'the full catastrophe'. She contrasted such maturity with aspects of our western culture that infantilise and foster narcissism. What do you think prompted her remarks? What advice could you draw from her remarks?
2. Rephrase Roshi Joan's statement that 'establishing your community in the midst of conditions, for me, is where it's at'.
3. Roshi Joan advises that we pursue spiritual friendships and also critiques the 'hyper-transference' that can burden a teacher-student relationship, prolonging the student's infancy or adolescence. What is the middle way that she points to here?
4. Roshi Joan concludes this final session, saying that Upaya is about 'cultivating the skilful means so we can free ourselves from suffering and help others be free of suffering ... training the heart and the mind and the body and bringing that sensibility into the world of action.' How do these closing remarks relate to the just prior point she made on 'establishing your community in the midst of conditions'?