

Craig's notes for a 10/23/2021 talk to the DTO on Right View

- Gatha on Opening the Sutra
 - The Dharma, incomparably profound and minutely subtle, is rarely encountered, even in hundreds of thousands of millions of ages. Now we see this, hear this, receive and maintain this. May we completely realize the Tathagata's true meaning. [bell]
- **Welcome**
 - **{GRAPHIC}** What I hope to convey
 - **What the red pill is and why you should take it.**
 - In The Matrix, the main character Neo is offered the choice between a red pill and a blue pill by rebel leader Morpheus. The red pill represents an uncertain future—it would free him from the enslaving control of the machine-generated dream world and allow him to escape into the real world, but living the "truth of reality" is harsher and more difficult. On the other hand, the blue pill represents a beautiful prison—it would lead him back to ignorance, living in confined comfort without want or fear within the simulated reality of the Matrix. As described by Morpheus: "You take the blue pill...the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill...you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes." Neo chooses the red pill and joins the rebellion.
 - **Who am I**
 - No, I'm not that....
 - Beings are numberless. I vow to save them all
 - Delusions are inexhaustible. I vow to end them.
 - Dharma gates are boundless. I vow to enter them.
 - Buddha's way is unsurpassable. I vow to become it.
 - **Why am I here**
 - To learn more about Right View
 - "To teach is to learn twice" - Joseph Joubert
 - "To learn something well, teach it" ~Jim, My Marlboro college professor
 - Learning to be able to teach others forces you to understand more deeply
 - Right View is a fundamental transformation of the way we experience our existence
 - To focus on teaching. To that end, could you:
 - Listen with a critical ear. What is good in this talk, what could be better
 - Complete the survey that we'll send out with your feedback on the manner of teaching
 - Echo
 - Could 1 or 2 people volunteer now to give a brief summary of the talk at the start of the discussion?
- **A brief orientation to see where Right View fits**
 - **{GRAPHIC}** The Four Noble Truths (FNT)
 - The first teaching of the Buddha
 - In the Mahayana tradition they show how we can live in the everyday world
 - They are 4 nouns - The truth, the cause, the end, the path.
 - **The truth of suffering:** birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.
 - **The origin of suffering:** it is this craving [taṇhā, "thirst"] which leads to re-becoming, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for becoming, craving for disbecoming.
 - **The cessation of suffering:** it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it.
 - **The way leading to the cessation of suffering:** it is this noble eightfold path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.
 - **{GRAPHIC}** The Noble Eightfold Path (EFP)
 - **General**
 - They are 8 verbs, all working to bring about the end of suffering
 - Sammā (Pali) - commonly thought of as properly, rightly, thoroughly,
 - But also means 'to go along with', or 'go together with', or 'unite'.
 - This fits with the obvious realization that these elements all inter-be to form a whole.
 - The term path implies movement – these are things we continually do and they all work together to form a way of living.
 - **The groups**
 - The moral virtue group - Living harmoniously with others

- The meditation group - Training the mind to develop clarity and insight into the nature of reality
 - The wisdom group – Understanding why this path should be followed and realizing wisdom as the culmination of the path.
- The elements’ order
 - When viewed as three divisions, virtuous living is first, and through samadhi we achieve culminating insight
 - When viewed as eight factors, view is primary because it is needed to understand why the path should be followed
- **{GRAPHIC} The origin of ordinary views**
 - Ditthi in Pali means view, (unless accompanied by Samma,) most often ‘wrong view’
 - The Yogācāra school posits the obvious observation that all of our perceptions, everything we know about the world, happens within the mind.
 - Over time, the experience of our perceptions create mental formation which coalesce into views.
 - We easily mistake these views for something more than they are and become bound by them.
- **{GRAPHIC} The need for Right View**
 - If we are on a journey, and we are going in the right direction and keep going, no matter how long and difficult it is, we will get there.
 - If we don’t have the right direction, even with the strongest aspiration and the greatest efforts, we may be wandering all our life. (paraphrasing of Joseph Goldstein)
 - Right View is fundamental to all aspects of our paths
 - **{GRAPHIC} Reliance**
 - We want things to rely on, but our personal perspectives are inherently unreliable.
 - The Diamond Sutra’s advice is “Abiding nowhere, give rise to mind”, but how?
- **Why Right View Isn’t Obvious**
 - We are all descended from 3.7 billion years worth of natural selection where the primary measure of success was whether you lived long enough to pass on your genes. Suffering wasn’t particularly relevant.
 - **{GRAPHIC}** Robert Wright in *Why Buddhism is True* “natural selection didn’t design your mind to see the world clearly; it designed your mind to have perceptions and beliefs that would help take care of your genes.”
 - While it’s easy to see this in other animals, we tend to not think of ourselves that way and don’t want to see that we are almost completely governed by subconscious thoughts to which we retroactively fit rationales
 - **{GRAPHIC}** A view of Mara from the 18th century poet, Alexander Pope - *An Essay on Man: Epistle II*
 - The poem describes the wealth of personalities that constitute the self. All of these personas have had a purpose in the past, but may not be the best strategy for now
 - A cutting description of us by sci-fi author John Burdett in *Bangkok Tattoo*
 - “You see, dear reader (speaking frankly, without any intention to offend), you are a ramshackle collection of coincidences held together by a desperate and irrational clinging, there is no center at all, everything depends on everything else, your body depends on the environment, your thoughts depend on whatever junk floats in from the media, your emotions are largely from the reptilian end of your DNA, your intellect is a chemical computer that can’t add up a zillionth as fast as a pocket calculator, and even your best side is a superficial piece of social programming that will fall apart just as soon as your spouse leaves with the kids and the money in the joint account, or the economy starts to fail and

you get the sack, or you get conscripted into some idiot's war, or they give you the news about your brain tumor. To name this amorphous morass of self-pity, vanity, and despair self is not only the height of hubris, it is also proof (if any were needed) that we are above all a delusional species.”

- **{GRAPHIC} What is Right View (Samma Ditthi)?**
 - Right View is not a view – it is a meta-view of views
 - It is the view that leads to wholesome results and is pragmatically determined
 - Right view is not moralistic or dogmatic, but simply what leads to the end of suffering
 - Underlying RV is the admonition to always inquire why we think what we think. Examine your views.
 - It isn't a guiding theory, but a transformation of perception resulting from living the Dharma. One comes to see things in a manner by which we don't become attached - Samma Ditthi is 'Perfected Vision'
- **Right Viewing**
 - Everything that you encounter is your life. (This is it, right here and now.)
 - You experience your personal mind and its activity with universal awareness.
 - In answer to the Diamond Sutra's 'Abiding nowhere' admonition, abide in the meta-viewpoint of Right View. Right View has you take our Buddhist vows and understanding as the ground on which you stand. It is using those ideas and dancing with the present moment as it is.
 - Grasp at nothing (including enlightenment), nor merge with Oneness, nor alternate between the two. Instead experience the attempts of grasping while 'intimate with the absolute'.”
 - The self is the door that swings open and closed with each breath. The breath is not yours – it is the universe's breath. (Suzuki Roshi in Zen Mind, B.M.)
 - A practice of right Viewing. When something arises, ask:
 - 'What is this?' – What is this feeling?
 - 'What just happened?' - What events led to this?
 - 'What's next?' - Grounded in Right View, formulate an appropriate response
- **What do the sutras say?**
 - Saṃyutta Nikāya | The Connected Collection, Accayanagotta Sutta: To Kaccayana Gotta (on Right View)
 - Ven. Kaccayana Gotta asks Buddha 'To what extent is there right view?'
 - Parts of the response are:
 - People normally see the world in terms of a polarity of existence & non-existence. But when seen with right discernment this does not arise.
 - Right view is to not be bound to attachments, fixations, clingings, biases and a sense of a permanent self.
 - Right view avoids the two extremes of "'Everything exists' and 'Everything doesn't exist' - This is the Dhamma via the middle:
 - Right view understands that suffering arises or ceases depending on the presence or absence of the Twelve Links of Interdependent Co-arising
 - Ignorance (avidya, meaning the lack of understanding) — the condition for the arising of mental formations.
 - Mental Formation (or Volitional Formations) (samskara, meaning the will to cling to being) — the condition for arising of consciousness. Buddhism emphasizes the need to purify formations rather than eliminate them
 - Consciousness (vijñana) — the condition for the arising of name (labels) and form. This includes mind and storehouse consciousness for both an individual and for the collective.
 - Mind and body (or Name and Form) (nama-rupa) —the condition for the arising of the six senses (perception).
 - The Six Senses (ayatana) — the condition for arising of contact or interactions (the psychological process whereby we interact). These six senses are not separate from mind/body (fourth link). When one comes into contact (sixth link) with a sense object it creates a sense consciousness (third link).
 - Contact (or interaction) (sparsha) — the condition for the arising of feeling. It occurs when a sense organ meets a sense object, creating sense consciousness.
 - Feeling (vedana) — the condition for arising of craving (wanting). It may be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.
 - Craving (wanting or desire) (trishna) — the condition for the arising of “grasping”

- Grasping (or attachment) (upadana): the condition for the arising of “becoming”. We are caught in the thralls of the object.
- Becoming (or being) (bhava) — the condition for the arising of birth. What we have desired comes to be.
- Birth (jati) — the condition for the arising of aging and death.
- Aging and death (jara-marana) — the condition for arising of ignorance (back to 1)

◦ **Majjhima Nikaya | The Middle-length Discourses, , MN 9 PTS: M i 46 Sammaditthi Sutta: Right View**

▪ (<https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.009.than.html>)

▪ (From Thanissaro Bikkhu’s introduction:)

▪ Right view is normally explained in terms of the four noble truths. In this discourse, Ven. Sāriputta expands the discussion in several directions.

▪ Focusing on two concepts that underlie the structure of the four noble truths:

- The dichotomy of skillful and unskillful action
 - Actions give results. Unskillful actions lead to pain, skillful actions to pleasure.
 - The search for the root of skillful and unskillful actions leads ultimately to the mind, because the presence or lack of skill in any action is determined by the mental state motivating it.
- The concept of nutriment.
 - The question of roots brings up the question of where do the roots draw their nourishment?
 - To use nutriments skillfully, deprive unskillful states of them, and feed skillful states.
 - There are two sorts:
 - Physical:
 - Food
 - Mental
 - Contact, Intellectual intention, and Consciousness.

▪ Expands on the Four Noble Truths by working backwards through dependent co-arising

- He notes that the contrast between any two of the twelve steps “provides enough discernment to abandon unskillful obsessions and put an end to suffering.”
 - The unskillfulness is often easily apparent
- After arriving at the beginning, ignorance, he looks for the origination of ignorance and finds it to be mental fermentation (taints?).
 - Since these fermentations depend on ignorance, the application of the skillful action and nutriments ignorance can be brought to an end.
 - The Nibbedhika Sutta says:
 - “There are these three kinds of fermentations: the fermentation of sensuality, the fermentation of becoming, the fermentation of ignorance.”
 - Ignorance is a fermentation as well as the cause by which fermentations come into play.

• **Guidelines**

◦ **{GRAPHIC}** See the fundamental characteristics (The Three Dharma Seals) in all things:

▪ Impermanence (Anicca)

- Because causes and conditions constantly change, everything is impermanent. Impermanence reminds us to appreciate, without attachment, all that goes on. It is what allows transformation to be possible.
- Ironically, change is a constant.

▪ Non-self (Anatta)

- Nothing has a separate existence or self. All that is, is made of other things. The insight that we ‘inter-be’ with everything else is a profound realization

- The combination of impermanence and non-self shows us that everything is in the one thing, and the one thing is in everything. When we touch these truths deeply, we touch the ground that is beyond the dichotomies of birth and death, permanence and impermanence, self and non-self.
- Nirvana (The inverse of dukkha)
 - Nirvana is the complete silencing of all concepts. It is the ground of all that is. Just as a wave does not exist outside of the water, impermanence and non-self do not exist outside of nirvana. In touching them, you touch nirvana.
 - The silencing of concepts includes the ‘Eight Concepts’ of: birth, death, permanence, dissolution, coming, going, one, and many. It also includes the silencing of their opposites. Nirvana is not something to find later – as a Dharma seal, it is present in all the teachings and in all that we experience.
- **{GRAPHIC}** Recognize the truth of the Three Doors of Liberation (aka The Three Concentrations) to dispel dualistic notions

If the wave knows how to rest in the water, she enjoys going up and she enjoys going down. She's not afraid of being and nonbeing. She's not afraid of coming and going. She is capable of touching the ocean in herself.
The three doors of liberation remind us that we are no different than the wave: empty, signless, and able to touch the ultimate inherent in us at any moment.

 - Emptiness (shunyata)
 - All conditioned things are empty of a separate self. Instead, they are made up of other non-self parts. They ‘inter-be’ with all other conditioned things. Emptiness means interdependent co-arising, impermanence, and non-self. Simply put, “This is because that is.”
 - Signlessness (animatta)
 - A sign is an appearance, or mark, we associate with an object of our perception. They are useful, but they are not absolute truth and as such, they can mislead us. The Diamond Sutra says ‘Wherever there is a sign, there is deception, illusion.’ It also says “If you see the signlessness of signs, you see the Tathagata.” We need to see beyond the signs, to see the true nature of interbeing of the object.
 - The Tao Te Ching alludes to signlessness in chapter 1: “The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal name. The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth. The named is the mother of ten thousand things....”
 - Aimlessness (apranihita)
 - The Heart Sutra says “there is nothing to attain”. We already have everything we need for happiness. Nirvana is here now.
 - Aimlessness is stopping and realizing the happiness that is already available.
- **{GRAPHIC}** Conclusion
 - Right View is activating spacious, flexible mind.
 - It is to dance gracefully between the principle and the persona.