

## 40 tenets Youtube lecture summary notes

### Class # 1 Space is not an unconditioned dharma like time, matter and consciousness

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#### Introduction to the 40 Tenets and Historical Background of Buddhism

- **This class is based on a book** written by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh called “Làng Mai nhìn núi Thửu” or “Plum Village Looks at Vulture’s Peak” (An English translation is not yet available). The book describes the essential characteristics of Plum Village practice and teachings. For an English list of the tenets themselves, follow this link: <https://orderofinterbeing.org/2016/07/forty-tenets-of-plum-village/>
- **The monastic** who is teaching this first class is a young, white male in his thirties. His name is Thay Phap Luu and he is speaking from Deer Park Monastery in the US. He is wearing brown robes, has a shaved head, and has a gentle disposition and smile.
- **The meeting began** with an overview of early Buddhist schools in India around the beginning of the Common Era, mentioning at least 18 mainstream schools differentiated by region, teacher, or doctrine (e.g., Sarvāstivāda and Pūṣkalavāda) [00:42].
- **Reflection on how these early teachings** influenced the Plum Village tradition in the present moment, combined with insights from Mahayana Buddhism and Western science, emphasizing non-dogmatic practice for transforming suffering [02:40].
- **Mention of the publication** of the teachings in a book titled *Looking at Vulture's Peak* and related volumes, highlighting the spiritual significance of Vulture's Peak as a site cherished by the Buddha for teaching and meditation [05:00].

#### Significance of Vulture’s Peak

- **Description of the physical experience** of visiting Vulture’s Peak with Thay in 2008, including meditations, mindfulness transmissions, and head shaving rituals symbolic of aspiration renewal [06:40].
- **Vulture's Peak** serves as a metaphor for the place of Buddha's teachings within Plum Village and the heart of practitioners [08:30].

#### First Tenet: "Space is not an unconditioned dharma"

- **Explanation of the term "dharma"** as phenomena, encompassing all perceivable and impermanent things, including physical objects and elements such as water and atoms, illustrating their conditioned and impermanent nature [10:00].
- **The Buddha’s teaching** highlights impermanence and the necessity of recognizing that attachment to conditioned things leads to suffering; the practice aims at liberation by understanding this truth [12:40].
- **Discussion on distinctions** between *conditioned* and *unconditioned* dharmas, with Nirvana traditionally seen as unconditioned; however, the tenet challenges the notion of space as unconditioned, emphasizing it as conditioned and interrelated with time, matter, and consciousness [15:30].

#### Scientific Insights into Space, Time, and Consciousness

- **Insights from modern physics** such as the distortion of space-time by massive bodies (gravity), gravitational waves, and the relativity of space and time provide a richer understanding supporting the conditioning of space [22:00].
- **Thay taught not to be attached** to concepts, traditionally in Buddhism Space is unconditional- but with new science Thay updates this notion. Thay’s view and Einstein’s view are the same. Also Space and Time are not separate concepts in both Einstein’s view and eastern philosophy. For Einstein time is the 4th dimension – time itself is also a condition and conditioned.

- **The concept that time** is experienced as the present moment and that past and future are products of consciousness, thus *all time is conditioned* [28:00].
- **How does this relate to consciousness?** The idea of interbeing and “non-self” helps us detach from the idea of a fixed consciousness. Also the idea of impermanence.
- **The interdependence** and co-arising of subject (consciousness) and object, suggesting that space and time cannot be understood separately from consciousness; this aligns with Buddhist teachings on emptiness and non-self [31:30].
- **Modern quantum mechanics** illustrate that observation (consciousness) affects the observed, contradicting classical science and reinforcing the conditioned and relational nature of reality [34:30].
- **In the “ultimate dimension”** all dharmas are conditioned but cannot be described. (So Nirvana isn't a concept like heaven that negates or excludes conditions) Nirvana is a concept or tool to practice or lean towards Nirvana- everything we imagine even “God” or “Heaven” are unfixed. As soon as we label something we create conditions. Anything I can perceive gives rise to conditions. Nirvana cannot be described.

### Metaphor of the Wave in Water and the Unconditioned

- **The metaphor of the wave and water** is used to illustrate that all phenomena (waves) arise from a nomena, a fundamental ground (water), helping practitioners to relate to impermanence and non-self [38:00].
- **Emphasis that metaphors are tools for practice** and understanding rather than absolute descriptions of reality, encouraging practitioners not to cling to conceptual views [41:00].
- **The unconditioned** is ultimately beyond words, concepts, and space-time localization but can be approached through practice and insight into conditioned phenomena [39:30].
- **Nirvana, Non-self, etc isn't a negation of self-** these are concepts and practices to be free of suffering. Nirvana isn't “elsewhere” – it is in the fabric of our reality. It is in the here and now.

### Practical Implications and Encouragement for Practice

- **Encouragement to not see nirvana** as distant or unreachable but as attainable in the here and now through diligent practice and insight [43:00].
- **Reminder that attachment to body, emotions, or perceptions** causes suffering, and insight into impermanence and non-self alleviates such suffering [45:50].
- **Studying together:** The meeting concluded with an encouragement to continue studying the 40 tenets together and bring questions to future classes for deeper understanding [48:30].

### Administrative Notes and Closing

- **Distribution of handouts** for ongoing study and plans to provide English translations for wider accessibility [49:30].
- **Time was provided for questions** and reflection during future sessions, with a commitment to clear and slow speech to assist language learners [50:10].

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*Note:* Timestamps are approximate.