

PLUM VILLAGE TENET 2 SUMMARY OF LECTURE NOTES.

Class 2, on Tenet 2: In the historical dimension, every dharma is a conditioned dharma. In the ultimate dimension, every dharma is an unconditioned dharma.

Introduction to Plum Village Teachings and Context

- **N.B.** The timestamps are approximate and to video <https://www.youtube.com/watch/cvFrpiNjRuA>. If the time codes do not match for any class, please check the alternative video on either Deer Park youtube channel or Plum Village app channel.
- **The meeting began** with a mindful meditation using the sound of the bell, inviting participants to return to their body and breathing, releasing worries and anxieties [00:00].
- **The session is part of studying** the 40 tenets of Plum Village, teachings given by Thay in 2005-2006, and this was the first time the course was streamed live [01:00]. For an English list of the tenets themselves, follow this link: <https://orderofinterbeing.org/2016/07/fifty-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.
- **He compares the practice of Dharma** to refreshing immersion like cool water in the summer, helping one to let go of dirt and worries [01:20].

The First Tenet: Space is Not an Unconditioned Dharma

- **Space manifests together with time, matter, and consciousness** and is conditioned and impermanent; not unconditioned [04:30].
- **Space is both an idea** created by the human mind and a physical reality affected by mass and matter, demonstrated by general relativity's concept of space-time curvature [05:30].
- **Time is similarly conditioned and impermanent**, as we only truly experience the present moment; past and future are concepts arising from present consciousness [07:50].
- **The practice is to see impermanence**, non-self (no separate self), and interbeing (interconnectedness) in space, time, matter, and consciousness [10:50].
- **Mind consciousness and store consciousness** were discussed, explaining seeds of mindfulness and emotions existing in consciousness and how mindfulness brings awareness to these seeds [17:20].
- **Consciousness is impermanent** and experienced as continuous points of light; awareness of this helps reduce suffering by understanding emotions as phenomena, not self [20:50].
- **Emphasis on interconnectedness**: all elements interpenetrate and interact constantly, reflecting the concept of interbeing [11:40].

The Second Tenet: The Dialectics of Dharma – Conditioned and Unconditioned.

- **In the historical dimension**, every dharma (phenomenon) is conditioned — subject to impermanence, birth and death, coming and going [30:10].
- **In the ultimate dimension**, every dharma is unconditioned — beyond birth and death, no separate self, no coming and going. The unconditioned is the ground of all dharmas [30:50].
- **The dialectics of the Dharma** involves using teachings and concepts to let go of attachment to concepts, thus freeing oneself [28:20].
- **We have the seeds of anger, fear** etc in our consciousness even when they don't manifest. This is our store consciousness. We can touch the seeds of mindfulness in the store consciousness.
- **As a practitioner** we can recognise when we are angry and we shine the light of mindfulness to be aware of the roots. We are not eliminating the anger before we understand the anger. We embrace the seed of anger in our practice.
- **Consciousness is like points of light**. Like holding a candle. Consciousness is points in each moment, but we experience it as continuity. We don't see or experience everything- just a string of impermanent instances.

- **Consciousness has a non-self nature.** When emotions manifest they are family and we think it is us. We suffer because we hold onto that idea that we are our emotions. Anger is only a phenomenon. Letting go of idea of self is fun!
- **The teaching contrasts the conditioned experience** (historical dimension) of phenomena and the ultimate dimension where distinctions like being/non-being dissolve [33:00].
- **Examples include the life cycle** of a flower and the recognition of interpenetration between seed and flower [33:40].
- **We start our practice** by seeing everything as interdependent, even space and time and matter. Always changing and conditional, like modern biology, physics, linguistics, etc. "Life" as we experience it is a huge interconnected process dependent on all conditions – first tenet.
- **Second tenet:** [34:00]. "In the historical dimension, every dharma is a conditioned dharma. In the ultimate dimension, every dharma is an unconditioned dharma."
- **The unconditioned is the ground of all dharmas.** Thay calls it the "Dialectics of the Dharma." Everything we learn is to let go of every concept we learn! So long as you look for absolute truth in concepts and ideas you will suffer because you are using signs and words to try and signal something that can be represented.
- **Nirvana is beyond description-** we cannot grasp it, it is in everything. The second tenet brings to light this contradiction of using words and concepts to free ourselves from words and concepts.
- **We say the flower** was not there and it now is there- from non-being to being. This is the historical dimension but with a deeper mindfulness we can see the flower is there in the seed - the seed are the conditions to make the flower- the phenomena manifest. So the flower is already there. Things are already connected and we are free of ideas of being and non-being.
- **We live in the historical dimension** but we train ourselves to touch the ultimate dimension through knowledge of concepts of non-self, impermanence, God, etc.
- **God in Abrahamic religions** is compared, noting dualistic thinking (creator vs. created) versus Buddhist view where no separation exists [35:40]. For theologians in Christianity, God is close to the Buddhist notion of the ultimate (God is everywhere etc.) Buddhism shifts view- to see interbeing nature in historical dimension and ultimate dimension instead.
- **The practice involves touching the ultimate dimension** in everyday experiences, such as observing a volcano or a glass of water, recognizing the interconnected, impermanent, and unconditioned nature of all things [40:40].
- **There seems to be a contradiction.** We just said space is unconditioned in tenet 1, now we say it's unconditioned in the ultimate dimension. That is because this is not about philosophy it is about *practice*. Any notion is a dharma. The skill is to use the "dialectics of the dharma" to practice *continuously* letting go. See the 16 step of mindfulness of breathing sutra.
- **Talks about volcano in Iceland.** Meditating to the live video. Impermanence. Molten rock as our body. There are elements of our ancestors in the lava. There are elements of the earth in our body. This life force we carry is a continuation from our ancestors. It is the same as heat from the earth. Our ancestors are formed from chemicals in heated water, that formed lipids which formed membranes of first bacteria.... Nothing is separate from us. We are not separate.
- **Emphasized is the importance of a beginner's mind:** engaging with phenomena as if new each time to perceive their wondrous, unconditioned nature [52:50].
- **Emotional psychology** insights support that emotions are unique manifestations, reinforcing the practice to see their impermanent, conditioned nature [54:10].
- **The unconditioned** being the ground of all dharmas means nirvana is present within *samsara*; awakening comes from understanding both conditioned and unconditioned aspects [55:50].

Practical Application and Closing

- **Practice focuses on continually** returning to breath and the present, seeing emotions and thoughts as non-self and impermanent, thus reducing suffering [58:00].
 - **Participants were encouraged** to experience the course as a "bath in the Dharma" and welcomed to join ongoing sessions on YouTube, with plans for making it interactive in the future [01:02:50].
 - **The importance of community** and for sustaining collective practice [01:03:20].
-