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(Class #2) In the Ultimate Dimension, Every Dharma Is an Unconditioned Dharma

<https://www.youtube.com/watch/cvFrpiNjRuA>

00:00:02.535 We can enjoy three sounds of the bell,
00:00:06.012 come back to our body, come back to our breathing,
00:00:10.478 enjoy,
00:00:13.408 enjoy being free from our thinking, our worries, our anxiety,
00:00:19.084 just enjoying our in-breath and our out-breath.
00:00:31.706 (Bell)
00:00:38.615 (Bell)
00:01:08.415 (Bell)
00:01:33.837 (Bell)
00:02:17.377 Dear respected Thay, dear noble community,
00:02:22.505 today is the 24th of March in the year 2021.
00:02:28.899 We're still in the pandemic, and we're studying
00:02:35.838 the 40 tenets of Plum Village, teachings that Thay gave
00:02:44.229 in 2005, 2006.
00:02:52.756 And I think this is the first time we're streaming it live.
00:02:56.427 So welcome to everyone online.
00:03:03.682 This is a chance for us to go into the Dharma together.
00:03:07.325 It's very exciting.
00:03:10.749 it's like a cool stream in the summer time when we're hot.
00:03:18.497 And all we can think about is the water, and how cool it will be on our face.
00:03:24.557 And when we put our lips into the water,
00:03:27.715 maybe we put our head down into the water, and we feel refreshed.

00:03:31.898 We can let go of any worry, all the dirt on our body
00:03:36.645 can be carried away by the stream.
00:03:40.935 That is what it feels like to go into the Dharma, it's refreshing.
00:03:55.357 The first thing is to come back to our breathing, just be aware of the breath,
00:04:01.751 whatever the position of our body. Whether we're sitting up, lying down or standing,
00:04:12.187 be aware of our body, this wonder of a body.
00:04:18.451 It's covered with skin, and flesh and bone,
00:04:25.124 and full of all kinds of emotions, all kinds of ideas, concepts,
00:04:32.951 filled with millions of human cells, bacterial cells.
00:04:46.539 This wonder not only of our body,
00:04:51.799 but also of the air around us, of the body of others,
00:04:55.728 of the earth beneath our feet.
00:05:01.571 I have this plastic table in front of me. It's also a wonder.
00:05:08.931 A thermos, the stone, in the mountain, and the air that we breathe.
00:05:18.055 This all is not a philosophy, it's a practice.
00:05:22.599 It's a way of looking at all conditioned things as a wonder.
00:05:28.659 Things that are impermanent,
00:05:34.151 and free from a separate self.
00:05:38.699 Last class we went into the first thesis.
00:05:44.194 And for those of you - Or the first tenet.
00:05:50.188 For those of you joining online, you might like to get a copy of the 40 tenets
00:05:56.657 and follow along as we go.
00:06:00.126 I think it's available in a few places on the Plum Village websites,
00:06:04.539 as well as on the Order of Interbeing website in America.

00:06:13.278 So I'll just briefly cover what we covered in the last class.

00:06:26.350 The first tenet is,

00:06:31.160 space is not an unconditioned dharma.

00:06:41.749 [Space is not an unconditioned dharma]

00:07:15.032 It manifests together

00:07:31.201 with time,

00:07:38.338 matter,

00:07:44.061 and consciousness.

00:07:46.585 [It manifests together with time, matter and consciousness]

00:07:58.070 And we talked about space

00:08:04.611 as an experience in our practice.

00:08:09.175 We know

00:08:11.121 that our body takes up space, and there's a space around us.

00:08:15.364 As we move around, there's the air, there's the resistance of the ground beneath our feet.

00:08:21.146 But if you remove the ground, you remove the air,

00:08:25.757 there's still space, there's a sense of distance,

00:08:31.459 of length, or height width, three dimensions.

00:08:40.177 And it is likely that the monks, our ancestral teachers,

00:08:46.952 and the nuns that practiced getting in touch with space.

00:08:52.541 They had the practice of touching limitless space.

00:08:58.274 In that sense of limitless space they didn't include

00:09:04.498 anything you could touch or feel.

00:09:08.246 In that sense, they thought of it as being unconditioned,

00:09:12.557 in the way that nirvana is unconditioned.

00:09:20.084 But if we look more deeply at space, we see that it is, first of all, a notion.

00:09:28.559 It is something that we create with the human mind,

00:09:33.504 by this awareness of something deep in front of us,

00:09:41.029 to our side, above, and below,

00:09:44.476 a sense that things are not all occupying

00:09:51.352 one singularity, as it were, but they are spread out in three dimensions.

00:09:56.995 That is an idea.

00:10:01.124 Space as a way to describe

00:10:10.013 our lived experience of moving within three dimensions.

00:10:18.539 So in that sense, space is conditioned,

00:10:23.019 it's conditioned by our thinking, it's a concept.

00:10:28.114 But if we look more deeply,

00:10:31.640 we see, even if we try to ascribe a physical basis to that notion,

00:10:38.799 and say, 'No, there's something that is space',

00:10:42.645 we see that even in the scientific way of looking at space,

00:10:47.893 we also have come to see it as something conditioned.

00:10:51.922 Through the theory of relativity,

00:10:55.026 we know that space can be affected by mass, by matter.

00:11:02.768 If there is a very massive body,

00:11:06.132 even relatively low mass bodies have some effect on the curvature of space.

00:11:15.738 When light comes from far away stars,

00:11:21.797 we can actually measure how when they pass by massive stars

00:11:27.274 on the way the ray of light from that star is curved.

00:11:32.662 So there's actually a curvature of space-time.

00:11:38.405 That is also showing that space is conditioned.

00:11:43.601 Even in the way that we scientifically understand space

00:11:47.481 we try to get beyond the notion of space.

00:11:51.241 Even that what we ascribe to be space

00:11:54.672 is conditioned on matter, it is not something that is unconditioned.

00:12:03.380 When we look deeply into space,

00:12:06.744 we see that it is also made up of time.

00:12:11.555 And time is also conditioned.

00:12:16.982 It is not something unconditional.

00:12:21.344 Our sense of time is also a notion.

00:12:26.571 Actually, we only have this present moment.

00:12:30.252 But we use the word present moment to distinguish between

00:12:34.008 what will happen after this moment, the future,

00:12:37.053 and what has happened before, the past.

00:12:40.014 But the past is only your memory of experiences that

00:12:44.039 we have before this present moment, but that have left a mark on our consciousness

00:12:50.685 somehow, in the form of a sign, or a feeling or memory.

00:12:55.203 So, actually, we just have this present moment,

00:12:59.861 but we talk about the past

00:13:02.825 based on this lived experience that there is some kind of continuity in this body.

00:13:09.021 There are feelings, there are perceptions, there are mental formations,

00:13:12.748 and I recognize some kind of pattern in that.

00:13:16.313 That gives me a sense of continuity between what has happened before

00:13:21.574 and this present moment.

00:13:24.554 Then, my anticipation of what will happen after this present moment

00:13:30.365 is also experienced in the present moment.

00:13:35.706 But that is only

00:13:39.788 the planning, or thinking forward aspect of my mind.

00:13:46.345 and I call that the future. But everything is experienced only right here and now.

00:13:53.768 So, actually we see that time itself is a conditioned concept, it's a notion.

00:14:01.882 And there is no -

00:14:05.165 We can use the movement of, for example, the clock hands in around the clock

00:14:13.371 or the dripping of sand through an hourglass

00:14:20.013 to give us a sense that time is passing.

00:14:23.886 But those are all just conditioned things that are representing

00:14:30.069 an idea of what we more accurately refer to as impermanence.

00:14:44.906 [time]

00:14:52.569 [impermanence]

00:15:06.671 In terms of freeing ourselves from our suffering

00:15:10.617 we find it more helpful to talk about impermanence than to talk about time.

00:15:16.753 We tend to quantify time, right? We put numbers on it and we say that

00:15:24.714 the movement of large bodies like the rotation of the Earth,

00:15:31.194 roughly half of the time in shade, half of the time in the sun,

00:15:36.823 wherever you are on the Earth that is one day.

00:15:41.334 And then how long it takes for the Earth to rotate in its orbit, or -

00:15:46.210 Sorry, to move in this orbit all the way around the sun, that is one year.

00:15:51.653 Then, we subdivide the day into hours, and minutes, and seconds, and milliseconds.

00:15:59.648 Even now we have an atomic clock

00:16:03.793 that is based on the decay of the radioactive decay of atoms

00:16:09.539 to try to determine some kind of regular understanding of time.

00:16:16.431 But ultimately, it's still conditioned.

00:16:19.740 All of these ways of measuring ways of thinking about time are conditioned.

00:16:27.453 And conditioned things are impermanent.

00:16:30.894 That means they're subject to change.

00:16:34.894 So, they're subject to arising, manifesting,

00:16:38.674 subject to abiding for a time and then passing away.

00:16:44.536 So rather than concentrating on time

00:16:50.113 as a scientist might do in their observational study,

00:16:58.421 we, as practitioners, as scientists of the first person,

00:17:05.346 of our own practice looking inside,

00:17:08.759 we practice concentrating on the impermanent nature of things.

00:17:12.738 We don't need to measure the rate of impermanence,

00:17:16.196 but rather to recognize it.

00:17:18.527 It's a realization to see that this body, our body, is always changing.

00:17:23.128 We're growing older, our senses are perhaps,

00:17:26.973 if we're very young they're developing.

00:17:30.270 And as we get older, they become less able to see, to hear, to speak.

00:17:47.735 Recognizing that is actually a freedom.

00:17:51.515 That's why, this statement, we can see it as a practice,

00:17:56.859 to say that space is not an unconditioned dharma,

00:18:00.306 it means that space is also conditioned.

00:18:03.261 Space is also subject to impermanence.

00:18:06.448 And when we talk about impermanence in terms of space,

00:18:13.793 [space]

00:18:17.621 we use the term 'non-self'.

00:18:23.637 [non self]

00:18:27.134 Or 'empty of a separate self'.

00:18:35.755 So looked from the aspect of time, we see impermanence.

00:18:40.463 Looking from the aspect of space, we see non-self.

00:18:45.328 It means that there's no essence, there's no separate entity

00:18:50.776 that is cut off or removed from everything else in the universe.

00:18:58.945 Our teacher used the term 'interbeing'.

00:19:04.239 [interbeing]

00:19:10.900 We cannot be by ourselves alone.

00:19:15.561 One way is to say non-self, there is no self,

00:19:21.517 there's nothing inside of me, which is, somehow,

00:19:29.643 free from interacting with something in you.

00:19:36.603 There's nothing that is cut off from the rest of reality.

00:19:41.018 But actually, we inter-are.

00:19:45.794 There is a constant communication

00:19:48.275 through eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind

00:19:52.090 through the pores of our skin, through the very flesh of our body

00:19:55.858 that is the continuation of our ancestors,

00:19:58.566 that has come from the Earth, from the atmosphere, has come from the Sun.

00:20:02.626 All those things are interpenetrating us at all moments.

00:20:06.308 We cannot see any part of this body, these feelings,

00:20:10.333 our perceptions, our mental formations,our consciousness,
00:20:15.199 anything that is outside of that.
00:20:17.804 Seeing that is called wondrous existence,it's a wonder.
00:20:22.863 It's a kind of bliss, because we no longer feel alone, we don't feel isolated
00:20:30.507 no matter where we are, even if we don't see another human being for many months,
00:20:35.234 we are living in a mountain and we feel -
00:20:39.846 With this way of looking at space and time,
00:20:43.626 we feel completely connected.
00:20:48.249 If we're living with lots of people in a very tight space
00:20:53.965 and people are not practicing mindfulness,
00:20:57.694 people are not very perhaps kind,we can still touch,
00:21:01.689 using the concentration of impermanence and non-self,
00:21:07.249 we can still touch this nature of interbeing.
00:21:10.481 We can see that there's nothing that is cut off from the rest of reality.
00:21:16.214 Everything inter-penetrates.
00:21:20.352 This is a how to practice with this tenet.
00:21:25.915 How I like to practice with it.
00:21:29.362 You see that space is also empty of a separate self.
00:21:34.606 It is not an unconditioned dharma.
00:21:38.446 And it manifests together with time impermanence,
00:21:45.878 matter. When we look into matter,
00:21:48.881 we see that it is impermanent, everything is always changing.
00:21:54.459 Even if it's a very at a very slow rate.
00:21:59.669 Some subatomic particles are decaying

00:22:04.547 at rates of billions of years,
00:22:07.745 but they are ultimately impermanent.
00:22:12.106 So matter has this quality. When we look at matter,
00:22:16.468 we can see in it the aspect of impermanence.
00:22:24.125 And we can also see the aspect of non-self.
00:22:28.306 From the point of view of time, matter is impermanent.
00:22:33.263 From the point of view of space, it is non-self.
00:22:37.114 It interpenetrates with everything in the universe, it inter-is with everything.
00:22:48.270 And consciousness as well.
00:22:58.473 In the Buddhist tradition,
00:23:04.468 we talk about consciousness as having the aspect of mind consciousness.
00:23:11.776 [mind consciousness]
00:23:21.799 It means, what's therein the present moment in our mind.
00:23:26.641 If joy is manifesting, then joy is in our mind consciousness.
00:23:34.597 We are aware of the joy.
00:23:37.433 If we are thinking about a math problem, that is what is in our mind consciousness.
00:23:44.291 You can think of a computer and what is on the screen in that moment.
00:23:48.739 You know that inside the hard drive of that computer there's a lot of data.
00:23:55.182 If you try to represent that data on the screen at the same time,
00:24:00.258 It would look like a bunch of static. You wouldn't comprehend anything.
00:24:04.771 So, you only bring up at that moment what you want to look at,
00:24:10.049 That is your mind consciousness.
00:24:12.525 At this moment, maybe none of us is angry.
00:24:15.956 And none of us is afraid.

00:24:18.673 But that doesn't mean we believe that we don't have the seed of anger

00:24:23.118 in our consciousness somehow.

00:24:26.133 Or that we don't have the seed of fear in our consciousness, or the seed of joy.

00:24:32.591 Somehow it's there, but it hasn't yet manifested,

00:24:36.336 or it's not manifesting at that moment, it's not present in mind consciousness.

00:24:41.232 So we can talk about a kind of store consciousness.

00:24:47.340 [store consciousness]

00:24:56.911 In that store consciousness, there are the seeds

00:25:01.262 of mindfulness, of concentration, of anger.

00:25:18.127 They can have different shapes, Joy.

00:25:28.700 A good practitioner knows how to touch the seed of mindfulness

00:25:33.361 in the store consciousness so that it can manifest

00:25:39.570 as mindfulness in mind consciousness.

00:25:43.133 So we can find ways

00:25:49.377 to water the seed of mindfulness

00:25:53.903 so that when a seed of anger is also manifesting,

00:26:00.249 something we perceive brings up the flower of anger,

00:26:05.794 because it's like a flower in our mind consciousness.

00:26:10.571 And as practitioners, we know that in that moment I'm angry.

00:26:17.842 We recognize there is anger,

00:26:20.695 and then we touch the seed of mindfulness to bring it up.

00:26:24.126 And maybe that anger doesn't go away, but it's like you shine a light on it,

00:26:30.864 and you understand better its roots. What I said in the past,

00:26:36.707 what kind of conversations I have consumed, my family life,

00:26:43.520 movies, music, things that I have said or done to my friends

00:26:50.776 that have watered that seed of anger.

00:26:54.423 Things that I have heard, things that have been done to me, said to me in the past

00:26:58.804 that have made that seed strong enough

00:27:03.817 so that now, with one word, or one phrase, the anger manifests

00:27:07.573 in mind consciousness.

00:27:10.320 So, when we are a practitioner, we know how to invite mindfulness up

00:27:14.803 to embrace the seed of anger.

00:27:20.382 We often talk about consciousness like points of light.

00:27:36.832 It's like if we hold a candle, and we move it around in a circle.

00:27:43.943 Then, we take individual snapshots of each moment.

00:27:50.201 We would just see one point of light of the candle.

00:27:53.473 But if we leave the camera shutter open

00:27:56.923 for maybe a second, or two, or three seconds,

00:28:00.822 and move our arm in a circle,

00:28:03.604 when we expose the film, we will see a continuous circle.

00:28:09.513 Consciousness has that nature.

00:28:12.504 A nature of being like points in each instant.

00:28:21.613 But we experience it as a continuity.

00:28:26.222 It is like the shutter on our camera is kept open.

00:28:31.254 So all these firings of neurons,

00:28:35.616 all of these moments of feelings, perceptions, that happen in moments.

00:28:40.693 The consciousness of our eye, what we see, hear,
00:28:45.387 although you could break them down into tiny slivers of instants,
00:28:50.533 but our experience of it is continuous.
00:28:54.327 What we call consciousness is actually this continuous experience of instants
00:28:59.491 going on, instants of impermanence.
00:29:07.583 So, consciousness is also impermanent,
00:29:14.692 And it has a non-self nature.
00:29:18.784 Most of our training as practitioners is to realize that.
00:29:23.982 that's what I try to do most of my day.
00:29:27.013 Because when emotions manifest,
00:29:30.958 they have that familiar look inside my consciousness.
00:29:36.086 And I think that anger is me,
00:29:39.583 that sadness is me, and that joy is me.
00:29:45.493 And as a practitioner, I know as long as I hold on to that idea, I will suffer.
00:29:52.553 Because, actually, the anger is just anger. It's not mine.
00:29:57.632 When conditions are sufficient, then anger manifests.
00:30:03.607 So, with mindfulness, I see it as a phenomenon.
00:30:09.680 Anger is a phenomenon manifesting in mind consciousness,
00:30:13.613 it's not something that is me, myself, or mine.
00:30:19.701 So it's very fun to practice.
00:30:26.201 To let go of our idea of ourselves.
00:30:30.077 Here we start with letting go of the idea that space is free of conditioning,
00:30:38.251 as well as time, as well as matter, and consciousness.
00:30:42.714 They are interdependent.
00:30:47.861 Without matter, we can not have consciousness.

00:30:53.386 Consciousness depends on -
00:30:56.519 Consciousness is always consciousness of something.
00:31:00.647 It cannot arise without an object.
00:31:05.359 We have the eye in contact with forms. When I look at the thermos,
00:31:14.299 my eye comes in contact with the light
00:31:17.447 that's bouncing off of the outside of the thermos, it goes into my retina
00:31:21.392 and then stimulates neurons in my brain.
00:31:25.888 And somehow along a pathway,
00:31:29.068 I associate that with the word thermos, because I have learned the word 'thermos'.
00:31:33.792 because the company that makes these hot water bottles is called Thermos.
00:31:38.208 So, if I say 'thermos', that has a meaning for other people.
00:31:42.169 But the distance that is gone from these light photons
00:31:46.915 bouncing off of the outside of the thermos into my eye and my retina,
00:31:50.807 we slow it down.
00:31:52.627 There is an incredibly complex series of steps that are going on there.
00:31:58.172 So clearly,
00:32:01.935 matter is part of the process,
00:32:05.398 space is also part of the process, the photons are moving in space.
00:32:11.906 Time, right? The photon moving at the speed of light,
00:32:16.502 And then, the tiny neurons firing in my brain
00:32:21.081 to register the form of the thermos in my consciousness.
00:32:26.341 So all those consciousness are dependent on all those things.
00:32:32.418 That is just a brief summary of what we learned last time.
00:32:37.579 I'd like to go into the second tenet.

00:33:59.754 In the historical dimension,
00:34:18.317 every dharma is a conditioned dharma.
00:34:24.190 [2. In the historical dimension, every
dharma is a conditioned dharma.]
00:34:48.409 In the ultimate dimension,
00:35:05.872 every dharma is an unconditioned
dharma.
00:35:11.371 [In the ultimate dimension, every
dharma is an unconditioned dharma.]
00:35:41.404 The unconditioned is the ground of all
dharmas.
00:35:51.075 [The unconditioned is the ground of all
dharmas.]
00:36:34.166 There's a phrase Thay uses, which
is 'the dialectics of the Dharma'.
00:36:47.419 Everything that we learn is to help us to
be able to let go of our learning.
00:36:53.579 Every concept or word that the Buddha
teaches us
00:36:58.667 is to help us to let go of our attachment
to words and concepts.
00:37:04.050 And if you understand that point, then
the Dharma becomes very easy.
00:37:08.747 But so long as you are looking for some
kind of absolute truth in the words,
00:37:16.221 so long as you're looking for
some absolute truth in concepts or ideas,
00:37:22.029 then you will suffer.
00:37:24.679 Because you are trying to grasp onto
something which cannot be grasped onto.
00:37:33.221 You are trying to use signs or
representations
00:37:37.378 to try to represent or be a sign or signal
00:37:42.523 something that cannot be signaled or
represented.
00:37:49.503 So nirvana is the unconditioned. It is
something beyond description,
00:37:54.903 something we cannot grasp onto or
hold on to,
00:37:58.819 something that is present in every
cell of our body and every atom,

00:38:05.320 and every part of the nature of reality.
00:38:08.980 You can touch the unconditioned, but
the problem is that we,
00:38:13.193 in our yearning for the
unconditioned, the yearning for freedom,
00:38:18.600 we tend to grasp on to concepts or
ideas.
00:38:23.219 So, right away in the second tenet, Thay
already brings to light
00:38:27.412 this dialectics of the Dharma which
help us to free our -
00:38:37.422 It's using words using concepts to free
ourselves from words and concepts.
00:38:45.962 First we learn that space is not an
unconditioned dharma.
00:38:50.727 it manifests together with time, matter,
and consciousness.
00:38:54.937 But then, we see, in the historical
dimension
00:38:58.302 every dharma is a conditioned dharma.
00:39:02.780 We talk about the historical
dimension and the ultimate dimension.
00:39:09.623 The historical dimension are things
00:39:15.934 that happen according to
impermanence,
00:39:20.646 according to coming and going, being
born and dying, being and non-being.
00:39:32.384 We look at the flower, and we
say, 'Well, the flower is there.'
00:39:37.707 But we know that the flower one
day will no longer be there.
00:39:42.257 And we know that before the flower
was there,
00:39:45.469 there was only a seed in the soil.
00:39:48.099 We look at the seed, and we say, 'There
is no flower.'
00:39:51.875 That is an idea of non-being. So the
flower is not there.
00:39:58.040 Then, with some water and sunlight,
and the right soil in the right temperature,

00:40:03.251 then the seed manifests and soon we have a small plant.

00:40:07.874 And then, the beautiful orchid flower manifests.

00:40:11.328 And we say, 'Now the flower is there! Before it was not. Now it is.'

00:40:17.894 Then, sometime in the future, it will decay and we say, 'It's not there anymore.'

00:40:22.602 It's gone from being back to non-being'.

00:40:26.618 That is a way of thinking of things in the historical dimension,

00:40:30.715 that there are things that are not there,

00:40:35.426 they are not, non-being, they come into being and then, they go back to non-being.

00:40:43.234 But with a deeper look, with more mindfulness, we can look into the flower

00:40:49.294 and see that, actually, the seed is still there in the flower.

00:40:54.104 Because all the conditions,

00:40:56.471 many of the conditions necessary to manifest the flower

00:41:00.215 are already there in the seed.

00:41:02.233 The DNA, the capacity to break open with the right amount of humidity,

00:41:09.908 the right amount of temperature.

00:41:12.485 All those things are already there in the seed. The flower is already there.

00:41:18.085 When we look with the eyes of the ultimate,

00:41:23.569 we can see that things are already connected.

00:41:29.256 So we become free of ideas of being and non-being.

00:41:35.944 But we see that when conditions are sufficient,

00:41:40.608 phenomena manifest.

00:41:43.042 And when they are no longer sufficient, then they cease to manifest.

00:41:47.053 They haven't gone from being into non-being.

00:41:50.685 But actually, that's only looking at a very superficial level of things.

00:41:55.936 In our practice, we are training to -

00:42:00.324 Though we live in the historical dimension,

00:42:03.488 we train ourselves to be able to touch the ultimate dimension,

00:42:08.117 where there are no longer concepts of being and non-being,

00:42:12.342 coming and going, same or different.

00:42:22.918 In the historical dimension, we have birth and death.

00:42:27.045 We know that this body has been born of a mother and a father.

00:42:32.624 That it will grow old, get sick, and die. And that is all very normal, right?

00:42:46.124 Those are things that are happening all around us.

00:42:50.072 The phenomena that we experience through our eyes, and ears, and so forth.

00:42:54.600 Everything that we experience or perceive is in the historical dimension.

00:43:03.021 When we grasp at it from the sense of representation,

00:43:07.853 when we have a concept or notion that is happening in the historical dimension.

00:43:13.581 Even the word nirvana or the unconditioned

00:43:16.954 is taking place in the historical dimension.

00:43:24.319 The practice is:

00:43:26.744 how can we touch the ultimate dimension in the midst of the historical dimension?

00:43:34.844 They would teach us to look into, for example, the concept of God,

00:43:41.852 in the Christian tradition, or in the Abrahamic religions.

00:43:52.218 For many theologians, there's something very close to the unconditioned in God.

00:44:05.107 When we see God in all things, that he is the ground of all being.

00:44:11.801 That is coming very close.

00:44:13.910 But sometimes, there is still that attachment to

00:44:16.597 separating the creator from the created.

00:44:20.697 As human beings, we are the created in the theology of Christianity,

00:44:32.495 and God is the creator.

00:44:35.946 And God, the creator, is somehow separate.

00:44:39.039 We cannot say that God, the creator, is in the created.

00:44:44.070 He is somehow other than the created.

00:44:47.561 And that leads to dualistic thinking, we separate the creator and the created.

00:44:57.615 In Buddhism, we look at it from a slightly different point of view.

00:45:03.775 We say that,

00:45:07.787 instead of talking about the created, we talk about the historical dimension.

00:45:11.864 Things that are happening at the realm of being a non-being,

00:45:17.225 coming and going same or different more or less increasing decreasing,

00:45:24.140 all these ways of differentiating between one thing and the other thing.

00:45:32.212 So, in the historical dimension, there is a tendency to measure.

00:45:36.347 to separate one thing that has qualities that are different from another thing.

00:45:42.274 And not to see the interbeing nature that is there that can be touched

00:45:50.365 when we look more deeply, when we go down from the surface level.

00:45:58.408 In the historical dimension, every dharma is a conditioned dharma.

00:46:09.177 Anything that can be said to be in the historical dimension is conditioned.

00:46:19.218 And in the ultimate dimension,

00:46:22.233 beyond any concept or notion, every dharma is an unconditioned dharma.

00:46:35.352 Even space,

00:46:37.414 which we just said is not an unconditioned dharma.

00:46:42.661 So it seems there's a contradiction there.

00:46:45.489 How can we say, space is not an unconditioned dharma,

00:46:49.629 but here we say, in the ultimate dimension every dharma is an unconditioned dharma,

00:46:54.978 including space, time, matter, and consciousness.

00:47:01.389 The point is that this is not about philosophy, but it's about practice.

00:47:07.832 We practice in the historical dimension to look into every cell in our body,

00:47:14.661 to our breathing,

00:47:18.790 to even our ideas and notions,

00:47:21.936 and see that there is the element of the unconditioned in the conditioned.

00:47:27.596 All dharmas,

00:47:29.993 and when we talk about dharma it means a phenomenon,

00:47:34.518 like the cup of water, or a cloud, or a thought, or my anger,

00:47:43.963 even time, space, any kind of concept,

00:47:47.377 anything we can attach a notion, or have a perception about

00:47:51.571 is a dharma.

00:47:55.418 If we,

00:47:57.898 for example, if we just see ourselves as the created,

00:48:02.459 and we cannot see the creator,

00:48:05.405 if we just see ourselves as somehow separate from God,

00:48:10.135 then, we will be very lonely.

00:48:13.416 We will feel we are worthless,

00:48:17.111 because we don't have that god nature in us.

00:48:23.138 That is why, rather than talking about God, or a creator,

00:48:27.012 we talk about the unconditioned.

00:48:30.592 What cannot be expressed.

00:48:33.760 What cannot be perceived by any quality,

00:48:40.289 like flavor color, scent, pattern.

00:48:47.163 In Buddhism, that is a skillful means.

00:48:51.371 We use this dialectics of the Dharmato help free ourselves.

00:48:55.588 You touch something, it brings you joy, brings you happiness, brings you freedom.

00:49:03.132 But then you try to hold on to it, you say,

00:49:06.043 'What is that thing? That is an unconditioned dharma, that is nirvana'.'

00:49:11.288 And right away you already lose.

00:49:13.951 Because actually, it has become conditioned.

00:49:17.114 You have put a quality on the unconditioned.

00:49:21.852 You have given it a flavor, or a concept of thought, some kind of tone

00:49:27.454 And it is no longer unconditioned, it is something conditioned.

00:49:31.134 It is just a designation.

00:49:36.428 So, as a practitioner, we let go of that idea again,

00:49:41.340 and we say, 'No, I want to touch the unconditioned.

00:49:44.570 It's not enough to just grasp onto this body,

00:49:48.132 or these feelings, or these perceptions, this consciousness.

00:49:51.689 I want to be really free.'

00:49:54.794 And we train ourselves to let go of the conditioned, let go, just keep letting go.

00:50:01.634 So in the 16 steps of mindful breathing,

00:50:05.080 we're invited to see the impermanent nature of all things.

00:50:09.092 And that helps us to let go of our desire,

00:50:12.239 our craving for any sense pleasures.

00:50:18.814 And that calms our mind, so our mind ceases to become agitated,

00:50:24.395 ceases to have ideas of being and nonbeing, coming or going, same or different.

00:50:31.730 And then, we let go.

00:50:34.768 We practice letting go. The 16th step

00:50:39.246 of the Mindfulness of Breathing Sutra.

00:50:45.529 That is the practice of touching the unconditioned.

00:50:49.361 Just continuously letting go, continuously.

00:50:53.806 Maybe we can listen to the sound of the bell.

00:51:04.247 (Bell)

00:51:08.990 (Bell)

00:51:31.266 Right now, there is a volcano erupting in Iceland.

00:51:36.843 Some scientists put a camera on that volcano and attached it to the internet.

00:51:48.598 So the past few days, that's been my meditation.

00:51:52.994 I have a computer screen.

00:51:56.522 We have in the office a computer screen

00:51:59.434 with that live video of the volcano erupting,

00:52:04.349 with the lava coming up and out and pouring down the sides.

00:52:09.260 And then going out into the plane in molten rock.

00:52:15.321 And I also have a screen in my room, and I just put it there.

00:52:21.024 I have been using it as a meditation, to watch this live volcano erupting.

00:52:29.207 I was reflecting on why do I find it so pleasant to watch this volcano erupting.

00:52:34.996 Sometimes there are helicopters that are flying over it.

00:52:38.347 Sometimes there's a scientist who comes by and waves to the camera.

00:52:42.541 I looked on YouTube, where they have the live stream.

00:52:50.364 Today there was around 16000 people watching this volcano erupting.

00:52:58.224 So I reflected on what makes it so interesting to watch this.

00:53:02.587 And I thought it has something to do with impermanence.

00:53:07.849 I practice to look at that that red-hot molten rock coming out of the volcano

00:53:17.071 as my body.

00:53:20.183 There are some elements of the ancestor that are there in that rock.

00:53:27.362 And I know in my very body, the elements of the earth are there.

00:53:35.037 And seeing that, the Earth recreating itself from below through heat,

00:53:41.580 pushing up through pressure up and out onto the surface,

00:53:46.354 and then out creating new earth on top of the old earth,

00:53:52.316 I had some kind of joy.

00:53:56.412 I really see that this life force, this heat that we carry

00:54:03.452 from generation to generation,

00:54:05.935 unbroken for millions, tens of millions, hundreds of millions of years,

00:54:11.592 from our mother's womb,

00:54:14.675 that heat she gave to us and then passed on to us,

00:54:18.371 which we then carry in us and may go on to our offspring,

00:54:22.918 that is also the heat coming from the Earth.

00:54:28.761 Now we know that

00:54:31.008 it's very likely that the bacteria that are our ancestors

00:54:38.815 were formed probably

00:54:43.303 from vents with heated water, like geysers, like in Yellowstone,

00:54:50.302 coming up out of the Earth.

00:54:52.383 And the bacteria that can live there

00:54:55.341 formed the lipids that made the form the first membrane or -

00:54:59.525 Sorry, the chemicals that were there,

00:55:04.005 through the heat of the Earth pushing up through the geyser

00:55:09.565 led to the lipids which form the membranes of the first bacteria.

00:55:15.359 the first cells.

00:55:19.335 So. I reflected on all that as I watched the volcano erupting,

00:55:24.649 and I get in touch with this process which is going on in the historical dimension.

00:55:31.026 To see if I can touch the ultimate, look more deeply into it and see that

00:55:35.424 that molten rock is not separate from me.

00:55:40.582 I can touch it in the life force in my body.

00:55:44.762 I can see a deep connection. We are not separate.

00:55:50.538 Even though I don't want to go near that molten rock.

00:55:56.314 I have been one time on an active volcano in Indonesia.

00:56:02.426 There's a little bit of fear looking down into the caldera,

00:56:07.258 seeing the heat coming up.

00:56:10.668 It is not a very pleasant place for human beings.

00:56:15.561 But it is fascinating, because I'm looking into the heat of the life force

00:56:21.274 that is supporting my very own body

00:56:25.998 going back hundreds of millions of years. It is so wonderful!

00:56:31.630 That was my meditation of practicing to go

00:56:34.600 from the historical dimension into the ultimate.

00:56:39.373 We can do it with anything, not just the live stream of a volcano.

00:56:45.334 We can do it with the water that we drink.

00:56:49.859 Our teacher would like to look into a glass of water and see the cloud.

00:56:57.722 If we're only staying in the historical dimension, we just have a glass of water.

00:57:07.627 And the water is liquid, and it's moving around.

00:57:12.156 And then, as we drink, it goes into our body.

00:57:22.444 But with the eyes of interbeing, we can see that this water is already our nature.

00:57:28.502 We are mostly made up of water.

00:57:33.750 The water in this cup was in a cloud.

00:57:42.158 and the cloud then, became rain that fell on the earth,

00:57:46.219 that eventually seeped into the soil, and became the spring.

00:57:53.675 Eventually, it made its way to my thermos. And now it goes in my body.

00:58:00.070 And I will urinate it out, or sweat it out and it will go back to become a cloud.

00:58:10.358 So that whole process, by looking deeply with the eyes of interbeing

00:58:14.806 we see that

00:58:16.570 the cloud is still there in the water, and the rain is still there.

00:58:21.201 That means, now the cloud is in my body, and it goes back to being a cloud.

00:58:27.510 Those are the eyes of no birth and no death.

00:58:31.340 That is touching the ultimate.

00:58:34.483 So we can say, in the ultimate dimension we see things

00:58:39.548 as having the nature of no birth, no death,

00:58:43.094 no coming, no going.

00:58:45.642 Because we see that there's nothing lost,

00:58:47.751 there's nothing that goes from being into non-being.

00:58:52.211 It's not like we are right now, and that we will no longer be in the future.

00:59:01.337 But we are just part of the process

00:59:05.683 since beginningless time, of manifestation.

00:59:10.811 They often called it a game of hide-and-go-seek.

00:59:15.040 At this moment I manifest, and we don't know the next moment

00:59:18.917 if conditions will still be sufficient

00:59:21.256 for this body, these feelings, these perceptions to manifest.

00:59:26.062 That is the nature of things, Then we don't feel afraid anymore,

00:59:30.673 we don't fear death, we don't fear getting old,

00:59:33.868 because we see that's just the nature of the body.

00:59:36.898 That's the nature of our feelings and perceptions.

00:59:40.363 It's very joyful.

00:59:42.395 So we can ride the waves of birth and death without fear.

00:59:47.140 That is touching the ultimate dimension.

00:59:53.034 Living in impermanence,

00:59:55.809 seeing the nature of non-self without fear, without grasping.

01:00:01.342 And it's a practice, it's not for the sake of describing reality.

01:00:06.936 It is something we actually do.

01:00:10.148 So, that is what I take as my practice in my meditation.

01:00:13.961 I sit down and I breathe in and out.

01:00:16.855 and I notice all this thinking coming up from my projects,

01:00:21.183 whatever conversations I might have had, some interactions I might have had,

01:00:26.532 and I see that these feelings are not me, these perceptions are not me.

01:00:33.324 They are phenomena that manifest due to causes and conditions.

01:00:38.633 Things that I said in the past, things that I have done.

01:00:43.731 They're all part of a process, but I don't need to grasp onto them.

01:00:48.544 So long as I grasp onto them, then I have difficulty to see the root,

01:00:54.151 what is really going on down there in the roots of my consciousness.

01:01:05.741 So,

01:01:09.355 touching the ultimate is something we can do with any dharma.

01:01:14.198 And when we do that, then we see the unconditioned nature of the dharma.

01:01:18.593 So, everything that we experience in the historical dimension,

01:01:24.454 which is coming and going, being and non-being, flowers, trees, spring,

01:01:29.146 and bees, and breath, and body, and blood, and feelings,

01:01:35.276 everything we experience

01:01:39.056 all of it has this unconditioned nature.

01:01:44.252 That is not something that is separate from its conditioned nature.

01:01:50.778 But it is inherent in all things.

01:01:56.152 And that is the practice, to touch that, to become free from our conditioning

01:02:01.481 For example, you may like vanilla ice cream.

01:02:06.176 Who here likes ice cream?

01:02:08.702 Only one. Okay, almost everyone likes ice cream.

01:02:13.387 And you have a flavor that you like.

01:02:15.779 So every time you go, 'I like vanilla ice cream', or, 'I would like pistachio'.

01:02:22.762 That is a conditioned thought.

01:02:25.371 'I am someone who likes pistachio' 'I am someone who likes vanilla'.

01:02:29.253 It's such a pity, because there's so many wonderful flavors that you can try

01:02:35.380 if you just let go of grasping of your favorite flavor of ice cream.

01:02:41.124 Then you can taste pistachio, you can taste the mango, sugar, sorbet.

01:02:47.034 you can try all kinds of different flavors.

01:02:51.330 In the same way, when we touch the unconditioned,

01:02:55.091 suddenly all kinds of new possibilities open up, new wondrous things.

01:03:01.618 and those wondrous things are then not new things that we start to grasp onto.

01:03:07.399 But we, as practitioners, train ourselves to know that we just experience it

01:03:13.094 we just enjoy the wondrous nature of things

01:03:16.756 without grasping at it, without getting attached

01:03:20.186 That is the core of the practice.

01:03:22.765 You don't need to make concepts and ideas and then believe them to be really real.

01:03:29.376 That is the nature of the practice.

01:03:33.751 These statements of Thay, I see them really as inviting us always to practice.

01:03:39.978 They're not statements for the purpose of describing reality

01:03:44.543 or some kind of ontology.

01:03:49.003 The unconditioned is the ground of all dharmas.

01:03:52.768 It is there in all things.

01:03:56.847 But it cannot be described, it cannot be physically contacted.

01:04:05.671 We can't touch the unconditioned.

01:04:09.182 There's a way to do it by freeing ourselves from grasping at the conditioned.

01:04:15.510 This statement also is not a statement of theology or ontology,

01:04:20.968 but it is a practice.

01:04:23.159 We practice to see,

01:04:25.431 because our normal, habitual way of doing things is to see,

01:04:29.478 'Oh gosh! Breakfast with the brothers again in Solidity Hamlet!'

01:04:34.954 everyone's like looking at their bowl of cereal, and moping around.

01:04:40.699 It feels like, 'Oh gosh! This has happened like this hundreds of times already.

01:04:46.234 It's the same food, same oatmeal, same bread,

01:04:50.051 same peanut butter, and almond butter, and olive oil',

01:04:55.776 or whatever. We have very good food, but still it gets boring.

01:04:59.540 You think, 'Oh! It's just the same every day.'

01:05:03.670 But when I notice that in me, then I try to see,

01:05:07.716 what if I looked at it with new eyes?

01:05:10.729 I remember the first day I came back to Deer Park, a couple of years ago,

01:05:15.257 after being away for 10 years,

01:05:17.622 and I think, 'Look at all the wondrous food for breakfast. It's amazing!'

01:05:21.651 Fresh fruit, we're in California, really tasty oatmeal!

01:05:28.292 The brother makes granola, It's amazing! Look at all this wondrous food!

01:05:34.069 But, how did it happen that over days and days, many months, I just come down,

01:05:38.095 and, 'Oh! The same food.'

01:05:40.850 It's because I lost my capacity to touch the ultimate

01:05:47.273 in the very everyday, normal, wondrous, phenomena

01:05:52.162 that are going on at the breakfast table.

01:05:56.911 That is how by cultivating this beginner's mind, this kind of openness

01:06:02.025 of just always coming back to the breath, always coming back to the body,

01:06:05.590 coming back to our habits, our anxiety, our worry,

01:06:12.895 and looking at them with new eyes.

01:06:16.210 Now, in the study of emotional psychology,

01:06:20.889 they are abandoning the classical ideas of emotions

01:06:24.896 saying that, for example, anger is the same exact thing that manifests,

01:06:32.026 that's hardwired into you as it is to me.

01:06:34.759 I might experience anger in a very different way

01:06:37.318 than you might experience it.

01:06:39.728 What I've noticed since getting that insight,

01:06:42.313 is when I look at my anger,

01:06:44.413 it's always manifesting in new ways.

01:06:48.474 I cannot say that it's the same anger as yesterday or the day before.

01:06:54.171 But I am experiencing new things, new conditions,

01:06:57.684 new qualities based on my experiences and how that anger is manifesting.

01:07:02.147 So, I look at it with mindfulness, with the eyes of joy, and say,

01:07:08.557 'Wow! My anger, you are there, you are manifesting in a new way.

01:07:12.535 How is it that I can learn so that you don't overwhelm me,

01:07:15.479 so you don't take over my mind?

01:07:17.979 Because I don't want to be angry,

01:07:20.676 I want to be happy

01:07:22.659 But I know that I need to see the unconditioned nature in you, anger,

01:07:27.187 if I want to be free from you.'

01:07:30.392 That is the insight of a practitioner.

01:07:35.992 And that is what I try to do in my daily practice.

01:07:39.521 And how I try to practice this second tenet.

01:07:44.449 Moving from the historical dimension,

01:07:48.112 where every dharma is a conditioned dharma,

01:07:51.671 to the ultimate dimension.

01:07:54.820 It is changing our way of looking. It's not changing reality.

01:07:58.752 It's just changing our way of viewing things.

01:08:02.779 Freeing ourselves from concepts and notions. That is the essence.

01:08:07.841 And the unconditioned is there, it's already there, nirvana is in samsara.

01:08:16.551 It's already there, we don't need to go find nirvana somewhere else.

01:08:21.714 it is the ground of all dharmas, all conditioned phenomena.

01:08:28.072 So that's it for today, unless there are any questions?

01:08:34.048 I said I would leave some time.

01:08:43.469 Maybe we can -

01:08:46.537 Does she have a question?

01:08:51.582 (inaudible)

01:08:59.772 Maybe we can listen to the sound of the bell.

01:09:15.084 (Bell)

01:09:20.345 (Bell)

01:09:43.608 (Bell)

01:10:05.901 (Bell)

01:10:44.063 Dear friends, for those of us online,

01:10:50.039 I hope you feel a bit cooler, a bit more refreshed.

01:10:55.485 I know I do. This is like taking a bath in the Dharma.

01:11:04.779 And it's very helpful to take a bath in the Dharma.

01:11:08.644 We're just figuring out how to do this course online.

01:11:14.854 We hope to do it every Wednesday at 7:30 Pacific time.

01:11:20.397 The brothers are very generous to give their time to help put this online.

01:11:27.640 And we'll try to look into ways that we can have it be somewhat interactive

01:11:33.535 so if there are questions from people watching online.

01:11:37.231 Maybe for now you can put it in the comments on YouTube,

01:11:40.842 and then we'll see in the coming classes.

01:11:43.800 Maybe we'll have a mailing list just for this course

01:11:47.351 so people can keep in contact.

01:11:50.598 Because I think it's very lovely to have a group of us that follows through.

01:11:57.574 Because I'm also going into these teachings for my own practice.

01:12:03.052 I really want to savor these 40 tenets.

01:12:11.009 So it's nice to do it together

01:12:14.049 so we have a continuous course.

01:12:19.349 Maybe next week we'll have more information

01:12:22.398 about how you can keep connected to these classes,

01:12:27.508 but for now, we'll just make a playlist on YouTube.

01:12:30.455 We invite those of you who haven't seen the first class to watch it

01:12:34.320 when you have some time this week before the next class

01:12:38.275 Thank you.

01:12:49.034 (Bell)

01:12:53.396 (Bell)