

Module 6, Part 2 - final transcript and srt.

📅 Thu, Jul 20, 2023 6:13PM ⌚ 55:49

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

mind, body, feeling, meditation, emptiness, label, mental, moment, sense, exist, inherent, parts, aggregate, experience, meditating, bitcoin, indignant, analysis, realisation, called

SPEAKERS

Scott Snibbe

S

Scott Snibbe 00:05

Okay, everybody. Welcome back. So, now we move into asking the question from "How Things Exist", to "who am I"? And we're also going to ask this question systematically, the way that the Buddha taught, with some subtle enhancements from the lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, in which I've refined a lot of the meditation techniques and subtle, powerful ways that help and eventually eliminate what seemed to be the root of our suffering. And so the root source of our suffering, like we heard in some of the Buddhist commentaries, during these sessions today, is that the root source of our suffering is said to be our clinging to an unrealistic view of ourselves as permanent, partless, and independent. You know, and when I hear those words, you know, I think, of course, I'm not any of those things. And you might say the same thing too - it's logical. So that's great.

S

Scott Snibbe 01:18

But examining... the problem is, we don't really - and "I" (by we I greatly include "I") - somehow that doesn't really sink in, you know. Even though we know so much about our bodies, actually, so much more about our bodies than we did at the time of the Buddha. So actually going deeply again, through meditation: to examine how our body and our mind exists, step by step by step, is seen as a very important method to go beyond the like, "of course, I know, I'm made out of cells, and my mind changes all the time." But to do that, in a systematic, deep way, through meditation, that starts to impact the way that we feel and act and perceive reality and affect how upset we get about things, you know, or how attached we get to things.

S

Scott Snibbe 02:14

So we see ourselves as permanent when we forget that we're on a continual arc of change through life. We remember, don't forget, we were born! And then we were given a label, you know, our name is just a label, we were given the label of Scott, or Kamlo, or Carlo, or venerable Fabienne. It's just a label. I was telling my daughter about this, trying to teach her these ideas early in her life. You know, I said: your name is not you - it's just slapped on you,

it's just something we chose. And now you're used to calling yourself that, but you're not really - her name is Samaya - you're not really Samaya. You know, it really blew her mind to explain that to her. Because we think we are: our parents say it 1000s of times, and so we come to think we really are that label, but we're not. And then we will eventually die. And it's, you know, it's annoying to hear that. But each of us, each of us lives that kind of hero's journey. It's very beautiful.

S

Scott Snibbe 03:19

Again, it's very beautiful, looking out at all the faces out on this call, because each of us lives that hero's journey from like birth, being labelled, and then eventually to death. So do we see ourselves on this arc of life changing even now? Or do we have a more solid view of a self that somehow always has been and always will be? And I can tell you for myself it's more the latter. And it's very frustrating because it's so logical and true that, you know, that other way of seeing ourselves is obviously true, and yet we have this really annoying illusion of separateness and constancy. So do we remember that we're made up of organs, and cells, and molecules, and atoms, constantly changing thoughts, and feelings, and perceptions? Or do we feel this more unitary, singular sense of self, that's somehow greater than the sum of all those changing parts?

S

Scott Snibbe 04:23

Carlo Rovelli was - it really seemed like Carlo Rovelli, you know, had some, maybe some realisation of this, because the way he talks about it seemed very, very heartfelt the way he saw himself just as a process, you know, and not as a separate entity. So do we see ourselves as interdependent with the people and the forces and the culture around us? Or do we feel like an autonomous agent who has desires and dislikes that are independent and separate from the world around us? Who achieved things on our own without depending on others? So those are some of the questions that start to chip away at the illusion of a separate self. We're not destroying the notion of a conventional self, that lives and breathes and interacts with others. But we're trying to dissolve the diluted sense of self that seems independent from the forces and the beings around us. So that's a really subtle point and we'll get to it in meditation. Because there's a certain aspect of yourself that we're trying to dissolve - and not the conventional self: the conventional self is fine, where you're an interdependent process, in constant exchange and dialogue with the universe. It's that strong, separate, independent sense of self, that's the one that's really wrong and really painful. They [the Buddhists] say that's the cause of all, of at least our mental suffering.

S

Scott Snibbe 05:45

So let's get into this meditation. Get back into your meditation, posture, seat, bed, whatever. And so just for one minute, focus on the breath, it helps so much to calm and settle the mind. It's amazing how much deeper your analytical meditation is, even with one minute, trying to focus on the breath, and just letting go of distractions as they come, just let them pass by without getting upset about them. And so now we'll do this meditation, which is called meditating on the five aggregates of the self. That's, you know, if you Google it, you can find a lot of versions of this. The process of meditating on the self was taught by the Buddha with this

name, the five aggregates. But they really break down these five aggregates, again, it's just a model. There's another model where you might say seven, there's another way, you might say 52, or 53, or 56. Or, and there's one where it's just two: where you can just say, your body and your mind - the material body and the immaterial mind, if you want to use those words.

S

Scott Snibbe 08:06

So the first aggregate in this five-part model is the body/form, refers to the body. And then these other four aggregates refer to the mind. And there are a specific way of organising our different mental experiences, so that we can better see how our mind operates. It's not the only way. But it's powerful to break down your mind into these four different categories. So there's an element of this meditation that isn't always taught, that's very helpful in cutting at the root of our mental suffering. And so before we go into his meditation, it's actually very important to first conjure this specific, mistaken way that we see ourselves - that we're going to refute. And this mistaken way of seeing ourselves - technically, it's called the inherent I. And when we're meditating, the reason I mentioned it, is because when we're meditating, typically this inherent I actually isn't there. Because we're in this relaxed state of mind focusing on beneficial thoughts. And it's encouraging that this annoying, inaccurate sense of self isn't always there, because it shows that this exaggerated sense of I can be reduced or even eliminated.

S

Scott Snibbe 09:40

So in this relaxed state of meditation that, you know, we may already be in, we have to actually work at it. This is one of the tricks of this meditation, you actually have to work to bring up this inaccurate sense of I, so that you can refute it. And so here's how you do it - and please try to do it now with me if you don't mind - is bring to mind a time that you were strongly criticised. And if there's ever been a time when you were falsely criticised for something you didn't do, that's even better. I think for a moment now, if you can come up with a clear memory of this, you know, a time that there was a strong sense of I - of, like, injustice or indignity - then when it welled up in you, from not wanting to be criticised, from feeling wrong, so sorry to make you bring this up, but it's for a purpose. Just for a couple of minutes, a couple of seconds, quietly see if you can find a moment like that in your memory.

S

Scott Snibbe 11:06

And they'll leave that sense of the indignant kind of self righteous self, in a corner of your mind. And with the rest of your mind you start to examine it: searching for that self among its parts. So first, we search for this kind of indignant self in our body. And starting with the gross parts of your body, you can ask yourself, can I find myself in my feet? And it may sound silly, but just go through the process with me. Is that self who is being criticised found in my feet, or in my legs, my torso, my liver, my heart, my lungs? Do I find this inherent I in my kidneys, my stomach, my arms, or my hands? When we get to our head, we can ask if this inherent I can be found among my sense organs - that bring in the sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches, that the self reacts to: liking, disliking, or feeling indifferent to different sensations. Am I in my eyes, my ears, my nose, my tongue, or my skin? What about in my blood? That circulates once a second through my body? Do I find myself there? If it stopped circulating, I'd stop - my body would stop

living. Or do I find that self in any of the cells of my body? Can I find myself in the electrical and the chemical signals passing through my neurons and my limbic system? Or do I find myself in my DNA? Or my microbiome of billions of cooperating bacteria inside me? And then asked if I can find myself in my brain - is that where the self can be found?

S

Scott Snibbe 14:05

It's okay to say "yes". It's okay to say "no". It's okay to say "I don't know". But just be curious. And if you find yourself in your brain, where exactly in your brain is that self? Is it on the left side? Or is yourself on your right side? Is it possible to find a "self-neuron" - some single neuron where your self resides? And if that sounds silly, or obviously wrong, do I find myself in the collection of all the neurons of my brain? If I'm not in one, is it possible that I'm in all? But then if I'm in all, how can I not be in one? Neuroscientists have shown that when someone reflects on his strong sense of self, the brain activates in many different areas. And the different areas are different for different people and at different times. So from that perspective, neuroscience has found no "self-organ" in the brain, no central control centre - no pinpoint of activity that lights up when we have a strong sense of self and that if we removed it, we lose our sense of self. But ask yourself this question honestly just probe for a minute. Quietly whether you're your brain or any of the other gross parts of your body, just for a few moments silently.

S

Scott Snibbe 16:01

And now go further below the cellular level to individual molecules. Our bodies are mostly made of water. So are we the water in our body? Or are we the electrolytes, or the carbohydrates, the lipids, proteins or vitamins? And then descend to the atomic level. Are we the oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium, and phosphorus that make up our body's main elements? This is the moment that can be useful to make those heaps: pile up all those elements that make you up. However many pounds or kilogrammes, you are just a dozen or so piles of matter. Or are we the subatomic particles, the electrons and protons and neutrons, exchanging at enormous speed within our bodies' matter? Are we the empty space between the particles? Atoms are made almost entirely of empty space. So at a technical level, most of our body, too, is empty space.

S

Scott Snibbe 18:20

We can go even further to ask if we're the finer particles we know of: gluons and muons and quarks and bosons? Are these the fundamental building blocks of the universe that can be broken down no further? Is that where we find ourselves? And we know from quantum mechanics that matter exists in a probabilistic state, where particles flicker in and out of existence and the process of observing particles can seem to bring them into existence, collapsing a probability into a certainty. Is our body, ourselves, made up of a probabilistic appearing and disappearing like this - is that where we find the self? Search for yourself among your body's parts and ask yourself: "Am I any one of them? Or am I the collection of them?"

S

Scott Snibbe 20:05

Now we move on to searching for the separate self in the mind. First we make sure that that

Now we move on to searching for the separate self in the mind. First we make sure that that slightly annoying indignant sense of self is still there somewhere in your mind to probe and if it isn't, you can use that technique we talked about to bring it back (remembering a time that you were wronged). And now we start by probing the various parts of the mind that respond to sensory and mental phenomena. The first one is feeling - the second aggregate after form. And feeling is the way that we respond with pleasant feelings to experiences we like, with unpleasant feelings to those we don't, and with indifferent feelings to the rest. So am I the pleasant feeling that I have when I hear kind words, when I see beautiful sights, when I smell and taste food that I love? Am I the good feelings that arise through my skin and my muscles to hugs and kisses from people close to me? Am I the good feelings in my body that arise when I take a walk or workout or experience a physical thrill? Or do I identify with unpleasant feelings like those I have when I'm uncomfortable: when my body's hurt, or when I'm criticised, or attacked, or blamed, or ignored? Do I identify with the neutral feelings of indifference that I have? When I pass a stranger, or when I'm served by a clerk at a store?

S

Scott Snibbe 22:13

Try not to let your analysis stop at the feelings to make those solid. But see if you can further break down the feelings. If you look closely at your mind, you can see that there's a moment when a feeling arises in response to some sensory or mental event. You can watch it grow and sustain and then diminish and disappear. Are you any of these sub-moments of a feeling? If you're not an individual moment, are you all of them combined? And do these moments become indivisible at some point, or can you divide them infinitely into smaller and smaller moments of feeling?

S

Scott Snibbe 23:14

Next, we see if we can find ourselves in the third aggregate: the mental factor of perception. This is the part of the mind that takes some bundle of reality and labels it: collection of carbohydrates and proteins and lipids on a clay plate as our dinner. A collection of plant cells as a flower; a collection of metal and glass and almost all the elements on earth that come together as our iPhone. So are we this aspect of our mind, that takes the continuity of invisible electromagnetic reality, and through the senses labels it with colours and forms, and sounds and tastes, touches and tactile sensations? None of these senses exist absolutely, independently from the mind. Even Newton and Galileo understood that our sensory experience is psychological. That there's no blue, or sweet, or pain, or pleasure, that exist outside of our minds in the invisible universe of electromagnetic energy. So ask yourself if you are your perception: the ability of your mind to wrap bundles of sensory experience with a label of home, phone, dinner, or me.

S

Scott Snibbe 25:07

Feeling and perception are two of the most powerful mental factors operating in our mind. But they're dozens more categorised in the fourth aggregate - it's kind of like a grab bag - that's called volition or mental formation. One way to think of this aggregate is our will: the thing that drives us to action. So you can ask yourself, if you're any of the other mental experiences in your mind, that differentiate the intricacies of reality. Are you your mental experience of jealousy, or pride, or love, or compassion, or even democracy, or justice. And if you do identify

strongly with one of these other mental phenomena, then what happens to your self when one mental experience dissolves into a new one? Give yourself a moment to probe any aspect of your mental experience, to see if yourself can be found in any of them - just for a few seconds.

S

Scott Snibbe 26:49

And then the last place to search in this five part analysis of the aggregates is the fifth aggregate: awareness itself, the space of consciousness, or mental experience that's separate from the mental factors that flow through it. Although by separate we don't really mean separate. Not in a strong, separate way, but differentiable. So try now and let your attention move away from the contents of your mental experience, to the container of your mental experience. And as you relax into the space of your mind, does it appear to have any qualities? Does your mind feel large and spacious, or small and confined? Does it have qualities of luminosity or darkness? Does it have a clarity to it or is it fuzzy and obscured? Does the mind have a sense of knowing or reflecting what appears to it or is it indifferent to the mental factors that arise within its space?

S

Scott Snibbe 28:16

So inevitably, thoughts and feelings arise within the spaciousness of the mind. But pay attention only to where these thoughts and feelings emerge from, and where they dissolve back into. What is the ground from which the other mental factors emerge within the mind? You may experience some intuitive sense of the space of your mind and you can let yourself relax into this experience for a moment. So is this the ultimate place, where the inherent I can finally pin itself? On this pleasant space of the mind? If you decide that's who you ultimately are: this open space of the mind - inquire further. If we divide the space of our mind in half, am I to be found in one side or the other? Or if we subdivide the space of the mind into little cubes of mental space, can you find yourself in any one of them? And if that seems absurd, and unfindable, can you definitively find yourself in the collection of all these little cubes of space - mental space?

S

Scott Snibbe 30:03

The mind also has a temporal aspect, where individual moments of consciousness arise, grow, sustain, diminish, and disappear. Some of these have mental factors riding within them. Others are free from thought and remain in the direct experience of unobstructed mind itself. Whether combined with mental factors or free from mental factors, do you find yourself within any of these moments of consciousness? Maybe you find yourself within the present moment of consciousness - but what happens to the self when this moment of consciousness disappears? Does the self continue on with that moment of consciousness that disappeared? If it does, where does it go? Or when? Does the self jump to the next moment of consciousness? Or is the self separate from any moment of consciousness? And then you can keep slicing and slicing these moments of consciousness and see: am I in the prior or the next part? Do you find a quantum of consciousness, where you can't slice anymore or can you divide forever? And what does that mean? It's almost like transcending time itself - we find ourself in that realisation, that experience.

S

Scott Snibbe 31:50

The physical and the mental parts that make up our self all have causes. And so then we move to meditating on causes to see whether our self is as independent as it seems. Our body began with small bits of our mother and father, and then incorporated food and nutrients and oxygen to grow itself, within our mother and then outside her. As we grew, this process, continued turning "non-me elements" into "me". With our mind, we can notice how all the words we learned came from outside ourselves, from our teachers, and our parents, and our friends. All the concepts we know came from others. All the skills we have we learned from others. Most of our beliefs and our opinions came from others who taught or convinced or indoctrinated us. We can go back in time and trace our bodies and minds back through generations of humans who created the languages and civilizations, technologies and religions that brought us to where we are today. Back further through evolution, millions of years evolving back through apes and mammals and fish, to tiny sea creatures, back further to the origin of life on Earth, three and a half billion years ago.

S

Scott Snibbe 33:34

All the energy on Earth comes from our 5 billion year old star. And all the elements that make up life on earth came from earlier stellar explosions, that created the heavy elements of life, carbon, nitrogen. Ultimately, we can trace our physical body back to the big bang: the beginning of matter and energy, and even time itself in our universe. And then come back to the present: realise how, at the physical level, every atom in your body is moved by the gravitational attraction of every other particle in the universe. Gravity's reach has no limit. In this way, the galaxies we can see 14 billion light years away, exert a tiny influence on every particle of our body. So even now we're interconnected with the entire visible universe.

S

Scott Snibbe 34:43

And we look at the role of the mind in constructing the self. We're an uncountable collection of parts brought together by innumerable causes, stemming back to the origin of the universe. The mind wraps these caused parts with a label: Scott, Kamlo, Venerable Fabienne, Carlo. It's a provisional label. But we come to so strongly identify with it that we often feel a surge of excitement or fear when someone says our name. But we're not our name - our names are just a label placed upon our caused parts. Trying to imagine seeing yourself this way in your daily life, existing not independently but interdependently. Constantly changing, made of countless parts, produced by an infinite stream of cause and effect.

S

Scott Snibbe 35:56

Your mind the same way, too: all your opinions, beliefs, thoughts. Dependent on everything you learned - our whole civilization. If you always saw yourself this way, how would it change how you responded to criticism, to blame, to craving, or praise? Who's being criticised? Who is being blamed? Who is craving, and who is praised? Am I even the same person who was praised or blamed one second ago? So try for a moment now to let go of all the complex analysis - to let go of concepts. Let go into a non-conceptual understanding of yourself - that transcends the

ego, that transcends labels, that transcends any one part of you or the collection of parts. Let yourself relax into the experience and the feeling of interdependence, to know yourself, maybe for the first time, as you truly are.

S

Scott Snibbe 38:04

And now return to concepts. See how you do indeed exist. You haven't negated yourself in any way, but only expanded the boundaries of how you understand your body and mind - and so much more than I thought I was. The independent, unchanging part, this view of myself is so limiting, so narrow, and so wrong. The separateness that arises from this incorrect view of the self is unnecessary. When we become aware of our interdependent, changing self, composed of countless physical parts and mental moments, we're so much more alive and changing and interdependent than our narrow ego imposes on us. What's so great about this meditation is that it shows us that when that narrow egotistic self arises, we can now see that moment as a gift, showing us the false inherent I, that doesn't exist the way it seems. The arising of this inherent I, gives us the opportunity to perform this magnificent analysis of how we truly exist, and embrace a greater sense of self that's interdependent with all other life and everything else in the universe.

S

Scott Snibbe 39:49

So we can come out of the meditation and there's a little bit of time for questions or comments. Oh, yeah, sure. Well, you know, I mean, I don't know what you mean to a certain extent because, of course, I'm not in your mind. But you can apply the same analysis, right? That's the beauty of this - this is a tool, it's not like a textbook. So just for your own mind, what do you mean by oneness? First of all, there's a word, there's a label of oneness, right? So you definitely have that label. So that's the mind, you know, that's one one aspect of it, you have that label of oneness. And then what are you projecting that label on to? Just analyse it. You know, whatever appears into your mind is just another gift you can analyse through the same reasoning. So even though I don't understand what you're saying, because only you had that experience, you can just apply the same reasoning of what is just analysed. What is oneness? It's a word, applied onto concepts, probably purely mental phenomena, mostly, although you might believe that there's things happening in your brain at the same time. So there's physical correlates. Just do the same analysis on whatever you think oneness is and see what you find.

S

Scott Snibbe 41:19

Well, I think there are many meditations on emptiness, so, whichever you're familiar with. This one is called, you know, we use the five aggregates, and its reasoning of dependent origination. You see, the shortcuts, like in the Heart Sutra, where they say "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form", it can be really powerful, like, the first time you hear that, but, you know, then when you get the commentary, like, each of those words don't really mean the conventional things we think. "Is" doesn't mean is, it's like, remember, Bill Clinton said: depends what the meaning of is, is. Like, it's so true, the word "is" actually mean something different in both of those two sentences.

S

Scott Snibbe 42:11

And, you know, you go through this analysis, like when you say form is empty, means that form doesn't exist separately, solidly, you know, independently, and so on - in any particular form, you know. When you say emptiness is form, you know, one way to think about it is actually very different than - even though they're just like the same sentence flipped around - one way to interpret that is, emptiness doesn't exist by itself. You know, that's one way of interpreting that line: that you have to have something that's empty, to have emptiness - emptiness isn't just a solid thing that's independent on its own. Emptiness is a way that things exist. So you can't just have emptiness outside by itself. In that case, it requires you know, form: emptiness is form, form is emptiness. So, I don't know which meditation you're talking about, when you say, like, if you can replace it or not. I think you should find the meditation on emptiness that works for you. And there's so many different ones and different objects, too, you know, some people like to meditate more on the mind, and look at the emptiness of the mind. That's like a Mahamudra technique, sometimes. And we did a little bit of that, actually, in this meditation.

S

Scott Snibbe 43:35

This meditation is really, it wraps up a lot of things that aren't often, you know, taught or combined. But when I put it together, I wanted it to be really quite thorough to our tradition, in a way of of doing this, I think it's respectful of how, you know, sharp and experienced a lot of you all are. And to include all of these - especially that aspect of actually bring to mind, the inherent I. You know, this is a subtle point of the meditation on the emptiness of self, that if you just do that meditation and you're so relaxed, then you actually aren't refuting the right thing. Because that kind of conventional self, it does exist, like quite peacefully sort of in the way you might even be experiencing it in that calm moment. But it's that inherent self that is the one that really doesn't exist, the way that we think it does, like separate, partless, independent. So you need that false sense of self to negate.

S

Scott Snibbe 44:40

So there's some really subtle points in this. And I wish that I had any realisation of emptiness you know, I enjoyed doing the meditation and I was taught, I think by good teachers. I don't unfortunately have actual experience, but I think you get a taste of it. You know, you get a little taste of it. Like sincere Buddhist practitioners, like we, can have a taste - and I think maybe a lot of people had it today. And it's a normal thing, like, it's not necessarily a mystical special thing, but it's a normal thing with some small effort, you know, that we can all have and maybe eventually have the real experience. So I think it's up to you, you know, just like it's up to each of us, we have to figure out for ourselves, what brings us to some authentic experience. But I think a lot of our teachers would all say, it's good to sort of shop around and try different methods, but then if one is working for you, then to spend a significant amount of time with it so that you can deepen that experience, you know. That's maybe is the most important piece of advice is: once you find something that resonates with your mind, to go deep with it.

S

Scott Snibbe 45:57

I think maybe you're already doing it, right. Because I think that's what it is, is to bring to mind, that feeling of indignation, that there's somebody that could be insulted, or criticised. Right?

Because if you bring to mind a feeling of being criticised, it's wrapped up with the assumption

because if you bring to mind a feeling or being criticised, it's wrapped up with the assumption that there is anybody to be criticised. If you didn't see yourself as separate, independent, partless, then, you know, they say you couldn't feel criticised. And I can say, like, I've felt it every once in a while, and I can tell you, like, I'm really bad at doing this in everyday life. Like if my wife was here, you know, she could tell you how bad I am at doing this, you know, when I feel criticised or angry. But there have been times once in a while where I did feel it and it was awesome. Because, you know, someone would criticise me, I remember a very specific time, you know, someone said to me, it was actually with a former partner. And they were like: You, you, you, you, you, you, you know all these things wrong with me. And there was a moment that I just kind of thought to myself, like, there's no me like, who's even been criticised here? What you? There's no me! It made me laugh. It was like the spell was broken. And it's such a good feeling. And I say this, saying that I have no genuine realisations, but that experiences like this are normal for Buddhist practitioners. It's normal to have these experiences once in a while, and it's great.

S

Scott Snibbe 47:35

And you know, you and most people on this call have probably had that before. But the only reason I bring this up is you yourself can probably think of times where both have happened and you can think of a time you felt very strongly criticised, indignant, and then you can probably come to think of a time it just didn't bother you at all, you know. Or even that you had this analysis come to mind or this realisation like, there's nobody. And it's so refreshing and it's like a release, you know, it's just such a relief. And again, I say it is not a realisation. It's not realising emptiness. It's not some like giant, spiritual realisation. But it's the ordinary course of everyday Buddhist practitioner who meditates on this stuff consistently, I think. You know, we can all have these kinds of experiences, even with a tiny bit of practice. So is that reasonable?

S

Scott Snibbe 48:32

I think basically what you're doing, I think it's fine. But you know, but if you can think of a time of feeling that way, then you're doing it. You don't necessarily have to identify the kernel. Because that's the whole rest of the meditation! Really, you can't find it, right? You may be already further along than I am, right? Like: of course, it's not there to be found! But bringing up that feeling is great, because then, like Carlo Rovelli was saying, it's that process that you probe: that process of feeling indignant, attacked, angry, criticised, you know, et cetera. Ironically, that's the instructions on how to do this properly and I think it's a lot more effective that way. Otherwise, it's actually a little bit more - like it's peaceful and relaxing, but it's not actually doing the meditation on emptiness. Because you're not really - you're trying to negate something that's actually conventionally does exist. Like, there is an ordinary way that, you know, a conventional way that you exist, that doesn't need negating. It's that inherent self that needs negating.

S

Scott Snibbe 49:48

That's really nice. Okay, I wanted to say a couple of things. One is that I want to acknowledge that interacting with screens and technologies is one of the most difficult places to apply these techniques, because they're like the absolute culmination of our civilizations attempt to pull our attention away. On the one hand, of course, like computers are - like Steve Jobs said - they're

like a bicycle for the mind. And they're awesome - the way we're using it right now is quite awesome, right? Like, this is fantastic, I love it. So the highlight of my day, thank you. But on the other hand, so when the computer is kind of its tool for knowledge, connection, wisdom, wow. But really, you know, a lot of the ways these tools have been optimised is to take your attention away, which is just like the opposite of what we want to cultivate. So I think it's quite reasonable just to say, like: "Okay, I gotta get away from that thing".

S

Scott Snibbe 50:49

It's very, very difficult to look at screens and phones as you're using it, and say: "Oh, this is empty". I mean, fantastic, if you can do it. And doing it, you know, in your mind as you're on the cushion, is good practice for doing it in reality. But I actually want to start off by just saying, like, you know, one of the first teachings on attachment of how to avoid it, how to antidote attachment, is to get away from the object of attachment. So, like, screens are particularly difficult area, to, in the moment, to see that interdependence. But you know, try it! What you do, if you really want to do it: bring that thing to mind, in your meditation on the cushion. Imagine yourself in that situation, at work or at home, in front of your computer, doing all the stuff you normally do, and then break it apart in the in the slowness, and the spaciousness of your mind. And that will prepare you for doing that in real life. But from my experience, it's just like the most difficult - it's very, very difficult.

S

Scott Snibbe 51:58

The other thing that I want to say is that, I really, really do enjoy breaking down technology. In particular, cryptocurrencies - I actually did a whole episode called "Bitcoin and Buddhism", because I think it's a really, really fantastic object to think about emptiness, because it's groundless! Like, everyone criticises Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies, because there's no ground on it. Like they'll say: "Oh, well, you know, we have the Federal Reserve in the United States and so on backing our currency". But bitcoin is almost deliberately saying like: it's all groundless. Like the thing that you think money is based on, like, each of everything that you think money is based on, is subjected to subsequent analysis, and it's not really solid, it's not so solidly labelled and situated the way you think about it. So the way they have set up cryptocurrencies and Bitcoin, it's much more honest and deep and profound in admitting the role of our mind and our collective belief and trust in how we understand things.

S

Scott Snibbe 53:10

Rather than pretending that "the buck stops here", you know, there used to be that little picture on the President's desk in the United States which says: "the buck stops here", you know, passing the buck. But it doesn't - the buck doesn't stop anywhere - that's the analysis of emptiness. So I do think, again, more in your mind, in your mental space, particularly thinking about things like Bitcoin, anything electronic or digital is totally amazing. That's why I loved you know, I do technology, that's kind of what I've always been involved with, in my life. And I loved it as a little kid, because I couldn't find it. I just loved it: I looked for the programme, like, where's this programme? Is it the characters on the screen? Is it the numbers and the zeros

and the ones? I think it's the thing in life that's most like thought, or like mind: is programming, not just digital information, but the programming - the way that a programme actually processes information and then changes. And it doesn't exist anywhere, and you try to find it.

S

Scott Snibbe 54:09

It's like: where's Microsoft Word? Just something super boring, right? It's not in the screen on the glowing characters. Is it on the disk? Is in the memory, is in the people that wrote the programme? In particular, like apps and programmes, I think are one of the - if you understand how they work - is one of the coolest objects to analyse, because their existence is so so subtle. You know, before programmes they used to say music is actually one of the best objects to break apart, because where is it, right? Like, you can't touch it, you can't hold it, you can't see it. And it only exists as it's changing, you know, it doesn't exist in any moment. So I think like music and programmes - anything kind of changing and immaterial, is a very, very powerful object to meditate on emptiness. We could talk about this for a super long time, but you could go listen to that episode if you want. I spent a long time on it because it was a really fun topic: "Bitcoin in Buddhism".

S

Scott Snibbe 55:14

It was so amazing, you know, because like the Romans didn't have a zero. Like if the Romans had zero, they might still be an empire. You know, it's such an extraordinary concept when we realise that the idea of nothing, it's so important to label that: to put a little label on top of this concept of nothing. Because it's very useful, even though you know, it doesn't really exist. It's the definition of non-existence - it is putting a label on non-existence. Just amazing.