

Dawa Tarchin Phillips

*The Three Principles of Awakening*

Week Three: “Action: Integrating Realization Into Our Lives”

April 18, 2020



Hi, and welcome back. I'm Dawa Tarchin Phillips, and this is the series on the three principles of awakening. During today's session, we're going to be talking about action. In a relative sense, action can simply refer to our behavior. But in an absolute sense, it refers to the full integration of view in all aspects of life, in all areas of our existence.

Before we go deeper into this topic, I want to invite you again to give rise to your motivation, and to develop the aspiration to not only personally benefit from these teachings, but to become more capable to be of benefit to others through these teachings.

It's important to understand action if one wants to overcome suffering in one's life and assist others to overcome suffering. As I mentioned about the two previous principles, there are two understandings of action: mundane and supramundane. Mundane actions are actions primarily motivated by what we call the eight worldly concerns, or the eight worldly dharmas: joy and pain, praise and blame, loss and gain, and fame and shame. These eight worldly motivations can lead to different types of behavior. These kinds of actions are mundane actions.

But when we're talking about action as a principle of dharma practice, and as the foundation leading up to realization, then action refers to the complete integration of view in all aspects of our lives. Supermundane action is any action that is meant to integrate the developing clarity about the nature of reality, and therefore also the intentions and the motivations that arise out of such a realization.

There are four combinations of intent and execution of our actions. One, there is a benevolent intent and a benevolent execution. Two, there is a benevolent intent and a maleficent execution. Three, there is a maleficent intent and a maleficent execution, and four, a maleficent intent and a benevolent execution. So we have to be aware of these four combinations of intention and action.

When we develop our view, it naturally gives rise to a benevolent intent, and we partake of benevolent activity. So as we evolve our action, we are able to integrate it with our view and meditation, and it becomes a natural and organic process of ripening and becoming a more mature human being.

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Like the other principles of view and meditation, action, too, is obstructed by the two veils: the veil of knowledge and the veil of emotions. Because of the misunderstandings these veils cause, we develop this principle of action in a very confused way, getting mixed results because of our confused behavior. And so to emancipate our action based on the cultivation of view and meditation gives rise to a more refined principle of action as the foundation for the development on the path of awakening.

The evolution of action goes through different stages. The first stage is giving up doing harm: to give up hurting others through body, speech, and mind. Giving up hurting others through the body means that we stop killing, stealing, and harming others through our sexuality. Giving up harming others through our speech means that we give up lying, slandering, rough speech, and gossip. Giving up harming others through our mind means that we are giving up avarice, or greed; malice, or ill will, and wrong views about reality.

The next level of action has to do with benefiting others. We learn how to contribute. We learn how to benefit others through being generous with our resources, by providing material support, by providing protection, or by providing guidance and wisdom through what it is that we have to share that we have learned.

And third, there is the action that is part of the process of awakening, contributing to our own and others' awakening, and performing awakened activity in the world, in its many different forms. We engage in activity to help to pacify negative influences in the world, or to increase positive influences; activity to stop harmful action, or to guide people to more positive actions.

So, to summarize, when it comes to the principle of action, relative action is just about behavior. The absolute action is about integrating the view in all aspects of our lives. There are different levels of action, depending on our intention and motivation, and our ability to execute actions in a way that is non-harming but beneficial to others. And during this process, as we emancipate our action, action as a principle itself, together with view and meditation, becomes the foundation on which our path develops, on which we grow and mature as a human being, and we dissolve the many veils of knowledge and veils of emotion that stand between us and a fully informed, awakened life.