

Meditation & Searching for The Self | Dr. Sam Harris & Dr. Andrew Huberman

I mean there's some fundamental there there there's some false assumptions about the underlying logic of this process which I think it's worth addressing And it's actually there's a kind of found object in the news that II I talk about at one point I forget where it is in in in the Waking up app But there's a story that I stumbled on on the internet Um I think it's about 12 or 13 years old of a um a tourist bus in I think it was Norway it was somewhere in in uh northern Europe and it had about 30 people on it and one person was a was described as an Asian woman Uh And they all they they went they went to a rest stop and everyone got off the bus uh and they you know shopped and had lunch and and this Asian woman changed her clothing uh for whatever reason and they all got back on the bus Um I think the relevance of it being an Asian woman is that you know there were language barriers that that that explained what later happened Um So everyone gets back on the bus the Asian woman has changed her her clothing and the bus is about to leave But then someone notices hey there there's a there was an Asian woman who got off the bus who isn't it hasn't come back yet and they tell the driver this um and this poses a problem So now everyone's waiting for this person to return But in fact everyone was on the bus that this woman had just changed her clothing it was not recognized by her fellow travelers Um So everyone gets concerned as this this tourist doesn't you know sh show up and they start looking for her right And they can't find her And so a search party is formed and the Asian woman because of the whatever language barrier um thought I heard that there was a missing tourist So she joins the search party which in fact is looking for her right And this goes on into the night and they're ready in helicopters that you know for a dawn patrol to find the missing missing tourist Um Now at some point along the way I think it was at like three in the morning this tourist realizes that she is the object of the search right And obviously the whole thing unravels she you know she confesses that she changed her clothes and you know the the problem is solved but the problem is not solved by the the logic that the seeker expected right So it's like it's not true to say that the missing tourist was found in in the way that was expected right Because the missing tourist was never lost The missing tourist was part of the search party right And so when you think about it from her point of view like what

happened she's part of the search party she's looking for the missing tourist not knowing that she in fact is the missing tourist So what happens at the moment She realizes that everyone's looking for her right Like what what is it The the search isn't Consummated in the way that is implied by the logic of everyone's use of attention Um And yet the problem evaporates and there's something deeply analogous about the structure of that and the the the meditative journey in in precisely in again not talking about all the changes in the possible changes in the contents of consciousness that could be good which again they they come along for the ride anyway when you when you do the thing I'm talking about it's not on this point of looking for the self and not finding it And there is this sense that OK the self is here and it's a problem It is the the string upon which all of my conscious states mostly unhappy ones are strung right It's it's the thing that is at the center of my anxiety It's the it's it's the it's the thing that I don't feel good about It's the thing that when criticized I sort of let implode Um it's the center of my problem and now I'm trying to feel better and meditation has been handed to me as a as a possible you know remedy for my situation And it and it's billed as a remedy And in fact it's it's it's I'm I'm hearing from this guy that this is the thing that is gonna cause me to realize that myself isn't where you know or as I thought it was Um So now I'm gonna look right And so again you're you're the sense is I start out far away from the goal here I start out with a problem Uh I'm now meditating on the evidence of my un enlightenment Right II I can feel my problem I feel that I'm distracted and distractible and I feel as this sort of cramp at the center of my life it's me and I'm not as happy as I want to be I'm not as confident as I want to be I'm I'm more distractible than I want to be and now I'm paying attention to the breath right Um This is what the search party feels like This is what the the confused tourist feels like in her own search party and she's she's looking she's looking for the missing person And so the the sort of the the angle of of you know the inclination of all of this is and the logic of it is all wrong you know understandably so uh given how we we all get into this situation but you know it's useful to continually try to under undercut it and um recognize that that that the thing that's being looked for is is actually right on the surface which is you know the the there is no one looking there is no place from which you are pay if you're paying attention to the breath or to sounds or noticing the next thought arise The sense that you are over here doing that thing is actually what it's like to be thinking and not knowing that you're thinking you're not there's a there's a thought there's an undercurrent of

thought that's going uninspected in that moment And um so there is just a there's a continually looking for the mind a looking for the center of experience a looking for the one who is looking which again which is the kind of the the the orienting practice here And there's a lot more I say about this obviously um over at waking up But um it's it's the experiment you have to perform in order to get ready to recognize that this whole this the search party you know was formed in in error essentially And the problem that you're trying to to solve with this practice does evaporate in in a similar way which is like you don't actually get there in the way that you're hoping for Right It's like like you drop out the bottom of this thing in a in an unexpected way It's not um there's actually another uh kind of a similar um parable or or anecdote that I don't I don't remember if it's Zen or Sufi or I mean I'm sure it's been re appropriated in many different ways but or by many different traditions But there's a there's you know the the case of somebody who's lost in a town and they're they're asking for directions you know you can put put this in in in Manhattan You can let's say you're wandering Manhattan and you're you're a tourist you don't know where anything is and you you stop and ask someone you know where where is central park And the person thinks for a second and they says oh yeah Um unfortunately you can't get to Central Park from here right And that is a very strange I mean you think about that for a second you realize OK that's a that's an absurd There is no place that you can't get to from the place you're starting you know on earth right To describe the physical uh relationships between anything in the world Yeah That's just not the world we live in right So but it's a funny thing But but on some level that is true of meditation it's like you can't get there from here Like but the sense of you the sense of you as subject isn't brought along to this thing you're looking for Right Like you're like you're you know it's almost like it's almost like you're you're making a fist and you're trying to get to an open hand The fist doesn't get to take that journey as a fist Right Like you don't the fist doesn't go along for the ride the fist comes apart Right And and on some level that our subjectivity is a kind of an in an in an attentional fist you know it it is a contraction of energy again it's it's so much bound up in thought for for uh most of us most of the time that it and it get when when properly inspected there's just this you know evaporation of the starting point but there's not this there's not this fulfillment of I'm gonna get this fist is gonna just gonna if I you know if life gets good enough if I get concentrated enough focused enough you know if I austere enough if I renounce enough if I desire less if I you know you know enough with enough good in uh

intentions this fist is gonna move into some sort of sublime condition right
That's not the logic of the the process