

Topic of Right Speech

I am focused on a comparison of
> ethical speech in Judaism and Buddhism. GREAT TOPIC!! My principal
question is: How do we
> transform deeply conditioned patterns of speech behavior to more closely
> approximate the ideal of the spiritual tradition we follow? SO WE ALL
WOULD ABE SAINTS, (BODDHISATVAS, TZADIKS?, RIGHT)!?! To answer that
> question, I want to interview both rabbis and Buddhist teachers regarding
> right/wholesome speech (in Hebrew, shmiras ha-lashon; in Pali, samma vaca):
> 1. How do you understand your tradition's teaching about ethical speech, and
> please also refer to scriptural passages?
> 2. How have you learned to personally apply it? I LIKE THE PRACTICAL,

^SELF-EXAMINATION PART 1....

> 3. How are you teaching it to your students?
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> My chief orientation is a practical one. I am looking for strategies,
> techniques, guidelines that help one to learn how to overcome certain
> behavior patterns and cultivate others in their stead. This is a behavioral
> process, yes, but I also am aware that there is an element of mystery when it
> comes to spiritual transformation. PERHAPS THE MOTIVATION INVOLVES
MYSTERY, BUT THE EFFORT TO AVOID LESHAN HARA IS JUST A LOT OF HARD WORK!!!
> If that in itself were enough, wouldn't we all just do it? So how do we
> learn to do it, especially since each of us has different learning
styles? GREAT QUESTIONS....ESPECIALLY THE MATCHING OF PERSONAL STYLE
WITH STRATEGY: E.G., HOW DO WE CATCH OURSELF JUST BEFORE WE ARE ABOUT TO
ENGAGE IN LESHAN HARA; WHAT ARE THE ANTECEDENTS: E.G., WHAT EVENTS OCCURED
THAT SEEM TO TRIGGER IT IN US (PEOPLE, PLACES, ETC); WHERE IN OUR BODY DO
WE FEEL THE CUES: IS IS VISUAL /IMAGERY; PHYSIOLOGICAL, COGNITIVE); HOW
DOES THAT GET TRANSLATED INTO VERBAL RESPONSE....HOW DO WE JUSTIFY
(CONSEQUENCES) THE VERBAL RESPONSE: I.E., IT IS JUST FOR THEIR OWN GOOD,
I'M JUST HELPING THEM OUT, ETC; DOES ANYONE REALLY SAY NEGATIVE THINGS AND
THEN SAY, BOY, AM I AN IDIOT! (AND OF COURSE, SEEING THE SELF-JUDGMENT IN
THAT PHRASE!) YOU MAY WANT TO CHECK OUR BOOK CONTROL THERAPY (JOHN WILEY,
1998) OUT OF THE LIBRARY---PART WILL BE TOO "RESEARCHY" BUT PART DEALS
WITH PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF TRANSFORMATION, INCLUDING THE GOALS OF SPEECH...

I am seeking help from those who are more adept and can offer
> pointed advice through their spiritual practice. NICE SHARING. SO, IN
YOUR OWN PATH, THERE IS A) MOTIVATION: I.E., SEEING THE CONSEQUENCES OF
SUFFERING TO YOU AND OTHERS; B) DEVELOPING AWARENESS OF WHEN YOU DO IT; C)
SEEKING TO LEARN ABOUT THE PATTERNS....D) SEEKING INSPIRATION AND
GUIDANCE SO YOU DON'T GET FRUSTRATED WHEN CHANGE IS SLOW....E) ALL WITHIN
THE CONTEXT OF MINDFULNESS: WATCHING, WATCHING, SO THAT YOU SEE EVEN WHEN
YOU ARE JUDGING OTHERS, JUDGING SELF, AND AKEEP SOME EQUANIMITY ABOUT THE
PROCESS SO YOU CAN LEARN FROM IT...I.E, THERE IS THE ANGRY, JUDGING MIND
AGAIN, ET C.....

Wandering Jew, right speech

Now, for your second e-mail....that was really a beautiful, poetic sharing of your journey/challenge....I appreciate your sensitivity in sharing it. My sense is that at some level, all of us are "wandering Jews"---and that archetype, when we can feel it (and by this I include Christians,

Protestants, all humans!)...allows us to feel the vulnerability of the world (the song: all the world is just a narrow bridge...." We don't like that feeling, because of the helplessness and vulnerability, but I feel if we can be mindful of it, and not overwhelmed by it, it allows us to be so open, empathic, and caring toward others; we see, feel, share our joint humanity, we empathize with others', and there is a tender kindness we can embrace; the Japanese word is sabiwabi---the spirit of eternal loneliness---a sort of bitter sweet feeling; knowing that wandering Jew loneliness, we value and embrace as all that much more sweet the contacts and connections, when they do occur; we---the wandering Jew in you and us---can be the bridge that helps connect (even when others don't realize that such bridges are necessary; so, we can be "fed up" (I don't understand the word choice, but also see our envy at one level about those who don't yet see the vulnerability, but also have compassion for them, for often the very majority status (no matter whose) blinds us to the caring and sensitivity to others; honor your "more awakened state"; honor the extra "burdens" it causes you....and the great potential you have....

again, thanks for sharing, and blessings on your continued journey

... Moreover, your statement to her was eloquent (I think you are doing a lot of reframing to focus on and validate her higher self, but that's good). Keep your discussion of the wandering Jew - it is eloquent! I agree completely that, properly used, it is the quality of the outsider that enables us to accept rather than reject the Other. It's also Sukkot. You're really encouraging to go deeper, to go past what she feels about Judaism or Buddhism, and to probe her core vulnerability, and perhaps reframe it as a gift of compassion. Hope she can do this. Very nice and giving of you. Love ya, J

You were very generous in responding to this lengthy communication. It is a great topic - well worth exploring. You give her invaluable suggestions from a behavioral perspective, all contextualized within a spiritual domain. Really the best thing would be for her to come and follow you around for a year. I'd venture a guess that you know as much about "householder" Lashon tov as the greatest rabbi. Your catch of her "fed up" was fascinating - you do work at a very refined level.

... I thought you modeled alternative framings exceptionally well. ... I shed peace and light wherever your path takes you. Way to go, Deane. J

Dear Deane:

I forgot to respond to your pointing out my use of the words "fed up." It was an unfortunate slip. This is part of what I find with email---overly casual writing. Had I been sending out a written letter, I would have been more careful in my choice of vocabulary. In truth, "fed up" is not the most accurate expression of what I feel and I should have been more judicious in any case, email or otherwise. Ah, yes, right speech is ever my goal for greater refinement.

Universal, particulars: some challenges

This was a correspondence with a student regarding challenges s/he was facing regarding the Universal/particular, and my response .(in CAPS) ; see also writings in "Nature of the Universe" including "One Reality, Many Paths: Exploring the Universal/Particular Relationship. Sausalito, Ca: Institute of Noetic Sciences, 1993."

> Quite frankly, I get fed up with experiencing the Protestant paradigm I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.....I AM OFTEN ASTONISHED THAT IN SPIRITUAL WISDOM DISCUSSIONS, THE JEWISH PERSPECTIVE IS OFTEN LEFT OUT, AND OF COURSE, I MINDFULLY TRY TO LEARN, WHY DOES THIS BOTHER ME?! I SENSE THAT PARTLY IT'S EGO IDENTIFICATION SLIGHT.....PARTLY THERE IS SOME ADDITIONAL POSITIVE THAT CAN BE GAINED BY DIALOGUE. HOWEVER, LET ME ASK YOU TO NOTE YOUR WORD "FED UP"! (JUDGING? ANGER?) I'M REMINDED OF LAWRENCE KUSHNER'S HONEY FROM THE ROCK, IN WHICH HE SAYS: WE ARE ALL JUST A PIECE OF THE PUZZLE, IT'S NOT OUR JOB TO SOLVE THE PUZZLE, OR BE ALL THE PIECES, JUST BE THE BEST PIECE WE CAN BE....I GUESS MY THOUGHT IS TO TRUST THAT YOU HAVE A PIECE TO CONTRIBUTE.....TRUST THAT IT IS THE RIGHT PIECE FOR YOU....., AND AS THE BAL SHEM TOV SAID ACT AS IF EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON YOU (GOSH, I'D BETTER MAKE SURE THE OTHERS--THE THEY--THE PROTESTANT PERSPECTIVE--LEARN ABOUT OUR PERSPECTIVE,---AND AT THE SAME TIME, ACCORDING TO THE BAL SHEM TOV, KNOW THAT EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON GOD.! I.E., BE ENERGIZED TO DO YOUR PIECE, BUT HAVE FUN DOING IT, TOO, KNOWING IT IS YOUR PIECE, AND DON'T GET TOO UPSET, BECAUSE IF THERE WEREN'T THE VOID, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE SUCH A JUICY PIECE TO OFFER ! (YOU GO GOD!)

- > pervading so much of Western scholarship (and life in the West, in general).
- > How often do I read an article or book and realize there is not the slightest mention of Judaism or, if there is, it is colored by the New Testament lens.
- > With so many Jews who are scholars, I wonder why the Jewish perspective is not included more.

I HOPE THE ABOVE WAS HELPFUL. IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU'VE HAD TO DO SOME EXTRA EFFORT TO GET YOUR GOALS MET, BUT THAT YOU HAVE THE STRENGTH AND DETERMINATION TO GET THE SYSTEM TO ACCOMODATE YOU. YOUR TOPIC CERTAINLY IS AN EXCELLENT AND IMPORTANT ONE.....I WISH YOU ALL SUCCESS WITH IT, PERSONALLY ON YOUR OWN QUEST, AND I THINK IT CAN BRING A LOT OF HEALING AND WISDOM TO OTHERS.

I LIKE THIS TIME OF THE YEAR.....BERESHIT....IN THE BEGINNING, IT FEELS LIKE A TIME OF ^{New} BEGINNINGS.....!