

I still don't have wiki access so I'm emailing Sue with my report.

When practicing unconditional acceptance, start with yourself.

Take all the blame yourself.

When everything goes wrong, treat disaster as a way to wake up.

It seems to me that the primary effect of the Lojong aphorisms or slogans is to invert the usual logic we use to try to maintain our ordinary world view. I like to look at these as a system; that is, I like these three because they have different emphases yet are strangely consonant with each other, they work together. The first one is about accepting yourself and yet the second one talks about taking all the blame --- they seem contradictory but really aren't. In a strange way, both the movement towards thinking of yourself negatively and a movement towards blaming things outside yourself are two sides of the same coin; which is to say, part of a system of habits in which we are constantly preoccupied with a mythical self which supposedly is in control of everything, which needs to cause certain things to happen, which needs to make the world conform to a particular desired outcome or avoid problematic ones. The first aphorism tries to subvert this tendency by getting rid of this idea that we should think of our "self" as negative, doomed, or fatally flawed, which in an odd way is inflating the importance of the so-called self far beyond what is reasonable. The second one seems to contradict the first, but it's really about the complementary problem in which, in our obsession with the idea of a self as separate from the world, as opposed to or in contrast with the world, we deflect blame from ourselves and onto this supposedly separated world, or other people. And the third is not only good advice for what to do when disaster strikes, but good advice for how we ought to think about disaster before it happens: because we're often paralyzed by fear of things going wrong, but if we think of disaster as opportunity, instead, we might start to relax a little about it, and by relaxing, open to them in a more full sense, to see what disasters are in a less reactive way and just work with them as they come up, opening up to them and trying to see them more fully.

"Take all the blame yourself" isn't, in other words, a prescription for beating yourself up; that would contradict the "acceptance" slogan that comes just before it. It is, instead, advice about not obsessing on deflecting blame. Another translation is "Drive all blame into one" which is perhaps a bit more accurate --- what is being asked for here is not to beat yourself up but to stop assigning blame and rather try to be more present in a larger sense with what is at issue in our lives at all times. That is to say, rather than thinking in terms of blame, at all, we see in an accepting way what is happening and stop trying to force things quite so much, open up to things, and perhaps find a seemingly hidden dimensionality to our lives that was always already present.

Mitsu