



The following is a transcript of the workshop from April 9th 2009

Adams Dubrovna: Hello Scath, Pila :)

Scathach Rhiadra: Hello Adams, Pila

Pila Mulligan: greetings

Scathach Rhiadra: Hello Stim

Stim Morane: Hi Scacach, Adams, Pila

Stim Morane: *Scathach

Adams Dubrovna: Hi Stim. I hope you won't be offended if I just park my avatar here and go afk. I can't be here but don't want to miss it

Stim Morane: Sure

Pila Mulligan: hi Pema

Scathach Rhiadra: Hello Pema

Pila Mulligan: hi genesis

genesis Zhangsun: Hi Pila

Stim Morane: Hi Pema

genesis Zhangsun: Hi everyone

Scathach Rhiadra: Hello Gen, Fefon, Storm

Pema Pera: hi everybody!

Stim Morane: Hi gen, Fefon, Storm

Fefon Quan: Aurel, if you turn around and come inside you see us on teh sofas

Pila Mulligan: hi Fefon and Storm

Storm Nordwind: Hi everybody

Fefon Quan: Hello everybody! Happy Passover :)

Pila Mulligan: Happy Passover Fefon

Scathach Rhiadra: Happy Passover:)

Pila Mulligan: hi aurel

aurel Miles: Hi Pia

Stim Morane: Hi Aurel

Wester Kiranov: hi everybody

aurel Miles: Hi Stim

Scathach Rhiadra: Hello Wester, Aurel

Stim Morane: Wester!

aurel Miles: Hi everybody

Pila Mulligan: hi Wester

genesis Zhangsun: Hi Stim!

Stim Morane: Hi gen

Pila Mulligan: is that Santa CLaus on the rof?

Stim Morane: OK ... time to start

Stim Morane: Last week we started a new series on an experimental use of Buddhist Ethics, specifically the

precepts not to lie, steal, kill, or become (too) intoxicated. We're skipping the precept about improper sex, since it's unnecessary for our present purposes. The main points can be gleaned from the other precepts.

Stim Morane: (Sorry)

Stim Morane: So we started with homework concerning “no lies”. As an extra-credit assignment, I mentioned

related precepts against frivolous or inappropriate or excessive speech. But let’s concentrate on the “truth” issue first.

Stim Morane: A couple of extra features: I suggested that you make a formal commitment to this precept for one week, and that you also renew the commitment daily. Later in our chat today we might discuss these

two points, why they’re useful etc.

Stim Morane: You may not have noticed much this past week. Possibly you went through the whole week without

any homework-related issue coming up at all. But in general I think it's unlikely that you would have many

issues come up around the homework, and it's also unlikely that you would have none whatsoever. In my experience people typically notice one small or subtle point that triggered an alarm. But even a single case or finding can be valuable.

Stim Morane: So ... do you have anything to report?

Stim Morane: :)

Storm Nordwind wonders whether withholding information to the group fits in! >:^)

Stim Morane: Withholding is good. It means I get to have lunch.

Fefonz Quan: :_) thought so too. if everybody shuld say yes/no at least, it might make it more interesting:)

Storm Nordwind: You first Fef

Fefonz Quan: should*

Fefonz Quan: yes

Wester Kiranov: the main thing i found, was that i tend to evade difficult encounters rather than come to a

point where lying would be "necessary"

Stim Morane: do you see any consequences to that approach which relate to our emphasis here?

Wester Kiranov: (thinking)

Stim Morane: no hurry

Stim Morane: What we are committing to in this new series are various related ethical stances, but what we

are most interested in in some sense are our lapses. So when we make a mistake, we need to see why that happened. What exactly happened? Who are we being at that moment? What influenced us? Why? Insight in these

areas is going to be very helpful.

Stim Morane: Was the homework not framed in a way that is likely to produce findings?

Wester Kiranov: I think in the end evading people or lying to them are just different styles of being untruthful. but it does help to have an idea what your own style is, so you know where to look.

Stim Morane: Yes. That is our concern here.

genesis Zhangsun: perhaps this is beside the point but what is truthfulness

Fefonz Quan: yes, my tactic is giving a truthful answer, bu tto a totally different question than asked
genesis Zhangsun: :)

Stim Morane: We might have a way of being truthful that still isn't very awake to the larger issues.

Stim Morane: :)

Stim Morane: Fefonz, remind me not to have a conversation with you when I'm sleepy

Fefonze Quan: but mostly i have no reasons to lie...

Stim Morane: OK

genesis Zhangsun: the other person may not be able to appreciate the truth even if you believe you are being truthful

Stim Morane: That might be the case for everyone here. I'm not sure ..

Pila Mulligan: I had an uncomfortable situation by speaking too soon, and therefore inaccurately :)

Stim Morane: Basically what's really involved in this new series is seeing your own mind and nature, as well

as seeing the ways in which you depart from the latter.

Pila Mulligan: not an intentional fib, but an error in truth

genesis Zhangsun: I could understand why it might be difficult to share about this

Stim Morane: It's just using ethics to "find the OX" (as in the Zen Ox-herding pictures)

Stim Morane: Yes, it might be tricky. We may need some time to get into this approach.

Fefonze Quan: in fact most of the week the exercise was not on my mind. One of the clear cases it came up, was after i gave some information that i could hide, but decided to share anyhow

genesis Zhangsun: well to be fair it is probably one of the most difficult things to admit to others how you lie to yourself

genesis Zhangsun: what kind of lies you tell

Stim Morane: Yes, good point, gen.

Fefonze Quan: but that's so not black and white issue

Stim Morane: And Fefonze, I should have emphasized the point about renewing the commitment each day

Fefonze Quan: black*

Fefonze Quan: no, don't blame yourself Stim :)

Stim Morane: the renewal is part of what sharpens our appreciation of the issue, and the larger issues hiding

inside it

Wester Kiranov: i found it pretty interesting how I would try to convince myself that some untruth didn't really

count as such

Stim Morane: Yes, Wester. This counts.

Pila Mulligan: the more honest you are with yourself, the more at ease you become with yourself, it seems

Stim Morane: there is a big difference between being honest in the ordinary sense, and making a commitment, renewed daily, to the truth.

Fefonze Quan: but some times indeed the truth has many levels/layers, and you just choose one of them

Stim Morane: yes

Stim Morane: Well, my idea was this:

Stim Morane: Formal versions of meditation practice help people see their own minds, but this kind of practice

takes place in a rather artificial context. The approach we are following, being in ordinary life, pressed by various influences, circumstances, environments or contexts to fit in better or to get what you want or seem

impressive, etc., presses us to step away from reality (lie). So there is an opportunity here to see the mind in ways that ordinary formal practice isn't so conducive to.

Fefonz Quan: depending on the circumstances. like public discussions sometimes demand less details than private ones, etc.

Storm Nordwind: /In my case there was a situation where (to cut a long story short) I attached importance and

reality to something that did not deserve it. That skewed my priorities and thus I tried to control where I did

not need to. It pointed to self-grasping and a lack of faith. I could almost watch impassively the mental wriggling to juggle something that would become ethically acceptable.

Stim Morane: Yes, good example, Storm

Stim Morane: it's just meditation in action

Stim Morane: that's my emphasis here

Stim Morane: It can be more effective than sitting practice

Stim Morane: There are active stressors which make us lie, and there are also neutral-seeming contexts where we

leave the truth because of passive draft. It just doesn't seem to matter, so we get sloppy ... or we don't really check.

aurel Miles: so lying.

Stim Morane: *drift

Wester Kiranov: but at some level you always know if you are being truthful or not

aurel Miles: actually - i don't agree

Stim Morane: yes, perhaps, Wester. But that's a tricky point. So I see Aurel's concern too.

Stim Morane: Note that we don't actually know what is true, so this commitment to telling the truth is not a

simple matter like giving your correct age when someone asks you. For a tradition that talk so much about false

views, and the extent to which our whole existence is pervaded by and defined by false views, a tissue of lies

or misapprehensions... we are a false view, a kind of walking false view.

Fefonz Quan: i don't agree with wester too

aurel Miles: i mean, have you ever noticed yourself saying something and you don't think it's really true but

it turns out to be exactly true?

aurel Miles: that happens to me quite a lot

Fefonz Quan: in fact telling all the truth is mostly impossible

genesis Zhangsun: our lives are fiction

genesis Zhangsun: I would agree that we are walking lies

genesis Zhangsun: not to sound too dark :)

Stim Morane: on the level of basic information, like giving your correct age when asked, we probably know.

But with respect to deeper matters, do we?

aurel Miles: and at the same time -

Wester Kiranov: i meant - true in such a way as matters to us, not absolutely or factually true

Stim Morane: The whole point of this series is to start with simple stuff on the "fact" level, and go from there to more subtle matters.

Stim Morane: Yes, I understood, Wester.

Stim Morane: Anyway, we've hardly started.

Pema Pera: I can see Wester's point -- perhaps not immediately, but afterwards we often do recognize that

there was something bugging us

Stim Morane: So it will take a while to get orientted.

aurel Miles: i was part of a strike once - as a Teaching assitant

Stim Morane: Yes, with respect to things we do know about to some extent, we have a "conscience".

aurel Miles: and i told everyone i would not cross the picket line

aurel Miles: but one of my very important classes was being held

aurel Miles: off campus

aurel Miles: i knew i was lying when i said i would not cross the picket line

aurel Miles: because i had every intention of going to that class

aurel Miles: but those words made their own reality

aurel Miles: and i found myself standing on the subway platform

aurel Miles: completely unable to get on the train

Stim Morane: interesting

aurel Miles: i couldn't force myself

aurel Miles: i lied

aurel Miles: but in the end

aurel Miles: the lie made itself true

Stim Morane: Yes

Pila Mulligan: :)

Stim Morane: speech is powerful

Stim Morane: for good or ill

Fefonz Quan: why is our lives a fiction Gen?

genesis Zhangsun: can/t answer that right now one sec

Stim Morane: Here's one answer: We consolidate around a false self and a false reality context for that self.

In that sense, we are a walking fiction. The true reality is not just facts that are passed on accurately, but more important and subtle dimensions of being.

Fefonz Quan: well, for that i would say two things:

Fefonz Quan: we don't know it's true (me at least), and if it is, what does other lies matter? lets play the game as best as we can

Stim Morane: OK

Stim Morane: So can you say a little more about the game?

Fefonz Quan: if we are in a fiction movie/play, sometimes the interesting movies are the ones with plots and

intruigues

Stim Morane: yes

aurel Miles: interesting to watch - not so great to live

Fefonz Quan: so why not making this movie interesting? it's just a movie after all

Stim Morane: if you retain your reality sense, and there are no bad consequences for others ...

Fefonz Quan: (yes, surely i know for myself a certain level of lying makes me unhappy...but that;s another issue)

Stim Morane: OK

Stim Morane: lying is not playing. You are making a good distinction here.

aurel Miles: unless it is really obvious lying

aurel Miles: then it's playing

Wester Kiranov: then it's not really lying

Fefonz Quan: "it is not a lie if you believe it" - Master George Constanza

aurel Miles: which is interesting - cause it is lying

Eliza Madrigal sneaks in quietly

Stim Morane: So Fefonz, is this type of play something you've tried in a fairly vigorous, exploratory way?

Eliza Madrigal: (sorry, was quite a while ago...mistake)

Pila Mulligan: hi Eliza

Stim Morane: It's not a lie if you believe it, but it still can be a problem for you. That's where the contemplative traditions come in.

Fefonz Quan: well not so much stim, because i find it hard to believe that our life is a fiction

Eliza Madrigal: :) (now quiet) :)

Stim Morane: :)

Stim Morane: back to truth

Stim Morane: OK, well, we can explore this more for a while, perhaps.

Stim Morane: What about the other, related commitment of avoiding frivolous or unnecessary or excessive speech?

Stim Morane: Any takers on that?

Pila Mulligan: :)

Fefonz Quan: (hard to maintain while in PaB sessions :))

Pila Mulligan: hasty speech, for sure

Pila Mulligan: mea culpa

Stim Morane: I just ran a 9 day retreat where many people were spending more time and energy on talking than on practicing.

Stim Morane: It bugged me.

Stim Morane: :)

Eliza Madrigal: :) yes, difficult to know what is frivolous, when sometimes it is the frivolous which breaks down seriousness and allows deeper discussion

Stim Morane: yes, again, play can be helpful.

Stim Morane: So we shouldn't have a prohibition against that!

Stim Morane: It's important to be able to tell the difference.

Scathach Rhiadra: is it not more a prohibition against idle chatter, gossip?

Stim Morane: Scathach, there are several related precepts of this sort.

Stim Morane: The one you mention in a classical case.

Stim Morane: But there are others, including the ones I listed. I'll take any of these as counting here.

Stim Morane: The point is that this sort of speech, excluding the creative play side which we want to keep, tends to divert us from what we really are.

Stim Morane: Perhaps this is easier to see if we push it a bit, as Fefonz suggested.

Stim Morane: We may need a new round of homework based on his idea.

Fefonz Quan: yes, throwing around a big clutter of words in order to hide yourself is a known intellectual

practice

Stim Morane: :)

Stim Morane: It's a profession.

Wester Kiranov: :)

aurel Miles: one of my professors once told me i didn't do it enough

Stim Morane: :)

aurel Miles: he said "anybody could read this" go back and use the terminology.

aurel Miles: i felt something snap.

Stim Morane: wow

Fefonz Quan: you shouldn't hit him with the big stick Aurel!

aurel Miles: it was a film studies professor - as a discipline, there are some self-esteem issues there.

Stim Morane: I see.

aurel Miles: still - it bothered me

aurel Miles: and i think about it a lot because in academic writing we do use specific language

aurel Miles: and it is distancing for the average guy

aurel Miles: and it is meant to be

Stim Morane: turf protection

aurel Miles: you think?

Stim Morane: sometimes, yes

Wester Kiranov: sometimes it is necessary for precision though

aurel Miles: true

Stim Morane: yes, that's possible too

aurel Miles: nothing says liminal like liminal

Stim Morane: :)

aurel Miles: but spellcheck doesn't recognize it

aurel Miles: but that flabby language

aurel Miles: surely we get carried away with that

aurel Miles: and it gets to be like those people who put on weight

aurel Miles: in order to be invisible

Pila Mulligan: :)

aurel Miles: (i used to do that)

Pila Mulligan: that's poetic, aurel

aurel Miles: thanks Pila i should also mention, it is not a good strategy

aurel Miles: but it is one i notice with a lot of academics who just want to keep their heads down and study

Stim Morane: OK ... well, I will just make the general point that a commitment to truth, renewed and bolstered

by related commitments to conservation and correct use of speech in other ways, helps up become increasingly

focused on larger issues of reality and its evocation.

Stim Morane: *us. It is this sort of possibility that motivates my use of Buddhist Ethics.

Stim Morane: Going forward, what do you think we should try next? I am still exploring what is possible in

this context, and am open to suggestions from all of you.

Wester Kiranov: i would actually like to zoom in a bit on the distinction between play and frivolity

Stim Morane: OK, good. How would you start?

Scathach Rhiadra: we could keep with truth/ speech for another week, maybe better understanding what is involved?

Wester Kiranov: ummm.. pay more attention to when you're playful

Fefonz Quan: and when you play fool,,,

Wester Kiranov: try to stay playful but not frivolous, and then see if it zooms off into frivolity, and how that happens

Stim Morane: Yes, those are great ideas.

Stim Morane: Expressing your nature through play is different from a giddy loss of connection with that nature.

Stim Morane: But seeing the demarcation line requires actual experimentation.

Stim Morane: A worthy project

Stim Morane: Well, I will talk a bit next time about how a contemplative sees some of the issues we've mentioned here so far.

Stim Morane: That just leaves the question of what you would like to try for homework.

Stim Morane: Hopefully something fun but not likely to land you in jail.

Stim Morane: Would you like to make your own, personally-determined project? Some could continue on truth, others on play vs frivolity?

Pila Mulligan: ... and both, even

Eliza Madrigal: yes

Eliza Madrigal: (Scath, sorry to be wishy-washy, but will you add me back into the group? I'm sure I'd like to participate)

Scathach Rhiadra: ok Eliza:)

Storm Nordwind learns from others doing the same project. Can we stay as a cohort?

Eliza Madrigal: Thanks

Wester Kiranov: I was thinking something like that, storm

Stim Morane: OK, well it's truth, on various levels, plus the other speech-related injunctions, then.

Stim Morane: If you start each day with an explicit commitment to attending to these areas, you will probably notice much more than would otherwise be possible.

Stim Morane: Other closing comments or issues?

Storm Nordwind: Can I just check: with Scathach put the transcript of this on the Wiki? If so I can put a pointer to the Wiki on the Webpage

Storm Nordwind: *will

Scathach Rhiadra: yes I have put all the other ones on it already

Stim Morane: Yes, and thank you, Scathach!

Storm Nordwind: Great. Thank you so much for that. I'll do the website tomorrow

Scathach Rhiadra: people need to register as users

Pila Mulligan: thank you, Stim

Storm Nordwind: Once again thank you Stim!

Pema Pera: yes, thank you Stim!

Stim Morane: Thanks, Pila ... and everyone.

Scathach Rhiadra: and if I remember from last week, Stim you talked about making the wiki restricted?

Fefonz Quan: thank you Stim !

Eliza Madrigal: Thank you Stim, Scath, all
Adams Dubrovna: Thank you Stim
Wester Kiranov: Stim, I really appreciate what you're doing here
genesis Zhangsun: thanks Stim
aurel Miles: thank you Stim
Storm Nordwind seconds Wester
Stim Morane: Scathach, I don't mind either way. It's a matter of what the others prefer.
Pema Pera: bye everyone
Stim Morane: Perhaps we can sort this out next time ...?
Pila Mulligan: bye
Adams Dubrovna: bye Pema
Stim Morane: Bye everyone!
Adams Dubrovna: bye Stim
Fefonze Quan: Bye all :)
Wester Kiranov: bye stim, bye all
Scathach Rhiadra: ok, then the URL is <http://ways-of-knowing.wik.is/>
genesis Zhangsun: thanks so much scathach
Scathach Rhiadra: ok, good night all, Namasté
Adams Dubrovna: Yes, thank you Scath
Storm Nordwind: Thank you for all the hard work with the Wiki Scathach!
Adams Dubrovna: good night
Storm Nordwind: Namaste
Scathach Rhiadra: ha, they are really easy to set up:)
Storm Nordwind smiles!