

The following is a transcript of the workshop from April 30th 2009.

Mickorod Renard: Hiyaaaa

Eliza Madrigal: :)

Wol Euler: hello gaya

Gaya Ethaniel: Hello all :)

Eliza Madrigal: Gaya, hello

Mickorod Renard: hi Gaya

Scathach Rhiadra: Hello Gaya

Stim Morane: Hi Gaya

Gaya Ethaniel: This seat looks cozy :)

Gaya Ethaniel: :)

Wol Euler smiles

Pila Mulligan: slow rezzing today

Stim Morane: Is it? I'm using a Mac today, and it doesn't seem so subject to those sorts of problems.

Stim Morane: OK, shall we start?

Stim Morane: we're still circling around the basic topic of Buddhist Ethics, and have been concentrating on looking into the precept against lying.

Pila Mulligan: :)

Stim Morane: Does anyone have any new observations regarding this, perhaps based on experience since our last meeting?

Mickorod Renard: I like to inflate my ego

Stim Morane: :)

Stim Morane: Does it keep inflating?

Mickorod Renard: I have noticed

Mickorod Renard: usually bursts after a few mins

Stim Morane: ahh

Stim Morane: so you just like the inflation part?

Mickorod Renard: I realise its futile after a while

Stim Morane: why futile?

Mickorod Renard: probably due to a childhood lack of confidence

Stim Morane: :) More confidence might lead to more inflation?

Mickorod Renard: there is no need to inflate it

Stim Morane: I see. Yes.

Mickorod Renard: I am already fantastic

Stim Morane: I suppose much of what we've been saying concerns related tendencies.

Eliza Madrigal: :)

Stim Morane: Yes, what you really are is fantastic ... and satisfiable, and satisfied.

Stim Morane: The "ethics" stuff centers on that too, although it isn't always mentioned early on in the teaching.

Stim Morane: Other comments?

Mickorod Renard: lying can be attributed sometimes to a risk of loosing self esteem

Mickorod Renard: but again this is futile too

Gaya Ethaniel: I stopped being associated with a person because being in her company forces me

to lie

Stim Morane: Yes, I would think so. There are many motivations, and as you say, they are futile, or wrong-headed.

Stim Morane: I know what you mean, Gaya.

Gaya Ethaniel: I like the person overall but I just didn't want to be in a situation where I need to lie for her sake.

Stim Morane: This is an interesting dynamic, not uncommon.

Stim Morane: Familiar to others here?

Scathach Rhiadra nods

Stim Morane: This sort of relationship is a good opportunity to learn something about our tendencies.

Mickorod Renard: yes

Stim Morane: But since such things are uncomfortable, we usually don't seize such opportunities
arabella Ella: Hi

Stim Morane: So we give ourselves some leeway, maybe for a few decades.

Storm Nordwind has not encountered that tendency before and would like to hear more

Stim Morane: But eventually, we have to focus a bit.

Stim Morane: OK, anyone have a response to Storm?

Stim Morane: Storm, you mean about the "toxic" relationship?

Storm Nordwind: I mean where being in someone's company forces you to lie

Stim Morane: Yes, exactly.

Eliza Madrigal: Not lying has led to not avoiding for me, with some family members. More that I felt I had to sort of hide parts of my life...a kind of lie...in order not to feel uncomfortable with what I thought would be their reactions.

Stim Morane: that's a common variant

Eliza Madrigal: If they drop away, I'll have to accept that

Stim Morane: Does that one have an analogue in your experience, Storm?

Stim Morane: Yes, I see, Eliza. It's sad, I suppose.

Storm Nordwind: No

Stim Morane: Interesting. OK. :)

Storm Nordwind: No, I am what I am. And while I accommodate others I do not lie. I would need to understand why I would want to.

Stim Morane: OK, perhaps there's nothing for you to learn then. AT least re that point.

Mickorod Renard: it comes down to misplaced loyalties I guess

Wol Euler: is there a difference between hiding (lying by omission) and stating something that is untrue?

Storm Nordwind: But I am very interested in learning why anyone else feels that need

Stim Morane: But as you suggested a while ago, there are other, more subtle ways in which we distort things.

Stim Morane: Wol, those are related but distinct cases.

Eliza Madrigal: For me it is always avoiding (or trying to) overt conflict... misguided manners in some cases. In others it is simply knowing they won't understand so why get all tangled up.

Stim Morane: I suppose there are many reasons why someone might feel this necessity.

Wol Euler nods

arabella Ella nods

Stim Morane: Sometimes it's just convenience, or opportunism.

Stim Morane: We want something so we do what it takes (apparently) to get it.

Stim Morane: It's funny because such strategies are often unsuccessful.

Eliza Madrigal nods

Eliza Madrigal nods vigorously

Stim Morane: I was surprised to hear last week that it's crucial to lie to succeed in life nowadays.

Scathach Rhiadra: depends what you call success

Stim Morane: But the core point is not that it's a misguided strategy for success, but that it makes us opaque to ourselves.

Stim Morane: Yes, exactly, Scathach.

Mickorod Renard: yes, I find success in deception isn't satisfying

Stim Morane: If we step back quite a bit ... we can briefly consider very deep-level factors motivating all the precept-related lapses.

Stim Morane: It is traditionally considered that there are 4 factors that contribute to our not appreciating the ethical dimension of life and the consequences of inappropriate actions.

Stim Morane: One is "kama" or sensuality ... not that enjoying the sensual aspect of life is wrong, but that we can become too absorbed and redefined by it to care about higher things, or higher versions of what we are.

Stim Morane: Sound familiar?

Stim Morane: Another is "bhava", an undue emphasis on a thing-orientation. We don't see subtleties and do attach too much to apparent or conventionally-emphasized tangibles.

Stim Morane: This is where the "success" angle may come in, perhaps.

Stim Morane: A 3rd is "drsti" or attachment to our opinions and habits of view over insight.

Stim Morane: Comments re any of these first three?

Pila Mulligan: nice analysis

Stim Morane: admittedly this is pushing things towards the foundations level.

Eliza Madrigal: kama might include a sense of comfort in one's daily relationships?

Stim Morane: Absolutely, Eliza.

Stim Morane: Especially if one really emphasizes the "comfort" angle literally.

Stim Morane: we're willing to compromise what matters on level of principle to maintain that.

Eliza Madrigal: Ah

Stim Morane: And the 4th is avidya, often translated as "basic ignorance" ... really it's a deep level and pervasive version of unawakeness.

Stim Morane: But this 4th is very deep, usually invisible to us.

Stim Morane: I think it has come up in PaB too, right?

Wol Euler shakes her head. Under a different name, perhaps?

Stim Morane: Maybe. I was just guessing.

Stim Morane: I'm not sure if any of you can spot these factors at work in seeding a continuing involvement in actions really best dropped ... but perhaps we can talk about this sometime in more detail.

arabella Ella: I think it would be useful if someone could give us some examples for each as they are not all easy to grasp

Stim Morane: I mention these here because they do figure in what would otherwise be called "ethical lapses", especially for a tradition that emphasizes "seeing".

Gaya Ethaniel: Stim mentioned about being awake at PaB, how one cannot go back to

unawakeness once woken... if I remember correctly.

Stim Morane: I know, you're right arabella

Stim Morane: Yes, Gaya, I probably said something like that.

Stim Morane: arabella, do you see the possibilities re the "sensuality" factor?

arabella Ella: I am not sure ...

Stim Morane: i.e., as a compromising factor?

Mickorod Renard: I was awakened, and now it's like having to re-learn how to live again

Storm Nordwind: "What has been seen, cannot be unseen" perhaps Gaya :)

Gaya Ethaniel: :)

Gaya Ethaniel: Adultery can be 'sensuality' example?

Stim Morane: well, it comes down to relative valuations ... we are willing to lie, harm, etc, to get something from the sensual realm.

Stim Morane: It's extremely common.

arabella Ella: ok I see

Stim Morane: The other 3 factors are more subtle

Stim Morane: Consider the "thing" factor ... it means we value a tangible gain over an adherence to principle

Gaya Ethaniel: Willing to even harm?

arabella Ella: greed and unbridled ambition?

Stim Morane: or the "view" factor ... we value opinions held vs those recommended by someone allegedly more mature.

Stim Morane: Sure, those could be seen as surface manifestations, arabella.

Stim Morane: The more basic point is that we have an incapacity and disinclination to attend to the sorts of things we're discussing here, and can investigate these and try to see them more objectively ... possibly we can loosen them up a bit.

Stim Morane: A closely related kind of obstacle is that we are looking away from the issue without even realizing it ... this is the "head on backwards" (viparyasa) idea I mentioned last week.

Stim Morane: Contemplation is largely about reversing this mistaken orientation, looking here it's hard to look, and exercising our capacity to see things "straight-on", as they are. Re "exercising" ... it's like a muscle that isn't ordinarily used.

Stim Morane: We need to train ourselves to see in the right way, and also on various levels we normally don't suspect are present.

Stim Morane: We could go a lot farther with the "no lying" precept, but today I suggest we instead turn to two more precepts of conduct, those concerning stealing and killing (violence).

Stim Morane: One basic idea behind what I'm doing here and in other contexts where I teach contemplative precepts of conduct is that the ordinary interpretation of the precepts, the "outer meaning" is precisely just that: an outer interpretation that will, with investigation, open up to other, quite different understandings and insights on many levels.

Stim Morane: So, while we're waiting to determine what sort of investigation is best suited to our casual SL gatherings and RL homework time, let me just invite you to brainstorm a bit.

Stim Morane: Consider the precept of "no stealing". The basic idea is obvious. But can you think of more subtle meanings this precept might have? Let's see how many we can come up with today. Can we find 5? 10?

Storm Nordwind: Stealing time from someone

Stim Morane: Yes, stealing time really does count. Time is life!

Wol Euler: snap! I was about to say that.

Eliza Madrigal: wastefulness

Stim Morane: Yes, wasting even something basic like water is stealing from the world.

Mickorod Renard: stealing trust from someone who trusts you and u don't deserve it

arabella Ella: wasting food too perhaps

Stim Morane: those are both interesting.

Stim Morane: say more, Mick?

Mickorod Renard: erm

Stim Morane: :)

Mickorod Renard: well, when someone trusts you it's a gift

Stim Morane: anything undeserved is stealing ... that's your point, I take it?

arabella Ella: not paying tax

Stim Morane: Good

Stim Morane: oh, don't get me started on taxes!

arabella Ella: :)

Storm Nordwind: Taking and not bothering to find out whether something is freely given

Mickorod Renard: so if u receive the gift of trust and renege on it, then it's stealing

Stim Morane: yes, exactly, Storm.

Stim Morane: we normally don't have much sensitivity to the issue of being "freely given"

Stim Morane: This is something worth noticing more.

Storm Nordwind nods

Stim Morane: Yes, Mick, it's a kind of stealing after the fact.

Pila Mulligan: not being sensitive to whether someone else's apparent generosity may actually harmful to them

Stim Morane: That's intriguing, Pila.

Stim Morane: Say more?

Pila Mulligan: well, in Hawai'i giving is part of aloha and it is expected that you receive gifts

Stim Morane: I see.

Storm Nordwind: Sounds like an indigenous cultural ethic also found in ancient Europe, Pila

Pila Mulligan: but sometimes the person giving can be so generous as to actually harm themselves

Stim Morane: So Pila and Storm, are you saying the GIVER has to look closely so as not to steal from the recipient?

Pila Mulligan: giving to an extreme

Pila Mulligan: yes

Stim Morane: neat

Storm Nordwind: Very much so Stim

Stim Morane: excellent

Storm Nordwind: The ethic was "a gift demands a gift"

Stim Morane: now we're talking real ethical sensibilities!

Stim Morane: this is where I wanted to go here ...

Stim Morane: it's not about being an ethical robot

Gaya Ethaniel: Giving with an expectation of receiving?

Gaya Ethaniel: [trying to understand what Pila & Storm said...]

Stim Morane: yes, that might count too. But I suppose it's a bit complicated, depending on the context.

Gaya Ethaniel: Sorry I don't understand then... how can one steal from receivers when giving?

Stim Morane: Any help, Pila or Storm

Stim Morane: ?

Storm Nordwind: If the receiver is expected to give back in turn

Pila Mulligan: if the desire to give felt by the giver to give is excessive, perhaps

Storm Nordwind: That is the most outer way to look at it

Stim Morane: Gaya, what I understood from both Pila and Storm is that the GIVER has to look closely so as not to steal from the recipient ... steal the recipient's health, natural advantages, etc.

Stim Morane: I mean, inadvertently steal or harm the recipient

Stim Morane: "detract from"

Gaya Ethaniel: Yes I was thinking about that way too... giving compromises receivers' principles...

arabella Ella: isn't it also a case of abusing of generosity or exploiting the other's generosity

Stim Morane: yes, a possibility

Pila Mulligan: old Chinese saying: 'One must weigh how much one can decrease another.'

Stim Morane: we have to really look.

Stim Morane: And that's a key point re real ethics, rather than mere robot ethics.

Stim Morane: robot ethics is scripted, not sensitive or truly caring

Stim Morane: so my basic point here is that this caring is a great treasure.

Storm Nordwind: A gift can, after all, simply be a manifestation of self-cherishing

arabella Ella nods

Stim Morane: And we need to act in accord with it so we can get it so we can act from it so we can get more, etc

Mickorod Renard: it's a conundrum too, because when we get more charitable, rather than selfish, there is a greater risk of putting the recipient of our kindness into a dilemma

Pila Mulligan: balance is important

Stim Morane: is it a "bad" dilemma?

Mickorod Renard: could be

Stim Morane: I see. OK, add that to the list, then!

Stim Morane: Good.

Storm Nordwind: A dilemma that can often be got around by giving anonymously

Stim Morane: Yes

Mickorod Renard: they may feel obliged to give back

Stim Morane: Yes, I see now.

Stim Morane: What about the "no killing" precept? Does anyone have any suggestions re less-than-totally obvious interpretations of that one?

Mickorod Renard: I don't worry about that one

Stim Morane: :)

Pila Mulligan: not taking advantage of someone applies to violence as well as stealing

Stim Morane: Yes, there's a lot of overlap

Mickorod Renard: but you can kill someone's soul

arabella Ella: you could kill someone's good will or kill their motivation

Storm Nordwind: We include being vegetarian in the obvious category?

Stim Morane: Yes, Mick

Stim Morane: Good question, Storm.

Stim Morane: What do others think re that?

Scathach Rhiadra: and all life not just human?

Stim Morane: Frankly, I usually avoid that issue in public discussions.

arabella Ella: psychological violence

Mickorod Renard: killing vegetables?

Stim Morane: Good example, arabella

Pila Mulligan: violence is the #1 problem in the world, I'd say (both overt and institutional)

Mickorod Renard: adultery is killing

Storm Nordwind: Killing and Stealing are pretty much the same thing in many ways, are they not?

Stim Morane: Yes, they're closely related, Storm.

arabella Ella nods

Stim Morane: Killing is, perhaps, more "final"

Gaya Ethaniel: I was thinking about using public spaces with respect to others' healthy existence...
ie pollution

Stim Morane: less reversible.

Storm Nordwind: Stealing time is not reversible :)

Pila Mulligan: both arise from the willingness to use force to gain an advantage

Stim Morane: Yes, that too, Gaya. All these sorts of lapses arise from "not caring", no human-heartedness.

Stim Morane: The point of these precepts is to bring out more insight and more caring, compassion ... really the same thing.

arabella Ella: abortion and euthanasia too perhaps?

Gaya Ethaniel: These precepts seem related to each other at some level.

Gaya Ethaniel: ah Stim you said it :)

Mickorod Renard: would euthanasia be?

Stim Morane: I admit that some cases are difficult to judge.

arabella Ella nods

Stim Morane: I'm not here to prescribe "correct" conduct.

Stim Morane: Only to find cases we can relate to, personally, that > caring.

Stim Morane: It's always best to start with something you can really relate to.

Stim Morane: Otherwise we break ourselves against principles we're not sure about.

Stim Morane: Start where you can ...

Stim Morane: Take killing ... even very subtle ways in which we give ourselves over to discouragement in life is a form of killing. We kill our own connection to aliveness.

Stim Morane: We can look into such things.

Stim Morane: I meet people every day who are "killing" themselves in this way.

Stim Morane: It's very painful to me.

Stim Morane: Do you know what I mean?

Gaya Ethaniel: You mean overt, unnecessary criticism for example?

Mickorod Renard: yes, I kill myself often

Storm Nordwind: But is that killing or really just stealing. Most cases are reversible, are they not?

arabella Ella: yes and it could be initiated by ourselves or by others i guess

Stim Morane: It could be that, or some very subtle shift in attitude that really undercuts our appreciation of life.

Stim Morane: Yes, arabella

Stim Morane: we are awash in a shared attitude of killing our connection to aliveness.

Stim Morane: it's almost fashionable.

Stim Morane: it can even masquerade as "enjoyment" ...

arabella Ella: reminds me of the expression 'comfortably numb'

Stim Morane: Yes, exactly.

Stim Morane: anyway, you've all given me lots of good answers to my little challenge questions.

Mickorod Renard: I guess some could come from a sense of not wanting to become disrespectful in a world full of sadness

Pila Mulligan: Gandhi said "If one has pride and egoism, he is not non-violent. Non-violence is impossible without humility."

Gaya Ethaniel: Sometimes it is unavoidable though to 'fit in'

Stim Morane: Shall we pick up next time?

Stim Morane: Yes, I see, Mick, Pila, Gaya.

Gaya Ethaniel: Stim is there any materials you can recommend me to read online? Your book is out of print...

Stim Morane: I look forward to continuing ...

Mickorod Renard: me too

Stim Morane: Gaya, I'll consider that, and get back to you.

arabella Ella: humility is an interesting concept linked to all this i feel

Stim Morane: See you next week!

Gaya Ethaniel: Thank you :)

Eliza Madrigal: Stim, Sincere thanks. :)

Wol Euler: thank you, stim, and goodnight all

Mickorod Renard: thanks, bye Stim

Pila Mulligan: thanks Stim

Scathach Rhiadra: thank you Stim, bye

arabella Ella: thanks Stim

Ducky Ducatillon: Thanx

Gaya Ethaniel: Good night all

Eliza Madrigal: Mick, I found it...or think I did... did a search and an independent seller had it ...will see when it gets here