

UUF SHERIDAN, MARCH 2012, presentation by Leila Bruno

"Beyond right and wrong there is a field - I will meet you there."

I knew your theme this year was examining how UU might consider some "big ticket" ideas in other. I decided to look at how Buddhism (and the secular path alongside it, Shambhala) talk about something like "heaven and hell," asking myself, what is the Buddhist view on this concept?

So thought it could be more interesting to look at the whole question of dualities and frozen or solidified ideas from the perspective of our spiritual path

Mind discriminates. Heart unites.

Which is where the title of this talk came from (from the Sufi poet, Rumi): "Beyond the ideas of right and wrong, there is a place. I will meet you there."

In Buddhism **relative and absolute** realities
On the Relative level of reality: right and wrong, black and white, salt and pepper, up and down, here and there, for and against, good and evil, etc.....belief in heaven after death creates a profound duality between mind & body, here & afterlife, spirit and secular. A more profound view exists (Rumi's poem speaks to it)

What is wrong with dualities? NOTHING except not wakeful, automatic, reaction not response - and usually so fixed and solid in our mind that we are shut down to others point of view so that we're looking at the world in a purely mechanical way = too small a view for the richness of our experience

So what I get interested in talking about is not taking sides (duality of "heaven & hell") but rather the principle of Sacred World - a way of discovering the natural magic in everyday life

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The 3-part logic for this talk:

GROUND: a view of interdependence

Buddhism: 6 realms not places but seen as mind states

Shambhala: focus on "joining" - when we join H&E create Enlightened Society

PATH: way we experience this is to go beyond duality: "drala" - the warrior's journey is based on what is intrinsically good about human existence and how to share that basic goodness with others

FRUITION: mind discriminates; heart unites & we experience sacred world

Abidharma Texts: samskaras, kinds of suffering, etc.

Buddhism: 6 Realms -states of mind we go thru (see the development of ego in *Cutting Thru Spiritual Materialism* by Trungpa Rinpoche - realms are clues to working with discursive mind, collapsed intelligence, confusion, strong emotions

Heaven: hallucinations of ego, of a place filled with beautiful splendid things, freedom, pleasure, beauty, all comforts. SELF ABSORPTION

Jealous Gods: defending and maintaining the great bliss and happiness we once felt JEALOUSY

Human: earth bound, desire, consciousness. DESIRE

Animal: heaviness, fear, eat or be eaten, sleepiness. SLOTH

Hungry Ghosts: starvation/thirst, nostalgia.

POVERTY

Hell: doubt, violent reactions, hatred. ANGER

Conventionally, heaven and earth are considered to be opposites. Not so in Shambhala = continuum

Joining Heaven & Earth

Continuum bringing together vision and practicality
Sacred World, nature -- that which exists
spontaneously in the phenomenal world

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Heaven usually referred to as Great Eastern Sun [wakefulness]; the lofty ideal of experience of vastness, sacredness; confidence in what is BEFORE thought of anything at all, horizon of human consciousness where vision is arising - what inspires human greatness & creativity

Earth: practicality & receptivity; the ground, what promotes life; it can be penetrated, it's pliable, can be cultivated

Man: meaning human existence, simplicity, the agent of harmony, one who links up freedom of heaven (vision) and practicality of earth = good society.

Joining - reawakening an intimate connection to reality, the phenomenal world, connecting, linking, uniting with the mystery - this is not somewhere "beyond" - it is here on earth

DEEP LISTENING EXERCISE "Let yourself register this person, their presence. Make eye contact. Behold this brother/sister being. You are looking into the face someone who has experienced good times and bad times in their life - but they haven't given up. They are here now today. Here is someone who isn't afraid to love the gift of being alive, no matter what it is they have gone thru in their life to

this point. Feel your appreciation for their bravery. Now assume a feeling of openness to the highest good in this person, **Here is the topic: Think of a moment with what you appreciate - a sunrise, a season, your garden, a moment with your child, grandchild, partner. What are you aware of that feels sacred to you in your everyday life?** Be generous; share with your partner. Begin -- one by one -- speaking and listening deeply from the heart."

Obstacles to being in the moment and recognizing sacred world: arrogance, discursive mind taking up all the space, habitual patterns of behavior, solidifying opposites instead of seeing phenomena as a continuum

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Image of embeddedness (not a hierarchy) -- 3 levels of the skin: surface appearance
bones seen by xray and muscles seen by MRI
cellular & atomic level seen with microscope

Not the case that we have to change human nature - rather it is that we can go beyond concept and practice with inhabiting all parts of our true nature AT ONCE

Realization: waking up and recognizing we are already embedded in, part of, connected to, and NOT SEPARATE FROM this sacred, self-existing world right here and now.

Might ask: how is it possible to transcend duality or transcend conceptual mind?

"Drala is not a god or spirit, but fundamentally it is connecting the wisdom of your own being with the power of things as they are. If you are able to connect those two things, out of that, you can discover magic in everything. There are many other examples of invoking external drala. I have read, for instance, that some American Indians in the Southwest grow vegetables in the desert sands. The soil, from an objective standpoint, is completely infertile. If you just threw a handful of seeds onto that earth, nothing would grow. But the Indians have been cultivating that soil for generations; they have a deep connection to that earth and they care for it. To them, it is sacred ground, and because of that, their plants grow. That is real magic. The attitude of sacredness toward your environment will bring drala. You may live in a dirt hut with no floor and only one window, but if you regard that space as sacred, if you care for it with your heart and mind, then it will be a palace." -VCTR

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(another possible deep listening exercise)

EXERCISE: Take turns -- each person describes one precious thing that they cherish about their life, sharing the details of how they experience it and what it means to them. **Remind people this is not the usual conversation – they can take turns speaking and listening – give each person in the dyad about 2-3 minutes, and then ask for shares once the whole group gets back together: would anyone like to share something about what they experienced?**

(other quotes)

Sacred Path of the Warrior, p 101: "When human beings live in harmony with principles of heaven and earth then the four seasons and the elements of the world will also work together harmoniously. Then there no fear and human beings begin to join in, as they deserve, in living in this world. They have heaven above and earth below, and they appreciate the trees [all life]. They appreciate

all this. If human beings violate their connection or lose their thrust in heaven and earth, then there will be social chaos and natural disasters."

Sacred Path of the Warrior, p 102: "If we apply the principle of heaven/earth/man to the situation in the world today, we begin to see that there is a connection between the social and the natural, or environmental, problems that we are facing.

"When human beings lose their connection...human beings destroy their ecology at the same time they destroy one another...healing our society goes hand in hand with healing our personal, elemental connection with the phenomenal world."