

Wind on the Water

A Viewsletter To Encourage
Unitarian Universalist
Theology and Spirituality

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Karma

Karma is the web we trap ourselves in. It is the tendency for patterns of living to reproduce themselves. Habits are one example.

New Years gives us another example: New Years Eve we celebrate the end of one year and the beginning of a new one. New Years day we make resolutions to change our lives.

But we also take our new address/date books and copy the phone numbers and appointments from the

A Lincoln Statue

There is a statue of Abraham Lincoln in a park in Manchester, England. The story I was told about it is as follows:

During the American Civil War, the North blockaded the South. Manchester was a great textile manufacturing center, and since their supply of cotton was cut off, they were hurt financially.

The owners of the textile factories got together and sent President Lincoln a letter. They told him they were hurt by the blockade, but that they understood what he was trying

to do, and they supported him. This began a correspondence between them. Eventually the manufacturers erected the statue of Lincoln.

A friend to whom I told this story was cynical about the manufacturers. "If they were losing enough money to threaten their livelihoods, we'd see if they still were so noble."

Well, as the story goes, they *were* losing money, but presumably not so much as to threaten bankruptcy. But is this really a valid criticism? Maslow's hierarchy of motivations does predict that security needs take precedence over "higher" ones if a choice is ever forced.

But is that to say that people's attempts to achieve coherence in their lives are only pretence or hypocrisy? Maslow's hierarchy doesn't support such an interpretation; the higher needs are as real as the lower, if not as urgent.

We cannot judge people's values on a standard of perfection. No one can live up to an absolute standard. But we can judge how well they hold to their values under stress.

For Reflection

Lei Yuille and her brother were watching TV when she saw Reginald Denny's beating being broadcast live from a few blocks away. Her brother said, "We are Christians. We've got to go help him out."

She said, "Right."

They got to the corner of Florence and Normandie in ten minutes and she rushed to help Denny who had gotten back to his truck. He couldn't see. He didn't remember what had happened. She comforted him as Bobby Green, Titus Murphy and Terri Barnett arrived.

With trucker Green driving, Yuille in the cab with Denny, Barnett driving ahead to clear traffic, and Murphy standing on the running board holding on tightly, they raced to Daniel Freeman Memorial Hospital. Barnett had alerted the paramedics by the time the truck arrived. As the paramedics got to him, Denny went into convulsions.

A blessing on Lei Yuille and her brother, Bobby Green, Titus Murphy and Terri Barnett and on all people like them.

Would you rush to a riot to try to save someone from the mob? What if that someone were a member of another race?

Sight-Reading

Mary-Allen Walden writes:

It often seems to me that life is a lot like sight-reading music at the piano. That's when you sit down and play, at sight, something you've never seen before. If it's a fairly easy piece and similar to things you've seen before, it's no problem. You just play it like you see it and

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Sight Reading, continued

fake when you missed, and since it's a familiar situation you can pretty much predict what will work. The real problem is when you hit a piece that's very tricky and unfamiliar in style. Then you have to scramble to grab as much information as possible at a glance, make whatever sense you can, and go on. The one thing you absolutely must not do is start worrying about past mistakes, because music, like life, goes forward at its own pace, and you can't go back and correct errors or take time out to study the score. Usually you find you did better than you thought you could. Sometimes it's sort of a mess, but it was fun to try. And then sometimes you feel totally overwhelmed and inadequate amidst disaster, even though you did the best you could. Life disasters tend to be a whole lot more serious than musical ones, but just the same, you have to pick yourself up and go on.

Helping

At Thanksgiving and Christmas there is a great demand from people to be allowed to do good for the poor. Organizations that serve meals to the homeless are flooded with requests to help.

But they can't use that many helpers for just one day; they must turn volunteers away, and the volunteers do not come back. Are they hurt by being rejected? Is it only Christmas spirit that motivates them?

Winter is long in Chicago. The need is great in January, February, March. Once the holidays are over, all the activities suddenly end leaving us empty and lonely, cocooned in our apartments or houses. Why not volunteer your time now?

Better yet, use it as an excuse to get together with friends; volunteer to work together. That will make up for the lack of a motivating holiday spirit.

King's Day

This is the month of one of the newest national holidays, Martin L. King, Jr. Day. It is still not clear how to celebrate it. How can we celebrate in a fashion true to his memory.

It is a cold season for a parade, or more appropriately, a march.

Not all Americans are dedicated to celebrating the holiday. Some people compare Dr. King to Washington and Lincoln and find him lacking. You hear jokes: "I suppose if we have a Presidents' Day, it is only fair to have a King's Day."

You will find other Americans who find him more significant than the others. Legal racial segregation lasted more than half way through this century. Discomfort between races persists. Slavery and racism have defeated all our great democrats and natural-rights idealists. Dr. King may have had a more difficult task: he had to counter social norms of racial discrimination. He had to counter the indifference of those who do not find African Americans a part of the story of America: it is disquieting to think of slavery when telling a story of the land of the free.

There is one place, though, where King's Day is celebrated: the public schools. King's life and struggle are taught. Assignments are given. Artwork is assigned and posted.

But are the schools true to King's memory? Do they bring home the lessons of his life? Do the schools, for example, say "If you find

things around the school that are wrong and the teachers and principal won't fix, then ask yourself what Dr. King would do. Organize the students. Protest. March. Sit in. Perform acts of civil disobedience."

Do you think the schools teach that? Or do they just teach facts like "He had a dream; he got shot"?

Distractions

In the Buddhist Wheel of Life and Death, the realm of the humans is characterized by a multitude of activities which lead to distraction. The Buddha who appears to the humans comes as a monk, showing the simplicity that can calm and focus life.

Distraction is particularly prevalent at Christmas, with all the traditional activities demanding our time. It is a time when diets die. It is a time when it is difficult to organize new projects or keep up efforts on old ones. In January we try to pick up where we left off on projects that have grown several weeks cold.

In January we try to take charge of our lives again by making resolutions for the new year. Resolutions are an attempt to combat the distractions of life, to provide a consistent core.

Resolutions made once a year, however, are lost in the distractions as the year progresses. A better idea (from the pagan UUs) is to remake resolutions every new moon. The night the first sliver of the moon is visible, make your resolutions for the following twenty-eight days. As the moon waxes and wains, keep your vows. In the dark of the moon, reflect on the past month, and when the moon begins its next cycle, renew your vows, or vow something else that is now more impor-