Ethical Practice-- Homework Assignments #1 --- Spring 2006

(A) Homework answers should be brief essays -- no less than 1/2 page single-spaced/ no more than one page for each question. If you double-space, think of each answer to be about a page.

[Thus, writing three essays will require more than one page!]

ALL HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE TYPED AND THE PAGES STAPLED TOGETHER. Please invest in a small stapler.

You are free to do constructive critique, comparisons, applications to your own experience, creative extensions of the ideas, etc. You may write in 3rd person or 1st person. Extend yourself; write beyond your first stopping point. Use all that you know and more. Be creative and insightful and interesting!

(B) The homework answers will be collected at the end of each class. Each day’s homework is worth 1 1/2 points; the 2 assignments for a week are worth THREE points. Over the course of the semester you can earn 30 points -- a full three letter grades! -- just by faithfully doing your daily work. ASSIGNMENTS HANDED IN LATE WILL GAIN NO CREDIT, unless you have called within 24 hours on either side of missing a class to report that you will be or were absent. Please hand in hard copies of the homework. Only in BIG emergencies will I accept homework as email attachments.

(C) If something is bubbling up in your life that has relevance to our work, you may substitute a "Wild Card" for one only of the three questions on a particular homework. Some of the best learning results from such reflection on what you are facing in the moment.

(D) Please title each set of homework questions as below: Assignment 1 (for Mon. Feb. 6th).

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Assignment 1: Given Wed. Feb. 1st, 2006 for Mon. Feb. 6th: Read The Art of Possibility, Intro and Chapter 1, "It's all Invented" (pp. 1-15); read Living Large, Introduction, pp. 1-24. Reflect on the material and answer the three questions below:

1. On Z&Z, what assumptions are you making that structure the way you see your life? The assumptions are often uncovered in the stories you tell yourself and others that are only one possible way to look at things. What alternate stories might you invent to give you more choices?

2. On LL, Write a personal essay on the Frederick Buechner quote at the beginning of the introductory chapter (p.13). How might that threshold involve ethics and spirituality? Answer creatively.

3. On LL, in the Introduction I suggest a renewed ethics along the horizontal axis of time unfolding through epochs and an expanded spirituality along a vertical axis of contact with the timeless source. What is your view of ethics? How would you explain it to a friend? How might your view of ethics be challenged and renewed by the view presented here? What is your view of spirituality? How is this like and unlike the view presented here? Discuss.

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Assignment 2: Given Mon. Feb. 6th for Wed. Feb. 8th. Read The Art of Possibility, Chapter 2 "Stepping into a Universe of Possibility" (pp. 17-23) and read Living Large, chapters 1-3, pp. 27-64. Answer the three questions below:

1. On Z&Z: Z&Z contrast a world of measurement with a world of possibility. They also contrast survival-thinking and scarcity thinking with possibility-thinking. Use examples to show where these distinctions show up in your life and your world.

2. On LL (Living Large), explain the fundamental distinction and the four steps that aid us to move from small mind-and-heart to larger mind-and-heart. Give an example of your own to illustrate.

3. On LL, answer either 3a or 3b: (3a) Explain how each domain (and the conversation or MVP aspect of that domain) can be approach in small mind or in large mind. Give concrete examples for each domain. OR (3b) Suppose each domain is thought of as a lake. Show how the
analogy of the lake might apply to that domain – from surface to midpoint to depth and back up again.

Assignment 3: Given Wed. Feb. 8, for Mon. Feb. 13th: Read The Art of Possibility, Chapter 3 "Giving an A" (pp. 25-53) and read Living Large, chapter 4, pp. 65-83. Answer the three questions below:

1. On Z&Z: Z&Z believe that we should give everyone an A. In one sense, yes, I agree that we should treat everyone as unique, irreplaceable and of infinite worth. I also have no problem with everyone in a class doing "A" work and gaining an "A." On the other hand, I am unconvinced that this is the end of the story. Surely, there are criteria of excellence in most fields. [Is it correct or just to say that I can "give" someone an "A" or that you can give yourself an "A" regardless of performance?] Musicians go from awkward beginners to competent apprentices to accomplished masters to world-class virtuosos. I doubt that Ben Zander would accept any level of musicianship to his program or recommend any student at all for a first chair at a major orchestra. Discuss from your own point of view these contending views. (Perhaps you may make a case for Zander's view and win me over; perhaps you may make a case and win Zander over.)

2. On LL, either answer (2a) or (2b): (2a) Discuss minimal ethics using the traffic light model. Give examples of your own. Explain how minimal ethics is an advance over the first of the Three Houses-- the pre-ethical. OR (2b) Discuss with examples of your own an ethics of aspiration. How does this modify the Traffic Light model? Why is a minimal ethics -- though a gain -- not fully satisfactory? Explain the two movements from minimal ethics to an ethics of aspiration.

3. On LL, discuss ethics from an eastern perspective. What are the three phases of the eightfold path? What does this approach add that is not present (or not so clearly present) in the western model (as in the Traffic Light Model)?

NOTE: In the upcoming assignments, you will be asked to do certain practices for a day and then to write about what you learn. Thus, you must think ahead and even read a bit ahead so that you will have a chance to do these practices. In other words: look over the assignments both for Wed.—to—Mon. and from Mon.—to— Wed. Plan your practices accordingly.

Assignment 4: Given Mon. Feb. 13 for Wed. Feb. 15th: Read The Art of Possibility, Chapter 4 "Being a Contribution" (pp. 55-65) and read Living Large, chapter 5, pp. 89-99 + Appendix VII (253-256). Answer the three below:

1. On Z&Z. Declare yourself to be a contribution. Practice living from this mindset. Notice how the world shows up differently (a) from a success-failure way of relating and (b) from a declaration that "I am a contribution" way of relating. Write an essay on your experience doing this.

2. On LL. how is the sense of being separate, alone and in danger tied to the Modern Worldview? Check Appendices XVI and XVII and then use your own examples. How might beginning from oneness – from what joins us at the deep levels – positively affect ethics? Discuss.

3. On LL, in Appendix VII, I present definitions of manipulation, paternalism and non-manipulative persuasion. Give the definition for each and give an example of each.

Assignment 5: Given Wed. Feb. 15th for Mon. Feb. 20th: Read The Art of Possibility, Chapter 5 "Leading from any Chair" (pp. 67-77) and read Living Large, chapters 6 and 7, pp. 101-123. Answer thereof the questions below:

1. On Z&Z. Pick a class you are in and also pick an organization you are in. What would it mean to "lead from any chair?" What kinds of interventions help us to lead from any chair? Discuss creatively.
2. Your sense of time increases when you consider all our ancestors (not just the human ones) and all our contemporaries (not just the human ones) and all those who are to come (not just the human ones). What are you aware of when you call upon the beings of the three times (see 110-112)? How does this aid us to expand our sense of ethics?

3. Answer either (3a) or (3b) or (3c): (3a) Write an essay on the distinction between religion and spirituality. Give examples. OR (3b) Write an essay on changing images of the whole or Great Mystery. What strikes you as you consider various ways that the ultimate has been imaged? How might this distinction between God and image of God (or Ultimate and image of the Ultimate) be helpful to you in your efforts to live large? OR (3c) How does oneness, union, communion link to love? How does coming from what joins us aid us to be more loving in (i) our one-to-one relationships, (ii) our organizational life, and (iii) our life with all our kin in the planetary web of life?

Assignment 6: Given Mon. Feb. 20th for Wed. Feb. 22nd: Read The Art of Possibility, Chapter 6 "Rule Number 6" (pp. 79-97) and read Living Large, chapters 8 and 9. pp. 127-152. Answer the three questions below:

1. On Z&Z. Z&Z distinguish the calculating self from the central self. Practice Rule #6 (Don't Take Yourself So Damn Seriously -- DTYSDS). Show through examples from your practice how this rule helped you lighten up on your childish demands and supposed entitlements (the calculating self speaking) and allowed more contact with your central self.

2. On LL, pick a one-to-one relationship [with friend, family member, teacher, co-worker, etc.]. Practice seeing that relationship as a third reality -- under the imagery of bowl and then boat and then garden and then kingdom or commonwealth. What do you notice in making this shift? Discuss creatively.

3. On LL, practice beginning from abundance rather than beginning from scarcity. Note the language cues given on page 145. For one day, notice when you are in language of lack and complaint and shift to language of abundance and request. Report on what you learned.

Assignment 7: Given Wed. Feb. 22nd for Mon. Feb. 27th: Read The Art of Possibility, Chapter 7 "The Way Things Are" (pp. 99-111) and read Living Large, chapters 10, pp. 153-165 plus Appendix XI, pp. 262-263. On Monday, Feb. 27th I shall also review for our first test on Wed. March 1st.

Answer the three questions below:

1. Z&Z. At issue here are several practices -- acknowledging things exactly "the way things are" (remember our Great Paradox chant -- pointing to surface and depth), and stopping "downward spiral talk." Practice these two ways of acting and report on the results.

2. On LL, pick a particular relationship and then stand in the place of the Summer Sovereign. Name the task and nature of that potential partnership. Call it to its best. Act -- with joy -- for the sake of that partnership and all it serves. Report what you discover.

3. On LL, see Appendix XI, draw a shield for one of your partnerships and hand it in.

FIRST TEST ON MARCH 1st -- NO HOMEWORK FOR THIS DAY. REVIEW FOR THE TEST.

Assignment 8: Given Wed. Mar. 1st for the first class after the test, namely on Mon. March 6th: Read The Art of Possibility, Chapter 8 "Giving Way to Passion " (pp. 113-121) and read Living Large, chapter 11. pp. 167-184
1. On Z&Z. The practice of this chapter has two steps: Step one is to release those barriers of self that keep you separate and in control and let the vital energy of passion surge through you, connecting you to all beyond. Step two is to participate fully, allowing yourself to be a channel to shape passion into new expressions for the world. Try out this two-step practice in your life and report on the results.

2. On LL, pick a one-to-one relationship [with friend, family member, teacher, co-worker, etc.]. Practice for one day seeing that relationship as if apprenticing to the First Minister, the Autumn Diplomat. What needs to be acknowledged for that partnership to be all it can be? Write a acknowledging all that partnership has meant and still means to you – who you are both at your best and what service is given when you empower the partnership in this way. Then actually say some of the things you wrote to the person in the partnership.

3. On LL, pick a one-to-one relationship [with friend, family member, teacher, co-worker, etc.]. Practice for one day seeing that relationship as if apprenticing to the First Minister, the Autumn Diplomat. Practice this day identifying ways of speaking and ways of generating emotions that no longer serve the partnership and letting go of them. Notice your speaking and the emotional charge you put on people and events. Especially notice how you justify and defend, attack, blame and complain (Jud ABC). Shift your speaking and emotional tone for the sake of the partnership and all it serves.

Assignment 9: Given Mon. Mar. 6th for Wed. Mar. 8th: Read The Art of Possibility, Chapter 9 "Lighting a Spark" (pp. 123-139) and read Living Large, chapters 12, pp. 185-199.

Answer the three questions below:

1. On Z&Z. This is a practice to enroll others in possibility. Its steps are to imagine people are an invitation for enrollment, be ready to participate, offer that which lights you up and have no doubt that others will catch the spark. Engage in this practice of enrollment and report on the results of doing this.

2. Read of the gifts and skills that come with deep listening. For one day, practice deep listening in the encounters of your life where this is possible (even for a brief time). Notice lesser ways of half-listening. Call yourself to attentiveness. What do you discover about the power of listening through this exercise? Discuss.

3. In the light of the story of the Taoist farmer (p. 192) and the Rumi poem (p. 195), write an essay showing how you tend to see events as good or bad rather than both danger and opportunity. Pick an incident in your life where you would have more ease by dwelling in the type of inquiry favored by the Winter minister.

Assignment 10: Given Wed. Mar. 8th for Mon., Mar. 13th: Read The Art of Possibility, Chapter 10 "Being the Board" (pp. 141-159) and read Living Large, chapter 13, pp. 201-211.

1. On Z&Z. Z&Z call this "our graduate course in possibility." It is the decision to declare that "[you are] the framework for everything that happens in life." It is a way of taking total responsibility for everything as a way of refraining from blaming or being victim in any sense. Graduate work indeed! Z&Z claim that this practice has two parts. How might you explain these two parts? Finally, how do you assess this "graduate course in possibility." What are its strengths? What are its weaknesses?

2. Comment on the qualities of the little Japanese man who encounters the drunk on the Tokyo train. What does this have to teach us about strength and power? What does it have to teach us about leadership?


1. On Z&Z. Answer either 1a or 1b: (1a) On pp.169-170, Z&Z offer characteristics of their notion of "vision." Write a brief version of your vision and show how it can keep you creating frameworks for possibility rather than on a downward spiral of blame and complaint. OR (1b) Look over carefully the three steps for the practice of framing possibility. (p.163) Find an example different from any in the book for this practice. You might think of engaging in this practice in an interpersonal or small group setting or you might think of engaging in this practice in a business organization or educational organization. Keep in mind the prompt -- without such creative intervention a downward spiral is set into motion. The practice of framing possibility is a way of taking a different path -- one that averts the downward spiral.

2. On LL: Using Appendix XV as a guide, "walk the circle" of the ministry for the sake of a designated relationship. Answer one or two questions from each ministry. Let this exercise take the form of an essay. [Let me know the type of relationship you are "walking the circle" for the sake of.]

3. On LL, pp 221-223, there are comments on the life and death of partnerships. I mention that sometimes partnerships change their outward form; sometimes they dissolve; and sometimes they change their kind. Give an example from your own life and experience of each of these three changes. Explain. Are there others ways relationships change? Discuss.

Spring break begins after class on Friday, March 17.
Classes resume on Monday, March 27th.

Best Wishes for a Suffering-reducing, Life-enhancing, Wonderfully Enlightening Spring Break!

Assignment12: Given Wed. before Spring Break for Wed. Mar. 29th – the first Wednesday after Spring Break: Read The Art of Possibility, Chapter 12 "Telling the WE Story" plus the Coda (pp. 181-200) and read Living Large, chapter 15, pp. 225-240

1. On Z&Z. The steps for the WE practice are presented on pp. 183-184. In a situation in your life, practice this way of thinking and speaking and report on the results.
2. On LL, Chapter 15 expands the tools for “walking the circle” to the level of the planet. Use each of the ministers to suggest ways we can move from the Modern Worldview with its six seductive S’s to the Emerging Ecological Worldview. Include concrete steps.
3. On LL, Chapter 15 also expands the tools for “walking the circle” to the level of institutions. Use each of the ministers to suggest ways we might shift the college culture from one that reflects the Modern Worldview with its six seductive S’s to a campus culture that reflected more of the Emerging Ecological Worldview. Discuss creatively

For remaining homework assignments, click on “Ethical Practice” Assignment Page and print out Homework Questions Second Series.

In the next segment of our work we shall explore James Rachels’ The Elements of Moral Philosophy

To find our calling is to find the intersection between our own deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger. Frederick Buechner

If I am not for myself, who will be? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when? Rabbi Hillel (1st century CE)