



Thinking, speaking, and acting OUTSIDE OF THE BOX

There is a lot of talk about thinking, speaking, and acting “out of the box” these days – but not much consideration of how this is possible. Thinking, speaking, and acting out of the box depends upon knowing what “in the box” is. Stepping entirely out of the box implies knowing what is in the box. And really knowing what is in the box really helps you to move out of it. One is dependent upon the other and, more often than not, what is new is the latest reconfiguration of what is old. Doing what one instinctively “feels” is the classic Buddhist definition of a dumb animal. Thinking outside of the box therefore implies a knowledge of the box you normally function in. Only by understanding one’s programmed limitations is there a sense of what lies outside of the box called self.

Without knowing the self, we cannot move away from it towards a more real and substantial self – a self interconnected and inter active. We Americans fancy ourselves as spontaneously cre-

ative beings – able to be “out of the box” and creative by an act of will – the instant Enlightenment school. Lifetime endeavors and the value of lifetime endeavors are given secondary status. This tends to dichotomize our view of things, causing us to intellectualize or emotionalize instead of searching for the connective balance of the two. There is a Chinese Buddhist image of the Pure Land bird of enlightenment flying through the air of Truth/Reality by a harmonious flapping of the right wing of knowledge and the left wing of feeling – becoming the effortless flight of Wisdom/Compassion. If one wing predominates over the other, flight is impaired – or in extreme cases, when either wing flaps by itself, one only goes in circles.

Life then is not an either-or situation. There is such a thing as too much clarity – in Japanese “hakkiri shisugiru”. Our traditions values mists and fog over the clear light of day. It is better to add “I think” to all statements we

make and claim to know so clearly. Namo, the self-deluding “I”, could not be more opposite than “Amidabutsu”, the pure Light of Truth/Reality – and yet Namoamidabutsu is one word made up of two opposing realities - like the Chinese characters for Samsara, the world of self-created delusion being shoji (??) not birth and death but birthdeath. The world of grey and balanced uncertainty is a far more connected world – one to be enjoyed more than controlled. I think that the Japanese Buddhist emphasis is one of letting go - because culturally, we are extreme control freaks. Because of it, we are controlled, organized, efficient, ad nauseum. It is reflected in our temple organization, how we run things, and what we value. It makes us like our American half, efficient, knowledgeable, comfortable – but not particularly happy.

Want to get out of the box? See the box you built yourself into. Namandab

Rev. Mas