

Tao Te Ching, Psychosis, Meds, Minsky, And Psychiatry

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From emails I sent today to a colleague. Edited slightly.

Subject: TTC and psychosis

[Recipient],

If this is true:

Heavy is the root of light.
Still is the master of moving.

from ch. 26 of the Tao Te Ching, by Lao Tzu translated by Ursula K. Le Guin

then it might speak to psychosis. In a footnote, Ursula says that it might be a basis for T'ai Chi (and I have an essay somewhere on the tactile nature of T'ai Chi, and how that might apply to and be beneficial for the schiz-like mind/person).

That is, to recall and embody this 'heavy' is to then give flower to the light, it is the root. Its sense is profound. Likewise, still the master of moving. If we forget this, sometimes problems happen -- and I suggest that this applies to psychosis, and ways through it, or re-centering the thought-space.

Still, I'm not sure all of what we call psychosis is useless; and it can serve to deepen awareness, especially with re-orientation and a profound investigation of: mental representations of the external world, and relevant mental events (Minsky TEM).

Kevin

Subject: TTC and meds

[Recipient],

If this is true:

Heavy is the root of light.
Still is the master of moving.

from ch. 26 of the Tao Te Ching

then meds might seem to have a compensatory effect, in that they are heavy, and result in reduced moving. Is one therefore 'the root of light' and 'the master of moving'? There is some truth to this, and one can reflect on them, when they do work. But they are too heavy, and deadening; and one is hardly 'light' from them, they are not the root then of light; and moving is much reduced, so they are not so much the master of moving as its curtailing and confinement. [I'm talking of some of the antipsychotics/mood stabilizers.]

This points back to my statement, "Certain mental representations and mental events are not permitted. And certain behaviors are not permitted." But the individual is not given the chance to work with these, to explain them, or to justify them. And since the meds address these Fundamental Statements Of Psychiatry, they are given -- without thought to other implications or possibilities.

And certainly the psych unit psychiatrist and followup is NOT concerned with such say Zen fundamentals as mind-breath-body (and I'd much rather be Nagarjuna, Buddhist philosopher and meditator, than a psych unit psychiatrist -- much better theory and practice).

*** This concerns the gray zones (which I suspect there is a lot of) and not so much extreme depression (say suicidal or paralyzing mental states -- but here see Bertrand Russell or William James) or (actually) threatening action -- and I have more to say on that, over time. Some of this could be worked with in other ways, or a strong stance taken (but always must be realistic). ***

Kevin

Subject: Oh! Psychosis!

[Recipient],

I'm also giving thought to psychosis. Again, 'mental representations of the external world, and relevant mental events' (Minsky TEM) -- descriptions and the lived experience, thought, logic, and premise, and conclusion -- all are relevant. This could go on. And the psychotic person should realistically consider these.

The psych unit psychiatrist never does! -- or has the all too prevalent 'a priori decisis' disorder -- and thus again, never does!

And the psychotic person might be so involved with his or her world that certain things lie beyond scrutiny, or other means not considered.

But psychiatrists should consider such things, and indeed Minsky's work, and likely that of William James.

This statement by Minsky above yields such a tactile landscape -- and helps in this way toward a dimension, vocabulary, logic, reason, description, the participant, explanatory standpoint.

Kevin

P.S. And is the person encountering a demon, that he or she ethically, spiritedly, and effectively counters, in mind or body, a psychotic or a spiritual person? What if that person counters the demon by action, with effect in mind? What if that person counters the demon by spiritual awareness, with effect in mind? These are questions that psychiatry should take up. Again, dimension, vocabulary, logic, reason, description, the participant, and explanation -- and mind and mind-form-being.

Subject: A delight – to study psychosis

[Recipient],

What a delight this is going to be, and already is: questions and answers on, and investigations into, psychosis. This is my field of expertise, as well (as well as the Thesis so far). To have stepped to this point over the past hour or 2 from the previous emails, those stemming from thoughts the past week, is such a delight.

- What is psychosis? What are mental states, and what does thought space have to do with energy states, perception, speech and action, and patterns of speech and action -- and each of these with the other? What are each of these? What are emotive states, intentional states, and physical states?
- What does Minsky's phrase 'mental representations of the external world, and relevant mental events' have to do with anything? So much, in my view! It's such excellent, dimension vocabulary and reality, a real space and description to work with. Psych unit psychiatrists should take note.
- You can turn Minsky's phrase into 'mental representations of the external world and the internal world, all mutually dependent and mutually co-arising, and relevant mental events -- again mutually dependent and mutually co-arising'. So this becomes another profound statement, and again something tactile to work with -- and that the individual can work with! Psych unit psychiatrists should introduce this type of thing to their clients.
- What do various spiritual, philosophical, and psychological interpretations have to do with anything? Is there vocabulary there that can be taken up? I feel there is. Psych unit psychiatrists should look into this.
- What does the experiential have to do with anything? Mental events can be taken up in their noumenal and phenomenal sense. Significant!
- What does the social-relational have to do with anything? I feel so much, and this should be discussed with the individual -- and also related to (interconnected) the above, including mental events and mental representations: understanding, thought, speech, action, effort, and awareness. Once you ground on this, as well as the individual's experiential and 'room to maneuver' and 'sort out' then there is less of a problem -- including then perhaps the space and opportunity to explain!

And so on.

Enjoy! I remain enthusiastic.

Kevin

Subject: Psychosis – p.s.

[Recipient],

P.S. What of the merit of this or that thought, perception, belief, or view? These should be discussed!

What if the person has 9 points of merit (merit, in the psych unit, now being on the table) and 1 point of demerit, in view, action, the social-relational, etc.? Should this all not be taken into account?

Yet it never is!

Kevin

P.P.S. And what of Feynman's (the physicist) statement that the theoretical physicist goes through the following steps: imagine, deduce, guess. [See the books "Feynman's Lectures On Physics".] What if many of us do that in consideration of the external world, mental representation of it, and relevant mental events -- and entire explanations and so forth? What if much of 'all of the above' is penalized, instead of encouraged? What if these explanations and so forth do get us in a pickle sometimes? We should be aware of action, and that in an act, consciousness and action are one (Nagarjuna). We should be aware that in the real world, which is just the fusion of the concrete and the abstract, nothing of the abstract can exist solely on its own (Nagarjuna). In any case, we should reflect on these, and determine our own best answers. But: imagine, deduce, guess -- what if we do some of us come up with novel explanations or interpretations? And I was struck by several things in "The Emotion Machine", but one of which was the statement by Minsky that children work hard at play, and explore, explain, and learn! How do they do that? Yet we're bound by some sort of "objective view" as adults -- and good science should not be stare decisis but "explore, explain, and learn"! And Feynman says, "imagine, deduce, guess"!

[Additional Notes]

Feynman also says that the experimental physicist goes through the following steps: imagine, deduce, guess, experiment. So there's an additional step. What if we could investigate mental and mental-physical-world phenomena, ourselves, and talk about this, or write books on it? The book "The Logic Of Faith: A Buddhist Approach To Finding Certainty Beyond Belief And Doubt" takes just such an approach; it discusses dependent arising, and then analytical meditation to scrutinize our own beliefs and thoughts, and the world-space we encounter. I have yet to complete the book, but Buddhism does encourage each of us to find out for himself or herself. Sometimes you rely on teachings, sometimes on your own processes, but always then to validate and verify – and always (and this is emphasized in Zen) the experiential.

If you want more of Feynman's views on science – his very immersion in it – you can consult the book "No Ordinary Genius" by Christopher Sykes, an account of his life. I highly encourage this, as Feynman used creative reasoning to arrive at unexpected results. I also encourage that psych unit

psychiatrists study and reflect on and apply the type of thinking in Minsky's works "The Society Of Mind" and "The Emotion Machine" – as well as the clarity of thought in Aristotle's "On Interpretation". You might end up at a slightly different place or not, and it's the types of analytical, reflective, wisdom approach and tactile material and reflection that can lead to deeper insight into the real world, before us. Likewise for the philosophy set forth in Nagarjuna's "Fundamental Wisdom Of The Middle Way" translated by Nishijima. Reflect on the verses themselves, the philosophy itself, then consider the commentary, then consider again the philosophy. Meditation might apply.

For meditation you could consider the book "Buddhist Meditation: Tranquility, Imagination, And Insight" by Kamalashila. Or zazen and Zen practice in "Opening The Hand Of Thought: Foundations Of Zen Buddhist Practice" by Kosho Uchiyama. Or other traditions I'm not familiar with.

I have found Zen Buddhist practice and the living, working spirit of Zen in my own life to be key. It is the no-thing space that I bring to the works of Marvin Minsky, that makes his work such a delight to work with. And it is why I remain enthusiastic about what psych unit psychiatry could be, with a standpoint that is dimension, vocabulary, logic, reason, description, the participant, and explanation – and 'all of the above'.

For instance, I think it should be:

Jack: I just was committed to a psych unit.

Jane: You were? Whoa! How cool was that?

Jack: They realized that my mental states were mostly explanatory, and I picked up some really cool resources. So, pretty cool.

Jane: That's what I thought! Were you released? Did they talk to you at all?

Jack: Yeah, no harm done, it was like you say, really cool! What they call the dialogic. A different space than friendship yet interconnected with so much. You could check in yourself to find out this or that about some existential question you have!

Jane: Maybe Minsky?

Jack: Yeah, they're really good at Minsky. He's somebody I learned about. Along with a book on Buddhist meditation. So I can look into it myself. And they talked in a very helpful way about mental states, something I never considered.

Jane: Nice! Yeah, Minsky's familiar with that idea. Did you pick up on his 'combinatorial unfolding interconnected relational action-memes' (Kevin's term), the triangles diagrams from his book "The Society Of Mind"? You should! Things just unfold, in the world-space!

Jack: Who's Kevin?

Jane: Just some guy who thinks psychotic thought and regular thought are blended, and types of thought considered psychotic at least sometimes are really just novel ways of explaining things. Sometimes they can be problematic, other times not, and sometimes they lead to insight on reflection, or indicate a truth. But karman (action, performance, business) and karaka (making, doing, acting, who or what does or produces or creates) are both very important, he says, in this context, or in just about anything, for any of us. See "Fundamental Wisdom Of The Middle Way" by Nagarjuna translated by Nishijima. It's one of his favorite books, and he has many. But the individual, context, standpoint, the social-relational, the various life domains, and states, descriptions, and world-space are all key, for him.

Jane: Kevin came up with a koan: A student said to Master Uji, "In Zen it is sometimes said that at the beginning one sees mountains as mountains and water as water, then one sees mountains as not

mountains and water as not water, then finally one again sees mountains as mountains and water as water. Now, is this psychotic, or not?” Master Uji answered, “Kwatz!!!”

Jack: Surprising!

Jane: Apparently this is a tribute also to Master Dogen, who wrote the essay “Uji” in his “Shobogenzo”, Uji meaning “Being-Time”.

Jane: Did you know that up to a decade ago psychiatrists described all things only in terms of mental disorders, that were thought to be permanent neurobiogenetic malfunctions? Then they encountered Zen, and this essay. There was no explanation!

Jack: I can guess, no real explanation for Aristotle, either.

Jane: Nor Minsky.