

False passionate curiosity

In response to our CobaltSaffron issue #8, *Confronting the enemy*, we received a number of generous and supportive comments. We also received the following...

"I have taken on the same practice myself, in a very occasional way (I knew I had to, because both my lust and my social terror were present in high and equal measure). I have already done the hard work of becoming a very open and authentic communicator, and have instinctually used that kind of approach in these situations, which has always engendered positive responses. I always felt great afterwards..." "After all, what've I got to lose, really? And I've got freedom and responsibility and trust in others and in my own delightful brilliance to gain!"

This gives me the opportunity to confront another enemy here: abuse of freedom and power. This can be reduced, as the above writer has pointed out, to the relationship between freedom and responsibility as they relate to trust (if I may take these back momentarily after having had them "borrowed" from me).

Freedom and responsibility are always two parts to a whole; one never has one without the other. We can ignore one or the other, but they're always parts of the same body, like a heart and a brain. Of course, most of us are all excited about the goodies that go with the idea of freedom, identifiable by the impulse, "What's in it for me?" (Nicely articulated in the above comments, as every sentence is about the writer and what's in it for him.) And it's true that if you look exclusively at everything from that perspective, you probably have little to lose, but more on that in a bit.

Responsibility isn't about, "what've I got to lose;" it's about what others lose. That's a lot less exciting, more difficult to identify, and is a real pain in the ass because it ruins the fun of just taking whatever one wants whenever one wants. It is possible to bypass all that by believing that one's desires are more important than whatever someone else might lose through the pursuit of them (see thieves, rapists and plagiarists).

With ideas, that's subtle territory. Ideas, like words, are just out there and available for anyone to use however they like. In the case of the story in question, my intention in sharing it was to offer some insight into the dynamic of fear as opposition to many of the ideas we discuss in this newsletter. I used an experience from my past as an example,

or parable, if you will. I was not offering to the public a free technique to go out and experiment with (and this was expressed in the attached disclaimer at the end of the article). My experience came through extended training with responsible experts, part of an ongoing education that had both a solid foundation and a clear, disciplined design. Lust and feeling great, for example, were not aspects of that training or the exercise.

There's a world of difference between true passionate curiosity and taking the ideas, or anything else, of another to pursue one's private ambitions. The space between these two is also made up of ideas, such as integrity and responsibility. Admittedly, integrity and responsibility are not as sexy as lust and feeling great, but they are the determining factors in a lot of things, such as trust. If you were to look at the persons you trust, what qualities do they exhibit that enable you to trust them? Integrity and responsibility. That is, they took those ideas and made them real, sacrificed for them and created personal qualities from them.

So, "What've I got to lose, really?" Well, start with my trust. But again, the greater loss is for others. Obviously, I won't resort again to offering stories or techniques that could be misconstrued to be toys to go out and play with. That would place me in the position of being responsible for what comes from that, being that some others won't assume that responsibility ("Wow, what a great ass and tits; I'm really passionately curious about them and all the fun they could provide me with. And I've got my own delightful brilliance to gain! Darrell said so."). Given the general intentions and maturity of our readers, that's too bad. Yet another example of freedoms lost because one or two individuals lack the necessary discernment to leave in peace that which isn't theirs to take.

I probably wouldn't invest the time and energy to come down so hard on this, if it wasn't for the fact that the "borrower" of my ideas and experience happens to have a master's degree in counseling psychology and another degree in comparative religions, is a therapist, teacher and workshop leader (recently leading a workshop entitled 'Of Love and Truth'), claims to have practiced Buddhism for 20 years, is a "certified Master Trainer" and self-styled "intimacy and communication guru." Which, of course, changes the entire equation in terms of some random dim-witted individual casually misinterpreting and misusing information in a newsletter.

This is not meant to be a personal vendetta, or a form of character assassination. As with the original story in question, my intention here is to use the information as a metaphor for larger and more crucial issues. The credentials listed above are pertinent, because counseling psychology, Buddhism and other religions, love and truth, and intimacy and communication are all built upon integrity and responsibility. Any authoritative representative of any one of these schools receives the vulnerable trust of others and is in a position to significantly influence their lives, especially if he is a therapist, teacher and workshop leader. In other words, this is someone in a considerable position of freedom and power, an authority whose choices, in and outside of the workplace, determine to an important degree the well-being or suffering of others, as well as the integrity of the schools he represents. From my perspective, this turns the

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corner of casual misinterpretation and misuse, and becomes abuse of freedom and power.

The primary issue, then, becomes one of protecting that which one values. Where does one draw a line? At what point does one determine that something valuable—in this case, not only the information in a free newsletter, but the schools of thought and ideas listed above—is being abused and that something should be done about it? These are questions of integrity and responsibility that we all have, or should have. These are the components that determine whether any idea or act is legitimate, and even whether or not it is true.

Going through the list of some of the subjects we have addressed in this newsletter over the past year—true passionate curiosity, following imagination, life relevantly lived, piercing peripheral vision, reconciliation, unraveling mystery—I can say without hesitation that, yes, these are ideas I highly value. And each one of them does require some protection. That is, anything can be used for anything. A stone can be used for building a house, blocking a road, or killing someone. The same is true for any idea. The passion part of true curiosity, or anything else of value, must include a sufficient depth of devotion to keep the thing alive, safe and whole.

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Beauty in any form, including a woman or a newsletter, is not just about what’s in it for you. In a world where freedom is sought at any cost, and the associated responsibilities are often ignored, someone needs to uphold the basic principles that keep them both alive. One of the implications in the proud comments of the writer above is that we’re on the same team, doing the same things, so let’s just take whatever we need in our common missions. Just to make it crystal clear: no, we’re not on the same team and, no, we’re not doing the same things. If you want to borrow an idea to go play with, try chivalry.

As an aside, I’d like to apologize directly to the CobaltSaffron team here, a group of four very busy persons who donate a total of 40 to 50 hours a month to produce a free newsletter that provides absolutely no remuneration except for the joy of creating something they have interest and faith in. Their disbelief, sadness and outrage at the abuse of our efforts are unfortunate experiences that I’ll try more seriously to avoid causing in the future. (Contrary to common belief, this newsletter does not exist to sell tickets to my events; the intention behind the work is exactly as described in the first issue.) My appreciation goes out to the entire team, our various consultants, and those readers who continue to uphold the integrity of our original vision and the ideas expressed herein.

Darrell Calkins
November 2005

Comments

Thank you for your comments about the previous issue of CobaltSaffron. Excerpts from a few responses we received:

“Ohhhhhh.... Thanks for that newsletter. I didn't even know people like that exist anymore.”

Y. P., Greece.

“Thank you so much for the last newsletter on Reconciliation. It was and is a source of refueling the inspiration I experienced at the Retreat, during that extraordinary unity of time-space. The feeling of constant reconciliation—stopping and regaining faith and weighing the value of each element, especially when strength and determination seem to fail—gives me back the dignity and playfulness with which I find now essential to live my life.” ... “Well, just every time I reread the newsletter, everything seems more colourful and meaningful. Sorry for the lack of articulation, but I needed to express my appreciation somehow.”

A. L., Australia.

Upcoming event:

Enduring Essentials for Living Well (in an unwell world)

December 3 & 4, 2005, Brussels - Belgium

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We welcome questions, comments and complaints.

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