

Judgmental Thinking, the Cause of Suffering and thus violence - and the Alternative as a Way towards Joy in Living

Version 6

Overview of the content:

In this article, I'll explore the relationship between "judgmental thinking", and the suffering it creates for people caught up in it. And since this judgemental thinking is part of a world-view that still is the predominant world-view in our societies, almost everybody is caught in it most of the time.

I will show why this world-view, that I call "judgmental thought system" inevitably leads to varied suffering ranging from feeling slightly uncomfortable up to great suffering. And how it is based upon the (mostly unconscious) belief in "guilt" and "sin". In fact this "judgmental thought system" requires these beliefs in order to exist.

I'll also show an alternative way to see the world: the "thought system of non-violence", into which people have already developed 2000 years ago - people now known as the great sages of mankind - and into which more and more are growing to.

I'll then show how this alternative thought system inhibits suffering and how all judgments, including "positive" judgments, can lead us out of the "thought system of non-violence" into the "judgmental thought system" of inevitable suffering.

Finally I'll show how we can recognize when we are caught in the "judgmental thought system" and how we can free ourselves into the "thought system of non-violence". I will present the most effective way to develop and establish that change of all those that I've known to date.

Introduction

My motivation to write this article is to share with you my insights and experiences over the past years about the causes of suffering and violence (including its more subtle forms). These insights and experiences have culminated in an transforming experience I had a couple of

weeks ago - and I want to celebrate its gift and also share it with you here, and I hope it inspires you to join in exploring this "world without suffering" where we can face both, joy and pain open heartedly.

This instance was the first time I have consciously experienced this "new world" which I call the "non-suffering and non-violent world", or "thought system of non-violence". I have experienced how it is to be consciously grounded in a world of non-suffering and thus non-violent, even in painful situations.

Needless to say, my experience doesn't render me 'complete', certainly not 'perfect'. I continue to be a learner of life, just like you and like everybody else. What I've gained is that I can see more clearly now that I am neither "better" nor "worse" than any other; that after all you and me, we both are equal - exactly like every other human being on this earth. And even the experience itself isn't a merit but a gift that eases my life's journey.

What helped me to this gift was, above all, the Non-Violent Communication of Marshall Rosenberg (NVC), and Robert Gonzales with his NVC transformative practice. And I am especially grateful that I was allowed to deepen Robert's transformative practice in the "Euro-LIFE-2010"-course, for there I finally received the gift :-)

After this transforming experience I see more clearly than ever, that these insights are not new and I believe that all ways to happiness, that lead within, are based upon them. Therefor you might recognize some of it.

At the same time I hope that the specific way I describe, will inspire and support you on your life's journey, no matter what religion or philosophy you follow.

Before going any further I want to point out a pitfall that can and does appear in this work; a challenge that I've encountered personally and is likely to reappear numerous times for anyone on this journey:

When we humans decide on a way which we want to go, we almost inevitably judge ourselves when we fail to follow it. These judgments lead to new suffering though and draw our energy. Therefor a request: If you want to find the way out of suffering, treat yourself especially then lovingly and compassionately, when find yourself in self-

judgmental thinking because you made "mistakes" / were in error - please treat yourself as lovingly and compassionately then as you would treat a little child, that you love with all your heart and that you feel with and for that you wish the best.

In doing so you will forgive yourself your errors easier and thus you will learn better from them. The insight that **judgmental thinking (ours own as well as others') is just an expression of pain, that wants to be lovingly embraced and dissolved through mourning**, will support you in this.

Judgmental thinking can be seen as part of a "thought system", or "paradigm", i.e. a "way of thinking" or "world-view" that evokes fear and leads to suffering.

Definition of "judgmental thinking" and "suffering"

For clarity and comprehensibility first I'd like to define, what I mean by the terms "judgmental thinking" and "suffering":

- With **"judgmental thinking"** I mean the hostile, depreciative thinking, that evokes uncomfortable emotional reactions in us. As indicated, I see this thinking as part of the "judgmental thought system" (in NVC called "jackal thinking").

- With **"suffering"** I mean the avoidable "uncomfortable" as opposed to pain and mourning or grieving, which we cannot avoid, already due to the impermanence of live.

I see a lot of evidence that pain either becomes suffering (we "suffer pain" then) through judgmental thinking (in general: through resistance against the pain / against what is), or the pain, when embraced with love and compassion, can dissipate in mourning and grieving (as the expressions of love). The resistance to feeling the pain is just causing suffering and drains energy, the embracing lovingly brings us energy and leads us into our own power.

The relation between the judgmental thinking and uncomfortable feelings and body sensations

So that you don't just have to believe my writing, but that you can check the relations yourself, I invite you to a little experiment. In this experiment I hope you can experience the

effect that "negative" judgments have on people (please be careful and cancel the experiment if it should become to uncomfortable - breathing a few times should help):

In order to be able to sense the effect easier, first take some time to relax and calm down internally. Maybe to breath deeply a few times and to relax consciously will support you in this...

Then choose one of the following thoughts and speak it out loud. Then notice if there are sensations arising like tension, pressure, numbness, or similar. Choose a thought with which you sense a reaction already while reading it:

"I'm bad"; "I'm too egoistic"; "I'm guilty / doing all wrong"; "I'm too greedy"; "I'm too stingy"; "I'm reckless"; "I'm too lazy"; "I'm too stupid / not smart"; "I'm ugly / not beautiful"; "I'm useless"; "I'm helpless"; "I'm the victim".

If you don't feel a reaction with any of these thoughts, try the following: Remember a situation in which you were angry or felt otherwise uncomfortable and check for judgment you hold against others or yourself in relation to the situation. You can do the experiment with this judgment then. If it is a judgment about somebody else, just turn it around and say: "I am ...".

You will experience an uncomfortable reaction in your body, if you do this exercise with a thought, of which "something in you" / "a part of you" believes, that it is true - and this is usually not conscious.

Eventually you can give this uncomfortable reaction a meaning by naming it with feeling-words.

If the experiment was successful, you have experienced how judgmental thoughts are related to uncomfortable feelings (or "not-feeling", such as numbness) and to body sensations - in fact how the thoughts are causing those feelings and sensations. And you got a hint as well, about where most probably is hidden a core believe of yours - a treasure, that can lead you to more freedom :-)

The cause of addiction: avoiding the uncomfortable

This is a relation that is valid for every human being, even though many have learned not to

feel the "uncomfortable", i.e. to suppress it, to numb it down, or to avoid it otherwise.

All addictions and dependencies in my opinion are above all the attempt, to avoid uncomfortable feelings (like fear, anger, depression, ...) and their related body sensations, and they can appear in many different shapes. Viewing it in this light it becomes clear, that **basically really everything, that stimulates comfortable feelings in us, can make us dependent / addicted, if we use it, to avoid the uncomfortable - even work, sport or to help others!**

If avoiding the uncomfortable is now the cause for addictions and dependencies, then the solution cannot be found within the "judgmental thought system" (erg in self-judgments), because exactly this would just reinforce the uncomfortable, for that was caused by judgmental thinking in the first place. Unfortunately many people are doing but this very thing: they judge themselves for being erg "too weak", "too undisciplined", "inconsequent" - and thus make it more difficult for themselves to become free again...

The effects that judgmental thinking towards others has on us

As already mentioned, the judgmental thoughts like "I am ...", "You are ..." might often trigger suffering most clearly, because they are aimed directly towards the concerned person. However they are just the tip of the iceberg of the "judgmental thought system". Judgments / evaluations of actions or non-actions may not affect us so clearly, but on one hand they resonate easily with our subconscious self-judgments respectively they trigger these and on the other hand they pull us into the "judgmental thought system"; they so to say habituate us to judgments and support the believe in their alleged value.

You can easily experience the effect, that judgmental thoughts about others have on you. Buddha is supposed to have said: "Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else; you are the one getting burned.", and I think, you can experience also this effect with the following experiment:

Remember a situation in which you were angry about somebody - and notice how your body

feels right now in this moment...

Although we often are not aware of that (at least not immediately), anger is always linked to a judgment, that something is "wrong" and "should" be different - so anger can be seen as a form of fear of / resistance against what is, and it is only possible within the "judgmental thought system".

In my opinion we suffer under judging others out of two reasons:

1.: As the experiment showed, above all we are suffering ourselves (though often unnoticed) when we are judging others. Apart from the temporary relieve we experience, if we succeed in putting the blame on someone else - the reason for this is probably above all that our own (subconscious) feeling of guilt can relax a bit -, also judging others is keeping us from letting go of past experiences / making peace with the past - we are angry (and we are doing that to us all by ourselves ;-).

2.: Furthermore I always must fear to be judged myself, if I judge others. I inevitably live under this latent fear of being judged and I have to protect myself from this (erg by proving again and again that others are "worse" / that I'm "better"). And if others are actually judging me, it gets uncomfortable: the latent fear awakens.

Even the bible is talking about this aspect: "Do not judge so that you will not be judged."...

These two relations lead to the small and great suffering that is inevitable within the "judgmental thought system" and that can literally make live to hell for us eventually... I guess that is what Gandhi meant, when he said that he is his worst enemy... In "A Course in Miracles" I read: "There is no hell. Hell is only what the ego (the judgmental thinking) has made of the present."...

I'd like to add that even "positive" judgments like compliments or praise can unnoticeable keep us, unlike non-judgmental expressions of appreciation or gratitude, mired in the "judgmental thought system"...

The effects of judgmental thinking against myself

The core of our suffering is but our (mostly subconscious) self-judgments and they are even responsible for that judgments from

others are painful for us. This becomes obvious if somebody is judging us in a way, that doesn't correspond with any of our self-judgments.

If erg somebody is calling me "murderer", this doesn't affect me at all - just because it is "too far fetched" - just too far away from my own (still partly unconscious) self-judgments. If however somebody says to me: "What you're doing it crap!", this still can be painful for me for it is pretty precisely what I've hear in my childhood so often and what I then also told to myself eventually.

When we judge ourselves we have mainly three possibilities and we probably use mostly a mixture of all three:

1. We believe them and feel helplessly at the mercy of our self-judgments. That can lead us directly into depression.
2. We rebel against it, i.e. we try to "proof", that we aren't "like that". That leads to aggression - and hen mostly to violence.
3. We suppress the self-judgments into the subconscious.

By the way, if we suppress our self-judgmental thoughts, they are not dissolved but they affect is in our life much more powerful, because unconscious and thus unrecognized. In the past hundred years the western psychology has discovered the psychological protection mechanism of projection, through which our own subconscious parts affect us: Behind our judgments about others there is in truth our rejection / our judging of our own parts / impulses.

Besides many other approaches erg Byron Katie's "The Work" is based upon this very relation of projection.

The basic requirement for the "judgmental thought system"

If one looks upon the protection mechanism of projection clearly, one can see, that self-judgments are the very precondition of the "judgmental thought system". "A Course in Miracles" says: "...the idea of guilt brings a belief in condemnation of one by another, projecting separation in place of unity.". According to that (and the course speaks in many places about that), the "judgmental thought system" cannot exist without the believe in "guilt" and

"sin" which express themselves in self-judgments -and this believe in "guilt" and "sin" can be quite subtle and often it is completely unconscious.

And yet have you ever done less than the best you could do in that moment? I often asked myself this question and I have found, that I always tried to do my best, though I often did things, I regretted and would have loved to have done differently in hindsight - in the moment when I did what I did, either I didn't have important information, or was lacking some skills, awareness, or resources And I have begun to see more and more that it applies in general: **We human beings are doing in every moment the very best, that we can do given our condition, our knowledge and the resources that are available to us.**

By working with NVC more and more I have found, how strongly we human beings are controlled by our unconscious believes and opinions (without even the chance to be able to notice it!). And these believes and opinions basically are interpretations of mostly painful life experiences - often even taken over from others.

Just this fact, that we are controlled by interpretations, of which we are not even conscious about, shows the actual "bondage of will" and lets the concept of "guilt" and "sin" become meaningless - even then if we hurt others. And Jesus words at his crucification in my opinion are expressing exactly this: "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing."...

By the way, the belief in "guilt" implicates also the, on closer inspection weird belief, that attack or punishment are justified and they can provoke something good. Further down I will get back to this and I'll show that this as well is an error.

The alternative: The "thought system of non-violence"

What exactly is the alternative now? What is this "thought system of non-violence"? This thought system (in NVC called "NVC-consciousness") is a "paradigm", in which I treat myself and others lovingly and compassionately and I belief it is what e.g. in Buddhism meditation is aiming for and what is meant with "resting in the nature of mind" there. In Christianity I guess

some say for that "resting in the holy spirit" and I think, it is what Ken Wilber (myilp.com) calls "vision-logic" or "second-tier consciousness".

When I am in this, so different "thought system of non-violence", I see in myself or in others merely the human being who is just doing the best he can do in this moment - even though the effects of the actions might be painful. That doesn't prevent me from applying force in case of need in order to protect...

Before I saw all this just theoretically and yet I sensed: With that peace can prevail! Like that I want to live! After I had experienced how it is to be there not only, when the circumstances are comfortable, and for a few minutes, but **to live and be anchored in this "paradigm of non-violence" also in challenging situations, for a longer period and with awareness**, it's hard for me to find words for it. It is not a grand state. When I'm anchored there, I sense love and compassion for myself and the others (compassion in contrast to pity to which a judgment is underlying).

In this "world-view" I have no judgments like "good"/"bad", "right"/"wrong". I don't even use these words because I see how easy they take us directly into the "judgmental thought system".

In this "thought system of non-violence", I can express sincerely how I experience situations, without judging others.

In this "Paradigm of non-violence", I am relaxed and mostly empowered, and even in the mourning or grieving, I sense the joy of life - a joyful warmth between my solar-plexus and my heart.

In this "world outlook" I can react compassionately and with all my power to actions of mine or others, who are painful for me or others - probably above all **because I act towards and not against something**.

In this "paradigm" I can love my enemies, because I have no enemies! In people I had seen enemies in the past, **I only see the human being, who might be in despair, but who is always just doing the best, what they can do in consideration of the knowledge, the awareness and the resources they have available to them in that situation**. And in this way I also see myself and my actions.

That doesn't prevent me from learning from my errors - in contrary, like this it's much easier for me to learn and to change my behavior, because I encounter myself lovingly and compassionately and thus I don't trigger fear / resistance and thus my defense mechanisms. And when I encounter others in that way, I support them as well to embrace themselves in this way, and to learn from the past without fear / resistance and their protection mechanisms...

The "judgmental thought system" and reconciliation

On closer inspection it also becomes clear, that judgments are not (any more) necessary for the functioning of our societies. Even if somebody caused harm to somebody else or hurt them, **it is quite enough, to regard the action / the error and its impact, in order to intervene protectively** (what absolutely can mean to confine the "offender") **and then to make space for compassion and mourning and then to facilitate reconciliation**.

The way to abstain from judgments is even much more effective, because the feelings of guilt that are generally evoked by judgments, weakens the person concerned and deprives them of energy to reconcile, and this is counterproductive.

As already said feelings of guilt generally are so painful that they evoke the psychological protection mechanisms, above all the rationalization, the suppression and the projection on others. The latter is found often also in severe offenses: The "offender" blames (partially) the "victim".

Basically in the "judgmental thought system" an "offender" has two possibilities (or a mixture of both): Either he blames himself and feels "guilty" - that leads to suffering (resignation, depression), as the above experiment shows and thus deprives of energy -, or they project the blame on others: the "victim", the parents, or the society - and that evokes anger or rage. Both possibilities prevent that the "offender" regains his energy and that he really takes responsibility for his action, i.e. to empathize with the "victim" and mourn. Only through that the natural desire arises, to reconcile and to learn / change ones behavior.

In my opinion judgmental thinking virtually

prevents that people, who hurt others, have compassion for them and mourn. That is probably the main reason why punitive justice (upon which most of the justice systems in the world are built-on) do more harm than benefit (what many researches about prison sentences have confirmed meanwhile).

Approaches of "Restorative Justice" show more helpful alternative ways, although in the heads of the "operators" often there are still moral judgments prevailing and thus there is a "desire to change" / "desire to educate" implicit.

The effects of the "judgmental thought system" on "victims" of actions

On closer inspection, judgments are damaging even for the "victims", because they get distracted from really experiencing their pain and to mourn / grief it, i.e. to embrace it compassionately and understandingly. Only through this though the painful incident could be processed and the "victim" could eventually find peace with it / could let go of the experience - because of the distraction and as long as it is there, this is being inhibited.

Though "Revenge" may give a short-term relieve (probably above all because the own feelings of guilt can be projected onto others) and although the distraction may be even important at the beginning after extreme painful experiences (even though also for this there are more helpful ways in the meantime), but if the "victim" is holding on to the judgments, that means long-term suffering, because they cannot process the past experience and thus cannot let it go and make peace with it - unfortunately also this kind of suffering is still normal in our society. The words from the bible: "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven." are pointing exactly to this aspect.

I believe that every form of revenge is inevitably burdening the conscience of the one who is taking revenge, because everything we do redounds always as well upon us. Even somebody who erg killed somebody else in self-defense, needs to mourn the pain he has caused erg to the bereaved, in order to restore his inner peace - how much more is this valid for revenge?

Related to trauma in general I dare to make the case that the "judgmental thought system" is even the very foundation on which post-traumatic stress disorder is made possible and that these cannot occur when we are within the "paradigm of non-violence" - above all, because the greatest part of what hurts, is just the suffering, and this just is caused by the very "judgmental thought system". I don't believe that erg Jesus could have developed a post-traumatic stress disorder.

It would be an interesting research project, to analyze the research on resilience with regard to this aspect (resilience is the ability to deal with "normally" traumatizing situations and to overcome them).

I'd like to stress again that it doesn't mean to "let everything happen to us", when one refrains from / doesn't hold any judgments like good / bad, right / wrong. As also the examples of the great sages of mankind from Buddha and Jesus, over Gandhi to erg the Dalai Lama are showing, we are much more awake and aware for what is happening around us, if we rest in the "paradigm of non-violence", and of course in this "world-view" we have no difficulties to accept the things that we cannot change (and there we have the wisdom to differentiate those from the things we can change :-)

In the "paradigm of non-violence" we only see the suffering "brother" / "sister" in the "offender", who is not different from us, and thus we can approach them lovingly and compassionately. I've shown already, that by this, the danger of triggering or reinforcing their deference mechanisms (among of which also the attack) is being reduced as well. Thus in the "paradigm of non-violence" we have better chances to reach the "offender" respectively to influence the situation, i.e. we have more power...

The "judgmental thought system" and my personal experience with it

The experiment, I have suggested initially shows how judgments like "I am ..." / "You are ..." are causing suffering. This can only be the case because and as long as these are really resonating with dozing self-judgments and so activating our subconscious feeling guilty. As long as that the according sentences trigger our defense mechanisms and we project our

alleged guilt onto others.

In the meantime I'm convinced that nobody can preclude totally own projections. Thus it is an effective way to search our judgments we hold of others for own parts and to transform these - and if this is done compassionately, it leads us to more self-awareness and thus to personal development and more and more freedom.

My most recent discovery of an own self-judgment has the form of the believe: "I'm always doing all wrong!". And only since quite recently, I became aware that I had often said this sentence to myself in my childhood and in my adolescence. In the meantime I can see how this sentence has influenced my actions in the past. Even today it still has the power to trigger my defense mechanisms and all my life it forced me to "make up for it". This drivenness was living in me as an almost constant inner pressure and being alert, and again and again it has driven me to actions, that triggered pain in others and / or in me.

Was I said, already for many years I'm convinced that every human being at any time is doing the best, he can in regard to his knowledge, his awareness and the resources available tom him. This conviction has helped me increasingly to judge others less. At the same time I'm surprised to realize in hindsight that I didn't apply this to myself. Until the recent months again and again I had judged myself for unexpected results of my actions - mostly even without having noticed it.

Since I treat myself increasingly with compassion, when was under an error / die a "mistake" (the knowledge about my good intention makes that easier), I can open my heart more and more for the small and great pain that is stimulated by my errors. And thus I have compassion and can mourn full-heartedly in these cases...

Within the "judgmental thought system", I have analyzed past situations and I wanted to show possibilities, how the parties concerned could have acted differently, so that the painful situation could have been avoided. It might be valuable to learn from past situations also by analyzing, yet for me it was partially the subtle attempt, to project my "guilt" onto others and thus to get rid of it. I could then say to myself: If this would have happened / this person would

have acted in an other way, it would have turned out differently - and of cause, I wasn't aware of all that...

So to dissolve the belief in guilt has helped me to let go of the suffer-causing "judgmental paradigm" and to really take responsibility for my actions. In the past I needed a lot of energy either for the attempt to some guilt in others, or to judge myself, or both - and thus precious life energy was tied and I was distracted from what it is really about, namely to be compassionate and to mourn / grief the results of my actions or not-actions and to learn out of that and where appropriate to make amends...

The effects of moral judgments about actions

Moral judgments like right/wrong, good/bad, about actions, can evoke suffering as well as judgments about conditions like beautiful/ugly, gross/slim, etc. , and they support the "judgmental thought system". Life is probably never so simple, that we can judge actions clearly as "good" or "bad", like we can with results in mathematics. Because of the interdependency of all being, actions have multilayer influences so that, at best we can just see the most obvious ones - so that it seems to be an arrogation of the "Ego" to belief, we really could judge actions.

As already mentioned, it is totally besides the point too, whether we judge actions as right of wrong. It is quite enough to look at the consequences of actions or omissions and to correct if applicable and to learn from it. Even alleged "right" actions can have painful effects on others or ourselves, which need to be mourned lovingly and compassionately, in order to make peace with the past. As mentioned already: Even somebody who killed another one in self-defense needs to mourn, in order to find peace again.

We human probably need rules and consequences for some more hundred years - above all maybe, in order to simplify life. But we can let go of moral judgments and of the "desire to punish" / "desire for revenge". In doing so we also can see easier in "offenders" the same human as we are - a human, who just tries his best to be happy -, and thus we can support them easier and more successful in finding ways, that serve live in a better way...

The effects of "positive and other judgments

If you know Paul Watzlawick's "The Situation Is Hopeless But Not Serious: The Pursuit of Unhappiness", you know that besides others, you should compare yourself as often as possible and try to be "the best" or to be "right", in order to become unhappy. Here "positive" judgments are playing a big role and the effects one can see especially clearly in sports.

Especially in competitive sports nothing counts but the "first" or the "best" and everybody has to worry about not being the "first" or the "best". One can say now lapidary: "That's just the way it is in sports.", and when one is the "first" / the "best" one, it feels quite good too, isn't it? Even the spectators who can identify themselves with the "winner" short-term can feel good. But even if one is on the first place, there is always the latent fear there too, to lose this place again...

Much more important though is the effect on those who are not on "first place". That's especially clear to see in football, with the so called "hooligans". If the "own team" loses, that triggers pain that becomes suffering, which then (what suffering always does) leads to violence - unfortunately mostly violence against others.

And the most damaging is probably the example that is given to the people in the society by this: The pressure to have to be "the first" / "the best" supports the judgmental thought system" and thus enhances eventually suffering.

By the way the science has shown that competitiveness (that is enhanced also by these examples) is damaging even in professional life - above all, because it stokes fear and thus tends to activate the protection mechanisms of all parties. The result is that all parties are more busy to protect one from another, than to work productively, let alone the difficulty of teamwork...

Another wide area of suffering is "beauty". How much suffering can be caused by alleged outer beauty and the pressure to "have to be beautiful", I have seen with both of my two daughters. Even with people who are seen as being beautiful, this judgment can cause a lot of suffering, which might be shown most clearly by the life and suffering of Marilyn Monroe. "Beautiful" people as well want to be loved and for who they are and not because they

happen to meet an ideal of beauty respectively because they are being judged as "beautiful" by others...

In fact the ideal beauty is quite relative. On one hand it changes in the course of time (ergo the ideal of beauty for women has changed towards "anorexia" in the past decades). On the other hand it also varies very much from one to another what is being seen as "beautiful". And it even can change subjectively according to circumstances. I have observed myself again and again in the past years how I ergo saw somebody as "beautiful" at one time, and at another time I felt disgusted by their outer appearance. That has shown to me that my reaction to this person had to do with me and not with them.

Just this has taught me not to say anymore: "You are beautiful", but instead what actually is the case in that moment. E.g. maybe: "I like you." or more vulnerable: "I'm enjoying looking at you.", or even more vulnerable: "When I look at you, I'm feeling warm in my heart."...

In fact often I have discovered a beauty in people I felt repelled initially, a beauty that surprised me and touched me very much. What helped me in this often was, that these people had spoken from their hearts, be it in sadness or in joy.

In the meantime I believe that every human has this beauty within themselves and that one can see it, if one doesn't let oneself be distracted by the "shell" (the body, the words, ...) and thus gives it a noxious meaning. And I personally want to learn to see this deeper beauty more and more in every human, not least because by this I'm just feeling better myself...

How do I recognize, that I'm caught in the "judgmental thought system"?

In order to be able to decide consciously for one of the two paradigms, it is important to know the symptoms, they come up in the particular thought system / world-view.

If I'm caught in the "judgmental paradigm", I can notice that on three levels:

- On the level of mind:

I notice that I have judgmental thoughts.

- On the level of feelings:

I notice that I have uncomfortable feelings

(Fear, anger, irritation, depression, ...).

- On the body level:

I sense uncomfortable sensations in my body (tension, numbness, burning, pressure, etc.).

Generally I get caught in this "judgmental paradigm" above all in situations that are challenging for me, i.e. in situations that are linked to painful / traumatic past experiences. I often sense an inner pressure then. I'm generally alert or somehow in search of something; my mind is looking for something that I can do. I then unconsciously want to flee the uncomfortable within me and the feeling of helplessness...

When I am in the "paradigm of non-violence", in contrast I sense a joy of life / a joie de vivre within me and I am relaxed and awake. Such moments I had had before every now and then, erg when I was in love, when I enjoyed something with my senses (beauty, taste, touch, ...) or when I felt good for other reasons. In the past I didn't really know why I felt so good. I told myself it's because of the circumstances. Now I see: In those moments I am in the "paradigm of non-violence" and I don't have judgmental thoughts, respectively I don't believe them, but I embrace them lovingly, when they are there, and I hear them / feel them and I develop loving, compassionate understanding for them...

How can I change from the "judgmental paradigm" into the "paradigm of non-violence"?

The way out of the "judgmental thought paradigm" back into the "paradigm of non-violence" can only be managed with love and compassion. Namely if I judge myself for that I have been caught in the "judgmental thought system" / that I have judgmental thoughts, I get trapped even more in the "judgmental thought system".

The first step back to the "paradigm of non-violence" is to notice, that I am caught in the "judgmental thought system". The above described symptoms on the three levels: body, feelings, mind, are helping me in this.

The second step is, that I consciously decide on the "paradigm of non-violence". This decision was born out of the recognition that it is the best for my well-being (here first my mind had to be convinced through insight and

experience).

And the third step finally is, that I cultivate love and compassion for the uncomfortable within me. With triggers with minor importance, it's enough to just acknowledge lovingly the the "seeking thoughts" and then to let it go. With strong triggers I need support in form of loving guidance by others, so that I can develop love and compassion for the uncomfortable in me (that in fact is a wounded part of myself).

Without to believe the uncomfortable in me or to follow its impulses, I first give it space and breath into it and embrace and hold it compassionately. by this I really "hear" / "feel" it... When I succeed to accept the uncomfortable in me lovingly, without wanting to get rid of it, most of the time I eventually can sense the underlying longing and I thus develop compassionate understanding for the uncomfortable in me... And when I really experience the sadness and the compassion that lies in this longing, the uncomfortable eventually gets softer and can melt in the "sunbeam of love"...

Also this last step is being managed the faster and the easier, the more I get to know my wound parts and the underlying longing. For this probably never-ending process of becoming acquainted, the transformative practice of Robert Gonzales as well as the practice of their individual elements, as described in my article "Seven Elements of Healing - Single Skills for Everyday life" (Blog of May 25, 2011 on my website), are indispensable for me.

My development to the "thought system of non-violence"

My personal way to the "paradigm of non-violence" began 6 years ago with the attendance at an introduction to Marshall Rosenberg's Non-Violent Communication (NVC). There and in many courses thereafter I have learned to recognize the judgmental thinking and its effects. I have learned to translate judgmental thinking into what it is really about.

At the same time only in the past weeks I've realized, that in all those years I was driven by a "feeling guilty" - and this being driven every now and then had led me to do things without that I was able to see even the needs of others. If one defines violence as every action or default, without valuing the needs of others,

this being driven has led me to be violent - and this although my conscious intention also in those situations often was, to contribute to the well-being of others.

This being driven could have only been fundamentally dissolved after I could let go of the illusion of "guilt" and "sin" - and thus to forgive others and above all myself... As already mentioned, through this the believe from my childhood: "I'm doing all wrong." could loosen up. **Thus I could eventually experience how it is to be in this "open, non-judgmental attention", or in other words: to rest in the "paradigm of non-violence", or: to live "relaxed, empowered and in the joy of life".**

In the meantime I have noticed, that also in the face of the violence in the world, it is basically **an ongoing practice to forgive, by developing compassionate understanding again and again for all parties involved.** I find myself again and again in the "judgmental thought system", where I suffer (that happened even during the retreat I mentioned) - and again and again I can practice to be compassionate with me and others and thus to choose the other thought system / Weltanschauung, to choose relaxation, empowerment and joy of life.

This practice is an ongoing practice of forgiveness for myself and for others for which I need support from others again and again. And this practice has liberated already a lot from suffering and I feel more and more often empowered, because I act towards something and out of love and joy, and not out of fear, tension or anger against something - and thus I can be there for myself and for others in a better way...

An effective way also for you?

I don't believe that it has to take 6 years to develop this consciousness, like it did in my case. Though it doesn't really matter how long it takes and it is a hindrance on the way if one puts any pressure regarding the time on oneself. Besides already with the first step (for some an NVC-introduction) it starts a maybe sometimes slow or stagnant, however steady development towards the better.

At the same time I do believe that there is something like "best practices" / "recipe for

success" also for personal development and for development towards non-violence.

In the past 11 years, that I'm engaged with personal development, I personally haven't found any more effective support for the development towards non-violence, than the model of NVC in connection with some kind of "shadow work" / "mental hygiene", like the transformative practice of Robert Gonzales (see my blog of May 25, 2011).

And I'm convinced that the model of NVC not only supports people without (formal) religion, but it is compatible with every religion. I even believe it even is helping a lot to deepen the respective believe and to live it more fully...

As Ken Wilber (who has been called the "Einstein of Consciousness research") shows (see: myilp.com) is some any kind of "shadow work" / "mental hygiene" necessary for any meditation practice, because only with that one can "re-own" and integrate the own unconscious parts, and only through this we can reduce our own projections.

In addition to these practices it seems to me, that the letting go of the believe in "guilt" and "sin", is an extremely valuable "catalyzer" for the development towards non-violence. In any case it helped me to my break through :-)

I'm looking forward to incorporate the above described insights and experiences in my courses :-)

In the face of the violence in the world and the increase of the destructiveness of the weapons of all kind, there is probably nothing more important for the survival of man kind, than to inspire people for their personal development towards non-violence and to show them a practicable way - and eventually to support them in going this way. Let us set a good example, let's be the change we want to see in the world...

I'd enjoy to get feedback from you, about how it was for you to read this article. I hope in any case, it inspires you.

Until next time - live consciously and compassionately :-)

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