

Fall Adult Formation
Session 5 - Summary

Session 1 - Personal Transformation

- RR says that the following are our primary teachers: darkness, failure, relapse, death, woundedness; not ideas, doctrines, dogmas, belief systems. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
- RR says that our isolated egos cannot deal with otherness. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
- RR says you either see Christ in all things, or you do not see Christ at all. Where is it difficult to see Christ?
- RR joked about Catholics being threatened by Methodists; are you currently struggling in your spiritual life? What is causing this struggle? How might you get past it? How is it affecting your spiritual life?
- In the video and publication the Mendicant, RR says that we Christians, in our desire to be saved “have been left in an empty and disenchanted world hardly worth noticing because the Divine was always elsewhere and beyond.” He goes on to say that we have chosen to flee the very world God entered and chose to love and not condemn.

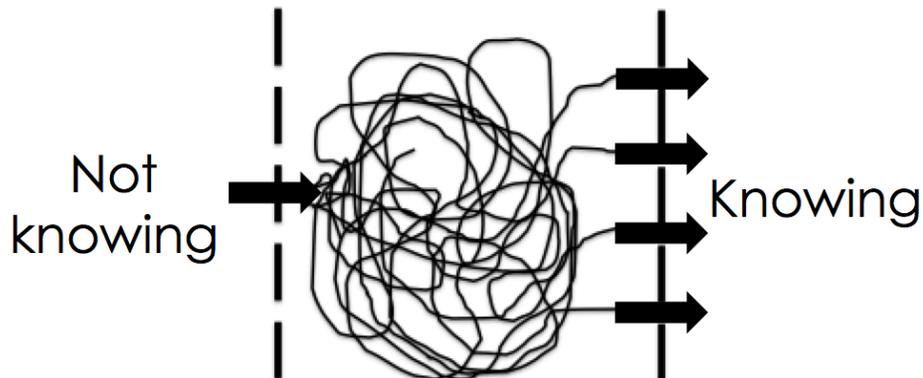
Session 2 - Liminality

- BBT quotes Carl Jung on his Individuation Process: “The breakdown of the persona* is essential to the self being made whole”. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? Do you have examples in your own life that you want to share that support your opinion?
- BBT gave us a few examples of where we live in liminal spaces such as 1) between addiction and recovery; 2) between good health and a cancer diagnosis; 2) between the gender on your birth certificate and the one you know yourself to be. What are some other examples? Have you ever found yourself living in a liminal space? How did it transform you?
- BBT describes 4 touchstones of the path of descent:
 - Dante Alighieri was right - you don't often set out on the path of descent, you find yourself there. You don't act as much as you are acted upon.
 - For the time being, you are alone. There are some places where no one else can accompany you. Has there been a time in your life where you had to go somewhere where no one else could accompany you? What was that like?
 - Affability factor - its hard to describe to others what it was (or is) like; and often others don't want to know.
 - We need to lay hands on the ambiguous twilight of our days and move them into the sacred. Note that when she uses her friend with cancer as an example, the term 'sacred' refers more to something that inspires awe and reverence. Have you ever had an experience of feeling more alive after having moved through “twilight” or the path of descent as BBT's friend describes?
- Are there others?

- BBT describes those things that helps 'steady the will' when she finds herself on the path of descent. They include:
 - Memories of the good that other times of descent brought.
 - Stories that help to remember how the path of descent brought forth transformation in others
 - Community - communities of support as well as communities that are called to descend together
- What do you call upon to get you through 'The Dark Night of the Soul'?

Extra Notes:

- What is liminality?
 - A liminal space is a void, or the space between two places
 - Liminality is the process of being in, or crossing the space
 - Described by Victor Turner as being "betwixt and between places"
 - A spatial or temporal threshold
 - Considered a product of ritual process



Session 3 - Crisis Contemplation: Transformative Contemplative Responses to Communities in Crisis

- Have you ever been part of a community that experienced a crisis? What was that like?
- Do you have a Jonah story? Share it if you are comfortable.

Examples of responses to communal crises

- Guernica, Spain
- African Water Spirits
- Civil Rights Protests
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=veiJLhXdwn8&list=PL671mfLBKIPqlyEEVUMN3J3MCM_cDWhoR&index=3&t=0s
- Vietnam
 - <https://youtu.be/LYfUIGORKkw>
 - <https://youtu.be/negxyCu39Jk>
- Refugee Crisis - photo
- Apartheid
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPuQBqNhH1M>
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tm_yR1uOnGU
- Dakota Access Pipeline
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Onyk7guvHK8>

Questions on the examples of responses to community crises

- Which of the examples were the most impactful to you? Why? What emotions did they invoke?
- Did any of the examples make you uncomfortable? Why? What emotions did they invoke?
- All of these responses are artistic responses - why is that? What is it about art that allows for a meaningful response to crises?

Session 4 - Ascending and Descending Religions

- A very brief history of Christianity was given by RR emphasizing that when, in 313 AD, Constantine declared Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire Christianity was forever changed.
- RR discusses our society's love affair with 'zero sum games' where there are winners and losers. He uses sports as an example. Can you think of other areas where we have winners and losers? Is there a way we can turn these into win-win?
- RR says that the Christian religion has historically defined 'who is in and who is out'. Is this still happening? Give examples.

- RR said that we as Christians have a duality problem because we say that we honor the absolute of God, when in fact we often honor the absolutes of country, industry, capitalism, money, war and power. He also made the point that anything we are uncomfortable critiquing (see the previous list) will soon become a false idol. Do you feel this conflict? What can you change personally to address this conflict? What can we do as a society?
- There are four 'code words' that RR uses to illustrate his point about integrating order inside of disorder:
 - Forgiveness - I would rather have relationship with you than be right!
 - Mercy
 - Compassion
 - Grace

He goes on to say that all Christian denominations need to grow up and walk through the dark nights to understand that forgiveness, mercy, compassion and grace are for everyone, not just who you and I believe they are for.

Who do you struggle to forgive? If you were able to forgive this person, what did that feel like? How did it transform you and/or them? Ask yourself the same questions with regard to compassion.

- RR says that our starting point for hearing the good news/message (Gospel) should be our woundedness, not our desire to ascend to perfection. Is that idea consistent with what you were taught about your religion?
- RR says that we are the hope of the world. What type of personal transformation would have to take place for you to realize that calling? What type of societal transformation would have to take place for the world to transform?

Session 5 - Centering Social Action in Contemplation (and vice versa).

- We had 5-6 conversations related to:
 - Silence
 - Centering
 - Connection
 - Focus
 - Descent
 - Joy
- How do you integrate action and contemplation in your life? Are you satisfied with this integration, and if not what kind of change are you hoping for?
- What are your 'centering down' practices?
- The work of Social justice often requires us to see people in 4 categories:
 - Oppressors
 - Bystanders
 - Oppressed
 - Allies

Is there a way to hold all four groups in an embrace of non-discriminatory love?

- “What you focus on determines what you miss”
- Has the focus of your spiritual and contemplative life changed over the years? How? Are you seeding further change?
- If it’s true that contemplative practices and social action should be centered in each other - how do we achieve that? What does it look like?
- Howard Thurman: Don’t ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive!
- What makes you come alive? How might you parlay that into a way to transform yourself and your part of the world?