

Humble Pie, Anyone?

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Reading

You sit here for days saying, This is strange business. You're the strange business. You have the energy of the sun in you, but you keep knotting it up at the base of your spine.

*You've gotten drunk on so many kinds of wine. Taste **THIS**. It won't make you wild. It's **fire**. Give up, if you don't understand by this time that **your living is firewood**.*

Quantum entanglement. Lakota Elder, Basil Brave Heart opened the ancient Yuwipi healing ceremony with these words. He said that the Lakota people had known about this concept for many hundreds if not thousands of years when they said Mitakuye Oyasin. This is their sacred unity prayer which means that we are all related, each of us, the birds, the trees, the stones, all matter, all experience is made manifest from the same infinite void that physicists now call the “unified field”. Some people call it God.

What does this mean? Regardless of the way it feels sometimes, regardless of any given moment in the past where one group is up and one group is down, regardless of the angry conversations about who is right on facebook, **we are all in this together**. And it is becoming clearer because of the storm in which we stand, that at this moment in history, **we all rise or fall together**. We have had many, many chances to learn this as a human race and just like at other times in

history, **at this precipice**, the consequences of not finding common ground, inclusion and justice for all are **huge**.

“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice”. These words, sewn into Obama’s oval office rug are attributed to Martin Luther King Jr. The original thought came from our very own renegade Unitarian preacher and abolitionist, Theodore Parker. What Parker said was

"I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice."

It’s obvious why *the Unitarian Universalist version* was not sewn into the carpet. The Oval Office is not that big. But let me “*improve*” this thought by making it a little longer.

Justice is a circle. **What goes around comes around**. Sometimes we can only see a part of the arc because this circle is huge and encompasses all humanity across all dimensions. We have our successes and our failures in turning once again to the point at which we began, where Justice equals **nothing more or less than Love**.

But seriously, why is this path to justice so long??? One reason is because living in a world of holistic, systemic justice depends on all of us and it is irrespective of space and time, so that injustices not repaired in the past are still as active in the collective consciousness as if they occurred yesterday. Epigenetics might have something to say about this. Epigenetics is the fairly new study of mechanisms that switch genes on or off. Scientists are finding that this is involved in every aspect of life because it affects potentially inheritable mental and physical traits that influence the way we live our lives and what is available to pass on genetically. So my theory right now is that the path is long because we are talking about a learning experience across generations. These mental traits that support justice may be working their way into our DNA over centuries and centuries and

must be learned, held and expressed over time family by family, community by community. This does not lead me to optimism for a today's world.

In the meantime, we struggle with what seems like trial and error and often use less than effective methods such as violence and war to try and achieve long lasting peace and justice. We do this at the micro level in human interactions such as violent conversations about gun control and of course at the macro level between nations threatening to blow each other up in order to stop conflict. Why do we continue do this?

Well, it depends. It could be satisfying needs for self-aggrandizement or revenge or because we are truly ignorant about the cycle of violence or because we think somehow that non-violence doesn't apply to this particular situation. Or maybe it's just in our genes to act this way.

On FB the other day, a good friend of mine, who I consider to be a pretty "woke" person was talking about our President and was indignant regarding the stance Trump was taking about the NFL players kneeling down during our national anthem. He pointed back to Trump's not fighting in the Vietnam War and called him a liar, a coward and a hypocrite for wrapping himself in the flag and admonishing these players and we Americans to be patriotic. My friend felt completed justified in his insults and violent communications and was hoping to make a point about how to stop what is happening in our world, so that we can have peace by ridding ourselves of this man.

Even though I do not agree often with this President's actions, in my opinion, this reaction my friend and many others have **is based on the same thought patterns as dropping a bomb on North Korea and expecting peace to arise.** Or as President Jimmy Carter truly said, we cannot create peace by killing other people's children. There are no thoughts that do not count in this collective consciousness. This includes how we communicate to and about others and inside ourselves. **Violence or hostility does not cause peace on any level.**

So what can we do personally to cultivate the true conditions of justice and nonviolence in ourselves and in this world? It requires a foundation of at least six other virtues. The ones that come to mind for me are Courage, Compassion,

Integrity, Trust, Persistence and last but not least Humility. All are important, and today I will speak about Humility and Courage.

They are not exactly sure where the term Eating Humble Pie comes from. However in olden times, there was a pie called Umble that was prepared from minced parts of a deer's heart, liver, lungs and kidneys. Umble evolved from the French *nomble* meaning 'deer's innards'. Since it was served in lower class households, it has come to be associated with humble circumstances or to be forced to apologize or to admit a fault.

It is easy to see why the state of being humble is something that we avoid in Western and other cultures. It is because we typically relate humility with some type of humiliation, "being humbled by someone or something" or being underneath others in terms of status. It requires us to be aware of our vulnerability.

Here is a passage from the book *Consolations* by poet philosopher David Whyte. He speaks of robust vulnerability.

Vulnerability is not a weakness, a passing indisposition, or something we can arrange to do without, vulnerability is not a choice, vulnerability is the underlying, ever present and abiding undercurrent of our natural state. To run from vulnerability is to run from the essence of our nature, the attempt to be invulnerable is the vain attempt to become something we are not.

The only choice we have is how we inhabit our vulnerability, how we become larger and more courageous and more compassionate through our intimacy with disappearance, our choice is to inhabit vulnerability as generous citizens of loss, robustly and fully, or conversely, as misers and complainers, reluctant and fearful, always at the gates of existence, but never bravely and completely attempting to enter, never wanting to risk ourselves, never walking fully through the door.

Humility seems to be the virtue of surrendering to this existential vulnerability. It has to do with the setting aside of our ego thoughts, concerns, worries and fears, long enough to experience the thrill and wonder of a moment and be filled with the life force that we are then able to put into service for Love's purposes. It is not self-effacing or equivalent to humiliation. It is a powerful state that comes

from within because of a choice to meet life at the seam between ourselves and others and respond with Love rather than react.

We can come upon this humility with ease and grace through spiritual practices of “setting aside” ourselves or more commonly, the opportunity to approach humility is precipitated by Life’s events. I never even really thought about humility as a virtue until I was in my 50s. When I did, my first thought was that I would be so humble that I would be known for my humility! Leave it to me to make humility a competition. Which brings me to a joke.

There was a rabbi, a cantor and a janitor. The rabbi ran up to the Arc of the Covenant and beat his chest and said, God, I am not worthy, I am not worthy. The cantor following suit, ran up and knelt to say I am not worthy, I am not worthy, I am not worthy. The janitor seeing this runs up and shouts loudly, I am not worthy, I am not worthy. The rabbi then turns to the cantor and says, “look who thinks he’s unworthy”.

From toddlers, most of us are given messages by our families and society that foster a lack of humility. So that in most adults there is a significant amount of subconscious, difficult to access material that supports a disconnection from the source of Life and a “clinging” to an egoistic perception of ourselves which requires that we put ourselves at the top of the pile whenever possible for survival. This subconscious material is the knot that Rumi speaks at the base of your spine. In the energetic architecture of human beings, this place is where the kundalini (or Life Force) sits, coiled like a snake with tail knotted and waiting to be released so that Spirit can flow in. I have come to believe that releasing this knot (which I believe is somewhat unique to each person) is part of the journey of awakening.

Sometimes we get to see when we are not in the Flow when we make mistakes. We get a chance to either take the position of humiliation which is another form of ego action or we open our hearts, take a deep breath and use the opportunity to laugh at ourselves and the human condition, then carry on with a more expanded, connected and authentic version of ourselves. And in this way, the

snake uncoils as more life force is unknotted and available. In this state of humility and Divine Service, we are at one with our true nature of Love.

What this unfolding is NOT about is a frenzy of activities to help others at the detriment of your personal health or well-being. This is service to Creation that is connected to those things you are drawn to do by your own unfolding. It is in balance with living a joyful life in the circle of your family, friends, community and world.

Aldous Huxley once said, it is a fact confirmed and reconfirmed by 2 or 3 thousand years of religious history that Ultimate Reality is not clearly comprehended except by those who have made themselves loving, pure in heart and “poor in spirit”. By poor in spirit, he means humble. I don’t really know why they call this poor in spirit because it means devoid of arrogance and connected to the flow of Universal Love that permeates Creation. It seems like “rich in spirit” would be a better term.

Humility also requires Courage. To be naked in your authenticity and say, “Here I am, Universe, Teach Me and Use me. Or as Rumi might put it, Burn up my life like firewood.

In fact though, the courage that is needed right now to proceed in this process of becoming whole together is not just the garden variety courage, it is more like **valor**. The kind of courage exhibited when in dangerous circumstances. Courage can only arise when we are motivated to action by the strong desire of wanting something other than what is currently happening or predicted to happen. And it is so important in the microcosm of our daily interactions including social media. The courage to respond with love instead of reacting with ego defensiveness or worse bombastic vigor **is a skill that is in short supply**.

Supposedly, the meek inherit the earth. Why would this be so? Because the meek, the humble **are listening**, they are making alliances, they are addressing the root causes of the problems we face today. They are active and engaged with life and their communities. They know enough to know that loving oneself **is a job a priori** and that this leads to a peace inside which leads to peace outside. They have left behind the ideas of one-up one-down. They are meek and they are

mighty and filled with Spirit and fire for service to others in this world and the cause of justice.

And I will end with Rumi who says it best. This wave of talking builds. Better we should not speak, but let it grow within.

Benediction: Whether we like it or not, we are one. So be courageous and pass the Humble Pie.