

Healing Breaths.

A very brief introduction to *Healing Breaths*.

Richard Rose continued to write and compose with little promotion and a small audience because he considered his work a meditative folk art. *Healing Breaths* was one of the last public presentations of his poetry, prose, and music. It provided the opportunity to show or, as he said, to “install” the work in the proper religious context for which it was written. Just as his work grew out of his life and meditation, the presentation of *Healing Breaths* encouraged participants to use his work as a meditative exercise in thinking about compassion, transience, the paths of love, and wisdom. This little handbook on meditation is also a key to the way he thought about his work and (in the “secret agenda”) how he did not think about his work.



Welcome to *Healing Breaths*.

In this listening circle, we rehearse, meditate, and learn about each other's work. In practice, this means centering down, listening or presenting, rehearsing, and centering again. The first four meditations, presented during the summer of 2014, introduced some new music and writing as well as the centering practice. In later sessions, other members of the group share their words or music. This is a ministry of the Church of the Holy Comforter to provide you a place for creative engagement to express, present, and rehearse works of imagination, be they stories, poems, songs, or other forms of the arts of breath.

The introductory series, called *Probing the Depths*, was broadly about meditations on compassion, transience, and our connections to others and began as the subject of a church retreat in October, 2013. The four meditations presented in this handbook come from this series.

Rehearsal is the basis of the centering practice, just as rehearsal is a basic practice of composition, writing, and worship. In rehearsing for a play or musical performance with others, we learn our roles. In rehearsing aloud the sounds of words or music, we learn how to put them on paper. In the many kinds of rehearsals of worship practices, we learn living skills in a blessed community. Rehearsal with others supports learning, skill, and understanding. Nothing substitutes for creative engagement. More background on this subject is given in my blog, <http://frameshifts.com>. A section of the blog is reprinted in this handbook.

Healing Breaths is only one of the ways that the Church of the Holy Comforter "opens up sweet surrender to the luminous love-light of the world." Other ministries include many ways to make music, study and meditate together, a healing ministry (including a Wednesday noontime service) operating a food pantry, providing meals, helping prisoners, and taking environmental actions. We invite you to worship here at 10 a.m. on Sundays to discover more.

Peace,

Richard Rose, member of Holy Comforter

Contents

Welcome letter (cover)

The routine of Healing Breaths (3)

Some centering songs and movements (4)

The first four meditations from June, 2014 (7)

First meditation (8)

Second meditation (18)

Third meditation (23)

Fourth meditation (26)

Grammar meditation (32)

Healing Breaths at half time (35)

Healing Breaths: A last welcome? (36)

Selection from the blog-site (37)

(<http://frameshifts.com>.)

Healing Breaths and resilience (58)

Stations of the Resurrection (60)

Healing Breaths is a ministry of the Church of the Holy Comforter at 4819 Monument Avenue, Richmond 23230, 804-355-3251 and hoco.org. At the city limits.

4

The Routine of Healing Breaths

Here are the four moves of the centering practice:

Inhale.

Hold the breath.

Exhale.

Hold the void.

Pause on completion of the four moves.

The four moves are simply acts of attention to breathing.

More will be said about these four moves, but the explanation is less important than our routine of rehearsing these acts of attention



together.

Some centering songs and movements

Just take one breath
 on this side of forever.
 Embrace all gifts.
 Hold joy and grief together.
 Hold, gladly welcome
 all of life and death.
 Just take one breath.

Just give one breath.
 To formless darkness diving,
 embrace all gifts,
 emptied of tasks and striving.
 Give, keeping nothing.
 Cleansed, begin again.
 Just give one breath.

We share the breath
 of all awake and sleeping.
 Their breaths we hold
 like treasures in our keeping
 In all the flying, running,
 crawling creeping;
 in every leaf and fungal thread
 all take one breath.

--R.Rose

From the Dances of Universal Peace:

"I'm opening up in sweet surrender to the luminous love-light of the world. (repeat) Opening. (repeat 3 times). "

Windows

I cannot leave the place I stay.
 I cannot move or find a way--
 even open up a window
 or find a face I know.

If there were friends to guide me in
 and wait for healing to begin,
 and give me time,
 and let me grow,

I'd make the roof a window.

*Forgive us, Lord, we are paralyzed;
our strength unrealized.
If you but touch our lives,
we will be free.*

*And give us, we who are paralyzed,
grace to achieve surprise,
power to give and touch,
power to make free.*

If there were one to lower me
into his presence, I might be
forgiven just enough,
enough to open windows.

Forgive us, Lord, . . .
--R.R.

Two refrains:

From "The blind beggar"

For the light has come into the world
that the blind may see,
And the light has come into the world
to blind the wise.

--R.R.

From "Strike the rock!"

Strike the rock!
Find the water in the wilderness.
He struck the rock
and then the water flowed.
Strike the rock!
And the water flows in wilderness.
Strike the rock!

--R.R.

Here are three centering movements from Phil Shepherd's *New Self, New World*:

Wakame Think of your body as a floating sea weed like kelp, anchored to a rock by a hold-fast (your feet) but otherwise gently moved by ocean currents. Let your head, arms, and torso move freely and flexibly as your feet stay in place. Focus on the center of your body, just below the navel, as you sway freely around it.

Flooring Imagine a spot midway between your navel and pubis. Now imagine a steel ball between that spot and the upper margin of the pelvis. This is the center of the body. Focus on the imaginary steel ball as you crouch into a squatting position and allow your arms to rest comfortably inside your knees. In Asia, people are more likely to be seen waiting in this position than standing. As in **Wakame**, the focus is on the center.

Triple eights As in Flooring, imagine the steel ball in the center of your body. (This is the movement to make if **Flooring** is too hard on your knees.) Imagine the ball moving in figure-eight path moving side to side and parallel to the floor. Keep it moving by moving your hips. First, make the ball roll quickly by making wide motions. Then let it lose momentum slowly by moving your hips in a smaller figure-eight until the ball is still. Now move it again, but this time, make the figure-eight move front to back. Repeat the speed-up, slow-down sequence until the ball rests. Now repeat the sequence a last time, this time using your hips and abdomen to direct the path in an up-and-down motion perpendicular to the floor.

Again, in all three movements, one focuses on the center. We use these and other movements between the Curation and the Rehearsal.

8

Four meditations

The first four meditations are all drawn from four sets of meditative works by Richard Rose, listed below (in green print) and illustrating the four moves of Healing Breaths. The **Guides**, containing words and recorded music for Rose's works are available upon request and on the blog-site given above. The books *Frameshifts (volume 2)* and *Jesus, the Human Face of God*, were given to participants in the introductory series and are also available on request.

Inhale (1) *(first meditation)*

Annunciations

Welcome, invite, accept, & surrender to the deep integrity and beloved reality of how things are.



Hold the breath (2) *(fourth meditation)*

The Books of Daniel

Ponder what you can absorb. Let patterns settle out & dreams come into focus. Wait for wisdom.



Find + the center,
which is the pivot,
for *this* moment poise, and proper position
of breath. ↓



Hold the void (4) *(second meditation)*

The Sower

Frameshifts (2 vol.)

The Fisher of the James

The People's Voice

Love can be misunderstood and even violated when misplaced by duty, mistaken for sacrifice, and misdirected to exclude the other.

Compassion, however, is unmistakable.



Exhale (3) *(third meditation)*

Amber

La Rinuncia

The Blind Beggar

Strike the Rock

Windows

All things on Earth shall wholly pass away, but the deep integrity of being remains. The beloved reality of how things are can be trusted, is always accessible, and is both the sought and the seeker.

The first meditation: *An invitation to compassion*

The first meditation is longer than the others because it explains what *Healing Breaths* is all about. As a welcome and introduction, Richard Rose performed the **Credo** from his *Missa brevis*, the third section of *Annunciations*, and made the following comments:

This was a rehearsal of the traditional Creed. At the Church of the Holy Comforter, we consider the Creed to be a way of opening your heart to the deep integrity of how things are. There are countless ways of making this invitation, across many languages, cultures, and historical periods. Another song we use is: *I'm opening up in sweet surrender to the luminous love-light of the world. (repeat) Opening. (repeat 3 times).*

Leonard Cohen's "Anthem" is also about opening and invitation: *Ring the bells that still can ring. Forget your perfect offering. There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.* And William Carlos Williams says:

*We shall not get to the bottom.
Death is a hole
in which we are all buried,
Gentile and Jew.*

*The flower dies down
and rots away.
But there's a hole
in the bottom of the bag.*

*It is the imagination
which cannot be fathomed.
It is through this hole
we escape. (Patterson, fifth book)*



Sipapu from a kiva

Perhaps this hole is also the sipapu through which the First People escaped with the animals into the new reality of the Fourth World when the the old world was destroyed through human negligence. Artists try to draw us immediately into another reality, inviting us to take an imaginative journey. J.K. Rowling says,

"Many prefer not to exercise their imaginations at all. They choose to remain comfortably within the bounds of their own experience, never troubling to wonder how it would feel to have been born other than they are. They can refuse to hear screams or to peer inside cages. They can close their minds and hearts to any suffering that does not touch them personally. . . Choosing to live in narrow spaces leads to a form of mental agoraphobia, and that brings its own terrors. I think the willfully unimaginative ...are often more afraid."

Actually, the imagined reality is not another reality at all. There is only one reality, one being, the Beloved Reality, but it is too great even to name. And we are not always open to it, because every time we enter, we must surrender. Imagination helps us to get at it. In the *Credo*, I open my heart to the deep integrity of being and welcome all the faces of the Beloved, because the Beloved is always at hand.

Writers and other artists invite us, beckon us, tug at us, or even summon us with words like: *These are the times that try men's souls . . . It was the best of times and the worst of times . . . Lift up your heart . . . Now is the winter of our discontent . . . In the beginning was the Word . . .* They pull us across the threshold to see as they see, to enter a new world, to find a different frame of reference. They beckon us to believe, to vibrate in sympathy with them, to share what they imagine.

The painting (above) by Caravaggio shows the space through which the gift of the Beloved is always accessible, the fourth place at the table in Emmaus--where the viewer sits. See how the dish teeters on the edge. The two disciples are stunned when the stranger reveals himself. As if in a trance, they had seen but not recognized him. Slowly he was revealed to them through quiet conversation but the moment of enlightenment came when he broke bread, a shocking reminder of their last meal and communion with him. And the place at the table that projects out of the painting is for us. ***Pay Attention!*** It says. ***The Beloved is always at hand.***

In the first 4 sessions, I introduced my words and music. In later sessions you will share yours. I call my work folk art or narrative music because you need the words when you listen. But mainly, it's **rehearsal music**. As when you rake a garden, no matter how many times you rake, there's more left to rake. And this circle of Healing Breaths is also for

rehearsal and listening, meditation, and enlightenment. Our routine will be to **center down**, have a **curation** of words or music, then a **rehearsal**, and then another **centering**.

When people think of music they think about entertainment rather than enlightenment, but entertainment and enlightenment are related. The deeper meaning of entertainment is to "hold between" or to *install something between us*. The French word is *entretenir*. A German word for this, used by Martin Buber, was *Enterzwischen* or "betweenness," that is, **relationship**.

So what we're putting together here is a special practice for discovering, developing, and projecting deep, healing relationships. Words like *healing*, *whole*, *communion*, and *holy* represent different perspectives on this practice. Because words and music are arts of the breath, I call this practice or installation "*Healing Breaths*." I also have a hidden agenda:

HEALING BREATHS **The Hidden Agenda**

is to install a listening circle exploring the arts of breath by using an unmechanized, unmonetized, uncertified, inexpert, offline, labor-intensive, unglobalized, four-stroke practice of listening, absorbing, expression, and release. It is about the Lord giving and taking away and finding the center to bless this fact.

In this practice, we probe for a deeper understanding of relationships within and between ourselves by using prayer, meditation, story and song for performers and audiences, givers and receivers, makers and users, all seeking to make peace and give peace by listening to each other with loving attention and making new things through breaths shared. (Sad to say, but to be candid, I'm not monetized or branded, automated or online, globalized or mechanized. My immediate endeavor on this side of forever is never tiring of respiring and ending strife by inspiring your design of local patterns of transition to wanting less and trusting life.)

1. CENTERING DOWN

We will begin and end our sessions with a **centering activity or centering prayer**, beginning with a tone struck from the singing bowl. In the busyness of doing things we circle about seeking a quiet center. Let the

bowl represent the deep, visceral center we seek in ourselves and the world around us. The word *compassion* is translated from the Greek word *splanchna*, which means gut or viscera. In this center, we vibrate in sympathy with the Beloved and are in harmony with the reality of how things are. We actively seek a quiet center, but we are not simply *human doings*. We are *human beings*.

Finding the balance between doing and being is a life work. What I offer in these introductory sessions is my own inexpert practice, an improvisational work of reflection, writing, dreaming, rehearsal, composition, performance, meditation, and communion. Attention to breath is a first step, a reminder to step away from what I know and who we think we are. Writing and performing are further reminders that ***Everything breathes together.*** (*Heraclitus*).

The arts help us to integrate with being. All breathe one breath, the atmosphere, the troposphere, the fluid of flight. In worship and in the arts, we fly in each other's lift. We can fly together or apart or watch from the ground below. We can always step away from whom we know ourselves to be and what we think we know.

So we begin with a tone from the singing bowl. **When you hear the tone**, just sit quietly. Roll your shoulders. Align head, spine, and pelvis, if you can, to sit straight. Breathe in deeply all the way to the center of your pelvis. **Breathe in** deeply all the way to your heels. Breathe in capaciously and continue to inhale. Then notice and embrace the breath you've taken in and **hold it**. **Exhale** slowly, using your throat to control the breath as if it were your hands slowly releasing and paying out a rope. When you have exhaled completely, notice the empty space left in your chest before inhaling again. **Keep it empty** for a moment. Pause and inhale again. These are the four steps of the practice.

1. Inhale deeply.	2. Hold the breath.	3. Exhale slowly.	4. Hold the void.
-------------------	---------------------	-------------------	-------------------

In an internal combustion engine there are also four strokes:

1. Intake	2. Compression	3. Power	4. Exhaust
-----------	----------------	----------	------------

Think about these four steps.

As human doings we understand these 4 steps by comparing ourselves to engines. We take in oxygen, our cells oxidize nutrients, our muscles contract and our lungs expel carbon dioxide and water.

But as human beings we understand that prayer is sustained attention and creative engagement in which we open ourselves to all sensations and gifts, ponder what we have received, respond with sustained attention and creative engagement, and then recognize our transience.

The fourth step deserves explanation. Even a steel beam supporting the roof, strong as it is, is mostly empty space, or void. What makes it strong and impenetrable are the electromagnetic relationships among the particles of alloy. **So also, our animal bodies are mostly void and even our wealth of human knowledge, in comparison to the universe, is mostly void.**

Our inner and outer relationships hold us and the world together. What we understand of our place in a universal frame of reference is infinitesimal. The fourth step therefore, is a reminder to shift our frame of reference. **Inhaling**, we may say "*The Lord gives,*" but when holding the void, we say, "*And the Lord takes away,*"

Finally, after the four-stroke breath, we complete the gesture of finding our center between doing and being. We say, "*Blessed be the name of the Lord.*" From this central circle, we pause to see the completed breath before inhaling again. And in drawing this center of blessing of the 4 steps of breath, we may draw the ancient symbol of our community, making the sign of the cross.

So, breathing is always available to us. We can always turn to it. Breaths come and go without our bidding. The gift of reality, of the beloved way things are is also beyond our control. When you breathe deeply, you begin to align yourself with all that is given. You lower your heart rate and blood pressure and become calmer. Paying attention to breathing is common to many ancient traditions. There is no one way to talk about breathing, just as there is no one song to sing about the Beloved. *Here is a typical script for centering down.*

CENTERING

Strike the bowl. Close your eyes, if you wish, as we center down. Simply breathe quietly.

The Lord gives

To **inhale** is to take in your surrounding, to welcome all you can sense, notice, and consider, to welcome all that is given.

To **hold the breath** is to think about it, concentrate it, to let it thicken with possibilities, connections, and patterns, to ponder it.

To **exhale** is to release hold gradually but completely, to work out patterns, to make a new thing, to perform completely what you are suited to do.

The Lord takes away:

To **hold the void** is to feel the sad loss and incompleteness of your actions, the grief of absence, but also the relief and cleansing of perfect release.

Pause at the completed breath: Blessed be the name of the Lord.

The Lord gives:

To **inhale** again is to feel a new beginning in the broadly branching network of support from others and from the nature of the world in which you are rooted, and to feel a little resurrection and hope in new surroundings.

To **hold the breath** is to focus it, to refine it, and even to use its own darkness to give it shape or meaning.

To **exhale** is to express and explain and perform, to draw out patterns, to understand, and to serve.

The Lord takes away:

To **hold the void** is to notice the emptiness that was always present, the pain of loss, the sleepwalking trance of one's limitations and incompleteness.

Pause at the completed breath: Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Please repeat the 4 steps in silence on your own.

Strike the Bowl. *Join me on page 5 of the Guide. "Just take one breath."*

2. Curation: Entertainment vs. Annunciations

In this part of *Healing Breaths*, the presenter acts as the "curator" of his or her own works. Think of what a museum curator does. The curator

must be an expert on the exhibit. Then the curator must decide how to select appropriate works and decide how to interpret and display them. Ezra Pound was a curator for the works of several artists in the previous century. He once wrote, "*What thou lovest well is thy true heritage.*" Certainly, when you sustain your attention on creative work over an extended period, it is because you love what you are doing, value it, and want to pass it on. **This is the case whether your expertise has come from close study of the works of others or from making something yourself.** So when you become a curator, you will present work that you know well--others' or your own.

Curation is also giving guidance and care. *Healing Breaths* is about making whole by integrating what is disconnected and unbalanced. We do this through sharing breaths in sacred stories and songs. Even though each of us must follow a different path, the performance speaks to us. Communication becomes communion and as we participate we are healed.

Transformation is a gradual process. In the book, *Jesus, The Face of God*, Jay Parini says that transformation, also called the kingdom of God, is gradually realized, like an image on a photograph in a developing bath. We realize slowly. We require many reminders, re-tellings, performances, and worship services. This is not because our communion with the Beloved is inaccessible; *it is because we get in our own way.* Even though we are like antennas who continually receive signals from the worlds within and around us, the signals are often blocked. We have many ways of getting stuck--particularly when we work alone. Doing the breathing practice and breathing arts together are ways of attending to breath and becoming unstuck in our divine paths.

By imagining or feeling your way into a sacred story, similar to what the church calls *lectio divina*, you can slowly get out of your own way. Visual artists do this when they make sculptures, quilts, or cut-ups. These could be exhibited or "installed" around the room; but works of words and music have to be read and performed. Richard Rose presented the following selections below, the songs indicated in **blue** print and the complete texts available on request or on the blog-site.

Annunciations combines 5 stories about receiving messages from the divine realm. Getting the invitation does not immediately result in transformation, however. When the old priest Zechariah hears voices in his dreams, he remains a realist. The voices say, **Do not be afraid Zechariah.** And he says, **I am just an old man.** He cannot get beyond what he knows and whom he knows himself to be. He's a realist and that means staying

stuck in your fear, not welcoming what is given. Fear is FALSE EVIDENCE APPEARING REAL. Zechariah prefers the trance of reality to the possibility of transformation. He is troubled for months and cannot sleep or speak. **Thou dost hold my eyelids from closing** . So, having received the gift, and endured months of pondering and as Elizabeth's pregnancy began to show, Zechariah is finally able to express himself.

So we must ponder what we have received, sometimes for decades, before the incubation period has ended and with a welcoming spirit, we are able to write, compose, perform it, or talk about it. When Elizabeth bears a son, he shouts "*His name shall be 'God is gracious,'*" that is, his name shall be John." **His name shall be John. Blessed be the Lord God.**

Meanwhile, Elizabeth's cousin also receives a message . Perhaps she was in the garden. **Mary was the sweetest gal..** Unlike Zechariah, she opened herself to the message, she pondered it in her heart, she welcomed it, and, later in life, she accepted the full weight of the message.

From moment to moment we receive signals and annunciations. The poet Herder put it this way, "A dream, a dream is our life here on Earth. We measure our steps and count our minutes but move like clouds over the sea and are, and know it not, in the midst of eternity." **Ein traum, ein traum.** Everything breathes together. Like a turning flock of birds, all share one breath in this moment without identity or knowledge. The turn is an adept action without interference by self or mind, like a sword-thrust--the kind of adept action which in Japanese is called *muga* and *mushin*.

But routine trances of self and knowledge may prevent us from acting. Such was the young lawyer who understood so much and yet remained unrealized, like an undeveloped negative. **Once a lawyer, rich from learning. (8 min.)**

Sacred stories have rich textures. The entranced Priest and Levite are more concerned with the letter than the spirit of the law. But there's more. *The face of the wounded man is the face of God.* Jesus said that attending to such a man was the same as attending to him. *The face of the Samaritan is also the face of God.* The religious Outsider saw clearly and adeptly took action without interference by self or mind. Like the Samaritan, Jesus also comes as an outsider bringing transformation. When we sing the Creed, we open our hearts to the divine realm and to seeing the one reality of the face of God in the familiar world within and the outer world around us. Singing reminds us not to sleep-walk through holy existence.

Strike the bowl.

3. Rehearsal

The third part of the practice of *Healing Breaths* is rehearsal. On the chairs are scores for today's rehearsal. Be sure to return them at the end of the session.

Rehearse

The Sanctus, Once a lawyer, Soft as a whisper

4. CENTERING

Strike the bowl . Meditation on Mary, using the 3 pictures of Mary.

To close, let's center down again, thinking about Mary. Perhaps you sat for awhile before today's session in the Mary Chapel on the Monument Avenue side of the church. It's always open. In these pictures we see Mary at the annunciation, then pondering the message and life of her child, and last, holding her dead son. Look at the images or Close your eyes, as we center down. Simply breathe quietly.

The Lord gives

To **inhale** is to take in your surrounding, to welcome all you can sense, notice, and consider, to welcome all that is given. Like Mary, breathe in the gift of the Beloved, surrender and accept it. The Beloved is always at hand. Say "Welcome!".

To **hold the breath** is to think about it, concentrate it, to let it thicken with possibilities, connections, and patterns, to ponder it. Like Mary, ponder this gift, look for patterns, concentrate it, find its power.

To **exhale** is to release hold gradually but completely, to work out patterns, to make a new thing, to perform completely what you are suited to do. Like Mary, raising her child, guiding him, and enjoying him, welcome all you receive. Make a new thing.

The Lord takes away:

To **hold the void** is to feel the sad loss and incompleteness of your actions, the grief of absence, but also the relief and cleansing of perfect release. Like Mary, empty yourself. Inhabit eternity. Know the void that is not absence or annihilation but abundant possibility.

Pause at the completed breath: Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Summary of the first session

In the first session, the practice of *Healing Breaths* was introduced. It is a practice of meditation and rehearsal centered on breathing and the arts of breath, which are words and music. Each breath is four moves of attention. Repeating the moves is like raking a garden to loosen and open up the soil for growth. When the soil is opened up, the roots probe freely and deeply, finding water and nutrients. *When does raking end?* As long as you garden, you rake. When you rake a garden, no matter how many times you rake, there's more left to rake; so also with the four moves of the centering practice.

The word "rehearsal" literally means "rake over." Rehearsal is what I do to open myself up to greater attentiveness to what is--to what I call the blessed reality of how things are. It's not just about performance. It's about getting closer and closer to what matters to you. To rehearse is to welcome the invitation of blessed reality. And then, to get beyond accepting the invitation, one surrenders with sustained attention and creatively engages in what one is suited to do. This is prayer, meditation, rehearsal, creative expression, and service. Rehearsal is what you do to rake and cultivate and attend to what is given to you, be it a kind heart, a gift for maths or attentive listening, a sense of melody or choice of words, or a grasp of abstract relationships, or the fluid movement of dance or throwing a ball. *When can you find time to do it?*

Breath is always available. It is given and unbidden. When I wait in a line or feel irritated or at a loss, I can always do my four moves because breath is always available: *inhale, hold, exhale, hold*. The healing breaths remind me of my frame of reference and help me to find the center--that is, the pivot, poise and proper position--for *this* moment of breath. In these workshops we will repeatedly use the four moves of *Healing Breaths* to open up, receive, and respond together to beloved reality. Sharing of creative work evokes creative responses. Creativity is always original, flexible, fluent, and elaborate. One person's works suggest entirely new ideas to another person. I will give you the work I have made; then it will become something else and I will be emptied of it. I have nothing to sell and no other examples than my own work, which are the music, words, and characters who have come to me over many years of opening up to what is given.

In the first session, I introduced some my words and music, called *Annunciations*, and provided CD recordings, librettos in guide booklets, and the book *Jesus, the Human Face of God* by Jay Parini.

And this listening circle that we make is for **centering** together, **curation** of the works we bring, **rehearsal**, and **centering again** at the end. It is for rehearsals, and listenings, meditations, and enlightenments. This is somewhat different from the usual setting for entertainment. When people think of music they think about entertainment rather than enlightenment, but entertainment and enlightenment are related. The deeper meaning of entertainment is to "hold between" or to *install something between us*. The French word is *entretenir*. A German word for this, used by Martin Buber, was *Enterzwischen* or "betweenness," that is, **relationship**. So what we're putting together here is a special practice for discovering, developing, and projecting deep, healing relationships. Words like *healing, whole, communion, and holy* represent different perspectives on this practice. Because words and music are arts of the breath, we call this practice or installation "*Healing Breaths*."

The second meditation

June 22 Session 2: Transience. This meditation on our temporary existence draws from several works: a treatment of the Flood story (*Frameshifts*), parables of enlightenment about the nature of existence (*The Sower*, *The Blind Beggar*, *The Woman at the Well*), and a meditation on possessions (*The Fisher of the James*).

First sing: "I'm opening up in sweet surrender to the luminous love-light of the world. Opening. Opening. Opening. Opening." Then sing "Just take one breath."

Let's center down. Just sit quietly. Roll your shoulders. Align head, spine, and pelvis. Breathe in deeply all the way to your heels. Continue to inhale and then hold the breath. Exhale slowly, using your throat to control the breath as if it were your hand slowly releasing a rope. When you have exhaled completely, hold the void before inhaling again. These are the four steps of the practice.

CENTERING

Strike the bowl . Close your eyes, if you wish, as we center down. Simply breathe quietly.

The Lord gives

To **inhale** is to take in your surroundings, to welcome all you can sense, notice, and consider, to open yourself to all signals and annunciations, and to welcome all that is given.

To **hold the breath** is to embrace what is received, to think about it, concentrate it, to let it thicken with possibilities, connections, and patterns, to ponder it.

To **exhale** is to release hold gradually but completely, to work out patterns, to make a new thing, to perform completely what you are suited to do.

The Lord takes away:

To **hold the void** is to feel the sad loss and incompleteness of your actions, the grief of absence, but also the relief and cleansing of perfect release.

Pause at the completed breath: Blessed be the name of the Lord.

The Lord gives:

To **inhale** again is to feel a new beginning in the broadly branching network of support from others and from the nature of the world in which you are rooted, and to feel a little resurrection and hope in new surroundings.

To **hold the breath** is to focus it, to refine it, and even to use its own darkness to give it shape or meaning.

To **exhale** is to express and explain and perform, to draw out patterns, to understand, and to serve.

The Lord takes away:

Hold the void and notice the emptiness that was always present, the pain of loss, the sleepwalking trance of one's limitations and incompleteness.

Pause at the completed breath: Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Please repeat the 4 steps in silence on your own. Strike the bowl.

2. Curation:

The *Annunciations* is like the "*Inhale*" part of the centering activity. *Annunciations* concerns opening up to what comes to us rather than believing only what we know and fear. But what if what comes to us is horrendous and annihilating--as in Syria, Darfur, Bangladesh, or N. Korea? This question cannot be answered from the sidelines. The answer must be found within the experience. Being swept out of existence does not seem like a visitation by the Beloved. And as a people accustomed to convenience, continual distraction, waste and speed, we do not easily accept our **transience**. As an artist I can give an expressive response to transience based on my experiences. I cannot offer advice or prescriptions for others. Perhaps others can find ways to express their own responses. Stories of transience and transition are like the Fourth Step in Centering--holding the void.

So, today's stories express visions of transience and transition. These visions or jumps of enlightenment I call "**frameshifts.**" A rich young Italian carousing with his friends after being let out of prison, was struck dumb in the middle of the street with a vision of poverty and submission. After this frame-shift in 1205 A.D. , Francis di Bernadone became Brother Francis of Assisi.

But usually, as with Zechariah, whom we met last time, people know better than to change. We are realists. And when we know something clearly, it's not easy for us to accept that everyone doesn't get it, as in the parable of *The Sower*. **Without suffering we do not understand suffering, we only know about it.** This kind of knowing is like hard ground--the kind of land where none builds because it doesn't perk. No life-giving water sinks into it. It needs a good raking. From this hard kind of knowledge we can build wonderful explanations, economic policies, and a multitude of excuses--all unenlightened. The dialogue between impenetrable

knowing and enlightened understanding is part of the gradual transformation described by Jay Parini in his book. Transformation is a lifelong project, simply described by Job when he says, "*I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee . . .*" (42.5)

Here are some stories of transformation, which I call *Frameshifts* . This is a book of stories and poems about people responding to transience and loss, and making spiritual transitions. The setting for the first volume is a familiar community in Virginia . The second volume depicts the characters moving into a very unfamiliar way of life. Their procession is like a pilgrimage from story to story and genre to genre. I will let some of the characters speak for themselves, beginning with Avery Crawley, a charismatic biochemist and evangelistic trash collector who preaches environmental disaster: ("**All things on earth . . .**" and other readings). In the congregation listening to this message is Hank Randall, a local university prof, who has his own take on religion and creativity, which he calls "studio work." ("**At their best . . .**"). But Hank faces annihilation close-up as he cares for his wife with Alzheimer's: ("**Sheila became...**"). Hank describes a meeting with the Preacher. Crawley tells him about the vision that had changed *his* life. ("**See, I had the suspicion . . .**") Other characters in *Frameshifts* have their own life-changing visions. Carol, a botanist, recalls Big Dave: ("**Once Big Dave . . .**"). And science teacher Ed Lashley gets a call from another teacher named Petrof. ("**Petrof lived . . .**"). Even Ed's housekeeper , Pinky, has a vision: ("**Pinky Cooke was ...**") The last two sections of the book are poems written by two of the characters. Here is one the poems by Tom Farley, who works as a auto shop parts-man. It's called "*Embrace All Accidents.*" ("**Shall all things . . .**")

In another work, *The Fisher of the James*, a fisherman catches a magic fish who grants him a wish. (p. 20: "**My name is Mashkinonge** ") His wife, however, is not satisfied with the riches and mansion they have already received. She says to her husband, (Page 26: "**It's just like you to think** "). As in the original Grimm brothers' version, the Fisher and his wife lose everything by trying to add more to their possessions than they could ever care for. Thus they become worse off than they were before, a situation Shakespeare described like this:

**So that, in venturing ill , we leave to be
the things we are for that which we expect,
And this ambitious, foul infirmity,
In having much, torments us with defect
of that we have: so then we do neglect
the thing we have and all for want of wit
make something nothing by augmenting it**

3. Rehearsal

The Blind Beggar, Strike the Rock, Windows

4. CENTERING

Close your eyes, if you wish, as we center down. Simply breathe quietly.

The Lord gives

Inhale the refreshing air which only comes to you.

Embrace the breath which waits for only you to respond.

Exhale the breath which only you can direct.

The Lord takes away:

Hold the void which only you can contain.

Pause at the completed breath: Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Please repeat the 4 steps several times in silence on your own.

Strike the bowl.

Leave when you are ready.

Peace!

Summary of the Second Session

In the first session, the work "Annunciations" was used to guide our thoughts on the first move of Healing Breaths, in which we **inhale** and think of ourselves "opening up in sweet surrender to the luminous love-light of the world." The second session was about the fourth move, called **holding the void**. What comes to us in this world--whether or not we're open to receive it--is often painful and devastating. How can we be open to this? This question cannot be answered from the sidelines. The answer--our response--can only be found within experience. Being swept out of existence does not seem like a visitation by the Beloved. And as a people accustomed to convenience, continual distraction, waste, and speed, we do not easily accept our transience. As an artist I can respond based on my experiences; I cannot advise others. Perhaps my work can encourage others to respond in their own ways. Even in the most desperate circumstances, humans have discovered their own responses. For Alice Herz-Sommer and the composer Olivier Messiaen, interned in concentration camps, the answer was making music. So they transformed horrendous experience into art. For the Tibetan monks who performed their meditative art of making sand mandalas, the practice itself was the response. The mandala was poured into the river to be reclaimed by the sea. So practices of music-making and mandala-making are in themselves structures to hold the void left as all we receive races away from us.

But it may seem easier not to change than it is to hold the void. As with Zechariah, whom we met last time, people know better than to change. We don't readily change our stories. We are realists. And when we know something clearly, it is not easy for us to accept that everyone doesn't get it. But *without suffering, we do not understand suffering. We only know about it.*

And this kind of knowing is like hard ground, as in the parable of the Sower. It's the kind of land where none builds because it doesn't perk. No life-giving water sinks into it. It needs a good raking. Sometimes we must even strike the rocks in it to make the water flow, as in the stories about Moses and the woman at the well. From this hard, impenetrable kind of knowledge we can build wonderful explanations, economic policies, and a multitude of excuses--all unenlightened.

The dialogue between impenetrable knowing and enlightened understanding is part of the gradual transformation described by Jay Parini in his book. Transformation is a life-long project. The stories and poems in *Frameshifts* are about people responding to transience and loss and making spiritual transitions--little jumps of vision or enlightenment, which I call "frameshifts." Several readings were presented from the second volume of the book. Both volumes are designed as a procession or pilgrimage from story to story, genre to genre.

In this session, we heard from two characters, Avery Crawley (p.37 p.214, p.231, p.69) and Professor Randall (p.24, p.53) and also heard from the Wife, the Fisher and the Magic Fish in the opera, *The Fisher and His Wife*. All of these characters respond in their own ways to holding the void, some with acceptance, others with denial. What does it take to remind us of our transience? A loss of all we hoped for? A vision of the world's fragility? A loved one slipping away? Blindness or paralysis--as in the parables of the blind beggar and the paralytic? Each of us has a personal void that is only ours to hold, but we can be strengthened by sharing the practice of accepting, pondering, responding to, and releasing the breaths and all the other gifts which come to us unbidden as living beings.

The third meditation

June 29 Session 3: Love. The meditation on compassion in Session 1 is extended to other manifestations of love, such as sacrifice (*La Rinuncia*), duty or responsibility (*Amber*), and inclusion of those who are different (*The People's Voice*).

Begin with centering song. Then center down by going through the preparation routine.

You may close your eyes as we continue the centering practice.

CENTERING

Strike the bowl . Close your eyes, if you wish, as we center down. Simply breathe quietly.

The Lord gives

To **inhale** is to take in your surrounding, to welcome all you can sense, notice, and consider, to welcome all that is given.

To **hold the breath** is to think about it, concentrate it, to let it thicken with possibilities, connections, and patterns, to ponder it.

To **exhale** is to release hold gradually but completely, to work out patterns, to make a new thing, to perform completely what you are suited to do.

The Lord takes away:

To **hold the void** is to feel the sad loss and incompleteness of your actions, the grief of absence, but also the relief and cleansing of perfect release.

Pause at the completed breath: Blessed be the name of the Lord.

The Lord gives:

To **inhale** again is to feel a new beginning in the broadly branching network of support from others and from the nature of the world in which you are rooted, and to feel a little resurrection and hope in new surroundings.

To **hold the breath** is to focus it, to refine it, and even to use its own darkness to give it shape or meaning.

To **exhale** is to express and explain and perform, to draw out patterns, to understand, and to serve.

The Lord takes away:

To **hold the void** is to notice the emptiness that was always present, the pain of loss, the sleepwalking trance of one's limitations and incompleteness.

Pause at the completed breath: Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Please repeat the 4 steps in silence on your own.

Strike the bowl.

2. Curation:

When we "open our hearts in sweet surrender to the luminous love-light of the world," we mean that in fact we live one life, have one mind, and exist in one timeless reality. As the Sikhs say, we live in these bodies for the one purpose of meeting the universal. We are one in God. Heraclitus said, the living "**share one breath.**" In this communion with all humans, with all life and with all that is, we also commune indirectly with those living before and after us. As Vincent Van Gogh put it, "**the best way to know God is to love many things.**" Saying and knowing this is easy enough, but attending to this embracing love from moment to moment is a tightrope walk of life-long practice.

Stories like *Pilgrim's Progress*, *The Way of the Cross*, *The Bhagavad Gita*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, *The Golden Fleece*, *Persephone*, and *Orpheus and Eurydice* express the difficulty of mastering the practice of living. We slip so easily into trances, denials, and excuses. We escape to other tenses than the present, spending months at a time in the definite or imperfect past, the future, subjunctive, or conditional.

Today's stories are like the second step in Centering--holding the breath. **Show the poster.** Only by holding and pondering the breath and other gifts do we begin to open up to a communion with how things are--rather than closing down to escape into other tenses. This communion and love of all things is manifested in different ways. In today's three stories, one shows love through **duty**, one through **sacrifice**, and another through **acceptance**.

To grow up in a military family, as I did, is to understand a life of continual rehearsal for calamities and a dedication to duty, honor, and country. When Rusty, now an officer himself, returns home for Thanksgiving, he finds his two sisters and his father, a retired survivor of the Bataan Death March. "**Families are those you have still . . . Yet there is another story we will never tell . . .**" Springing from love family are the duties of soldier to family, of wife to husband, and children to father. In *Amber*, these duties conflict. Love becomes duty and tragedy ensues.

In *La Rinuncia*, love becomes sacrifice. It is a story about two friends, Phil and Norman. Phil is a devoted friend who tries to prevent Norman from sacrificing everything to become a monk, joining the monks to chant, "**Not it, but Thou. In perfect union . . .**" Meanwhile, Phil tries to set up a love match to entice his friend away from monastic life. He describes how his friend has always bounced around from one obsession to

another to find meaning in life: "**He's been an herbalist . . .**" Perhaps one could say that Norman had fallen in love with the idea of enlightenment. He's so blinded by the trance of the idea of sacrifice that he cannot see his friend's passionate devotion to him.

In *The People's Voice*, love is distorted in another common way--by making it exclusive. This is not the compassion of the Good Samaritan. Jesus even said, "if you love only those who love you, what reward have you?" (Mt 5:46). Two families, one patriot and the other Tory, conflict shortly after the Battle of Bennington, when Stark, Warner, and the Green Mountain Boys defeated Burgoyne's army in Vermont in 1777. The Patriot wife, Eltha, tries to persuade her husband to take her to see the Tories' house before its confiscated furnishings are auctioned: "**Husband, hear me. We must away and visit . . .**" Thus the couple love each other for living in a trance, bringing tragedy to their neighbors and themselves.

We want to open up in sweet surrender to the luminous love-light of the world, but our self-serving ideas, trances, and distortions of love must be continually raked out to keep us open. This is why we rehearse.

3. Rehearsal Duet from **Amber: "No matter where I've toured . . ."**, From **La Rinuncia : "It is ever thus with love . . . (to end)"**, From **The People's Voice: "Now should I wear . . ."** and "**All the woods are still . . .**"

4. CENTERING

Strike the bowl . Close your eyes, if you wish, as we center down. Simply breathe quietly.

The Lord gives

Inhale to remember the compassion you have received and find its path through through the thickets of your life. In all the ways you flower, find the sacrifices, duties, and acceptance others have surrendered to you. Welcome all you have received. Welcome your continuing transformation.

Hold the breath is to embrace what is received, to learn from it, and to discover your proper response. to ponder it.

Exhale to hear better what was missed by too much busy effort. Surrender to the response that aligns you with all the gifts you have received. Now you, also, are a giver. You, also, make the sound of creation.

The Lord takes away:

And hold the void as the sound dies away. Know that coming to an end is also good.

Pause at the completed breath: Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Strike the bowl.

The fourth meditation

July 6 Session 4: Wisdom. *The Books of Daniel* treats the Biblical story of Daniel. It is a large vocal work which considers **wisdom in many settings- the business world, education, religion, and stewardship.**

Also give Crawley's definition of prayer here since it is related to a process and a work and seeking enlightenment.

Begin with centering songs. Then do the preparation for centering.

1. CENTERING

Strike the bowl . Close your eyes, if you wish, as we center down. Simply breathe quietly.

The Lord gives

To **inhale** is to take in your surrounding, to welcome all you can sense, notice, and consider, to welcome all that is given.

To **hold the breath** is to think about it, concentrate it, to let it thicken with possibilities, connections, and patterns, to ponder it.

To **exhale** is to release hold gradually but completely, to work out patterns, to make a new thing, to perform completely what you are suited to do.

The Lord takes away:

To **hold the void** is to feel the sad loss and incompleteness of your actions, the grief of absence, but also the relief and cleansing of perfect release.

Pause at the completed breath: Blessed be the name of the Lord.

The Lord gives:

To **inhale** again is to feel a new beginning in the broadly branching network of support from others and from the nature of the world in which you are rooted, and to feel a little resurrection and hope in new surroundings.

To **hold the breath** is to focus it, to refine it, and even to use its own darkness to give it shape or meaning.

To **exhale** is to express and explain and perform, to draw out patterns, to understand, and to serve.

The Lord takes away:

To **hold the void** is to notice the emptiness that was always present, the pain of loss, the sleepwalking trance of one's limitations and incompleteness.

Pause at the completed breath: Blessed be the name of the Lord.

Strike the bowl.

2. Curation:

Job's arguments with his friends and with himself are sometimes called *flytings*. This is a custom of trading insults or arguments. It's like playing the dozens. I discovered the word after years of writing in this form. In a flyting you hear from all sides, as in a town meeting. *The Books of Daniel* is such a work, filled with contention. It was also my only attempt to unite my professional life in education with my folk-art life. As Robert Frost says: "**my object is to unite my vocation with my avocation as my two eyes make one in sight. Only where love and need are one, and the work is play for mortal stakes, is the deed ever truly done for heaven's and the future's sakes.**"

Because this is a long work, we will spend most of this session on rehearsal, so the summary is brief:

A book publishing business controlled by a wealthy landowner and some-time gentleman farmer named Darian is about to be merged with a realty company. Darian is not fully aware, until it is too late, of some of the implications of the merger, such as the loss of his farm, layoffs of personnel, and changes in the character of his business. His Mergers & Acquisitions department consists of one VP named Vinny Joyner, who may be played by a man or woman. Vinny has succeeded in keeping Darian and the Board of Directors in the dark and lining her own pockets in the deal. But the CFO, Daniel Saperstein, knows what she is up to. In an effort to sway the Board, Daniel has paid special attention to one member in particular, the swing voter, a professor at the local community college, named Miriam Braun. In fact, he even enrolled in Dr. Braun's class, "The Bible as Literature." To his surprise, he falls in love with her. The play opens at dawn with Vinny on the phone in the office talking to one of the accountants after pulling an all-nighter going over the books before the Board Meeting later that day. He hangs up, falls asleep, and dreams he is a character in the book that Miriam is currently teaching--the *Book of Daniel*. In his dreams, the situation at the office merges with the story-line of the text. He wakes up to find Vinny threatening the office staff and defends his vision of the company against Vinny's. He and Vinny step out and the staff speculates on its future after the merger. Daniel comes back while they are talking and adds his own thoughts, then he goes on to class. In class, Miriam teaches students about the nature of myths but gets into an argument with Daniel about whether business is "in itself an evil," as St. Jerome argued. He stays after class to make up with her but is brushed off. He reminds her of the Board meeting that night and then goes home to sleep. Another dream puts him back into the Book of Daniel, with Vinny pushing him toward the lions' den. The last

scene is the farm auction followed by the Board meeting to vote on the merger. As with our recent yard sale here at church, a variety of customers come to auction, which the auctioneer sees as the dismemberment of the rural way of life, much as lions dismember their prey. Darius grieves over this and Vinny accuses Daniel and Miriam of colluding to get a large write-off donation to Miriam's school. Miriam defends her school, her vocation, and Daniel. Doing this makes her realize how she feels about him. Just as the Board meeting begins, Daniel arrives with the accountant to explain what Vinny has done.

3. Rehearsal: We will go through the whole work, without dwelling on any section in particular.

4. CENTERING

(First, we sang a centering song from the Guide, p. 159.)

Close your eyes, if you wish, as we center down. Simply breathe quietly.

The Lord gives

Inhale to welcome the wisdom in all that is given, even losses, contention and challenge. Surrender to this beloved reality and, as a tree draws from its roots, draw from the broadly branching network of support, love, and care left by those who have lived before us. As a tree inhales from its leaves, breathe in resurrection and grow in transformation.

Hold the breath to embrace what is received and let its patterns and directions emerge.

Exhale is to release your hold, giving as you have received. Make a new thing and give it away completely.

The Lord takes away:

Hold the void as only you can do. Find that this release, absence and emptiness, this void, can be good.

And pause at the completed breath to watch it escape:

Blessed be the name of the Lord.

O Thou whose love is broader than the measure of human mind and who doth make even human wrath to praise Thee, we give thanks for the opportunity to worship through our works. Let us have thankful hearts, for we have all drunk from wells we did not dig and warmed ourselves at fires we did not build. All is given, even we ourselves, and this gift is the answer to our petitions. Let faith guide us, love preserve us, and hope engage us in a mission of reconciliation and healing. Amen

Summaries of the Third and Fourth Sessions

Don't let it be said I didn't give you enough to read! This last packet summarizes the last two sessions and includes the two email letters and some last thoughts about meditative practices. More is to be found on the blog-site (<http://www.frameshifts.com>). This information also gives you some material to share with others who might be interested. I will not apologize for providing you with lots of words and music because communication and communion are what I *do!* But the next steps, if any, will be up to *you*. Please notice the different ways that selections of my works have been presented and rehearsed: simply singing them with and without accompaniment, reading them, acting them out, playing recordings, using voice-overs, having the group sing or read them, using surtitles and slides, and reading through scripts. The point is that if *you* have works of words or music to share, there are many ways of doing it. The invitation is open and we are *all ears*.

Session 3. We spent more time listening to recorded works than we did in rehearsal. We also learned about two practices, called *flooring* and *triple eights*. Like *wakame*, our "seaweed" exercise, these are for both relaxation and centering. We did them again in Session 4.

When we "open our hearts in sweet surrender to the luminous love-light of the world," we mean that in fact we live one life or "share one breath," as Heraclitus said. The Sikhs say that we live in these bodies for the sole purpose of meeting the universal. In this communion with all humans, all life, and all that is, we also commune with those living before and after us. Vincent Van Gogh said that "the best way to know God is to love many things." Attending to this embracing love from moment to moment is a tightrope walk of life-long practice.

The three works presented in this session come from some old stories. Many ancient stories and writings express the difficulties of mastering this walk, this practice of living: *Orpheus and Eurydice*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *The Practice of the Presence of God*, *Persephone*, *The Bhagavad Gita*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and *The Way of the Cross*. We slip so easily into trances, denials, and excuses. We escape to other tenses than the present, spending months at a time in the definite or imperfect past, the future, subjunctive, or conditional. (See the attached "grammar meditation.")

The *Annunciations* (session 1) explored the acceptance and surrender we give when we welcome all that is given and unbidden--like breath, life,

and compassion. The works presented in the second session (*Frameshifts*, *The Blind Beggar*, *Windows*, *Strike the Rock*, *The Sower*) explored experiences of loss, emptiness, grief, and other ways of "holding the void." The third session explored the difficulties that arise when we try to give as we received. On the tight-rope walk of embracing love from moment to moment, our attempts to show compassion can go astray, be misconstrued, or, as actors say, they can even be mis-cued.

In *Amber*, a family secret is revealed on Thanksgiving. A dutiful father and veteran of the Bataan Death March finds that the duties of soldier to family, husband to wife, and father to children have created a tragedy. In *La Rinuncia*, a comic opera, the holy aspirations of a businessman to become a monk turn out to be a misconception about the meaning of sacrifice. *The People's Voice* explores the religious and patriotic justification for carefully circumscribing one's compassion and excluding by ethnic cleansing those who do not fit in the circle. So, here are three ways that compassion goes astray--by morphing into duty, misconceived self-denial, and exclusivity. The self-absorbed trances of Priest and Levite on the Jericho Road are other ways. Fully aware of all our bird-walks away from the divine path, Jesus observed that if you only "love those who love you, what reward have you?" (Mt. 6:46)

In the *Inhale* step of our closing meditation I asked you to "*remember the compassion you have received and to find its path through the thickets of your life. In all the ways you flower, find the sacrifices, duties, and acceptance others have surrendered to you. Welcome all you have received. Welcome your continuing transformation.*"

Session 4 completed the presentation of my works. We read through the script and music for *The Books of Daniel*, a two-act opera which was my only attempt to unite my professional life in education with my folk-art life of writing words and music. Like the second move in *Healing Breaths*, this work took a lot of pondering and waiting, the patterns for it taking more than a decade to settle out clearly. In fact, the two "holding" moves of *Healing Breaths* are more concerned with waiting than doing. When you hold the breath, you wait as you hear from all sides and allow matters to sort out in their own way; when you hold the void, you wait as you let go of what you know. Small songs, mantras, and prayers may help with waiting. (See the attached "grammar meditation" and other walking meditations.)

The Books of Daniel is a long and varied work of many musical genres and many kinds of confrontation. Like the *Book of Job*, it is also a

flyting, or disputation--particularly between the idealistic manager, Daniel, and his realistic associate, Vinny Joyner. Other confrontations are between management and employees ("No good deed"), the goals of education and business ("Don't let the children dream"), the rural life and progress (the auctioneer's songs), and the literal and mythical interpretation of scripture ("I ask you to imagine"). And then there is the role of dreams in one's decision-making and the "love angle" between Daniel and Dr. Miriam Braun. Perhaps you see why it took a decade for all of this to come together. I think that **wisdom** is about largely waiting for the full shape of a pattern or decision to arise through meditative listening. One listens to all the voices, painful and assuring, familiar and alien, authoritative and complaining. One searches dreams. And slowly, very slowly, the pattern settles out--the synthesis, the wise course of action.

So, in the final centering practice, I asked for us to "**Inhale** and welcome the wisdom in all that is given, even losses, contention, and challenge. Surrender to this beloved reality and, as a tree draws from its roots, draw from the broadly branching network of support, love, and care left by those who have lived before us. As a tree inhales from its leaves, breathe in resurrection and grow in transformation. **Hold the breath** to embrace what is received and let its patterns and directions emerge. **Exhale** to release hold, giving as you have received. Make a new thing and give it away completely. **Hold the void** as only you can do. Find that this release, absence, and emptiness, this void, can be good. **And pause** at the completed breath to watch it escape: Blessed be the name of the Lord."



The Grammar Meditation
"Not it, but Thou."

Chant of the monks of the Order of the Clouds
in *La Rinuncia*

Despite my facetious use of this chant in *La Rinuncia*, I take it seriously and sometimes use it as part of a variation of the four-move practice (*Healing Breaths*). This meditation is simply another redirection of attention to immediate concerns, indicated when I am stuck in grammar. This is not for everyone, but I offer it for your perusal.

You know about "living in the past." Well, one can also become stuck in the future, the conditional or the imperfect past. One can be fixated on the possessive or excessively proud of the indicative.

Some poets try to give grammar a shake to see if they can get around it or at least see around it:

"I wish now to wish now that it is now
that I will tell very well
what I think not now but now
Oh yes, Oh yes now
What do I think now
I think very well of what now
What is it now it is this now
How do you do how do you do
And now how do you do now
This which I wish to say now is this . . ." --Gertrude Stein

"Anyone lived in a pretty how town
With up so floating many bells down.
Spring, summer, fall, winter,
He laughed his didn't
He danced his did."
--e.e. cummings

My grammar meditation is not quite as puzzling as these poems:

relationships it allows us to express. We **must** go back to making things up. Therefore, when the disciples asked Jesus about prayer, he said to think of it as an intimate talk with a beloved parent.

Other *Healing Breaths* meditations

I often do *Healing Breaths* while walking. When words are used, I may do the Grammar meditation, described above. Other meditative words are listed below. I try to choose words that do not interfere with the aim of simply being and attending to what is. Yogic practices describe many ways of escorting interruptions from your mind. What does *not* work is saying "I will not think about X!" No surprise . One must gently recognize the passing thoughts but allow them to go on their way. As with the music and words presented, I can only describe my own practice; if you would learn more about yogic practices there are many helpful guides. Some are listed in the references on my blog-site (<http://www.frameshifts.com>). Here are some words that I use.*

Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.

Shema yisroel, adonnai eloihenu, adonnai echod.

La illaha, il halla. Asalaam aleicu. Waleicum asalaam.

Om mane padwe.

I walk in beauty. Beauty is before me. Beauty is above me, behind and around me. I walk in beauty.

The Christian, Jewish, Isalamic, Buddhist and Diné messages also remind me that other communities of faith reach for communion with the beloved reality of all that is. And then there are other words but that would require another packet of information. You don't want that!

Peace,

Richard Rose

July 6, 2014

* Spellings of transliterations vary.

E-mail from 6/23/2014:

Healing Breaths at Half Time

We have completed half the series of workshops. Whether you have been present for everything or missed everything, you are still invited to attend. Please check the table at the doorway for handouts you missed and for new materials. Do come if you are still interested and do not be concerned about what you have missed. As long as we are doing Healing Breaths, the door will remain open.

Of course, after this series ends, you will decide whether you would like to continue the practice and how frequently. At our next session, I will give you a questionnaire about this. (A copy of it is also attached below.)

If you have participated in the first sessions, you know some things about the practice--what it is and isn't:

--It's not yoga, although it uses a meditative practice.

--It's not a writers' critique group, although writers and composers present and curate selections from their works--even their works in progress.

--It's not a discussion group in which people sound off their many opinions, although opinions are expressed *through the works* and although the practice evokes many personal discussions *after the practice has ended*.

--It's not a theatrical or musical ensemble rehearsing to get the performance right, although everyone--even those not interested in being on stage--gets to rehearse a selection of the work presented. And, of course, some of the discussions before and after the practice may lead to performances.

Healing Breaths is basically a rehearsal practice, an opportunity for a group to return repeatedly to a meditative practice which embodies imaginative giving or prayer. If you came yesterday, you know about Avery Crawley. Here's his definition:

Prayer is sustained attention and creative engagement, personal and corporate, leading to a cognitive procession from fatalism to willful action, from ignorance to understanding, from grasping to acceptance, from waste to salvage, from fear to hope, from opportunism to compassion, from exclusion to inclusion, and from partial work to whole-hearted soul work. (*Frameshifts*, p. 38, vol. 2)

So far, we have directed our attention to opening ourselves to compassion and to engaging creatively with our transience. The next two sessions of our cognitive walk concern the difficulties of compassionate giving and wise action. Hope you can make it!

Peace,
Richard Rose

E-mail from 6/30/2014

Healing Breaths—a last welcome?

Dear Participants,

We had a small but lively session yesterday, with two newcomers, Victoria and Michelle. Next Sunday marks the end of the introductory series, "Probing the Depths," which grew out of a church retreat at Shrine Mont in October 2013. Following our session on this coming Sunday, we will discuss the future path for *Healing Breaths*.

If you have come to any of the previous sessions of *Healing Breaths*, you know its components: A four-move centering practice, a presentation of a selection of original work (given by the "curator"), a relaxation and brief re-centering followed by a try-out or rehearsal of the work, and a return to the centering practice.

Because my work is an extended meditation on compassion, transience, inclusion, and wisdom, it formed the backbone of the presentation, but now it's your turn. Whether the work is music or words, finished or in progress, here is a setting for it to be heard. As a curator, I tried both to let you hear and try out a sample and to give you all of the words and recordings so that you might also know and meaningfully listen to the whole works. Please consider how you will sample what you have made and what you will give the group.

But the group is not simply or even primarily about performance. It is about rehearsal. The raking out of obstacles, weeds and impediments to growth--the softening of hard ground so that the life-giving water may penetrate and roots probe deeply. This is as much for us as **listeners** as for us as **writers or performers**. Paul Torrance wrote about four characteristics of creativity--flexibility, fluency, originality, and elaboration. All of these are as much about giving the gift of understanding and listening as they are about producing a work of any kind.

There are other ways to talk about this, of course. Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* comes to mind. But *Healing Breaths* is not a discussion group on creativity or an opportunity for writers and composers to copyedit each other's work. It is a space for the participants to practice being together. Works of breath--be they poetry, narrative, or music, need space simply to *be*. For human beings, works of breath *began* in small groups around storytellers, poets, and singers. These forms of expression belong to *all* of us and they are tools for working with the dark matter of being in this world--the gift of breath and life, the joy of connecting and communing with others, the griefs of loss and transience.

We use these tools to work on ourselves. To come out of trances and denials. To challenge assumptions. To find the energy and desire to change. To make the slow transformation called the kingdom of God.

Transformation is not about changing an opinion or an idea or winning an argument. It is about aligning ourselves with the beloved reality of how things are. (<http://www.frameshifts.com>)

If any of this appeals to you, please return or come for the first time to our post-Independence Day session on July 6. After the session, we'll decide where we want to go with *Healing Breaths*. By the way, after that session, I will drop the email addresses of any participant who has not come to a session, unless you let me know that you want to remain on the mailing list.

Peace,

Richard Rose

Richard and Kathleen Rose

BOOK BLOG : <http://www.frameshifts.com>

GENERAL WEBSITE: <http://marginalnotesinwordsandmusic.org>

Selection from the Blog-site

Note that this blog, from <http://frameshifts.com> for May 1, 2014, is background material for a workshop series described in the *Performance Schedule* folder on the blog-site.

Healing Breaths

And The Mechanisms of Enlightenment

An essay interrupted by a list of references

There are no mechanisms of enlightenment.

So let's consider what's given--the way things are.

Every generation arrives into a made world. As Kurt Vonnegut said, we just got here. But even the made world is a small fraction of the way things are. Breath comes unbidden. We do not decide to metabolize food. Language and culture are received without evaluation. Our bodies and their transience are not consequences of rational analysis. Our lives are not composed, written, engineered or programmed. They flow, given and unbidden, complex and undirected. Each life flows in its own path of relationships. Each of us is a path but none manages the its flow. All flow and breathe together. And the breath is troposphere, the fuel of cells, the fluid of flight. John Muir wrote, "The rivers run not past but through us."

We experience moments of enlightenment when an event, practice, or story heightens our attention to the way things are. In *Frameshifts* and other works, I wrote about such experiences, which often come as little annunciations. These works form the basis of a series of workshops, called *Healing Breaths*, to be presented in June as a ministry of the Church of the Holy Comforter in Richmond. (See ad in the Performance Schedule folder.) For me, the making of words and music for the last fifty years has been a centering practice. Results have varied--piano improvisations, stories, poems, songs, and operas. I called it all **folk art** because it served a local interest (mine) and operated, in Roger Butterfield's phrase, "below the level of historical scrutiny." The work focused the mind, synthesized experiences, and reinterpreted some religious stories, but **rehearsal** was the foundation. In writing, I continually rehearsed what to say until I was satisfied with its sound and sense. The same was true of composition and performance. A "hearse" was originally a kind of rake, so "rehearsal" literally means "raking over."

As raking prepares soil by scraping tracks and grids for seed and lifting out twigs and other obstacles to growth, so rehearsal lays tracks and grids for smooth performance unimpeded by self-consciousness. So it is with performance both on stage and page. Rehearsal links bodily memory to intention. Whether the result is a convincing performance in a stage role or the shifting away from self by what Brother Lawrence called the "practice of the presence of God," I have found that both are matters of rehearsal. I suspect that in the gridded fabric of my cortical neurons the tracks which embody a created role are no different than those which embody *my self*. I cannot claim

to be expert or adept at meditative practice. I can only share my own arts of breath--arts of words and music which were admittedly personal, local, and folk arts. For me, this practice has been a divine walk, a daily invitation to the annunciations from the beloved reality of the worlds inside and around us. For an *explanation* of the previous sentence, however, I offer the works themselves.

In the *Healing Breaths* workshops, participants will use my rehearsal-based centering practice. My practice and works are offered for communication and communion, not commerce. Some participants will want to practice *Healing Breaths* after the series ends or to continue meeting and sharing their works. That will be their decision.

In the workshops I try to give as I received. Both breath and imagination are given and unbidden. One can take what is given as if it were a right or one can rake it to get under it, remove obstacles, understand it, plant in it, grow in it, and embody it in some way. This practice is not a mechanism for enlightenment, however, but a guide. Guides may help, but the ultimacy of enlightenment must be personally discovered.

Of course, enlightenment is not simply about a personal quest. This quest has serious social consequences and in traditional societies is therefore guided by the group through stories and practices of divine paths. These practices ensure trust, cooperation, compassion, wise judgment, and social cohesion, protecting groups both directly from individual excesses and indirectly from group excesses such as persecution. Although enlightenment is individually experienced, it can reform the group. From individual discoveries come the more tolerant rules, helpful inventions, articulate expressions, and leadership to awaken a group to its connections with others. Enlightenment takes different forms. For groups blinded by faith, enlightenment may be critical reason. For societies dazzled by information, enlightenment may be the Buddha's advice to be satisfied with what is given. For cultures swollen with greed and opportunism, enlightenment may be Jesus' story of the farmer so satisfied with excessive preparations and investments for the future that he missed an appointment with eternity.

Enlightenment is evoked and strengthened through participation in the divine stories of the groups in which we are rooted. This is why I wanted to offer *Healing Breaths* as a ministry of the church to imagination. As an artist, I want to communicate and commune with others. Entertainment is part of this, but no more than the props, the rhyme scheme, or voicing of the instruments. To entertain is simply to hold something between the performer and the audience. Production values matter less to me than the content of this "between-ness" or relationship of imaginations. For audiences deeply rooted in the same traditions, the communion is deep. Humor is understood. New ideas are evoked. Barriers are broken. New interpretations are considered. Obstacles to actions of justice and mercy are raked away. For other audiences, not rooted in the traditions, the work, written or performed, bridges differences.

If the workshop series has participants, I'll have more to say about it. For now, I have described *Healing Breaths* as a personal practice offered freely to others, but not as a method for manufacturing enlightenment.

Humans exaggerate their importance. As transient animals rooted in particular societies they nonetheless produce innumerable ways to seem permanent, godlike, and independent rulers free to automate inconvenient tasks and ignore limitations. Some, like Gilgamesh, intent on securing immortality, or Orpheus, checking up on how well he's done so far and thereby losing everything, seem to lose track of themselves and live in a trance. Of course, the stories of Gilgamesh and Orpheus were told to remind us of the dangers of such exaggerations. Surrendering to how things are rather than how we want them to be is a part of all such myths.

It is natural to live in harmony with the beloved reality of how things are; yet humans are so committed to their ways of knowing--the meanings and significances they find in everything--that they live in a trance of all-knowing independence and control from which they can be only occasionally awakened. These brief encounters with the vast interdependence of their transient existence are holy moments because they are separated from the usual trance of power and self-knowledge. Every person's experience of the holy is unique. The words, images, and practices of others can only serve as guides. As Karen Armstrong said (in *The Spiral Staircase*), we live through such moments linearly in time but return to them repeatedly in spiraling, transforming awareness given to us unbidden as we surrender to the way things are. The transformation comes not from fastening rationally onto a doctrine but from opening to the gift that was always present. Every path is different, she says, and "The great myths show that when you follow someone else's path, you go astray. . . The hero must fight his own monsters." Jesus said that each person must bear his or her own cross. As one is guided into a holy story or practice, like the *Way of the Cross*, one embodies the hero and awakens--even if only briefly and gradually. In *Healing Breaths*, I offer my own practice as a guide. It is a folk art using myths in words and music. It is also a meditative practice of continual rehearsal. I don't distinguish between rehearsal, performance, composition, prayer, writing, and improvisation. For me, they share the same space. Although serious about the art, I don't see it as a serious contest but rather as communication and communion in which self slides away in surrender as hearts are shared. At the end of my opera, *The People's Voice*, the antagonists sing:

**When freedom comes,
silent as snowfall,
none will hear it.
Like the fresh air,
all will breathe it,
yet none see.**

**Like the wind
giving sail:
yet none see.**

**In this way,
when voices blend,
each bending
to the other,
freedom comes.**

This is the experience of the Holy Spirit, the Pentecost experience celebrated in the Church of the Holy Comforter and all other communities of worship. It is an unbidden gift. It is the sustained attention and creative engagement of prayer.

In *Healing Breaths* I let the art speak for itself and encourage others to present their own works. Other works about enlightenment are listed below with a few final comments. I have omitted meditative methods aiming at happiness, wealth, and well being. Viktor Frankl, criticizing an American document, once said that happiness is not pursued. It must ensue from living a meaningful life. So enlightenment, like happiness, is not pursued by technique, but ensues practice. It is not mechanized but realized. Rehearsal with a beloved community is what keeps us on a divine path, even though--or especially because--we don't know what will come next.

There are no mechanisms of enlightenment.

Only paths.

As many paths as humans.

As many paths as there are trees

opening to the given,

rooted in their source--

trees whose roots and branches bend and turn to what is given.

There are no mechanisms of enlightenment.

Only interpretations.

As many interpretations as humans--

humans awakened to how things are and to what is given;

humans like trees who flower,

and open their branches to the light,

and whose ancient roots anacampserote

bend hearts always back to love.



A personal list of selected references with final comments about "enlightenment"

Adams, Scott *God's Debris: A Thought Experiment, The Religious War* The cartoonist and free thinker imagines that the Big Bang was the explosion of God to all parts of creation. The task of humanity is to reassemble the debris. God's self-limitation is the basis of humanity's creative endeavors. Humanity needs a metaphor that allows God and science to coexist in our minds. Our minds however are untrustworthy deception-generators; therefore the best we can do is to choose the ideas that seem least delusional. Religions may be compared to different maps which all lead to the collective good of society. Adams presents these ideas in the form of a story about a delivery man who turns out to be an avatar entrusted with the truth about humanity.

Aquinas, Thomas What I have read by Aquinas has come second-hand (See Anton Pegis's book on Aquinas' works), so this will be brief. The essences of things are the enduring intellectual objects of thought. These essences are fundamental realities. All concrete and material aspects of the world are transient. In some way, the real world derived from the ideal (Platonic) world. Unlike Plato, Aquinas was more concerned with how this derivation occurred. He imagined that humans were composites of soul and matter. The material world was part of creation. In Mass, the hypostatic union represents the importance of both spirit and matter, so knowledge must have both spiritual and material referents. Aquinas differed with Plato's attempt to understand by reason alone, He argued that human intellect is powerless to reason without drawing on many experiences and existence itself. For Thomas, the soul requires the incarnation of the body to do the work of the spirit and to know the truth. Unlike Plato, he does not see the material world as an unwelcome intruder on the work of reason.

Armstrong, Karen *The Spiral Staircase* is a memoir of her own divine path. Her writings on religion are lucid and numerous. See *The Great Transformation, A Short History of Myth, Buddha, Muhammad*, and other works. She writes of several ages of religious development, the first four of which are:

An oral tradition of dream times in the Paleolithic period (20,000 to 8,000 BCE),

A period of traditions of hunting myths, Sky-God myths, and quests by shamans for the tribe--often by ascending a tree and returning re-born after an ecstatic experience with a message for the community (Neolithic time 8000 to 4000 BCE).

A period of life with wild and domestic animals, including logical and practical skills for hunting and killing, myths about taking the lives of animals for food, and transcendental experiences when making comparisons with animals (Early Civilizations, 4000-800 BCE)

The Axial age (800-200BCE) The term "axial" comes from Karl Jaspers. In this period of Neolithic agriculture, just as the hunter had to make the heroic descent and ascent like Hercules, so the farmer's seed had to die to be reborn as crop--an epiphany. Hunting and agriculture were sacramental. Rituals sacrificing the first fruits replenished the soil's power and gave proper reverence to the sacred Earth whose produce was shared by both gods and humans.

As she threads through the anthropology and historical record, Armstrong elucidates the function of myths and liturgies: "A myth does not impart factual information, but is primarily a guide to behavior. Its truth will only be revealed if it is put into practice--ritually or ethically." (p. 22)

Berkofsky, Martin My teacher, who died in 2013, championed the meditative music of Alan Hovhaness, Charles Ives, Liszt, Beethoven, Brahms, and others, always finding the spiritual nature of the music and the quiet center within himself to perform it. Our lessons always began with tea. He set me to learning Schubert and encouraged my compositional efforts. He set an example of selfless dedication to others and to his art.

Bach, J.S. *The Well Tempered Clavier*. I have spent many hours with these musical meditations. Schweitzer's comments in his biography of JSB illuminate their interpretation.

Bhagavad-Gita This story from the *Mahabharata* consists of Krishna's teachings to the young ruler Arjuna, who refuses to fight his relatives, the Kauravas. It becomes clear that the hero is really refusing to engage with the most intimate matters of his life, represented by his relatives and teachers. The soul must do battle with its friendly relations or it will be enthralled and forever separated from its true center, the Atman, or one reality. None are truly born or die. What must be defeated is the desire for fruit, the expectation of returns for one's actions. As Christians say, "give expecting nothing in return" and "freely ye have received; freely give," and "For what we have received may we be truly thankful."

The BIBLE. This journey of this library of the many books of the many stories of many people on many divine paths began in 500 B.C, translated into the Septuagint in 250 BCE, increased by the additions of the New Testament from 50 to 150 A.D., translated by Jerome into Latin in 200 AD, put into the Vulgate in 383-405, illuminated at Lindisfarne in 700, adopted by Charlemagne in the Alcuin version in 800, the Lindisfarne version used for an interlinear English translation in 960 AD, the Paris version published in 1200, followed by the Wyclif version in 1382, the printed Gutenberg Latin version in 1455, Erasmus' version in 1516 and Luther's in 1522-34, Tyndale's version in 1526 (for which he was burned in 1536), the Coverdale version in 1535, the Geneva version of 1560 (favored by Scots and Puritans), the Great Bible in 1539, the Bishop's Bible in 1582, the Douai-Rheims English Bible of 1582 and the King James Bible of 1611, based on Tyndale's version. The Bible is the main source for most of my work, such as *The Books of Daniel (Daniel and Darius)*, *Frameshifts (Noah and the*

Flood), **Annunciations** (the annunciations to Zechariah and Mary, the Good Samaritan, and other references), **The People's Voice** (the Pilgrim interpretation of the City on a Hill), **The Sower, The Blind Beggar, Strike the Rock** (linking the stories of Moses and the rock and the Woman at the Well), **Amber** (The Lord's Prayer and other references), and others.

Bridgman, Percy *The Way Things Are*. While he may not answer the question of what and how we know things, Bridgman disposes of many false, confused and delusional answers. As Godel shows, he says, in order to understand a system, one must get outside it. But we cannot exit ourselves, much as we may deny it. What we know and how we know it are always *with respect to us*. "The best that we can attain is relative rigor in a limited universe of discourse and operations." He then proceeds to specify this limited universe, applying Occam's razor, which says, as he puts it, that "entities are not to be created beyond necessity." (Given the number of words I've written in this blog on the topic of "enlightenment" I have already failed this criterion.) He continues that this criterion "seems to satisfy a deep-seated instinct for good workmanship."

That is, from the start, getting understanding is a *studio project*, as artists have always known. In **Frameshifts**, Professor Hank Randall writes, "Nature evokes our best efforts when we take it as a studio. In fact, nature brings these studios into being. We say that studios are 'evoked' by nature because only by building studios to meet exacting specifications can we prepare to understand what nature has to teach." (p. 15, vol. 2) In his withering analysis of society, Thorstein Veblen paused to make a comment about workmanship: A human being "is an agent seeking in every act the accomplishment of some concrete, objective, impersonal end. By force of his being such an agent, he is possessed of a taste for effective work, and a distaste for futile effort. He has a sense of the merit of serviceability or efficiency and of the demerit of futility, waste, or incapacity. This aptitude or propensity may be called the instinct of workmanship." (*The Theory of the Leisure Class*, p.29). Knowing, making, testing, and creating are all means for attaining the "relative rigor in a limited universe of discourse and operations" --such as a philosophy, theory, painting, composition, or meditative practice. All such work we do "by force of (our) being."

Bruhac, Joseph *Roots of Survival*. A treatise on Native American story-telling and the Sacred. From Bruhac and other Native American writers, and from the Journals of Lewis and Clark, I wrote *Finding A Purchase*, the last section of **Frameshifts** (vol. 2).

Buber, Martin *I and Thou, Good and Evil, The Knowledge of Man* Buber meditates (Good and Evil) on some of the Psalms, like Psa. 73 (which I set to music in *The Books of Daniel*). It asks why the wicked prosper and answers that wickedness is a slipping into isolation and nothingness while righteousness is a continuing relationship with God. Buber's focus on interrelationship is summarized in the famous concept of between-ness (*Enterzwischen*). We are created and defined by our relationships. We are not self-made, independent beings. We are gifts, like the cosmos itself. We are part of what is given. As self-aware and reasoning creatures, we exaggerate our power and

ability to control, even sometimes imagining God as a powerful tyrant. The relationship to others and the natural world as manipulable things has great force, but like any unbalanced force, it moves the Controllers and Controlled in unexpected directions, such as greed, lust, and exploitation. The I-It relationship must be balanced with I-Thou relationships. In a balanced system of relationships, we are awakened to our place in the beloved reality of how things are. In *Frameshifts*, I wrote of this between-ness:

**The *between*
that beckons from another's eyes,
not doing or being
but relationship,
a domain whose variables
rise from interactions
and fall when we slip
in betrayals.** (p.367, vol. 2)

Campbell, Joseph *The Power of Myth, The Masks of God, and The Hero with a Thousand Faces* are all valuable sources.

Carr, Monsignor (*St. Bridget's Richmond Colloquium on the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, 9/10/2011*) Carr discussed the traditional teaching concerning the four ways that worshipers experience Christ in the Eucharist. The four gifts are temptation, resistance, mind and spirit; that is, the Eucharist offers power to resist temptation, to resist Evil, to put on the mind of Christ, and to receive the Holy Spirit. In the liturgy, "Earth unites with heaven," and, as Augustine said, "we become what we eat." Because of the Real Presence of Christ, it matters how we treat each others. Hospitality is part of the celebration. Worshipers come to each other as prophet, priest, and king, as Christ came to them in the chrism of baptism. The Real Presence is the substance of the church, the "underlying reality" in which all participate. And the liturgy or work of the people, according to Monsignor Kevin Irwin (11/20/2011) is "mediated immediacy" of this reality. The truths of the faith that were once the immediate experience of the first disciples become the present experience of worshipers through sacraments and scriptures. The name "Jesus" is never used without the modifiers "Christ," "King," or "Lord" because we do not have immediate experience with the historical Jesus. Our experience is with the risen Christ, the Logos, the underlying beloved reality. The essence of liturgy is the personal and immediate participation in the wordless fellowship with water, earth, fire, air--all the creation--in shared bread and wine.

Drda, Darrin *The Four Global Truths*. Drda applies the truths of Buddhism to problems of global suffering as if describing the treatment of a disease. The four noble truths are: to recognize the reality and symptoms of suffering, to diagnose the causes of suffering, to explain the prognosis for overcoming suffering, and to prescribe the path to end suffering. In discussing the diseased biosphere, he marshals evidence from ecology,

economics, and other areas of research and then offers a Buddhist framework for finding wise relationships.

Edwards, Cliff *Van Gogh and God*. Vincent's rough strokes made paintings work like Zen koans. They are no longer needed after they have served Vincent's purpose by directing the viewer to pay attention to all that he loved in what was portrayed. Edwards provides a brilliant explanation of the religious intentions that guided Vincent's work.

Grimm, der Brüder *Märchenhaftes*. The fairy tales of the Grimm brothers contained many mythical elements. My work, *The Fisher of the James*, is based on *The Fisher and his Wife*, a story about wanting too much.

Haidt, Jonathan *The Righteous Mind*. The moral psychologist demonstrates that conservatives and liberals have certain common interests at stake, specifically what he calls the "taste buds of the righteous mind," viz. receptors for six fundamental values: caring, fairness, loyalty, authority, sanctity, and liberty. Conservatives and liberals define and emphasize these values differently.

Halifax, Joan in *Westward Dharma* and other books, writes about caring for the dying. She is a Buddhist and medical anthropologist, who says "When I tasted the stillness I knew it was medicine." The more awareness grows, the more responsibility grows. As a child, she became aware of the inequity suffered by her Black nanny and to understand the other world which supported her privileges. She went on to live with people of the Negev desert. In one community (the Dogon) a ritual is performed every 53 years, in seven year alternations among clans. In this ritual, the community is re-born. In Western cultures, traditional rituals are weakened--such rituals as those for the returning warrior, the entry into adulthood, the passage from life to death or for regular prayer and worship. Talking with Krista Tippett in her program *On Being* (12/26/2013), Halifax said that the absence of strong rituals has led to hypervigilance, anxiety, pathological altruism, and other issues as media-consumers are overcome by their empathetic but impotent response to the continual flow of horrific "news." Group rituals and personal observances evolved specifically to address the many threshold experiences of human life.

As Temple Grandin, the animal psychologist, has written, humans and other animals have emotional neural pathways for panic, rage, fear, seeking, lust, care, and play. Each is a discrete system of nerves and hormones with its own receptive, or dendritic, pathways. These pathways can be nurtured and made to branch and flourish in a positive way through life-fostering concern and compassionate interactions with others. Or dendritic growth can be impaired by abnormal repetitive behaviors, like those arising from sensory deprivation, or obsessive-compulsive disorders, neuroses, sleep dysfunctions, addictions, anxieties, frustrations, acting out, self mutilation, self aggrandizement, self deception, stereotypy, racism, ostracism, hatred, genocide, fixations, sadomasochism, bullying, gossiping, phobias, self-disgust and so on. Imbalanced emotional pathways lead to finding comfort and success in imbalanced behaviors and to

trance-like patterns from which escape is difficult. Religious comfort and ritual shared with a group have the power to recruit positive emotions which can guide us across difficult thresholds onto our own divine paths. Unfortunately, religions often squander this power, letting tribalism take over.

Hamer, Dean *The God Gene*. A molecular biologist at NCI, Hamer identified the indicators of religiosity as: propensity for mystical experience; transpersonal identification, self-forgetfulness, concern with or feeling for all the things around one. He then searched for a genetic basis for such traits. He found it in genetic material from Buddhist monks, Wiccan priestesses, and others and called it the gene for "self transcendence" or VMAT2, which makes a protein that packages monoamines like dopamine and serotonin, mood-altering neurotransmitters. With William James, Hamer believes that religion is what one does in solitude. On this view, some people are genetically more spiritual than others.

Of course, this claim disregards the communal and interdependent nature of religions. It is an example of how science can turn a vague idea like "religiosity" into operational concepts for empirical study. After the study, however, one must always return to the original abstraction and ask whether the operational concepts validly represent the object under study. It is not enough to say that because one has defined religiosity as self-forgetfulness and propensity for mystical experience, that a gene producing a protein causing these effects is the gene for religion--or the "God gene." The initial abstraction of a vague concept is narrow. The subsequent testing is narrower. The statistically significant claims of the results yet narrower, and the interpretations and speculations regarding the results, narrower still. The religious believe that God is present in all things, so these results are perhaps not surprising at all.

Hirschfield, Jane *Nine Gates*. Like Hart Crane, who wrote that poetry is "self discipline for the purpose of a formal integration of experience," and Gary Snyder, another Buddhist poet, Jane Hirschfield's work is deeply controlled by her meditative life. But she is popularly known for her definition of Zen: "Everything changes. Everything is connected. Pay attention."

Lama, The Dalai *Ethics for the New Millenium* The Dalai Lama writes that "someone else's action should not determine your response." Our identities--indeed all identities and ideas--have a provisional nature. They are provided by convention so that we may communicate with each other, but "when we begin to see that everything that we perceive and experience arises as part of an indefinite series of causes and conditions, our whole perspective changes." Perhaps what one sees is like the jewel net of Indra--a net of infinite size and covered in sparkling jewels reflecting each other. This is a classic Buddhist image for universal interdependence. Such a view is violated by the concept of individualism; yet production, possession, consumption, and economic activity come from individual actions. So a balance must be struck. As he says, "There is no denying that our happiness is inextricably bound up with the happiness of others. There is no denying that if society suffers, we ourselves suffer. Nor is there any denying that the more our hearts and minds are afflicted with ill will, the more miserable we become.

Thus we can reject everything else: religion, ideology, all received wisdom. But we cannot escape the necessity of love and compassion." An African word for the inextricable connections of our well being with the well being of others is "ubuntu." (See the poem "Ubuntu" p. 370, *Frameshifts*, vol. 2.)

Lawrence, Brother *The Practice of the Presence of God.* (quoted elsewhere)

Lewis, Samuel L. *Spiritual Dance and Walk.* Lewis was a widely-traveled botanist who founded the Dances of Universal Peace. (Local chapters are in Charlottesville and Richmond.) One of the dances goes to the Kabbalistic words, "I'm opening up in sweet surrender to the luminous love light of the world."

Lucretius *On the Nature of things.* (especially in the translation by Frank O. Copley) This exposition of Epicurean philosophy and Democritus' atomism is an early materialistic explanation of the cosmos. It also aimed to console those who feared death, simply stating that where death is, we are not and where we are, death is not. In that much, it was like the later poem by Mary Frye in Baltimore in 1938 for her Jewish neighbor worried about her family in Europe: "Do not stand at my grave and weep, I am not there, I do not sleep, I am a thousand winds that blow; I am the diamond glint in snow. / I am the sunlight on ripened grain . . ." Such a consolation is also offered by Buddhism and by an awakening to our transience, scale, and inter-dependence within a vast and beloved reality.

Nouwen, Henri J.M. *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*

Okakura, Kakuzo *The Book of Tea.* Okakura explores the connections of Teism, Taoism, and Zen.

Parini, Jay *Jesus, the Face of God.* See my review in the earlier blog.

Pope, Alexander *Essay on Man.* A human being, he says, exists in an "isthmus of a middling state/ A Being darkly wise and rudely great/ With too much knowledge for the Sceptic side/ With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,/ He hangs between, in doubt to act, or rest, / In doubt to deem himself a God or Beast,/ In doubt his mind or body to prefer,/ Born but to die and reasoning but to err. . ." Written as rationalist treatise in 1743, Pope's essay has always seemed a concise statement of exactly where humanity stands.

Rogers, Fred *Television performer.* Rogers' performances were centered in meditative practice and compassion. He frequently cited the writings of Henri Nouwen. I have thought that Rogers' puppet plays about King Friday unconsciously spoofed a false notion about God as a self-absorbed paternal ruler to whom everyone is always saying, "Correct as usual, King Friday." Rogers may have done this deliberately, but his interest was in using puppetry to go into the imagination and find stories about human development during a very short period of human life. He did so in a secular television

program, but his intentions were religious. He begins with the same question that the lawyer (or rich young ruler--not a bad name for a three or four year-old) asked Jesus: "Who is my neighbor?" Rogers answer was a Neighborhood--the whole Kingdom of Make Believe he created, which was his expression of the kingdom of God.

Schneider, Stephen H. *The Primordial Bond*. Religion, arts and sciences recognize the natural cycles of the Earth. Humans participate in these cycles and in traditional societies have attempted to live in balance with the natural world. Schneider and his co-author present art, literature, and quantitative science in support of a balanced and sustainable way of life.

Schweitzer, Albert *The Philosophy of Civilization, The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle, The Quest of the Historical Jesus, Reverence for Life, J.S.Bach*. Schweitzer wrote, "wherever a man turns he can find someone who needs him. Even if it is a little thing, do something for which you get no pay but the privilege of doing it. For remember, you do not live in a world all your own. Your brothers are here too." I cannot write too much about Schweitzer and therefore stop here.

Seneca *On the shortness of life* (part of a longer essay. See also: *On Tranquility*) writes that "the greatest obstacle to living is expectancy, which hangs upon tomorrow and loses today." He mentions Democritus's treatise on balance or *euthymia* and cites Lucretius, speaking of human restlessness: "Thus every man flees himself." And again, he says, "You act like mortals in all that you fear and like immortals in all that you desire . . . You are living as if destined to live forever; your own frailty never occurs to you." He lists all the ways people waste their lives and then complain of not having enough time. "Everyone hustles his life along and is troubled by a longing for the future and weariness of the present."

Shepherd, Phil *New Self, New World* Shepherd speaks of divisions due to the nature of abstraction and individualism, ignoring the Law of Inter-relationship. A sense of the Whole requires passive acceptance because we are confronted with the fact that all of reality will forever be greater than humans. We cannot get that perspective. Instead, we get approximations and what he calls **unintegrated perspectives**. The natural cycles of nature give us a sense of the compensations of parts to the whole, in which some humans of the past partook and saw their own roles as stewards. Imbalances set in as nature was transformed from provider to resource, shifting the center from the world-mind to the controlling mind.

Sobel, Eliezer *Why I am not enlightened*. This author, a Richmond resident, seems to have explored every meditative method known. His accounts of numerous encounters with gurus, guides, shamans, priests, and New Age psychologists are filled with sage humor. An earnest seeker pleads with a Zen priest to show him enlightenment. The priest holds his head under water until he chokes; then he says, "When you want to be enlightened as much as you wanted to breathe just now, come back and see me."

Thurston, Mark *The Inner Power of Silence*. Currently the director of a unique program on Contemplation at George Mason University, Thurston wrote this book in 1986. It is an excellent summary of meditative practices such as anapanasati, the surrender to the rhythm of the "universe which breathes through us."

Tillich, Paul *Dynamics of Faith*. The object of devotion or "ground of all being" is an ultimate concern, Tillich said, with an emphasis on "ultimate." For Rudolph Otto (*The Idea of the Holy*), the numinous experience of the Holy was the object of devotion. Jesus' parable of the prisoners, needy, and sick being Christ in the world could be interpreted in relational terms, following Buber, or in Tillich's terms of ultimacy. All descriptions of the object of devotion have supported ethical prescriptions from Mesopotamian times to Decalogue times to New Testament times. Perhaps questions about suffering, origins, dreams, the dead, and the proper object of devotion are reflections on communal life. The liturgies and scriptures and ethical codes are antedated by communal practices, stories, and folk arts. The later traditions evolve to recognize and strengthen communal relationships which already existed. Like literature and the historical disciplines, religion concerns stories partially verified and intended as templates by which a community becomes obligated. The community of faith is defined by a "system of thought and action," (Winston King, *An Introduction to Religion*) as given by the myth in which it is rooted. Usually such communities were ethnically homogeneous, but in great worldwide religions, the community had more and more to accommodate the vast reality not addressed by its formulations. Coming out of Protestantism and the postwar period, Tillich sought to find the fundamental features of what it meant to live by faith. He discovered that all human beings search for ultimate concerns, even though clumsily or unknowingly.

Tilden, Elwyn *Toward Understanding Jesus*. Tilden, who was my teacher, spoke of Jesus' "life-fostering concern," a concept like Schweitzer's "reverence for life," which extends to all of creation. Tilden wrote that the "turn from collecting of facts to interpreting the whole of life--this evaluating and self-dedicating operation--is faith rather than science at work. Men align themselves with the truth they accept . . . This act of self-direction or self-dedication is more clearly included in the meaning of 'faith' than of philosophy."

Final Comments. I weaken!/ It's time to cut off the list. Other writings and stories about the divine path are too numerous to add-- Faust, Henry IV (See W.H. Auden's *Lectures on Shakespeare* and everything else by Shakespeare, Auden and Philip Larkin), the stories about Moses, Orpheus, Demeter, Gilgamesh, and James Joyce's stories about Stephen Daedalus and Leopold Bloom. Also, the works of poets like Hopkins, Dickinson, Basho, Eliot, Rilke, Crane and others too numerous to mention.

Harold Bloom argued that religions are worships of literary figures--and often the wrong figures. He finds more wisdom in Cervantes, Shakespeare, and Homer than in the philosophers, like the Platonists who influenced Kabbalah, Christianity, and literature. He sees the rift in Western thinking between Platonic and Hebraic thought as a defining

dynamic in our culture which stimulates our imaginations. He points out that to do creative work in a culture with a well defined tradition, the artists purposely misreads the tradition to create space for the imagination to work. Thus Plato censored poets but created the poetic fiction of Socrates, and thus, Bloom says, Christianity misreads Judaism. The more Jewish version of Jesus' life is to be found in sources like *The Book of Thomas*, where Jesus is shown as an itinerant rabbi teaching the wisdom to be found in the immediate, present, and commonplace. He tells his followers to disregard their historical predecessors and traditions. They must learn to open their eyes and understand the wisdom around them.

Certainly an immediate, kinesthetic awareness and empathy are evoked by poets, dramatists, artists, and composers. The world-mind is to be made immediately accessible and as natural as if there were no mediator. When an opera like *La Traviata*, or *Mathis der Maler*, or Kurt Weill's *The Covenant* begins, one suddenly is in another world.

Of course, some in the audience always resist--turning away, laughing, despising, ignoring. They are not prepared to connect with the work. A sower must first rake the ground and prepare it to receive the seeds or the soil will not receive the seeds. My parents, a young officer on leave during World War II and his new bride from Texas, went to a ballet in New York and couldn't stop laughing. They had to leave before being told to leave. Such a high-fallutin' performance was so unfamiliar to them that they couldn't take it seriously, but for a Russian bureaucrat, stealthily passing along a samizdat to her co-workers, a visit to the Bolshoi was a religious experience of the artistic freedom so alien to the rest of her life. She received the ballet experience with a sense of elevated gratitude. Most of us, most of the time are more like seeds falling on unraked, unprepared soil.

We're not so enlightened

Sometimes we seem not dumb but numb. Think of a foot asleep. Or think of the people we read about running into trees or being robbed at the ATM at 3:00 a.m. Both the perpetrators and the victims who make it above the fold of the morning newspaper often seem to have been sleepwalking through their lives. We too, in our personal lives, may continue to hurt ourselves and others as if caught in the repeating loops of dream. In our public lives, our trances become great, unbalanced, calamitous movements. The numbness is what religions call darkness. The correction is enlightenment--waking up. But if it's a personal path, how can anyone else tell you how to find it?

It doesn't help that the many sources all seem to have different ideas about enlightenment. Do we remain unenlightened because we are ignorant of a Secret Idea or because we are insensitive to an Obvious Idea? Is this matter of waking up even concerned with getting an idea right?

Let's back up. I am not multilingual. I also am not multi-enlightened. Joseph Campbell was capable of writing about the "hero with a thousand faces," but, much as I

admire his work, I can only make out a few faces. Like a tree, I am rooted in the Christian divine walk. It's where I grew. Seeing Christ in others is the practice Christians follow by continually rehearsing Christ-consciousness with each other. In non-Christian systems, I can only converse in a creole or pidgin, but it seems to me that all traditions say that humans remain unenlightened when they live in a trance and forget three realities:

their animal nature, and tree-rootedness in what is given

their limited understanding and scale, and

the inter-relationships affected by their self-dazzling control of everything



Waking up to these realities is spiritual enlightenment, but this is not an intellectual exercise. Transformation is not mechanized. I do not argue for an idea but rather make a plea. Like Phil Shepherd, I feel that our culture is losing its way and profoundly unbalanced. As when Lord Krishna or other avatars were sent to restore balance to a distorted world-mind or as when Orpheus traveled to Hades to fetch Eurydice, we have a trip ahead of us. Why? Gross injustice, inequity, violence, and global devastation--the usual situation for myth, religion, and apocalyptic hucksterism. The usual solution is a personal Quest followed by social Transformation. The world is then restored and pulled back from the powers of darkness. All good plots.

But neither academic nor mythic analysis is within my grasp, so I will simply expand on the three realities and let you take it from there.

Our animal nature and rootedness. On the religious view, escaping the trance we are in is less about getting more information than it is about fully appreciating what we are, or as Percy Bridgman called it, "the way things are." And first we are animals: relational, rooted in place and group, transient, sentient, self-stabilizing centers of energetic and informational exchange. Our less cognitive relations, particularly the mammals, are exquisitely sensitive to the immediate conditions of their habitats, readily accommodating to and assimilating changes at many levels of metabolism, behavior, and genetics. Whether through reflex reactions, fixed action patterns, learning, dominance hierarchies, biochemical change, or epigenetics, they respond impeccably to their worlds without ideas, abstractions, analysis, dissertations, or market research.

Our limited understanding and scale. We, however, begin to lose speech almost as soon as we learn what to do with it. We convert experiences into meanings and forget that we created the meanings. Our trademarks are statistics, poems, iconic images, computer-assisted designs, translations of dead languages and countless other ways of putting living things to death through names and explanations. Statistics hide the costs of our comforting systems, but Federico Lorca reminds us that "beneath all the statistics is a drop of duck's blood" and that a "river of blood flows past the suburbs" of our comforts. But we go on, confidently bundling all of our forms of knowledge into traditions,

curricula, resource allocations, societal structures, academic disciplines, industries, markets, and what Phil Phenix called "realms of meaning."

Of course, in wretched circumstances, meanings give us our lives back. Consider the Mozart played by and for the dying in Theresienstadt, the *Quartet for the End of Time*, composed by Messiaen while in Stalag #7, or the log drums played by Africans enslaved in Virginia. These expressions led the psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl to observe:

We needed to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life--daily and hourly. Our answer must consist, not in talk and meditation but in right action and in right conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets before each individual No situation repeats itself, and each situation calls for a different response. Sometimes the situation in which a man finds himself may require him to shape his own fate by action. At other times it is more advantageous for him to make use of an opportunity for contemplation and to realize assets in this way. Sometimes man may be required simply to accept fate, to bear his cross. . . (*Man's Search for Meaning*, 122-123)

Given such trying circumstances and our feelings of insignificance as we contemplate our lives and express ourselves, it is not surprising that we are often dazed. We defensively exaggerate our importance and knowledge. Perhaps our bodies being mostly empty space is a frighteningly good reason to remain in a daze.

Our inter-relationships. Nevertheless, these limitations lead us to exaggerate the importance of meaning, to forget how to perceive and live as animals, and how to have a world-mind. So we fail to be circumspect about our understandings. As a Christian, I should try to allow for a deep integrity in the way things are--not because I know this, but because I also allow for my animal and cognitive limitations. Lucretius saw atoms and the void where others later saw electromagnetic fields or informatics. All such understandings are defined by levels of measurement and limited by characteristics abstracted, however useful the ideas may become. To say that one allows for a deep integrity in the way things are is to accept limitations on one's understanding and to realize that "knowing" and "meaning" are concerned with acceptably verifiable claims.

Enlightenment, however, is about re-discovering the personal experience of the animal's receptivity and readiness to accommodate to relationships at many levels, to assimilate the accommodations, and to respond in an impeccably adept way. To say that one allows for a deep integrity in the way things are is also to accept that the built-in limitations on knowledge also apply to *self*-knowledge. Again, as native Americans remind us, our animal spirit-guides show the way--like Mashkinonge, the spirit-fish portrayed in my *Fisher of the James*. The animal way is to accept the given world. Frankl reminds us that when invited to an unavoidable situation, it is often better to be prepared with acceptance than with meanings.

And Fred Rogers reminds us of the acceptance of others as they are, saying "**the greatest gift you can give someone is an honest receiving of what the person has to**

offer." That is, enlightenment is not about getting an idea right, it is about surrender to how things are. I prefer to say it is about accepting the beloved reality:

Bless the wisdom of the Holy One above us.

Bless the truth of the Holy One beneath us.

Bless the love of the Holy One within us.

--from the Chinook Psalter, 2008

So, this acceptance of our relationships to how things are is not about explanation and control, but surrender, expression and responsibility. This is a matter of whole-body responsiveness, not simply words. Shaky ground--without the proofs, persuasion, and explanations of language. The language of poetry, however, can take shortcuts:

*Yang argues against any idea of poetry that is unchangeable, unchallengeable, or fixed. In his use of meaning to urge us to pass beyond meaning, in his use of words to pass beyond words, he points to the mode of knowledge described in the Heart Sutra, the central text of Zen: "no eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind, no consciousness." The description does not mean that an awakened person is blind, struck deaf, numb to the world, and dumb. Rather, such a person is one who knows the world directly, without mediation, and knows the self in the widest existence, reflected in all things. The poet, too, is free to see with no eyes, to speak with no tongue. Poetry will continue on its own path, untroubled. (from Jane Hirschfield's *Nine Gates*, p.57)*

Archibald MacLeish may have had this in mind when he wrote that

*A poem should be palpable and mute
as a globed fruit,
dumb
as old medallions to the thumb,
as silent as the sleeve-worn stone
of casement ledges where the moss has grown.
A poem should be wordless
as the flight of birds.*

(*Ars poetica*)

Shepherd puts it this way:

As Buddha said, "Your work is to discover your work and then, with all your heart, to give yourself to it." Creativity itself is precisely about receiving the energies of the world, processing them, and releasing them. But the same could be said of presence: to be present is to be here, now, fully sensitized and awake to the world--assimilating it and giving over to what it calls from you without resistance or hesitation. The same can be said of the third leg of our metaphoric stool: freedom. The caged tiger cannot live in an open exchange of energies with the world; the tiger treading the bamboo grove is fully participant in it. In fact, the currents of energy that make up your

exchange with the world are what you feel as your life. You are most fully in reality, then, and most freely in reality, when your exchange of Energy with the world is most free: when the inner corridor is most uncluttered . . .

--*New Self, New World*, (p.266)

These helpful formulations provide indicators of enlightenment, but they cannot be used to certify that one is enlightened. Presumably those not sufficiently mindless or wordless would not entirely qualify! Thus one seems always to slip into trying to get the **idea** of enlightenment just right. We continually get in our own way.

Like Jesus, Brother Lawrence wrote nothing on the subject of enlightenment. All that is known about him comes from an interview. He seems to have adopted a habit of acceptance that recalls Buddha's final words to his disciples, "Learn to take satisfaction with what is given." He said:

That our sanctification did not depend upon changing our works, but in doing that for God's sake which we commonly do for our own. That it was lamentable to see how many people mistook the means for the end, addicting themselves to certain works, which they performed very imperfectly . . . (and) That it was a great delusion to think that the times of prayer ought to differ from other times; that we are as strictly obliged to adhere to God by action in the time of action as by prayer in the season of prayer. That his prayer was nothing else but a sense of the presence of God, his soul being at that time insensible to everything but divine love . . .

While allowing for both the ways of action (like Karma Yoga) and meditation (like Dhyana Yoga), Brother Lawrence speaks of his own acceptance of how things are as a "holy inactivity." As Eliezer Sobel comments, referring to Zen master Bernie Glassman, escaping from the "addiction to being me" is unlikely for any of us--even if we are "spiritual superstars."

Spiritual realization is more like a rock that you sit on than a path you walk on. "You find your seat," the Buddhists say, and you sit in that center of Presence and Being, gazing at Reality as it is, including the unfolding of your own and everyone's ongoing participation, contributions, and dramas of daily life. (*Why I am not enlightened*)

Of what use are guides if the wake-up call from the universe is not an idea but a personally discovered divine path? It would seem that all that is needed is to become more spiritual--but **who is this self** independently finding his way through the universe? A relational being. A limited being. A being rooted in the forest of its animal and social nature. A being of the "isthmus of a middling state," as Pope called it, whose very uniqueness is created by interdependent relationships.

Whatever guidance is available must be used.

So you now have a list of references and a suggestion that you can best learn a spiritual practice when rooted in a beloved community and its tradition. **But enlightenment is not guaranteed.** Rooted as he was in his religious community, Nicodemus could not understand what it meant to be "born again." The disciples of Jesus were equally clueless both at understanding and even at recognizing Christ after his resurrection. If spiritual enlightenment were as commonplace and accessible to us as religious guides tell us, it should be possible to tell how things are in a way that is concise, non-narrative, and not overly abstract or doctrinal. **So** I'll try one last time.

Realities Escape Us

As we master the world, we repeatedly lose contact with three aspects of being human: that we are animals, that our ways of reference are limited, and that we occupy a narrow band within scales of time, mass, and range of influence.

When we attend to these realities we discover other realities:

That **to be animal** is to be a transient, semi-stable system interdependently exchanging energy and information with other systems.

That **our cognition has led to many systems of reference**, such as abstractions, speech, maths, inquiry, arts, and cultures. Proper selective attention to relationships within a system of reference forces one to neglect relationships external to the system, but because all events are inter-related, this neglect ultimately must be corrected.

And that **attention to our own scale**, situation, and relationships, whether individual or societal, makes other scales of reference inaccessible. The physicist, Neils Bohr, was surprised to realize that he "could not think of my son at the same moment both in the light of love and in the light of justice." This led him to think that certain states of mind were like the two aspects of "figure-ground" pictures--what psychologists call **metastability**. We know that both a vase and two profiles are in a figure, but we can't make ourselves see both simultaneously. If we have trouble with only two pictures, consider our limitations in dealing with metastable images of higher order.

**What's given simply is too vast
For us to take more than we make
The universe has us outclassed.**

(Frameshifts, p. 376, vol. 2)

So many classes, sets, conditions, properties, and concepts can metastably exist than we can comprehend! In reference to particles, physicists' call it **complementarity**.

In reference to our efforts to attend to the ground of our being, we find that the very neglect necessary to knowing in one way disables us from knowing in another way. We shift from one provisional frame of reference to another with little leaps, only

occasionally glimpsing as a whole our animal natures, transience, and deep roots in the reality to which we belong.

So we are inclined to forget the provisional nature of our reference systems. Our very accomplishments put us at greater and greater distance from our feelings and responsibilities as beings of the universe. In fact, as we master our understanding of the world, we may even begin to believe **that it is the world**.

As we grasp at reality we believe reality to be what we have grasped. It's an honest error, particularly given all the benefits, conveniences, and benevolences made possible by our understandings, inventions, and undertakings.

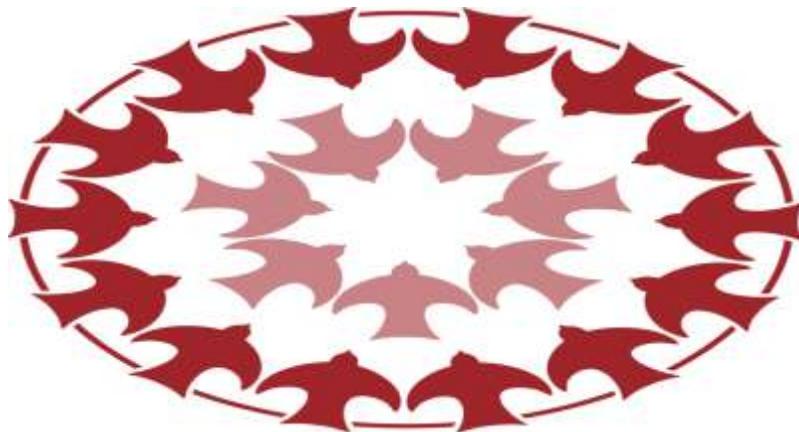
This error is the source of grievous separation of human beings from nature, their own nature, and each other--a separation with painful consequences, and a separation from reality recognized from ancient times and addressed in the many ways peoples have described the divine path.

Rehearsing the stories of the divine path returns us to the transient and relational nature of existence, the social and provisional nature of understanding, and the ineffable relationship of beings to the deep integrity of the way things are. The divine path always concerns transformations and restoration to the way things are. This reality escapes us because human grasp exceeds its reach.

But the great gift is that the beloved reality always reaches for us and draws us back in, as Jesus described the shepherd looking for one sheep.

Of course, Nicodemus and the disciples in the upper room, the women at the tomb, and the disciples in Emmaus only recognized Jesus a little at a time. Perhaps, then, the most we can say to guide each other toward personal transformation is:

Stop, Look, and Listen.



Healing Breaths and resilience: A dialogue

Host (H): *So what is "Healing Breaths"?*

Rose (R): It's a listening circle for meditation and performance arts.

H: *So it's for performers?*

R: Yes, but also for writers, audiences, composers, listeners, and anyone interested in deepening a spiritual practice.

H: *What led you to offer this?*

R: We believe that sustained attention and creative engagement are skills to strengthen in our less resilient society.

H: *Why do you say that our society is "less resilient"?*

R: For many reasons. Public attention given to local matters is easily distracted, whether you're talking about local government, locally grown food and nutritional practices, dealing with issues concerning wastes, toxins, water, and soil quality, or other issues such as living near the workplace, using local public transportation, improving local services and micro-grants for those in need, or solving personal problems using local resources.

H: *What does all that have to do with resilience?*

R: Resilience is a community's resolve and readiness to face and handle its own issues. It does not do this well if its resources are misallocated, misused, or even unappreciated and if individuals and small groups believe that their efforts are less important than the decisions of political and corporate leaders.

H: *But this sounds more like politics than meditation and music. How is all of this connected to "Healing Breaths"?*

R: Healing Breaths is a ministry to the imagination. Mark Twain said once that "you can't depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus." I'd like to suggest that many of us spend a lot of time distracted by unimportant matters while personal and local issues of vital importance go unattended. To change that, one must first pay attention and use imagination. One of our participants put it this way: *"The first common venture of the people in a faith community seems to be to nurture an awareness that there is in*

fact a realm, a level of reality that undergirds the world of the senses. A next common task for the faithful might be to grow towards a place where we truly seek to align our lives more closely with the reality we discern with our spirit--always acknowledging that there will be a tension between the physical and cultural world we inhabit and the spiritual world we may hope and long for." (John Vandervelde)

H: *So Healing Breaths is about paying attention?*

R: Yes. First pay attention to yourself. Center down in your own existence. Lay hold on what matters deeply to you and to your beloved community, whatever that may be.

H: *But it's also about performing arts and writing?*

R: This is because one cannot pay attention without ultimately taking responsibility in some way. To be responsive is to express and explain yourself in some way. This can begin with singing, story-telling, dancing, and performing. And anyone can do it. We must remember the original contexts of these arts. They were **local expressions in small groups**. The arts, stories, and religious rituals developed to tighten the bonds within the group. **Religion** means to make bonds with others, probe our own spirituality, and to make and renew community. In our culture, the arts have often been monetized by corporate interests to package into public entertainment. But originally "entertainment" referred to a special understanding held between a few people. This "Between-ness" was strengthened by performance, dance, recitation, listening, and appreciation.

H: *So this is what you do in Healing Breaths?*

R: Yes.



Five Stations of the Resurrection

**First is the emptying of all amenities
from pockets, shelves, accounts, and guarded attitudes.
First, lose all the necessary amenities.**

**She who lost seven demons, false divinities;
spent all she had on spikenard; on another Way,
after he fell, was consoled, cannot touch, but sees.**

**Push past angels. Rush in. Pick up the very cloth,
still damp. Search the shape of space, dark as it is true.
Run past yourself. Deny nothing. Retrieve your path.**

**Caravaggio seats you opposite, where the dish
teeters. The eyes cannot stare into being all
that they want to see on the backdrop of dark mesh.**

**Once all's lost, One comes through locked doors bringing peace;
guiding hands to touch, hearts to search on every side,
and lives to be an unencumbered sweet release.**

Rev. Hilary Smith suggested that meditation is as much needed on the resurrection as on the events of the week before Easter. She suggested that we think about the "stations of the resurrection" as we do the "stations of the cross." Whole lives of faith are spent working on ourselves to be guided by the resurrection reality. Surely this is worth a meditation. As Parini writes, this work of the kingdom is a long process of transformation--a life-work or journey with many stations or stops along the way. The revelations of the face of Christ in nature and in other humans are only slowly realized as we are guided in community to step out of our own way and leave aside all that we thought so necessary.

This meditation, written on 5/9/2014, is the result. In form, it is made of rhymed tercets of twelve-syllable lines, representing resurrection on the third day and recognition by twelve disciples (with Mary taking the place of Judas Iscariot). It focuses on the recognition of Christ after resurrection--by the guards, by Mary Magdalene, by Peter, by Cleopas at Emmaus, by the disciples in the upper room, by Thomas eight days later, by the disciples on the sea at Tiberius, by those at the ascension. The phrase "One who comes through locked doors bringing peace" comes from Rev. Jan Edmiston.

What does it take to recognize Christ?



Prayer is sustained attention and creative engagement, personal and collaborative, leading to a cognitive procession from fatalism to willful action, from ignorance to understanding, from grasping to acceptance, from waste to salvage, from fear to hope, from opportunism to compassion, exclusion to inclusion, and from partial work to soul work.

**This is Avery Crawley's definition of prayer
in *Frameshifts*, volume 2, page 38**