**Home Retreat: A Different Viewpoint 04.05.24**

O God Come to my Assistance – Lord, make haste to help me.

Welcome to Home Retreats: This is the third of a series by Richard Rohr whose general title is Action and Contemplation. Last time we looked at three foundational Illusions – so now, as Richard says:

When we overcome those foundational illusions in early meditation, I think it inevitably moves us towards **a different viewpoint**.

Remember every viewpoint is a view **from a point**. Now, Richard says, if the point from which we view life is simply ‘my Richard Rohr self, my American male, educated Catholic self’, I’ve got to defend all those little **identities**. From that viewpoint, we saw ourselves as the one true church, we were going to heaven. But then we discover as life goes on, that every **religion** believes that. It is called **‘group narcissism’**. There is only one thing more dangerous than individual egocentricity, and that’s group egocentricity – when the group **together** agrees upon the **same lie**, and then reassures its membership that we are the **only saved ones,** doing the same thing which we will always do, so long as we do not **experience** **substantial reality.** We will fall in love with **forms**; we will **defend forms**; we will promote **clichés** and **external doctrines and dogmas**.

So, until the illusions are taken away from us by some form of **inner journey** – we are calling it meditation, we are calling it contemplation – if there is no **inner experience**, the mind will almost always remain what we call a **dualistic mind.** It can only think in terms of **winners or losers.** It can’t even get energy. It can’t even get motivation.

Richard does a lot of men’s work and he sees this especially in men. They just love a win/lose situation. They just get energy as soon as there is a team to beat or a nation to destroy, or a group to be right and another group to be wrong. You take that away from them and there is actually a **palpable loss of interest and motivation in whatever is happening** if you cannot demarcate that into good guys and bad guys. Richard says, that is the very demarcation that is grabbed away from us in meditation. It falls apart – the dualistic mind, the either/or thinking. That’s why of course almost all the great spiritual teachers tell us, in one form or another, ‘Do not judge,’ because the judging mind is the dualistic mind. It is just the same; it is always comparing and competing. Men tend to compete more; women tend to compare more; but it’s the same ego game.

Richard asks; Are judgements necessary? Of course they are, on certain levels. It took him a long time to recognise that his need to judge was not really a desire for the truth. His need to judge was a desire for control: to be in control of the data; to be in control of the explanation; to define the pecking order (who’s up, who’s down; who’s in, who’s out; who’s right, who’s wrong; who’s superior, who’s inferior). That’s what is taken away from us and that’s why many will never go there, because no-one wants that power to be taken from them. It gives us small comfort but comfort nevertheless – momentary comfort that we are right, and that’s the first need of the ego.

Richard continues; The ego defines itself by negation and by contraction: ‘I’m not that, I am not like those; I am not a sinner; I am not a communist.’ Remember the Pharisee in the Temple! Because something that we are not, is a very convenient but completely ineffective form of transformation and demands nothing of us whatsoever, except putting someone else down. And that’s supposed to, for some strange reason, pull us up? But people keep doing it. I think history will continue to do it, until and unless, we find the true self. The false self will always need to win, will always need to be right, will always need to defeat the other.

The ego, therefore, defines itself by **contraction**, pulling itself in, saying ‘no, I am not like…’. But the soul defines itself by **expansion**, not by ‘no’ but by ‘yes’; by letting down our ego boundaries and letting the other in – letting in the **face of the other**, the **opinion of the other**, the **worldview of the other,** letting down the boundaries and barriers.

So Richard can see why Jesus said this will be a **‘narrow path and few will follow it (Mt 7:14)’.** Because he thinks on the unconscious level, we know that is going to change our politics, we know that is going to change our worldview. If we keep doing meditation, Richard cannot just keep self-securing, cannot just keep self-validating. In fact, he doesn’t even need to because we have been validated, or as Paul and Luther would say ‘justified’. And once that radical justification has taken place, that radical legitimation of the self **in God**, together all **as one**, then **the parts** take on less and less importance.

So, Richard sees that meditation grounds us utterly in a pre-existent **wholeness** before we identify with the partialities, the partisanship. And of course, if for 40 years we have identified with the partialities, the partisanship, the little loyalty systems, it’s pretty risky to have those taken away from us. Richard feels that if our whole identity is that we are a Republican or a Democrat, 9or in Britain a Conservative/ Labour or Liberal) we better not pray! We really better not, because our political identity just isn’t going to mean a great deal. And yet it astounds Richard that in so many of our Christian communities that is still the foundational identity, that these people’s loyalty system is tied with passing political shows. How could we possibly be dealing with **substantial truth**?

Jesus taught about the kingdom of *all* the earth. Suddenly we are going to have no place to lay our head. That is exactly what Jesus said. He said the whole world will hate us. Why? Because now we are not on either side of the usual categories, the usual loyalty systems and groups, which is exactly where the ego wants to be to shore itself up, to give itself a foundation and a **security that it does not have**.

So, Richard suggests, what we can do is go to **another place** for our foundation and security. Of course, as many other teachers have said, once you say ‘Jesus is Lord’, then of course the logical consequence of that is, no one else is. No one else is! And yet see how history has been formed by even Christian loyalties **to the lords of this earth**, whoever they might be in their six-year terms or 8-year terms or 50-year tyrannies; **whoever** they might be.

If people have been faithful to John Main’s magnificent and brilliant and utterly simple teaching on meditation for even three years and they haven’t experienced a seismic shift in their viewpoint – how they view the world – then Richard doesn’t think they are praying. If contemplatives are cut off from social prophesy and they become another **resource of the culture** instead of a resource **against** the culture, such contemplatives are living in a major illusion, and they have made contemplation itself into another way to feel morally superior. **This would be our greatest danger.** But in some circles Richard has been in, it has been the new word just like ‘charismatic’ was back in the 70s; it is the way to feel we have got one up, on everybody else.

The disguises of the ego, Richard says, are endless, endless. And so we must find a way to make sure we are not just seeking moral high ground in our own eyes or in the eyes of anybody else. Is this leading us to a new vulnerability, to a new ‘**dispossession**’, as John Main calls it, a new viewpoint? Or is it leading to a new possession – ‘I have’, ‘I am’!

Be careful of any ‘I have’ or ‘I am’ language, says Richard, except the great ‘I am’ in God.

Thank you for listening. You can find a Timetable and some resources accompanying this talk.

Suggested Timetable for the Home Retreat Day(But do make your own).

11.00 Home Retreat: A Different Viewpoint

11.20 Coffee Break

11.45 Read the Talk again.

12.00 Watch the video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9BpFsCgj_18>

13.00 Lunch break

14.00 Garden/Walk/Sleep

16.00 Read: <https://blogs.canterbury.ac.uk/psychology/can-brexit-be-explained-by-the-theory-of-collective-narcissism/>

16.30 Tea Break

17.00 Read : <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collective_narcissism#:~:text=Collective%20narcissism%20is%20characterized%20by,a%20group%20as%20a%20whole>.

18.00 Vespers Live Stream

20.00 Compline Live Stream