

**Seeds for
Celebration
for the
Jubilee!
Community
Asheville, North Carolina**

Fall, 2020

VIA NEGATIVA: THE POWER OF DISRUPTION

We enter the Via Negativa as the Fall Equinox and the Jewish Head of the Year (Rosh Hashanah) collide. The Via Negativa is a time of uncertainty, darkness, suffering, and letting go. As we have noted at Jubilee!, “This, too, is a period of celebration as we contemplate the mysteries that surround us, from the black holes of the universe to the nature of our own souls.” This fall we explore the Power of Disruption.

VIA NEGATIVA: THE POWER OF DISRUPTION

Sept 20, 2020 – Disrupting Order (Equinox, Rosh Hashana)

Gospel of Thomas, Saying 2

Jesus said, "Let one who seeks not stop seeking until that person finds; and upon finding, the person will be disturbed; and being disturbed, will be astounded; and will reign over the entirety."

Starhawk

Fall Equinox is a time of evaluation. Did we plant enough of the right things? Did we tend our crops well? Have we nurtured what will truly feed us? How do we preserve our harvest, so it can continue to nourish us through hard times? ... In a just world, everyone would have enough to sustain lives with room for beauty, pleasure, self-expression and love, to restore and regenerate the natural systems that provide what we need. May the balance be restored!

Disruption could be another name for 2020. The disruption of quarantine and the disruption of the uprising for Black lives have each created disturbances in our personal and communal lives. Disruptions can be irritating or shattering, small or large, from the interruption of a summer eve by a mosquito to the continental chaos of a volcano. In the wake of disorder, what emerges?

The Equinox is a time of balance – between the fullness of harvest and the fading of the natural world. Rosh Hashanah is a threshold – washing away the troubles of one year and heading into a new one with intention. But what if we are pushed off balance? What if we trip over the threshold and land flat on our face?

Sometimes our plunges can plummet us into a new perception. Sometimes our tumbles can toss us toward a fresh foundation. Sometimes disorder helps us reorder our lives. Milan Kundera wrote, “The longing for order is at the same time a longing for death, because life is an incessant disruption of order.” During this Via Negativa, we invite the power of disruption to animate our lives anew!

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Sept 27, 2020 – Disrupting Distance (Yom Kippur)

Jonah 1:1-3

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amitai, saying, “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.” But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid his fare and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the LORD.

Psalm 51: 10 – 12

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

~

Hafiz

*Just sit there right now. Don't do a thing. Just rest.
For your separation from God is the hardest work in this world.
Let me bring you trays of food and something that you like to drink.
You can use my soft words as a cushion for your head.*

Yom Kippur, of the Day of Atonement, is the Holiest Day of the Jewish year. A day of fasting and prayer, it concludes the ten Days of Awe, a time of introspection on the previous year and a chance to take corrective action for both personal and national sins.

Theologian Paul Tillich defined sin as anything that separates us from God, each other, or our truest self. What if Atonement is really At-One-Ment? A chance to reconnect what has been broken, to reunite with what has been lost? Maybe we confess our distance so that we can find the bridge back home. Maybe we acknowledge our aloofness so that we can embrace our tenderness again.

How do we disrupt the distance between ourselves and the Holy One so that we can journey back into the True Heart of Love?

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Oct. 4, 2020 Disrupting Authority (St. Francis Day and Blessing the Animals!)

Luke 1:46-55 (Magnificat)

“He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.”

Sid Vicious

“Undermine their pompous authority, reject their moral standards, make anarchy and disorder your trademarks. Cause as much chaos and disruption as possible, but don’t let them take you alive.”

“You say you want a revolution? We all want to change the world.” We know the words well enough. The song has become – would you believe it – an institution. The world has seen its share of changes since the chords were first belted, and generations (!) have since been inspired to lace up their boots and march. Well, did the world change? That’s a matter of perspective. Did you change? Hold up. It wasn’t about you? Then who was it about?

It could be said that snubbing one’s nose at the status quo is necessary to personal and social evolution. To grow your scruples, there’s got to be some kind of an adversary. Whether it’s the parents who won’t let you out past curfew, or the leader who won’t let policy XYZ happen on their watch, the friction creates a spark of essential rebellious creativity. We’ve been sticking to the powers that be since the powers have been. Or, as Jubilee saint Tom Robbins says, “Humanity has advanced, when it has advanced, not because it has been sober, responsible, and cautious, but because it has been playful, rebellious, and immature.”

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Oct. 11, 2020 Disrupting Plans

Proverbs 19:21

Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is God's purpose that prevails

Hafiz

Pulling out the chair beneath your mind and watching you fall upon God. What else is there for Hafiz to do that is any fun in this world!

I've lost track of how many of my plans for 2020 got disrupted. There was the beach trip in May, my niece's French wedding in June, the lake house with college friends in October. And those are just the big ones. Most of them were small and more quotidian.

And then there are the things that filled the empty spaces. The extra time sitting under trees. The books I got to read. The new recipes.

Disrupted plans can be heart-breaking or heavenly. They can lead to boredom or break-throughs. Are they loss or are they gain? Sometimes they are both. Finding the proverbial silver lining in the clouds of disrupted plans may take some seeking. But what if that's the whole point?

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Oct. 18, 2020 Disrupting Comfort

Amos 6:4-7

*You lie on beds adorned with ivory
and lounge on your couches.*

*You dine on choice lambs
and fattened calves.*

⁵ *You strum away on your harps like David
and improvise on musical instruments.*

⁶ *You drink wine by the bowlful
and use the finest lotions,
but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph.*

⁷ *Therefore you will be among the first to go into exile;
your feasting and lounging will end.*

Khalil Gibran

Verily, the lust for comfort murders the passion of the soul, and then walks grinning in the funeral

Rumi

*"The breezes at dawn have secrets to tell you
Don't go back to sleep!
Don't go back to sleep!"*

Oh the wonders of comfort!!! Who doesn't love a massage or spa day? Or sliding into 1000 thread-count Egyptian cotton sheets or the leather seat of your new car? Or what about your favorite comfort meal, the goodness that brings? Or the comfort of a large bank account? Or the comfort of next day amazon delivery?

And while comfort is important for our nervous system regulation, when is it too much? And when is the price just too high? Does the comfort of next day delivery feed our cardboard box addiction to such an extent that whole forests are destroyed? Does the comfort of driving a car feed our oil addiction to such an extent that whole populations are flooded off of their homelands due the rising tides of climate change? Does the comfort of a chocolate bar feed our cheap labor addiction to such an extent that children become slaves in Africa?

Spiritual wizard Swami Rama was fond of asking, "Can you be a little uncomfortable, so that another may be more comfortable?" In other words, can we make choices that make ALL of us more comfortable, rather than a select few. Can we think like whales, who see the "we" as the "me"?

Doing so may mean we have to disrupt all sorts of systems that keep us comfortable, both personally and collectively. But I wonder, would it be worth it? Would it bring another kind of deeper comfort? A soul comfort? An awake comfort? A comfort that comes from crossing the threshold where we know that until all can be comfortable, none of us can be.

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Oct. 25, 2020 Disrupting the Status Quo (Reformation Sunday)

Matthew 9:16-17

No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.

Eric Weiner *Geniuses are always marginalized to one degree or another. Someone wholly invested in the status quo is unlikely to disrupt it.*

Once upon a time a guy named Martin Luther nailed 95 new ideas to the door of a church. Little did he know just how thoroughly he was about to disrupt the status quo of the Roman Catholic Church he served. But it didn't take long for the old disruption to become the new status quo.

New ideas are a dime a dozen but truly disruptive ideas – the kind that can change history, or at least our personal story – arise from somewhere wiser than our clever heads and deeper than our deepest thoughts. Sometimes we shake things up just because we feel like dancing to a new beat. And sometimes the shaking is more like an earthquake that knocks us off our feet and shows us where the fault lines lie. And that's when things get interesting!

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Nov. 1, 2020 Disrupting Life (All Saints Day/Day of the Dead/Samhain)

Bhagavad Gita 2.22 – 2.23

As a person sheds worn-out garments and wears new ones, likewise, at the time of death, the soul casts off its worn-out body and enters a new one. Weapons cannot cut It, nor can fire burn It; water cannot wet It, nor can wind dry It.

Psalm 23:4

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Did you know birds can see further into the light spectrum than humans? And elephants can hear into the sound spectrum. Both are clear examples, saying there is so much more going on here than we can possibly understand.

Maybe religions and spiritualities are trying to do the same...see further into the spectrum of life into death. Yet, somehow, even with all the various traditions to choose from, us westerners seem to be terrified of death. Perhaps because we are taught to identify almost exclusively with our bodies and ego. We believe if we lose them, we lose everything.

But the Tibetan book of the Dead helps us see that so much more is going on than just this ego-life. That death is not the end of it all, but rather the beginning of what has the potential to be the most incredible opportunity ever. The Gita confirms, saying parts of us so great, that death cannot end it. And the Bible lets us know that we will be guided along the way.

Earth-based traditions know that death is not the end, but simply the beginning for something new. When a tree dies, it becomes the home for a whole new ecosystem of life. When we eat a plant or an animal, its death is the seed for our life. That death is not just necessary for life, but the very foundation of it.

If we are going to get comfortable with life, we first have to get comfortable with death. After all, none of us will be getting out of here alive.

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Nov. 8, 2020 Disrupting Peace

Ecclesiastes 3:8

A time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.

Jesus (Matthew 10:34-38)

Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Naomi Wolf

Democracy is disruptive ... there is no right in a democratic civil society to be free of disruption.

We all want to give peace a chance. We love having that peaceful, easy feeling. I mean, what is so funny about peace, love and understanding? But when is peace not so peaceful? Do we try to keep the peace when what we need to do is build justice? Disturbing the peace might be a misdemeanor but what if keeping it is a different kind of transgression?

Making peace is not the same as keeping peace. Non-violence can be disruptive. Telling the truth can be unsettling, but does keeping silent bring healing? Sometimes the uneven beating of our hearts disrupts the tempo that the conductor in our head is trying to control. “Make me an instrument of your peace,” St. Francis prayed. What if that instrument is an out of tune banjo?

If nightmares disrupt peaceful sleep, making waking up is what we’re called to do.

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Nov. 15, 2020 Disrupting Ignorance (Diwali)

Buddha

Meditation brings wisdom; lack of meditation leaves ignorance. Know well what leads you forward and what hold you back, and choose the path that leads to wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11

*I denied myself nothing my eyes desired;
I refused my heart no pleasure.
My heart took delight in all my labor,
and this was the reward for all my toil.
¹¹ Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done
and what I had toiled to achieve,
everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind;
nothing was gained under the sun.*

Yoga Sutras Chapter 57

The Kleshas (forms of ignorance/causes of suffering) are 1) Avidya (Mistaking the impure for the pure.) 2) Asmita (Mistaking the non-self as the Self.) 3/4) Raga/Dvesha (attachment and aversion, and mistaking pain for pleasure.) 5) Abhinivesha (Mistaking the impermanent for the permanent)

The old idiom tells us, “Be careful what you wish for...you might just get it.” But I wonder, how could that ever possibly be true? After all, I’m the closest to me. Surely, I know what is best!

But maybe that’s the problem. We’re just a little too close. Too caught by our own limitations – clouded by our ignorance, conditioning, attachments and aversions - to know what is best, not just for ourselves but for the collective. We want what we want when we want it and don’t want what we don’t want. In our dark stubbornness we cling to our ideas of right and wrong, even if it means taking the whole ship down with us.

But luckily grace happens. Or meditation happens. Or God happens. Or whatever you want to call it. And through that, we get shaken up enough to start to look for something wiser, deeper, truer.

Sometimes this shaking comes as the Goddess Lakshmi, showering us with all we desire until it taste like ash in our mouth and we are forced to look elsewhere for the light of truth. But more often, the shaking comes as the Goddess Kali, who cuts off our heads to save our own lives - a life quake that turns us toward our own darkness so we can find our way through it to the other side. Either way, she loves us enough to pull us out of the darkness and back into the light.

So while we may not always get what we want, if we are open to shedding our ignorance and opening to the light of truth, we will often see that we truly do get what we need.

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Nov. 23, 2020 Disrupting Cynicism (Thanksgiving)

Jeremiah 31:33

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Matthew 11:28

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Meister Eckhart

If the only prayer you ever said was thank you, that would suffice.

Cynicism is easy. People will disappoint us, organizations will frustrate us, government will dishearten us. “What do you expect?” we say, knowing that we expected something else or we wouldn’t be disappointed. “That’s the way things always are,” we shrug, even though we harbor a dream of how things might be different.

What can bridge the distance between our desires and our reality? What can buoy our spirits when our hopes feel out of reach? Gratitude can.

Gratitude makes what we have enough, we’re told. And it’s true. Kind of. There’s always room for more love, more laughter, more peace, more justice. Gratitude helps us see the love and laughter already present. And what we appreciate, appreciates.