

Notes on Brother David Steindl-Rast's DVD regarding How to be Grateful in Troubled Times

What makes us grateful? An opportunity. We can always be grateful for opportunity. In troubled times, the opportunity is the chance to do something about it. If you are in the habit of being grateful, during troubled times you will ask: What can we do? What kind of opportunity is this very trouble offering us to be grateful, to act gratefully, to *do* something.

How can you truly *be* and not be grateful? To be means to be creative, responsive, awake--grateful. If you are not grateful, then "to be" does not have its full weight and meaning.

Gratefulness is a state of being. Only from this first point do you move to the second step of gratefulness, which is thankfulness. Gratefulness is like having a bowl that is full to the brim. Thankfulness is the overflowing of that fullness. (Gratefulness is very Buddhist while thankfulness is more Abrahamic.)

THE PARADOXES OF GRATEFULNESS

Calm --- Energized
Fulfilled --- Receptive
Uplifted --- Humbled
Acknowledged --- Self-forgetful

The ultimate must be paradoxical. Opposites coincide in the ultimate. When we deal with gratefulness, we are dealing with the ultimate. The ultimate is a mystery from which everything comes and everything is given. Gratefulness is the only reasonable response to this given reality.

We experience the mystery—ourselves, our loved ones, the whole of the universe--and revel in it. It's all of one piece. Our skin, eyes, body do not define us. We are part of the whole of it. We experience the ultimate as the source from which everything comes and it expresses itself in everything we experience. This gives spirituality a new dimension. We can see the divine in everything—the unmanifest and the manifest.

Consciousness is the ultimate mystery. It is also our contact with the ultimate mystery. In gratefulness, the ultimate (unmanifest) source gives itself totally into the manifest, manifesting itself. When the manifest acts properly, it gives all this back in thanksgiving, creating a circle dance of gratefulness. This view of our spiritual relationship to the divine is compatible to all spiritual traditions because it is based on a universal human experience—gratefulness. This experience unifies us and allows us to see our relationship to the ultimate.

Notes from Brother David's talk compiled by Leslie Earnest

