

The Analytical Mind and The Spiritual Mind by Fr. Ray Ball: frray3@gmail.com

1) It has been pointed out that all of the major religions of the world developed between approximately 1000 BC and the middle of the first millennium, at a time when human rational analytical logical consciousness was rapidly developing. Religion and spirituality were seen as necessary correctives – like corrective lenses – to the tendency of the rational mind to separate, divide and fragment what is actually one and whole. We see this reflected in the Book of Genesis, at the beginning of the Scriptures, where there is the warning: “Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” (Genesis 2:17) We might question that. Wouldn't that be a good thing to be able to eat from that tree in order to separate the good and the bad, the good guys and the bad guys, what's true and what's false? This separation that is the work of the analytic mind, however, is not regarded as a good thing – because it fragments what is whole, as contrasted with life - eating from the “tree of life” (Genesis 2:9, 16) - which embraces the dualities. The loss of the experience of the oneness of the Garden - oneness with God, with the natural world, with people, and with oneself - is the result. How to return to the Garden, how to regain this oneness – this time with the analytic mind – is the task of religion. The word “re-ligion” means “re-ligament” – to reconnect to a lost oneness. This is in contrast to the “dia-bolical” – which means separating and dividing. The temptation of the serpent (Genesis 3) – like the temptation of the lizard or reptilian brain – induces a person to react to life out of a sense of oneself as a separated, fearful egoic individual, motivated out of fear and personal survival, and out of a sense of a feeling of lack and neediness – like the branch separated from the vine (John 15:5) or the part separated from the body (Romans 12:5).

2) This negative association with separation can also be found in the creation story. When God creates, God says “It is good or it is very good” (Genesis 1:9-31), *except* on the two days when there is separation: when God separates the light from the dark (Genesis 1:4) and when God separates the land from the sea (Genesis 1:6). We know, of course, that the logical, calculative, analytical, left brain, rational part of our mind knows by separating, by dividing, by comparing and contrasting, in other words, by creating opposites. This is because our rational mind is binary, it's dualistic, it's oppositional, it creates polarities and either/or scenarios and then the egoic consciousness identifies with one side or the other instead of seeing itself as part of the whole. It's good versus what's bad, it's what's true versus what's false, it's right versus what's wrong, it's what's up versus what's down, what's forward versus what's backward, what's right versus what's left, what's black versus what's white, what's life versus what's death. Spirituality is ultimately about knowing the deeper reality of things through “presence”, which provides the context and the depth to simply knowing things through “thinking”.

3) We see this expressed in one of the wisdom books of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Book of Ecclesiastes 3:1-11:

”There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens:
a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
a time to search and a time to give up,

a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.
What purpose is there for all we do in our lives? I have considered the tasks which God has appointed for us to be responsible for. He has made everything beautiful for its time, and has placed the timeless into our hearts, without our discovering, from beginning to end, this purpose He has worked.”

4) When the analytical, egoic mind reads this passage from Ecclesiastes, it will evaluate the list and end up only liking half of those things. It will come down on one side or the other, rather than embrace the whole – which is what life and spirituality are inviting us to. The final line from Ecclesiastes says “the timeless has been placed in our hearts” – referring to that dimension that is within us which can do what the analytical mind cannot – it can embrace the polarities and respond to the whole rather than separate and react to the part.

5) What we learn from Ecclesiastes is that there is no opposite to life. Death is not the opposite of life. Birth and death are the opposites (“there is a time to be born and a time to die”), and both are contained within what is eternal, namely life, a life that we participate in. This is the perspective that we gain when we eat from the tree of life, as opposed to eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

6) Becoming “self-conscious” and developing an ego follows from the development of rational thought – as suggested from the story of the eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. [*The fact that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is in the garden suggests that it is good and a gift that is intended for people to have, but to be integrated within a proper relationship with God and everything else.*] Following this incident, Adam and Eve - who had previously felt oneness in the garden - now hide because they now feel divided within themselves - “naked and ashamed” (Genesis 3:7) which points to a separation between the “I” and “how the I sees itself”, which is egoic consciousness.

7) While analytical intelligence is a good and necessary tool in order to do math and science, when we try to apply and impose this grid on certain other things, it is not so good, in that it separates and divides in our minds what is really a whole within reality, including ourselves as part of that whole. It turns God into an object, a separate being – like Zeus on Mt. Olympus or “the man upstairs” - instead of Being itself, the “I Am” (Exodus 3:14) within which “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). The analytic mind localizes itself as “here”, other people “there”, the world “over there”, and God “up there”. We need to be able to see, recognize and respect the wholeness, of what really is one. And this dualistic way that our rational mind operates easily gets co-opted by the ego as a way of forming a separate identity, being in control, imposing order, being correct, being certain, being in charge, being over and against and separate from and in opposition to those on the other side. The ego resists the need to change, to grow, to be transformed, and to become part of a bigger whole, a bigger reality, which Jesus refers to as “the Kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14-15). Jews and Christians are thus not “theists” who believe in God as a separate being alongside other separates beings, but rather embrace God as Being itself – in whom they live and move and have being.

8) When the analytical mind is not properly integrated and situated within the deeper intelligence of the spiritual or unitive mind, we end up with the polarities and divisions that we witness today in the world, particularly in politics and religion. It is the opposite of wisdom, which is knowledge of and embracing of the whole. The first word Jesus speaks in the Gospel: “meta-noia” (Matthew 3:2) or “meta-mind”, literally refers to the need to change from a small or narrow mind to a bigger and more comprehensive mind which is not the same as rational knowledge. Albert Einstein (1879-1955) offered a warning with respect to this when he stated that “the problems of the world cannot be solved by the same consciousness that created them”.

9) Rational, logical, conceptual knowing always creates a subject/object split, whereas biblical knowing or spiritual knowing is about being one with, loving, and participating in, subject to subject, with God, others, and with all things - for example Adam “knew” Eve (Genesis 4:1, 17, 25). This is the difference between conceptual knowing (object to subject) as contrasted with knowing by identity (subject to subject), because the known is one with the knower.

10) St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) distinguishes between “cognitive knowing” (what Duns Scotus (1265-1308) calls “analytic knowing”) and “connatural knowing” (what Duns Scotus calls “intuitive knowing” or what is also called knowing by identity or knowing by affinity or biblical knowing or spiritual knowing or unitive knowing or contemplative knowing). The first is knowing something as an object (object to subject). The second is knowing something because you are also that something (subject to subject), and you participate in it. This is the way one knows God – not as an object or as a separate being, but as being itself – in whom one participates, and in whom one “lives, and moves and has one’s being” (Acts 17:28). It’s knowing by connecting what is in you to what is around you. It is when what is in you recognizes itself in the other, because in reality you are one. You recognize and connect with peace because there is peace in you, you recognize stillness because there is stillness in you, you recognize joy because there is joy in you. You recognize the mystery, beauty, and goodness of life and reality – because the mystery, beauty and goodness of life within you connects and resonates with it. You can recognize love – because there is love in you. You can recognize God because there is God in you – or rather God in you sees, recognizes and loves the God around you.

11) Quantum mechanics has also come to recognize this second kind of knowing, recognizing that the knower influences what is known - because the knower is in fact also the one who is being known – because ultimately there is no separation between the knower and the known. In other words, the object and subject split that is presupposed by logical, analytic intelligence, is an egoic convention!

12) The word “exist” literally means “to stand out”. Our analytical mind only knows things that stand out. It recognizes the foreground, not the background. It hears the noise, not the silence. It perceives the motion, not the stillness. It notices the object, not the subject. It knows the things, not the space within which the things exist. It perceives the form, not the formless out of which the form emerged. It sees the matter, not the energy. It knows the beings, not Being. It does not recognize God, but only what comes forth from God. It doesn’t recognize the depth of one’s own conscious presence, because it only recognizes what one is consciously present to.

13) For a practical way of seeing these two different ways of knowing: In “A Charlie Brown Christmas” (1965) while the other kids are looking at the Christmas trees by comparing and contrasting them with each other – which one is more perfect, which one is taller, which one is straighter, which one is more glamorous (what the analytic mind does) – Charlie Brown looks at the trees in a different manner. He looks at the little tree by being present to it with what is inside him – and he is drawn to the smallest, weakest, most humble tree on the lot – because he was aware of those same qualities and vulnerabilities within himself – and he saw with them – and it was through them that he was able to look out at the world and see it as it is. He saw the hidden goodness and beauty that was there. He saw the tree as one that was in need of love and grace, like he was. The honest simplicity through which Charlie Brown saw the world enabled him to form a closer bond with another being – it opened to him a dimension of existence that was hidden from those simply judging, evaluating, comparing, - the analytical, critical, cynical attitude that is not in touch with life because it is not in touch with the depths of oneself. From this perspective, one is not open to beauty, mystery, the sacred – because one has lost touch with that dimension within oneself.

14) Charles Dicken’s (1812-1870) character Ebenezer Scrooge from “A Christmas Carol” (1843) was only able to see people through the narrow analytical, calculating mind and viewpoint of an economic system until the ghosts of Christmas past, present, and future enabled him to see by helping him get in touch with the vulnerable depths within himself which had been obscured and hidden. This is why Jesus said “the kingdom of heaven is within you” (Luke 17:21). When you are connected to that dimension – you see it all around you. The world becomes alive and enchanted, sacred and holy again.

15) It is thus “intuitive knowing” that situates “analytical knowing” within the context of mystery and wisdom. Without this context, the analytical will soon lead one to being critical and then becoming cynical, because its logic will break down in the face of the realities of suffering – of what it can only view as illogical, absurd, and meaningless – and this happens when individual events are separated from the whole. The analytical mind also breaks down within the context of love – where one will do something within the context of a unitive relationship that would otherwise be seen as illogical from the perspective of the egoic self.

16) Living within this bigger reality, this bigger life, has “reasons” for what it does that can be reflected in lives of people who holds things together, not because of perfect logic, but because one experiences that one is being held by a bigger reality that is actually doing the holding! This is what is meant by faith – a faith that holds and bears the mystery of things, of what seems contradictory. Paul says that Jesus – “reconciles all things in himself” (Colossians 1:20) because he embraced all things. Mary also “held all these things in her heart” (Luke 2:19, 51) as opposed to her mind. What we cannot reconcile with our minds can be reconciled bodily – as in the body of Christ on the cross - or in the tears we shed in bearing and holding the mysteries and contradictions of life: “Blessed are those who mourn . . . “ (Matthew 5:4).

17) The kneejerk reaction of our analytic minds is to judge, name, label, interpret, evaluate, compare and contrast objects. There is a place for this, but the problem is that we do not contextualize this shallower ‘knowing’ within the broader and deeper context of the mystery of things, i.e. the first step needs to be an acceptance and embrace of the whole, or “keeping the field open” before one divides the field.

18) The term “ignorance” refers not to what we don’t know, but to what we know in this manner, because it literally “ignores” that further depth and mystery of things that only comes out when we bring the depth of our presence to things. This is why Jesus would so often say “Do not judge” (Matthew 7:1-3) and “Meta-noia” (change your mind) (Matthew 3:2, 4:17). In other words, change that judging mind that you are filtering reality with. This is also the reason Jesus would so often put a child in the midst of his disciples whenever they would get into “heady” abstract arguments (Matthew 18:2, 19: 1-14, Mark 9:36, Luke 18: 15-17). A child does not bring pre-fabricated concepts and judgements to attach to things – but instead bring an openness and presence. There is the knowing that analytic thinking knows – by comparison and contrast – and then there’s the knowing that “presence” knows – the kind of knowing referred to in the Old Testament: “Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10). The first knowing knows the “wave”, the second knowing knows the “ocean”. The first knowing knows the “branch”, the second knowing knows the “vine”. The first knowing knows the “part of the body”, the second knows the “body”.

19) In ancient Greece, during a time when analytic intelligence was growing and developing, Socrates (470-399 BC) was considered the wisest person by the Oracle of Delphi. Why? Because he knew that he didn’t know! This was in contrast to the Sophists who claimed to know - simply because they knew how to attach prefabricated labels and concepts to things. Socrates maintained an attitude of openness, wonder, humility, reverence and presence before the mystery of things.

20) Rene Descartes (1596-1650) identified himself with his thinking in his famous statement: “I think therefore I am”. He discovered the “ego” or “false-self.” (The “false-self” is not a bad self. It is only bad if one sees it as one’s only self, and has lost touch with the “true-self”.) Spirituality is making the discovery that there is a deeper reality to us, known as “presence” or “consciousness” or “awareness” – our “true-self”, without which there could be no thinking. Because one can be aware of oneself thinking, this points to the deeper dimension of “awareness”. It is this dimension of presence that

recognizes itself in others – and then realizes that there is not otherness, but oneness between the self and the other. Jesus points to this dimension of approaching the world through presence when he says “Martha Martha you are anxious and worried about many things. Mary has chosen the better part.” (Luke 10:41-42). This is also the movement from seeing life as a “maze” – to be analyzed - to life as a “labyrinth” – to be embraced and surrendered to. Ultimately, as Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) said: “Life is not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be loved, lived, and surrendered to.”

21) In the profession of the beliefs of faith, there is the statement: “Jesus is fully God and fully human”. The rational logical mind cannot process this because our minds function based on the principle of non-contradiction. How can two things be fully two things? The same is true when we say “Mary is virgin and mother” or that “God is three and one”. What we call these things are “paradoxes”, which require paradoxical knowing. Now a paradox consists of seemingly contradictory statements that are in fact true at a deeper level. A paradox requires one to be able to hold both truths, both/and. If you lose one or cancel one out, you lose the truth, and in holding the two it forces you to move and change. It forces you to change your vantage point – to let go of one’s self and one’s narrow-minded, self-referential ideas and conclusions - in order to arrive at the deeper place where wisdom is to be found. Even science recognizes that the most important truths are paradoxical truths, for example, that light is both a wave and a particle, or in Quantum mechanics where an electron can be both here and there at the same time.

22) During the time of Jesus, many of the religious leaders tried to fit truth and reality into narrow egoic either/or, abstract categories and concepts, often trying to pin Jesus down by the way they framed questions, for example: “Should we pay taxes to the emperor or not?” (Matthew 22:17) or “Should this woman that has been caught in adultery be stoned or not.” (John 8:4-5). And of course Jesus doesn’t bite on these dualisms and polarities. He rejects separating and dividing the world into logical categories. Jesus instead would say “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and give to God what is God’s” (Matthew 22:21) and “Let the one among you who is without sin cast the first stone” (John 8:7) In other words, by holding and staying in that tension, truth is what one comes to and becomes.

23) This is also how Jesus taught, by teaching in parables. Parables confound and bypass the analytic, logical, dualistic, either/or mind, and force one to hold and bear the polarities of something. They move one to what is called the unitive, spiritual, “wise” mind which integrates, holds, bears, forgives, and unites. A parable forces one to change and become in order to embrace the whole and become one with the truth. Parables lead one to hold together the “weeds and the wheat” (Matthew 13:24-30), “the first shall be last and the last shall be first” (Matthew 20:16), “sinners entering heaven before the religious” (Matthew 21:31), “you must lose your life in order to find your life” (Matthew 10:39), “Blessed are the poor, happy are those who mourn, blessed are you when you were persecuted” (Matthew 5:3-12), “the smallest seed shall become the greatest shrub” (Matthew 13:31-32), “one who works one hour is paid the same as the one who works all day” (Matthew 20:1-16), “the blind see and those who see are blind” (John 9:39), “the poor are rich and the rich are poor” (Luke 6:20-26).

24) The reason that reality can only be known in this way, is because of the Trinitarian nature of reality, that is, the Trinity as the pattern and archetype of all that is. Everything is in relationship – and nothing can be understood as separate and apart. This was the correction that St. Thomas Aquinas made to Aristotle (384-322 BC). According to Aristotle, relationships are a secondary part of something. Aquinas insisted that relationships are a primary and essential dimension of everything that is. Jesus himself always identified himself in terms of his relationships - to God and to people “Son of God” and “Son of Man”.

25) Jesus did not come as much to give answers, but to trust in a relationship. The emphasis was not about being correct, but about being connected. It was not so much about being right, but about being in right relationship. He taught how to live, love, trust and surrender to mystery - when one is walking through the darkness - and that ultimately is the answer, namely, that one lives without needing analytic answers which often get in the way. It's been pointed out that Jesus was asked 183 questions in the scriptures, but he only answered 3 of them. He often refused to give answers, only spoke in parables (Matthew 13:34), and often told his disciples not to speak about things until after the Resurrection. He knew what the self-centered mind can do with 'truth', and therefore he had them wait until after the experience of death and Resurrection (Matthew 17:9) – after the loss of their egoic selves.

26) Job continually questioned God for 35 chapters and did not get an answer, but instead received a relationship. We are also called to bear and hold the mystery of light and darkness, and life and death. Often 'answers' can simply be ways to embolden and prop up the ego - instead of a relationship with God where we must surrender our small minded ideas - along with ourselves - as he calls us through the desert, through the unknown and through the darkness.

27) It has been pointed out that the greatest evil is committed by people who are convinced of their certitudes, have no self-doubt, and who lack humility over what they claim to know. And unfortunately, this tends to be many religious people who claim to be walking by faith - which is the opposite of certitude. Unfortunately, religion has often connected itself with a philosophy that gives the impression that it has connected itself with truths that are absolute, unchanging, certain, and eternal, and fails to recognize that these are truths that are abstractions from the concrete, and must be continuously reconnected within the context of other concrete facts and truths, within a world where knowledge of additional facts and truths continue to expand and grow. As St. Thomas Aquinas puts it: "Individual truths are relative (that is, they need to be put in relationship with other truths – which is the pastoral dimension) while only truth as a whole is absolute." (Summa I, q. 16, a. 7) This is a major theme in the New Testament, where the religious leaders are constantly making individual truths – such as not working on the Sabbath or liturgical washing – absolute, which of course is the very definition of ideology and creating an idol – making something other than God an absolute. They were not able or willing to put these abstract truths into proper relationship with other truths such as loving one's neighbor. Jesus taught and demonstrated that all truth is pastoral. It has been pointed out that there are two ways of being heretical. One is not recognizing and respecting doctrine (which expresses spiritual meanings and values). The second is not recognizing and respecting what and who one is applying doctrine to. And what one applies doctrine to is forever growing and changing in our understanding of it, which is why theology is an ongoing discipline – mediating religious meanings and values to life.

28) The embrace and acceptance of what is – especially the excluded and negative parts of life, ourselves and others – allows things to be out in the open where they can be integrated rather than repressed and denied, projected onto and hated in others, and allowed to take on a hidden life of their own. If we try to exclude and triumph over the negative parts, the shadow parts, the wounded parts, this leads one to a kind of heroic spirituality, based on will power and the achievement of some kind of perfection – where one often strengthens what one opposes. This was attempted by the Pharisees in the New Testament, but as Jesus pointed out, this leads to a lot of pretending and denial of one's shadow side – which leads to an even worse state of being like "white washed tombs" (Matthew 23:27-28), a need to feel superior, and a lack of compassion towards others – such as wanting to stone the woman caught in adultery (John 8: 2-11). This is contrasted with the way of integrating and forgiving the wounded parts, which keeps one humble and in relationship, because when one is not in control, one has to let go of one's own will, preferences, and needs – and one then discovers that they don't dominate one's life, and one finds joy and peace at a deeper level.

29) Our “ego” is the thoughts that we have about ourselves that create our image or persona or identity. Our “ego” is also the thoughts that others – or the world – has about us that we have internalized. Our “shadow” is those things about us that do not fit the image, which we then hide or deny or disguise and project onto others and hate in them. Peter is one who had a big ego – and tried to make himself out to be stronger than he actually was. His “ego” took a hit when he denied Jesus, after having earlier said “I will never deny you” (Mark 14:31, Matthew 26:35). When Jesus asked to wash his feet (John 13), Jesus was calling him to be more open about the hidden part of himself – his shadow – which we all have - and not feel the need to deny or pretend, because it did not fit with his image – his ego. Peter denied Jesus because he was in denial about himself first. As we shine the light on our shadow self, it may appear that our shadow is our true-self – until we realize that the light that we shine on our shadow is really our true-self. But we only come to our true-self because our shadow-self has first toppled our ego-self, which forced us to bring presence and awareness (our true-self) to our shadow-self. That is the gift of our weakness. Paul refers to his shadow when he talks about his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7) which he begged the Lord to take from him – but instead made it possible for God’s grace and strength to be able to work in him even more abundantly: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:8-10) Amazingly, when we bring the light of presence to our shadow, the shadow itself also gets transformed into the light - “Whatever is exposed to the light, becomes light” (Ephesians 5:13) - because our true identity is that we are “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14-16). But we only come to this realization because our shadow has toppled our ego, or as Jesus says: “You must lose yourself in order to find yourself” (Matthew 10:39, 16:25). Only through that light of presence - can we recognize and love that same light hidden beneath the surface in others. It was only after Peter and Paul’s egos had been toppled – Paul being knocked to the ground and Peter denying Jesus – were they able to live from a new source of grace and become the patient, empathetic, compassionate shepherds that could love, feed, and care for the flock as Jesus himself (John 21).

30) “Behavioral atheism” – is a phrase that describes a condition wherein one desires certain answers more than a trusting relationship with a living and mysterious God. Truth is finding the balance between knowing and not knowing, between the “kataphatic” (according to the light) way and the “apophatic” (against the light) way, and having the humility to be aware of the difference. There is definitely a place for making logical/rational judgements, but they need to be done within the broader context and not as kneejerk reactions from our own egocentric selves: “Remove the beam from your own eye, then will you be able to see clearly to remove the splinter from your neighbor’s eye” (Matthew 7:5). This is what ignorance is. Ignorance (ignore-ance) refers not to someone who doesn’t know something, but to one who knows in such a way as to “ignore” the greater mystery and depths of things that one’s knowing blocks and filters from view. Many Christians have come to define faith as knowing things with certainty – the complete opposite of biblical faith. Faith, rather, is actually about trusting when one does not know, because “God knows”. The first way leads to arrogance, the second to humility before the mystery – “walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

31) The “Cloud of Unknowing” (late 14th century) is a classic spiritual work written by an unknown Christian monk. In it he says that in order to live and pray, one must enter into the cloud of forgetting, to forget one’s certitudes, labels, hurts, and explanations. And the word for that is faith. A certain degree of awareness and facts and information can be good and helpful - but we are admonished not to get too attached to our thoughts and opinions, because our ego likes to convince itself that it has the whole picture. At that point growth and the humble journey stops, and nothing new can happen to us. During the middle ages, the term “tabula rasa” – an erased board - was used to describe this disposition of a humble openness as a learner or a disciple.

32) With St. Paul we witness a great change in terms of the way he moves from a logical, analytical mind to a paradoxical or spiritual mind – the “mind of Christ” as he puts it (1 Corinthians 2:16, Philipians

2:5). At one point in his life, he describes everything as black and white to his analytical, logical mind. Everything was clear cut based on observance or non-observance of the law. That's how he came to the logical conclusion, according to the Book of Deuteronomy, that "If one hangs on a tree, one is accursed" (Deuteronomy 21:23), and Jesus hung on a tree, therefore Jesus is accursed (Galatians 3:13). But when he witnesses that Jesus is one with God (1 Corinthians 15:7), his logical rational mind could not process that reality anymore. He had to move to a new place. He was blinded, and then came the great conversion and transformation (Acts 9:19) when he could see anew through the mind of Christ – the "meta-noia". His life was now lived out of a trusting relationship with God, through Christ and the Spirit, and not out of a detached analytical mind that had all the answers.

33) Paul, like Jesus, then began to teach in a way where one would have to hold two things together in order to come to truth: law and spirit, flesh and spirit, slave and free, Jew and Greek, male and female, weakness and strength, life and death, law and grace, individual and community, the wise and the foolish. And he said one needed to "put on the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16, Philippians 2:5), who alone is able to reconcile all these things (Colossians 1:20, Ephesians 2:16), all these seeming contradictions and contradictories which we are also called to hold, forgive, bear, be patient with, and reconcile in the same way (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

34) Most of us want certitudes, we want conclusions, we want explanations, we want to be correct, we want to be in control, we want to be in charge, we don't want to change. That's the ego standing behind the narrow mind which is all about being identified as being on one side or the other, instead of holding the tension and moving to that deeper truth – moving to the mind and heart of Christ - because our ego won't accept having to change or having to be transformed. And when one does hold paradoxes together, something new comes about. When you hold life and death, you get resurrection, when you bring together male and female you get new life, when you hold onto the love of God and the cross of Good Friday, you get Easter Sunday. Ultimately, life is not about being correct, but about being connected, not about being right, but about being in right relationship.

35) We also witness this reconciliation in Mary when it was said that she would "hold all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:19,51). Mary held together her trust in the love of God and the death of her son on the cross. And where does Mary hold these things and process these things? In her heart. When we look at the image of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mary isn't pointing at her brain, as if to say "Hey, I've got this all figured out". Instead she is pointing to her heart, to the place where God is, the place where love is. It's the place where love, where God, can come and take this and make something new out of it, create and recycle, bring life out of death, bring goodness out of tragedy, bring beauty out of ugliness. And that's the ministry of reconciliation that we are also called to participate in as well.

36) In life most of us experience suffering and injustice, while also experiencing beauty and goodness. How do we hold both of these realities together - both of these ups and downs - when the logical mind cannot figure them out? How do we hold things that could cause us to become bitter or filled with resentment and instead hold them in a way that stretches us and creates something new in us and around us? When we think solely out of our narrow, logical mind – we tend to follow this progression: "analytical – critical – cynical." This happens because we approach life with too narrow a lens that ends up missing the greater dimensions of things, the sacred mystery, the enchanted universe in which we live.

37) In the 1st Book of Kings, there's a story where Elijah asks a poor widow for some food (1 Kings 17:7-16). At first it appears as if she's going to consult her rational logical mind which is thinking: "No, we don't have enough. Don't give to this guy." It appears that she is going to go with that narrow, self-centered part of her mind and say "no", but then she says "yes". She ends up trusting that her life is

part of a bigger life, her heart is a part of a bigger heart. She, like Elijah, trusts in that small, still, quiet imperceptible voice of God's Spirit and surrenders to it. She trusts in the love of God to take care of this, and she ends up being able to eat well.

38) Similarly, there's the woman in the Gospel (Mark 12:38-44, Luke 21:1-4) who gives all she has, even though it seems to be an insignificant amount. And Jesus says "She gave more than anyone". She trusted. She didn't analyze the situation from her small mind. She held 'being poor' with 'being rich in trust of God', and enabled something beautiful and worthy of Jesus' respect to take place. When Jesus asks his disciples to feed the 5000, he was challenging them to trust and to approach reality from the great mind and heart of abundance rather than the narrow minded place of scarcity (Matthew 14: 13-21, John 6:1-14). Jesus continually points out how the natural world – the birds of the sky and the lilies of the field – trust in and participate in the abundance of life without fear or holding back like human beings do (Matthew 6:26-28).

39) In Jesus on the cross, we see the archetype of a human life - holding, bearing, and suffering the contradictions of life, not simply in his mind, but bodily. By continuing to love through it, embracing the pain, the hurt, the brokenness - by embracing them with patience, compassion, forgiveness – he restores and reconciles all things in himself (Colossians 1:20). In doing this, Jesus reveals the divine manifesting through the human. Jesus demonstrates the way of re-union/redemption/re-conciliation by embracing what is - even in its brokenness and woundedness - by his embrace of the cross, embracing the seeming polarities and dualities of life - pointing this way (John 14:6) for all people to trust and follow as truth and life.

40) Mother Theresa (1910-1997) tells a story that on one occasion as she was walking down a street, a beggar came up to her and said "Mother Theresa, everyone is giving to you. I also want to give to you. Today for the whole day I earned 15 rupees" – the equivalent of 30 cents. And he said "And I want to give it to you". Mother Theresa thought for a moment: "If I take the 30 cents he will have nothing to eat. If I don't take it, it will hurt his feelings. So I put out my hand and I took the money. I've never seen such joy on anyone's face as I saw on the face of that beggar, at the thought that he too could give to Mother Theresa". She said that gift to her meant more than winning the Nobel Peace Prize (1979). Mother Teresa went on "That was a big sacrifice for that poor man who had sat in the hot sun the whole day long and received only 30 cents. 30 cents is such a small amount and I can get nothing with it, but as he gave it up and I took it, it became like thousands because it was given with so much love. God looks not at the greatness of the work, but at the love by which it was performed". And in the same way, we have the opportunity as we live our lives, to look at the world, to embrace the world with a heart and mind that can stretch and grow, to love even when it's difficult, to embrace even when it does not seem logical, but to love in a way that can make all things new and all things right, that brings healing and restoration and hope to our world. That's how we embrace, with Christ, the way of the cross, the way of sacrificial love, the way that leads to Easter and Resurrection.

The Blindspot of the Pharisee: Jesus' Challenge to the Orthodox Fr. Ray Ball: fray3@gmail.com

1) Have you ever wondered why the New Testament puts such an emphasis on the doctrinally orthodox Pharisees in their opposition to Jesus? I believe it is because there is a blind spot - a default setting - which religious people tend to fall into which the New Testament is trying to warn religious people about less they too end up repeating the same mistake. St. Paul admitted to having the same religious blindness (Philippians 3:4-8). How is it that we can sometimes resist the gift that Jesus continuously tries to help the Pharisees to overcome? The biggest blind spot of those who opposed Jesus, the orthodox Pharisees, was that they made individual doctrines and liturgical practices into idols and absolutes. They were very preoccupied with ritual, liturgy, and the symbolic. For example, they were

quick to criticize Jesus for not liturgically washing his hands properly (Matthew 15:2) and not working on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:12).

2) The ego wants to hold onto something that it feels is secure and unchanging because it wants to stay in control. This, of course, is precisely what faith is the opposite of. Faith calls us to trust only in the mystery of God and not our ideas, answers and explanations. It is precisely about giving up control and security, of making anything but God an idol. They often made accidentals into essentials, and missed what was really essential – life and relationships. When you make an individual truth into an absolute by not putting it in relationship with other truths or facts, it becomes an ideology. Individual truths need to be connected and related to other truths and facts. This is why St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) stated that truth as a whole is absolute (Summa I, q. 16, a. 7) not separate truths apart or out of context to the whole. Individual truths are relative, that is, in need of being put in relationship to other truths and facts in order not to be distorted and becoming ideology. This is why theology is an ongoing discipline that needs to continuously connect religious meanings and values to the ongoing understanding of truth and reality. When Jesus healed on the Sabbath he demonstrated that a particular religious doctrine - e.g. do not work on the Sabbath - was not absolute and needed to be put into the context of other truths and facts, namely the need to love our neighbor and the need for liturgy to connect a person to service. The Pharisees were orthodox in terms of their ability to quote doctrine, but were not able to pastorally connect those truths, meanings and values in a way that was able to recognize and respect the truth of people and their daily lives, as Jesus did. They were doctrinally orthodox but pastorally and behaviorally unorthodox which is what matters the most. As Pope Francis (1936-) has pointed out - there are two ways of being heretical. One is not recognizing and respecting doctrine. The second is not recognizing and respecting what and who one is applying it to. And what one applies it to is forever growing and changing, which is why theology is an ongoing discipline – mediating religious meanings and values to life.

2) It has been pointed out that Jesus was asked 183 questions in the New Testament but only answered 3 of them. We often look to Jesus as the one who gives answers and explanations. Most of the time, however, Jesus did not give answers because he knew answers and explanations would only embolden and solidify the ego. Peter and Paul, among others, had to let go of their answers and explanations - which had made them arrogant and self-centered - in order to trust and surrender in times of darkness and confusion, i.e. to enter into the Paschal Mystery. Jesus did not give them answers but gave them a relationship to the God of mystery. They had to learn to surrender and let go of their certitudes, and had to learn to walk humbly. What we cannot grasp with our brain we can embrace heartily and bodily. Mary herself is the great example of one who does not know, but trusts. In paintings of Mary she points not to her head but to her heart - pondering these things in her heart. Job is another example of one who called out to God with questions regarding the meaning of suffering. God never gives him an answer to hang onto, but a relationship to trust in. The problem that most people have is that they would rather have an answer than God!

3) The other part of the problem that the Pharisees were blind to was the inability to know spiritually as opposed to knowing logically. They were always trying to pose either/or questions to Jesus, e.g. "Should we pay taxes to Caesar or not?" (Matthew 22:21) This is because the logical, analytical part of our brain is binary, and this is how we try to divide up reality. This, of course, was the original temptation - eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:17) We want to couch everything in terms of up or down, right or left, good or bad, black or white. Jesus did not give in to this dichotomy of reality. Instead he said things like "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's" (Mark 12:17). Truth comes through holding both statements together.

Ego, Shadow, & True Self Fr. Ray Ball: frray3@gmail.com

Our "ego" is the thoughts that we have about ourselves that create our image or persona or identity. It is also the thoughts that others – or the world – has about us that we have internalized. Our "shadow"

is those things about us that do not fit the image, which we then hide or deny or disguise and project onto others and hate in them. Peter is one who had a big ego – and tried to make himself out to be stronger than he actually was. His “ego” took a hit when he denied Jesus, after having earlier said “I will never deny you” (Mark 14:31, Matthew 26:35). When Jesus asked to wash his feet (John 13), Jesus was calling him to be more open about the hidden part of himself – his shadow – which we all have - and not have to deny or pretend, because it did not fit with his image – his ego. Peter denied Jesus because he was in denial about himself first. As we shine the light on our shadow self, it may appear that our shadow is our true-self – until we realize that the light that we shine on our shadow is really our true-self. But we only come to our true-self because our shadow-self has first toppled our ego-self, which forced us to bring presence and awareness (our true-self) to our shadow-self. That is the gift of our weakness. Paul refers to his shadow when he talks about his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7) which he begged the Lord to take from him – but instead made it possible for God’s grace and strength to be able to work in him even more abundantly: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:8-10) Amazingly, when we bring the light of presence to our shadow, the shadow itself also gets transformed into the light - “Whatever is exposed to the light, becomes light” (Ephesians 5:13) - because our true identity is that we are “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14-16). But we only come to this realization because our shadow has toppled our ego, or as Jesus says: “You must lose yourself in order to find yourself” (Matthew 10:39, 16:25). Only through that light of presence - can we recognize and love that same light hidden beneath the surface in others. It was only after Peter and Paul’s egos had been toppled – Paul being knocked to the ground and Peter denying Jesus – were they able to live from a new source of grace and become the patient, empathetic, compassionate shepherds that could love, feed, and care for the flock as Jesus himself (John 21).