

WHO DO YOU SAY I AM? DEMOCRACY AND THE SPIRITUALITY OF TRUTH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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*And they that shall be of thee
shall build the old waste places;
thou shalt raise up the
foundations of many
generations; and thou shalt be
called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of paths to dwell in.*

ISAIAH 58:12

REPAIRERS OF
THE BREACH

ANCIENT TYPES OF TRUTH



Teacher— arts, crafts, skills,
professional life (techne)



Philosopher – wisdom,
logic, rhetoric, debate,
dialectic



Prophets – religion, faith in
Truth



Parrhesiastes – one's own
truth, risk w/o reward, uses
discourse/conversation

HISTORY

Parrhesia begins with the Greeks about the 5th century BCE and persists until about 5th CE

First in Classical Athenian democracy (5th and 4th BCE)
Then in the courts of the Hellenistic monarchies
(4th to 1st BCE)

It eventually becomes, under the Roman Stoic Seneca for example, a personal spiritual practice

Parrhesia is the
ancient spiritual
practice of truth
telling

It literally means
“free speech” -
“pan” + “rhema”

Speaking what? The
truth!

alethia = truth =
reality = virtue

A duty one did
alone, spoken to
power at great
danger and risk

DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS

THE ART OF LIFE

“*Techne tou biou*” - the art of life

- the education of the soul,
- technologies of the self,
- the care of oneself (*epimeleia heautou*)

Personal practices for the main event of political speech

- Journaling – *Hupomnemata*
- Letters – *epistoli*, epistolary

Discourse requires an interlocutor – *basanos* - (“touchstone”)

PLATO - THE LAWS (DE LEGIBUS) 348 BCE BOOK VIII

- There is, however, another matter of great importance and difficulty, concerning which God should legislate, if there were any possibility of obtaining from him an ordinance about it. But seeing that divine aid is not to be had...
- ...there appears to be a need of some bold man who especially honors plainness of speech and will say outright what he thinks best for the city and citizens—ordaining what is good and convenient for the whole state amid the corruptions of human souls, opposing the mightiest lusts, and having no man his helper but himself standing alone and following reason only

PROBLEMS AND POLITICAL EFFECTS



Problem! How do we judge the quality of truth-telling?



Problem! How do we deal with disagreement and conflict?



Questions: What is the aim of parrhesia? How do we judge success?



Megalothymos vs megalopsychos – desire to be superior vs desire to aid others

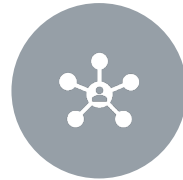
LET'S PRACTICE!



GROUPS OF 2-3



BASANOS AND
PARRHESIASTES –
THIS IS AN EXERCISE
TO HONE ONE'S
PARRHESIASTIC
SKILLS- REMEMBER
SENSITIVITY AND
CONFIDENTIALITY?



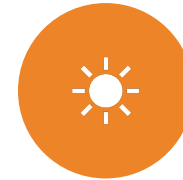
CREATE A
DISCOURSE WITH
ONESELF VIA
ANOTHER



BEGIN WITH
INTRODUCTION,
THEN ONE ASKS FOR
A POLITICAL
POSITION/OPINION,
SOMETHING
PROVOCATIVE



ASK WHY? RECEIVE
ANSWER, THEN ASK
WHY AGAIN, AND
AGAIN...

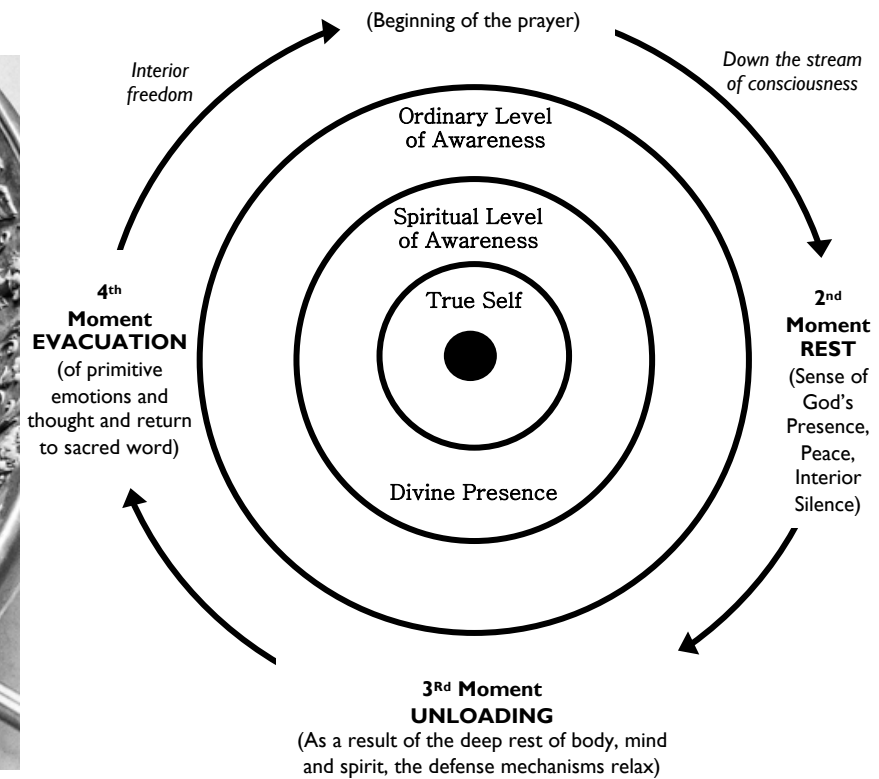


UNTIL ONE ARRIVES
AT THE TRUTH



THEN SWITCH AND
DO THE SAME FOR
THE OTHER PERSON

THE SPIRAL OF PARRHESIA



REFLECTION



What was your experience when speaking? Listening? Observing?

Three kinds of awareness: one must develop



**What do you see as the strengths of this approach to democracy?
Weaknesses?**



Questions? Concerns?

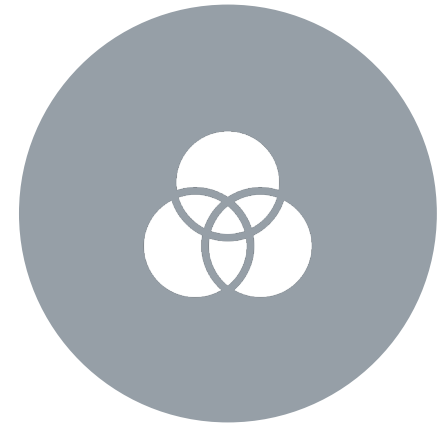
CLOSING



WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE? WHAT
WILL YOU DO?



HOW WILL YOU STAND APART FROM
FAMILY/GROUP/NATION, SO YOU MAY
STAND TOGETHER?



REMEMBER: SPIRITUALITY IS POLITICAL;
THAT IS POLITICAL EFFECTS ARE AN
UNAVOIDABLE, AND INDEED DESIRABLE,
PART OF ONE'S SPIRITUALITY

Parker Palmer, *Healing the Heart of Democracy*



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graph TD; A[Parker Palmer, Healing the Heart of Democracy] --> B[Henri Nouwen, The Wounded Healer]; B --> C[Thomas Merton, Seeds of Destruction and Faith and Violence];
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Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*

Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Destruction and Faith and Violence*

RECOMMENDED READING

FOR MORE INFORMATION:



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