

Image Theory - Jim Addington (August '93)

Good Morning! I gave up wearing a watch about 3 years ago when I broke mine, and I decided that I lived in a world that paid too much attention to time and so I decided never to wear a watch again. Well, I've come to realize that there are occasions and moments where it's very important to keep track of where you are. Now, our schedule says, that at 10:15 we're going to break to stretch and have coffee and whatever. I'm the official timekeeper so I just want you to realize and understand that when I say It's break time, it's 10:15.

I want to read you some poetry -and I read this with honor to and gratitude for "Maya Angelou", "A Rock, a River, a Tree".

* What words out of that poetry do you remember?

* As you listened what word picture what image in this poetry had power for you, struck sparks?

* Who would you like to share this with? Well there's a saying in the 'Lakota' language that goes 'Neeta Kooye Oyasi' and that means "for all my relations". Perhaps we can dedicate Maya's creativity and this poem to all of our relations.

Now, what I would like you to do, for just a few minutes is to talk together at the tables. I would like you to do is four things.

* Make a quick note in your experience, what has been for you a powerful permission giving image in your life? and you can interpret that however you want to.

* Then secondly, what is one striking influential story that you remember from your childhood? Maybe it was in school, maybe your teacher told it, maybe it was one of your parents or friends.

* Thirdly, reflect on how that story influenced your perception of your own life and journey and you can reflect on it now.

* Finally, what poetic metaphor best captures your sense of vocation and self. What's a poetic metaphor?

Let me ask you a few reflective questions just so we get a sampling of what happened to you. Which of these four questions did you find easiest to get involved in? Give us a sampling of some powerful images?

* If you were going to paint that for me, what would you paint?

* These two here what did you discover, when you talked about 2 and 3, what is this business about story?

* What's the power of stories for us? How does it influence your thinking? Anybody want to share a story with us that you told your partner?

* How many of you in grade school had teachers that read books to you? What happened to you if you listened to those books or stories? You could see, couldn't you? Literally, the story unfolds as you listened to it and heard it, isn't that the case? There's something about the connections between images and stories, is very interesting.

* How about poetic metaphors? Did you find that hard to come up

with? or was that easy? Share with us a poetic metaphor that captures your sense of vocation. Is there another? How does poetic metaphor relate to story and images?

I want to take a few minutes and spin out some word pictures for you about images and education and pull in a couple of resources and what I want to do really is simply be provocative. I don't want to suggest a system to you or an inclusive model, but just simply be provocative and spin out some pictures and images for you. First, to help us with that, I'd like you to help me for a couple of minutes-think together about images. We need to do a quick brainstorm on associations with the word image.

* What are the quick associations do you have with the word images?

*What are the characteristics of an image? Now clearly something happens to the retina of the eye when sensory data hits it and forms images but then there's something else that goes on within the imagination-that may happen while you are sleeping or with your eyes closed or when you think of an experience or a person - they are visual.

* Are there feelings or emotions associated with images? The five senses can trigger those, can't they? Have you ever walked into a building that smelled like your first classroom? Interesting things can happen to you. Smells can trigger all kind of stuff. Images are powerful and that really is the point we share this morning.

Let me come at it three different ways. Two of the resource people that we want to pull on this morning - one of them, is Kenneth Boulding, who wrote this book called "The Image". For years we have found this to be a key resource in a very helpful way of thinking and talking about the role of images in human behavior. Boulding says four things. First, he says that all of us operate out of images. Contrary to what many in academia believe that we operate out of great ideas or ---- ideas. Boulding says, that we all operate out of images. Secondly, he suggests that images have a powerful or a profound influence on behavior. I'm abbreviating that, in fact he uses stronger language. He says, images determine or govern behavior. The least we can say from our experience is that images have a powerful influence on behavior. The way I perceive things powerfully effects the way I respond to what I see. Thirdly, that messages change images. Now what do I mean by messages, certainly poetic metaphors can be messages. Messages come as powerful missiles that impact my picture of myself and the world.

Are you familiar with Jane Elliot? Jane Elliot is a teacher who years ago when ---- was an elementary teacher and as she was struggling to figure out a way to make her students understand the significance of the assassination of Martin Luther King, she created a game that she played for two days with her classroom. That game was such a shocking experience for her that after she caught on it she decided to institutionalize it in her classroom and she's still doing it even with adults these days. The game

is called 'By some brown eyes blue eyes' and all she does is she splits the class in two groups according to eye color and she marks the brown eyes first and she declares the blue eyes to be superior and the whole first day she uses her role as an authoritative power in that classroom to send messages to the brown eyed students, to suggest to them that they are less than there blue eyed friends and what she discovered the first time she did that it took about 15 minutes for the brown eyed students to live down the messages that she was sending them. Messages have powerful impact on our pictures of ourselves and the world. Then the second she switched it and she declared that the blue eyes were really the ones who were inferior and the brown eyes were really the smartest and the brightest and incredible things happened in word games and flash cards the brown eyed students did it faster then they had ever done and several times faster then they were able to do it before and again it took such a short period of time -----of her authoritative position as the teacher, messages that she sent, had an impact specially.

Messages change images, what that means then is that images can change. What this suggests and we'll have a chance to reflect on these a little bit more in a few minutes as you look at this paper, that these five characteristics describe the way images operate in relation to the ego. What that is to suggest is that if you are interested in altering somebody's behavior, well, change their perceptions of themselves and the world. Boulding suggests that all of us operate out of deep pictures of ourselves and the world and the values or images that are woven into both of those which determine whether or not messages give --- an impact or image or pictures. Hold that for a moment and we want to come back and talk more in detail about Boulding's understanding but in effect what he is saying is that the bridge between abstraction or ideas and concrete activity is--- that the deep pictures that we live out of connect for us what is going on in life and our reflections.

Now what does this mean about education and teaching? Well, some suggestions, let me share with you a subversive book. It's particularly subversive for teachers because it's written by a Theologian, church and state, 'Walter -----', written a little book called, "Texts under Negotiation" and even though he's focussing on the religious community, he's clear that teaching is one the fundamental tasks that goes on any parish or congregation. Therefore, he has some interesting insights about the educational process. The educational process, according to 'Brugman, has fundamentally to do with the imagination and knowing gathering knowledge, is the work according to Brugman, of the imagination. We don't always make those connections, that education is fundamentally to do with the imagination. The word that I found helpful is 'imagineering'. Now I want to give credit to my friend Elsa Batica, even though she tells me that she heard it from 'Disney'. Imagineering means that education has fundamentally to do with the process of imagining. It is a mutual

process, Who is the teacher? and Who is the learner? Well all of you who are teachers can testify how much you have learned in the classroom from your students. That the process of imagineering is mutual. Imagineering has to do with organizing social reality around authoritative powerful images, that knowing has to do with latching on the pictures that organize our experience of life for us. Imagineering is communal and happens in community and if you don't believe that look at the powerful imagineering that goes on in our society everyday. Turn on the tube or watch MTV if you want to see the power of images and the way images, music, poetic metaphors are all woven together and all the stuff are young folks are washed with everyday. Think of the commercials on TV, those folks know what they are doing relative to images and the power of images and associations and music and poetry. Society everyday bombards us with all kinds of messages telling us who we are. So, whether it's in a society or a classroom, learning as imagineering is a communal process. Now Brugman suggests that the task of the teacher in this process is a subversive task. Now I don't know how long it's been when you as teachers thought of yourselves as subversives but I find that kind of intriguing - it's true and it's true because it do take serious the business of image change and behavior. You're going to find yourselves subverting the imagineering that society subjects us to everyday.

* Now think, what are the images that society bombards us with?
* Turn on the television, what does it mean to be human? who are we?

* What else does society tells us through things like commercials and television?

* What are the standards of beauty? What characterizes or makes up beauty? How do I know that a female is aesthetically pleasing?

A good teacher is subversive. Dangerous! Subverting the programming society bombards us with. We have to beat about the business of consuming, that is patriotism in our day and yet nobody is going to stand up in their classroom and say that if you want to be a good american, By golly, you get out there and get yourself in debt and spend every penny that you earn to accumulate these experiences and things and that makes you a good american, no one is going to say that. That's the messages. Brugman suggests that the task of the teacher as a subversive is to fund the imagineering process. In our times it' not to offer - --- system and big pictures to hold everything together whether it's to suggest the resources that enable students to recreate their own imagination. That is the resources that enable the student to actively be involved in imaging themselves and the world and so funding the process has to do with provocative pictures - that's images, it has to do with compelling rhetoric - that's poetic metaphors, and powerful narratives - that's story. What's interesting is that I heard couple of you talk about the use of drama in the classroom or the use of music in the classroom to teach the disciplines through.

Now just an illustration, if for example, you were with a group of adults or classroom students and you were reflecting together on the ecological crisis and what it means to have eco-consciousness and wondering how it is in our time we enable people to see themselves as responsible for that goes on, when you might use pictures like this. What does this look like to you? Anyone else? Well I call it the 'Web of Life' and Rick's right in the center of it and ofcourse I'm too and so is Tina. We are all in the center of the 'Web of Life'. Yesterday Elsa talked about the 'Uruguoi' nation and their tradition of making decisions on the context of the 'seven generations'. It was probably ----- of the people of the 'Uruguoi' nation that began that tradition and now it's like a common mythology among most native peoples in North America-the tradition of 'seven generations'. If you were to count the concentric circles, how many do you think you would find there? There are seven there. If you think for a moment, here's Rick in the center of the web of life, i.e.in the center of the seven generations - think of the seven generations that preceded Rick. Here's his mother, here's his father, each of them has a mother and father and mother and father and each of them has a mother and father, and mother and a father and so on and on and that's seven generations and if you go back four generations, sixteen different genetic streams flow into Rick's life in the center of the web. You go back seven generations, how many different genetic heritages enrich Rick's life? 128 just back seven generations. Now, good Heavens! what would have happened if seven generations ago Rick's great great - --- grandmother on her way to her wedding ---- rock in the road and threw out and she cracked her head open, never made it to the wedding. Rick never makes it and all of these 128 ancestors, one of them stubs her toe or cracks her head and Rick never makes it. History itself can be seven generations ----- fact. Mythology is a fact, image is a fact, provocative pictures that help you grasp, who you are and where you stand, and now if you turn that around, take that seven generations and -- it to the center and think of the seven generations yet to be. -----, what that means is that literally every decision that we make is like rock dropped into a still pool, that is the concentric circles of the impact of those decisions spread out and out and out, in every decision. What that means is then, that everyone of us has the 'power of one. What is the 'power of one', it is to open and close the doors, someones sister, some little insignificant decision and seven generations from now, Rick, doesn't make it. Everyone of us has the 'power of one'. Did you see that movie 'The Power of One'? I still remember a poetic metaphor from that movie.