

**ANOTHER
NAME
FOR EVERY
THING**

with

RICHARD ROHR

Season 4, Episode 6
Transformation | Theme 5

- Brie Stoner: So, on today's episode, we're exploring the fifth theme of the Alternative Orthodoxy, which deals with the separate self. Here's how it goes: The separate self is the major problem, not the shadow self, which only takes deeper forms of disguise.
- Paul Swanson: How true this is! I feel like as we delved into this conversation, it got subtler and subtler about how the shadow takes more and more disguises, and when we do that, how we often separate from the whole.
- Brie Stoner: Yeah, I really appreciate that certain themes keep coming up. And one of them is power, control, how we try to control, how the ego tries to keep us from seeing things we don't want to see in ourselves. But also, I appreciate how shame has come up a lot. The role of shame in that it paralyzes us, and how unhelpful shame is because it actually keeps us from looking at our shadows and seeing things that need to grow and accepting them as part of our imperfect perfection of being human.
- Paul Swanson: Yeah, that tendency is so toxic, and then also that thread of forgiveness of not only self and other, but the necessity of community to hold the mirror so that we can forgive ourselves and while also witnessing our shadow self.
- Brie Stoner: Yeah. I feel like the shame component is so strong and many of us have received it within Christianity especially, that if we're not perfect, that there's something wrong with us, and like you just said, Paul, how that perpetuates a sense of isolation and separateness. I also really appreciated that looking at this tenet allows us to see that we have to shift how we identify, that part of the path of transformation is to shift how we perceive ourselves so that we can begin to see ourselves as one through whom the whole resounds, as connected to the whole, as inextricable from the whole. [music] And when we live from that place, it's actually easier to look at our shadow.
- Paul Swanson: Right.
- Brie Stoner: Right? Because we're not so flattened by the fact that we make mistakes.
- Paul Swanson: Yeah. And it frees us to live as one, unique part of the whole, to be a part of that diverse body and not feel like we have to conform or be part of something that's just completely uniform without that distinction of who we are and what we're called to be.
- Brie Stoner: That's right. So, with that, we hope you'll enjoy this episode on the separate self, the fifth theme of The Alternative Orthodoxy. [music ends]
- Paul Swanson: All right. So, we are here with the fifth theme of the Alternative Orthodoxy, which is: The separate self is the major problem, not the shadow self, which only takes deeper forms of disguise. Brie, I wonder if you would kick us off, if there's any story that comes to mind that helps put some flesh on that theme.
- Brie Stoner: Yeah, I think when I first encountered this theme, it was around the time that I was trying to make sense out of the true self/false self—
- Richard Rohr: Yeah, that would make sense.

Brie Stoner: --and which of these selves is the real self—Can the real self stand up?—and trying to make sense out of that. In the beginning my instinct was to try to attack the false self, as if I could eradicate it, as if I could just cut it out and throw it away, which in fact only made it worse, right? Because then I'm in denial of the fact that the only thing you can do is include it and welcome it as part of your humanity.

But the two stories that come to mind is, one, how the ego takes a further form of disguise. I went through this phase when I first encountered this path where I turned contemplation into the new righteousness, to the point where I went through this phase that I call "contemplative frumpy phase," where I thought it was my job to wear really baggy clothes that were second-hand clothes, and I died my hair brown and I kind of just went into this place of the more frumpy I was, somehow the more contemplative I was, and the holier I was. And I eventually outgrew that phase, but it always makes me laugh because it's like contemplative frumpy should now be a clothing line or something.

But in the process of going through that, I realized what I was doing was totally driven by the ego. Even with contemplation, I was feeling extremely proud of myself for multiple sittings in the day and the shadow self, my ego, was just taking a further form of disguise. It was still there, but it just found a new way to manifest. And the thing that shifted it for me was when I went to a symphony performance, all of the sudden it kind of struck me, this idea that it's not that we have to cut parts of ourselves away, but rather to see each of our selves as an instrument, as a part of the whole, and that if I live from that sense of wholeness, of belonging to that wholeness, then I don't have to move into that self-righteous game of cutting pieces and parts of myself and shoving them away as if they're evil and wrong, that tends to perpetuate the cycle of this anyway.

But something about seeing a symphony play and really experience it, or going to a musical like the "Lion King," which I just went to recently, where you really see all of these participants joining in together in one voice, in one chord, in one symphony, it illustrates this tenet for me, to understand that really it's about us recovering that sense of belonging to that whole. What about you, Paul?

Paul Swanson: That's a beautiful story, and really helpful for me. I had this strange hunch that I was going to be dead by the time that I was thirty when I was a kid—

Richard Rohr: Really?

Paul Swanson: --just because of some family health issues. Not with me, but when I was in the womb, it was discovered my mom had cancer, so I could only imagine some of the fear and trauma being transferred to me. And then my dad had some heart issues my entire childhood, and my brother, when he was born, they weren't sure he was going to make it.

Richard Rohr: Wow.

Paul Swanson: And so, out of my family, I was the healthy one, so my thought was, my due is coming. For whatever reason, I picked the arbitrary age of thirty. Like, I'm going to die at thirty.

Richard Rohr: Die at thirty.

Paul Swanson: So, what I found myself doing, in hindsight, was splitting myself into two. Like, I don't have time to deal with any of the false self or the insecurities or the failures because I only have until I'm thirty. I have to just power through. And it was just that deeper form disguised with just suppressing, suppressing, suppressing. And I remember when I came as an intern here and we were sitting in our intern sharing circle, and I said, "I remember when I lived in my false self, and now I live out of my true self."

Brie Stoner: You'd arrived.

Paul Swanson: I'd arrived, with this hubris of only a twenty-something could have, at least I could have. And that year really helped me see there's all this unfinished business that I haven't processed, I haven't worked with, I haven't looked at, not recognizing that how, I'm sure, apparent that split was for everyone else to see. But I was just gung ho with my spiritual life being the goal of all goals and denying everything else. But it was in my internship here really being able to begin to see that my shadow was pretty large and that I needed that community to help me look at it with love and that it's all a part of my journey. It's not just this singular. So, it was that arbitrary thing of thinking I'm going to die at thirty, and then just the way that allowed me to deny so much of my life.

Brie Stoner: But, Paul, when you were an intern, did you rock the contemplative frump look? Were you contemplative frumpy?

Paul Swanson: I think I'm still in it. [laughter]

Brie Stoner: What about you, Richard?

Richard Rohr: You know, I was just thinking as you both were talking, would it help the listeners if, even at this point, we describe the shadow self a little bit, or have we done that already?

Brie Stoner: Nope, that was our first question, so, please.

Richard Rohr: Oh, that was the first. Okay.

Paul Swanson: Why don't you, if you don't mind—

Richard Rohr: Wait. I'll wait.

Paul Swanson: Are you sure? Okay.

Richard Rohr: It's fine to wait. Yeah. Because they might be saying, what is this that we're, yeah. I just remember that this teaching, which came to me, I have to admit, more clearly from Buddhism, but then I said, well, my gosh, Jesus is referring to the same thing, the vine and the branches, or whatever other metaphors he gave us. I just felt a huge sense of relief when I would get offended or be hurt by some kind of betrayal, or a rejection, or whatever. And you've heard me say this, but I did learn it by saying to myself, "Richard, what part of you is hurt?" And I knew it was always the separate

self. The self in union doesn't easily get hurt. It's just too secure. It's too grounded. And I guess I'm not giving you one example, it's just that's happened 300 times in my lifetime, where I realize how much I'm identified with my separate Richard/teacher/priest/Franciscan/male self than I am with who I am in God. It's always a liberation. Always.

But it's always a letting go, too, because you've firmed up those boundaries that take the offense, the Richard self, and you've probably been taking it seriously for three weeks, and then to let go of it feels like losing, feels like a defeat somehow. So, that's my ongoing experience of this dynamic, I guess I'd call it.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. Well, Richard, for our first question, this is going to be a complete shocker. You don't see it coming. [laughter] How would you define the separate self and the shadow self?

Richard Rohr: Yeah, I was moving into it, I guess, right there. So, the separate self is the self that really believes, and we're really programmed to do this, so there's nothing evil about it. I experience my body as sitting over here, yours is sitting over there, that I am me and you are you. So, you know God expects us to fight our way out of this paper bag, but it doesn't come naturally, because the first half of life is defining it, making it important, making it smart, making it strong, whatever it might be. But if you persist in that too much, I'll say by the second half of life, a lot of things start going wrong, the big one being you can't love. You really can't. You can't have empathy. You can't feel other people's sadness or pain.

Now, if you're really hardened in that identity, you don't even know that you can't do those things. You think everybody is that way. In individualistic America, it's easy to persist in that for a long time, because it feels, the competitive nature of our culture allows that to continue, sort of unquestioned. Well, of course, it's you against him and her against you. Something has to put a crack in that façade, in that vessel that you've so meticulously constructed.

Richard Rohr: Now, if you're real practiced at plastering it up again, you'll put off transformation a long time.

Now, that's just a starter, but I want to quickly jump to the shadow self, which is even harder for people to understand because, of course, we use the word shadow in different ways. But ours is largely a Jungian way. Carl Jung, I think very helpfully, described the shadow as that self which is there, but you don't want to see it. It's hidden in the shadows. It's unacceptable to your public persona, to your public image that you've projected to the world or even to your, well, that's even to yourself. If you hold onto it too tight, you believe your own press by thirty. This is true. And you normally don't realize that whole parts of it aren't true at all. Oh, that's very, very humiliating to recognize that because it's always something that didn't fit in with my public persona, and my private self-image.

So, shadow work is crucial to becoming whole, crucial to growing up spiritually or even psychologically. And you all need mirrors. I think that's why most of us are

called to marriage or at least in-depth, persistent relationship, because we need mirrors to say, “Honey, you’re not really what you think you are.” “Oh, I am too.” Well, maybe you are some days. The shadow self doesn’t die easily. As we say here in the description, it only takes deeper forms of disguise.

I have sought to be a poor Franciscan all my life, and I remember when I was a young man, young friar, I’d empty out my room every six months and get poor again. [laughter] I just had to recognize that less and less, but it’s still true. I do like nice things, not exaggeratedly nice things, but just things that are beautiful, things that are tasteful, restaurants that are well-appointed and food that is, I do like that.

So, when people treat me to it, I get rid of my shadow love of it by saying, “Well, he paid for it.” [laughter] Because he paid for it and bought me this expensive meal, it’s okay to eat it. And it is. But it’s just having to admit that, you know, Richard, you’re materialistic, too, and you’re soft and comfortable, too. I don’t need to hate myself for it, but I do need to know it or I really fool myself. I really kid myself. You just can’t get away with that too long. The whole key to the shadow self is it’s revealed in the seeing and the deliberate seeing, which is usually out of the corner of your eye. You can’t get it directly. It has to be revealed in an unguarded moment. Or, in the remark of a friend that says something and you think, “Oh, am I really that way?” [laughter]

So, forgive me, this is really embarrassing because I’ve prided myself in being clean. But Elias, who helps me at the house, he said to me a few days ago, “Have you taken a bath recently?” [laughter] I said, “Do I smell?” I said, “Do I really?” Like, I whiffed under my arm because of all these meds I’m on, I actually do have some odors, I guess. But my nose is dead. I don’t smell anything. So, I made him promise to keep telling me if I—

Brie Stoner: These are the gifts of community.

Richard Rohr: That was shadow self. No one wants to think they’re smelly. Isn’t that wonderful? It isn’t really a moral evil to be smelly, but it’s shadow. It’s just, I’m an inferior person if I stink. [laughter]

Paul Swanson: That’s so good.

Richard Rohr: So, you have permission to, if I smell, let me know.

Brie Stoner: This is interesting to me, though, that the Christian tradition has often made many of us feel like our job was to fix what is wrong, to eradicate the sin portion, to—

Richard Rohr: By all means.

Brie Stoner: --cut it out, fix it, heal it. Maybe not even heal it. Heal it is almost too integrated of a word for what many of us were given. Most of us—

Paul Swanson: Too Christlike.

Brie Stoner: Yeah. That was almost too Christlike for our experience of Christianity. And what I hear you saying, Richard, is that essentially in this tenet, that the problem isn’t that we sin, or make

mistakes, or miss the mark, or have a shadow, or have stuff going on, or in process. That's not the problem. But that essentially, the problem is that we perceive ourselves as separate from each other and the whole.

Richard Rohr: Yep. Yep.

Paul Swanson: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Brie Stoner: And so, it shifts the emphasis, then, about we're not trying to fix the issues. The machinery of being human isn't the issue, but kind of update our operating system to just perceive differently? Is that right? Because the perception process seems to be what shifts or what needs to shift.

Richard Rohr: Yeah. No, I think that's right. And to switch to that perception process is somehow experienced as a defeat, or a, "Oh, I couldn't have missed this all that time," or "Have other people been seeing what I can't see?"

Brie Stoner: Like, there's a humiliation in it, like a—

Richard Rohr: Yeah. "Am I that dumb, or that gross, or that stupid, or that"—

Brie Stoner: Do I talk that much?

Richard Rohr: --"or overbearing?" Yeah. Yeah. [laughter] "Do I talk that much?" "Yeah." "Or talk too little," whatever it might be. When someone else names it, it's very humiliating. If it's something you've been trying to hide real well.

Paul Swanson: Right. I think one of the ways it manifests for me, too, and still does, is not just not knowing how to love, but the fear of being loved as I am fully, and I think that's another way for me to, yeah, I think about Jesus's saying, "Do not fear. Do not be afraid." And that invitation is do not be afraid to be fully loved just as you are, shadow and all, and the games we play with that separate self.

Richard Rohr: I like it. Well said. Thank you.

Brie Stoner: I'm wondering, Richard, if you could share with us a little bit more about Carl Jung. You brought him up just now but, obviously, this shadow language comes from his work. How would you describe his core contribution and how it's influenced you on this tenet?

Richard Rohr: I'd have to say in a major way. If I list, now don't ask me the other four, but he's one of my five great teachers. I can remember, I had read the name in works of philosophy and psychology, but never read any of his books. And when I was in college at Duns Scotus in Detroit, I remember taking one of his books off the bookshelf and just paging through it, and knowing I was onto something that was deeply true. I wish I could remember which of his themes it was. I don't know that I do remember. But the ones that still are with me today are his notions of the anima and the animus, the female part of a male and the male part of a female. I just said, "Yeah, that's true."

And then his notion of archetypes. And you've heard me quote this so often, that we create

the images that the soul needs to see for its own transformation. And I think being raised a Catholic and at this beautiful, old, medieval Duns Scotus College where there was art everywhere, I had just lived in the midst of this kind of beauty, and I wondered why do some pieces of art just fascinate me, or I want to look at them whenever I pass by, and others mean nothing whatsoever. So, archetypal truth, which was connected to his notion of the unconscious, that most of what we do is unconsciously motivated. I knew that was true. And we have this expectation that we're all fully aware, and it's obvious to me hardly anybody's aware by the way they deny and project.

And then I reverted to Freudian terms like projection, and so forth, to explain what Jung was seeing. He always struck me, after I'd read a bit of Jung, as a man who must have been a believer, and his great disappointment in Christianity was that it was so external. It was all just external beliefs, external behaviors. He said, "There's no interior life in most Christians, Catholic or Protestant." I said, "Yeah." I mean, that's become central to my whole life, that recognition of the necessity of interiority to balance out so much externalized morality and externalized religion, externalized liturgy, externalized notion of priesthood or ministry.

Richard Rohr: And then, of course, this massive notion of the shadow self. Just that someone would clarify for a largely moralistically trained Catholic, that the shadow self is not the bad self. And I didn't believe it because he said it, but because he said it I was able to believe what I knew to be true at a deeper level: "Yes! He's right!" And in all these, there must be one or two more, that he named things by giving words to what I intuitively suspected.

I remember when I taught in Switzerland, several times they took me to places where he had worked, and taught, and written, and I felt I was walking in a sanctuary, you know. He really evoked for me the meaning of holiness. And yet, here I recognize most Christians thought of him as a pagan, an "esoteric," as the Germans call him. And, in fact, even in Switzerland, when I would quote him, I found out again and again he wasn't that popular. He wasn't that well-known, even here he was one of their own, but there was a resentment about him. And I think it's because of his rather harsh criticisms of Christianity. So, they just didn't read him. But they were very fair, really.

And then, oh, the other thing, I used to teach, when I was in charge of the youth community that became New Jerusalem in Cincinnati, all these young people. I don't know if you have them more when you're young, but they were always coming to me with their dreams. Now, we were part of the charismatic movement, so we had fostered that, I guess.

Brie Stoner: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Richard Rohr: But his help in understanding that this was the way the unconscious was trying to break through. And as a young man, I had many revelatory dreams, and he gave me immense permission to trust them. And, each one builds on the other. And the language of dreams is symbol. It's not literalism. And once you get one or two good dreams that, really, you know this is your deeper self-speaking, it almost cures fundamentalism. Really, it does.

I bet a fundamentalist has to repress his or her dreams, because they don't want to read reality as symbolic. They want to read it as literal. So they'll make any dark dream the devil: "A devil was in my dreams last night." And to say this might have been a friend showing you

what you don't want to see, which it often, if not usually, is. Maybe that's what we should do for fundamentalists, give them a good dream course? [laughter]

Brie Stoner: Dream Jungian analysts.

Richard Rohr: And then it just doesn't work anymore. You know it's not true—literalism.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. I took a class at Creighton on Jungian psychology and Christian spirituality. And my professor, who is now my spiritual director, really helped me with seeing my dreams as these invitations from the unconscious, to see what I'm unwilling to see.

Richard Rohr: That's right.

Brie Stoner: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Paul Swanson: And to be able to have someone who's not telling you what your dream means, but to work with it archetypically, it literally helped me decide to get married because of a dream I had and this image of me on a rope swing just going back and forth, never letting go. Back and forth, not deciding. And below was just this big ocean of unknown. And the way that she helped me work through that dream allowed me to see the ways that I was clinging to indecision as a way to not drop into the unknown.

Richard Rohr: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Paul Swanson: I think that is part of, I think, what I envy a little bit in the Catholic Tradition is the numerous archetypes that are available.

Brie Stoner: Yeah.

Paul Swanson: And growing up in the evangelical world, there wasn't that same opportunity to see archetypes reflected back in their smallness and in their wholeness. And so, I wonder if you could speak to the way that the archetype's present in the Perennial Tradition kind of help, I'm thinking back to that first theme, that help elucidate how we move towards wholeness?

Richard Rohr: Well, if I'm hearing you, don't let me go on a tangent, but this whole idea of pay attention to images that fascinate you, that draw you in. When you go to an art museum, "Why do I want to stand in front of this one? What is it saying to me?" You would remember, Paul, when you did the rites of passage. In the early nineties, I started collecting every postcard and photograph from a magazine, pictures of men in every stance I could imagine—king, warrior, lover, magician, positive and negative, male/female, father/son—and I created six rather huge boards. They were probably still used when you made it.

Paul Swanson: Yeah.

Richard Rohr: They traveled around the country and they got pretty raggedy as the years went on. But I never had to encourage the men to spend some time in front of those pictures. And I'd say, "Just keep looking. Why do you keep returning to the warrior board? You're probably a warrior archetype. Or, you're trying to discover it because you've rejected the warrior archetype part of your soul."

And, of course, the most popular board was always the father/son because so many men began their men's work by bemoaning, necessarily, a poor relationship with their father, and they longed for some dear pictures. But again, I'd always have on the board both positive and negative. So, I have no doubt to this day, and that has been continued in Czech Republic, Ireland,

Richard Rohr: Australia. They've all created their "archetype boards," as they call them, because they saw, my God, it evokes. It evokes the unconscious. And, of course, this must please a Four. You know? [Note: Fr. Richard is referring to the Enneagram type "Four." There are nine Enneagram types.]

Brie Stoner: I'm so happy right now.

Richard Rohr: You know, the power of art. And it must be one of the greatest weaknesses of Protestantism—

Brie Stoner: Yeah.

Richard Rohr: --that it rejected or did not understand the archetypal world, that words don't really, of themselves, evoke and transform you, but images do. Is that what you asked me?

Paul Swanson: Yeah.

Richard Rohr: I went on my tangent anyway.

Paul Swanson: That speaks to it directly. Directly.

Brie Stoner: But I want to say, though, that just as the separate self is the major problem for us individually, I think collectively, our spiritual traditions, the major problem is when they consider themselves separate and unique and only—

Richard Rohr: Oh, that's well stated. Yeah.

Brie Stoner: --the need for a wholistic view where everything belongs, and all these, I love how your tenets, Richard, are building on each other, right?

Richard Rohr: I hope so.

Brie Stoner: It's like, there's momentum here. Because without the Perennial Tradition, I have to say, our Christian archetypes are pretty lame. Especially for women, because there aren't very many powerful, archetypal images for us where we can befriend things that society has deemed as not socially acceptable, things like fury, and rage, and energies that we're kind of afraid of.

And I think I'm saying this because when you asked the question about the Perennial Tradition and archetypes, immediately what came to me was the Hindu goddess Kali, and she is fearsome. She is scary. She's out there with a sword and there's blood everywhere, and she's called the liberator. She's called the Mother of Liberation, and that holy fire is so necessary.

Brie Stoner: But it seems to me, Richard, that what's happening with the shadow self is that it connects with fear, kind of as you said, Paul. It's that which we're almost afraid to see of ourselves.

Richard Rohr: Yes. Fear is big part of it, that's right.

Brie Stoner: Is that the same mechanism, do you think, as the true self/false self that Thomas Merton describes? What's the relationship between how he talks about the false self and how Jung talks about the shadow self?

Richard Rohr: Some have accused me, and maybe rightly so, of conflating them too much, that false self is always shadow self. So I think they're right. I don't want to say they're always the same, but they're certainly frequently the same. False self has more a sense of shame to it. Shadow self has more a sense of shame to it. False self has more a sense of ego to it.

Brie Stoner: That's helpful.

Richard Rohr: That's the first time I've said that, just now. Yeah. Wow. I wish I'd said that earlier. [laughter] Good. So that's probably why people were a bit dissatisfied when I talked as if they were one and the same. They're not totally. They overlap for sure, but it's the difference between ego and shadow.

Brie Stoner: That's really helpful because it invites us, then, to welcome the ego mechanism, not to try to cut it out, like I was saying earlier. So, the initial instinct is to fix it, break it, or get rid of it—

Richard Rohr: Yes.

Brie Stoner: --to welcome the ego mechanism, to say, "Yep, you're there. You're going to do that thing you do and you're always going to find a way to show up." With shame, it's a little harder, though because it's so difficult to see that which we're afraid to see. And I wonder, thinking on the story you started with, Paul, if this doesn't connect back to the importance of community. Or, I'm even thinking about Confession, for instance, in the Catholic Tradition. Without somebody saying, "Hey, it's okay. You're human," that theme you've been coming back to again and again, Richard, the welcome to imperfection. We're all there. Without that loving gaze, I don't know that it's even possible to do shadow work.

Richard Rohr: No. That's right. That's what I meant by mirroring. You have to have help in that. You can't just delve in in your private cave. It needs to be revealed to you. And the humiliation and embarrassment, "Is that how I look? Is that how I'm coming across?" Otherwise you'll just, "Oh, it doesn't matter." It's just a thought in the head. Your evil is a thought in the head. That's very legitimate. A community is, our marriage, the smallest community, is a very needed element. And I've always said that's the danger of celibacy. Those of us who live in community, but there's not one person who's allowed to mirror us. And I think that's why

Richard Rohr: the tradition of spiritual directors emerged in monastic and religious communities, is we didn't have a wife or a husband, so there better be someone you let in.

Like, when Father Jim O'Brien, my Jesuit spiritual director, revealed to me that I was a One, it was just so, "Ugh." Sorry, Corey. [laughter] It's like, "Oh, God, is that me?" And I

just drove back to the friary, which was about five miles away, just feeling, have people seen this in me all my life? And I thought it was zeal. I thought it was on-time, good Boy Scout, clean and reverent. And, in fact, I was probably overbearing most of my life. [laughter] Well, you've heard me say this when I teach the Enneagram: if it doesn't humiliate you, you haven't grasped its truth—what you are, what your game is.

Paul Swanson: It seems like it has to raise that cognitive dissonance within you, and then move down to almost the wounding of the body, or not just to get stuck in the head.

Richard Rohr: Yeah, yeah. Good. Good.

Paul Swanson: Can you speak to how, I mean, we have these opportunities to see how we're living in that separate self, or how the shadow comes up through this mirroring. What kind of words of wisdom would you offer to those who can see it in their mind and think about it, but how do you let that move down through your entire bodily experience?

Brie Stoner: That's great. Yeah.

Richard Rohr: Well, you've got what I'm trying to say when I continually say you have to suffer it as a wound or as humiliation. It can't just be head knowing. It has to be gut. I used to say you want to vomit. [laughter] That's probably an overstatement, but it's like, "I hope no one has been seeing this." Like, when Elias told me the other day I stunk, [laughter] I've since asked him, I said it this morning, "Do I stink today?" He said, "[sniff, sniff] No, no, not today." [laughter] Have people been seeing this, or smelling this and I don't know it? Wow. That's good that really happened because it's a very real example, because smell is not a moral imperfection, but why are we so humiliated by it? I mean, my mother used to whisper in my ear, "You have bad breath. Go wash your mouth." Or, "There's wax in your ears," and she'd put her finger—

Brie Stoner: Oh my gosh.

Richard Rohr: And this is probably the things Ones would be offended by, but any notion of uncleanliness— [Note: Fr. Richard is referring to Enneagram type "Ones."]

Brie Stoner: Uh-huh (affirmative), imperfection of any kind.

Richard Rohr: --is our imperfection. I don't think I answered what you asked.

Paul Swanson: You did. I mean, you spoke to—

Richard Rohr: Did I?

Paul Swanson: --not allowing to just rattle around the head. It's got to float through the entire being.

Richard Rohr: Yeah. Cellular knowing, as you've heard me say over the years. It has to kick you in the belly a little bit, at least a little bit. And that's what I mean when I say you want to vomit, it's "Yuck, god, is that how obnoxious I am?" "You come in, Richard, and you just start talking and take over the whole table." "Do I?" Oh, God, I hope not. You know? I think you've got to have a few moments like that. And it's a true friend who will say that to you with love

privately, preferably, and not at the table where you have to suffer the group humiliation. And for you both as parents, this is important to your kiddies. You're the first mirrors that say, "Now, sonny boy—"

Brie Stoner: Well, and to do that without shaming—

Richard Rohr: Without shaming them.

Brie Stoner: --that's the key. Because when we shame each other, we perpetuate the problem—

Richard Rohr: You got it. Yeah.

Brie Stoner: --and we make each other feel more isolated, more separate, more alone. And I think culturally that's a huge problem right now, that we have gotten so used to shame and blame as a form of attacking one another.

Paul Swanson: Writing them off.

Brie Stoner: Yeah.

Paul Swanson: I do think that kids are also the best at telling you, mirroring back.

Brie Stoner: Oh, so honest.

Paul Swanson: Because there's no filter it just comes out, and you have to deal with whatever it is. I mean, not to keep going with this stink metaphor, but the number of times my daughter has just said, "Dad, you stink." You know? [laughter]

Richard Rohr: Oh, really?

Brie Stoner: I love it.

Paul Swanson: And it's just, there's no filter. It's just, this is what's happening. Mirroring from the youngest ones.

Richard Rohr: Yeah, yeah.

Brie Stoner: Are you sure she was saying that from a physiological standpoint and not just a general, like—

Paul Swanson: Just a general stance in life. [laughter]

Brie Stoner: I'm kidding.

Paul Swanson: Spiritually. Physically.

Brie Stoner: So, I want to transition to talk about selfhood, because without a stable selfhood that can withstand—

Richard Rohr: Yes. Good.

Brie Stoner: --that wounding, that humiliating process of seeing the shadow, we collapse, right? So, I want to connect this tenet back to the Trinity for a second because if we build on these, right, if we hold that reality is relational, then when we're living from the false notion of separateness, could we say that the problem or sin is living in anti-reality, or living the lie of separateness, that our choices and actions don't impact the whole, that we're not accountable to the whole?

Richard Rohr: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, we refuse to accept the implications of connectedness. It's very interesting that our central sacrament of Eucharist, or Communion as you very well call it, is naming the whole deal. Go to Communion. Go to Communion. Yes. Go to union. Go to the place of union. And you transfer the bread to another person, even the action of the ritual is relational. We're always told, I hope I don't offend you, in your churches, do you pick up the bread yourself or pick the cup yourself?

Paul Swanson: Growing up, yes. Now, in the Mennonite community that I'm part of, we go, there's an exchange. Yeah.

Richard Rohr: Yeah. And it was always insisted, it must be given to you, and you must receive. That was correct, I think. But I know there are churches who just pick it out, and it maybe seems like a small thing, but the symbolism of relationality is lost.

Brie Stoner: Yeah. Well, and then it seems like that's the stable selfhood, then, is the relational self, the communion selfhood.

Richard Rohr: Excellent. Yes.

Brie Stoner: The selfhood that most reflects the Trinity, that understands that we are inextricable from each other, and then can mirror back to each other these things with love. So, it's almost like the work of seeing the shadow is to move deeper into relationship.

Paul Swanson: I'm thinking back, and I think it was when we were preparing for this episode, Brie, we were talking about the image that we both grew up with. It was an evangelistic tool where there are two cliffs. On one side it's you, the other side is God, and then the cross is the bridge.

Brie Stoner: Oh, and the cross. And the flames of hell were licking up around the cross.

Paul Swanson: Yes.

Brie Stoner: Yeah.

Richard Rohr: Oh, my God.

Paul Swanson: And so, it was that need of the cross to get to God, and it was like a one-time transaction.

Richard Rohr: A one-time transaction.

Paul Swanson: And I think that only deepens the separate self, when that's the kind of theology that you're raised with, is you don't see that it's a continual need for communion, a continual need for reconnection.

Richard Rohr: You named it very clearly. So many people, as you know, learn visually, or by a geometric symbol, or sign, and that's why you've got to get it right. And we had the little milk bottle with little flecks of black in it and that was the Catholic who had sinned.

Brie Stoner: What?

Richard Rohr: They were basically white, which even is racist, of course, but there were little flecks in the milk bottle. This was the old Baltimore Catechism.

Brie Stoner: That is terrible.

Richard Rohr: It's terrible, yeah!

Paul Swanson: Yeah.

Richard Rohr: And then when you committed a mortal sin, you basically had chocolate milk. [laughter] Oh, God! We only discovered after Vatican II that this document that formed several generations of American Catholics, the Baltimore Catechism, was written by a not-so-theologically-educated monsignor from New Jersey, and

Richard Rohr: that he was given that kind of authority to come up with those kind of symbols. And there are metaphors that limp, and there are metaphors that are just tragic like your cross, your transaction.

Brie Stoner: Ah, man, that image was burned into my brain. I wish it wasn't. [laughter]

Paul Swanson: Yeah. Yep.

Brie Stoner: I wish it wasn't.

Paul Swanson: This would be a good time, I think, to talk about unity in diversity in this. So knowing that that transformation, the fallacy of separateness, doesn't just squash diversity, can you speak to how that plays into this theme?

Richard Rohr: Yeah. I think one of the major ways—now if I don't speak to it, come back to me—one of the major ways the shadow is created is that we feel if we're not like everybody else, this starts when you're a little two-year-old, three-year-old, you must conform to gain other kids' approval. And any kid who is a little different will be made fun of, publicly shamed, and that's the last thing a kid can bear.

So, that grows into its mature form of confusing uniformity with love, love which leads to true unity. And the basic symbol is the love of a man and a woman, who are different, who are not the same, you know. You don't overcome the difference, you bridge the difference by communion, connection, forgiveness, patience, all the great virtues. So, it's still the same game, this fear of not belonging.

And so, without any doubt, at the minor seminary, the major virtue we were taught in high school—of course, they had 200 teenage boys and they had to keep us under control—the major virtue was obedience to the laws, and punishment of a minor nature for not obeying the rules or the laws. When I first saw this, I really wanted to cry. Think of all the classmates

that left, who came to the seminary to be good Franciscans, I'm sure, but they weren't taught love initially.

It increased as we went along. We were taught conformity and obedience and loyalty to the Church, to the order, to the seminary or whatever it might be. Why didn't someone see that? But this isn't going to create the kind of pastoral ministers we need because if they don't make that breakthrough before they're ordained or get out of the inner formation system, they're going to treat people the same way. The important thing in the Mass is that everybody conforms—kneels, stands, makes the sign of the cross. And there are priests that way, and I can't hate them. I realize they bought the game of conformity.

So, to distinguish conformity from unity is to distinguish it from uniformity. Did I say that right? Yeah, yeah. Why does uniformity become the substitute for

Richard Rohr: unity? Unity applies to things that are disparate or separate. Uniformity is trying to pretend that's all you can do—pretend you're all the same. I always think of it when I see soldiers marching. My God, and every country does it. And the more perfectly you can conform to that march, it must take warriors or soldiers a lifetime to get out of that notion of life. How do they go home and raise their kids if they've been marching around in a uniformed manner, and even wearing uniforms?

Brie Stoner: Right? Yeah.

Richard Rohr: Oh, it's not good, spiritually speaking. I'm not saying it's wrong, but it's dangerous.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. My dad spoke of his military experience, where he said that he was broken down into who they wanted him to be, because it helps build a so much easier, more efficient machine versus a diversity within a cohort.

Richard Rohr: Sure. Sure. Yes.

Brie Stoner: Well, and it seems like there's a relationship, again, between power over and power with because conformity seeks to control what we're afraid of in our differences, in our uniqueness.

Richard Rohr: There you go. Yeah.

Brie Stoner: It's trying to manifest and flatten and seek to have that sense of certainty. Because diversity and creativity and the unknown, and unknowing, and mystery are all scary. The mystery of not seeing—

Richard Rohr: How could they not be? Yes.

Brie Stoner: Right. The mystery of not being able to see our full shadow. The mystery of not being able to name God or understand, or fully describe God, so we create these images of God that provide us with a sense of uniformity and conformity, and we can control. And I'm thinking about, as you're speaking, about just the damage of purity culture and how that was kind of weaponized as a tool to shame, especially for women, but all of us, I think, have suffered from that purity culture within Christianity. And I wonder if you could talk about that

a little bit, that as a shadow side to Christianity, it's part of the shadow that we're maybe needing to bring to the light to say, "You know what, how we went about this was deeply damaging."

Richard Rohr: You remember, was it the first day when I talked about Ken Wilber—cleaning up, growing up, waking up, showing up? In my experience, I hope I'm wrong, the vast majority of religion stays at the level of cleaning up. Purity codes: "Thou shalt touch this. Thou shalt not touch that," immense concern for not stinking. Let's get back to that again, which makes some kind of immediate sense

Richard Rohr: because it appeals to our sense of I'm a superior being. I'm clean. The rules of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts were very much built on that. And I was a Boy Scout, I'm not putting it down. If that's merely the first level, we have to watch how much of our religion is concerned with cleaning up, which is usually appearances. Not being, but appearing to be.

Growing up is what breaks that all apart, where you see, my gosh, even when I think I don't stink, I know in my own mind I still do. Do you understand? That I've had very petty thoughts today. I've had thoughts that I'm ashamed to admit to anybody. You mentioned confession before. That was the church's way of saying there's got to be some place you can say it or it will fester and it will take over.

Paul Swanson: I think there's a freedom, too, when you are able to drop purity being the forefront goal, and I think the image of the body of Christ is so helpful then because I don't need to be the mouth. I can be the pinky, like I'm called to be, or whatever it may be. When you see that the wholeness is the goal, you can just play your part within the body.

Richard Rohr: You're such a healthy Nine, but you're a healthy person. That's true. I have my role to play, and I don't need to be everything. I can't be perfect by definition. I am a mouth, in my case, and I'm not a whole bunch of other things. Don't hate me for it. Don't hate you for it. It's wonderful liberation, wonderful freedom.

Brie Stoner: Well, and Richard, you just used the word person, which is so helpful because I feel like the way that Cynthia Bourgeault and Ilia Delio, as students of Teilhard talk about personhood as the goal, and what they mean by that is one through whom the whole resounds.

Richard Rohr: Resounds?

Brie Stoner: Yeah. So, the personare of the one through whom—

Richard Rohr: Personare, yes.

Brie Stoner: I just used Latin, Richard.

Paul Swanson: Yes. You're in the club.

Brie Stoner: Ding!

Richard Rohr: Good little Baptist girl using Latin. [laughter]

Brie Stoner: But that seems to be what this tenet is pointing us to, that the gift of wholeness, and what

Ilia says, whole-making is our goal, that the waking up and showing up is us awakening to our full personhood, that we can be ones through whom the whole resounds, and allow that resounding to soften the edges of our

Brie Stoner: imperfection and allow us to just be imperfect because we are, as you said, Paul, the body of Christ. But as we close on this really, really powerful tenet, how do we practice this one, Richard? How do we take one step further into being one through whom the whole resounds?

Richard Rohr: First of all, I'm very glad you introduced that word resound. I don't think I've used that much, and the way you described it makes sense to me. It's good. When I don't need to exaggerate my specialness, my separateness, and my superiority, the three S's, I call them, then I can fall back into the hidden wholeness, where we share a whole bunch of things in common that are much better than my separateness, my superiority, and my specialness. But we don't know that until we've done it a few times. We have to let our humiliations properly humiliate us, and by that, I mean unless the single grain of wheat stops becoming a single grain, it cannot bear much fruit (John 12:24). I think that's what he's saying, that we're all shelled—

Brie Stoner: And we have to die.

Richard Rohr: --and that shell has to break open and recognize it has to send out tentacles or roots into the surrounding soil and draw life from different sources: the dirt and the sun. And then, only then, can it grow. That's a good metaphor. I can see why Jesus used the seed metaphor so often. Of course, he lived in an agricultural culture where it was all around him—the planting of seeds, and so forth.

So, yeah, just let your humiliations properly humiliate you. Now for me, really, and this is why I'm a bit worried about not journaling anymore, the way I would let that soak in for years was journalizing about it. I'd go home at the end of a day where I felt like shit, forgive me, and try to process, why are you so humiliated, or angry, or resentful, or discouraged? But you're disheartened somehow. And an ability to clarify it to myself was just very healing because I would normally recognize I was not a malicious person. I was just like a weak person, a stupid person. Weakness and stupidity you can accept easier than malice.

Paul Swanson: And sometimes a smelly person.

Richard Rohr: A what? Sometimes a smelly person. Elias is going to love to hear this, how he helped my lectures. [laughter]

Brie Stoner: Well, Richard, I feel like you're inviting us to embrace our mortifications as opportunities to die, which is what the word really means. But for us to see these humiliations as the grain breaking open, and to allow it to just be like, "Okay, yep, that's happening. Next time I stink, I'm just going to tell myself that. I'm breaking open. I'm breaking open."

Well, should we look at some listener questions?

Paul Swanson: Let's do it.

Unknown Speaker: “Hello, Season 4. Here’s my big Living School contemplative question: I find myself always trying to do life correctly and hit that magical mark, whether that’s Christification, or Enlightenment, or inner peace, or Nirvana. And I’ve heard Richard say many times we’re not punished for our sins, but we’re punished by them. And I have to wonder then, if we’re experiencing life where it’s suffering, is life then punishment? And I don’t believe in a punitive God, but if we’re experiencing this, is this sort of some form of karmic punishment for our sins? And I know that the word sin is to miss the mark. And so, my question is what is the mark? And if Christ is another name for everything, then what is not the mark? Thank you for considering these.”

Brie Stoner: I almost want to start just by saying we need to make a distinction between the kinds of suffering that are a natural part of life, that are the part of manifestation of this plane of creativity and life and death and these cycles that we’re given, and then there’s the additional suffering that’s created by us, by our choices. And I almost just want to just interject that as a way to begin the conversation, because to say that maybe, or the question of are we all suffering in a karmic way, is life itself on this planet because we’re sinful, I think that makes us separate away from the shadow reality of this plane of existence. Death is part of this. Suffering is part of this. Our world operates with a certain amount of chaos theory, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s a form of punishment but rather just something that we have to embrace as the way things are, as you said. There’s an absurdity to it, but we have to have that long, loving look at the real that can say, “Okay. Instead of fighting it, let’s work with it.” That’s where I wanted to go with that.

Paul Swanson: That’s beautiful, Brie, and what came up for me was thinking about living out of the separate self is a form of suffering.

Richard Rohr: Yes. Good.

Paul Swanson: Like, when we’re disconnected from the whole, then we almost feel it so much more deeply because we’re not connected to God, to ourselves, to community. It’s a projection of who we think we should be. That’s what jumped to my mind.

Richard Rohr: We have to carry the blame, the price you pay for being separate is you have to carry the whole burden of sin. “I did it,” when in fact, we did it. At least that’s what I’m trying to say in my new book on evil, that evil is a collective notion. I’m sorry. Go ahead.

Brie Stoner: Yeah, yeah. Well, what I appreciate about what you just said, Paul, is that it kind of gets at his question about sin, then. Sin, missing the mark, would be when we live out of separateness, when we live in anti-reality—

Richard Rohr: Yes. That’s good.

Brie Stoner: --when we live in a way that denies that our choices have consequences on the whole body of Christ, or that we’re a part of the whole body of Christ; therefore, we’re accountable to the body of Christ. That helps me a lot, Paul. I’m grateful you said that.

Richard Rohr: I do want to repeat that I think the most simple, wonderful metaphor for this whole theme is John 15, the vine and the branches. Just read it over once in a while. It’s there very

explicitly. Cut off from the vine, you can do nothing. Wow, that's strong. And understood in a literal way, it could probably create problems, but in a symbolic way it's deeply truthful. Don't separate from your source. Don't separate from the other grapes on the same vine.

Paul Swanson: One of my favorite songs is a song called "China" by Greg Brown, where he talks about being in a relationship this is, but where are you? You're off in China. When are you going to come home? And that separateness that we can feel within a relationship where you're both there but—

Brie Stoner: One of you is disconnected.

Paul Swanson: One of you is disconnected.

Brie Stoner: Yeah. You're offline.

Paul Swanson: And that song always rings true to the vine and the branches, and what happens when you're disconnected. And the other's just saying, "When are you going to come home?"

Brie Stoner: Thank you, Richard. That's a beautiful way to end, on that meditation.

Paul Swanson: Yeah, thanks, Richard.

Richard Rohr: Well, it is because people might think this is mere psychology, so let's just pull it back to Jesus, which is our central reference point. Jesus was a magnificent psychologist 2000 years ahead of the discovery of the science of psychology. And even the same with the shadow, his idea of the speck in your brother's eye and the log in your own. There's projection. It's really amazing, his transcendent knowledge that foresaw things that we didn't talk about for centuries with that clarity.

Paul Swanson: Yeah. It all goes back to Jesus.

Richard Rohr: Jesus. I mean, it's true. We don't have to throw anybody else out.

Paul Swanson: That's right.

Richard Rohr: But we've got it.

Paul Swanson: [music] And that's it for today's episode of Another Name for Every Thing with Richard Rohr. This podcast is produced by the Center for Action and Contemplation thanks to the generosity of our donors.

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