

## The Path of Reconciliation by Bonnie Rose

Dear Friends,

This is a repost of an article I wrote for ServiceSpace.

Sweet are the uses of adversity. -Shakespeare

Out beyond ideas of wrong-doing and right-doing, there is a field. I'll meet you there. - Rumi

Reality goes by many names - God, Spirit, The Absolute, Love, The Tao, Awareness, The Universe. Reality is perfect, meaning inclusive of everything. Reality is an unfettered field "out beyond ideas of wrong-doing and right-doing."

Opposites arise in the field - good, bad, darkness, light, joy, sorrow. These qualities arise in concert, each a complement to the other. But the human brain struggles with opposites. We attach to one side of an equation and call it Reality. Our point of view is never the whole picture.

Fortunately, the Universe is maintained by scientific/spiritual laws. We're familiar with laws of science. The laws of physics get us where we need to go. The laws of gravity help us stay where we need to stay. A spiritual law, the Law of Three known as The Third Force, helps us reconcile opposites and find new possibilities in seemingly impossible conditions.

The Third Force teaches that a conflict contains both an affirming and denying factor - a yes and a no. Our typical response to "yes vs. no," is to struggle. We try and get the other side to change. We hope to achieve a win for our side, meaning that the other must lose. Even a compromise involves both sides making concessions. The Third Force is a reconciling factor that offers something greater.

We invite the Third Force, by first identifying the affirming and denying factors. Then we surrender to the tension of opposites. It may be uncomfortable; but we wait, watch, pray, observe, and cultivate faith. We stop looking for answers in the limits of our knowing and trust a vastness that is both infinite and intimate. We abide as the perimeter of the yin/yang symbol, a circle that holds both darkness and light. Newness emerges through our willingness. A "Fourth" way arises as a mystical, often deceptively simple win/win.

My husband, an avid gardener, uses a plant metaphor to explain the third force. Water and the plant's innate urge to grow are the affirming factors. The plant begins to ramble, so the gardener applies the denying factor of pruning. The interplay of affirming and denying invites the third factor, the Force of reconciliation. The natural order of reconciliation moves the plant to exuberant fullness that ultimately produces more seeds,

plants, and compost.

The Third Force helps us navigate relationship conflicts. Several years ago, we had an ongoing challenge with homeless people gathering on the church grounds. For the leadership, the affirming factor was our right to a clean, sanitary environment. The homeless people were denying what we wanted. I felt frustrated and guilty. "What would Jesus, Buddha, or Rumi do?" I asked.

Something inspired me to flip the affirming and denying factors. I saw that our homeless friends had needs. We were denying the fulfillment of these needs. Guilt made me want to let them do whatever they wanted, but that wouldn't have been a win/win. With a little more Third Force-time, I realized that the source of my frustration was not "undesirable" behaviors; it was my own sense of helplessness. What if we could transform helplessness into help-fullness? This insight led to an expansive practice of distributing blankets, food, water, and toiletries while politely asking our friends to respect our property.

The third force can be used to address social/political issues as well. Even in heated political discussions, we trust that a perceived enemy is an opportunity for deep practice. This perspective invites listening. We surrender the false certainty of old patterns and make space for the better yet to be.

In these pandemic times, the Third Force can help us re-imagine the world. The affirming factor could be impermanence, the inevitability of change. The denying factor could be our unconscious commitment to the status quo. Rest in the dynamic tension of "I want the world to change," vs. "I don't want things to change because I'll have to let go." Be honest about both sides of the equation. The Third Force will lead us to a Fourth that exceeds our current capacities for goodness. Trust the process, live like the truth of reconciliation is true, and await the new inspiration and growth.

It is important to remember that the reconciling Third Force arises not in spite of the tension between affirming and denying factors. It arises because of that tension. Natural resistance yields new growth in the way that weight-lifting builds muscles. This shift in awareness soothes the need to punish ourselves, others, and the world when things seem against us. Instead, we surrender to the nuances of divine perfection in imperfection and enjoy the process. We enter Rumi's field, with lighthearted yet sincere intentions for the well-being of all. In this Infinite place, we move from miracle to miracle and everything becomes a blessing.

A few questions that I find interesting to reflect on:

Is there a place in your life where you can invoke the Third Force?

What will need to change in you, to enhance your receptivity?

How can you live like the Truth of reconciliation is true?

Note: This essay was inspired by Cynthia Bourgeault's book, *The Holy Trinity and The Law of Three*. She is a student of George Gurdjieff.