

Blockages become gifts

by Carlos Gonzalez



“The impeded stream is the one that sings.” (Berry, 2011)

For one week, my students and I read and pondered Wendell Berry’s poem, “Real Work” (2011). The last line of the poem is the zinger of an aphorism quoted above that left us all wondering about the many places in our lives where we face obstructions, where the path suddenly narrows or is blocked by something so much larger than ourselves. These moments are never easy and are often spaces that collect fear, shame, and hopelessness. Interestingly, they also can be places where grace emerges if we surrender attachments to moving in the same direction that we have been conditioned to follow, and, instead, allow ourselves to be guided toward the desire of all rivers—the blissful union with the sea.

Time and time again, we are told by prophets and sages that the ocean of bliss for us is not somewhere else, rather within our hearts. The obstacles and impediments are all the delusions and illusions that we create and hold, that take us away from seeking within. These blockages, however, are not curses to fight against, but gifts which call out to us to awaken and surrender to the grace of the present moment, a grace possible to find even when feeling lost in the noise of hegemony.

Reference

Berry, W. (2011). *Standing by words: Essays*. San Francisco: Counterpoint Press (p. 97).