Pu Up Short wth Stato Wortha

sFath or Raso ab Tha Raso?

Featuring Thomas Groome with Stanton Wortham (host) and Belle Liang (commentator)

Original Air Date: March 29, 2021

Sta to Wortha 00:08

Welcome to Pulled Up Short. This is a podcast that 's devoted to a particular kind of activity, where we're told some new perspectives on things that cause us to stop to be pulled up short and think a little bit about something that we believed but which turns out not to be true, or at least that we need to reconsider based on some new information that we've been given.

This is an important thing to do. It requires that we recognize deeply held presuppositions that we entertain the possibility that our typical ways of understanding are incomplete or distorting, we need to be open to questions and alternative formulations of basic issues that we tend to take for granted. We have to be willing to consider alternative ways of thinking. This requires a commitment, imagination to seeing the world in new ways, a commitment to systematically inquiring based on evidence and reason wherever it leads, a commitment to being open to moving beyond dogmatism, and considering alternative beliefs and practices, a commitment to conversation to listening deeply to others and inquiring jointly.

So in each episode, we're going to hear from someone who has an insight or something we don't typically think about that requires us to be pulled up short, to rethink something that we tend to take for granted. And we hope that you will enjoy.

Thanksfor joining ustoday, everybody, on another episode of Pulled Up Short. Today, we're very pleased to have with usas our guests, Thomas Groome, a professor of theology at Boston College, also with expertise in theology and education. Tom has written many books, sold hundreds of thousands of copies, has many admirers around the world on issues of faith and formation and education. We're very pleased that he's been willing to take the time to speak with ustoday. We also have with us, Belle Liang, who is a professor of counseling psychology at the Lynch School of Education and Human Development at Boston College. And we're grateful to Bellefor joining us. She will come in with

are both perspectival spins, takes as Taylor would say. They're chosen stances towards life, personal perspectives. There's nothing more rational about

Now that may sound like a strange thing to say, but many of us are only growing out of a cosmos attitude or understanding of life and creation towards a universe, and the universe is this immensity of space, the galaxies that are billions and trillions of light years away. How do you then begin to think that, "My God, the God of this little speck of a planet is the Creator and Sustainer of all of that?"

In the midst of my doubts, I was out for a walk one afternoon, and I stopped to say hello to a neighbor. We entered into this incidental conversation about her, a beekeeper. As she talked about her little charges, she was describing what I perceived to be amazing design in the life of the beehive. All of them drones and worker bees, and the queen (there is no king) are fulfilling extraordinarily complex, and what at least would appear to be intelligent functions. And all of this to produce what is likely the most delightful elixir of life-none sweeter, than honey.

Asmy neighbor talked on, my precise pulled up short moment was when she explained that her little charges actually can recognize her voice and her face as their caregiver. And as a result, they don't attack her and sting her. If a neighbor or a visitor comes, she always has to warn them not to go near the been ive, because the bees will sting them. But she could go into that been ive and do everything, clean it out and collect the honey, and they never sting her because they recognize her voice and face. In other words, these little characters have the ability of recognition. That '0 G[14(ti)-2(o)-4(n)7(.)-6om0 5(sti)-2(o)-4(n)7(.)-6om0 5(sti)-2(o)-4(n)7(.)-6o

something that would be a reasonable take, because in fact, defenders of reason and science choose not to explain or engage with certain sorts of things.

But you seem to begoing even further in your argument. You'renot willing to allow folks who defend enlightenment rationality to divide the world up, as if there are things that science can explain and then the rest uff you just have faith in. You're claiming something more radical, I think. You're saying that in fact, faith is connected to reason, that people who follow religious traditions believe in things about the world because it's reasonable to believe in such things, not because they just accept it because somebody told them. But it is rational for folks to believe things, like about the design that led those bees to recognize that beekeeper. So that means that there is not really a qualitative distinction where, when you're religious, you just accept stuff because somebody tells you, and when you're rational, you insist on reason and evidence. You're saying that every body has to believe somethings, whether they be religious or not. And rationality goes together with faith in order to make beliefs possible, to allow them to make sense of our experience. So that means that religious belief is involved with rationality. It's a reasonable thing, right?

To roo 20:51

Absolutely. To go back to apoint I mentioned in passing earlier, there's nothing more dangerous than blind faith; faith without critical reason can be enormously destructive. This is where people of faith can get pulled up short by the inadequacy of their faith and the need to push beyond its present limits. Let me darify something here that I'm uncomfortable with in how the discourse is normally transacted. We constantly refer to either belief or unbelief. And I think those terms are too narrow. Belief is a very thin word, really. It's reflects something purely rational and based on reason alone. I prefer the word faith, because faith is much more holistic and engages the whole person. Faith is not just what you believe, it's also your relationships, your commitments and your ethics whole way of being in the world. From that perspective, it can't be simply limited to the mind alone (although I will come back and say yes, but it definitely hass.

inclusivity and equality of LGBTQ people

B a 30:14

First, thank you so much, Dean Wortham, for this opportunity to think about some of the mysteries

knowing. And how ironic, that very word 'biography,' biosgraphia, literally means' what is written in our bodies.' In many ways, the wisdom of lifegets written in our bodies, but we don't listen to it. We don't listen to our emotions. We don't listen to her affectivity. We don't listen to our soul and to our desires and our aspirations and our imagination. The darn enlightenment limited us to critical reason alone as the only reliable way of knowing.

recognized only one function of the mind reason ignoring the memory and the imagination. Descartes argued that the

function of the mind reason ignoring the memory and the imagination. Descartes argued that the imagination is unreliable and leads us astray. The Irish poet William Butler Yates has a great verse at the : "God save me from those thoughts men think in the mind alone. He

that singsalasting song, thinks in the marrow bone" The whole Enlightenment movement wasn't just alimiting to the mind alone but to reason alone, leaving out memory and imagination. I think when we look backwards over our lives, we're more likely to be believers or people of faith, than when we try to look forward. When we look forward, the fears arise and the anxieties. So the limiting of knowing to critical rationality really backs us into a corner, denying a whole aspect of our selves that is vital and is just as reliable. My heart is as least as reliable as my head.

B a 35:12

If you don't mind, I have one more question. So you shared that there have been allot of criticism about faith being complicit in social injustice. How can reasoned faith actually be an answer for the pathway forward in social justice today?

To roo 35:36

I think we have to dig back into our traditions, our sacred texts, our Hebrew Scriptures, our New Testament, the Holy Quran, whatever is our sacred book. I think we've got to go back and re-read them with a contemporary consciousness. Of course, we also have to situate them in their historical context. To read them out of context is definitely to misread them. So you have to read the text in its context, but then you have to read it for our context and with our perspective and our consciousness. This is how, for example, that we can become aware of racism and sexism—and rather than being legitimated by our faith, such social practices are antithetical to faith. When we go back to our sacred texts with a contemporary consciousness, we find things that we never saw before.

In other words, when you bring a contemporary consciousness to current issues and reread the texts of tradition with our contemporary consciousness, we see things that we had never seen before. Christian faith has many "subversive memories," as Johann Baptist, the great German theologian calls them subversive memories that can upset and change our present attitudes. For example, to go back again to the first story, the first chapter, the first book of the Bible, it says very dearly, "And God created humankind, in God's own image and likeness." And then to make sure we got the point of that, "And

created them male and female." In other words, we're radically equal in the eyes of God and in the intentions of God. Then, the second story is about becoming partners with God and each other. Yes, to be real partners as men and women, and women as helpers—as has often been mistranslated. The text makes clear that Eve was to be an equal partner with Adam. You come then to the great prophetic literatures of Isaiah and Jeremiah and Amos and their call to justice in every age. As Micah 6:8 well summarizes, "This and only this is what I asked of you on human kind." Note immediately that in Micah 6:8, God is addressing all human kind, not just Israel. human kind, this what Yahweh/God asks of you, and only this that you live justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with your God." In many ways, Micah 6:8 summarizes the whole prophetic tradition of Israel, a great summary of how we are (a) 3 (v) 4 (ii) 1 (2)