

Daily Meditation 10/30/2021

Deep Ecumenism & Work, continued

Good morning.

We continue our meditations on work and employing the method of deep ecumenism: that is to say, bringing various traditions into the discussion, into the story of work.

The poet Rilke says, "Know the great void, where all things begin."

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So today's meditation is about the via negativa and work. And the void is part of the via negativa, about making touch with the nothingness, with emptiness, with source, and sometimes that source is the void.

Rumi has a marvelous poem: he says,

"I've said before that every craftsperson
searches for what's not there,
to practice his craft.

"A builder looks for the rotten hole
where the roof caved in. A water carrier
picks the empty pot. A carpenter
stops at the house with no door.

"Workers rush towards some hint
of emptiness, which they then
start to fill. Their hope, though,
is for emptiness. So don't think
you must avoid it. It contains
what you need!"

So emptiness is a kind of invitation to go to work. What's missing? Well, let's fill it!

"Dear soul, if you were not friends
with a vast nothing inside,
why would you always be casting your net
into it, and waiting so patiently?

"This invisible ocean has given you such abundance,
but still you call it "death,"
that which provides you sustenance and work."

So that's a very profound poem, as of course all of Rumi is, about nothingness, about the role of the via negativa that invites us to work. And it has profound implications.

Now Eckhart, too, talks about the role of our inner work. He says:

"The inward person is not at all in time or a place, but is purely and simply in eternity. It is there that God arises; there God is heard; there God is. There God and God alone speaks: 'Blessed are they that hear the word of God' (Luke 11:28)."

So it is our receptivity, our powers of listening, taking in: again the *via negativa*, and even contemplation, that calls in the spirit presence of the Divine, with whom we co-create, with whom we work.

And then we have the Tao te Ching telling us in today's meditation, "Practice not doing, and everything will fall into place."

This is the same teaching as Rumi and as Eckhart: Practice not doing, and everything will fall into place.

Now there are two ways we experience non-action: one is awe and enchantment, the *via positiva*; and the other is suffering and nothingness and tasting the void. We do not make awe, and we do not make the nothingness; we surrender to it. We undergo awe; we undergo the zero, what Merton calls "the golden zero," nothingness.

So this is what is at stake here, in both the *via positiva* and the *via negativa*. This inner work is a work of receptivity. And then it changes gear in the *via creativa* and *transformativa*; it goes out to accomplish things.

Thank you; we'll see you tomorrow.