

Daily Meditation 07-09-22

Exploring Nothingness: Teachings from the Mystics, continued

This morning we continue our meditation on exploring nothingness...the experience of nothingness. And we cite Thomas Merton in today's essay about how our true self is not easy to find: it is hidden in obscurity and nothingness at the center, where we are in direct dependence on God. And he says that one reason that meditation is often not deep enough is we never get started, because the serious return to the center and our nothingness before God is ignored.

Meister Eckhart says that "the ground of the soul is dark"... the ground of the soul is dark. So as we go deeper into our true identity and that of our communion with the ground, where God's ground and our ground is the same as Eckhart puts it, when we go deeper, there is going to be darkness.

And it's not something to run from. The Dark Night of the Soul is something to learn from and be present to. Thomas Merton says,

*Oh silence, golden zero,
Unsettling sun,
Love winter when the planet says nothing.*

...Love winter when the planet says nothing... so even planets go into darkness and go into hibernation, as do many animals in the time of winter in wintertime. We too undergo winter times, not necessarily in the winter, but in the winter of politics, in the winter of history.

In the midst of human machinations, we have to encounter a golden zero. The silence and unsettling Sun where we are admonished by Merton to love winter, when the planet says nothing.

We can be at home with this nothingness. Meister Eckhart says:

This word-- talking about the word that is God, Logos -- this word is a hidden word and comes in the darkness of the night. To enter this darkness, put away all voices and sounds, all images and likenesses, for no image has ever reached into the soul's foundation where God herself, with her own being, is the fact.

So it's about going deep to the soul's foundation and it's down there that we hear the Divine Word, the ultimate sound between humans and divinity.

Rainer Rilke, a great poet, says

Yet, no matter how deeply I go down into myself, my God is dark, and like a webbing made of a hundred roots that drink in silence.

So he's telling us that trees are beautiful above ground, but go down to their source, to their roots, and there's a lot of webbing down there. There are hundreds of roots and they drink in silence and that is where it all begins. That's where all the energy of the tree is feeding and being nourished and nurturing of course, building up a whole ecosystem.

So what we're being countenanced here by these great mystics is to trust the darkness, to trust the sinking, to trust the nothingness.

Adrienne Rich writes about Madame Curie and her dying a famous woman, of course, and a scientist.

She died a famous woman denying her wounds, denying her wounds came from the same source as her power. That wounds and power are not opposites. They may be feeding one another.

And Rich says, "If we could learn to learn from pain, even as it grasps us"... if we could learn to learn from pain, even as it grasps us. What a marvelous statement about the dark night of the soul: it is painful, but it is a place of learning.

And Simone Weil says:

One should identify oneself with the universe itself--

...with the universe itself...

everything that is less than the universe is subjected to suffering.

So to get a perspective on suffering, you want to see the whole universe, in its whole and how everything is contributing to the birthing of the universe.

And Julian says, speaking of the kenosis, the emptying that Christ underwent:

When Christ is in pain, we were in pain; all creatures of God's creation that can suffer pain suffered with him. The sky and the earth failed at the time of Christ's dying, because he too, was part of nature.

So for her the Christ event and the archetype of the crucifixion is a reminder that pain is universal, and that we all participate in one another's suffering.

Meister Eckhart shed some light on all of this. He says: "Remember this, all suffering comes to an end."

...All suffering comes to an end. Whatever you suffer authentically, God has suffered from it first.

So all this is a development of our tasting nothingness and of its relationship to that spark that continues to shine, no matter what depths of silence and darkness we find ourselves in, whether as individuals or as communities.

This darkness does not have the last word. Sparks, they have the last word.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.