

Daily Meditation 08-26-22

Grief and Praise, Walking Together

Good morning.

We're continuing our meditation on grief, and on praise, on the via negativa and the via positiva, how they need to hook up.

I love the teaching from Rainer Rilke: "Walk your walk of lament on a path of praise."

...Walk your walk of lament on a path of praise.

The praise has to hold the suffering and the grief and the lamentation. First, we have to be in love with life, before we have the energy, and the perspective, to undergo the sorrows, and the letting goes, and the grieving.

You have to stay rooted to the via positiva.

But another very important statement early in my essay comes from Rabbi Heschel, when he says, "Humanity will not be saved by more information, but by more appreciation."

Now we're living in the time of information, aren't we, in the media and on social media and our computers? So much information you could spend 24 hours a day just finding news, news, news, and new information on your computer.

But would that save anybody? Would that heal anybody? Would that turn to celebration and shared joy, which is why we're here?

No: information is information. Some of it is useful, a lot of it is not. And too much of it is an avalanche of trivia, a Niagra of trivia, as Thomas Merton talked about it way back, hmm, 40, 60 years ago, over 60 years ago. An avalanche of trivia, and a lot of it is being sold by the media conglomerates of our time. So we have to be discerning and only allow so much news into our reality... and so much bad news.

But to celebrate, as Rabbi Heschel says, that appreciation is what saves or heals, not information. We're back to the via positiva, aren't we? Gratitude, thanks, appreciation, appreciation for being here. Appreciation for this planet, all its wonders and beauty: animals and birds, fishes, whales, soil, rivers, all of it.

Not to take for granted... not to take for granted.

This is the teaching of the mystics. It is the primacy of the via positiva.

Remember what Derek Walcott, the poet, Caribbean poet, won the Nobel Prize for poetry in 1972 I think it was: in his acceptance speech said....

(Hold on, got to find it, the mind sometimes goes blank when you're 80 years old...)

"The fate of poetry is to fall in love with the world in spite of history."

That was worth waiting for, wasn't it? The fate of poetry is to fall in love with the world in spite of history... that is a call for the via positiva, isn't it? To fall in love with the world.

History is not pretty. Usually, very often, it's quite ugly. And we can see that in the headlines everyday today. A lot of ugliness being reported, and happening, serious things that we need to respond to.

But first comes falling in love with the world. The world is bigger than human history. Creation is bigger than human history. Indeed, creation birthed humanity, humanity did not birth creation.

So in that context, the fate of poetry -- to fall in love with the world in spite of history - we are all poets. We are all here to sing the joys and the wonders, the reverence and the gratitude of our existence.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.