

## Daily Meditation 02-10-25

### T.S. Eliot on the Mystics as Medicine For Despair

Good morning.

Today, in the midst of the travails that democracy is going through, abroad and at home, and of course, the travails that Mother Earth is going through around the entire globe, I have chosen to write about T.S. Eliot on the Mystics as medicine for despair.

In just a very short phrase, he declares that the Mystics are medicine for despair. He says, “The Mystics, or else despair.”

Now, this is important for one reason, because we’ve distorted the mystics over the centuries. We squelched them and we distorted them. We had a very inadequate tool for interpreting, inadequate hermeneutic, interpreting and understanding the path of the mystics.

Even John of the Cross, whom I cite beautiful poetry in today's meditation. In the 16th century, when he lived, and he lived a very prophetic life, he and his sister, Teresa of Avila, a Sister Carmelite, tried to take on corruption in the church in Spain in the 16th century, when the Inquisition was very visible and forceful and cruel. Even he was stuck with the three paths of purgation, illumination and union, by which to interpret mysticism.

It's thoroughly inadequate today, and it was thoroughly inadequate then, because it says nothing about prophecy, about social justice, about compassion. The struggle was usually portrayed, then, as a personal struggle against one’s inner demons. Now that's important, but it’s not at all the whole story.

And one of the peculiar things about John’s life and poetry, and theologizing about his poetry, is that this iconic poem on the Dark Night, which is only eight stanzas long — it culminates not in depression, but in victory, if you will, in love scenes. The last three stanzas are about making love.

But what’s really striking is that John himself put down his pen after theologizing about his poem for 100 pages, and that became a book on the dark night of the soul — using purgation, illumination, union, he quit. I think he quit because the prophetic side was not considered an integral part of the spiritual journey. I think he just got tired about writing about purgation, purgation, purgation.

And this is why so many, if not all the translators of his poetry, say, don’t look at his theologizing about it. Look at the poetry itself. That's where his real energy and insight and intuition is to be found: in that prophetic coming to the prophetic awareness, which ultimately is about the journey of love, the Via Transformativa.

So if we look around us today, at what's going on, and the various interpretations of what's going on, here's just one piece of news that Mike Johnson, the head of the lower house, House of Representatives, says that he wants to destroy PBS. That means to end "Sesame Street," and all the contributions that PBS gives us. So many fine programs we find on PBS: Art and "Antiques Roadshow," and excellent documentaries. I'm personally enjoying very much a series on the First Ladies. I think it's wonderfully done. And it shows us history in action, and of course, the role of the spouses of the presidents from Eleanor Roosevelt, and Betty Ford, to Mrs. Obama.

So just the desire by the head of Congress to destroy PBS, and NPR, National Public Radio, where we get intelligent news, not propaganda such as Fox, which is of course, owned by a right-wing billionaire who has been as successful as anyone in destroying democracy, not only in the United States, but in the UK as well.

Here is one response that's going on from a prophetic voice, Jamie Raskin. He says,

*Pardoning more than 1,500 Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, white supremacists, and violent insurrectionary fanatics, firing the January 6 prosecutors, targeting thousands of FBI agents for doing their jobs, cutting off public health communications and campaigns by federal health agencies, trying to vaporize constitutional birthright citizenship, firing 17 inspector generals to make way for unchecked political corruption. Elon Musk seizing control over the government's financial payments, communications and data infrastructure, ordering a lawless federal spending freeze, and attacking critical public services millions of American families rely on. If you're feeling overwhelmed for the new Trump onslaught, that's by design.*

And yes, I think many are feeling overwhelmed, which is, of course, a big step toward despair.

*Elon Musk and the Project 2025 crowd have spent months planning an avalanche of executive orders, pardons and directives, to flood the zone — to flood the zone — with so much chaos, that American people would experience sensory and political overload, and be unable to respond.*

But you see, this is where the mystical side of oneself comes in, that one learns to make space for one's Self. One learns some distancing from the everyday onslaught of bad news. One has to develop that dimension of solitude and of letting go, that is part of the mystical journey, that dimension of emptying and of silence. But Jamie Raskin goes on:

*That may have overwhelmed us with the magnitude and velocity of the chaos for a few days. The way I see it, on February 3rd, we regained our fight, and our solidarity, in our determination to win. That's when we rallied with hundreds of DC's USAID workers of Washington, reasserting our unity against the shutdown of all foreign aid. That is where we got mad.*

Getting mad, getting in touch with one's third chakra, with one's moral outrage, is part of the spiritual journey. You don't have to sit back and take it.

*The seizure of state power by a billionaire government contractor. Truth is, we don't have a fourth branch of government called Elon Musk. Well, we do, though, have a fourth branch of government, the Press, which is owned by billionaires like Elon Musk and Rupert Murdoch, and others who are weighing a tremendous amount of impact on the social media and the so-called general media. Jamie Raskin says,*

*Now it's our turn to flood the political zone with protests, marches, demonstrations, lawsuits, injunctions, creative legislative action, both offensive and defensive. Musk is showing every sign of conducting coup in America, seizing control over the financial payment systems, citizen privacy data, and communication networks of the government.*

So what I'm saying is that, do not think that your mystical dimension is divorced from this prophetic gathering and responding and linking-up, and resisting, and community-making. It all goes together: the Via Positiva, the Via Negativa and the Via Transformativa. It all comes together. And this is the time we're living in, a time that requires a spiritual warrior to rise up, to make allies with others, and to speak out.

Thank you. We'll see you next week.