Daily Meditation 11-9-2026
Further Everyday Ecstasies Where We Taste the Divine

Good morning.

In today's meditation, we're continuing our reflections on ecstasy and joy. And for many people, this last Tuesday was exactly that. It ushered in new and deep feelings of hope, optimism, joy, decency in American politics.

So, in one recent DM, we talked about the ecstasy involved in politics itself.
And in today's meditation, we apply that important term, ecstasy, to the new Creation story from science, to cosmology itself, to the cosmos. And I simply love that passage from Sanders about

The universe exists at all, that it obeys laws. These laws have brought forth galaxies, stars, planets. And on our planet at least, life, and out of life, consciousness. And out of that consciousness, these words, this breath, all this is a chain of wonders. I dangle from that chain and hold on tight.

I just think that's one of the most perfect celebrations of Creation and existence and sacredness of Father Sky that we've ever experienced, and I thank him for his brilliant telling of the wonder of existence.

I also bring in the BTS group, the Korean group, because joy is incarnated in so much of their dance, song, and music, as it is in so much art. And I end with the example of friendship, the friendship between humans and animals. I share a video of it I saw recently, it brings that to mind. Not to leave out, of course, friendship between humans.

In all this, I'm reminded of what Bill Everson, the California poet, who was also known as Brother Anthony, when he was with the Dominicans for 16 years, Brother Antoninus. But his statement, he said, "Most people experience God in Nature, but they experience God in law."

Now, nature includes Creation and all the other elements of Earth and the cosmos, but it certainly includes human nature too, and that's where our creativity and our art and our celebrations of so many kinds come through.
They are a conduit, a channel to an experience of the sacred, also.

And of course, I've written before about how Thomas Aquinas takes that word ecstasy as his primary word for naming the experience of the divine.
And I like to point out that many mystics have their word for that. Meister Eckhart invented the word “dirkbruch," which means in German, breakthrough. He says, "In breakthrough I learned that God and I are one."

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So all our experiences of ecstasy are experiences of breakthrough. Think about it. Julian of Norwich invented the word “one-ing." O N E I N G. She talks about that as her effort to name the mystical experience.

I agree with Aquinas: I also use the word ecstasy in my book, *WHEE! We, wee All the Way Home*. And that word "whee!" itself, W H E E, is a word I invented, I guess you might say, with the exclamation point, another synonym for ecstasy.

So I'd like to develop a little more Aquinas's teachings on the ecstasy of experiencing the divine. His commentary on the Psalms, and I relay this in
the introduction of my book, *The Tao of Thomas Aquinas: Fierce Wisdom for Hard Times*. But much of my citations from Aquinas come from my book *Sheer Joy,* because there I translated his big book. I translated Aquinas from books that his commentaries that had never been translated before, including his commentary on the Psalms, which is amazing. So, in the commentary on the Psalms, Aquinas says that

The soul is elevated toward God in four ways. And he spells them out, and he cites Isaiah: *For the purpose of admiring the height of God's power,as Isaiah puts it, “Lift your eyes on high and see who creates these things.”*
Isaiah 40:36. And Psalm 104: "How wonderful are your works, O Lord!"

So admiration and wonder, the Via Positiva, are named in these examples from Aquinas, from the Psalm, and from Isaiah.

Second, and of course, it parallels perfectly what Sanders just wrote so brilliantly about the chain, hanging on that chain of evolution of our relationship to the rest of the history of the universe.

Second, says Aquinas, *the mind is raised for the purpose* of embracing the *excellence of eternal beauty*. And then he quotes from Job, Chapter 2:
"You can lift your face without stain; you will be able, and you will not fear. You will also forget misery. And a kind of noontime brightness will rise from you.” Aquinas says, *This is the elevation of hope, and putting misery behind us in presence of a noontime brightness*.

I think our country is in that mood right now, after Tuesday's election.

And then remember the Via Negativa demands hope, because both misery and fear are experienced in the Via Negativa. But a noontime brightness breaks through the shadow, and contemplation assists that process.

Third, says Aquinas, *the mind is raised to cling to divine good* and sanctity. As Isaiah puts it: *“Awake, awake, rise up, O Jerusalem!” Chapter 51, verse 17. And this,* says Aquinas, *is the elevation of charity*.

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The Via Creativa then, is a movement of waking up and rising up, connecting to the Holy Spirit to give birth to goodness and charity.

And fourth, says Aquinas, *the mind is raised to work for the imitation of divine justice.* We're up to the Via Transformativa. And here he cites Lamentations 5 in the Bible: *"We will lift up our hearts with our hands to God in the heaven." This is the elevation of justice,* says Aquinas.

The fourth way is also indicated when he says, "To the holy and on high," since the two last ways of elevation pertain to his saying "to the holy," the first two ways pertain to when he says "to you on high."

So clearly, the Via Transformativa is spelled out here, and it is about justice and compassion. But it too takes us into the presence of the divine.

So I think that we have a marvelous and substantive undergirding for what we're talking about here in today's meditation, and what we're feeling as we turn to the work of compassion and justice, truth-telling, and birthing a new politics of acknowledging the suffering that's going on in the world, going on with Mother Earth and all her creatures, global warming and all. And of course the wonder and the glory of the universe to which our species has been called to serve, and to praise, and to give thanks.

I do confess that I like the way I ended today's daily meditation: "The world is filled with ecstasies. It is our job to find them and share them, and build a civilization around them, and give thanks."

Aquinas defines healthy religion exactly that way. He says, "Religion is supreme thankfulness or gratitude." That's the essence of religion: supreme thankfulness, supreme gratitude.

Thank you. We'll see you next week.

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