

Daily Meditation 03/10/2022

Some “Silver Linings” within the Appalling News from Ukraine? Part II

Good morning.

In today's meditation, like yesterday's, I'm posing a question about the "silver lining" that may be present in the terrible goings on in Putin's war in Ukraine. There would be a bit of sunlight if at least some of these silver linings came true.

But I looked up this phrase about "silver lining" to see where it came from, because I think it's interesting, and there has been some discussion about what it really means. Then I found that it was John Milton who first use the term in a poem written in 1634--so, 17th century. And I'll share this section of his poem with you.

He says,

"I see ye visibly and now believe
that He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
are but as slavish officers of vengeance
would send a glistering guardian, if need were
to keep my life and honor unassailed.

Was I deceived? Or did a sable cloud
turn forth her silver lining on the night?"

Her silver lining on the night.

"I did not err, there does a sable cloud
turn forth her silver lining on the night
and casts a gleam over this tufted grove."

So, he was the first to use this phrase in English--again, in the first part of the 17th century.

But other writers after him picked up on this "clouds and silver linings" and they gave Milton credit. In fact, they even talked about Milton's clouds. Milton's clouds. But it was later in Victorian England, 19th century, that the phrase came to evolve as a shibboleth.

And in 1853, there's actually, in America, in a magazine called Home Journal, an American writer, Sara Payson Willis Parton, whose pen name was Fanny Fern. And it became very popular.

It seems she was the highest paid writer in the United States, that she actually put this phrase to use: "Every cloud has a silver lining."

So, she was writing an essay on despair--actually, going beyond despair. And she says:

"No, never! Every cloud has a silver lining, and He who wove it knows when to turn it out. So, after every night, however long or dark, there shall yet come a golden morning. Your noblest powers are never developed in prosperity. Any bark may glide in smooth water, with a favoring gale, but that is a brave skillful oarsmen who rows upstream, against the current, with adverse winds, and no cheering voice to wish him God speed.

"Keep your head above the wave; let neither solemn despair nor weak vacillation drag you under. Heed not the poisoned arrow of sneaking treachery that whizzes past you from the shore.... Dream not of the word "surrender!" Lean on the "Rock of Ages."

"The Great Architect passes you through the furnace but to purify. The fire may scorch, but it shall never consume you. He will yet label you "fine gold." The "promised land" lies beyond! Clusters of Hope may be seen with the eye of faith.... You shall yet unbuckle your dusty armor while soft breezes shall fan your victor temples. Nil desperandum!"

So, this phrase has come to mean "keeping hope alive." And there's one person who has commented, "Today's parallel expression is 'The darkest hour is just before the dawn.'"

Or, in my language, the Via Negativa is a prelude to the Via Creativa

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.