

Daily Meditation 07-07-22

Tasting the Nothingness of Our Times

Good morning.

Today we introduce an important name, an important concept, important experience in mysticism. And that is the topic of nothingness, the experience of nothingness.

And I point out in the essay that Thomas Merton and Meister Eckhart bring up the theme of nothingness when they talk about the spark of the soul, since it's really a very organic bridge, from the spark of the soul to nothingness. But they're not the only ones to do this.

Hafiz, in the poem that we share in yesterday's meditation, says,

I've made the journey into nothing.

...I've made the journey into nothing. Have you made that journey? Is that something that you've tasted, personally? Or something you've tasted, politically? Or as I pointed out, in today's essay, in light of the politicalization of the Supreme Court, it seems to me we're answered a point of nothing.

But notice, what Hafiz builds on after telling us he's taken the journey into nothing.

*I've lit that lamp that
needs no oil.*

...I've lit that lamp that needs no oil. So there is some light going on here, isn't there? But it's the lamp without oil. It's a lamp that lights nothingness, that derives light from nothingness.

*I've cried great streams
of emerald crystals
on my scarred knees, begging love.*

So his suffering has been a kind of oil for the lamp of nothingness, in his grieving: "I've cried great streams on scarred knees."

*To never again let me hear from
any world,
the sound of my own name.*

So he's undergoing a kenosis, an emptying of his own identity, his own being. This is what suffering does to us: it empties us.

*Even from the voice of divine thought,
or see that pen you gave me, God,
and the sun's or sky's skillful hand
writing
anything other than the word,
ONE.*

...the word one, so the oneing is going on. This is another way, an angular way, away from the via negativa, of talking about the unity experience that mysticism is, whether we call it oneing as Julian of Norwich does, or ecstasy as Thomas Aquinas and I do, or breakthrough as Meister Eckhart does, there's only one thing going on, and that is oneing. So the emptying is a prelude to the communion, the oneing.

And he repeats himself:

*I have made the journey into nothing.
I have become that flame that needs no fuel.*

...become that flame needs no fuel. It's being fueled by the nothingness, by the emptiness, by the via negativa.

*Beloved,
now what need is there to ever
call for Hafiz?*

That's his name, and he just surrendered his name. What need is there to ever call for Hafiz?

*For if you did,
I would just step out
of you.*

That he's become someone else. This is exactly Matthew 25, isn't it? Jesus saying, "If you do it to the least, you do it to me." He's no longer Jesus. He is the widow. He is the starving one. He is one in prison. He is the lonely one.

*For if you did,
I would just jump out
of you.*

So this is a tremendous poem by Hafiz, telling us what the journey of nothingness does to us. Yes, it empties us. Yes, it gets us on our knees scared and bleeding and grieving and shouting, but also it takes us closer, ever closer, to the act of oneing and communion and becoming one another. So it takes us into compassion.

As Eckhart said, "what happens to another, whether it be joy or sorrow, happens to me." It redefines the "me" and the "you."

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.