

Daily Meditation 07-08-22

Nothingness and Supreme Court Folly, continued

Good morning.

We continue our meditations today on nothingness. We put it not in the context of personal loss so much as in the context of politics, the loss that the community is going through. And thus we're talking about Supreme Court folly, which as I suggest, has served up generous proportions of nothingness that we are feeling and tasting today.

Slaves tasted it, indigenous people have tasted it, women taste it on a regular basis. Now, many of us are tasting it.

There is a story told by Chaim Potok about, when he was a child of age six, he saw a dead bird. And he asked his father, "Why?"

"That's the way the Ribbono Shel Olom made this world, Asher."

"Why?"

"So life would be precious, Asher. Something that is yours forever is never precious."

...Something that is yours forever is never precious. Thus the limits of life squeeze us in at times. And there are deep lessons there when we're feeling powerless, when we're feeling and knowing the unknowing that Meister Eckhart talks about.

Deep experiences of suffering and of letting go, including, of course, the archetypal experience of the cross, the Jesus story, all this that reduces us to nothing, to zero, as Mahatma Gandhi puts it:

"This is the secret of life. Selfless service," he says, "which comes when true individuality consists," he says, "in reducing oneself to zero."

When you taste nothingness, you learn not to cling, and to let nothingness being nothingness.

Mechtilde de Magdeburg, 13th century Beguine, the feminist movement of the Middle Ages, says,

Love the nothing, cleave itself. Stand alone, seek help from no one. Let your being be quiet. Be free from the bondage of all things. Free those who are bound. Give exhortation to the free. Care for the sick, but dwell alone. When you drink the waters of sorrow, you shall kindle the fire of love with the match of perseverance.

... the max of perseverance.

This is the way to dwell in the desert. Dwelling in the desert is a no-thing. A nothingness experience.

Meister Eckhart too often invokes a desert as a symbol of nothingness.

D.H. Lawrence said,

*Are you willing to be sponged out, erased, cancelled,
made nothing?
Are you willing to be made nothing?
dipped into oblivion?*

If not, you will never really change.

...If not, you will never change. So part of the process of transformation is undergoing a deep and radical kenosis, emptying, letting go, tasting of nothing. Of course, trust is involved in sinking, as Eckhart says, "sinking eternally from letting go to letting go."

It's not an easy journey, the via negativa is not an easy journey, the dark night of the soul, the dark night of our species, the dark night of our society, the dark night of democracy...it is not an easy journey. But, in it, we undergo, we come to grips with unknowing knowledge.

It's another dimension, unknowing knowledge...that's Eckhart's phrase, it's another dimension to wisdom. Wisdom encompasses all, including the nothingness, including the experience of nothingness. Carol Christ, in her fine books on feminist spirituality, says:

Women must even read themselves sideways into analyses of the experience of nothingness. Women need a literature that names their pain and allows them to see the emptiness in their lives as an occasion for insight, rather than as one more indication of their worthlessness. Women need stories that will tell them that their ability to face the darkness in their lives is an indication of strength and not a weakness.

That is the via negativa. It takes strength to face darkness and emptiness and letting go and nothingness and kenosis, and this grows our souls, it's part of the process of deepening our presence on this earth. This applies whether we talk about personal nothingness experiences or political, and therefore Supreme Court, nothingness experiences that we are undergoing today.

Don't go into denial. We don't go into fanatic response. But first, we deal with the heavy loss that we're feeling and then go to work. We roll up our sleeves, because hope is a verb with its sleeves rolled up.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.