

Daily Meditation 08/10/2022

Meditations on Nothingness Experiences, continued...

Good morning.

We continue our meditations on the experience of nothingness.

And I point out in today's essay that there are metaphysical experiences of nothingness: the experience of nonbeing, and being, or our pre-existence: were we nothing before we came to be?

And there are psychological experiences of nothingness. Sometimes one feels forgotten, unnoticed, completely ignored.

And, as we've been meditating on lately, there's political nothingness, when humans are subjected to less-than-human decisions, and circumstances, by powerful decision makers.

So we've been meditating for a few days on the nothingburger that the Supreme Court, I think, has come to be in our time. Hopefully, this is only temporary, but that means adding more people at the Supreme Court.

And there are the experiences of women in a patriarchal world, of people of color in a world of white supremacy, of gay or trans people in a world of homophobia, and of poor and homeless people, in a world that centers around possessions and materialism. This too, is nothingness. happening.

And also nothingness is used to speak of the via negativa, of the deep journey into darkness and loss and grief and suffering which is epitomized by the darkness of the cross in the Christian tradition, and named by the mystics, the darkness of the dark night of the soul.

As I've been saying for some time, we're living in a time of the dark night of society, and the dark night of our species, as we actually face our own extinction due to climate change, and also, of course, to the potential of nuclear weapons that we've been developing for so many decades.

But I share with you a powerful poem that Thomas Merton wrote from his sick bed, in a hospital. And he talks about humanity's enormous want,

*Until the want itself has gone,
Nameless, bloodless and alone.
The Cross comes, and Eckhart's scandal,
The Holy supper, in the precise wrong,
And the accurate little spark
In emptiness in the jet stream.*

He talks about this spark and how it's lost from the castle, from his

soul. Or feels that way. And he says:

*I am Christ's lost cell
His childhood and desert age
His descent into hell.
And the spark without identity
circles the empty ceiling.*

So he was clearly going through a very significant and poignant and anguished period in his life, as Sister Lentfoehr talks about. She was a good friend of Thomas Merton's and she too was a poet, and would give him feedback on his poems; as a critique, a critic of his own poems in the best sense of the word. But what's being said is that the experience of nothingness comes up against that spark of the soul, and the spark of the soul comes up against our experience of nothingness. And so there is this dance going on. It's not a pleasant dance; it's the wrestling match even between believing and feeling the spark, the Divine Spark, the reason we're here, on the one hand, but also the vast emptiness and suffering and nothingness that is also part of our journey.

So it's a powerful way, the mystics talk about, about the relationship between the via positiva, and the via negativa, that there is often a struggle, a profound struggle, and again, the cross is an archetype of that kind of struggle. It calls up our deepest trust, our deepest faith challenges. This can happen personally or collectively as a community.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.