

Daily Meditation 10/15/2022

Cataclysms and the Good Fruit They Bear

Good morning.

Today I share with you a wonderful, powerful quote from a good French playwright, Antonin Artaud. He says, "It is good that from time to time cataclysms occur that compel us to return to nature. That is, to rediscover life."

I find this sentence absolutely rich, rich, rich, and I've been carrying it with me for many years.

My friend MC Richards translated his book in which the sentence is found, a number of years ago, from French to English. So I'd like to spend a little more time exegeting it.

"It is good that from time to time cataclysms occur."

Now that's kind of tough news, isn't it? That it's good for cataclysms to occur. Who wants a cataclysm in their own backyard, in their own state? Speaking to Floridians now.

It's hard to believe, isn't it, that a cataclysm can be a good thing. But of course, that is the story. That's the story of converting evil to good. It's the Christian story of Good Friday. And then Easter Sunday and Pentecost. That Cataclysm does not have the last word.

It's the story of the Four Paths, that the Via Negativa is contextualized within the Via Positiva. We fall in love, and the Via Creativa, when we give birth. And the Via Transformativa, where we become agents of the spirit of justice and compassion. It's not unlike the Chinese teaching that ...slipping my mind... that within chaos, there is something good.

But notice, the cataclysm compels us to return to nature. Compels us to return to nature.

World War Two was a cataclysm. The Holocaust was a cataclysm. Some good did come out of it--the ecumenical movement for example, the apology of Christians and Catholics, the Vatican II, toward Jewish people. An awareness, deeper awareness of our capacity for evil.

Of course, a lot of people, millions and millions of people, had to die in the Second World War for those lessons to be learned.

Return to nature. Is that what creation spirituality is about? Is that why creation spirituality has shown up on the scene? I think so.

Out of the cataclysm of bad religion and bad education, Gregory Bateson, the scientist says, "We are writing our minds from bad education and bad religion." I think the return to spirituality is an effort to move beyond the

cataclysm of bad religion. Religion for its own sake. Structure for its own sake. Form for its own sake. Rules for their own sake. Fear as a motive for religion, instead of the fruits of the Via Positiva, Via Negativa, Via Creativa, and Via Transformativa.

Notice a return to nature is the recovery of the sacred.

And then he says, "i.e. to rediscover life." To return to nature *is* to rediscover life. That life is the bottom line. Not our ideologies but life itself.

I go on in the essay to point out, borrowing from my book on *The Names of God*, one of those names, page 38, or name number 38 is "God is Life."

And I reproduce here some of the evidence of that from all these wonderful mystics who call God, Life. Howard Thurman, Thomas Aquinas, Hildegard of Bingen, Meister Eckhart, Julian of Norwich--they all celebrate God as Life.

And frankly, before I read any of these mystics, except Aquinas, I came up in my first book with the definition of prayer as a radical response to life. That shocked a lot of people, scandalize some priests. They told me so. But I felt that the word God was perhaps overused. Stamping as we do on Earth, on coins and dollars, presidential speeches, that we had to return to life.

So I think you can see why I am deeply moved by Antonin Artaud's observation, and invite you to meditate on this yourself.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.