

Daily Meditation 12/22/2022

Apophatic Divinity, continued

Good morning.

We are continuing our meditations on the apophatic divinity, darkness, this time of the year, the season of Advent and Solstice

Here I cite Thomas Aquinas talking about infinity: he says, "God is the unknown one." He says,

The cause at which we wonder is hidden from us. We are united to God as to one unknown. God alone knows the depths and riches of the Godhead. And Divine Wisdom alone can declare its secrets.

This is a teaching that is very close to the teaching in the essay yesterday, about Eckhart saying things very close to that. Now Meister Eckhart also says "Reason can never comprehend God in the ocean of the Divine unfathomable boldness."

... the ocean of the Divine unfathomable boldness.

Don't expect reason to comprehend it. This is what others talked about too, and certainly the Hindu and Buddhist traditions talk about this, as we saw from Deepak Chopra two days ago.

And Aquinas says the following:

The mind's greatest achievement is to realize that God is far beyond anything we think. This is the ultimate in human knowledge, to know that we do not know God. By its immensity, the divine essence transcends every form attained by the human intellect.

Again, this is such a rich telling of the limits of our immense intellects. Nevertheless, they come up against the formlessness of the Divine. And Eckhart echoes this same teaching:

Whatever one says what God is, God is not. God is what one does not say of God, rather than what one says of God.

So I think these dual teachings and of course, Eckhart stood on Aquinas' shoulders, he was 15 years old when he'd just joined the Dominicans, which is Aquinas' tradition also. Then Thomas Aquinas died. So, there's real continuity in what these two mystics and theologians are telling us.

Now, if we turn to Estelle Frankl, who is a Hasidic mystic, and a psychotherapist, and she wrote a fine book this past year called *The Wisdom of Not Knowing*...The Wisdom of Not Knowing. She calls us to befriend the unknown and to trade the certainty of the known for the unknown. She says, "The Zohar [the great medieval Jewish mystical book] says this: 'Thought cannot encompass your divine essence.'"

But she re-translates this in contemporary English to say, "You cannot wrap your mind around God."

...You cannot wrap your mind around God. That is how unique divinity is. And it is how incapable we are of truly knowing the divine. And so this Hasidic tradition of Judaism is very much sounding like the tradition of the apophatic divinity that Thomas Aquinas and his brother Dominican, Meister Eckhart, spoke of so many years ago, in the Middle Ages.

And this is found on page 130 and 131 of my book, *Naming the Unnameable: 89 Wonderful and Useful Names for God, Including the Unnameable God*.

That's what we've been talking about lately. The unnameable God, the apophatic divinity.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.