

Possible Silver Linings in the Coronavirus Emergency

Meditation #309, March 16, 2020

Engaged Mysticism – Matthew Fox

We are mediating on the Coronavirus emergency that is upending many lives, work and play habits, and even our economic foundations. The great mystic Meister Eckhart instructs us that "the soul grows by subtraction, not by addition." Fasting, whether it be voluntary or involuntary, would seem to qualify as a subtraction for sure.

Silver Linings and a growing of the soul in all this involuntary fastings (which can become voluntary fastings if we put them into the larger context) might include the following:

Moving from doing to being. Moving from vicarious acting by watching Television to actually acting. What happens when the TV gets turned off? What lies beneath our excitement for contests and winners and losers?

The building of community—a "common task" of group survival and caring and interdependence and compassion.

Once again, all facing our immortality or at least our vulnerability. Stretching of our collective minds to serve one another by doing the necessary "fasting" or letting go but also to stand up to the virus by doing the testing (and making it possible—something the government has proven unable to do).

Learning the primal lesson of not taking for granted—our health, our breath, our life, our community interdependence and mutual service.

Learning to SLOW DOWN. And contribute less to global warming by slowing our economies down.

Learning anew the preciousness of health. And a healthy planet. And a healthy body.

Learning the important lessons of what the mystics call: Letting Go; Letting Be; Silence; Being.

Learning important lessons of what mystics call: Nothingness. What Thomas Merton called the "Golden Zero."

Hopefully, the important lesson from the mystics of: Gratitude. Not taking for granted. "If the only prayer you say in your whole life is 'Thank You,' that would suffice." (Meister Eckhart)¹
Moving from Busyness and Making the Gross National Product to Being.

Remembering our radical interdependence—whether young or old, black or brown or white, male or female, rich or poor, of this country or that, of this religion or another or none at all, we are all living in tandem with one another.

Re-learn some humility and ask how we can assist one another as well as ourselves to take steps to a healthy existence. Maybe generosity, magnanimity and sacrifice might return and replace the reptilian brain energies of competition and one-up-man-ship.

Stretching our moral imaginations to assist those temporarily displaced from working their jobs.

Celebrate in spite of bad news, as they are doing in Siena and other Italian cities.

Maybe this Involuntary Lenten Practice might ultimately shed new light on the primal question for ourselves as individuals, as communities and as a species: What does it mean (and not mean) to be a human being?

¹ For lessons of Letting Go, Nothingness and more, see Meister Eckhart's teachings on the Via Negativa in Matthew Fox, *Passion For Creation: The Earth-Honoring Spirituality of Meister Eckhart*, pp. 180-265.