

April 10 Readings



An excerpt from John Main OSB, *From Isolation to Love, THE WAY*

OF UNKNOWING (New York: Crossroad, 1990), pp. 44-46.

We meditate because we know with absolute certainty that we must pass through and beyond our own sterility. We must transcend the sterility of the closed system, of a purely introspective mind. We know, with an ever greater clarity, that we have to pass beyond isolation into love. It is curious that introspection, the mind turned in upon itself, should lead to such sterility. Why should a self-centered consciousness be so sterile? Suppose for example we try to analyze some experience of our own. The almost inevitable consequence is that we end up observing ourselves in the act of observation.

The deeper the degree to which we turn in upon ourselves, the more complex will be the degree to which we become fixated on our own self-consciousness. The result is like being trapped in a hall of mirrors where we constantly take the image for reality. And all we have are images of ourselves.

This is a good point to ask why is meditation so different? . . . All of us when we begin come to a point when we ask ourselves ?what am I getting out of this? What is it doing for me?? [. . . .] It is at this point that all of us have to make an act of faith. It may appear to be the faith to enter the darkness and to embrace the sterility, but there is no way we can embrace it except with total abandon. It has to be a total act of faith. In other words, we commit ourselves to meditation, and to the mantra as a way [of] letting go of self-consciousness. In effect, we are committing ourselves to letting go of our own sterility.

It is at this point that the sterility we experience is transformed into poverty---a poverty that we embrace totally. Here we are led to that declaration of our own poverty which reveals that there is only God and in God are all riches and all love. . . .Sterility becomes poverty---a state of complete simplicity, complete vulnerability and complete abandon to God and to his love. Self-consciousness gives way to consciousness. We become aware of what is beyond our own horizons, of what is, what God is: that God is love. Introspection is transformed into self-transcendent vision because everything we see, we now see in the divine light, expanded into infinity. We see everything bathed in the infinite love of God.

Meditate for Thirty Minutes. Remember: Sit down. Sit still and upright. Close your eyes lightly. Sit relaxed but alert. Silently, interiorly, begin to say a single word. We recommend the prayer phrase "Maranatha." Recite it as four syllables of equal length. Listen to it as you say it, gently, but continuously. Do not think or imagine anything spiritual or otherwise. Thoughts and images will likely come, but let them pass. Just keep returning your attention ? with humility and simplicity to saying your word in faith, from the beginning to the end of your meditation.

After Meditation, ?The Artist,? Stanley Kunitz (New York: Norton, 1995), p. 63.

His paintings grew darker every year.
They filled the walls, they filled the room:
eventually they filled his world---
all but the ravishment.
When voices faded, he would rush to hear
the scratched soul of Mozart
endlessly in gyre.
Back and forth, back and forth,
he paced the paint-smearred floor,
diminishing in size each time he turned,
trapped in his monumental void,
raving against his adversaries.
At last he took a knife in his hand
and slashed an exit for himself
between the frames of his tall scenery.
Through the holes of his tattered universe
the first innocence and the light
came pouring in.

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