

Friends of Silence

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“Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?”

Dear Friends ~ I recently participated in a conversation in which dissatisfaction or dissonance was a recurring theme poignantly and piercingly captured in a line quoted from a Mary Oliver poem:

*I am so distant from the hope of myself,
in which I have goodness, and discernment...*

Somewhere along the continuum from self-loathing and beating oneself up to don't worry/be happy and keep busily distracted, must be a way of channeling this disparity into learning. How do we allow that longing, that discrepancy between who we think we are and who we want to be, to become not a well of disparagement but fertile ground for discovery, the disquiet that prods and encourages us into growth and change? Sufi music interprets the plaintive sound of the *ney*, an ancient reed flute still in use from almost 5000 years ago, as the reed lamenting its separation from the reed bed. The Sema ceremony of the Sufi whirlers was explained to me as “being empty like the *ney* and listening with the eye of the heart to the breath of God within.”



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St. Augustine said, “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.” Our dissatisfaction could, therefore, be the admission and awakening of our longing for the eternal. Rather than being simply the edge of some personal emptiness, it could be the first step in the opening up of our eternal belonging...desire cultivates dissatisfaction in the heart with what is, and kindles an impatience for that which has not yet emerged...There should always be a healthy tension between the life we have settled for and the desires that still call us. In this sense our desires are the messengers of our unlived life, calling us to attention and action while we still have time here to explore fields where the treasure dwells!

~John O'Donohue in *TO BLESS THE SPACE BETWEEN US*

Only | discern-

Infinite passion, and the pain
of finite hearts that yearn.

~Robert Browning

Tears are prayers that reveal our truth before the Beloved...God honors tears...receives and tenderly holds tears as if they are precious, explosive testimony that must be preserved for some future day. Perhaps this vigilant, seeing, and tear-collecting God weeps with the weeping world.

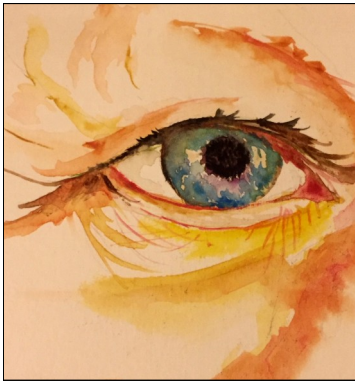
~from *LAMENTATIONS AND THE TEARS OF THE WORLD* by Kathleen M. O'Connor

In feigned completeness | would walk the lonely
longest distance between all points and all others
because in their connection my geometry will have
been faithful to its own imagined laws.

~ from “American Biographies” in *ANOTHER AMERICA*
by Barbara Kingsolver



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this world of dew
is, yes, a world of dew
and yet...

~ Issa Kobayashi in *HAIKU MIND* by Patricia Donegan

of the wrong you did; I am not going to be bitter and I am going to go on loving you anyway” ...Every time we forgive, we begin a new life, free of the past and open to love. Remember, forgiveness is not only about your relationship with others but also about your relationship with yourself.

~ from *PRESCRIPTIONS FOR LIVING* by Bernie S. Siegel

If you ask for grace to realize who you are, ask also for the courage you will need to do so. To realize who you are, you will have to walk through all the shadows in your inner landscape. It is not easy. You will need to give up all your views about yourself again and again, each time they crystallize into a pattern. You will have to experience and release all the pain in your life. You will have to embrace your death. You will have to bear everything to realize everything. A perfect divine economy.

~ from *A FIELD GUIDE TO THE SOUL* by James Thornton

What if the question is not why am I so infrequently the person I really want to be, but why do I so infrequently want to be the person I am?

How would this change what you think you have to learn?

What if becoming who and what we truly are happens not through striving and trying but by recognizing and receiving the people and places and practices that offer us the warmth of encouragement we need to unfold?

How would this shape the choices you make about how to spend today?

~ from *Oriah Mountain Dreamer in WOMAN PRAYERS*, ed. by Mary Ford-Grabowsky

When somebody you've wronged forgives you, you're spared the dull and self-diminishing throb of a guilty conscience. When you forgive somebody who has wronged you, you're spared the dismal corrosion of bitterness and wounded pride. For both parties, forgiveness means the freedom again to be at peace inside their own skins and to be glad in each others' presence.

~ from *LISTENING TO YOUR LIFE* by Frederick Buechner

Forgiveness is a method FOR GIVING love...a way of saying, "I am going to let go

Even in our sleep
Pain, which cannot forget
Falls drop by drop
Upon the human heart.
Until, against our will,
We come to wisdom
Through the strength of God.

~ Aeschylus



You companion us through the wilderness,
through the shadows created by fear.
You plant your Seed into each heart...
Roll away the stones that become obstacles
to growth,
to producing a bountiful harvest...
Arise, O Beloved, in your steadfast love
shield me from the demons within;
Stay near me, Heart of my heart, and
I shall be strong to face
my fears.
Let all the fragmented parts of my being
gather around You,
help me to face them one by one.
Love's healing presence will mend
all that has been broken,
and I shall be made whole.

~ from *PSALMS FOR PRAYING* by Nan Merrill