TERESA OF AVILA (1515-1582)

Quotations, Bibliography, and Notes

“From silly devotions, and from sour-faced saints, good Lord, deliver us.”

“…let us desire and be occupied in prayer not for the sake of our enjoyment but so as to have…strength to serve…the soul has its share of misfortunes while it lives [mentions Mary Magdalene, Elijah, Dominic, & Francis]…let’s refuse to take an unfamiliar path [one different from the saints’ path]…May the thought never enter our minds…Mary and Martha must join together.”

"Don’t try to hold Me within yourself, but try to hold yourself within Me."

"Mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us."

"It is for you to look at Him: He never takes His eyes off you."

"The important thing is not to think much, but to love much, and so do that which best stirs you to love."

"The Lord doesn't look so much at the greatness of our works as at the love with which they are done."

• LOVE=ALWAYS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING
• JESUS CHRIST IS OUR CENTER
• INFLUENCE OF AUGUSTINE
• INNER SPACE/ARCHITECTURE/INTERIOR CASTLE
• PRAYER AS A PROCESS, A PROGRESSION
• SUCH PRAYER EMPOWERS ACTION IN THE WORLD>FOUNDING OF 17 CONVENTS (OR MONASTERIES)
• HONOR=16TH CENTURY SPAIN’S MOST IMPORTANT VIRTUE. TERESA DECONSTRUCTS IT.
• THE FOUR WATERS, THE SILKWORM, AS IMAGES FOR WHAT HAPPENS IN PRAYER
• THE INTERIOR CASTLE/TRANSFORMATION OF THE CASTLE IMAGE AS IMAGE OF PROGRESS IN PRAYER
• SUFFERING-PURIFICATORY CHARACTER: CRUCIFIED JESUS IS ETCHED INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE SOUL, ACTUALLY, ONTO THE HEART (Fitzgerald)

SHORT ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

--------, “Teresa of Avila and the Soul’s Growth toward God”


Mary Frohlich, *The Relationship between Mystical Transformation and Responsible Intersubjectivity in Teresa’s Interior Castle as Analyzed through the Theology of Bernard Lonergan and the Psychology of Heinz Kohut* (Scholars Press, 1993). Speaks of:

- today’s interest in mysticism + demand for a politically and ecologically responsible faith. Teresa’s *Interior Castle* offers a mature mystic’s autobiographical account of the fullness of mystical transformation, development toward maximal openness to God. Spiritual transformation is never only interior and private, but takes place in an interpersonal framework and leads to increased social responsibility.
- The truths to which the mystics testify must also be articulated systematically and in accord with post-Enlightenment cognitive exigencies.
- Teresa is a specialist in the descriptive categories of mystical transformation: “This is the reason for prayer, my daughters, the purpose of this spiritual marriage: the birth always of good works, good works.”
- Bernard Lonergan, SJ: authentic theological method requires critical interiority=critical appropriation of the categories of human consciousness
- Heinz Kohut: a specialist in the explanatory categories for the intersubjective origin and ramifications of psychic contents.

**Stanislav Grof, Beyond the Brain (SUNY, 1985)** He doesn’t mention Teresa, but his research and ideas have been used to interpret her altered states of consciousness. He speaks of perinatal birth matrices: symptoms emerge spontaneously, we could hypothesize, as Teresa’s consciousness opened through her practice of prayer. Her seizures=progressive symptomology accompanying the emergence of higher states of consciousness=growing pains of expanded consciousness, the psycho-physical system’s throwing off its poisons as it moves to more wholistic stages of consciousness. Transpersonal experiences: unity states of consciousness with other life forms; exploration of one’s cultural, racial, and even evolutionary past; recalling past incarnations; ESP & out-of-body experiences.
Edward Howells, *John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila: Mystical Knowing and Selfhood* (Crossroad, 2002). This book explores their theology of the Trinity, interiorization of the mystical journey, and the unique epistemology and ontology that [they thought] needed to be worked out following unitive spiritual experience. Thomas Aquinas inspires their theology. They use his ideas to insist on the uniqueness of their experience. But is it direct communication from God? We may need to pose further questions about this.


Rowan Williams, *Teresa of Avila* (Continuum, 1991). A historical, biographical, spiritual and theological account of Teresa’s life and experience. Makes larger claims about mysticism that extend beyond Teresa. He speaks of “traditions’ forgetfulness of what is generative of their language and practice”:

- “Each tradition trains personalities to be potential critics or reformers: if the person who takes up these roles and practices can establish that what she or he sees from their position is credibly related to the foundational realities of the tradition, or holds together its distinctive concerns with more plausibility than certain of its current intellectual or institutional manifestations, they will properly acquire considerable authority as a touchstone of the tradition’s integrity. Their lives become a kind of classical exegesis of the tradition’s basic texts and stories; a *regle vivante*, someone from whose conduct you could reconstruct the text on which it was based. More than this, such a life becomes a point of access to a truth in danger of being overlaid by the passage of time.”

- [Teresa was] not a feminist, not a social reformer, not a defender of individual rights or consciousness as such, not a proponent of the authority of experience as such.” P. 152.

Anna Wise, *The High-Performance Mind*. (Tarcher/Putnam, 1995) Brain Research: The contribution contemplative process can make to the healing of splitting. Wise doesn’t mention Teresa, but her work with brain encephalography contributes to the understanding of Teresa’s experiences.

- A developmental tension is generated between opposites.
- The brain becomes extremely lateralized and this leads to imbalance. There is no communication between the right and left hemispheres through the corpus callosum. Result: separation, fear, anxiety, isolation, dysfunction, addictions.
- Contemplation brings about a symmetrical and balanced brain-wave pattern: alpha, beta, theta, and delta waves in equal degree=a waking sleep. The above-mentioned problems are overcome and healed.