

“Thinking Concretely” Kataphatic Prayer

Different questions have been raised by my co-workers in our economics project that tie in with this blog, from one extreme of: ‘what has this blog-section to do with economics?’ to the other end of a spectrum of interests: ‘how is economics to be related to a search for the mystical body?’ In between are questions that are more direct: ‘what is kataphatic prayer?’

I wish only that we make a start here, one that may ferment into a culture that would dominate humanity in the future. Eldorede 3, “Spirituality, Prayer,” gives such a start in a first sentence that relates prayer to thinking. The fifth and sixth essays in the present series “Economics’ New Standard Model” give other contexts. But there are many other contexts that call for this cultural interest and turn. There is the Christian culture of negative mysticism, the apophatic as contrasting with the kataphatic, that I talk of in Prehumus 4-8. There is the Zen tradition and its Western offshoots. And so on.

And so on to noting that the topic points to the second and third seminars noted in the Appendix to “The New Standard Model in Economics.” It does so, quite simply, because the new economics is to emerge from thinking seriously and scientifically about the future of humanity, and if you are religious in any way, then that is the way of your thinking: it is kataphatic, a source of talking. Is it prayer? Well, do you shelve your commitment or call when you do economics? The gods are not just on your side, they are in your side, inside your inside’s moi intime, and for the Christian thinker the thinking becomes a collaboration that can grow more luminous with the months of thinking. “We four are living creatively in love: nOw noW3 Now.” Yes, OWN, owned by you slowly slowly, like the growing habit of a tennis champion facing what the cosmos serves nowNow.

The growing is the problem, and the old Zen story is true of kataphatic enlightenment: “‘Master, when might I attain enlightenment?’. ‘Perhaps in ten years?’ ‘But if I try harder?’ Perhaps, then, in twenty years?’” To try seemingly less hard is to follow the Little Way, not of that wonderful woman Theresa of Liseaux, but the way picked up from Descartes in the first paragraph of Insight.

Phil McShane