

Art as Meditation and Personal and Social Healing, continued

Good morning.

We continue our meditations with Meister Eckhart and Ms. Jennifer Hereth on the power of meditation, and art is meditation in particular, to bring about personal and social healing

And I call on the psychologists Naranjo and Ornstein in their book *Psychology and Meditation* written in the 1970s, about how what they call extrovert meditation (what I call art as meditation) is "the way of the prophets."

All the prophets were artists! And to organize like Gandhi did against the (British) empire marching to the sea and so forth, filling jails, that is an art form, to organize the anger of groups of people. And of course Dr. Martin Luther King did the same thing, by having borrowed his strategy from Gandhi.

That he too, by combating segregation, and fighting for civil rights, engaging people to fight for their civil rights, to march and to remain non-violent in the presence of police violence, and to expose this to the world and to the country on television, and to fill the jails -- all this is an art form of social justice and refusal to go along with injustice.

Now I point out that Jennifer Hereth is part of a whole lineage therefore of artists who have turned their work to the struggle for justice.

And in my book on Creativity, *Where the Divine and the Human Meet*, I point out how M.C. Richards the potter puts it:

"We have to realize that a creative being lives within ourselves whether we like it or not, and that we that we must get out of its way, for it will give us no peace until we do."

In other words there is creativity in all of us: we are all artists. Our cultures do not teach us that, but our spiritual traditions teach us that. And if we're not in touch with the artist in us, with our deepest self that can express our deepest feelings, then we're going to be in trouble and we're going to make trouble for others.

That's why she says we have to get out of its way, this creative impulse, or it will give us no peace until we do.

Now I put out in my book that the Prometheus story is a very powerful story: about how early humans stole, Prometheus stole the fire from the gods and he was punished for it. And he was roped to a rock and his liver was eaten out by a big bird because he had stolen the divine creativity.

In some ways the Adam and Eve story kind of parallels the same myth: that creativity carries with it a tremendous danger, because it is encroaching upon the divine powers.

So that's one more reason why art as meditation is a meditation: that it's about disciplining ourselves so that we truly steer this powerful energy of creativity to something appropriate, something good, something just, and not something destructive. Because creativity has a shadow side for sure: we can create more and more nuclear bombs, more and more ways of caging people, and the rest.

So we're dealing with the gods, we're dealing with fire when we're dealing with creativity.

Rollo May, the psychologist who deals a lot with creativity, says that creativity comes from a struggle: "Out of the rebellion creativity is born." It's born of a great passion, a passion to live beyond one's death, and there's an intense emotion involved, a heightened vitality. The rage ultimately is against injustice, he says: the ultimate rage embedded in creativity is against injustice.

So all these powerful observations remind us that creativity has to be tended like a good fire, and it has to be given a direction. That is why the *via creativa* in the four paths of creation spirituality leads to the *via transformativa*: that we steer it in the direction of compassion, in the direction of justice making and healing, so that it does not run away with us and turn into the directions of destruction instead of construction.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.