

Daily Meditation 11/06/2021

Eckhart, Coomaraswamy, and a ‘Common Universal Language’

Good morning.

We are continuing our meditations on deep ecumenism, and especially that between Meister Eckhart and Coomaraswamy, the Hindu art expert.

And remember in yesterday's meditation, Coomaraswamy says that Eckhart's sermons can be called the Upanishads of Europe; he is comparing Eckhart to the Upanishads.

This is as great a compliment as a Westerner can get, of course, and he also said that there's a parallel in Eckhart's thinking to that of Indian thought, including whole passages in Eckhart that feel like they were originally sentences being translated from Sanskrit, he says, the sacred language of India. So, truly Coomaraswamy was taken by Eckhart.

And the passages I share with you in today's meditation are very profound on Coomaraswamy's part, and as he says that Europe and Asia used to understand each other, but there's been this big gulf, but Eckhart really is a bridge to the deeper history of European awareness.

Again, we're, we're undergoing these meditations on deep ecumenism because, triggered by the COP26 gathering in Glasgow this week, we're all facing the reality of climate change, which has potential to eventually render our species and so many others extinct.

So it truly is a time for all hands on deck.

Now I'm reminded, when I read Coomaraswamy and Eckhart in this context, *of the wonderful teachings from Thomas Berry, in the foreword that he wrote for this very fine book, called When the Trees Say Nothing: Thomas Merton's Writings on Nature*. It's a wonderful collection by Sister Kathleen Deignan, on the meditations from Thomas Merton, on nature and the sacredness of nature.

And remember that Merton was very, very moved and even transformed by his encounter with Meister Eckhart. It began in 1958, under the guidance of Dr. Suzuki, the Japanese Buddhist, Zen Buddhist, who told Burton to read the one Zen thinker of the West, Meister Eckhart.

So there too we have the linking of East and West, and what came of that marvelous relationship, when Merton was converted, really, by Meister Eckhart and became a different kind of non-dualistic kind of monk in 1958, to the time he died in 1968.

But here is Thomas Berry, speaking about a sacredness of the Earth:

Everywhere we find ourselves invaded by the world of the sacred. Such was the experience of Thomas Merton, such as a wonder that he's communicating to us. Let me say, such was the experience of Meister Eckhart and his teachings, when he says that every creature is a word of God, and a book about God, logos, the Cosmic Christ is present in every creature in the universe.

Barry goes on:

An absence of a sense of the sacred is the basic flaw in many of our efforts at ecologically or environmentally adjusting our human presence to the natural world. It has been said we will not save what we do not love. It is also true that we will neither love nor save what we do not experience as sacred.

The difficulty is that the natural world is seen primarily for human use, not as a mode of sacred presence primarily to be communed with in wonder and beauty and intimacy. In our present attitude, the natural world remains a commodity, to be bought and sold, not a sacred reality, to be venerated. Eventually, only our sense of the sacred will save us.

Merton's gift is this sense of the sacred throughout the entire range of the natural world. Well, that is very much Meister Eckhart's gift as well. And this too, correlates with a gift of the Hindu tradition as well. The sacredness of the rivers, the sacredness of the land, the sacredness of every day, and how the real purpose of our being here is for all of us to encounter the sacred and to share it.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.