

Daily Meditation 11/17/2021

Dorothee Soelle, Mysticism, and the Undoing of Patriarchy

Good morning.

In today's meditation, we're reflecting on the work of Dorothee Soelle, who did a wonderful job of bringing out the essence of what mysticism is about.

She, by the way, was very partial, if you will, to Meister Eckhart, whom she taught courses on for years at Union Theological Seminary. She herself was from Hamburg, Germany, a feminist theologian and a liberation theologian.

And yesterday, as you may recall, we meditated on the connection between our cultural issues today and the teachings of Father Bede Griffith, and how the West has underdeveloped its mystical understanding and awareness. And the East has done a better job of keeping it alive.

And the emphasis, I said yesterday, was on what I called the fatalistic self-hatred that patriarchy teaches. And I get that idea from the poet and philosopher and feminist Adrienne Rich: fatalistic self-hatred. And I pointed out that's behind a lot of the gun culture, the macho "prove I'm a man" kind of thing that seems very much at the heart of the sad and tragic trial and goings-on in Kenosha, Wisconsin, which is coming to a head this week: the jury got the case last night.

But also, I think, it lies behind such important issues as climate change.

I write about matricide, the killing of Mother Earth, that has been going on under the power and agenda of empire-building and of capitalism, understood as extraction from Mother Earth and giving nothing back.

And that kind of corporate capitalism that is so reluctant to even address climate change. And that goes out to lobby and essentially purchase and buy politicians so that they remain silent about climate change, and fossil fuels, and all of that. That too, is a species of fatalistic self-hatred.

And of course, the opposite of fatalistic self-hatred is love. And that's one reason I have the painting of Julian of Norwich, which is the cover of my recent book on Julian of Norwich. Because, as I've said many times, the mystic is the lover. The prophet is the warrior, one who stands up to injustice. The mystic says, yes, yes to life. The Prophet says no, no to those who are destroying it, and in denial about what's going on, when our Earth and all her creatures are being endangered, and indeed exterminated.

So just to share a few some examples of the love energy that Julian puts out, there is the painting itself here, where she had this vision of the whole universe as a glowing ball in her hand, the size of a hazelnut, she said, and when she looked at it, she said, "This is so vulnerable. How can it possibly stay together?" And the answer she received was that it was kept together by love. So that statement is such a statement of cosmic love that permeates the universe.

It absolutely parallels the teaching in Christianity of the Cosmic Christ -- Christ, the pattern that connects, as Paul calls it. That is a loving pattern, not an indifferent pattern, but a loving pattern, or pattern full of love. And the teachings of Jesus are that too: love your neighbor as yourself. And notice it's about loving self.

It's not about fatalistic self hatred, it's the opposite. It's about Healthy Love, and sharing that with love of neighbors, not just two-legged neighbors, but all the other creatures who are our neighbors as well. And with whom we share this web of creation, as Hildegard of Bingen called it.

Also we're talking, Julian is talking, about the power of motherhood being essentially about compassion, and how God is a mother as well as a father. And compassion is at the heart of motherhood and is integral to all of us, male and female.

And obviously, fatalistic self-hatred is not about mothering, or caring, or compassion, or parenting, or fathering, it is about fatalistic self-hatred.

And so, Dorothee Soelle is so right, that the mystics -- and of course her definition of mysticism is to be so in love with the divine, that we are never separated from it, and cannot be. She cites who she calls the mystic, Paul, about that.

And speaking of Paul, John Dominic Crossan, a very renowned New Testament scholar, in his book on Paul, says that for Paul, you cannot be a Christian without being a mystic...cannot be a Christian without being a mystic. And that Paul uses the phrase "in Christ," which is a mystical phrase, to be in something. It's a phrase about love, and he uses that phrase over 125 times in his letters.

So it's absolutely a pattern in which he thinks that we are in the Divine, and the Divine is in us: panentheism.

So there's love going on everywhere. That's the lesson of mysticism. And that's the alternative to patriarchy, to matricide and to turning to guns, as a solution to differences or to feelings of upset.

Our first, second and third response is not meant to be hating each other, as of course, Facebook is making lots and lots of money by setting up algorithms based on how much hate there is in the air. And not just Facebook, but a lot of the social media is so consumed by capitalism and wanting to make profits, no matter what, even at the Earth's expense, to create these machines, essentially robots, that choose anything over love. Because fire and rancor make more money than love does, than caring, than forgiving, and listening.

All this is about whether we choose more patriarchy, including matricide, the killing of the mother in all of us and Mother Earth herself, or whether we choose to love one another. The Mystic choice.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.