

Daily Meditations 11/18/2021

Soelle: Mysticism Represents a New Kind of Transcendence

Good morning.

Today we continue our meditations with Dorothee Soelle on how mysticism is so special that it offers us a new understanding of transcendence.

Transcendence is no longer to be understood as being independent of everything and ruling over everything else, but rather as being bound up in the web of life, as she puts it.

What does that mean? That we move from God above us to God within us, and overcome false transcendence hierarchically conceived: God within us. And of course, the word Immanuel means God among us.

And Jesus said that the kingdom of God is among us. And within us, that word he uses can be translated either as "among," or as "within," or I should say, as both "among" and "within."

But this is a mystical way of seeing the world. It's rounded. So it's also feminist, it's a rounded way of seeing the world. Being bound up in the web of life, a web is essentially round, isn't it? It's not hierarchical.

And this is panentheism, which teaches that God is in all things and all the things are in God. Panentheism, not theism that has God up there, and us down here, and dualistically separated. No. The divine flows through all things, and all things flow in the Divine.

Again, that was Paul's language about Christ in us, and us in Christ. And John's Gospel also talks about the God is in the Father, the Christ is in the Father and the Father is in Christ, and we are in both.

So all that language, all that imagery is an effort to name the roundedness of the Divine. Hildegard of Bingen says, "We are surrounded by the arms of the mystery of God." ...we are hugged by the arms, the mystery of God, again a round way of seeing our relationship to the Divine.

This is part of Black Elk's teaching too, the Lakota teacher and Shaman. He says that everything in nature is round, he says. This is a wonderful phrase. He says, "Our religion is like the birds, because a bird creates a round nest, and our religion is round also, because everything in nature is round."

This is all what feminist theology is about. And this is something we yearn for today.

Because the charging, dominant, reptilian-brain patterns that we've been living through in history for several thousand years...this pattern of energy, which is out-of-control reptilian brain -- I win, you lose -- this has run its course, this is what's killing the earth, it's over. The only question is whether we respond swiftly enough with a rounded version of living on this planet, and embracing the earth as the Earth embraces us, the mother embraces us, that's the only question: will we choose this pattern, this transcendence?

Or will we run ourselves right to the end, and bring down not only our species, but so many others? So these discussions were happening, these meditations on transcendence, on our relationship to the Divine, on mysticism in preference to extractive capitalism, and warmongering, and fatalistic self-hatred, and a perverse patriarchy as distinct from a healthy masculinity.

These are the issues of our time. And time is running out, as the COP26 gathering taught us anew: that we all -- all humans, all our nations, all our governments, all our politics, all our education and religions -- have to turn to a curved understanding of our place in the web of life, not of our pretending to be superior and in control of Mother Earth and her creatures.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.