

Daily Meditation 01/16/2022

The Specialness of the Human in this Universe

Morning.

We continue our meditation on Father Sky, the universe, and our place in it as human beings. And in today's meditation I interact with Joel R. Primack, the astrophysicist, and Nancy Abrams. And they talk about how special our species is insofar as we've arrived at a very special time in the history of the universe--time to be able to actually pick up the edge of the universe. We won't be able to do this forever. And of course, this special creation of the universe that we call Earth, our Mother.

Now, to speak of ourselves as special is not to put down other species. It's not about a competition. Every species is special in its own way. Whales are special, and their intelligence is special. And dolphins are special and elephants are special and rainforest is special.

But one person who saw my essay for today said, "Oh, all kinds of people are going to object because" ...I don't know... "you're putting chauvinism first or something." No. to love yourself well is to love others. Well, as Jesus said, "Love others as you love yourself."

To recognize our species as special does not put down other species. In fact, if we can't recognize our specialness, we're in no place to appreciate the uniqueness and the specialness of other species.

Now, one way in which we're special as a species is our capacity for evil. And this is related to our neocortex, to our most recent brain, which is very intelligent and is very curious. So there's a negative side to this and a positive side.

The negative side is that we make nuclear bombs and submarines to deliver them. And we tear down rainforest in a day that it takes nature and God 10,000 years to give birth to. And that we can go into denial about climate change when everybody knows about it and the causes. And we want to make money up to the last minute with coal and oil and all the other devices that are, in fact, killing the planet, as we know it, and putting us very close to extinction, and extinguishing other species, as well.

So that's the negative side to our specialness.

But let's talk about it. If we can't talk about our capacity for evil, we're not going to do anything about it, are we? But Thomas Aquinas, in 13th century, said, "One human being" ...one human being... "could do more evil than all the other species put together." He's really saying the same thing. Our capacity for evil is special.

And we have to focus on that at this time in history, not deny it and cover it up and say, "Oh, we should think of the other species." No, we aren't. We're different. Each species is different. There's a whale intelligence, an elephant intelligence, and a forest intelligence, and human intelligence. Let's talk more about it.

Now, the positive side of our specialness is beautifully shared in this painting behind me. It's here. It's about our capacity for celebration.

No, don't stop and say, "Oh, but other species celebrate too." Of course they do. I'm talking about human species doing human celebrations.

And this artist renders so wonderfully the magic of Miles Davis, his trumpet, his music, the dance that goes with it, the beauty of the costumes. All these things that humans do make for one another. And the artist himself bringing forward these images, this vitality, this beauty that humans are capable of.

Now, does that mean other species don't do beauty? No! Let's stop and recognize our own!

And then there is the teaching that follows all of this, from Thomas Berry, where he says, "The human venture depends absolutely" ...absolutely... "on this quality of awe and reverence and joy in the earth, and all that lives and grows upon the earth. In the end, the universe can only be explained in terms of celebration. It is all an exuberant expression of existence itself."

An exuberant expression of existence itself.

Now, I know that whales get exuberant, too, about their existence, and all kinds of beings get exuberant about their existence. The question is: Do humans? We have the capacity for it. It's right over my shoulder for one example. But do we give thanks enough? Do we praise enough? Do we really act out our exuberance for existence? Not for making money, for being famous; not for being right, but for existence itself.

So these questions, I think, are raised by the reading of Joel Premack and Nancy Abrams about the specialness of our species today. That we came at a unique time in the history of the universe. And we are a unique size among all the sizes of beings in the universe. We are right in the middle. And we have a unique responsibility and opportunity and curiosity to learn more about the universe. And to praise. And to praise, to develop our version of exuberance and gratitude.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.