

Daily Meditation 01/13/22

Father Sky Among Indigenous Peoples, continued

Good morning.

We continue our meditation with the indigenous peoples about Father Sky, in order to connect again, because there's been this rupture that created so much depression and suicide, as Barbara Ehrenreich points out.

And the bad news from John Calvin, although in his message from yesterday that I shared in the video, there is also the hope: he says, "if we'd been made of the stuff of the stars..."

Well, John, we have a cosmology and a science that's teaching us exactly that today. So we can go beyond your depression, and your talking of the curse that spreads over all creatures, including the sky.

Indigenous people did not believe the sky was a curse, or creation was a curse. In fact, in today's reading, we learned that death happened on Earth because the sky and the earth had been severed.

And as I really think we have to point out, this sounds an awful lot to me like the story of the Garden of Eden, that the severing brought down a lot of the pain and suffering in our lives.

And appropriately, I think, we end with the Lakota and the Algonquin tribe leaders talking about the Great Spirit is in the air that we breathe, and is blessing us, and we call forth that blessing upon all things.

But it wasn't only the John Calvins of the world, the religious theologians, who ended up with a depressed attitude because of the loss of Father Sky in the West. It also comes from scientific philosophers like Bertrand Russell, a 20th-century mathematician, who was also a good man insofar as he was very active in the anti nuclear movement in the 50s, and so forth.

But hear him out on our species.

That Man is a product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves, and his beliefs are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms--

...an accidental collection of atoms, that is his version of what birthed us...

that no fire, no heroes, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the laborers of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins -- all of these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the first foundation of unyielding despair --

...The first foundation of unyielding despair....

...can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built?

I need a drink...Bet that you do too!

That's modern philosophy...it's not exactly happy, is it? That's patriarchy, folks. Adrienne Rich: "fatalistic self-hatred."

So he wants to begin philosophy with despair. Aquinas says philosophy begins with wonder! Exactly where the poet begins, he says, with wonder.

So take your choice: if you want to give in, to give in to despair, follow Bertrand Russell and John Calvin, follow these modern thinkers into hell...with despair and cursing everywhere. Or follow the role of Wonder.

It's not just Aquinas, of course. Rabbi Heschel says wisdom begins with Awe, and that Awe is, he says, the encounter of the human mind with the universe, yes, with Father Sky.

But it's a choice: who will you choose? As Deuteronomy said, I put before you life and death; choose life. It's a choice. So I put before you despair, and awe and wonder, and gratitude -- the via positiva -- it's your choice.

But don't bring others down with you. That's not fair. If you choose the path of despair, take it alone. Don't cause it, to bring it about the very prophecies that you are projecting about your own sadness and despondency.

Of course, Russell's not alone. Stephen Jay Gould, in 1995, wrote that humans are a mere "fortuitous afterthought" on the part of the cosmos in his book, *Dinosaur in a Haystack*.

But as Joel Primack and Nancy Abrams, 21st-century scientists, point out, "a mindset like this reinforces our collective irresponsibility."

...reinforces our collective irresponsibility. So bad news from pessimistic patriarchy increases the likelihood of irresponsibility. Responsibility is born of a sense of hope, and gratitude and promise and possibility.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.