

Daily Meditations 02/08/22

Transformation and the Divine Feminine: Rich & Eckhart

Good morning.

Adrienne Rich makes a very important point in our essay today about the role of women in transformation. And she develops that, in many respects, throughout her writing, and here is one thing that she says in her poem called "Hunger."

*The decision to feed the world
is the real decision. No revolution
has chosen it. For that choice requires
that women shall be free.
I choke on the taste of bread in North America
but the taste of hunger in North America
is poisoning me.*

And in another poem speaking to compassion, she says,

*But gentleness is active.
Gentleness swabs the crusted stump,
invents more merciful instruments
to touch the wound beyond the wound
does not faint with disgust
will not be driven off,
keeps bearing witness calmly
against the predator, the parasite*

In this poem:

*My heart is moved by all I cannot save:
So much has been destroyed
I have to cast my lot with those
who age after age, perversely,
with no extraordinary power,
reconstitute the world.*

...reconstitute the world.

And she talks about feminism this way.

Feminism "exists in many stages of development throughout the world: at the most local, pragmatic level; as a network of formal and informal communications; as a growing body of analysis and theory; and as a profound moral, psychic, and philosophic reevaluation of what it means to be human."

...a reevaluation of what it means to be human. I think that is saying a lot.

And I think it is very needed that all of us should be engaged in posing the questions: What does it mean to be human? -- to be Homo sapiens? -- before it is too late to answer the question. And finally, I share this wonderful poem of hers on compassion, which moved me deeply for many years. I discovered it after my book on compassion came out. So in the second edition of the book, I included it.

Remember that compassion is what the Dalai Lama calls for, and Buddha calls for, what Jesus called for. It's the secret name of divinity, according to the Jewish tradition. And of course, it is most often used as the name for God, the adjective for Allah in the Quran. Here's Adrienne Rich on compassion.

*We are a small and lonely human race
showing no sign of mastering solitude
out on this stony planet that we farm --*

Notice the role of the cosmos in our understanding of compassion.

She begins with the cosmos, the stony planet that we farm, and the solitude -- it's also about solitude, compassion is.

--The most that we can do for one another--

What is the most we can do for another? great question...

*---Is let our blunders and our blind mischances
Argue a certain brusque, abrupt compassion.*

This is not a great lofty statement of being compassionate.

Our blunders and our blind mischances offer a brusque compassion.

What is compassion? Now she's going to define it.

*We might as well be truthful I should say
They're luckiest who know they're not unique --*

That's her working definition of compassion: that we're not unique; that we're in this together. It's about interdependence, therefore. Now she's going to lay out some examples of our un-uniqueness. Compassion is not about ego. It's not about ego. And she says,

*They're luckiest who know they're not unique;
But only art or common interchange
can teach that kindest truth. And even art
can only hint at what disturbed a Melville
or calmed a Mahler's frenzy.*

So even art can only hint at what brings us together, whether it's disturbance or calmness, frenzy -- what we have in common are all these things.

*You and I still look from separate windows every morning,
Upon the same white daylight in the square.*

So compassion is not square. And it's not about white daylight, and it's not about separate windows. It is about this capacity to come together and to recognize what we have in common, and to relieve one another's pain.

Just like Meister Eckhart says, "What happens to another, whether it be a joy or sorrow, happens to me."

Thank you, we'll see you tomorrow.