

Daily Meditation 02/23/22

Some Thoughts on Mysticism and Our Survival

Good morning.

We're meditating on mysticism, and how important it is to our survival as a species. And not only our survival of course, but that of so many other species with whom we share this planet, and the planet as we know it. Not that the planet will go on without humans, but it will not be as diverse and exciting as it currently is. We will lose many, many species besides Homo Sapiens, if we do not change our ways in the next eight years.

And we're playing with the meaning of mysticism, non-dualism versus dualism, non-patriarchy, a marriage, sacred marriage of the divine feminine and the healthy and sacred masculine. But I want to share with you, and of course, I offer a number of examples of non-dualism as taught by the mystics: Meister Eckhart, Julian of Norwich, Thomas Aquinas, Dorothy Soelle and Rosemary Ruether.

When I bring Augustine in, of course, I'm talking about Neo-Platonism, I'm talking about the philosophy from Greece that was very dualistic, about matter versus spirit, and about how this world is not the real world; it's just a shadow, the shadow on the cave wall as Plato talked about it.

But I'm going to share with you a teaching from Thich Nhat Hanh -- who as we know left our planet this past month, a few weeks ago -- and what he says about Christianity, and non-dualism is both a compliment and a challenge to the West.

And remember, we've been meditating on Father Bede Griffiths, who lived in India for over 50 years, and his teaching about how important it is that the West learn from the East. Many lessons of the divine feminine and of non-dualism.

So Thich Nhat Hanh says he is very excited. Those are his words, very excited, about the encounter between Buddhism and Christianity in the 21st century.

But he also calls for "a very drastic change," to occur in the Christian tradition. So he is critiquing the West.

What's on his mind? "If we can bring into Christianity the insight of interbeing" -- that's the word that he invented for non-duality --

"...the insight of interbeing and of non-duality, we will radically transform the way people look on the Christian tradition. And the valuable jewels in the Christian tradition will be rediscovered."

Notice what he's saying there, that the most valuable jewels in the Christian tradition have been lost. They've been covered up, by dualism. But there is a way out of this dilemma. We will radically transform the way people look on the Christian tradition. So that's a challenge to everyone in the West.

And it's really not just the Christian tradition - it's the Jewish tradition too, on which Christianity tries to establish itself. I say tries, because often it fell into the dualisms of Plato and Augustine, in contrast, in opposition to the Jewish tradition, which is far more non-dualistic than in his opinion, Christianity has become under the influence of Plato and Augustine and so forth.

But again, these people whom I cite in today's meditation are Christians who got to that other side, to the non-dualist side, that Thich Nhat Hanh is calling for, but we can all move there, because that's what mysticism is. And to the extent that mysticism has been repressed, distorted, or misunderstood during the modern era, for hundreds of years in other words, Thich Nhat Hanh is absolutely right, he sees very little presence of the non-dualistic dimension, that is the mystical dimension, in Christians of the 21st century.

But I think that he is an amazing saint who is appropriately calling the West to wake up, and, as he says, to discover its own treasures. You don't have to go east. But the East is calling us to wake up. And this is why I feel blessed to be able to teach the mystics and to explore them all these years.

Because there is no doubt whatsoever, in my experience, that the West has its non-dualist tradition. It's just been squelched by an academic system, even in seminaries, that leads with the left brain and rules with the left brain and is out of touch with the mysticism that all of us, all humans are capable of. We all practiced it as children.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.