

Daily Meditation 03/19/2022

Rank on “the Beyond”

Good morning.

In today's meditation, we're taking up the topic of "the Beyond," which is a rich word, for sure a rich concept, which is very important to the work of Otto Rank.

And remember that we started this incorporating of Otto Rank's really brilliant--what I consider a brilliant understanding of human nature--psychology at the time of Putin's invasion of Ukraine. Because you're trying to deal with these evil goings-on which have only increased in intensity and latent-ness in these more-than-three weeks. Trying to understand this in a context of spirituality, and a deep understanding of human nature, what's going on here.

And you may remember that I shared an article by Hungarian professor--actually an American professor working in Hungary--a psychologist whose specialty is Otto Rank. And that kind of got me going on sharing with you some of Rank's deep ideas. And one of these is his calling on the idea of "the Beyond." And I especially like this because, as he says, the individual is not just striving for survival, but it's reaching for some kind of Beyond.

So, survival is not just enough for us humans. We are looking for something greater than just our individual survival.

And I think the word "Beyond," employed so richly by Otto Rank, helps to name what that quest is about. And so I point out, for example, of course, what "beyond," to "be yonder," means in the English language, and how it has something to do with being called to the horizon, to adventure, to stretching and growing, and even to returning to our origins.

And one of the points that Rank uses, and applies this term of "Beyond" to, is his critique of psychology. And he was a psychologist. I respect him for critiquing his own profession, his own work. I think we all need to do that. I certainly tried to do it with both my work in education and my work in religion, and spirituality, and spiritual education.

But part of what Rank is saying is that psychology can focus so much on the individual, and so much on the human, that it is out of touch. It is anthropocentric. It is out of touch with the bigger context in which humanity lives and thrives. And so there is a built-in narcissism, and anthropocentrism, in psychology. And we have to be aware of that; that there's something bigger than the human person, and that is the universe itself, and all the other creatures with whom we are interdependent, and in deep relationship.

So that's one application of his term of the Beyond in which he takes to a very pragmatic and practical level in his book *Beyond Psychology*, which, by the way, was his last book, published posthumously. And he wrote it, actually, near to where I live in Northern California, Lake Tahoe.

Now, a second dimension to the Beyond that we touch on in this meditation with Otto Rank today is that, he says, "The human is born beyond the psychological era." So he's saying, we've been in a psychological era; we have to move beyond.

Remember he died in 1939. So he was calling in cosmology and ecology back in 1930s. Remember that ecology is functional cosmology, according to Thomas Berry. Notice he was way ahead of his time regarding our concern now about ecology and climate change and all the rest.

Humans are born beyond the psychological era, only, *only* through vital experience of their own. In religious terms, through revelation, conversions, or rebirth. So these are those moments of wanting, of breakthrough, of ecstasy, that are the core of the mystical experience.

This is what Otto Rank is really talking about--that we will reinvent ourselves and our era; move beyond the era of psychology, when we take seriously these moments of grace, that are mystical experiences.

Dr. Kubler-Ross, of course, worked with dying people, said that there are two kinds of dying people: those who die kicking and screaming because they regret that they have not lived, that they have not lived fully, and those who die peacefully, who are remembering the moments of joy in their lives that are often very simple, and may be a family singing around a piano or something like that.

These are those who die peacefully, those who yield to the experience of grace and our mystical wantings. All this is to further our meditation on the term/experience we call "Beyond."

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.