

Daily Meditation 04/11/2022

Anger, Love, and Expanding—Not Shrinking—the Mind

Good morning.

We're meditating this morning on what we call anger, love expanding, and not shrinking the mind. And I cite Thomas Aquinas about how great things happen with the help of anger, because anger is a fire in our belly that allows us to sustain struggle and to sustain the quest for justice to persevere in hard times.

He says that "a trustworthy person is angry at the right people for the right reasons, expresses it in the appropriate manner, and for an appropriate length of time."

So he's saying we don't want to marry our anger. And certainly we don't want to live in our anger forever. But there's time for anger and there's time for letting go of anger. And good things can happen if we learn to steer our anger toward the greater good for the common good.

He says, "That which provokes anger is always something considered in the light of an injustice."

The two important words in that sentence are "always" and "injustice." That injustice provokes our anger. It's a kick in the gut that wakes us up.

"That which provokes anger is always something considered in the light of an injustice." So, if we're out of touch with our anger, we may be out of touch with the injustice in the world. He also explains that we are angry because what we love is being threatened or in danger.

Here's how he puts it:

"If we are angry with those who harm others, it is because those who are injured belong in some way to us either by some kinship, or by friendship, or at least because of the nature we share in common."

So anger is embedded in the work of community, in the work of solidarity, and in the work of standing up to injustice together, and to recognizing how interdependent we all are. Not unlike what Jesus said: 'If you do it to this person, you do it to me.'

That is the impetus behind compassion that can be born of anger.

There is another powerful teaching in today's meditation from Thomas Aquinas, near the end, when he defines "acedia," which traditionally has been translated as sloth. Which is far too reductionist and narrow an understanding of this rich term for the Middle Ages, or the capital sins called "acedia," the lack of energy to begin new things.

But Aquinas also says "Acedia is a shrinking of the mind." A shrinking of the mind.

So without the energy to respond to injustice, might it be that our minds have shrunk? That our capacity for community and for feeling the hurt and the suffering of others has been diminished?

And we can cover up this sense of compassion and interdependence with denial, of course, or with spiritualizing and just dancing over the suffering of the world and saying, 'Oh, isn't it all wonderful anyway, and so forth?'

No, we have to face the realities of evil and of brokenness and of suffering. And that's part of our expanding our mind, isn't it? And in our hearts! Because we have to have the courage to look bluntly at what's real, and what's really happening. And this is true of the war in Ukraine that is also true of the war against Mother Earth. And it's true of so many other struggles that we are facing today.

And so this whole theme we've been dealing with recently about expanding our psyches to really connect to the universe again. All of this is about moving out of the shrinking of our minds to something bigger and more generous.

Thank you we'll see you tomorrow.