

Daily Meditation 07-13-22

Aquinas: “Capable of the Universe”—Humanity’s Greatness

Good morning.

Today we celebrate the accomplishment of the new Webb Telescope, which is reaching far into the history of the universe, and beaming back amazing pictures of the lights created by stars, by galaxies, most of which are long gone, because we're looking so far back into the universe and its origins.

And they tell us that Webb is seeking the earliest galaxies in the universe, the earliest galaxies, and the earliest stars, the earliest news of the universe.

First of all, we have to congratulate humanity, for being smart enough and clever enough to ask these questions, first of all, and then to develop, to create technologies that can do this magnificent looking-back into the history of the universe. It's been kind of popular in the modern era, to say that humanity is an accident, that humanity has no meaning and all the rest, but surely the ability to pursue our curiosity and to develop the amazing tools, technology that we have is no small thing. No small thing.

And above all, it leads to praise. It means we can praise this universe: you can't praise what you don't know about. We can praise its 13.8 billion years of achievement. And part of its achievement is this wonderful Earth, this splendid Earth, this diverse Earth where everything from giraffes to dinosaurs, to whales, to lions and polar bears, to rainforests and redwood forests, oceans, rivers, plants and flowers of all kinds have flourished.

And we humans too, although we are facing our own extinction, quite directly at this time in history. I'm told by science that we have seven years left to churn, to turn, to transform, to be better humans and better at being human, than we demonstrated, especially of late, and especially in relationship to the earth herself, with climate change and all the rest. But it is a moment to really pause and give thanks, and to give praise, and for the universe itself.

I received a letter this morning from a friend of mine who's a psychologist teaching in Hungary. And he's a Rankian scholar. He's published a lot about Otto Rank who is my favorite psychologist. And this is what he wrote. Now, he and I do not share the exact philosophy of the universe...that's one reason I'm sharing him with you!

But I do think the question he asked is a question for all of us. Here's what he wrote. And he included with it a *New York Times* article on the Webb telescope that came out today.

For any understanding of the universal suffering of human beings, isn't the strange consciousness of living, the dim awareness that we are alive for a moment on a speck of dust, as it spins, meaninglessly (that's where I would

disagree) around the sun, itself only slightly larger speck of dust in the vast incomprehensible spaces of the cosmos -- isn't this the single most important fact of human existence?

Isn't this the single most significant fact of human existence?

I couldn't agree more that we are, that existence is, and existence has shared itself with us, and invited us to be aboard. Even if it's for a short time, to live fully. And it's interesting, it begins with the universal suffering of human beings. So all the suffering we've been talking about in daily meditations lately, they find, as I say in the essay today, a context...a context. And context is this miracle that we call existence, that we call the universe, and that we humans are capax universi, capable of the universe, and eager to find our place here. And to know what here is, and as I say, it gives us context, it gives us perspective, and it awakens gratitude for the special existence that we do share, or as Meister Eckhart put it, isness is God.

Existence is God. And we share it.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.