

Daily Meditation 11-11-22

Peter Gabel: Pioneer & Prophet in Law & Education

Good morning.

In the last two meditations, we have been considering the role of the interior life. This is consciousness at work and it's conscience at work.

And in yesterday's meditation we applied it especially to the topic of our work: how we bring our values and bring our joy, we bring our inner life therefore to work. Work brings it out, distributes it, shares it with others. There's a wonderful teaching from Thomas Aquinas: he says, "All beauty yearns to be conspicuous."

...All beauty yearns to be conspicuous. And he talks about how the sun gives out its heat, its light, its warmth utterly generously and in all directions, and it reaches the Earth and blesses us, makes life happen. Photosynthesis happens and plants happen, and animals who eat plants happen, and so much more. The earth thrives, lives, blossoms, nurtures, feeds its creatures -- that's us, we're included, we're recipients of that generosity of the sun.

In today's meditation I was speaking about a man named Peter Gabel, who unfortunately died suddenly a week ago. I call him a pioneer and a prophet in law and education. He and Rabbi Michael Lerner founded *Tikkun* magazine, a prophetic magazine, tackling many of the problems of our times with critical thinking and with loving heart, coming out of the depths of the prophetic tradition of Israel.

Michael Lerner was a student of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, who wrote the classic work on the prophets (a book this thick), and who walked his talk literally. He walked with Dr. King in Selma and so forth, and stood up for racial justice in a time of trying to overcome the segregation and racism in America.

Peter Gabel was Dean of the Law Department at New College, and was also president of New College.

And he writes in today's meditation, about how the whole notion of originalism -- he never once heard the term in law school, in his years of studying law. It's a very recent term made up by the far right-wing judicial system, bought and paid for by a lot, a lot, a lot of dark money from the Koch brothers and others with certain agendas, such as to gut environmental protection laws, because the Koch brothers got their billions from fossil fuels and didn't want that interfered with.

He writes that Social Security, that Medicare, that the Affordable Care Act, "evolved in manifestations of our sharing a greater collective wisdom about the moral bounds that unite us as social beings"... that are mortal bounds, that unite us as social beings. And none of this was in the collective awareness in 1789.

So how can a judiciary in 2022 be making decisions on a theory of so-called originalism about a document that does not explicitly speak to these moral bounds that unite us as social beings? I mean, evolution is a fact. And we have evolved since 1789, I hope, and our laws have, I hope. Such matters as whether African slaves or human beings have a right to vote and to be full human beings.

Not only did it take a great civil war to answer that, but then there was a backlash, Jim Crow and the rest, that took it all back after the war for decades.

And women were not included in the aspiring statement that all men are created equal, until they had to fight and fight and fight for many, many decades to get their right to vote. And, of course, indigenous people are still fighting.

So that was one of Peter's important contributions. In another in today's meditation, he says, a new emphasis on integrating spirituality, law and social justice is needed. But Peter, unlike many legal commentators, and professors, let me say, teachers of law, is not afraid to talk about spirituality, and law and social justice.

And he walked his talk not only in founding *Tikkun* magazine, but in his work as a dean in New College of Law School, where they created a different kind of law school, one that was trying to turn out lawyers who would work with the poor in work around social justice -- that was the emphasis, not on signing up with the richest law firm, to make the most money, but to see how one can interfere with injustice of any kind, that being the purpose of a legal vocation.

We owe Peter Gabel a lot. He was a prophet in our midst.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.