

Daily Meditation 03/08/2023

Julian of Norwich, Eckhart, Merton, Suzuki on Digging for Truth

Good morning.

Today we continue our meditations on truth and on the search for truth within, and the true self, finding the true self. And first I invoke Julian of Norwich, the 14th-century English mystic, who writes that

There is a treasure in the earth that is a food tasty and pleasing to the Lord. Be a gardener...be a gardener...dig and ditch, toil and sweat and turn the earth upside down and seek the deepness and water the plants in time. Continue this labor and make sweet floods to run and noble and abundant fruits to spring.

...Seek the deepness. So this energy of going down...Eckhart talks about sinking: "We sink eternally from letting go to letting go into the One."

And Mechtild of Magdeburg also talks about sinking. It is very different from the patriarchal imagery of climbing up, climbing up the ladder, climbing up Jacob's Ladder.

This is sinking. Because, as Eckhart says, "God is at home, it's we who've gone out for a walk."

But I love how sensual and down to earth Julian's imagery is about "treating your soul like you do the Earth" -- there's a sinking going on here, there's a gardening going on, there's digging and ditching, there's sweat and there's toil. All that is beautiful imagery for the spiritual journey itself.

Next in the meditation I bring up Dr. Suzuki and Thomas Merton and Meister Eckhart who're playing with something very parallel to Julian when they talk about the "ground of the soul," or as Eckhart preceded Julian, whereas Suzuki and Merton are 20th century.

But there is this link you see, about how to get to the ground of the soul, that Julian has introduced in terms of her language of gardening.

And Buddhist scholar Dr. Suzuki says that "the true self is a formless, original mind." And Thomas Merton points out where this is very much the language of Meister Eckhart.

So, the mind does not mean the intellectual faculty, but it is called the ground of our soul and of our being: that is where Divinity will be found. We have to go deeper than the rational, deeper than the intellectual. This includes entertaining the intuition and the silence that is deeper than what books can do for us,

And there we find what Suzuki calls "prajna, the ground nature of consciousness" that illuminates things inside and outside.

All of this is found in Thomas Merton's essay on "Buddhism and The Modern World." And Merton interacted with Suzuki in a big way, went to visit him when he was in his 90s, close to death. He was so moved, he said, by the experience of being in the presence of a Buddhist, he said, "You can't really understand Buddhism from reading a book. You've got to be in the presence of people who live it and have lived it, such as Dr. Suzuki."

So they spent a lifetime doing this digging and ditching and sinking into the ground of being.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.