

Daily Meditation 04-13-23

On Evil and Its Remedies, ii

Good morning.

Today we continue our reflections on evil and its remedies that begin with an interesting observation from Martin Buber, the great Jewish mystic who tells us that we cannot wipe out evil. But we can work to turn evil into good, turn evil around. And that evil is present to teach us deep lessons about ourselves and draw the best of ourselves.

So I ask about where's the good in us? And my method is to draw out the seven chakras which we'll be talking about in a meditation coming up soon.

But the question remains: how do we turn evil around? And of course, the process of non-violence is practiced by Gandhi and King and others, and these three people recently in the legislature in Tennessee.

This is at the heart of turning evil around and not succumbing to despair on the one hand, but not doing nothing, either. Recognizing the evil when it's among us, and responding in an appropriate and non-violent manner, whenever possible.

Now Ernest Becker has some powerful things to say about turning evil around. And now, in today's world, Ernest Becker won the Pulitzer Prize for his book on *Denial of Death*. But he also wrote a book on evil. And of course, they are related, the denial of death and evil as he sees it. The book is called *Escape from Evil*. He says that, for modern people,

We've long since abandoned a ritual renewal theory of nature, which the indigenous people have. The reality for us is simply refusing to acknowledge that evil and death are constantly with us.

So it is that denial, not only of death, but of evil, that is strong in modern consciousness. He says,

With medical science, we want to banish death. So we deny it a place in our consciousness. And what we've done, we've shifted the fear of death onto the higher level of cultural perpetuity. This very triumph ushers in an ominous new problem.

We cling to immortality projects that our culture lays out for us: unabated riches, and military might, and addictions to work, shopping, religion, sex, success or patriotism or anything else. He says that the indigenous people had rituals that really connected them to the universe.

They humanized the heavens and spiritualized the earth and they melted the sky and earth together in an inextricable unity.

But we lack cosmic rituals, he feels, and the result is that we built up energy for destruction. We now have missile launchers, atomic reactors. Sacrificial altar mounds were enough to serve the earlier human beings, but now we've

upped the ante and are playing out a lot of destruction in our imaginations where our imaginations should be seized by the beauty and the wonder and the grace, the giftedness of the universe that has brought us here.

And this is where I think a new creation story can really help us, if we put it into our bodies, into our rituals, to rediscover our place in creation, in this great drama and theater that we call the universe, that we call history, that we call evolution. To shift our consciousness to recognition of our capacity for evil on one hand, but to a playing out of our gratitude for the beauty that has brought us here, and that is all around us, that many of us call God or the Creator.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.