

Daily Meditation 4/28/2023

Holiness and Answering to Evil

Good morning.

Today we're meditating on the relationship between holiness and evil, because Rabbi Heschel, in his wisdom, has said there's a very strong relationship, that "the opposite of evil is not good, but holiness."

And I'm drawing now on the brilliant book, *Escape from Evil* by Ernest Becker, who won the Pulitzer Prize for his book on *Denial of Death*. But after that book, he wrote this book, before he died, the book on escape from evil. And he says some very interesting things that are worth our attention. He says this:

In a perverse way, the churches have turned their backs, both on the miraculousness of creation, and *the need to do something heroic in this world*. The early promise of Christianity was to bring about, once and for all, the social justice that the ancient world was crying for. Christianity never fulfilled that promise, and is as far away from it today as ever."

But again, he goes back to the miraculousness of creation, and the need to something heroic in this world. And that the Holy is something heroic, in the sense of something bigger than ourselves.

Now, he also brings up the topic of St. Francis. He says,

What religion needs to offer us today is the possibility of a new heroism, a heroism of sainthood. This meant living in primary awe -- living in primary awe -- at the miracle, the created object, including oneself in one's own godliness.

And so it's so interesting to me, that he defines a commitment to awe, finding it everywhere in creation -- he's explicit about that -- including the human creation, that is the foundation of a new holiness or a new heroism.

And he goes on:

Remember the awesome fascination of St. Francis, with the revelations of the everyday world -- revelation of the everyday world -- a bird, a flower. It is also men unafraidness of one's own death, because of the incomparable majesty and power of God.

So he keeps coming back to this miraculousness of creation, which the mystics called the *via positiva*, and how our facing that and taking it in is the way to holiness in our time. And I have no doubt that the new creation story from science assists us. It assists us profoundly in taking in the bigger story of how the bird and the rock and the earth and everything on it, including ourselves, came to be. It fills in the details, puts meat on the bones.

So this marriage between science and spirituality can be a tremendous boost to growing our souls, expanding our souls, instead of shrinking them or allowing them to be shrunk by culture and its shadows, including the shadows of rising fascism or any other energies that are evil, that are contrary to the grace of creation.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.