

Daily Meditation 05-25-23

Searching the Roots of Fear and Pessimism

Good morning.

We're meditating this morning on the subject of pessimism.

Now Otto Rank, the great psychologist, the father of humanistic psychology, says that pessimism is a philosophy, it's a way of looking at the world therefore, in a jaded way, if you will, it's a sad way. And that it kind of runs with with fear, which we've been talking about lately. And pusillanimity: Aquinas talks about the small soul, puny soul, as opposed to the magnanimity, the great soul, the large soul.

And Aquinas also says in today's meditations, just a short phrase, but I think it's really striking, that "wonder brings joy"... wonder brings joy.

So the pessimistic culture, pessimistic choice, or philosophy, is a flight from wonder. It's kind of cutting ourselves off from wonder and awe. From, therefore, the via positiva.

I read today a wonderful teaching from Rumi, the Sufi mystic. He says, "Stop acting so small,"

...stop acting so small.

"You are the universe in ecstatic motion."

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Now, this is another example of how mystics can be way ahead of culture and even science. How Rumi, from the 13th century -- he was a contemporary of Thomas Aquinas and for a while of Meister Eckhart -- that he can say that we have this tendency to be small, and that we are part of the universe, that we are ecstatic motion. And not just physically, we can dance. But we can share our ecstasy, we undergo ecstasy, we know we're undergoing ecstasy.

We know when we're in motion.

"You are the universe in ecstatic motion."

How much this parallels Aquinas' teaching. He says the best thing about the human person is that the human is capable of the universe.

That so much parallels Rumi, to be capable of the universe, to be the universe in ecstatic motion.

But again, the joy dimension, Aquinas saying that wonder produces joy, ecstasy and joy go together.

So it's striking to me, truly striking, how Aquinas and Rumi are on the same page and it all relates to our theme of pessimism: how do we get beyond pessimism?

But this is where the joy and the ecstasy of knowing we're part of the universe, in today's scientific universe, cosmogenesis 13.8 billion years of history -- we're part of that. And we can talk about or think about it, pray about it, be grateful for it. And above all, be struck by Wonder, which has to be a part of it.

All this has a lot to do with wrestling with pessimism.

The second teaching that's striking today is Otto Rank telling us -- and we'll be developing this later as well. But this is really raw information, and important information.

Pessimism is a philosophy of hatred that springs from self hate. So pessimism and hatred go together. And self-hate is at the core of it.

So there too, we have a very different philosophy from Rumi and from Aquinas, that we're really here to be big, ecstatic citizens of the universe. And of course, it's Julian of Norwich saying that joy is our birthright. Joy is our birthright, not pessimism, not hatred.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.