

Daily Meditation 07-22-24

The Unhappiness of Young Adults the World Over: A Scientific Study

Good morning.

In today's meditation, we are reflecting on a new study scientists have called shocking, that has found that all over the world, poorest countries and the richest countries, in democratic countries and not-democratic countries, there's this astounding thing happening. It's been happening since around 2011, and that is that the young people are less happy than older people, and middle-aged people.

Scientists say, this is a complete turnaround: that usually, the young are the happiest, compared to the middle-aged, who are the least happy. They go through their well-known midlife crisis, and so forth. And the question arises about what is the cause of this very unusual phenomenon, and global phenomenon?

I want to say that I just heard the news that President Biden has stepped out of the presidential race. And I think there is a connection here, too. I give President Biden credit for stepping aside, and for what he accomplished in his three-and-a-half years as president. But this is important, that he's passing the torch to a younger generation.

And of course, his opponent in the race is just three years younger than him. And listening to his very extended acceptance speech a few nights ago, convinced me that he too is on a mental decline, in his older age. So whatever happens with the Democrats, there will be a younger voice and a younger team that will be composing the next administration, with policies that hopefully appeal to the needs of the young, not just in America but around the world, because America is the leader.

But what I could do in reflecting on this news from science, I found myself returning to three of my books, really. One is the *Occupy Spirituality* book, which I wrote with Adam Bucko, who worked for 16 years with young adults who are living on the streets in New York City. So we subtitled that book, "A Spiritual Revolution for a New Generation." And my book on Thomas Aquinas begins with his very first chapters, a sentence from his writing: "The experience of God must not be restricted to the few, or to the old."

I think the whole idea of seeing the world and the cosmos, and its history and our place in it, as an Original Blessing, as something astoundingly good and glorious. To use a word from the scriptures, that "the heavens and earth are filled with God's glory." I think that message of good news, Original Blessing and glory of existence, has been obviously lost to many young people

today. We are in this in-between time, and we are being invited into a new cosmology, a new view of the world, born of science. And I think the Webb telescope bestows on us many of the glories, the beauty of the universe, our home -- and its history that has brought this particular planet, unique that it is, into existence with all the marvelous creatures we share the planet with, and our own species, which is capable both of tremendous darkness and shadow on the one hand, but also tremendous potential on the other.

So I think that's part of the depression of the young, is that they're in between time, and we have not yet gathered the good news, the Original Blessing news, and put it into rituals and ceremonies, including rites of passage, ceremonies that truly welcome the young into new roles as adults, in this new and global society.

But of course, also adults continue to play our games of who's number one, reptilian games, who's number one, what nation is number one, what system is number one, what weaponry is number one, what military inventions are number one. All reptilian brain questions, which are not worthy of our species.

We have more than just a reptilian brain. We have a mammal brain, which is capable of tremendous compassion, creativity, intimacy, and caring. We have to decouple, I think, our brains from the reptilian agenda -- which happens also to be a patriarchal agenda. We haven't done that yet. And we have to decouple from that agenda, to gather our energies to serve the young.

Adultism reigns, just as deadly as sexism, or militarism, or economic oppression, or racism. Just as deadly as all those isms, is adultism, where the adults dictate what education is, how to do it, what to leave out, like values, for example -- or joy, leaving that out. The idea of blessing and goodness, leaving that out. And just reducing education to "how do we get a Job and climb to the top?"

So I think many of the issues that I've been raising over the years, and also the work I've been doing in education with young people in the YELLAWE Project -- I remember that very title, "Yell Awe," begin education with awe. Not with exams, but with awe, stirring up the awe. Because it is out of awe that wisdom comes. And inventing education in light of wisdom, not just knowledge.

Knowledge is useful and important, but it's not enough. With knowledge, we destroy the Earth. Wisdom would steer us to celebrating the Earth and saving it and recognizing its holiness of Creation.

In the work of ritual, the Cosmic Mass, bringing our bodies to prayer, to ceremony, even the work of the Order of the Sacred Earth, I think -- it's an effort. It's a lifeboat to let ourselves down from too much institutional organized religion, to steer always into places of spirituality that are more immediately fruitful and productive.

And so in my Cosmic Christ book, I devote an entire chapter to these questions, it's entitled "Honoring the Christ Within: Youth and the Cosmic Christ," And we'll be playing with more of these concepts.

But I define adultism as a society that devours its youth. And then we have to choose between Christos and Kronos, because Kronos devoured seven of his children. And I think that is what's happening in so many places around the world now, because of adultism.

Another section is "The Puer and the Senex." Puer is the child, that is the mystic in all of us. That has to be honored and brought forward. So we have a lot to meditate on.

Thank you. We'll see you next week.