

Daily Meditation 7-07-25

The Banality of Evil: 2.0

Good morning.

In today's daily meditation, we bring up the subject again, of the banality of evil, "the banality of evil," which is a phrase employed by Hannah Arendt, who was Jewish and did a lot of study about the Holocaust, and especially Adolf Eichmann in his trial, at which she was present. And what struck her the most was the banality of evil; that is to say, how ordinary people doing their ordinary jobs contributed to this immense evil that we remember as the Holocaust.

And as I point out in my article, her position has been criticized over the years, because it seems to kind of let the makers of evil "off the hook" somewhat. But as I point out, I think it's a both/and thing. There is a banality, ordinary people simply doing jobs — or what should I say, appear to be ordinary, or at least seem to fall under their functions and job descriptions, and not asking questions.

I frankly think a better term would be the stupidity of evil: that stupidity leads directly to evil, and refusal to look at the bigger picture, to see the potential of evil in decisions that people are making on high, and that takes millions of others to implement. So I don't think we should get stuck in a debate about the term itself, "banality of evil," but rather into a search into all the elements that go into making evil possible.

And of course, the human species is capable of so much evil, because we have the immense imaginations and intelligences that we have, and we come up with sadistic ideas like gassing people efficiently, and creating ever newer weapons, faster weapons. And, of course, setting up camps à la Dachau in the state of Florida amidst the alligators and the Everglades and all the rest. Stupid, because we're definitely imitating the Germany of the 1930s at this very time in history, in America.

And as I point out at the end of my article, that really in many ways, this is an explosion of the dark side, the shadow side, the uncriticized side of capitalism: that money, and those with biggest amounts of it, billionaires dictate policy, dictate to an entire party that they can get tax breaks at the expense of the poorest people and the middle class, as if the billionaires need more tax breaks, or as if multinational corporations need more tax breaks.

Well, we've already been giving the fuel industry, the fossil fuel industry, tax breaks for decades, even as it goes about destroying the environment, and it knows it's going about destroying the environment, just as the cigarette manufacturers knew they were killing people with their cigarettes. Finally people rose up, and we passed laws to prevent that. But currently, the big capitalist machines roll on and on untethered.

One example is the giveaway from CBS, paying \$16 million to Trump for a bogus lawsuit that was dumped on them, because they dared to edit some of the interview with the vice president who was a presidential candidate, Vice President Harris. Well, *60 Minutes* and other news outlets are always editing. They have to squeeze things into so much time, and make decisions about what to include or not. How can a political candidate sue a large corporation, a media corporation, because he didn't like how they edited an interview? Well, it's because Paramount, CBS's parent company, wants to pull a deal with the present administration, a big billion dollar deal. So that's capitalism at its worst, as is the bill giving tax breaks, more tax breaks to billionaires at the expense of everyone else, including \$4 trillion of debt that will come with that latest bill.

But the one bit of good news is that artists are beginning to rise up and speak out and do their thing. Artists do more than just write articles. They energize the lower chakras to get people to move. Coming from the generation of the 60s, I remember vividly the role of Joan Baez and Bob Dylan, Peter Paul and Mary, and all those who contributed to their art in stirring the heart and the mind of people who were growing into resistance to the Vietnam War and much else that was upsetting the body politic, and was to the contrary of the common good at the time. And really, would there have been the movements of the 60s without these artists leading the way?

And so recently, Bruce Springsteen has been doing a series of concerts in Europe. And in that context, he has been giving speeches, short speeches. Thousands, tens of thousands of people who attend his concerts, really hundreds of thousands, talking about righteous power in dangerous times. And as one article put it, when he did his concert in Berlin, in a country that saw democracy die in 1933, *the more than 170,000 people crowding into three of Germany's biggest soccer stadiums for Bruce Springsteen's rock concerts, have been especially receptive to his message and dire warnings about a politically perilous moment in the United States, one that has reminded some of Adolf Hitler's power grab in the 30s.*

And here is one of Springsteen speeches: *The mighty E Street Band is here tonight to call upon the righteous power of art, of music, of rock and roll in dangerous times, in my home, the America I love, the America I have written about, the America that has been a beacon of hope and liberty for 250 years — is currently in the hands of a corrupt,*

incompetent and treasonous administration. Tonight, we ask all who believe in democracy and the best of our American experience, to rise with us. Raise your voices against authoritarianism and let freedom ring.

And as the authors comment, These words of Springsteen had special resonance in Germany, where memories of the Nazi past are never far from the surface. The cataclysmic demise of the Weimar Republic, which led directly to Hitler's takeover, is studied in great detail in schools and universities. With that Nazi past embedded in their DNA, German fears of President Trump's tactics probably run higher than anywhere else.

The music critic of a German newspaper said, Germans tend to have angst about a lot of things, and they are really afraid of Trump. A lot of Germans think Trump is a fool. It's not only his politics, but the way he is just so completely over the top. Germans love to see Trump getting hit, and they admired Springsteen standing up and taking him on.

So this is part of the role of the arts, to awaken people and to challenge people to come awake, and to inspire people and bring people together when there is injustice, when there is darkness, where there are lies, and where is the oppression of the least among us. So let us support these artists, and let us recognize that all prophets have been artists.

Thank you. We'll see you next week.