

Daily Meditation Transcript 08/30/2021

Moving Beyond Apathy, Acedia & Selfishness

Good morning.

Today's essay, we're beginning to go deeper into *acedia*. Sam Keen, the theologian, says that the "epidemic of boredom and depression is a symptom of cultural rather than individual failure." Cultural rather than individual failure. So there's something cultural going on. That is, creating this baseline of apathy, or acedia, that is preventing us from acting on things as a culture, as a whole, for the common good. And then, when we fail to do that, then it's easy to fall into selfishness. So I talk in today's essay about the power of love, that love is the opposite of acedia, it's caring.

It's interesting that Dante, who shared a strong cosmology with Thomas Aquinas, because his favorite teacher studied directly with Aquinas in Paris, Dante says, "Love moves the sun and the other stars." Love moves the sun and the other stars. This idea of a cosmic energy called love. It is so important to recover, and you have it in these great Creation Mystics.

Of course you've got Hildegard of Bingen, with her vision of how she saw the whole world in the palm of her hand, and it looked so precarious. Just, how can this survive? And the answer was, love holds it all together. Love holds all beings together. Again, uh, she was writing in the same century as Dante.

And, so, not having a cosmology, therefore, living in a world of anthropocentrism, of the humans, being the greatest thing around, are all that eats away, saps away, our energy for love. Sam Keen talks about a "Litany of Bored, and here is his litany of boredom. But boredom is integral to acedia also. "It doesn't matter." "It's not worth getting excited about." "I'd rather not risk it." "Why fight the system." "Find out what they want and give it to them." "Why should I care." "I don't let anything bother me." That is Sam Keen's "Litany of the Bored."

And I'd add a few others. "I've seen it all before." "Who does she, or he, think she is, or he is. Who do you think you are?" "Know your place." Behind acedia, there is boredom, there is a cynicism.

Hildegard of Bingen cries out, "Oh, human being, why do you sleep? Why do you have no taste for the good works, that sound in God's ear like a symphony? Why do you not search out the house of your heart?"

The house of your heart. So it's interesting that she connects our tiredness with ignoring the sounds of the universe, the first chakra, that resound like a symphony. The cries, therefore, of Mother Earth and her creatures brought about by climate change. It's as if we have chosen to be deaf, uh, to these cries.

Now, there are things we can do to awaken this sense of love again and um, to awaken the first chakra. Thich Nhat Hanh suggests that we meditate by breathing in gratitude, and breathing out a smile. In gratitude, out smile. That can affect your day. It's a very simple, portable, but practical and profound expression of the Via Positiva. Breathe in gratitude, breath out a smile.

[coughs] Pardon me.

You know, the first chakra is about listening. Maybe we can go, which is the *true* meaning of obedience, maybe we can practice listening, for example, for a sound you've never heard before. Go out looking for a sound you've never heard before. Or go out listening...looking to listen to birds, for their different sounds, for their various wonderful songs, the varied songs that they sing.

Or, listen to a new kind of music, or a new musician. Or to new stories, from people who are new to you, who come from a tribe different than your own. So, there are so many ways to practice and develop our hearing, our listening capacities. And I think this is one way to exercise the, the habits of listening that awaken the first chakra for us.

Thank you, we'll see you tomorrow.