

Daily Meditation 09/11/2021
Some Thoughts on the 20th Anniversary of 9/11

Good morning.

We are meditating together this morning about the events of 9/11 and what has transpired since. It is kind of a lot on our plate.

I really do recommend a wonderful film that was made by MSNBC recently, which has people who were involved in New York City at the time with the blowing up of the towers, speaking to their experience back then, just a month or two after the event, and then in our time today, 20 years later. And it's a very profound insight about the subject of pain that so many people who are especially close to the event, went through.

I really do recommend that film.

Also, I recommend this article that I alluded to this morning in the Washington Post. The title of the article is "The World 9/11 Created: The Waning of the American Superpower" and it points out that in September 2001, America was at the height of a particular moment on the world stage.

"Here is the United States, no longer just a triumphant victor of the Cold War, but a wounded unipolar superpower ready to meet out justice on a global scale. The enemy was not a rival power but an amorphous concept called 'terror' that American leadership linked to a web of Islamic extremists and adversarial autocratic regimes. The results were the costly invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the massive expansion of the U.S. security state, and a new global awareness of the limits, rather than the potency, of American power.

I would add also one result was fear that filled the airways. The media absolutely salivated, it seemed, on spreading the feeling of fear. And the phrase which always gives me shivers in a negative sense, the creepies, of "American Exceptionalism" -- this phrase was spread willy-nilly all over the media and in our political discourse - again arrogance.

So the need to cut through arrogance, as we have been talking about acedia and arrogance as sins that flow from misdirected first chakra. Clearly, one of the medicines for arrogance is the Earth itself, because the Earth reminds us of our limits.

Now, today we're being arrogant still about our relationship to the Earth: that's what it means to fall into a state of denial around climate change. It's the arrogance that our species is superior to all the rest. That word "superior" - a superiority complex - came up from Wendell Berry in one of our meditations a couple days ago. So, we seem to be strutting the world with a superiority complex.

Now, the failures of Afghanistan and Iraq (and of Vietnam before that), you think would whittle away a little at our hubris and our arrogance. But returning to honoring the Earth is one way to cut back on our arrogance and our hubris.

And another way, of course, is to stay close to the Earth: that again is what the first chakra is about, listening to the Earth and to those who are close to the Earth. That includes Indigenous people for their wisdom, it also includes animals.

To me, it's so interesting to watch a dog or a cat (I have a dog), because they're created so much closer to the Earth than we are. Not because they're shorter than us but that their whole bodies are oriented towards smelling the Earth, toward paying attention to the Earth.

They really are not sky people like we can be. The sky is an important thing to meditate on for sure, Father Sky/Mother Earth. But I do think the one reason animals are becoming more important to us is not just as companions, to fill a hole in our hearts around loneliness and cosmic loneliness (because our culture has avoided the first chakra; it does not put us in touch with the cosmos like it should).

...But also because animals are close to the Earth, and they have so much to teach us about remaining close to the Earth, even as we stand up erect, which can be an advantage. And we can see the large picture of the cosmos and create telescopes and the rest to take our vision even further.

Theologically, we have the teachings from the wonderful medieval mystics Meister Eckhart, who talks so often about the ground of our being. God is the ground of our being, and Thich Nhat Hanh just loved that understanding of God - that was his favorite understanding of God: ground of being. He got it from Paul Tillich, the 20th century German philosopher, who in turn got it from Meister Eckhart in the 14th century, and 100 years before Eckhart, Hildegard von Bingen actually talks and writes about Mary as the ground of all being.

Well, Mary represents the Goddess of course, the divine feminine. So the divine feminine does return us to the Earth -- Mother Earth. Hildegard was playing that out mostly in an unconscious way, but in a powerful way, so that return of the divine feminine is also another way of deconstructing this arrogance that seems to accompany patriarchy, as it does an unfettered reptilian brain.

And the maternal brain, the mammal brain, again bringing the mother forward, bringing compassion forward - all that eats away at arrogance, whether it be personal arrogance or national or community arrogance, tribalism.

All tribalism is a kind of arrogance, including the tribalism of going around saying, writing, talking about it as journalists, that one country is "exceptional." Because we're all human beings, we're all capable of both beauty and good, and of evil certainly. That is one lesson we've learned from the last 20 years and the launching that occurred of a different America following the 9/11 events.

Thank you.

We'll see you tomorrow.