

Daily Meditation 10/24/21

Meister Eckhart, Buddhism, Thich Nhat Hanh

Good morning.

Today we've been meditating on some of Meister Eckhart's teachings that are very Buddhist, very deeply ecumenical. Yet he never met a Buddhist or read a Buddhist book. It was because he plummeted his own tradition, his own soul, his own form of meditation and contemplation. And he came to truths that Buddhists are teaching us also.

He talks about how the soul grows by subtraction, not by addition. By subtraction, not by addition. So this really underscores the value of letting go and letting be. It also emphasizes the value of getting in touch with silence, with nothingness; letting go of images of all kinds.

And also it's a lesson from suffering as well; that when we suffer.... Let's say you're in the hospital; you learn to let go. And it is a subtraction. During the pandemic, of course, so many people were necessarily isolating, staying indoors, staying at home. That, too, was a time of subtraction.

So Eckhart's advice is very profound, very real, very practical. The soul grows by subtraction, not by addition. And, of course, this confronts a society based on consumerism, based on "more is better," based on gross national product increasing every year. All this flies in the face of the compulsion to expand, and always expand, and always expand.

Of course there's a dialectic between the Via Negativa of letting go and subtraction, and the Via Positiva of getting awestruck at more and more levels of our being in the presence of more and more beings. So it's not that the Via Negativa is the only way to go, but there's this dialectic. And in our culture the Via Negativa--the subtraction dimension--is very often ignored.

Even in religion it's rare, very rare, to get a seminary which knows anything about the mystics; which knows anything about teaching its students who someday will be, hopefully, leaders--religious leaders, spiritual leaders--about the power of subtraction.

Here's another teaching from Eckhart that parallels what's in today's meditation:

"All God wants of you is for you to let go of yourself, and creatures, and let God be within you. The smallest creature image that takes shape in you is as big as God. Why? It deprives you of the whole of God. As soon as this image enters you, God with all His Godhood has to exit. When the image exits, God enters.

"What harm can it do to you to do God the favor of letting God be God in you? Let go of yourself, for God's sake, and God will let go of the God Self, for your sake. When these two have

exited, what is left is one and simple. In this One, the Father bears His Son in the innermost source."

So, for Eckhart, again, the experience of the divine is not just meant to be a final experience, a cumulative experience. It's meant to turn into creativity, to give birth that what follows this union is the birth of the Son, of the Word of God in you, and in society through you.

There's a lot to ponder here.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.