

Daily Meditation 11/03/2021

Meister Eckhart, Deep Ecumenist par Excellence

Good morning.

I speak this morning about the uncanny dimensions of deep ecumenism we find in Meister Eckhart and also, he plugs into so many other wisdom traditions in his writings.

When I first published my big book of Eckhart's sermons, 37 of them, with commentary after each (which originally was called *Breakthrough*, and now the new version is called *Passion for Creation: The Earth-Honoring Spirituality of Meister Eckhart*), I put it in the world.

And the first substantive response I had to it was 8.5x11' envelope with a 13-page article in it from a Sufi, and he said to me that clearly Meister Eckhart is a Sufi and he did that article, all 13 pages, a kind of exegesis, from a Sufi perspective on just one short paragraph that was in my book.

And this is the paragraph that he was responding to when he said Eckhart is a Sufi. Says Eckhart:

Love is nothing other than God. God loves himself and his nature for being in her divinity. In the same love with which God loves herself, she also loves all creatures, not as creatures, but God loves the creatures as God. And the same love with which God loves the God Self, God loves all things. Now, I shall say something I've never said before: God enjoys herself. In the same enjoyment with which God enjoys himself, he enjoys all creatures. With the same enjoyment with which God enjoys herself, she enjoys all creatures, not as creatures, but enjoys the creatures as God. In the same enjoyment with which God enjoys himself, he enjoys all things.

Just that one paragraph triggered a 13-page paper from a Sufi, who was really excited about it, and mailed me his paper.

So that was my first inkling that wow, Eckhart's speaking to a lot of people besides just Christians.

Now in my chapter on Eckhart as Sufi, I point out that he cites Avicenna, the Muslim philosopher who lived 200 years before him. At least 11 times in his sermons, and in 11 different sermons, he gives out Avicenna credit for the phrase, "the spark of the soul" ...the spark of the soul... which meant a lot to Eckhart.

But it's so interesting to me that he didn't just use the phrase or steal it, appropriate it from Avicenna, he gave him credit, every time he used it in his sermons.

And there, too, Eckhart talks about

There is something in the soul which God is bare and the masters (meaning Avicenna) say, this is nameless and has no name of its own: it is, and yet has no being of his own. For it is neither this nor that, nor here nor there. In the soul, takes its whole life and being. And from this, it sucks its life in being. This nameless thing is all in God,

but the soul is outside here. Therefore, the soul is accordingly always within God, unless it takes this nameless thing outward, or extinguishes it within itself.

So he goes on and talks about the spark of the soul; sometimes he compares it to the manger where Christ was born, or he talks about it as the Holy Spirit, that presence that inspires us. And he also talks about the spring, that is divine, the divine spring, the maternity bed where God is born.

And so this is another example of his acknowledging and learning from the Sufi tradition. But Eckhart says "Nothing in all creation is so like God as silence," and Rumi says (Sufi):

*Secretly, we spoke, that wise one and me.
I said, Tell me the secrets of the world.
He said, Sh...let silence tell you the secrets of the world.*

So Rumi and Eckhart are on the same page about silence. Eckhart was 13 years old when Rumi died. So they were, they shared the earth together for a while.

And just one more example. Since Eckhart talks about the spark of the soul, there's a wonderful teaching from Rumi, about the spark of the soul. He says,

*Ah, one spark flew and burned the house of my heart. Smoke filled the sky.
The flames grew fierce in the wind.
The fire of the heart is not easily lit.
So don't cry out, Oh, Lord, rescue me from the burning flames.
Spare me from the army of thoughts that is marching through my mind
Oh heart of pure consciousness, you are the ruler of all hearts;
after countless ages you brought my soul all it ever wished for.*

So that's Rumi's poem about the spark of the soul, the spark the set fire to the house of wisdom that is our soul.

Purely this is Eckhartian language as well. This is just one small example of Eckhart's deep ecumenism, in line with so many other traditions.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.