

Daily Meditation 01/25/22

Thich Nhat Hanh's Preferred Name for God

Good morning.

In yesterday's meditation, we celebrated the theme of waking up to the mystical tradition, the non-dualist tradition in the West, that Thich Nhat Hanh very much countenanced and was looking forward to.

In today's meditation we're focusing on experience as the basis of authentic religion, and also of the path to wisdom. And the word for experiential religion is spirituality. That begins with the tasting, which is a word for the basis of wisdom in both Hebrew and Latin.

I call the mystics the heart specialists in today's meditation for good reason, that this expansion of the heart that can happen when you go deeper into what Tillich called the Ground of Being. And that phrase was Thich Nhat Hanh's favorite name for divinity, but Tillich got it from, you guessed it, Meister Eckhart, who talks often about the Ground of Being: how God's ground and our ground are the same.

Now I want to share with you what Carl Jung says about this topic of rediscovering experience in religion, because I think he puts it very bluntly (now this also is in my book on Meister Eckhart, because one of the chapters is on Eckhart and Carl Jung) and Carl Jung said he received "the key to the unconscious"...the key to the unconscious...from Meister Eckhart. So he has a lot of respect for Meister Eckhart.

(Just a minute, I have to find this chapter.... here it is...)

Okay so here are Jung's words, and it's very powerful. He says – and it's so much like what Thich Nhat Hanh is talking about -- Jung says how "the bridge from dogma to the inner experience of the individual has broken down."

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He cautions that Christianity is threatened with "complete oblivion"

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it is of the highest importance that the education and 'enlightened' public should know religious truth as a thing living in the human soul, and not as an abstruse and unreasonable relic of the past.

And then he launches into this brilliant statement: all this is about recovering spirituality, the experiential side.

Too few people have experienced the divine image as the innermost possession of their own souls. Christ only meets them from without, never from within the soul.... So long as religion is only faith and outward form, and the religious function is not experienced in our own souls, nothing of any importance has happened. It has yet to be

understood that the mysterium magnum (great mystery) is not only an actuality, but is first and foremost rooted in the human psyche. The man who does not know this from his own experience may be a most learned theologian, but he has no idea of religion and still less of education.

I think that is a formidable statement on the gap, the growing gap between religion and spirituality. And this is where the great spiritual teachers of our time -- I'm talking of the Dalai Lama, or Thich Nhat Hanh, or Father Bede Griffiths or Thomas Merton, or Dorothy Day, and others -- they find common ground because they've been to this underground river.

Whether they arrived a way of the well we call Buddhism, or the well we call Christianity, or the well we call Judaism (to give Rabbi Heschel right now), or these many other wells, indigenous wells, the well of Black Elk, what have you, whatever well we go down, these people arrived at this underground river, what Eckhart calls God, "the underground river." And from there they are speaking a common language, inviting us to visit that well also, to share that deep experience.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.