

Daily Meditation 03/25/2022

Origins of Evil

Good morning.

In the second half of today's meditation, which is on the origins of evil, I take up a question raised in a recent Comment section of the Daily Meditation by a man who said, "Why do you keep dragging in patriarchy, when you're talking about the war?"

I was a bit surprised by this question, but I refer you all to this wonderful article by Thomas Friedman, which came out March 22 in the New York Times (and we offer a link to it in the Daily Meditation this morning), entitled "Xi, Putin and Trump: The Strongman Follies."

Strongmen follies, I really like that. And it's important that he named Trump in this too, because the authoritarian rise in our recent politics in America and around the world is a problem of patriarchy. I don't know why people wouldn't see that by now, if they've been reading the Daily Meditations.

It is a problem of patriarchy, it's a problem of the imbalance between the healthy masculine -- and authoritarianism is not the healthy masculine -- the healthy masculine and the healthy and divine feminine. We've been talking about that for forever, in our Daily Meditations.

Indeed the Daily Meditations were launched deliberately on Mother's Day, and not anthropocentrizing the mother in Mother's Day, but recognizing Mother Earth as being under great peril today. And one reason it is, is because of patriarchy.

The same is true of the wars that are going on.

But here's some of the truth coming through from Thomas Friedman in this amazing article. He says that, in the last five years, of the three most powerful leaders in the world, Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping and Donald Trump -- that's Russia, China and America leaders -- each took drastic steps to hold on to power beyond their designated terms of office.

Two succeeded: Putin and Xi got laws passed that they can be president forever, essentially. And the third, well, he doesn't say this, but the third almost succeeded. That's what January 6 was all about, and it's not over. The truth is that the spread of the lie that the election was unfair, and the bad laws about counting votes and not counting votes and everything else that are going on in state after state after state because of that, those laws, because of that lie, this is still going on full force. So I'm not as positive as Friedman is that America has escaped this strongman effort.

But Friedman does say this:

Lord knows democracies have their problems today, but they still have some things autocracies lack — the ability to change course, often by changing leaders, and the ability to publicly examine and debate alternative ideas before embarking on a course of action.

And he says:

Putin's performance in Ukraine is a walking, talking, barking advertisement for the perils of having a president for life, who believes that he's indispensable and infallible.

And it's a very important point, of course, that Putin's mistakes in Ukraine are not sustainable. He talks about China as being "a more serious place," but there too there have been a lot of public lies, especially about the origin of the coronavirus and so forth. And the two of them, of course, met up at the recent Olympics and declared an everlasting friendship, et cetera.

But as he says, "Xi's bet on an alliance with Putin's Russia has gone bad fast." And that China is a big importer of oil, corn and wheat, both from Russia and Ukraine. Furthermore, its biggest trading power in the world is Europe. So China is in a very precarious position with the backing it's done of Russia.

And he says that there's been a myth going around that the authoritarian powers are playing chess, and that democracies are just playing checkers. But as he says, he thinks Russia is actually playing roulette, Russian Roulette, because their economy is crashing, and they've become pariahs around the Earth. As he puts it:

For now, at least, the messy democracies with their regular rotations in powers are outmaneuvering the presidents for life, who need to choke off all sources of dissent more than ever.

So, the pressure for the dictators to not tell the truth is, of course, on the rise.

The "contrast could not come at a better time — when the global democracy movement had been stalling everywhere."

But this incursion, this war by Putin is actually bringing back the value of democracies who are waking up to resist it. As he says,

China and Russia relentlessly pushed the narrative: 'Democracies are weak and morally and politically decadent. They can't get things done. Authoritarianism is the future.'

But as one commentator put it, "Putin and Xi are giving authoritarianism a bad name."

And let me add Donald Trump, too. And that America is demonstrating that we can forge alliances abroad. But can we build conditions at home where democracy can get healthy again? That is a big question before us.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.