

Daily Meditations 06/11/2022

Eckhart: We stammer to name the spark and depths of our souls

Good morning.

It is our privilege this morning to continue to travel, to journey with Meister Eckhart and his teachings on the spark of the soul.

And I was pleased that people who commented on yesterday's meditation, which initiated our discussion of spark of the soul by Eckhart, that they wanted to go even deeper on this important topic.

As I point out in today's meditation, at the end, Eckhart is reaching, he's reaching deep, he's reaching far. He's struggling too, for language to talk about this great mystery of our mystical union with the Divine. And with that spark of the soul, to fan it into a flame and a fire. And there's a lot of paradox in the way he's talking and trying to explain things.

And, to me, that is always a good sign, paradox. One of the mistakes of shallow religion that gets so easily misused and abused is that it tends to be literal. But the deep things in life are not literal. Humor is not literal. It's just the opposite; humor is paradoxical. You want to tell a funny story, one expects a conclusion to the story that is unexpected. That's what humor is, isn't it? So paradox is one of the deep ways in which humans talk about the depths. And Eckhart is clearly that kind of a talker and thinker.

Think, for example of the well-known Zen koan: what sound does one hand clapping make? Well, you can think a long time about that question. And that's the whole point. And it's not that different from Jesus' parables too: they were not linear. They rarely, if ever, ended with a statement about morality. They were invitations to participate, to apply your own imagination.

That's one of the really impressive things about Jesus, that he trusted people to hear stories and then draw conclusions and apply them. And of course, argue with one another about them, which is a big part of the Jewish intellectual contribution to the world.

So let's just go over these powerful, powerful teachings in today's meditation from Meister Eckhart.

The spark of the soul encounters God as "bare" and "naked."

For in the spark of the soul there is hidden, something like the original outbreak of all goodness.

What does that mean? Well, try it on, live with that for 30 years, like I've been doing! Live there for three days! That's the whole point. There is mystery here, folks. Everything does not get handled. This is not fast food spirituality. It doesn't all get clear in 24 hours. But the point is that it touches you, doesn't it? It feels powerful. It feels good. That's the whole point.

So swim in it, wallow in it for a while.

Something like "the original outbreak of all goodness" -- are you interested in living with the original outbreak of all goodness? Well, then hang out, hang in with this.

And then he tries another phrase, something like "a brilliant light which incessantly gleams and glows..."

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Now this is going on inside all of us. According to Eckhart, this is the spark of the soul. And here's another image, something like "a burning fire which burns incessantly." In other words, a candle that never goes out, the eternal flame...

the eternal flame.

And then this is the kicker. This fire is nothing other than the Holy Spirit. So clearly the spark of the soul is, for Eckhart, the Holy Spirit at work.

This light is not content with a simple changeless divine being, which neither give nor takes. Rather, it seeks to know where this being comes from, the source of the being. It wants to get into the simple ground, the silent desert, into which no distinctions ever appear between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

So, it wants unity, it wants non-dualism, non-separation at all costs.

That word "desert" is very important to Meister Eckhart. What is the ground? The ground is

a still stillness with no motion in itself. And by the immobility, all things are in motion.

Notice the paradox there: by the immobility, everything is in motion. And all those receive life that live of themselves, being endowed with reason. And by reason he doesn't mean the modern version of the left hemisphere of the brain. He means being endowed with consciousness, with choice, with creativity.

So we can see in all this, he is trying to name something profound and ineffable, but being the poet and mystic he is, he takes a shot at it. And I think he does a very good job; he stirs things up in us so that we too, can go on that journey, to dig deeper into what it is to be alive and what it is to carry this divine spark that we all carry.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.