

Daily Meditation 12-20-22

Advent, Solstice, and Eckhart on the Apophatic God

Good morning.

In this time of Advent and Solstice, darkness and repose, we continue our meditations.

And we are focusing currently on the topic of the apophatic divinity. Not the God of light, the God of creation, but the god of darkness, and of mystery.

And really, no one has laid out this dimension to divinity that I know of so thoroughly as has Meister Eckhart.

And so I share with you several statements of his around this rich topic that I think has some potential to reinvent religion for us. To do what Thich Nhat Hahn proposed we do.

He says that Christianity could recover its real gems, its real richness, when it recovers a sense of the nondualism, the non-separation.

Of course, this is what mystics like Meister Eckhart do. Indeed, Julian of Norwich, who came right after Eckhart, talks about the experience of "oneing." Oneing. She invented that word: oneing, in English.

That's non-dualism, isn't it? But part of non-dualism is to recognize the darkness and the apophatic divinity in order to balance it with the cataphatic infinity of light. Much like the Taoist symbol of the yin and the yang, the darkness, and the light, with the light in the darkness and the darkness in the light--overcoming dualism, therefore. Oneing. Non-dualism.

So let's just walk swiftly through a few of these marvelous statements from Eckhart that I share in my meditation for today.

"God, the Ineffable One, has no name."

That's what ineffable means, doesn't it? Some things are beyond, some things are beyond language. beyond words. This is surely true of Divinity.

"The Divine One is a negation of negations and a denial of denials."

Again, Meister Eckhart. What does it mean to negate negations? What does it mean to deny denials? Well, those are important questions and they take you right into the experience, even to pose those questions. That question takes you into the experience of denying denial and negating negation.

"God is neither this thing or that thing that we can express."

God is neither this thing nor that thing that we can express. The Hindus talk about that, don't they? *Neti neti*--not this, not that.

"God is beyond all expression."

In this way, silence is so important in the face of the Divine. As the psalmist says, "Be still. Be still and learn that I am God." We calm the reptilian brain by being still, by learning stillness. By meditation, therefore.

Pretty important thing to do, isn't it? To calm the reptilian brain. We can't survive without it. Without that calming of the reptilian brain, because we cannot allow the reptilian brain to run all our decisions and all our history making.

We have to find ways to get our reptilian brains to step aside, to chill out. Just take a nap. (laughs) Nice reptile, nice reptile. Reptiles love solitude more than they love bonding. And solitude is something that humans have to learn in order to pay attention to the reptilian brain.

We don't want to destroy the reptilian brain or cut it out. But we do need to demonstrate to it that it is only one of three brains and it should not, just because it's the oldest, it should not win out all the time.

Another statement. "Truly God is a hidden God."

Of course, that phrase "hidden God" comes from the scriptures. But it's a wonderful thing and Eckhart says in another place that we should quit flapping our gums about God.

"Quit flapping your gums about God." Instead, he said, "Speak from an inner wealth of silence."

Inner wealth of silence. Quit flapping your gums about God. When we flap our gums about God, we're bringing God down to our size, and we're controlling God, and we're making God into our image instead of responding to our deepest selves being made in the divine image.

There's so much richness in all this teaching of Meister Eckhart about the apophatic divinity.

Thank you, we'll see you tomorrow.