

Daily Meditation 03/22/2023

Eckhart, Thich Nhat Hanh, Hildegard on God as Ground of Being

Good morning.

Today we're continuing our meditations on the theme of being and in particular today the ground of being: that phrase that is very important to Meister Eckhart and Paul Tillich picked up on it and Thich Nhat Hanh read about it from Paul Tillich: the ground of being.

And I say from the Book of Acts, the scriptures, talks about God is the "One in whom we live, move and have our being."

"The ground of being" invites us into depth, doesn't it - it invites us down. And it's a good question to ask: what does it mean to you? To use this phrase or hear it used - "the ground of being" - it is obviously a very rich phrase; it's not overly used as yet, not overly familiar or trite.

But when Eckhart uses it, he talks about how God's ground and my ground, our ground, are the same. We sink down - he talks about sinking, doesn't he - "we sink eternally," he says, "from letting go to letting go into the One."

But Thich Nhat Hanh supports this: he says that the words "God" or "nirvana" or "ground of being," he says that all these are interchangeable words, and cannot really be conceived of beyond the conceptual. It takes us out of our rational brain into a deeper place, a place where poets and musicians and other forms of artists tried to speak from and speak about.

That's what Thich Nhat Hanh likes about it, I think, because it keeps us from being overly flip about the Divine Name; it honors the apophatic divinity, the God without a name, as Eckhart says, who will never be given a name. It's just mysterious, the ground of being, it's deeper than being, it seems like.

But I point out at the end of the meditation that what is interesting and really startling is that Hildegard of Bingen, who never read Eckhart, 150 years before Eckhart she lived, wrote about the ground of being. But she doesn't apply it to God; she applies it to Mary, if you will, to the Goddess, the divine feminine.

And that's really worth our meditation and our dwelling-with, how she says that Mary is the ground of being, our mother is the ground of being. And in this meditation I share several of her praises:

Mary, mother of all joy, ground of all being, glowing, most green, verdant sprout. Ask for us life. Ask for us radiant joy. Ask for us the sweet, delicious ecstasy that is forever yours.

So that's a lot of prayers to the divine feminine. And Hildegard was out front in that regard in the 12th century. Here are some more prayers she addressed to Mary:

Mary, the heavens gift the grass with moist dew. The entire Earth rejoices. From your womb the seeds sprouted forth. The birds of the air nest in this tree, rest in the fruit of your womb. Your womb's fruitfulness is food for humankind, raises the joy of this delicious banquet. In you, O Virgin, is the fullness of our joy.

Another prayer to Mary:

O luminous Mother, holy healing arc. Eve brought sorrow to the soul but by Your Holy Son you pour balm on death's wounds and travail. You have indeed conquered death. You established life. Ask for us life. Ask for us radiant joy.

So a lot to think about and stir our imaginations when you talk about God as a ground of being, or the Goddess as the ground of being.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.