

Daily Meditation 3/25/2023

Divine Love, Earth Love, Human Love, continued

Good morning. We continue our meditations on being and love and compassion.

And there's a down-to-earth and unvarnished definition of love in today's meditation from Thomas Aquinas. He says, "The habitual or conditioned appetite for something, as for its own good, is called love."

Now that statement is not at all anthropocentric, is it? He's saying that any being that has an appetite for something, that it seems is good for it--maybe it's food, because it's hungry. All beings have to eat. All this is called love.

So I think it's so interesting, for Aquinas, love is a very generic energy that is, as I propose at the end of the meditation, permeating the whole universe. Because all beings seek out what is good for them.

So goodness and love go together. And that's where an idea like original blessing, which can be translated original goodness, which by the way, is a phrase that Thomas Aquinas uses.

I was condemned for using it by two popes in the 20th century. And the early 21st century. A saint and mystic and doctor of the Church used it seven centuries ago with his term "original goodness." And before him, Hildegard of Bingen, another saint and doctor of the Church used it with her phrase "original wisdom."

And the Buddhists use it when they talk about our "original mind." And really, many teachers use it when we talk about the "ground of being." Ground of being is good. It's our original goodness; it's the ground of our goodness. And Eckhart says, "God's ground and our ground are the same."

We're sinking into the divine goodness that way. It's divine goodness that spreads into the universe; has made the universe, expands it. So, where there's goodness, there is love. Love, as Aquinas defines it, in a kind of a very, say, raw and non-anthropocentric way. "Habitual and conditioned appetite."

So it's our desire for something for its own good. This is love. So this is attraction, isn't it? At what draws us, and especially what draws us to our own pleasure, in the deepest sense, for our own survival and our goodness. And Aquinas says it's necessary; it's a virtue that humans love themselves. Not just humans, all beings, he says, have self-love. Can't survive without it.

So this, too, about finding the goodness in ourselves that is attracted to the goodness in other beings. And it may come out as food, It may come out as friendship. It may come out as finding a good teacher or finding good students. Or finding a good doctor or good nurse. All the gifts we give to one another. This is a circulation of goodness and therefore the circulation of love. And that's kind of what I mean by saying that love permeates the universe.

And I tell this wonderful story, I think, about this dog who was new to his family and saved the baby in diapers from being killed by a snake, which in turn bit the dog. The dog paid a price for his love for this new baby, to whom he was himself new in a new family. And then not only pay the price to the dog with the snake but with the people because they thought the dog had done a negative thing by throwing the baby in his diaper. In fact it was saving the baby's life.

I think it's a beautiful story about the more-than-human commitment to love and goodness in this world.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.