

## Daily Meditation 04/15/2023

### On Turning Evil Around: Prescient Teachings from Ernest Becker

Good morning.

Our meditation this morning, called “On Turning Evil Around: Prescient Teachings by Ernest Becker.”

And I begin by pointing out a couple of days ago, we cited Rabbi Heschel. He's talked about evil, and about how the Hebrew Bible calls for a new level of consciousness and reality called holiness. That is the real response to evil. And to me that story is parallel to my idea that the opposite of evil is the sacred, not the good. The good is the opposite of bad. The sacred is the opposite of evil.

But Ernest Becker says something very parallel when he talks about the heroism of the saint, or holiness. The key to this is the primary awe that the miracle of created object, including one's own godliness. And then he gives the example of St. Francis and his relationship to the everyday world with a bird or a flower, a tree. All of it has that kind of relationship to the holy that strengthens one.

But he thinks that today's version of religion falls far short, and doesn't really even offer that much of what he calls a hero system. So we want to look around to see where is the saintliness.

And I do think that the current history is requiring a lot of generosity and a lot of depth. And the whole nonviolent movement requires this inner largeness, magnanimity. That is what we traditionally mean by “the Holy.”

But he says religion has turned its back both on the miraculousness of creation and on bringing about the social justice that the ancient world was crying for. Therefore, it has trouble being taken seriously as a hero system.

So the shrinking of religion in the sense of its losing its real passion and strength, becoming myopic and preoccupied with petty issues. This is an obstacle to its real task which is to generate largeness of soul.

And I think it's so striking because he wrote this book about 40 years ago, that when a culture is in denial about social justice and is pushing victimhood—“victimage,” what he calls victimage--based on the inequality of social classes, and the State is repressing freedom.

There's a lot of that going on right now of the states, in particular, and the Supreme Court. And then large-scale social lies, lies are dominating. That's pretty obvious in our time.

And then there's a repression of the artist. Here we have states telling librarians and schools and public libraries what books they cannot make available for readers to read and children to read. Even books by Pulitzer Prize-winning authors.

So it is striking to me how Ernest Becker was really hitting the nail on the head at our time.

And there is something deep going on and it has to do with the repression of our greatness. and therefore of holiness.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.