

## Daily Meditation 1-17-25

### Aquinas and Korten on Limiting Institutionalized Greed

Good morning.

I promised in the daily meditation this morning, to share with you what Aquinas says about where we find the infinite in our lifetimes. Because as we've seen, his critique of avarice or greed includes his understanding that greed is a quest for the infinite. But that greed will not do, because we live in a finite world, and material things are finite. But in what way do we live in an infinite world? In what way are we satisfied, without greed as such, as our purpose?

So instead of greed for gain that knows no limits and tends to infinity, he offers areas where greed, when it's a quest for infinity can actually be attained. And the first of these is in terms of knowledge. He says, "We never know too much. We never know too much. That our minds are such that they can Fill and Fill and Fill."

Now is that your experience too? Is this one reason people like to travel, because there are so many cultures, there's so many accomplishments by human beings around the world, whether it's buildings or architecture or paintings, museums, or simply everyday ways of living: the food, music, rituals, celebrations, the vital cities, farms, the agriculture, and the smiling faces and the languages and our sense of humor and so forth.

The quest for knowledge is never sated, and yet it's not hurting anybody. It's not hurting anybody when we learn, because unlike material things, knowledge is infinite. That is to say, because I have some knowledge, it doesn't mean I'm taking it from you -- whereas material goods, it does mean that. There's only so much to go around. So knowledge is one area of the infinite that Aquinas celebrates, that we are all capable of. We never need to stop learning.

Another experience the infinite that he underscores, that's authentic and that really works, and is not around material things and therefore limited -- it's truly infinite -- is love. He says, "We never love too much." We never love too much.

Now he's not saying that sometimes we don't make mistakes in love, in love too much, in that sense of giving ourselves away. But what he means again, is there are an infinite number of things to love. It never stops. You can love sunsets and sunrises, if you love it enough to get up early. And you can love all kinds of music, and there's continuously

music being born through love. The same is true of poetry, and so much else that humans give birth to.

And of course, to love our neighbors. Now there's only so much time for friendship. You can't love everybody at the level of friendship, because that takes time. But again, think about it: the love you have for your cat, for your dog, for your horse, for your land, for your country -- hopefully it's a healthy love -- for your favorite authors, and so forth.

Again, these are statements that you and I have every right to think about: Is he right, that love is infinite, in that sense? "We can never love too much," for our ancestors, for our children and grandchildren and those yet to come. All of that, of course, is dependent on our love for the Earth, isn't it? We can keep the earth healthy and thriving, so that future generations can love their existence, so that life will be fruitful for them.

And a third way he names that is infinite, is he says, our capacity for making things, for creativity, for art. He says, "The human hands with fingers and thumbs connected to human imagination, to human imagination, produce an infinite amount of artifacts."

Think about that. Is he right? Have any two composers composed the same song? One may steal someone else's song, then you get caught and go to court. That's not my question, is it. Have any two painters painted the same painting? Unless someone is trying to deliberately and overtly copy someone else's painting, which is fine, via the permission person did that a couple 100 years. No problem. Go at it. Try to reproduce and eventually, good luck.

Have any two poets produced the same poem, any two directors film the same movie? He's right. I think he's right. Imagination has no limits. It's infinite.

So there, in the level of knowledge, in the level of love, and in the level of creativity, imagination, there we have no limits. There is the infinite.

And another name for the infinite is God or Spirit. So I think here we have a hearty and important teaching from Aquinas. He is not just criticizing greed, avarice, cupidity, humanity's desires. Yes, obviously they can take us astray. That's the point that's being made. But they don't have to, if we seek the infinite in the right places, in the right places, such as truth, the search for truth. Mind and love, the sharing of love, receiving and the giving. And imaginations, capacities for making things, kinds of things that is infinite.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to construct an economic system and a culture around those realities of knowledge? And let me add wisdom, too: wisdom is bigger than knowledge, and it's so important, because it wraps love and values into knowledge. Knowledge by itself, only carries the values of a culture which need continual critiquing, obviously,

So in all these ways, we can find the infinite in this lifetime. We need to build educational systems, political systems, economic systems, and religious systems, and artistic systems, that truly celebrate our capacity for the infinite, and make it easier for everybody to live a good life, and not a life of craven greed.

Thank you. We'll see you next week.