Daily Meditation 11-2-26

Election 2024: Democracy Rises? A New Course: Mysticism Rising?

Good morning.

In today's meditation, I refer to the opening lines in my book on recognizing the archetype of evil in our time, and how the publisher of the book, who's from a background of literal evangelization but who has stepped out of that fundamentalist religion — how he started an interview recently by citing Thomas Aquinas from his very first pages in the book.

So I'd like to begin this meditation with you by sharing some of those insights from Aquinas, and also talking about the second topic, that of our course on the Mystics that begins Tuesday night.

First, I want to say that about a month ago, three weeks ago or so, two women who were commenting on the daily meditations, got together and complained about Thomas Aquinas and how awful he was. I was quite upset, since I've written two major books on Aquinas, and their ignorance just really showed.

But it just shows how all it takes is a rumor, not knowledge, but a rumor, about a thinker to dismiss him as irrelevant.

The truth is that I have said in both of my books, and proven, I think, Thomas Aquinas was a proto-feminist. I'll say it again, a proto-feminist. Why? Because he deconstructed, he pulled the rug out from under the dualisms that are the basis of patriarchal religion, patriarchal philosophy and thinking.

None other than Rosemary Ruether, one of the greatest feminist scholars of my generation, has said that “the basis of patriarchy is dualism.” Well, that's exactly what Aquinas had both the brilliance and the courage to fight with. He deconstructed the dualism of Augustine, which was based on dualism of Neoplatonism.

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That's why he went with Aristotle. And he says that he preferred Aristotle to Plato because Aristotle does not denigrate matter. So Aquinas is an ally for those who care about a gender balance, and so let's not be ignorant or stupid. Now here we have Aquinas as an ally of those who seek democracy and seek to return it in our election this week. Aquinas says,

The disregard of the common good is greater under an oligarchy than under a democracy, where, after all, the welfare of the majority has been attempted. But worst of all is a tyranny, where the advantage of one man is sought. The rule of a tyrant is worst. Security is banished, and everything is uncertain. When people are cut off from law and depend on the will, I would even say the greed of another. A tyrant oppresses the bodies of his subjects. What is more damnable, he threatens their spiritual growth. For he is set on his own power, not their progress. He is suspicious of any dignity that they may possess, that will prejudice his own iniquitous domination. A tyrant is more fearful of good persons than of bad persons, for he dreads their strange virtue. Fearful lest they grow strong and so stout apart as no longer to brook his wicked despotism, but resolve with companionship to enjoy the fruits of peace, a tyrant is constrained to destroy good people's confidence in one another. Thus, they band together to throw off his yoke. Therefore, he shows disregard among them and encourages dissension and litigation.

That sounds a little familiar, doesn't it? And he says,

Avarice gives rise to insensibility to compassion, because one's heart is not softened by compassion to assist the needy with one's riches. It also gives rise to restlessness by hindering one with excessive anxiety and care. "For an avaricious man shall not be satisfied with money," says the Book of Ecclesiastes 5:9. The avaricious, in acquiring other people's goods, sometimes employ force, which pertains to violence, sometimes deceit upon men. And then if they have recourse to words, it is falsehood. If it be mere words, perjury, if they confirm the statement by oath. If they have recourse to deeds, and the deceit affects things, we have fraud.

And it sounds to me like a recording of the last two years of this current administration. So I certainly do encourage people to get out and vote, and help others to get out and vote.

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Now I'd like to turn to the second dimension to today's meditation, and I point out that there's quite a stark difference between talking about the voting today and this new course on the Mystics that I'm starting this very day. That is to say, Tuesday evening. We should be finished just about when the polling booths close on the East Coast. Pretty good timing. It's not intended that way.

And I say that while there's a stark difference, there's also a sharp relationship between the two events: the historic voting election moment we are in, on the one hand, and starting up a two-year course, classes just meet once per month, with 24 classes on Authentic Mysticism.

And what is this connection? Well, as I've been saying lately, one of my learnings from my three books on evil, is that the opposite of evil is not the good. Bad is the opposite of good. The opposite of evil is the sacred. The sacred.

And if Mystics are anything, and if the mystic in us is anything, the Mystic is the searcher for the sacred. And encountering it, the preacher, teacher, the teller of the good news of the sacred, the big news of the sacred.

And as I pointed out, Thomas Berry points out, *When a society loses the sense of the sacred, the only way to get it back is to return to the sense of the universe as the primordial, the primordial sacred event*. So we have this new cosmology today, Cosmogenesis it's called, that feeds us with that.

And I talk about the Trinity of Pierre de Chardin, Thomas Berry, and Brian Swimme. The latter two were, I'm happy to say, good friends of mine and co-workers. These people that I've been bringing forth now in the 20th and 21st century, the excitement and the awe and the wonder of the sacred we find in creation.

But there's a second dimension to recovering the sacred when it's lost, and that is the Mystics. The Mystics throughout centuries and throughout cultures and religions around the world, have had the joy and the poetry and the compulsion to tell humans, all of us, about the world that is sacred, and how to tap into it and how to get there.

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So we're going to be covering over 24 Mystics in 24 classes. First class, we deal with Jesus and Paul and the Gospel of Thomas. That's three were touching on there. But great mystics -- and not to put anyone on a pedestal, not to put any of these Mystics on a pedestal, but to ask what can they teach us at this special moment in history, when we have to recover a sense of the sacred, if we're going to survive. It is the loss of the sense of the sacred that has allowed the degradation of Mother Earth, the coming of climate change, and so forth, to occur.

And also the rundown of religion itself. So many people are saying today, "I'm spiritual but not religious." They're really saying that "I'm looking for the sacred, and I don't get it from organized religion in its current forms."

So what we're doing will be very important, I think, for the future of our species, of our democracy, of Mother Earth, and therefore our children and our grandchildren. So I really do look forward to this class, and I invite all of you to join us. It will be very rich, and spaced out. We'll do one class a month for 24 months, two years. But come join us. It's open to everybody.

Thank you. We'll see you next week.

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