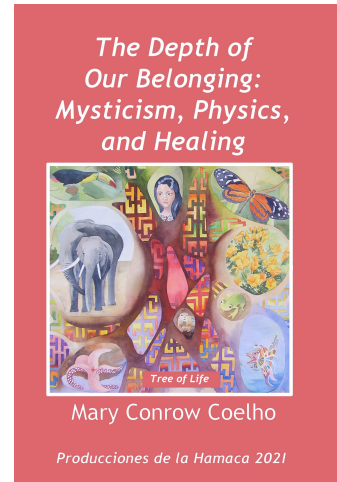


Discussion on *The Depth of Our Belonging: Mysticism, Physics and Healing* with Quaker Earthcare Witness & Mary Conrow Coelho



From Page 43-44:

Brian Swimme writes that the quantum field is neither a material thing nor an energy constellation, yet it is profoundly real and profoundly powerful. Both the mystics and the physicists witness to the discovery of this interiority. Until the last century, physicists did not recognize the quantum field, the seamless plenum, and its presence integral to the patterns of energy that are the matter of our daily world! It is a heartening discovery for the individual who is exploring personal spiritual identity. There is enough coincidence of insight that we find support for the witness of contemplatives and mystics through the ages with regard to their testimony of an actual nonvisible, hidden presence. Listening carefully to their common witness invites fresh reflections about our identity.



The writing of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin offers examples of experience of this interiority. Teilhard de Chardin experienced in childhood and throughout his life what he called a sense of plenitude or “Cosmic sense” at the heart of a glowing universe. In his essay, “The Heart of Matter,” he tells us that “the World gradually caught fire for me, burst into flames; how this happened all during my life, and as a result of my whole life, until it formed a great luminous mass, lit from within, that surrounded me.”

He writes that his experience was so strong that he might have embraced a dualistic world that separated matter and the sacred and he might have chosen to disappear into the formless, abandoning matter, to become the Other. In this manner, he tells us he might have escaped to the spirit world but he recognized spirit at the heart of matter. He wrote that he was saved by an understanding of evolution. Because of evolution he recognized that matter and spirit are no longer two things, but two states or two aspects of one and the same cosmic stuff.

Queries (respond to whatever query speaks to you; if there is time, you can do a 2nd round):

- *There is a remarkable overlap between the discovery of the seamless plenum by physicists and the witness of mystics through the ages (see pp. 40-44). This overlap challenges the dominant view in the West that objectifies the natural world and has left us open to nearly unbridled exploitation as well as narrowing many people’s understanding of their identity. Can this overlap of experience between mystical experience and the new physics deepen the witness and voice of Friends, and especially Quaker Earthcare Witness? How do you see that happening?*
- *Have you had a mystical experience or experiences that you have been reluctant to discuss/disclose? Has it been difficult for you to share this experience with others? Do you understand why this has been difficult or why it has not been difficult?*



This painting, "Belonging", celebrates a belonging in which the numinous energy that had awoken within me is integral to me and all of life that surrounds me. Although written in another context, the following words describe the profound belonging we are invited to embrace:

"Now instead of being a cup going to the ocean and each time getting just a cup full, you are a cup living in the ocean being filled by the ocean itself ...the ocean of energy." (97)

Query:

- Describe a time when you have felt like a living cup of water within the ocean.
- Have you had occasions to know that trees and birds are a living cup?

Worship Sharing Guidelines

- Reach as deeply as you can into the sacred center of your life.
- Speak out of the silence, and leave a period of silence between speakers.
- Speak from your own experience, about your own experience. Focus on feelings and changes rather than on thoughts or theories.
- Do not respond to what anyone else has said, either to praise or to refute.
- Listen carefully and deeply to what is spoken.

Expect to speak only once, until everyone has had a chance to speak.

- Respect the confidentiality of what is shared.

Guidelines for Today

1. Do the first round of sharing for any of the queries that speak to you – leaving time for each person to speak. If you choose to pass, please make sure to let your group know that you wish to pass.
2. Depending on how much time is used in the first round, you might have time to do a second round.
3. You are all clerks – Begin with some silence, consider starting off the responses yourself if it seems that all are reluctant to start. Introduce yourself and your meeting.
4. We will have 15 minutes in our breakout groups; each will have 3-4 participants.
5. We will come back together as a group to share reflections.