

Daily Meditation 11/27/2021

More Gratitude to Robert Bly

Good morning.

We're continuing our meditation with Robert Bly, who as I point out in today's meditation, I think it's synchronistic that his death occurred just as we were developing, based on the Kenosha trial and the rest--the rest, including the uber-uber-masculine authoritarianism that is seizing a lot of souls in our country and in other countries at this time in history--that Robert Bly died.

And it's a time to reflect on his work and life's work. And it was significant for a lot of people, as I end the meditation today with a remark that I've met a lot of men over the years whose lives were deeply improved, because they underwent some of Robert Bly's retreats, and read his writings, and so forth.

One such person was James Miller, who was a student of mine in my master's program. He liked to talk about "coyote wisdom." And he was 72 years old.

He described himself as a retired farmer; he grew wines here in California. Investor, photographer, poet, a bit of a coyote crazy, and he's been "a swimmer all my life"--that's how he described himself. He would swim from San Francisco to Alcatraz and back every week. And this he did in his 60s, maybe even in his 70s. Yes, I think it was in his 70s.

So, I interviewed him in my book on the sacred masculine. I have it from page 209 to 217. No, 218. So that's like nine pages in the chapter on Grandfather Sky, because he was very outspoken about the role of elders. And he picked up on that from Robert Bly.

He attended a number of workshops with Robert Bly. That was one of Bly's themes, too, that the elders must work with the youngers. And this was very important to Jim Miller because he was very wounded by his father. And it took him, as he says, 50 years of therapy to just deal with it. And it was never done. But it was an ongoing journey to grow up from that.

But Jim has a lot of wise things to offer. But again, he gives a lot of credit to Robert Bly. And he brings in Michael Meade, as well, and Michael Meade was often a co-worker with Robert Bly. And that's important, too--who Robert Bly worked with and supported along the way.

And Miller was also deeply wounded by Christianity. He felt the shame about his body and about sexuality was baked into his experience of Christianity. And the older he got, the more he resented that.

One thing he said in this interview is, "It hurts to have a priest who denies his sexuality, say he is superior because he has denied it. It's through our sexuality and our expression of sexuality that we come close to the cosmic energy that flows through all of life, that we are all part of, that the trees and the stones are all part of."

So he had a worldview that was cosmic, like that of Kabir and Robert Bly and of Creation Spirituality.

And in our program, he was thrilled that he discovered Art as Meditation. And he learned that he was a photographer, and he actually put out several books of photographs that he took after he went through our program, and he combined them with poetry.

So he found a path of creativity himself late in his years, that he told me he wished he had found a lot earlier, that this was part of his development--healthy development--as a man.

And just speaking of other gifts that Robert Bly gave me, he introduced me not only to Kabir, the Eastern mystic, but also to Rilke. Robert used to say that Rilke was the best poet of the last 500 years. And he may well be right about that. Rilke was profound beyond belief.

And then Robert Bly also introduced me to Rumi. And this is before Coleman Barks made Rumi as popular as he did. But he said Rumi was the greatest poet ever. Robert Bly said that, that Rumi was the greatest poet ever.

And, of course, all these poets are mystics.

And that's the Via Creativa, isn't it? And that's giving birth to the truth, or our deepest experiences of the Via Positiva--the awe and wonder and joy in life; and the Via Negativa--the silence and power of silence, but also the reality of the depths of suffering and grief.

So, one thing I noticed about Robert Bly is that he came out of the Scandinavian Lutheran tradition. And he was fighting that all his life. He never reconciled with his Christian roots.

And one of his close friends was Jim Hillman, the fine, important Jungian therapist. And I think one reason that he and Robert bonded is that he, in my opinion, never dealt well with his Jewish roots. And I think there is an important lesson there, too. I think both of them felt out of touch with their religious traditions, if you will; that they weren't able to really dive into the deeper truths of their religious traditions. I don't think either were exposed to the mystical traditions and the mystics of their tradition. And as a result, they grew up somewhat religiously wounded.

Now I think Robert evolved somewhat, but I know he got in a lot of fights with Christian poets, like Bill Everson, because he couldn't deal with his own roots. And I think there's an important lesson there, too.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.