

Daily Meditation 06-19-22

More Paths to Authentic Masculinity: The Hunter-Gatherer

Good morning.

We continue our meditation on the healthy masculine, because there's so much display today of unhealthy masculinity, in the form of authoritarianism and fascism, and hostility and anger and lies that destroy any hope of community.

So today we're considering the great archetype of the hunter-gatherer. And this is what one scholar has said about our hunting-gathering lineages. This is from Jared Diamond in his book *Guns, Germs and Steel*. And this is from page 44 of my book on the sacred masculine, *The Hidden Spirituality of Men*.

Diamond says:

Until the end of the last ice age, around 11,000 BCE, all peoples on all continents, were still hunter-gatherers.

(that means 13,000 years ago)

...For most of the time, since the ancestors of modern humans diverged from the ancestors of the living great apes, around 7 million years ago, all humans on Earth fed themselves exclusively by hunting wild animals, and gathering wild plants, as the Blackfeet still did in the 19th century."

Thus, we all come from hunter-gatherer stock: to be a human is to be a hunter-gatherer. To be a man is to serve the tribe and the survival of the community through the skills of hunting and gathering.

Diamond lived among hunter-gatherers in New Guinea for many years. And his conclusion is that moving from a hunter-gatherer lifestyle to one based on farming and industry does not guarantee progress, or happiness, or greater intelligence. He says:

My own impression, from having divided my life between United States cities and New Guinea villages, is that the so-called blessings of civilization are mixed. For example, compared with hunter-gatherers, citizens of modern industrial states enjoy better medical care, lower risk of death by homicide, and a longer lifespan, but received much less social support from friendships, and extended families.

And of course I tell the story of how I remember years ago when I was in the Amazon, and there was a gathering in the rain forest, a gathering of people working with the church and Bishop Casaldaliga, working among the native peoples, and there's like a retreat that week for about 150 of these workers.

And a young Jesuit priest came up to me and said he needed to talk to me. He said to me, "I live on an island with this tribe, whose whole life is dedicated to the monkey, the whole sense of the sacred and so forth. And I'm alone

there as far as being a Westerner and so forth." He said, "I don't know what I'm doing here. I don't know what I have to teach them."

And I said to him, "What are they teaching you?"

And immediately, how fast the word came up!

"La joie," he said, joy. "They experience more joy in a day and night than my people do in a lifetime."

"Well," I said, "It's obvious why you're there! Take some joy back to the Jesuits and wherever they dwell."

In another dimension to the hunter-gatherer stage of human development is that this is a high point of ritual, of human ritual. Barbara Ehrenreich, in her important book, *Dancing in the Streets*, which is really the history of ritual among human beings. talks about how the hunter-gatherers of Australia, the horticulturists of Polynesia, the village peoples of India, are all advanced when it came to ritual and ceremony.

Europeans call it savagery, because it often led to trance. And Europeans resisted that kind of ritual. But, in fact, this is what brings the energy alive among hunter-gatherer tribes and communities. And it gives them the courage to go out and hunt the beasts together. Because it's a very dangerous project.

And so you go into a trance in order to build up your courage and your strength. And this, again, corresponds very much to a conversation I had with an Aboriginal woman one day, who said to me, "In our culture, we work three, four hours a day, and the rest of the day we make things."

I said, "What do you make?"

"Well, of course," she said, "we make rituals. There's so much work to do, to paint our bodies as beautiful as the other animals, to teach our children the songs and the reasons and meaning of the ritual, and prepare the food and so much else, that it's all a community project."

It's all a community project; it's about celebrating together and building up the energy, the courage, the strength, and the common purpose to work together. All this is healthy, very healthy, sacred masculine energy and practice.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.