

Daily Meditatin 4/19/2023

Healthy Shame, Unhealthy Shame, and No Shame

Good morning.

Today we're continuing our meditations on shame, beginning with some daily meditations a couple of days ago, when posing the question to the Supreme Court judge, chief of the Supreme Court, and some politicians today about whether they have no shame.

And I'd like to share with you now an interview I did with Mark Nicholson in my book, *The Hidden Spirituality of Men: Ten Metaphors to Awaken the Sacred Masculine*. And this interview is part of the chapter on the archetype, the metaphor of the hunter-gatherer. And I talk about shame going back a very long way. Studies of ancient hunter-gatherer groups such as in New Guinea make it clear that, along with violence, shame was and is a primary way of maintaining control: the ultimate shame is to be expelled from the tribe.

And, of course, in ancient times, this was in many ways a condemnation to death, because you needed the tribe to protect you from the wild animals and so forth. It was a form of capital punishment really. And shame then in that context is about not belonging: you're being expelled from the tribe.

So it's proposed that, after some ten-thousands of years of this, our DNA might even be hardwired for shame. No wonder shame plays then such a large role in men, often leading to aggression.

Now, Mark Nicholson was a member of the men's movement. He was a 45-year-old therapist when I interviewed him from Birmingham in England. But he was part of a men's group in Southern California, which he felt very positive about. And key to their gathering was the understanding of shame, and the work of Gordon Wheeler, at Esalen, on shame, and how attention to shame helped men to be intimate with each other.

He says that, when we feel a sense of alienation, this leads us to a position of being easily shamed. Shame is the opposite of belonging. Shame is the experience of not belonging. There is an appropriate shame, when you commit harm. But the secondary shame is a feeling of not belonging, that who we are is not okay.

And I make the point that in today's world there's a lot of feelings of not belonging, because we're moving from a machine universe of the modern consciousness, to the organic universe and expanding universe of a postmodern consciousness.

And all this has deep implications for our sense of self and our relationship with Father Sky, the universe, the cosmos, as well as, of course, being cut off from Mother Earth because of the way we've turned Earth into an object, and how we're so afraid of the earthy and of the feminine, and those who are close to the Earth, such as indigenous peoples.

Nicholson makes the point that research has shown that boys get shamed for their vulnerability at a very young age, right around kindergarten. They're taught to keep in their feelings and deepest experiences. Girls too, are exposed to a shaming process. But it becomes much much harder for men to transcend these experiences of not belonging.

So these are some reflections on shame and we'll be treating more later. But I do think it's important to recognize the danger of too much shame, which patriarchy very much invests in, but also the danger of no shame at all, which is really a prelude to violence and aggression and not caring about others which stems from not caring about oneself.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.