

Daily Meditation 04/08/2022

Meditating Anew on Yesterday's Banner Photo

Good morning.

Today we're reflecting on the indigenous experience again, and a wonderful picture of indigenous dance. Thomas Merton, the late Catholic monk, wrote a lot about Native American spirituality.

Merton died in 1968. But he wrote a book called *Ishi Means Man*, with a foreword by Dorothy Day, in which he made some very important contributions to the relationship of indigenous wisdom to other forms of Western wisdom. He says that the Sundance and mystical practices of fasting and vision quest, in the power of cosmic rituals are all of course, celebrated, put forward in the indigenous way of life.

He says that these accomplished a full integration into

...a cosmic system, which was at once perfectly sacred and perfectly worldly... 'Self-realization' in such a context implied not so much the ego-consciousness of the isolated subject in the face of a multitude of objects, but the awareness of a network of relationships --

...a network of relationships...

...in which one had a place in the mesh. One's identity was the intersection of cords where one 'belonged --'

...belonging...

The intersection was to be sought in terms of a kind of musical or aesthetic and scientific synchronicity -- one fell in step with the dance of the universe, the liturgy of the stars.

Beautiful sentence: one fell in step with the dance of the universe, the Liturgy of the stars. So Thomas Merton got it, the marriage of the psyche and the cosmos, that healthy rituals always renew, and a sense of belonging, belonging to a network of relationships. And he talked explicitly about the oppression of Native people:

In putting the Indian under tutelage to our own supposedly superior generosity and intelligence, we are in fact defining our own inhumanity, our own insensitivity, our own blindness to human values...

He talks about how the reservation, putting Indians on reservations was

like the existence of an orphan in an asylum...as close to non-existence as we can get... without annihilating [the person] altogether.

So people felt that Indians there "were squatters on land which God had assigned

to us...they were the aboriginal owners, they never had any legal title to the real estate." Thus we placed them, "with the help of the military," on reservations.

In another statement about the contrast between the native consciousness and the dominant European consciousness, he composes a myth of indigenous history. And he says, "We have not understood their playful modes. We have fought Eros."

...we have fought Eros. That is such a powerful statement, that the playfulness of indigenous consciousness, which of course is also about creativity, as Jung says, our creativity requires fantasy and play. But there's a playfulness to the indigenous consciousness at home, in the land. And we have fought Eros: that is such a strong statement. That also means we have fought wisdom, because in the Book of Wisdom, it says, "This is wisdom: to love life."

And that's what Eros is about: passionate love of life. And the native consciousness brings that forward in a marvelous way.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.