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A Second Story on Healing Acedia and Depression, Sans Pills

Good morning.

Today we continue to meditate on the realities of acedia and how we can best deal with it. And of course, there are some circumstances wherein drugs are necessary and can be wisely prescribed by smart doctors.

But in our culture I question, in academia I question, whether we provide the full gamut of possibilities for healing, and whether we can focus too much on the psychological dimension, ignoring the cultural dimension, the broader dimension, where neurosis is often spawned.

Indeed, it was Otto Rank (who is today finally being credited with being the father of humanistic psychology, including Maslow and Rogers and Rollo May, who died young in 1939, unfortunately) -- who talks about the *artiste manqué* being the basis of all neurosis, that our creativity gets misused. We turn it in on ourselves, to beat ourselves up with, instead of truly expressing our deepest self, our truest self.

And I've cited already Barbara Ehrenreich's brilliant book on the history of ritual, no less, where she tells us of the 17th century as the birthplace of an "epidemic of depression." And you don't solve an epidemic of depression just with pills. There's something else in the air, there's something else in the messaging, something else in the dying of a culture, that renders people depressed and subject to acedia.

And so I question whether our psychology schools do enough teaching about the power of meditation, about the power of contemplation, about the power of creativity, about the power of knowing that you belong to a universe that has welcomed us here...in other words, a cosmology.

All these are ways to heal as well. And there are ancient ways and it's not an either/or.

But it is, if you go to most schools. I'll give you a concrete example. Robert Bly the poet and translator of poets and leader of a men's movement several decades ago, he once told me when he goes lecturing in colleges and students come up afterwards and talk to him about poetry.

He'd ask them, "What are you majoring in?" If they majored in psychology, he'd say, "Do you study Carl Jung?" And he said that if they say no, he turns his back on them. His point being that psychology that doesn't deal with people like Carl Jung, or, I might add, Otto Rank, that they're just essentially dealing with rats, physiological action/reaction responses of our neural system, from which we get a lot of our drugs.

That's all psychology is; he turned his back on students because there's no future in that, he felt. That's an example of what I'm talking about. That whole culture can be selling, giving away depression.

And it's not enough just to take a drug. In fact, you want to be on your toes, so you can critique, you can contribute to a healthier culture, one that is not enslaved to acedia, but that delivers meaning and the reason for goodness and the doors that open up joy, the gift of the Spirit.

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow.