

LIVING MYTH PODCAST

Episode 375 - The Return of Eros

Michael Meade: The other morning, I walked outside to feel the presence of the day. It was early, the sky was gray, overcast, a cold front had rolled in, as if winter was resisting change. As I walked past an area of garden that hadn't been weeded and cleaned up, I spotted in the midst of some withered stems from last summer, a group of crocuses that had just pushed up through the cold ground. They were purple with the promise of spring renewal and transformation coming from somewhere deep in the earth. I was compelled by their presence and stood still as if pulled into some mystery. And I bowed a little before returning to work.

The next morning, when I went to feel the promise of the flowers again, they were gone. Looking closely, I could see where the deer had eaten them down. And I felt the sudden sense of loss, and an irrational but palpable feeling of pain, as if something had been cut down in me. Then, as I turned, in the midst of a bewilderment, I suddenly saw another group of crocuses that had pushed through the pallid ground nearby. They were like pure white, as if reinforcing the whole sense of promise I had felt the previous morning, as if speaking a message of loss and renewal. The old idea of life's core mystery of birth, death and renewal went through my mind. But what was more compelling and more lasting, and its own kind of mystery, was how I felt physically connected to the presence of the flowers on each occasion. It wasn't the sentimentality of the beauty of flowers, and so on. And it wasn't simply the surprise of spring springing forth from the ground. The more enduring feeling was the magnetic sense of being connected to everything.

Although the flowers are clearly part of a cycle of renewal that has been part of the earth from the very beginning, the mystery being referred to is not a simple return to what was before, but actually a breaking through of something unique each time it comes around. That's the mystery. It's a renewal, that is also a recreation or return, in a sense, to the original creation. And therefore, a message more about wonder, about the awe of ongoing creation that keeps trying to pull us into a greater sense of presence and invite us into the constant invitation to become a greater version of ourselves, to be in a sense, a blossoming of our own souls.

In terms of mythology, every act of creation is connected to the original act of creation. Creation is continuous, and yet it's also new each time, which becomes clearer when we are present with nature. In mythology, one of the greatest images of the origins of life, as well as the interconnectivity of everything on Earth, appears in the god Eros. In Greek myths, Eros is the oldest of all the gods and he is also the youngest God. Eros was there at the very beginning of things. But he's also present again, at the beginning of any new project or undertaking, as the incarnation of the divine in the world. Eros is a God in the sense of being the embodiment or representation or imagination of divine energy, constantly entering the world. Eros is the energy of connection and union, the secret glue that holds

everything together. And so of course, Eros had to be there at the very beginning. And of course, Eros has to be present when anything begins in this world. Eros is the innate force of desire that wishes to connect, to combine, to unite and to fuse one thing and another, one person and another, any one with the other, that can appear as the deeper self within, as the soul of nature itself, or as the divine trying to enter the world again through us.

Eros is that part of us that desires that we connect, that we create and recreate, that we learn to long for the things that are truly meaningful to us. Eros is the evidence of the Divine Source of Life in each of us. Eros is the elemental principle of connection that binds each of our souls to the Soul of the World. This feeling of connection, but also longing, and love, all of which come under the sense of Eros, this feeling is the soul's verification of its own existence. In other words, not "I think, therefore, I am," but "I feel and I long for connection. And I have a capacity to be present with creation ongoing in nature, and even in my own psyche, and therefore I am." Eros is the archetypal presence of attraction and connection. And as such, it can be seen as the opposing energy to Thanatos, the god of death. And the suggestion there is if we are not connected to our own sense of Eros, then we are actually closer to the realm of death.

Eros is absolutely necessary to sustain life. And yet, Eros also transcends life in its simplest forms. For Eros can lead to a union that creates literal birth. But it also can lead to a greater sense of coming to life within a person's soul. Eros can lead to an awakening of the Spirit and to connections to the Divine through ecstatic emergence. Eros is present in all forms of love, including parental love and fraternal love, and even the love of pets. It is Eros that connects us to the uniqueness in the other being whether it be a human, an animal or even a plant. Without a genuine sense of Eros connection to children, mothers become overprotective, smothering the child in material security or overfeeding them or exaggerating their safety needs. When Eros is present, the child is loved for the sake of its unique self. And through Eros. The genuine mother nourishes not merely the biological child, but also nurtures the spirit of humanity through that child's soul.

Eros is necessary to support the social life of all humans. And yet, Eros can also suspend normal attitudes and patterns as it transports us to another realm that is both deeply sensate and highly spiritual. Eros is the power that connects and binds our souls with the living soul of the world, as in the genuine presence of nature and place and the living environment. Eros seeks an ongoing presence in all of our exchanges with the spirit of great nature. And when we lose our sense of Eros, we lose our natural connections to life, and we can become as if dead to the world. Eros is protean and always present. It appears in the foods that we can't resist, in the music that moves us, in the attractions that compel us. Eros is in all our creations and our procreations, in our vocations, in our avocations. Eros appears wantonly in popular culture, and also in sacred situations. It appears in our strangest fantasies, as well as in our most accurate desires.

When Eros is present in political life, the leaders and the rulers sacrifice their egotistical needs for the benefit of the entire community. When Eros is not present, the leaders become obsessed with power and with dominance, and become a threat to the community of souls that they are intended to lead and protect. In that sense, Eros continually reshapes history one way or another.

In ancient stories, Eros was at times a god, at other times, a daimon or a genius, an intermediary or go-between between us and the Divine, between us and nature, between us and the beloved. In that sense, what truly calls to us has something divine in it. The Mystics use the language of love, which includes myth and poetry, story and song, for what calls to us comes from the other world, from the Divine, from the daimonic realm. And in that sense, we could say that Eros is another calling in life. Each soul has its calling, which calls a person to awaken to the essence inside them, to learn the pattern that was woven into their soul to begin with, and to awaken to the sense of a genuine purpose in life. One of the things most absent in the present world dominated by technology, and ruled by history, is the genuine presence of soul. And when soul is absent, Eros is diminished and people can't feel or find the genuine connection to each other. And soon enough, everyone is turned against each other, thinking that the problem lies in that other person, when truly it lies in the disconnection within each person themselves.

Eros, of course, is connected to love. And so the calling of Eros can crystallize in the form of a particular person whose appearance and whose essence brings us closer, both to our own fate and to our own destiny. That person becomes the beloved for us, a representative of the Divine, a lord or a mistress of our soul, who can pull us into the daimonic realm of Eros. And of course, being in the realm of Eros involves us in both pain and pleasure, in growing pains and in painful encounters. When pulled into the realm of Eros, we can become tormented, possessive, dependent, lost in agonies or led to ecstasies. In following the calling of love, Eros may shred our love maps in order to remake them.

The struggle between fear and love or fear and Eros is an old one, for one would separate us while the other would unify us. The ego or the little self formed around our earliest fears, and that can cause us to feel the way we did when we were small and helpless. Eros would pull us onto the path of discovery, where we find hidden abundance and powers we didn't know we had. And yet, this path of discovery will inevitably raise again the exact fears that hold our hearts captive. When the time comes for love to open the heart fully, the old fears will also awaken and the inner walls of the heart will tighten up. After all, the delicate crocuses must somehow push themselves through the hard earth in order to come into the light, draw down the heat of the sun and blossom fully. In that sense, each waking of the true sense of self with its natural callings, and erotic connections becomes a little redemption and an act of truth in that individual life. And each act of truly being present can bring a greatest sense of healing and love and understanding to this increasingly broken, separated and troubled world.

Whether this deeper sense of self and erotic soul awakens is deeply personal, but not simply a personal matter. When people fail to live the life of calling, including the calling of Eros, the world becomes diminished, and the wealth of existence can become poisoned by the dredge of un-lived lives. In modern times, extreme adaptations to the outer demands seem to be the rule; our essential identity, and our core sense of connection to the world can be completely overlooked, and years can pass while this deeper sense of self sleeps within us. The old knowers used to say that the trouble in the world is not there to defeat us or to harm us, but to awaken us to the un-lived lives within us and the longings and the callings that our souls would have us follow. Although it can manifest as raw unconsciousness, Eros intends to open a path that can lead us to greater consciousness, to a greater sense of presence, and to a deeper sense of connection to our own souls, to the essence of nature, and to the divine source of life.

And now, I have nothing to say, except repeat the words that poets have already spoken. Here is Rumi, that mystic lover and master of Eros, in a poem that he calls What Matters. "They try to say what you are is spiritual or sexual. In the body of the world, they say there is a soul. Well, you are that soul in the world body. Yet again, we have ways within each other that will never be said by anyone. Listen, you are from a country beyond this universe. Yet your best guess is that you are made of earth and ashes. You engrave this physical sense of self everywhere you go as a sign, simply that you have forgotten where you are truly from."

Here's Rumi again, What Must Die. "Love is the essence of life. Yet loving requires dying. Lovers are alive to the extent that they can die. What must die then, you might ask?" Call it the ego, or the little self, or the idea that you are better or worse than anyone else.

Hafez also has something to say on this subject. He calls the poem Between Our Poles. "To whom can I tell the secrets of love? Who here has not confined their life to a well-padded cell? Look at nature as a river. Its size, strength and ability to give are gauged by the width between its banks and its current. The Divine also moves between our poles and in our depths. The Divine flows and gathers power between our hearts range of forgiveness and real compassion. On a day like this, who can Hafez tell all the secrets of love?"

Hafez again, "One regret dear your world, that I am determined not to have when I'm lying on my deathbed is that I did not kiss you enough." Rumi speaks again, "A human being is essentially a spirit eye, whatever you really see you are that. And secretly, everyone longs for the friend or the beloved, the drunkards, as much as those who claim to be awakened. Listen, when the real wine is being passed around, every place is the house of love, the church, as well as the synagogue, the mosque, as well as the Cathedral, the tavern too and the theater as well.

All this talking began with the crocuses trying to break through the hard ground of the previous season. It must be the truth, that the crocuses are not going back, but are in fact, going forward in their instinct to blossom. And I imagine, that's what Eros would have us do as well. That is to say, the opportunity to join with creation ongoing may be closer than ever. And it is our mutual collective calling to join in creation on going, to allow ourselves to be pulled further into the realm of the living soul of the world, and thereby find our own souls' unique way of blossoming in the world that is just forming.

One last poem then, in service to all that tries to blossom in this world. This is from Rolf Jacobson. "What sower walked over the earth, and which hands sowed our inward seeds of fire. They went out from those fists, like rainbow curves, to the frozen earth, to the young loam, to the hot sand. And there, they will sleep and greedily drink up our lives and explode them into pieces for the sake of a sunflower you have not yet seen, or a thistle head, or a chrysanthemum or a crocus. And so, let the young rain of tears come and let the calm hands of grief come forward is not all as evil as you think."