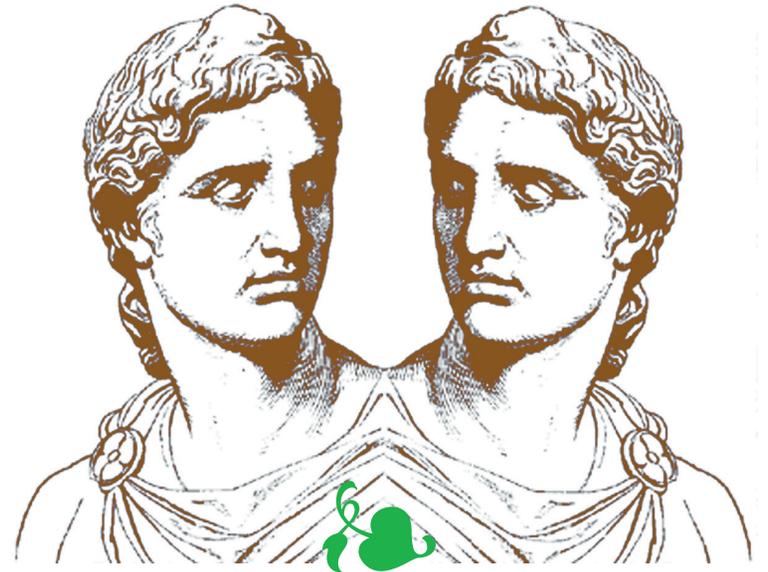


# THE GODS



## & other men

THE MYTHS OF MALE ATTRACTION

EDWARD MAUPIN

THE GODS & OTHER MEN



MAUPIN

“The worship of God is  
the recognition of his gifts  
in other men.”

WILLIAM BLAKE

ISBN 0-9654257-5-4

First Public Issue  
2006

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DAWN EVE PRESS  
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San Diego, CA 92103  
[edmaupin@usa.net](mailto:edmaupin@usa.net)

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MALE ATTRACTION

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# 1

## Attraction Between Males

“Whatever it is, there’s a lot of it” –  
attributed to CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

When I was young, being attracted to other men was a fearfully guarded secret. Homoeroticism was immoral, shameful, and a certified sign of mental illness. For many of us, though, it simply would not go away.

Now the cat is out of the bag, and many of us are out of the closet. Being attracted to people of the same sex is immoral and shameful only to the un-hip, the hopelessly conservative, the hostile Religious Right, and women who are disappointed when we are unavailable. But it seems to me that there is no less confusion than there ever was about some aspects of the matter.

Straight men, most of them, lumber along, slapping each other on the back, talking about sports, (my stereotype) afraid to acknowledge a tender moment. Gay men also miss the point: the freedom to be sexual sometimes makes sex a reflex rather than a considered choice – lurking instead of relating.

I propose that the distinction between sexual and non-sexual is too sharply drawn, that the energy of attraction is always erotic and thus always hovering between sexuality and spiritual longing, and that as a culture we don’t know much about any of this stuff.

In other words, we need maps.

k

For example, Michael Jackson was bait for a shark feed not so long ago. This enormously talented man of thirty-two or so is attracted to pubescent boys. I'm just speculating, but I suspect that his love of these youths has a great deal of soulful longing in it. Now one boy claims that Michael performed fellatio upon him—which Michael has denied but paid several million dollars to assuage - and criminal charges are still being considered. The whole matter will focus on WHETHER MICHAEL DID IT—whether he was overtly sexual—and no attention will be paid to any of the subtleties of the way it came about or how he loved. No considerations of quality can be raised against the storm of puritanical protest. If he DID IT, he will be punished. No matter that this was not a short, lustful episode, but a long courtship of apparently intense and personal interest. If Michael, in his longing, crossed over the sexual barrier even once, he is a criminal who will be condemned and punished.

This is not to say that a sexual encounter with a powerful and charismatic older man might not be confusing or even destructive to a beardless youth, but not necessarily so. Being loved by a uniquely gifted artist might also be an inspiring and transformative experience. Perhaps the hysteria of other people has invaded what was once an innocently blooming garden of delight.

Men are attracted to boys, though we treat such attraction as something akin to axe-murder. Yet perhaps enormous benefits can come from such love under some circumstances..

We need maps to help us distinguish what is worthy and beneficial from what is exploitative and destructive.

k

To the Greeks of the classical period such a relationship between a youth and a man was acceptable and even esteemed. It was understood to have important educational benefits for the youth, and the man took on certain responsibilities along that line. The man's attraction was understood to be erotic and soulful, and sexual expression was acceptable within certain limits.

My guess is that Michael Jackson's young friend was enjoying quite important educational benefits in their relationship, and that it was the boy's father who literalized the sexuality, frightened the boy, and raised havoc in the situation.

k

Leaving aside the thorny problem of beardless boys, how about the idea that friendship between males is an important part of the answer to the alienation of our times, and it is important for us to understand, support and encourage it? By friendship, I do not mean something tepid, such as we mean when we say that two people are "just friends." I want to explore the real attractions, real intimacy, real feeling and real bonding which can take place between males. Intense love between them, I submit, is creative, organic to our nature, and of great importance for our times.

I also think the distinction between "gay" and "straight" is too sharply drawn in our present society. It seems overly literal to define people in terms of sexual behavior, and surely some of the ambiguity of human feeling is lost. Many writers, Plato and Freud included, have struggled to find a

vocabulary which acknowledges the wide areas of feeling and sensuality which are related, perhaps driven by sexuality yet are not genitally expressed. Plato said that baser natures always sexualize the subtleties of exalted love. Freud tried to use "sexuality" for the entire area of pleasure and desire, of which genital activity is only a small part.

'Eros' is a useful concept. It is an ancient term for the attraction which exists between people, the magnetism which draws us together. Eros is something we feel in our hearts and our bodies. It is energy, and it must be dealt with. It is conveniently ambiguous about its sexuality—that is, the same energy is expressed in overt sexual activity or in the most elevated intimacy. It is useful to use a word like 'Eros' which can mean both.

At least, 'eros' used to have this ambiguous quality. Alan Bloom described "The Fall of Eros" in his final book, *Love and Friendship*. (1994) According to him, there are three major sources for our present shallowness about the matter. First, Freud led us to reduce even the most delicate blossoms of eros to frankly sexual motives, so that it is difficult for us to believe in the intrinsic reality of any but the most basic urges. Second, Kinsey, with his statistical approach, levelled our moral considerations about sexuality into a simple matter of percentages: how much of the population is engaged in what kind of activities. This is fine for assuaging sexual guilt, but it diverts us from considering our actions from the standpoint of moral values. (Even 'moral', which used to refer to considerations of goodness, rightness, and virtue, has come to have uncomfortably puritanical, restrictive overtones, as if all that was a hopelessly constricted

illusion of the past.) And finally, Bloom says, the current feminist analysis of relationship between the sexes solely in terms of power denies that all the complexities of attraction and courtship were ever anything but power manipulations between members of a privileged (male) and an exploited and powerless (female) population. So now, in the 1990's, we are likely to treat even the most subtle erotic surge as (a) frankly sexual (Freud) (b) generally acceptable, because large numbers of people do it (Kinsey), and (c) probably not erotic at all, but rather a power manipulation (feminism).

Poor Eros!

k

My partner and I gave a series of workshops at Esalen Institute, on the Big Sur coast of California, entitled "Friendship: exploring radical, non-genital intimacy between men." Our groups experimented with ways of making contact, crossing physical barriers to intimacy, in order to return to the uncomplicated, slightly erotic access we had had with each other as boys. That was in the mid-Seventies, and many men were interested in making better contact with other males. Distinguishing sensuality from sexuality was a useful step. Again and again we found that, after rolling around on the floor—"soft wrestling" we called it—these men reached a gentle state of "Pillow-talk" as if they had been sexual lovers, but with fewer complications. There are a variety of workshops being offered now which cover the same area, which develop sensual, as distinct from sexual, contact.

Then, as now, I felt that the real issue is Eros, and that

sexuality is actually a rather unimportant issue—a bugaboo. When Eros is properly in place, friends may explore all kinds of things with each other. The real issue is that they be friends.

k

Around three thousand years ago, David, an heroic youth who had just killed the giant champion of an opposing army, was presented to Saul, the Israelite king. Saul's son Jonathan saw David in this dramatic circumstance, and a marvelous thing happened:

“It came to pass. . . that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.”<sup>1</sup>

This is probably the best-known tale of male love in the Western tradition. That Jonathan loved David “as his own soul” is repeated several times in the commentary, and certainly Jonathan showed his love in many ways. He “delighted much in David”<sup>2</sup> Later he had to protect David repeatedly from his father's murderous intentions.

Were David and Jonathan sexual lovers? Some interpreters have marshaled evidence that they must have been sexual lovers, while the religious approach has been to deny or ignore the sexual possibilities. The fact is, we do not know. Intense relationships involving a great deal of feeling tend to have this ambiguity—they might or might not be overtly sexual. Jonathan's attraction, his “delight” in David, would certainly urge him to physical closeness if they were in a Greek context. Whether the laws against homosexuality laid down in Leviticus were strong enough to restrain

such an attraction in those wild times is an open question. What seems more important is that there was intense love involved, love which moved Jonathan at the level of his soul, and thus it was an “erotic” relationship, one based upon Eros, or feeling, or genuine attraction.

k

We have been through a so-called “sexual revolution”. Wilhelm Reich, the founder of most body-energy-oriented psychotherapies practiced today, predicted that the repression of his day would be followed by a sexual revolution, and that it would not help our cultural dilemma in any basic way.<sup>4</sup> He meant that the old forms of sexual repression would be overthrown, but not in a way which would actually liberate people in their core. He was right on both counts: there was a sexual revolution, and it hasn't helped—people today are even more alienated from each other and from core feeling than they were when he made the prediction.

The sexual revolution has, of course, been followed by a strongly repressive backlash. This has taken various forms, one of which has been the extremity of the witch hunt against sexual abuse. While there is no doubt that terrible acts have been perpetrated in some cases, in others it seems likely that more innocent affection has been re-framed as monstrous. If this witch hunt succeeds in making adults afraid to touch children or to enjoy simple contact with one another, we will have lost more than we have gained.

k

Eros, the sweetness of attraction: it exists everywhere

between males. It is played out across a terrific variety of behaviors, some of them explicitly sexual, others not. Let's look at some of the variety: Two men discover a profound rapport which grows into deeply intimate relationship. An older man is smitten with a teenage boy. A younger male admires a man who seems to "have it all together." Two school-age boys become comrades, exploring their new world together. An older male perceives something special in a younger one and finds ways to encourage him in his development. Two men have a sexual encounter in a public rest room, parting without even having exchanged names. Clearly men are attracted to one another in many different ways. We find friendships, romances, mentorships, relations between older and younger males, purely sexual encounters, genital rituals of initiation all motivated by the urge men have toward closeness and intimacy with one another. This is a study of that urge, which I am calling by the ancient name of "Eros," and the variety of forms it takes in the lives of men.

k

The need men have for erotic connection is quite apart from sexual preference. A man's male relationships are different from his female relationships, meet different needs, and hinge on different determinants in the depth of his psyche. Therefore, this is not a study of homosexuality per se. Eros between men takes many forms, many of which involve no genital expression at all. Eros includes sexuality, but the same energy can take many forms. Then, too, not all sexuality is motivated by Eros. Power-motives such as domination, manipulation, control, or proving oneself are

only secondarily erotic.

k

I was very fond of a young male friend,. One afternoon we were talking, and the love and intimacy between us was intense. Snuggled against him, I had a semi-waking dream in which we were young boys, early adolescents in Italy in the Renaissance. We were lying innocently together in a tower room which was open to the spring breeze. The feeling of the entire situation was extremely sweet—erotic, but not in any way genitally-focused. The feeling was far more global than genital. Suddenly there was a flurry of someone coming up the stairs, an indistinct black presence, a priest perhaps. Immediately the global feeling of Eros was disrupted. I found myself defensively explaining that our closeness wasn't sexual. What had been innocent a moment before was now something which had to be explained. The global and inclusive feeling was now divided into colors of black and red, which seemed to symbolize a conflict between ascetic renunciation (the black) versus sexual lust (the red). Duality and conflict had come into what had previously been a unity. As I came out of the dream I felt I had learned something about the structure of the repression of Eros in the West.

This global feeling, which is sexy, but not sexual, is the basic nature of Eros. Western culture has a long history of conflict about sexuality and the body, because of which the global feeling of Eros has been repressed. I think this is the source of much of our alienation. Without Eros, we do not connect.

k

Sexuality and Soul are the twin themes of Eros. Apparently they are its twin faces, somehow inseparable. Sexual energy may be a vital component of spiritual development.

Oscar Ichazo of the Arica School suggests<sup>5</sup> that the sexual and spiritual centers of the body are an alive polarity, two ends of a single spectrum, expressions of the same vital energy. Spiritual experience is often overtly erotic, as the poetry of St. Theresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross makes clear. There are "orgasms" of the heart and of the mind. Ichazo has said that when sexuality and spirituality are split apart, treated as if they were antithetical, each pole again divides. Spirituality becomes involved with a conflict between Good and Evil; sexuality becomes a cycle between guilt and lust.<sup>6</sup> This was played out in the pathetic string of sexual scandals involving television evangelists in 1989. Many readers will remember that Reverend Jim Bakker was revealed as having paid his lover \$200,000. to ensure her silence—a kind of blackmail which seems absurd to people who are honest about their sexuality. Reverend Jimmy Swaggert, who was particularly harsh in his denunciation of other people's sexuality, proved to have a pathetic desire to look at nude women in certain circumstances. It seemed a sad and thwarted sexuality, orphaned of any connection with spirit.

k

When I was a boy, my parents were involved in a spiritual movement called "Moral Re-Armament", or "The Oxford

Group." Started in the 1920's by a Protestant chaplain from Princeton University, it attracted well-educated, serious people who wanted to do something about world problems. A French woman of my acquaintance called it a movement of the Religious Right, and certainly it was an alternative expression to the public-minded impulses which led idealistic people to join the Communist Party during the same decade of the Great Depression. When I was very young, these people seemed keen, clear-eyed, and very fine. Their technique was to examine their lives according to four "Absolute Standards", one of which was "Absolute Purity." Purity, of course, referred basically to sexuality: these people were later-day puritans. At first all went well. They attracted favorable attention from many of the world's leaders, including Conrad Adenauer of Germany, and Nehru of India. They had a hand in mediating labor disputes and international controversies. But, as I grew older, the atmosphere around sex started to feel strange. Not only was unmarried sex or masturbation forbidden, as it was in most Protestant sects at the time, but the slightest suggestion of eroticism became taboo. I remember an elderly gentleman being reprimanded for saying he was going upstairs to have a bath—because people might imagine him naked! Finally, by 1950, the group was taking full-page ads in the New York Times to decry homosexuality in the State Department! This group did not have an adequate psychology of sex. Suppression simply led to eccentricity, and, not doubt, to erratic hedonistic outbursts.

If sex and spirituality are a single polarity, then sexual

energy is not to be denied or buried, but used consciously, even technically, for various specific purposes. We must have an adequate psychology of sex.

k

Several contemporary issues make the understanding of same-sex eroticism particularly important. The first is the overpopulation of the planet. Everywhere we read of populations which have doubled in a few decades. Traditional religious views which place sexuality solely at the service of reproduction are simply irrelevant today: we do not need more people on the planet. The Biblical injunction, "Be fruitful and multiply" has been carried out, and out and out. Humanity has been fruitful enough already. Quality of child-rearing must replace sheer fecundity as a priority. One tremendous advantage of same-sex relationships is that they do not result in children. People need the comfort and creativity which can be found in human contact, but such can well be found with people of the same gender if we do not need to breed.

Secondly, there is AIDS, the progressive destruction of the immune system caused by a virus which is transmitted, among other ways, sexually. AIDS has made promiscuous sexuality dangerous, especially between men. The quick resort to sexual expression with strangers is no longer a safe solution, but it is a wise person who knows how to reach satisfying intimacy without it. The surprising persistence of promiscuous sexuality in the face of this disease attests to an aching need for intimacy, still unmet. Obviously a strong urge is there, but how can it be satisfied more safely? Better

understanding of Eros between males can enable people to meet their needs without endangering their lives.

Understanding Eros between males may have political importance as well. Without strong bonds men are weakened in many ways. The army of Alexander the Great was carried to victory after victory on the morale of male friendship. Alexander himself was inspiring to his men, but they also derived strength from close pairing of comrades. The Theban warriors were another classical and oft-cited example of an army whose strength rested on pairs of male lovers (the source for this is in Plutarch's Lives of Pelopidas and Epaminandas.) As men lose their bonds of male friendship, they become susceptible to authoritarian manipulation and control. When men see each other mainly as competitors, they are especially alone, surrounded by rivals. In a dangerous world, it is dangerous to oppose authority. Mitch Walker<sup>7</sup> and other writers<sup>8</sup> have speculated that the patriarchal power structure has fostered rivalry and competition in order to maintain control. The classical Greeks remembered that it was a pair of male lovers who brought down the tyrants of Athens. By repressing Eros are we weakening our ability to resist manipulation and control? Eros by its very nature involves the stirring of feelings which are spontaneous and real. If we are unwilling to let Eros stir, we may block it along with the rest of our feelings. Then we have no access to the feelings which are our natural internal method of evaluating what is going on around us.

k

Good maps enable us to make good choices. There

are evidently many different patterns of affection between men, and these need to be differentiated. As is the way of human love, not all these patterns are helpful, creative, or constructive. Various possible patterns need to be sorted out and described. My own interest in writing this book is to explore certain spiritual possibilities which can be found in the love between men. The revelations of Soul, even of Spirit, are among the mysteries of this love. Such profundities must not be lost in the banalities of conventional morality, opinion, petty lust, or even public health.

Guiding images, myths, are needed to describe the territory. Most people are unable to invent their lives. By "invent" I mean to attend carefully to their own core feelings and find ways to live which are in accord with their real natures. This is originality in living, and it is rare. The majority of people need already-formed images for what they are doing. When the whole subject of male friendship is left vague or becomes taboo, they must shut down that potential in their lives. They may slap each other on the back, but they will not touch anything that warms and sustains their hearts. Gay culture offers some images, but these do not, I feel, really come to terms with the full range of impulses and feelings which propel men toward one another. It is easy to fall into one trap when we get out of another.

k

There are four major types of information we can use. First, there are myths from a variety of sources. I have drawn primarily upon the Greek myths, with additional input from ancient Babylon and from the Bible. As stories

which have captured the imagination of many generations, these myths must be expressing what is important in the human psyche. They can tell us much about how Eros is structured in our deeper experience.

Second, there are historical examples. I have cited the friendship between the Sufi mystic Rumi and Shams of Tabriz, David and Jonathan, the Emperor Hadrian and the youth Antinoüs, and others.

Third, the ethnographic material: accounts of traditional societies by anthropologists and other visitors. I have used this material primarily as a backdrop, a source of limits upon my possible foolishness in interpreting other material, and as a correction for our contemporary cultural perspective.

Finally, there are personal accounts—my own, and those of other people. Some of the material also comes from research carried out by my students or from recently published books. These personal experiences are generally set in italics. They are the field notes from the exploratory study that I call life.

k

#### PATTERNS OF EROS BETWEEN MALES

It seems to me that there are five main themes in male relationship,

The first theme, of course, is relationship between equals, or friendship. The archetype here can be called "The Friend," but the theme is so broad it cannot be captured by a single myth. There are many important issues here. I have included a range of stories, about mortals as well as gods, and not all of them Greek, to cover this territory. The

earliest literary epic, a myth from ancient Babylon, concerns the friendship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu. David and Jonathan are the prototype friends in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Within equal friendship, there is a significant difference between twins and complementaries, between couples which conceive of themselves as identical, and those which retain greater differentiation. The Gemini twins, Castor and Pollux suggest a kind of twinship which may occur within the psyche of a single person.

Boyhood friendship is the second theme, and it has its special characteristics. Apollo was the patron god of boys and young men among the classical Greeks, and indeed this archetype seems particularly useful in understanding boyhood friendship.

Not all male bonding occurs between equal partners: sometimes the pair differ in age. The myth of Zeus and Ganymede is the basic model for the third theme which covers those patterns which involve an older and a younger male. The intense feelings engendered between the beauty of youth and the power and authority of age are captured in this archetypal pattern.

The fourth theme concerns Mentor and Protegé, and describes patterns of relationship in which the age difference is also prominent. It is similar to Zeus and Ganymede in that there is an age difference between the two partners, yet there are important differences. In the original story, in the *Odyssey* of Homer, Mentor assisted young Telemachus to get his own power. In some portions of the text it was Athena coming in the form of Mentor. Since Athena is the

daughter of Zeus, we can see that on the level of archetype and myth Mentor/Protegé is derived from Zeus/Ganymede yet serves somewhat different purposes. The emphasis is on teaching and learning. Its specific aim is the empowerment of the younger man. Ganymede remains a servant of the powerful Zeus, whereas Telemachus was given the strength to follow his father as king. This is an important difference, and I have given this theme full and independent emphasis in its own chapter.

The fifth theme I call "Shadow", borrowing Jung's term for the interior aspect which carries the forbidden and excluded parts of ourselves. Here Eros manifests more impersonally, often enacting forbidden fantasies and impulses. Such an important archetype has its own myths, of course, and we will examine Pan of the Greeks, and his transposition into the Christian Devil.

Sixth, there are some elements of the love between men which can only be understood as ritualization and magic: worship of the male organ as symbol of masculine generative power. "Phallos" is the name usually given to this theme.

Finally there is the theme of Spiritual Friendship, for which I have examined Plato's original descriptions of 'Platonic Love' as well as the friendship between the Sufi mystic, Rumi and his friend Shams—a particularly profound example of how friendship can lead to spiritual development.

These themes are intended to give breadth and dimension, differentiation and intelligibility to the whole subject of male love. Love is such a tender plant, so easily trampled

by misunderstanding. When it must survive the brutal incomprehension of an entire society it is indeed in danger. If this study can make it easier for a few people to find love, intimate, genuine, and without guilt, then it shall have succeeded in its intention.

<sup>1</sup> I Samuel 18, 1.

<sup>2</sup> I Samuel 19, 2.

<sup>3</sup> I Samuel 20, 30

<sup>4</sup> Reich, W. *The Murder of Christ*.

<sup>5</sup> Ichazo, O. Unpublished lectures on the Hypergnostic System, Maplecrest, New York, 1982. Related material is available through the Arica Institute, 101 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011.

<sup>6</sup> I have again followed Oscar Ichazo's analysis. *Ibid*.

<sup>7</sup> Walker, M. *Visionary Love: a Spirit Book of Gay Mythology*. San Francisco: Treeroots Press, 1981.

<sup>8</sup> "Sex and the Politics of Identity: an interview with Michael Foucault" in Thompson, M. (ed.) *Gay Spirit, myth and meaning*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987.

## 2

### The Myths of Eros, and the Uses of Myth

"Male Bonding" is an okay buzz-word these days, a first approximation of being able to talk about tender feeling between men. Bonding is a good concept if we imagine the way atoms are bonded together in molecules. Bonding implies an energy of attraction between the elements which come together. We know from physics that enormous energy is involved in such bonding. That is something like the original meaning of Eros in Greek Mythology.

k

Eros is what makes us want to be near someone. It is the basic nature of attraction. Is it too radical to think that our human experience of attraction is related to the most fundamental physical properties of energy and magnetism? Erotic relationships are those which involve feelings, which touch us in our tender parts, which nourish (or perhaps exacerbate) our need for contact, closeness and intimacy with each other. A relationship without Eros is a relationship without feeling. It may be fine for business, but it is insufficient for our deeper needs. A fully erotic relationship may arrive at such intimacy that sexual expression would be irrelevant or unnecessary to achieve further closeness.

Erotic intimacy can easily occur between two people who do not find each other sexually attractive. The pleasurable anticipation I have about spending time with my 73-year-old neighbor, Yaakov, a retired writer and wide-ranging intellectual is an erotic one. I enjoy his mind. Erotic attraction occurs on many levels which are not sexual. On the other hand, peak moments of intimacy may be accompanied by waves of genital excitement, including penile erection, quite apart from any sexual need. Eros is a global feeling.

A graduate student in philosophy asked to read this manuscript after a portion was excerpted in a local newspaper. He wanted a rationale for his own attraction to male friendship, which was non-sexual. Later he mailed the manuscript back without even a return address, scribbled with indignant notes in the margin protesting my use of 'eros' for experiences he strongly distinguished from any taint of sexuality. Perhaps other readers will feel the same way. But I insist that these distinctions should not be drawn too sharply. At the risk of de-repressing aspects of feeling which non-homosexual men may wish to keep hidden—I believe he especially did not want to view his boyhood friendships as erotic—I think the Greeks were right. Sexuality is a portion of a much larger arena called "Eros".

k

#### THE MYTHS OF EROS

Among the ancient Greeks, Eros appears in two quite different myth cycles. In myths from the archaic period, Eros is a primary energy existing from the beginning, along with Chaös, Gaia (the earth mother), and Tartarus. Eros,

shooting his arrows, brought order into the original Chaös and caused the barren Earth Goddess, Gaia, to bring forth life. In this version, Eros is what binds everything together, the primordial flow of energy. This is much like the creative 'yang' principle in Chinese cosmology.

In the later myths, after the Olympian gods had supplanted the earlier deities, Eros was behind the movement of love and attraction between human beings. This Eros was a child born of the union of Aphrodite and Ares. However, he failed to grow up, but remained in childish form. Worried, his mother Aphrodite consulted an oracle and was told that "Eros does not grow without Passion." This was a puzzling message which became clear only after the birth of Eros' brother, Anteros. ("answering love" or "love returned") When these two brothers were together, Eros could mature into adulthood. We shall hear more about Anteros later.

Later, Eros was conceived mainly in his childish form. By the time of Alexander, when most of the elements of Greek classical culture had become trivialized copies, he had become a gossamer-winged cherub, shooting his arrows in mischief, causing irresistible emotions and desires, yet himself immature and pre-sexual.<sup>1</sup> The Romans continued this Hellenistic form of eros under the name "Cupid", which, of course, persists today on innumerable Valentines and other ephemera—an icon of trivialized eros.

k

## EROS AS A FUNDAMENTAL ENERGY

In the archaic myth, Eros is an utterly basic principle. It is he who causes the very earth to become fertile. When the world was barren and lifeless, it was Eros who "seized his life-giving arrows and pierced the cold bosom of the Earth," which then burst into plant life. Eros then breathed life into the nostrils of clay forms of man and woman and gave them the "spirit of life."<sup>2</sup> He is the engine of evolution. As the energy which binds things together he is fundamentally necessary for anything at all to happen. This is no infantile Cupid, but an awesome, cosmic First Principle, in the proportion of the Hindu god, Shiva, whose very dance is The Creation.

This earlier story is also like the Chinese myth of creation in which there is an original, nameless 'One' which divides into primordial 'Two', the 'Yin' and the 'Yang', which in turn combine and recombine to form the five elements, and ultimately the entire range of creation. Eros is like the Yang element, except that, already an element of feeling is brought into the process.

On the level of human relationship, we can say that, without Eros, life is barren. There is no feeling, no impulse, no heart. Until Eros pierces the earth with his arrows, nothing really happens. Of course, the arrows, being phallic, tell us that sexuality is going to be involved at some level in this binding, this connecting between people.

k

## EROS AS CHILD OF APHRODITE AND ARES

The later myth brings the story into more human proportion. Eros is the son of Aphrodite and Ares. Aphrodite is the goddess of beauty, while Ares is often called the god of war. Rollo May interprets this to mean that, because the father of Eros is Ares, Eros has a necessary relationship with aggression, but another interpretation is possible. Ares may simply mean strength. In this case, Eros grows out of the attraction of strength to beauty.

k

## EROS AND PSYCHE

From Roman sources<sup>3</sup> comes the story of Amor and Psyche (Amor being the Roman name for Eros). Psyche means "soul", and the myth can either be understood as a parable for the unfolding of a woman's psyche, since the figure is feminine, or as a description of a relationship between Eros and Soul itself, within either a man or a woman. Since Apuleus, the Roman author of the work was a male, this general interpretation may be more applicable.

Amor, the son of Aphrodite, comes to Psyche and carries her away to a palace where they dwell—at night and only in the dark—in the raptures of love. Prodded by her envious sisters, Psyche does precisely what Amor has forbidden her to do: she looks at his face by candlelight whereupon he immediately flees. The rest of the tale is an ordeal of tasks and challenges until Psyche, now mature, can come at last into full relationship with Amor.

Here we have an image of soul's development in love. What begins in immature rapture, wherein the partners are

in the dark with one another, develops after considerable work into intimacy of soul. It is as if the first, unreflected love is like the infatuations of adolescence—love occurs by nature, because of hormones and glands. It is not conscious. It can take place only in the dark. Once she has begun to wonder what is really happening, Psyche must mature to regain this intimacy and to establish it on a deeper level. Since, according to Jung, a man's soul, "anima," is feminine, the myth seems to be saying that a man as well as a woman must mature in his deepest part in order to come into full relationship with Eros.

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#### EROS AND ANTEROS: IS THERE ALWAYS A LOVER AND A BELOVED?

Eros did not grow out of his childish form until Aphrodite bore another son, Anteros. While the two brothers were together, Eros grew to young manhood, but when they were apart, Eros regressed to his childish form. Anteros can be interpreted as "passion", but he is better understood as the answering response of the person to whom one is attracted. The Greeks called the person to whom one was attracted, "Anteros". Eros is the experience of desire, but the person who is beloved must respond for anything much to happen. In other words, desire is not enough: there must be relationship.

One of the strengths of the Greek understanding was a careful distinction between the lover and the beloved. The lover, assumed to be the older male, made the approach to the beloved, who was generally the "beardless youth". This

boy might or might not respond. A loving response, from a beautiful youth who had the freedom not to respond, was called "Anteros", or answering love. This situation enjoyed a high, rather sentimental esteem, as we can well imagine.

Here is a fine differentiation, this one between the lover and the beloved. In our egalitarian society we are often unwilling to make distinctions between people. Both should be, we think, both lover and beloved. How selfish of the beloved not to love as ardently as the lover. But this is democratic idealism; it is very useful to ask who is the lover and who the beloved in many, perhaps all relationships. Later, in the chapter on The Friend, we will examine this issue at greater length.

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#### SEXUALITY AND SOUL-RELATIONSHIP: TWIN FACES OF EROS

From Eros piercing the Earth Mother with arrows, to the final union of Amor with Psyche, the myths of Eros maintain a dual character. Desire, the attraction in which we discern the action of Eros, is both sexual and spiritual. The urge to unite with the beloved is both, though its expression may emphasize one or the other. This duality is instructive: in applying these myths to the attraction between men it would be well to avoid drawing too sharp a distinction between sexuality and the relationship of soul. The myths allow us to discern some important information about this,

Eros could not grow until his brother, Anteros was born. Without the answering response, without relationship and mutual recognition, further growth was thwarted. The

gauzy-winged Cupid of post-classical and Roman times lacked exactly this quality of relationship. Cupid was largely mischievous and immature. He can be seen as an image of sexualized attraction which does not develop into intimacy of soul. Eros fails to grow up unless the element of soul is nurtured.

Nevertheless, without the sexuality, without the basic energy of attraction, earth and life remain barren. No spirit is breathed into the nostrils of the clay dolls. Whether or not a friendship includes sexual expression, the energy of sexuality is part of its Eros, its sweetness of attraction.

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#### ARE MYTHS USEFUL?

What are these Greek gods to us? From one standpoint they are only prescientific superstitions which have no relevance to modern living. But from another they are poetic descriptions of something which is real in the human psyche. The "gods" are spirits, energies, atmospheres, which can be perceived in many different situations. A particular quality of beauty and graceful pleasure may be present in a social gathering. We could call it Aphrodite. We might be moved by a flower arrangement and perceive in it another reflection of Aphrodite. We might see a group of men play baseball and sense Apollo in their acuity and teamwork. Feeling Zeus first in sky or thunder, we might come to perceive a similar spirit in more human contexts involving authority. More to the point, the sky-broad viewpoint of Zeus was what Plato and his contemporaries associated with philosophy—the love of wisdom—and hence with a philosophical kind of love.

Individual people can be strongly influenced by one particular spirit, in which case we say they "carry" the archetype, or are even "possessed" by it. In my life I might express qualities associated with Zeus more than, say, Dionysos. This is what Plato meant when he referred to worshipers of different gods. He said they loved according to the nature of the god they served. The followers of Zeus, for example, were more likely to love philosophically, whereas

". . . the attendants and companions of Ares, when under the influence of love, if they fancy that they have been at all wronged, are ready to kill and put an end to themselves and their beloved."<sup>4</sup>

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Jean Shinoda Bolen has attempted entire typologies for both men and women based on the Greek pantheon, and she has offered a great deal of detail about the ways each type of person loves.

I am less interested in these spirits as personality types than as energies which manifest in certain configurations of relationship. I suspect I have lived out different energies with different people and according to my age and circumstance. Just now, I have gray hair, enjoy some authority, and I am rather patriarchal in spite of my best efforts to reform. The Zeus-energy is likely to be involved in my life though, hopefully, other spirits have a chance to play through as well. Since this book is primarily an attempt to bring attention to a subtle form of love which is not immediately sexual, I have sometimes thought I should call it "The Zeus Factor" or some such title.

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It is not unusual these days to use mythology in an attempt to understand and give order to our personal lives. Freud made use of it, and Jung and his followers have certainly expanded the practice. Within the past decade, Robert Johnson has published four books of particular interest which enlarge upon mythical themes: He<sup>5</sup> uses the legend of Parsifal to explore issues of masculine development; She<sup>6</sup> uses the tale of Amor and Psyche to do the same thing for women; We<sup>7</sup> explores the story of Tristan and Iseult as both source and map of certain illusions about romantic love; Ecstasy<sup>8</sup> looks for a psychology of joy in the myth of Dionysus.

Jean Shinoda Bolen and Kate McAllister<sup>9</sup> have used the Greek pantheon to develop a psychology of women. They see the Olympian goddesses expressing patterns of femininity which are being lived out by actual women on the human level. More recently Bolen has produced a similar psychology of men using the Olympian gods.<sup>10</sup>

Christine Downing's *Myths and Mysteries of Same-Sex Love*<sup>11</sup> has explored the Greek mythical tradition as regards love between people of the same gender.

I have found each of these works valuable, especially in the ways they manage to span the twin realms of the ordinary and the mythical, bringing them together into a meaningful whole. My own interest in myth is somewhat different. I am attempting to clarify several different patterns of male relationship, and I am using myth as well as other sources to do so. I am not limiting myself to Greek myths but using Babylonian and Hebraic sources as well as personal and historical accounts where they prove useful.

For our purposes, understanding the variety of relationships is central, and the myths are primarily illustrative. When I first encountered Downing's book I was fearful lest my own project had been rendered superfluous by her work. Our aims are different, though. She centers more on the myths, I on the relational patterns.

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Myths, for a culture, are like the dreams of an individual. A culture expresses its deepest understanding in its mythology, which gives form to elements and issues defining any important area of living. Myth has to do with the sense of meaning in two ways: first, we use existing myths to give meaning to our lives; second, when mundane events reveal their mythical ground, we feel we are in the presence of Meaning itself.

In a culture such as ours, which is decaying or reeling toward some new, future synthesis, the myths may be as chaotic and transitory as television programs, impossible to use as stable indicators of enduring meaning. Myths which developed over longer periods of time may express something deeper within human beings.

The Greeks, like all peoples with a chance to develop their civilizations over many centuries, had a long time to tell stories to one another. In a pre-literate society, hearing is very acute. They placed a very high value on poetry, especially the epic poetry in which their myths were cast. The stories grew over time, and they captured essential themes.

No doubt the stories gave shape to a world which could be frightening. At its simplest level a mythology simply serves to stave off terror. Beliefs cover over our fear of the unknown. Today, for example, if we believe that Jesus, the government, technological advances, or help from outer space is going to solve the ecological crisis on the planet, we can avoid experiencing terror.

If the Greek myths were only a defense against terror, they would be no more significant for us than the beliefs of the Cargo Cult in New Guinea. But a well-elaborated myth system does something more: it reaches into the deeper levels of the human psyche and gives form to elements which lie at the bedrock of human existence. A human being dreams, and the dreams vary in importance. Some natter away about particulars, like indigestion, a troublesome project, or the need to urinate. Others wrestle with longer-range personal issues--conflicts, problems, and emerging forces. Still others are especially significant, like the dreams sought by youths among the Plains Indians, questing visions to guide them in life. And some dreams seem to step outside of the individual life entirely to communicate something of more general relevance. Such dreams remind us of art, which is supposed to give us Meanings which are more universal than the artist's personal neurosis.

So also with storytelling. The best stories express themes everyone can respond to--respond out of the mysterious and non-articulated feeling-level of the body. For dreaming is the way the body thinks. Can we say that myth-evolving is the way the social body thinks? Images are the pictures which the body forms out of its feelings. The gods were

born out of this process. The English poet, William Blake has this version of the growth of organized religion from poetic imagination:

"The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could perceive,

And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country, placing it under its mental deity;

Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects; thus began Priesthood;

Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.

And at length they pronounc'd that the Gods had order'd such things.

Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast."

The imaginal dimension was much more present in the consensual consciousness of those early people than it is today. By that I mean they moved more easily between the interior world of significance and the outer world of actuality. Nowadays we are likely to experience Significance only in very special circumstances such as when we fall in love. Then we sense Eternity in our feelings and Meaning in the incidental details of how we met. In pre-literate and prescientific societies this dimension is more readily available. Ego, the "I", is less separated from dream, and the felt significance of things is not lost.

Significance: a place can have a special feeling, a rock a special presence. The sky, when it thunders, must feel especially significant. This projection of a "genius" into a place may be humanity's first perception of the divine. More global deities probably came later, to be organized into mythological systems, and still later into theologies, creeds, and catechisms. Many of the gods of the Greeks were probably global deities, but of local peoples, put together in relationships which reflected which tribes came to have the greatest power. For example, Pan, which means "All", may have been the global deity of certain tribes of the Arcadians, the original inhabitants of Greece, Zeus seems to have been the deity of an invading people, the Dorian Greeks, who migrated in from the Eastern steppe, bringing with them this tribal sky-god. Since the Dorians were the winners, the Arcadian deities were redefined in relation to Zeus, the Dorian chief deity. Pan then assumed his goatish form and was given his place just outside the circle of the Olympian gods. Artemis may have been The Goddess in some agricultural locale before she took on more particular and limited traits as Zeus' daughter. [The Hebrews did something similar, bringing their tribal deity, Javeh, or Jehovah, in from the Sinai desert and relegating all the Canaanite deities to the position of demons.] Some writers have interpreted the available evidence as indicating that widespread worship of feminine deities in Greece preceded the patriarchal religion of the Dorians.<sup>12</sup>

The pantheon of Olympian gods was in place by Homeric times (around 1000 BCE., the same time King David was defeating the Philistines) These gods were more per-

sonalized, the centuries of storytelling having given them human qualities. Though "divine", they were not God in the sense that monotheistic religions understand the term. Theos means "immortal", and thus refers to unchanging elements which are always present in human experience regardless of accidental vicissitudes. They can be seen as expressing constants in the human psyche rather than representing Divine Consciousness itself. Were they then only projections of mundane human drama? Or are human dramas themselves expression of some deeper movement? If the latter is true, then the gods of the Greeks delineate figures of this movement, sharply drawn figures of internal elements. As Robert Johnson says: "Hera is always the jealous wife."<sup>13</sup> This, he adds, is why C. G. Jung found them so useful for understanding human psychology.

Today, following Jung, we would say they referred to "archetypes," deep patterns in the human psyche. Since they refer to archetypes, the stories have a general significance, far beyond the time and place of the Greek civilization. These are particular forms and faces given by Greek culture to the underlying patterns. Other mythologies seem to be expressing similar patterns with different names and different stories. For example, we can generally identify some figure in every mythology which has the characteristics of Hermes. This figure of cleverness nearly always combines the qualities of the guide, problem-solver, and messenger with those of the trickster and thief. Brazilian followers of Macumba, dancing out traditions brought over from Africa, regularly invite archetypal energies to possess them. And these are similar in quality to the gods of the Greeks. Similar

patterns can doubtless also be traced in the Judeo-Christian Bible, say, by examining the tradition of the patriarchs, or the archangels, but monotheism plays a heavy hand with mythology, and the full expression through storytelling, which might give flesh to the figures portrayed tends to be restricted.

As they are one source of our classical tradition, we can examine Greek myths to give us insight—their insight, at least—into the phenomena involved. This is especially true of Eros between men, since, as is well-known, the classical Greeks permitted much fuller expression to male relationship, made more room for it in their societal patterns, than has been the case in Europe and the West.

The Greek insight had its definite limits, however, which must be recognized. The most carefully elaborated understanding in that society concerned a rather specialized form of male relationship. This was between an older man, generally in his twenties (the “erastes”), and a “beardless boy” in early pubescence (the “eremenos”). It was a definitely hierarchical relationship. Although it could grow into equal friendship (*filia*), true equality in friendship was not fully developed in Greek thought. Another of their blind spots concerned effeminacy, which they considered shameful. Since there are special and important relationships which involve feminine or androgynous men, the Greeks have little to offer us here except opprobrium. Hence we cannot limit ourselves to Greek sources. An ancient myth from Sumer, a story from the Bible, and some historical figures, and some anthropological accounts are necessary to complete the picture.

<sup>1</sup> Several male psychotherapists I have asked have admitted that they occasionally get erections when their clients reach important and genuine moments of feeling.

<sup>2,3,4</sup> Paul Rosenfels, whose book *Homosexuality: the Psychology of the Creative Process*, is discussed in the next chapter, sees the attraction between one strong and one loving partner as fundamental to homosexual relationship.

<sup>5</sup> Retold by Apuleius in *The Golden Ass*, evidently from much earlier sources. It has been recounted as a myth of feminine development by Robert Johnson.

<sup>6</sup> Phaedrus, 252.

<sup>7</sup> Johnson, Robert. He.

<sup>8</sup> Johnson, Robert. She.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, Robert. We.

<sup>10</sup> Johnson, Robert. Ecstasy.

<sup>11</sup> *Goddesses in Every Woman*

<sup>12</sup> McAllister, Helen K.

<sup>13</sup> *Gods in Everyman*

<sup>14</sup> Downing, Christine *Myths and Mysteries of Same-sex Love*. New York: Continuum, 1989.

<sup>15</sup> Blake, William, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* etched about 1793.

<sup>17</sup> There was probably no actual Homer, but a gathering poetic tradition from at least 1000 bce, brought into the organized form used in the classical period by 550 bce.

<sup>18</sup> Johnson, Robert. Ecstasy

<sup>19</sup> Downing, Op cit., Ch. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Dover, K. J., *Greek Homosexuality*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978.

# 3

## "The Friend"

More than twenty years ago I turned to a man and said, "I've really been looking for a friend." My words amazed me. I had not planned to say them: they issued from some place deep within me in an odd voice, and I was trembling.

It was the right thing to say. He, too, had been dreaming of finding a friend, had written, in fact, a sonnet which began with the line, "I long to dream a dream of two as one." We fell into each others arms and spent the next several months, as Plato says, "lost in an amazement of love and friendship and intimacy..."<sup>3</sup> We established in those days a partnership which has lasted, through many vicissitudes, to this day.

The event had been long prepared. I had taken a long time to admit that I was looking for a male friend. This longing seemed organic to my nature, and over time the image had grown clearer: I wanted sensitive contact in which feeling could be exposed; I wanted intimacy. I wanted "to know and be known". I hadn't chosen my desire, only uncovered it.

As is the nature of such things, our meeting seemed very mythical. We had that sense of eternity and of Meaning (with a capital M) which reveals the presence of Soul. But what I remember most was how basic and primordial—how "archetypal" if you will—the very idea of "Friend" seemed to be. We knew it was deep: there seemed to be no limit to this kind of essential recognition, of disinterested love. It could extend to anyone, cross any boundaries. It was

larger than the limitations of ego. I felt we were opening up a domain which had existed between men since the beginning of time.

This wasn't about sex, although there was a healthy erotic attraction. Our instincts guided us to establish our friendship—our mutual knowing—carefully, on all levels.. We avoided discharging the energy between us in genital orgasm. Since then we have lived through many cycles, dumping illusions and learning subtleties of love. It is fortunate that our initial "contract", was to be friends. In fact the archetypal Idea was working for us. Had we called ourselves "lovers" we might not be together today, because we have not always been "in love." (I often think 'lover' sounds purely functional, like someone who is hired to take care of the plumbing. Surely when the function is no longer met, the relationship is over.) But "friendship is forever." The form can evolve;

There are certain abstract forms which seem to exist in the bedrock of the human psyche. Plato called them Ideas; Carl Jung called them "Archetypes" (arche = primary, type = form). These primary forms are invisible, but effective in molding our experience. An archetype is like a crystal which refracts light in a certain pattern. We know of an archetype only through its particular manifestations, but it will never be completely defined by any one of them. The same archetype may be expressed in very different myths of widely separated cultures. 'Home' is such a primary form. Every human being probably carries some image of home, a place to feel comfortable and safe, a place of one's own. Any one's image will be conditioned by the housing practices

of his society (from tipi to bungalow, from castle to condo), and by the joys and disappointments of his personal history. But 'Home' exists as a psychic element quite apart from these particulars: an archetype of safe haven.

'Friend' must surely be such an archetype. Quite apart from cultural or personal particulars, we all carry some notion of friendship, of deep intimacy and acceptance between two equal human beings.

Ask a Christian about "The Friend" and he will probably think of Jesus Christ, the understanding, compassionate, forgiving friend. Jesus made many statements which seem to touch upon friendship carried to the utmost extreme. This "friend" is willing to lay down his life for another. This "friend" understands that we human beings are all together: "[Whatever] ye have done unto the least of these, my brethren, ye do also unto me."<sup>1,2</sup> Again and again the stories of Jesus reflect compassionate understanding, soul-recognition, non-judgemental respect for the people he encounters. "Friend" would seem to be one of the faces of Christ. "Krishna" probably has similar associations for Hindus as does "Maitreya" for Buddhists, who emphasize compassion as one of the characteristics of the enlightened state. Could one argue that fully developed friendship is a form of worship?

What characteristics define this idea of Friendship? I would suggest there are four: Recognition, Equality, Attraction, and Creativity.

Recognition: Friendship manifests itself as some degree of intimacy, of recognition, of knowing and being known. Someone bears witness to our existence, and we to theirs.

We will see that recognition is desperately important at certain times. How we develop is often determined by what someone else sees in us. In mentoring relationships this recognition is an essential element.

Equality: "Friendship" implies equality, a bond between equals. There may be important differences between two friends, but at bottom they feel themselves to be equal at the core. This is Essential equality : there will be much more to say about it, because it is at the center of what makes friendship spiritual and creative. Big differences in money or power may make real friendship problematical.

Attraction: Unless you are attracted, you will never spend enough time with someone to form a friendship. This desire to draw closer is erotic whether it is the cast of intelligence, the physical shape, the athletic prowess or some other aspect which draws us. This is what I am calling Eros. Not all eros leads to friendship, of course. .

Creativity: This is what we do as a result of the friendship. Socrates says (approximately) where love is of the mind, the outcome is poetry and philosophy, meaning that men have their own way of being pregnant and bearing offspring together. Sometimes the creativity is in sports or mutual assistance. Creativity is an important criteria for judging the success of a friendship.

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Friendship is clearly not one phenomenon: there is no one myth which could possibly cover it in all its aspects. The twin, the brother, the partner, the companion, the "other half", the boyhood chum, the equal: these are all friendships,

but with very different qualities. There are differences in maturity and depth. Friendship between boys must be different from the friendship between men. Many friendships involve older and younger males. The themes underlying these friendships are sufficiently distinct that I have set them apart in separate chapters for Mentor/Protegé, and for Zeus/Ganymede.

Vast differences in money or power may render the equality of friendship impossible. They are at least problematical, because manipulation and distrust so easily creep in. The friendship between mentor and protegé is a special, temporary relationship based on a difference in power, but implies that the younger person will develop a more equal power as a result of the relationship.

There are differences in the emotional intensity of friendships, from the most casual to the most romantically passionate. There are crucial differences in the way friends define their friendship: some see themselves as identical twins, as doubles of one another, while others see themselves as different or even opposites which complement each other. All these themes have their mythical expression.

In this chapter I have selected several stories and myths for the information they can give us about intimate friendship between equals. Clearly we are in an ancient and honorable company.

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#### GILGAMESH AND ENKIDU

It is significant that male friendship is a major theme of one of the oldest and most influential works in literature. The Epic of Gilgamesh is a Babylonian poem dating from about 2000 B.C.E. Comprising many earlier elements of myth and folklore, it enjoyed immense popularity from the apogee of Babylon through Roman times—more than 2000 years. For all of that time people referred to it frequently and quoted it in other literature. Its major theme is a heroic struggle to come to terms with death.

This quest for immortality, a common preoccupation of myth, begins with a male partnership. Gilgamesh and Enkidu are sworn, eternal, bosom friends. It is because Enkidu dies that Gilgamesh begins seeking immortality.

The story of their meeting is powerful. Gilgamesh was created by a goddess, Aruru. He is semi-divine, and he is the king of Uruk, a small walled city of early agriculture times, prominent in the history of Babylon, now known to us as Iraq. The city contains a section for dwellings, a section for orchards, and a large, uncultivated tract with a temple to Ishtar, the chief goddess, and Anu, the head god. Being semi-divine, Gilgamesh has lots of energy; in fact he never sleeps. He keeps all the girls of the town up all night ("He leaves no virgin to her lover"), and, in his enormous thirst for public works, he conscripts all the young men of the town for his building projects.<sup>5</sup>

The people of Uruk are worn out by Gilgamesh ("Day and night his outrageousness continues unrestrained"), yet they recognize that he is shepherd of their city, and they value his strength. So, they pray to Aruru as follows:

"You who created Gilgamesh, now create his equal, To the impetuosity of his heart, let him be equal.

Let them ever strive with each other, and let Uruk thus have rest."<sup>6</sup>

Those people know a thing or two about male friends! Aruru, "conceiving the image of Anu (the god) in her heart", creates Enkidu out of clay, which she casts out on the steppes. He looks very wild. He has hair all over his body, and "the hair of his head is like that of a woman." He runs wild with the animals, This archetypal natural man is going to be Gilgamesh's other half.

A hunter sees him and is distressed. Enkidu is saving all the animals from his hunting and his traps. He complains about the situation to his father who suggests he take a courtesan out to Enkidu. Once he has mated with a woman, the animals will avoid him.

That is exactly what happened. The translator primly shifts to Latin when describing their appropriately heroic coition, but generally we get the idea that they spent six days and seven very active nights together. And sure enough, the animals will no longer have anything to do with Enkidu.

"It caused Enkidu to hesitate, rigid was his body. His knees failed, because his game ran away. No longer able to run as before, he slackened his pace. But he had intelligence, wide was his understanding."<sup>7</sup>

He went and sat at the feet of the courtesan, and he listened to her words:

"Why do you run around with the animals on the steppe? Come, I will take you to Uruk. . . Gilgamesh lives there. He is perfect in strength, and prevails over men like a wild ox. . . "He is seeking a friend, one who understands his heart."<sup>8</sup>

Enkidu likes the idea. He thinks he might to try his strength there.

"I will summon him and speak boldly. I will cry out in Uruk 'I am the strongest'. I will change the order of things. I who was born on the steppes am stronger than he is."<sup>9</sup>

The courtesan adds further enticing description of Gilgamesh:

"I will show you Gilgamesh, a joyful man.  
Look at him, behold his face;  
Comely is his manhood, endowed with vigor.  
The whole of his body is adorned with pleasure.  
He has greater strength than you. . .  
So temper your arrogance, Enkidu.  
The gods have given him wide understanding:  
Before you get there he will have seen you in  
dreams."<sup>10</sup>

What a setup! And Gilgamesh has indeed dreamed two dreams which he brings to his divine mother for interpretation. In one, a star fell from the sky. As everyone in Uruk watched, he tried to lift it or move it, but could not. He brought the star before his dream-mother and "bent over it like a woman." His mother then "put it on a par" with him.<sup>11</sup> Her interpretation was this:

"Your equal is the star of heaven. . . which you put at my feet, which I myself put on a par

with you, and over which you did bend as over a woman... He is a strong companion, one who helps a friend in need. He is the strongest in the steppe, strong as the host of heaven. That you bent over him as over a woman means that he will never forsake you."<sup>12</sup>

The second dream was similar. He found an ax in Uruk, and as everybody watched, he laid it at his mother's feet and "bent over it like a woman," and she again "put it on a par" with him.<sup>9</sup> Her interpretation:

"The ax you saw is a man. That you bent over him like a woman, that I myself put him on a par with you, means that he is a strong companion, one who helps a friend in need...strongest in the steppe, strong as the host of heaven."<sup>13</sup> "When you see him, you will rejoice as over a woman."<sup>14</sup>

After another six days and seven nights (in Latin) with the courtesan, Enkidu sets off for Uruk. A man complains to him about Gilgamesh's appropriation of all the women, in this case his daughter, at which Enkidu becomes indignant. Seeing that Gilgamesh is about to join his bride of the night, he blocks the doorway, and they have a terrific fight. Rolling all over the street, shattering the doorway, rocking the walls of the house, they wrestle like bulls until Gilgamesh apparently triumphs: "Gilgamesh bent over, with his foot on the ground; His fury abated, and he turned away." Enkidu then speaks to him in exalting terms, adding "why do you desire to do this thing? I want you to come with me into the forests," whereupon they kiss and form a friendship.<sup>15</sup>

They undertake various exploits together, but eventually Enkidu has a series of dreams which reveal to him that the

gods, outraged at one of their acts, have decreed his death. Lying on his bed, he gradually grows weaker until he dies. Gilgamesh cries and chants and prays over the body for nine days but is unable to bring Enkidu to life. He then undertakes his epic search for immortality, ultimately reaching the conclusion that no action however heroic can achieve immortality. One must accept that one is going to die and proceed to live as well as one can.

What was the cause of Enkidu's death? It was punishment by the gods, because Gilgamesh had spurned the advances of the Great Goddess, Ishtar. He had asked why he should want to come with her since her many previous lovers had all been destroyed. Incensed, she called down the bull of heaven to destroy him, but the two heroes killed the bull and taunted the goddess. Then Enkidu began to have dreams that the gods had agreed that one of them must die as punishment, and he grew ill.

This is strong stuff. Gargantuan heroes—a semi-divine king and a wild man of nature—a life of heroic adventure together—and fatal revenge by a Goddess.

Equality is the ever-recurring theme of this friendship. The exhausted citizens of Uruk prayed for someone equal to Gilgamesh so that they would strive with each other and leave their sons and daughters alone. In the dreams, Gilgamesh's mother put the star and the ax, both symbols of the coming friend "on a par", that is "equal" with Gilgamesh. Their fight established that they were nearly equal in strength, and then they had their flash of recognition.

Gilgamesh and Enkidu emerged from their fight as equals. Each had tasted the other's strength, the timbre

of his limbs, the odor of his sweat, the style of his combat. This intimate savoring brought about an essential step, the recognition between them.

Narcissism, the inability to step out of personal preoccupation to relate truly to another human being, may be a present-day psychological epidemic, but narcissism was not invented yesterday. Gilgamesh, with his nightly ladies, was stuck in his own self-preoccupation. He wasn't coming across, really, not relating outside of his own needs. After all, those virgins had other boys who interested them; the young men had their own fields to plant. True recognition takes place when two people really begin to relate outside of narcissism:

Once, in my early twenties, I took a beautiful girl out to a place in the mountains by moonlight, and we began to kiss. I knew she was attracted to me, and, at the beginning of that kiss, I expected we would make love, and another gratifying experience would be added to my list; another conquest would demonstrate my desirability. Some time during the kiss I suddenly realized that she was fully as real as myself! It was an extraordinary moment. I really felt her there. That was my first surrender in love.

Stepping out of narcissism feels like that. Someone else is fully real! As Oscar Ichazo says, "Love is the recognition of the same consciousness in another as in oneself."<sup>19</sup>

Were Gilgamesh and Enkidu sexual together? The Jungian commentator, Yolanda speculates that their homosexuality was part of the differentiation of the masculine psyche from its earlier engulfment in the matriarchal feminine. In other words, men got interested in other men as part of a

movement out of an earlier consciousness. The sexuality of the story seems a great deal less complicated than that of the later Greeks or Romans. In the dreams Gilgamesh "bends over [him] as over a woman." His goddess-mother interprets this to mean (1) the friend will never leave him and (2) he will "rejoice over him as he would over a woman"

We can only speculate what this 'bending over' meant to the Babylonians, but at least we can assume that strong physical contact assured that they would become deeply involved with one another. After the wrestling match, in which Enkidu prevented Gilgamesh from going in to his woman, they kissed and formed a friendship. After that, there is no more mention of either having sexual contact with women. Their erotic bond was with each other.

The exclusion of the feminine eventually proves to be disastrous. When Gilgamesh spurned the advances of the Goddess Ishtar, Enkidu died as a result. Does this mean it is dangerous for men to leave out some relationship also with the feminine? Does this mean actual females, or some archetypal feminine (Goddess), or the feminine within themselves?

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#### DAVID AND JONATHAN

The most famous friendship in history must be that between David and Jonathan which is recorded in the Old Testament. At its beginning, David had just succeeded in killing Goliath, a huge and powerful man, the champion of the Philistine army which was menacing Saul and his kingdom. Jonathan was a mature and seasoned warrior. David

had been brought before Jonathan's father, King Saul, when a profound and wonderful movement of Eros occurred. The Bible describes it thus:

It came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.<sup>20</sup>

Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.<sup>21</sup>

King Saul saw David more as a rival than an ally. He became more and more threatened by David and several times planned to kill him, Jonathan repeatedly shielded his friend and helped him escape. Once Saul accused Jonathan of having a shameful, presumably sexual, liaison with David:

Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?"<sup>22</sup>

Eventually both Saul and Jonathan were killed. Finding them dead, David made his famous funeral oration:

"How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thy high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: Very pleasant hast thou been unto me: Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."<sup>23</sup>

### The Theme of Soul-Recognition

In the initial recognition, Jonathan's soul was "knit with that of David," and the theme of soul is introduced. Then it is repeated several times in the text that Jonathan loved David "as his own soul." This emphasis on soul represents a deepening in psychological consciousness beyond anything described in Gilgamesh.

The historical events described in this myth occurred shortly before 1000 B.C.E. It may be that the concept of friendship had evolved since Gilgamesh, which originated a few hundred miles away, but a thousand years earlier. In Gilgamesh the friends were boon companions who delighted in one another, but their way of being together seems more active and physical, rather than deeply reflective. In the Bible, we are poignantly aware of how moved Jonathan was by his first sight of David. Later, his protection of David is quite clearly seen as counter to his own political and familial interests. David, of course, is the most personal of heroes, intimately seen in his psalms, and in his expression of grief quoted earlier. These are people, not heroic monoliths or mythical ciphers. Has the concept and feeling of soul grown in those thousand years? Has friendship deepened?

Jonathan was clearly older than David, since his exploits as a brave and seasoned warrior are recounted in Samuel I as having occurred before the appearance of the youthful David. He was also the son and the apparent heir of Saul, the anointed king. However, David's victory against Goliath would have evened the field, and the quality of relationship seems to imply equality. To love David "as his own soul" means that Jonathan saw him as an equal on the essential

level. David was the beloved, and Jonathan the lover: this seems clear since over and over again we hear of Jonathan's love, whereas David is always the recipient. In the end David acknowledges it beautifully: "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

Apart from the initial scene in which Jonathan shares his clothing with David, we have very little picture of their interaction. Most of the narrative is concerned with how Jonathan protected David from his father. This occurs in several phases. He helps David hide. He chides Saul for being unfair to David. He carries out a plan to test Saul's real motives toward David, and ultimately helps David to escape. All this is counter to his own interests as Saul's heir.

Saul

Saul, of course, was in a classical dilemma. He must have felt the Eros. If a young hero has just brought about the defeat of one's major enemy is he not going to appear beautiful in one's eyes? But that may have been just the difficulty: David was too beautiful: Saul could see that, and when the people were singing "Saul has slain his thousands, but David has slain his ten thousands"<sup>15</sup> it was only what Saul already knew: David was better than him and more blessed in God's eyes.

Saul missed his chance to love David. He was attached to his power, and he was threatened by David—by his very beauty and strength. He contracted, and the love became hatred, which is surely another face of eros, or love in its contracted form. He became jealous and murderously competitive. The game became one of power rather than of love.

As with all great myths, we can read the story of these three men either as an external story, referring to external events and guiding us in external behaviors—or as an internal story, the figures of David, Jonathan, and the threatened old king (ego) being internal figures in our personal dramas. In either case, we can see the role of power and competition in subverting love and leading, ultimately, to disaster.

#### ACHILLES & PATROCLUS: LIMITS OF THE GREEK MODEL

For the Greeks, the classical story of love between men was that of Achilles and Patroclus in Homer's *Iliad*, which was compiled at about the same time as the Old Testament account of David and Jonathan. Achilles, the hero of the Greek party in the Trojan war, had an intense bond of friendship with Patroclus. When his companion was killed Achilles was beside himself with grief, leading him back into the fray and to kill Hector, the champion of the Trojans, in an atrocious manner.

For us the most significant aspect of this story is that the relationship was apparently one of love between equals rather than the initiatory, erastes-eremenos model of later Greek thought. By the time of the classical age (ca. 500 BCE) the Greeks had come to focus on a quite specialized pattern of Eros between males, much idealized, and for which strict social guidelines had been established. In this relationship, an older male, usually in his twenties, became attracted to a younger one, a "beardless" youth. It was an educational model, since the "erastes", the elder male, undertook the training of the "eremenos", the younger, and did so with the permission of the boy's father. It was understood to be a sexual relationship, in that the older male was expected

to penetrate the younger in anal intercourse. Later, when the boy matured, the relationship might change from one of "Eros" to "filia", friendship, and presumably their sexuality would disappear along with their Eros. This was the approved model, and in fact the Greeks had rather little to say about love between equals.

This seems to stem from a certain attitude the Greeks had toward sexuality.<sup>24</sup> Today we would call them 'macho'. Sexuality was conceived in quite phallic terms. The man had the phallus, and with it he penetrated other people—women, boys, slaves. He had the only power that mattered. It was a sexuality of domination and hierarchy in which a more mutual sexuality was not part of the picture. The yang, penetrating sexuality of the older man was without shame. For him to offer himself more receptively would have been shameful. It was alright for the boy to allow himself to be penetrated out of friendship, but he was not expected to enjoy or desire it, just as women were forbidden to express hot desire. After the boy matured, he was certainly not expected to continue to submit.

Other aspects of the Greek understanding are stiffly conventional. The younger male must surely be the beloved, since if he pursues the elder he would be lascivious. The older male must be the lover, since to him belongs the initiative. When they mature, the erotic relationship is replaced by friendship, "filia" about which the culture has far less to say. At any rate, it must not be sexual, since for either of them to "submit" would be shameful and unmanly.

Thus the Greeks offer us little insight into more reciprocal relations between men. It is interesting to see this played

out in the various later reactions to the Achilles-Patroclus tale. There is an attempt to make the friendship fit the erastes-eremenos model. In Plato's Symposium Phaedrus goes to some length to establish which of the pair was the beloved and which the lover.<sup>17</sup> As Downing says, "The very discussion about who played which role shows how poorly they fit the [erastes-eremenos] model. . ."<sup>25</sup>

There were also differences of opinion as to whether Achilles and Patroclus were sexual lovers. Homer uses the word "filia" and leaves the issue ambiguous. Xenophon denies that they were sexual lovers. Later Greeks seem to have assumed their sexuality. There are fragments from Aeschylus in which Achilles speaks to the dead Patroclus of lovemaking, kisses, and "god-fearing intercourse with your thighs"<sup>26</sup>

So Achilles and Patroclus add little to our understanding of male friendship except to point to the limitations of the later, classical Greek model, which could not handle them. It is interesting, too, that the Homeric account, though contemporary with the David/Jonathan story, lacks its interior psychological consciousness. This difference between the Greek focus on details of external reality as contrasted with the Hebrew attention to internal and moral realities has been noted by various authors.

#### FRIENDSHIP IN TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES

Mutual, life-long friendship between men of the same age receives its most exquisite expression in the anthropological literature. Robert Brain has written a valuable survey of friendship in many cultures.<sup>20</sup> In many of them, including the Bangwa and other African tribes which he

himself visited, male friendship is an open and passionate thing. "Best friends" walk hand-in-hand, sleep together, and share deep intimacies which are supported and expected by the society. A Nzema man might take such a friend as his "wife" in a formal ceremony of "marriage," yet both of them marry women as well. The range of his information is extensive, and certainly valuable for the study of friendship. The ethnographic data encompass a tremendous range of possible patterns. Many of these people experience Eros of the kind I have been calling "global," and which includes deep feeling and sensuality without sexual focus.

Brain seems to have a rather puritanical view of sexuality in friendship. He is convinced that hardly any of these friends are sexual together. He states as a "well-known" fact that sex destroys friendship. One wonders whether there was more sexual expression between these male partners than Brain was aware of, simply because, in global Eros, sex is not given so much importance. There are forms of soft sexuality, of gentle fondling or friendly caress which might not have seemed worthy of mention when he questioned them. They may not have recognized in themselves the sexuality he had in mind.

From the ethnographic evidence, then, bonded friendship, permanent and intense, between males of the same age, is common in many traditional societies. Such societies have clearly accepted cultural patterns defining these relationships. What sexuality is involved in them is ambiguous, but the extreme degree of their intimacy is apparent.

## ARISTOPHANES' TWIN SOULS

Two people in a relationship may think of themselves as being the same, like twins, or as different people who complement one another. The idea of twin souls expresses the longing for a friendship in which differences are dissolved in total intimacy. The classical myth of twin souls was recounted by Aristophanes at the banquet portrayed in Plato's Symposium. The guests had agreed to give speeches on the subject of love, and Aristophanes gave his myth of twin souls as his contribution. In the beginning, he said, human beings were round, being composed of two men, two women, or a man and a woman, with four legs, four arms and two faces on a single head. "Terrible was their might and strength, and the thoughts of their hearts were great, and they made an attack upon the gods." The gods could not suffer their insolence to be unrestrained, and so Zeus split them in half "as you might divide an egg with a hair."

After the division the two parts of man, each desiring his other half, came together, and throwing their arms about one another, entwined in mutual embraces, longing to grow into one; they were on the point of dying from hunger and self-neglect because they did not like to do anything apart; and when one of the halves died...the survivor sought another mate... and clung to that. They were being destroyed, when Zeus in pity of them invented a new plan: he turned the parts of generation round to the front. . .and they sowed the seed... in one another; and. . .the male generated in the female in order that by the mutual embraces of man and woman they might breed, and the race might continue; or if man came to

man they might be satisfied, and rest, and go their ways to the business of life: so ancient is the desire of one another which is implanted in us, reuniting our original nature, making one of two, and healing the state of man.

"Each of us when separated, having one side only. . .is always looking for his other half. Men who are a section of that double nature which was once called androgynous are lovers of women. . . The women who are a section of the woman do not care for men, but have female attachments... But they who are a section of the male follow the male, and while they are young. . .they hang about men and embrace them, and they are themselves the best of boys and youths, because they have the most manly nature. Some indeed assert that they are shameless, but this is not true; for they do not act thus from any want of shame, but because they are valiant and manly, and have a manly countenance, and they embrace that which is like them. . .When they reach manhood they are lovers of youth, and are not naturally inclined to marry or beget children. . .but they are satisfied if they may be allowed to live with one another unwed; and such a nature is prone to love and ready to return love, always embracing that which is akin to him. And when one of them meets with his other half, the actual half of himself, whether he be a lover of youth or a lover of another sort, the pair are lost in an amazement of love and friendship and intimacy, and one will not be out of the other's sight, as I may say, even for a moment: these are the people who pass their whole lives together; yet they could not explain what they desire of one another. For the intense yearning which each of

them has towards the other does not appear to be the desire of lover's intercourse, but of something else which the soul of either evidently desires and cannot tell, and of which she has only a dark and doubtful presentiment. . .There is not a man of them who. . . would not acknowledge that this meeting and melting into one another, this becoming one instead of two, was the very expression of his ancient need."

This is the statement of a classic fantasy, a dream in which one's separate existence is dissolved into a union of two-as-one. Aristophanes was probably correct in calling it "the very expression of an ancient need" for many people. Loneliness is gone; there is always the other; they are two parts of the same thing. It is a beautiful ideal, but, translated into literal expectations in an actual relationship, it can lead to painful disappointments. This degree of mutual identity is probably impossible.

This was the hardest thing to give up. When we first got together we expected to be like twins. Gradually we learned how different we are. We really see things quite differently. It was painful, and when my friend remarked about it I denied and protested. I did not want to feel that we were fundamentally different. Gradually we have come to accept it. We engage in quite different activities, pursue quite different interests. We allow our different abilities to supplement one another. It is quite a change in the way I see him, too. I feel as if I see him more as a person, less as an extension of myself. I am less threatened by what he does, and I see his flaws and weaknesses with greater acceptance. I can let him be himself.

Actual twins often have a beautiful intimacy which non-twins can only yearn for:

Miles and Nyah, identical teenage twins, are playing a game on my computer. The game involves highly coordinated action against an "enemy" dropping from the sky. Using the mouse and the keyboard they must fire and escape, fire and escape. They are sitting thigh-to-thigh peering into the screen. When one is manipulating the mouse, the other looks on, giving directions. They communicate in monosyllables, exchanging information with minor cues which an onlooker can barely understand. I am amazed at their unity. They are so attuned they seem to have no boundary between them.

However, even actual identical twins must eventually make some move to separate. Some go to great lengths to be different, even shutting each other out of their lives.

The distinction between complementarity or similarity, friends or twins, may be important in predicting how mature and healthy a friendship is. Friendship based on the model of twinship implies being virtually alike, communication between two people who are really the same. There is obviously a danger here of narcissistic projection which fails to see the full, independent reality of the other partner. On the other hand, the assumption of twinship may produce especially deep experiences of union and empathy between the partners.

At Esalen Institute in Big Sur in 1967 a small group of us were interested in exploring "Group Mind." We decided to assume we were a single organism. We stayed together for several days exploring this assumption, and all of us were con-

vinced that very deep levels of communication and unity were taking place. Later we tried the same rules in workshops involving other people, and always the bonding of the participants was intense. Several marriages and many long-term friendships had their beginning in these workshops.

Here the assumption of sameness was made across a small group, but the effect was to promote extreme closeness.

It may well be that friendships which are based on a fantasy of being twins or, as Mitch Walker calls it "The Double"<sup>30</sup> are less mature than the model of complementarity. The projection of twinship between friends can express infantile longings from a very early level of development, in which self-other boundaries are dissolved in blissful union. The baby at the breast is existing in this soup of sameness with the mother. Reenactment of the nursing scene in an adult friendship may contain elements of omnipotence, and magical control which are detrimental to actually dealing with external reality. One of the "twins" can easily be suppressing the actuality of the other partner.

In BWMT, an organization of black and white men, generally gay, I met a male couple who made a point of dressing alike, and apparently were attempting to maximize their similarity. I thought the idea of dressing alike was rather appealing until I became aware that the more extroverted of the two, an evangelizing minister, seemed to be overwhelming and suppressing his more quiet partner.

It is quite possible for two people enacting this myth not to step outside of pure narcissism, never to relate fully as separate human beings. Foundering relationships often

involve elements of the twinship fantasy which need to be given up. Twinship can easily mean that the partners do not really see one another apart from narcissistic projections. Then one or both of them may feel unrecognized or unseen in themselves. Often they sad or angry because their expectations of undifferentiated, strifeless intimacy have been disappointed.

A complementary relationship, between two equals who are different, hinges on the idea filling in for one another, each having individual characteristics which he brings to the union. Gilgamesh and Enkidu, David and Jonathan, Hector and Patroclus are each quite different from his partner.

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## CASTOR AND POLLUX: THE TWINS WITHIN

The motif of twinship is given another twist in the myth of Castor and Pollux, who were the sons of Leda, a mortal woman, and Zeus (or another god, Tyndareus). In the most common tale Castor is mortal, while Pollux is immortal. After sailing with the Argonauts and many other adventures, Castor was killed in a fight. Pollux begged his father Zeus to let him share his immortality with his brother. This wish being granted, they spend one day together in Heaven, the next in Hades. They are the twin stars in the constellation of Gemini.

This may be a special form of the twin myth, one which speaks to an internal relationship within the psyche. The special problem of one partner being mortal, the other immortal, which we saw in the Gilgamesh Epic, is taken up again in a different way. Here the resolution was not simply

to accept death, but to remain together, alternating between the sky and the underworld.

Austin Delany<sup>31</sup> has developed this myth to explain a very special inner relationship, between the dreaming and the waking egos. Ego is that part of the psyche which can call itself "I". When I am awake my experience is organized around this "I": "I" am having this experience. When I am dreaming I also experience myself as "I". Seemingly it is the same. But a problem arises because one "I" does not always remember the experience of the other.

It is a common experience to waken with a dream so fresh that it seems impossible to forget. People who write their dreams down are sometimes tempted not to do so because so clear a dream seems surely to be remembered. But often the dream is lost, inaccessible to the ego when awake. Can it be the same "I" that experienced the dream yet does not remember it?

The two egos have different skills. In my dreams "I" can fly, for example, and there are doubtless other skills I have for moving in the dream realm. My waking ego has quite other skills, for keeping waking reality under organization and control, for driving a car, for going to the grocery store in external, actual space which does not dissolve and become somewhere else while I am getting there.

If the two "I's" have different skills and do not remember each other's experience, they are arguably different--the fundamental "multiple personality," as it were. Then the question arises as to their relationship.

Returning to the myth with this in mind, one twin, being mortal, died and went to Hades, the underworld,

the land of the dead. Ancient people did not distinguish much between the realm of dream and the realm of death. In both the shades move, subject only to psychic energy, unlimited, and therefore unchallenged, by constraints of material reality. The light is dim, or at least different from the sunlight of waking consciousness. The transition into death has many dreamlike images, as people returned from near-death experiences tell us. Tibetan Buddhism calls the transition zone the "Bardo", and has developed detailed maps for guiding the departed soul through its initial steps. It is the territory between death and rebirth. A strong and developed "I" can traverse this space without falling prey to fears and resistances which would result in rebirth rather than release into immortal Being. Since meditation can be seen, in part, as learning to remain conscious at the margin between waking and dreaming consciousness, much of the Buddhist's training seems to be preparation for joining the two.

Since Castor was mortal, he went to Hades, while Pollux remained on earth. Zeus, the sky-God, and thus the archetype of waking consciousness itself, responded to his petition to rejoin his twin. In alternating between the heavens and the underworld, they too, like the meditators, come to be able to dwell in either realm.

In a human psyche this may be a model for full integration and individuation. As a myth it suggests that the Eros in certain friendships, especially where the urge is to be like twins, may be projected from a deeper mystery, the relation between the two "I's" within oneself. The pain and necessary disappointment which comes in all such relation-

ships—who can find a perfect twin?—can find its resolution in cultivating this other twinship within.

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#### FEMININITY

I haven't the slightest intention of doing justice to the full topic of what we now call 'The Feminine', but one or two small topics raise themselves at this point in a chapter on male friendship. The first is that sometimes the attraction of another man is a feminine attraction, or the attraction exerted by his femininity. These days a host of feminist flags go up, since women quite rightly resist definitions of femininity which might be limiting. I cannot define it, except to point to attractions which take place because a man or boy is willing to open, receive, melt and yield. He is temporarily able to suspend the active, assertive male role which is likely to have been his training. He becomes "yin" in the sense of opening and making receptive space. Boys do this when they want the guidance or recognition of a grown man. Men do it with other men in a variety of circumstances.

Furthermore, some men are particularly aware of a woman-like portion in their sense of themselves. These men have a particularly strong identification with women. Many relationships take place across the polarity of a male-female difference even when both parties are men.

The Greeks, in their macho celebration of phallic sexuality, were contemptuous of femininity, especially in men. Yet it has always and everywhere been the case that some men feel themselves to be more feminine than masculine. What

the Greeks did not address is that femininity in a male can exert a powerful attraction on other men. And truly, it is not without its initial terrors:

When I was younger I detested effeminate men: I felt uncomfortable around them and wanted to attack or harm them. When I finally understood more about Shadow, I acknowledged I might be attacking some unacceptable element in myself. I had to look at my own sissy-hood.

In consequence I realized that I am strongly attracted to feminine men. Men who have crossed childhood as "sissies" have suffered a great deal, and they are sometimes very strong. Their femininity can give them a real understanding of women plus a woman's understanding of men. A transvestite, such as theatrical female impersonators, are fascinating to me. They seem amazingly strong, just having the courage of their deviancy. They have been through a lot, and sometimes it has made them wise and clever. Their androgyny seems like an access to almost magical power.

The literature of effeminacy is a complex one, involving many inconsequential and niggling issues which I will chose to skirt. It seems to me that Carl Jung's concept of 'anima' yields some clues. Anima, ("soul" in Latin,) is for Jung the contra-sexual archetype within a man. It is the agglomeration of impressions of the opposite sex which a man has acquired in the course of his life, and it is his gateway to feelings and deeper understanding of himself. In other words, a man's soul is feminine--He is masculine on the outside, feminine on the inside. To become more complete, most men need to gain access to interior femininity, to acquire richness of feeling and human connection. The

anima is also the source of dreams and deep understanding of oneself: in a word, the soul.

In effeminate men, this pattern may be inverted. The exterior personality has identified with the feminine. For such men the path to more internal growth and completeness is to gain access to an interior masculinity, find force and initiative to supplement the feeling and sensitivity of their frontal being. When they succeed in doing this, they bring the two elements together in a combination which is often very powerful. Recent publications on 'androgyny' suggest that there is power inherent in the combination, much as yogic or alchemical trainings undertake to bring masculine and feminine principles together in an "internal marriage."<sup>33</sup>

Native American tribes are said to have made a role for men who felt attracted to women's work, or even wore women's clothes. Early European explorers called these men "Berdache."<sup>34</sup> Here the female vocation is heralded for the boy in dreams. A warrior might visit such a man-woman before a battle, or even become a husband to him.

This is only to say that "feminine" men are often attractive to "masculine" ones, and that the pattern has existed since the beginnings of history. When the young Greek man was attracted to his beardless boy, he was attracted to that special ambiguity of gender which young boys possess. As the boy grew older and more masculine, he was less erotic. Hence even the Greeks were attracted to the femininity in other males --if only to train it out of them.

In Native American myths, the 'berdache' is seen as sensitive, especially creative, and sometimes even as magical.

['Berdache' is a highly unsatisfactory term, one which was borrowed by European observers from the Turkish word for catemite, or 'boy-toy'. Obviously these native American androgynes deserve more respect.] There are stories in which the berdache brings men and women together, since he alone can understand both. Practicing a woman's crafts, the berdache is especially skilled in them. Finally, the berdache may be a shaman, or magician. Indeed, shamans among many traditional peoples around the world, are expected to be feminine and often homosexual. A shaman is someone who moves easily and safely in the inner realm of dream and image. He may use this skill to diagnose and treat soul-related illnesses, or he may bring back useful intuitive information for the tribe. His femininity, or rather his androgyny, is seen by these tribes as part of the talent which unlocks the mysteries, which gives him access to these realms.<sup>25</sup> What of the warrior who husbands such a man? Perhaps he gives grounding and stability in the outer realm so that the berdache is safe to traverse his special internal territory.

A man who is explicitly enacting a female identity, as in transvestism, often induces awe in other people. Something deep is being touched, something uncanny. Camille Paglia touches on this in her caustic review of an inadequate book on the subject:

The time is right for a major scholarly book on transvestism that would speak in lucid, sensible language to a general audience. Since the psychedelic Sixties dissolved the rigid sex roles of the Fifties, we have been in a maelstrom of gender. Androgyny, the promise of the Seventies, has

ceased to satisfy, as each sex searches for its lost identity. Homosexuality, more common as well as more visible, is part of this movement for sexual self-knowledge and self-definition.

The drag queen has emerged in America in the Nineties as a symbol of our sexual crisis. A pagan priest whose ancestry is in the ancient cults of the Great Mother, the drag queen defies victim-centered feminism by asserting the dominance of woman in the universe. With geisha-like sophistication of gesture and costume, sometimes elegant, sometimes comic or phantasmic, the drag queen re-creates the dreamlike artifice of culture that conceals the darker mysteries of biology.

. . .The drag queen ritually acts out and exorcises our confusions and longings. But the shaman with secret knowledge is often vilified, outcast. [R]educing transvestism to politics or vaudeville. . . never catches its uncanniness, its dangerous magic.<sup>36</sup>

The man, then, who can enact femininity in this degree has crossed over some boundary which limits most males. He may simply stretch the limits of fear or he may actively explore the unknown, the archetypal and the uncanny. He may find the key to special mysteries, as in shamanism. He may be vilified or he may inspire awe, but he can hardly fail to draw our wondering attention.

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#### THE LOVER AND THE BELOVED

Ours is an egalitarian age, and we are often reluctant to look upon love relationships as other than fully symmetrical. The Greeks made a much finer discrimination between

the Lover and the Beloved. In their classical relationship between the older male, the erastes, and the younger, the eremenos, it is the former who loves (eros) and who approaches. The boy is the beloved, and he may or may not respond with love in return (anteros). Is this model useful in all relationships? Certainly in some it serves us well.

Recently I was with a friend, a little senior to me, with whom I had been quite close several years earlier. For some reason I had been very touchy with him then, and I had often been puzzled as to why. This time we lounged together talking, and I felt funny: young, almost like a boy. I also felt less attracted by our contact, and at the same time guilty about not feeling more. Suddenly I realized that he was the lover and I the beloved. I am rather used to being the lover. I am much less used to being the beloved, and this had been the reason for my touchiness in the earlier phase of our relationship.

I find this passage in Somerset Maugham's *Summing Up* which expresses his dilemma:

Though I have been in love a good many times I have never experienced the bliss of requited love. I know that this is the best thing that life can offer and it is a thing that almost all men, though perhaps only for a short time, have enjoyed. I have most loved people who cared little or nothing for me and when people have loved me I have been embarrassed. It has been a predicament that I have not quite known how to deal with. In order not to hurt their feelings I have often acted a passion that I did not feel. I have tried, with gentleness when possible, and if not, with irritation, to escape from the trammels with which their love bound

me. I have been jealous of my independence. I am incapable of complete surrender. And so, never having felt some of the fundamental emotions of normal men, it is impossible that my work should have the intimacy, the broad human touch and the animal serenity which the greatest writers alone can give.<sup>37</sup>

There appear to be people who carry the Lover role quite comfortably, while others are found usually enacting the Beloved. There are advantages and disadvantages to each.

The lover, of course, has the advantage of initiative, based on his original attraction. He chooses whom he approaches. He chooses to love, and he chooses what to love in his beloved. His disadvantage is that he is exposed and vulnerable. He can be rejected. If his love is spurned, he can suffer terrible loss of self-esteem.

The beloved has an advantage in that he is not exposed or vulnerable. He can refuse to accept the lover without revealing his hand or his heart, safe from humiliation. His disadvantage is that he feels less than the lover, when perhaps he would like to feel more response. It is awkward to be loved more than one loves. In being loved, one is in the position of receiving, of being given to, and this can be felt as a one-down position. Then, too, the loving attention may seem intrusive, obligating, entrapping. And finally there is a danger that the lover who is so interested, may finally see something which is unworthy and come to reject him.

In his remarkable book, *Homosexuality: the psychology of the creative process*,<sup>38</sup> Paul Rosenfels has given us a careful analysis of Eros and Anteros in somewhat different terms. He sees a necessary polarity here between Love and

Power. The lover is attracted to the power of the other partner. The beloved enjoys the love of the other partner, but is himself more wrapped up in his own expression, his own power, than he is in the other partner. As the study unfolds it becomes an almost mathematical declension of the various states, missteps, conflicts, and possible resolutions in the relationship between the two. For example, if the partner who is characterized by Love feels that other partner misuses his power or is insensitive to the vulnerability of the lover he reacts angrily and with vengeance. Rosenfels sees this as the basis of sadism. The partner characterized by Power is susceptible to guilt about the use of his power, and this is the basis of masochism. The combinations go on through many vicissitudes. Rosenfels' study is of particular interest because he is a psychotherapist who specializes in guiding male relationships past pathological pitfalls to maximum creativity.

In this chapter we have examined the concepts of friendship between equal partners, Similarity versus Complementarity, Twinship versus Partnership, and the distinction between Lover and Beloved, and the topic of femininity in men. Two other aspects of age-equal friendship deserve chapters of their own. These are boyhood friendship and spiritual or "Platonic" friendship.

<sup>1</sup> 5, 40

<sup>2</sup> This "Christ-consciousness" appears to understand that Humanity is only one spirit. Humanity as a whole must be identical with Christ on some deeper level. Then the "Second Coming" would be the awakening of Humanity One to its own identity.

<sup>3</sup> Aristophanes speech in the Symposium

<sup>4</sup> Castenada, Carlos. *The Teachings of Don Juan*.

<sup>5</sup> Heidel, Alexander. *The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament*

Parallels. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946.

<sup>6</sup> Tablet I, Col. ii, lines 30-32.

<sup>7</sup> Tablet I, Col. iv, lines 8-21

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, lines 26-29

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, line 41

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, col. v, lines 1-3

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, lines 13-24

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, lines 26-38

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, lines 41-47, and col vi, lines 1-5

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, lines 9-15

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, lines 18-23

<sup>16</sup> Tablet II, col i, line 20.

<sup>17</sup> Tablet II, Old Babylonian version, lines 24-27

<sup>18</sup> Heidel, op. cit. pp. 32-33.

<sup>19</sup> Axiom of the Arica Psychoalchemy training, 1974.

<sup>20</sup> I Samuel 17, 57 to 18, 4

<sup>21</sup> I Samuel 20, 30

<sup>22</sup> II Samuel 1,25-26

<sup>23</sup> I Samuel 18, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Dover, op. cit.

<sup>25</sup> Symposium, 180a

<sup>26</sup> Downing, op. cit., p. 175.

<sup>27</sup> quoted by Dover, op. cit., p. 179.

<sup>28</sup> Brain, R. *Friends and Lovers*. New York: Basic Books, 1976.

<sup>29</sup> reported in Maupin, E., "The Symbo Experiment" ETC. Rev. gen. Semantics ,

<sup>30</sup>

<sup>31</sup> [adapted from Benet, W. R. *The Reader's Encyclopedia* New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1965]

<sup>32</sup> Delany, A. unpublished manuscript, 1987

<sup>33</sup> Singer, June. *Understanding Androgyny*.

<sup>34</sup> Erikson, Erik H. *Childhood and Society*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1950. P.152.

<sup>35</sup> Williams, Walter. *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1986.

<sup>36</sup> Paglia, Camille. "What a drag: Marjorie Garber's Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety." In *Sex, Art, and American Culture*. New York: Vantage Books, 1992.

<sup>37</sup> Maugham, W. Somerset. *The Summing Up*. 1938.

<sup>38</sup> Rosenfels, P. *Homosexuality: the psychology of the creative process*. Roslyn Heights, New York: Libra Publishers, Inc., 1971

## 4

## Apollo ~ Beauty, and the Boyhood Friend

Late childhood and early adolescence is a golden era of friendship between males. Boys are struggling for identity as males at this age, and aesthetic beauty plays an important role in the selection of friends. Boys are very aware of what is beautiful—a well-shaped body or face can have a terrific impact. The most popular boys are well-knit and well-coordinated. Their approximation to an aesthetic ideal of male-ness is important.

Freud spoke of late childhood as the “latency period”. The painful conflicts of the Oedipal period, the raging wounds of the family romance, are temporarily resolved. Most boys achieve a balance and competence in dealing with life which remains undisturbed until the disruption of puberty. Children between eight and twelve often seem surprisingly clear, capable, and intelligent. Since the beginning of school, relationships outside the home have increasingly supplanted the family as his major preoccupation.

He is taking most of his cues from peers. He is acquiring basic beliefs about life and about the world from them. In the home he was dominated by the feminine values of the mother. Gender-roles are especially important, and most boys are spending a lot of energy learning how to be masculine.

For most males it is the high point of male friendship. Old enough to explore a the wider world outside the home,

he often does so with a chum or with a small group of boys his own age. Many men remember with yearning this period of close, easy companionship, unclouded by focused sexual tension. Physical contact is globally erotic without much conflict. Sexuality is explored in various ways—from dirty jokes to physical games—but the meaning of these activities is generally left ambiguous, without the label of homosexuality.

## APOLLO, THE ARCHETYPE

For the Greeks, any discussion of boyhood friendship would necessarily begin with Apollo. They held celebrations which were open only to youths and young men. They felt Apollo’s spirit infused their early relationships, and his myths outlined the basic themes of the erastes/eremenos bond.

Apollo has many different sides that are hard to fit together. In fact, I originally found this chapter difficult to undertake. In examining my resistance I discovered I was ambivalent toward Apollo himself because he combines beauty with aloofness—which means pain for any admirer. I have come to appreciate that Apollo’s complexity—the sun god who is the model of lucid intellect, yet also intuitive and musical, the archetype of male beauty, yet avoiding passion and destructive to his lovers—points to something deep and profound.

Who is this Greek god? First, of all the gods, he is the one most frequently portrayed in the nude, a beautiful youth at the gateway to maturity: male beauty itself in its youthful form. He was the patron of youthful males, who competed, nude, in the Gymnopaedia, in athletic contests in his honor.

These games, by the way, could only be attended by young males. His special cult events excluded all but boys and young men.

He is the favored son of Zeus, the sky god: they get along well. Hence, to understand Apollo, we need to understand Zeus. For the Greeks, so close to the mythological aspects of their lives, the sky expressed a masculine entity, powerful, patriarchal, and above it all. Sky has breadth. The perspective is vast. In its changes can be seen a Presence, sometimes benign, sometimes storming with thunder and lightening—like a patriarchal male. Zeus sees things from afar, like an eagle. The sky contains everything in its vast space, both night and day, light and dark. Apollo is the god of the sun in the sky of Zeus.

If the sky is like the vastness of Mind, then such a sun is like focused consciousness—daylight clarity and intelligence. Rationality, the appreciation of ratios, the proportions of things, things in proportion, aesthetic balance, form—beauty borne of the pure, abstract proportions of the thing.

What were the fruits of this intelligence? Apollo had two notable sons: Asclepius, the original physician, and Orpheus, the original musician. Apollo himself is a musician. He plays the lyre made by his clever brother Hermes. Surely beauty and proportion go together in music. There will be much more to say about music, and especially Orpheus as one spirit in which men can be together most intimately.

Apollo was also the spirit of the Delphic Oracle, that important psychic advisor of the Greeks who “interpreted the will of Zeus” to them through the utterances of a priest-

ess, sitting on her tripod, stoned on the smoke of hemp and laurel leaves. This is not a tight rationality alone, then, but intelligence informed by imagery and intuition.

In fact, Dionysus is his half-brother. Spirit of ecstasy, sheer joy of being, and definitely on the side of letting out all the stops, Dionysus is the opposite of rational order, though he, too, has his reasons. Apollo shared the Oracle at Delphi with Dionysus. He went away to some beautiful place “beyond the Borealis” (Hyperborealis) for three months each year, leaving Dionysus as the spirit being “channeled”. This ecstatic, non-rational aspect of Apollo is another of his complexities so difficult to fathom.

Apollo had many lovers, both male and female, most of whom died tragically as a result. One of the beautiful boys he loved was Hyacinthus.

“. . . neglecting his harp and arrows. . . heedless of his old habits, Apollo was willing to carry hunting nets, or direct a pair of hounds, as he accompanied Hyacinthus over the rough mountain ridges, and by constant companionship, added fuel to the fire of his love.”<sup>1</sup>

He instructed the boy in various skills, of sports and hunt, music and divining. One day, according to Ovid, the two stripped naked, rubbed their bodies with olive oil after the manner of athletes, and began to compete with one another in throwing the discus. By accident, Apollo’s discus struck Hyacinthus in the face and killed him. Apollo could not save him, but only give him immortality as the flowering hyacinth.

As befits the god of blooming youth, there were other boys he loved. He is also described as “burning with love for unmarried Admetus,” the young king of Thessaly, whom Apollo had to serve for a year as a punishment by Zeus. This story appears to give Apollo a role different from his usual one as erastes, the initiator of the younger boy. Here he may be the eremenos, the boy himself undergoing initiation.<sup>2</sup> The Greeks didn’t like to admit that their god ever played the submissive role in sexuality, but that was implicit in being the younger man, the eremenos. His taking both sides completes our picture of Apollo as “patron of young people entering their manhood.”<sup>3</sup>

#### THE UNEMOTIONALITY OF APOLLO

In contrast to all these love-stories, Apollo also has a reputation for cool rationality, aloof calm, and unapproachability. Otto describes him as rejecting “whatever is too near—entanglement in things, the melting gaze, and, equally, soulful merging.”<sup>4</sup> This definitely seems to be an aspect of this Apollonian beauty, which is pure rational proportion, and somehow superior to our ordinary existence:

For Beauty is only  
the beginning of a terror we can just barely endure,  
and what we so admire is that it serenely  
disdains to destroy us.<sup>5</sup>

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#### THE APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY

When I try to understand the movement of Apollo in actual human life—for these gods mean nothing to us if they

are too abstract to be discerned—I think we meet him when we encounter certain types of beauty, especially in music and in males. On the mundane human level Apollo is the essence of beauty in a man. There is a special quality to his beauty: there is sunlight in it. Mentally he seems clear, reasonable. He is the boy who could mediate disputes in a school-yard game, easy to like and trusted by everybody. His reasonableness is fair, not given to emotional upheaval.

He is the youth whose very limbs seem to give off light. An athlete, his body is clear, swift, lean. He gets along with people, works well on a team.

In adulthood, he is the Dream Lover.<sup>6</sup> We see him in the handsome man next door or at the end of the bar. In real life he is often unavailable, married, straight. He does not pursue; he is the object of pursuit. Beautiful and intelligent, he doesn’t respond much with passion, and he is troubled by passion in other people. Many receptive hearts crash on the shoals of his inaccessibility. On the other hand, Apollonian men are cooperative, easy to like and trust, work well in groups and fit in everywhere. They just don’t open up.

k

#### SHINODA-BOLEN’S APOLLO

This is in accord with Jean Shinoda-Bolen’s version of Apollo-type males.<sup>7</sup> Moving gracefully between myth and human life, she describes how the Greek gods also find expression in different types of men. Her understanding of Apollo leans heavily on his patriarchal lineage as Zeus’ son. Much more than Downing, she emphasizes his rational, emotionally aloof quality. She also sees him as the mouth-

piece of Zeus' authority. The familiar injunction, "Know Thyself", which meant humbly understanding that a human is not a god, was inscribed upon his temple at Delphi, along with:

Curb thy spirit. Observe the limit. Hate hubris. Keep a reverent tongue. Fear authority. Bow before the divine. Glory not in strength. Keep women under rule.<sup>8</sup>

The Apollonian man is a favored son who does well in a patriarchal world. His intellect and rational tidiness serve him well. He cooperates with authority, takes a leadership role with his peers, and relates with them easily. In the context of our present search for the roots of male Eros, he may simply be the man who attracts friendships which do not develop great intimacy or emotional depth.

k

#### SILVERSTEIN'S TYPES OF BOYS

Charles Silverstein is a psychologist who has interviewed many men on their experiences in gay male couples. On the basis of their accounts he has concluded that preadolescent boys show four basic patterns in their social adaptation. He calls them "Comrades [Insiders]<sup>9</sup>, Outsiders, Sissies, and Romantics." These types, of course, are not exclusive. They are a set of characters acting out patterns of relationship. They are an intriguing bunch, though, which may enable us to understand much that happened to us in our childhood, when sports and masculinity were so closely identified.

The Insiders, or comrades, are successful in sports and in other aspects of masculinity which boys of school age

are striving for. They are chosen first for sports. They are popular and at the center of school yard activities. They have special chums, comrades. They do things together, competing in sports, exploring, making projects. Silverstein calls this group "Comrades," because they form friendships which are close, but their love and intimacy are implicit, rarely expressed. Their attention is turned outward into the world they are exploring and mastering. They are extroverted, and interior reflection is not their interest.

The "Outsiders" would love to be like them, but they are less competent in sports, and less successful in the masculinity skills they are attempting to consolidate. They seem to have much more conflict and disruption in their lives than the other three groups. Outsiders may yearn to possess Insiders in friendships which would allow them to gain their qualities. Outsiders often reject other outsiders who are "inferior", because like themselves. Since the Insider's pattern is so valuable yet so inaccessible to them, there is much more ambivalence, poor self-esteem, and neurotic turmoil in the relationships of these boys.

"Sissies" may be feminine-identified, or simply loners. They avoid the whole arena of sports and competition in favor of their own interests. Collective masculinity is not their pursuit, and they are more likely than other boys to have close friendships with girls. (Are these incipient berdaches of Native American tribes?) They adhere to their own values, spend a lot of time alone doing their own things, involved in their own rich fantasies. If they are effeminate, they may have suffered at the hands of more aggressive boys. They may long for a close friend and they may have worked

out a clear idea of the intimacy they desire. Femininity has given them a sensitivity to feelings in relationship. Sometimes they have a partnership with another sissy, but solitude is a more usual pattern until they are older.

The Romantics are most of all involved in close relationships. They do not compete for masculine success in the arena of sports. They want to be alone together. They think about intimacy and love, and they talk about it openly.

Silverstein formed his idea of these patterns from his interviews with gay adults. He was studying male couples, and relationship is his emphasis in thinking about boyhood. The landscape he describes from that viewpoint may not include other important dimensions—where are the “nerds” of contemporary computer society, for example, who are not sissies, but merely preoccupied in their own activities? He does offer a metaphor for looking at one’s own boyhood which can prove interesting.

I remember yearning for a close friendship with a boy, Edwin when I was about eight. I think my motives were along romantic lines. He wasn’t particularly available, and I was painfully disappointed.

During the high point of my chum-ship years, my family lived in a rural town in Missouri. I was part of a circle of boys—all in the same (fourth and fifth) grade—which ran around together. Delphus was a fine, balanced boy whom I would now classify as Apollonian, and definitely an Insider. Eugene was also an Insider. Moreover being kind, he held the group together. Lanath was another member. He had a nice muscular body and I liked to put my arm around his shoulder so I could feel his pectoral muscles. My parents interfered

so that Lanath and I would not have much time alone together. Jackie Bill was an outsider who tagged along. He came from a chaotic family of dubious morals, and he was probably carrying the shadow role for our group. We were intrigued and appalled at what he was said to be doing with his sister.

A tragedy ended the peaceful existence of this group. Several of the boys went hunting one day and Jackie-Bill’s 22 rifle went off accidentally, killing Delphus. After an intense and confusing funeral—who was to blame?—the group simply broke up.

After that I played with John S. We were both bright and had many hobbies. Neither of us was good at sports, and we eventually stopped trying. I suppose we were considered “nerds” in whatever was vocabulary of the day. His father had many hobby materials, including a printing press which we were allowed to use. I remember we talked about interesting things, but I remember he bored me a little, the Eros being less than I had felt with the previous group.

Surprising that I have thought so little of these boys for so many years. I can dimly remember that Delphus and Eugene were quite important to me, and very strong feelings must have been involved at the time. The shooting must have cut short the natural process of our chum-ship, and I wonder how it might otherwise have developed.

It is strange that boyhood friendships are forgotten so easily. Is it due to the intervening turmoil of adolescence or can we discern in it Apollo’s avoidance of passion?

## APOLLO IN BOYHOOD

Looking at Silverstein's types in light of Apollo, it appears that the Insider boy embodies Apollo most successfully. He expresses the other boys' ideals of masculinity, of competence in sports, and of physical beauty. He is sought-after as a friend, and very attractive. Indeed, Apollo seems to be the central game on the school yard. These most successful boys embody him most closely. They are extroverted, balanced, athletic and clear of intellect—"Sound mind in a sound body," just like the Greek ideal.

The Outsider is also caught up in the Apollo game, but less successfully. He envies the Insider and may long to possess him as a comrade. He sees the beauty, but cannot perceive it in himself.

If Apollo is expressed in the Sissy it may be in his musical aspect, since music or dance can easily be the favorite solitary activity of such a boy. The Romantics seem less affected by Apollo. Explicitly interested in intimacy and love, they do not seem like Apollonian friends, who would be embarrassed to speak openly about such things. If they used such words, they might say they were attracted to soul. Plato might make sense to them at a later age.

Do the patterns of our relationships then still influence us as life goes on? Do they mutate and evolve? Do the feelings we had then still move us, motivate us to do what we do? I suspect the insider-comrades still go bowling together without ever making their affection explicit. The outsiders still rankle unless they have found other ways to become insiders. Do the romantics still look for intense bonds? And what have the sissies done with their gifts?

We may all be reacting and compensating for experiences in these important years. The achievement of masculinity may take on more complex forms in adulthood, but we all remember our struggles in the school yard. When a man's sexual attraction to another man seems to be filling in for what's missing in his own genital potency or in his self-esteem, he may be reenacting the outsider pattern. The outsider boy trying to possess the masculinity of some more 'inside' boy can be detected here. He still hasn't got his own.

k

## APOLLO AND DESTRUCTIVE FRIENDSHIP

This aspect of the myths about Apollo has been the most difficult for me to understand. Of course, many of the liaisons between gods and mortals were destructive to the latter. Semele, the mother of Dionysus, was burned to death when she looked at Zeus in his full splendor as a God. Perhaps this is all that is expressed: that mortals cannot gaze directly upon ultimate Reality. Yet there is something more. Is it Apollo's emotional remoteness which lures more passionate natures to tragedy? Or is it the emotional immaturity of boyhood which is rent by the intensity of adult passion?

Or is it the mentality that kills? Hyacinthus, after all, was struck in the head by the discus. Downing suggests "the love stories show us an Apollo in whom passion is so divorced from his acknowledged character that he cannot be the lucid, clearheaded Apollo when in love—and so his love is dangerous not only to its objects but to himself"

There is also the possibility that these deaths simply show us the passing of boyhood itself. It is a curious fact that, in spite of the passionate intimacy of boyhood friendships, they are forgotten with amazing ease.

k

#### APOLLO AND MUSIC

Music can be a very special kind of communion. Male choruses can express a bonding and unity which men rarely feel in any other context.

My closest and most uncomplicated chum was probably my college friend, Tom. We both sang a lot in our respective fraternities, and one day when we were sixteen he approached me saying he wanted to sing with me. We joined voices that day, my baritone and his rather witty tenor, and we continued inseparable for the next three years. We sang for hours every week, and a whole circle of people gathered around to sing with us.

It is interesting how untroubled our friendship was. I had plenty of conflict about my attraction to other males in those days, but Tom and I could sleep together in the same bed without tension. It was as if our singing produced an intimacy which required nothing more.

Apollo acquired the lyre as his special possession from Hermes. He has always been associated with music, and Orpheus, the archetypal musician, is his son. Perhaps there are different kinds of music, some more wild and Dionysian, some more rational and architectonic, which would be consistent with Apollo. But Apollo's music is not only mathematical, to judge from Orpheus' ability to melt hearts

and even to charm his way into the underworld.

If music is the domain of Apollo, then he is not so aloof after all, but brings us together in his special way.

My father was born in 1897. Growing up, he heard the stories of Civil War veterans, then in their fifties and sixties. He is a musician, and we were talking recently about music, especially about singing. He said this, which has stayed on my mind: "They sang in the Civil War. They did less singing in World War I, and by World War II it was gone."

Think of it! Thousands of men sitting around campfires, singing in small groups. Did they sometimes sing together en masse? When opposing armies were camped a few miles apart, could they sometimes hear each other? Did voices carry in the country air, punctuated by harness, and hooves, and metal clanging? Some of their songs were truly inspiring, and some we still sing today.

What does it mean that Americans sang less in World War I? Were we already moving farther apart, sharing our souls and voices less? By World War II, I suppose, we had already become addicted to passive entertainment. Bob Hope "entertained" the troops, who were presumably no longer able to serve this function for themselves. And what does it mean that we have so few songs in common, so few songs that we can sing together? In Switzerland, and in Israel, everyone spends time in military training. I am told they know a lot of the same songs. The bonding of voices can produce a deep sense of community connection.

I joined my college fraternity because they sang better than any of the others. We sang all the time: wonderful harmony, and the most sex-

ist, trivial, embarrassing lyrics imaginable. Today I have the impression this group still enjoys a strength that lingers from those earlier singing days. The graduates of those years enjoy a particularly strong bond

Is this the partiality of an Old Grad? Perhaps. But I think that, in music we have a particularly important way to increase our feeling of inter-connectedness. The sense of musical intervals, literally felt as vibrations in the throat, can be a gateway to transpersonal experiences.

I routinely have students in my classes experiment with sounding musical tones together. They are instructed to direct their voices to each other's throats and to listen with the voice box. They are generally quite moved by the intimacy which results. I have had the most amazing transpersonal experiences doing this exercise.

<sup>1</sup> Such as Dionysus? Of course there are! but focussed consciousness claims much for itself.

<sup>2</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 10, 200-219

<sup>3</sup> Downing, *op. cit.*, p. 155-7.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Otto, *The Homeric Gods*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1964, pp. 71-72.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>6</sup> Rilke, Rainer M., *Duino Elegies*, I, lines 4-7. The relevance of Apollo in these lines is underscored that, in the midst of the creative storm in which he wrote them, Rilke also produced *Sonnets to Or-*

pheus in celebration of the experience. Orpheus, of course, is the son of Apollo.

<sup>7</sup> Christine Downing says he is THE lover, but he is not the lover who pursues the beloved.

<sup>8</sup> *Gods in Everyman: a new Psychology of Men's Lives & Loves*. New York: Harper & Row, 1989.

<sup>9</sup> from Guthrie, W. K. C., *The Greeks and their Gods*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1955.

<sup>10</sup> Silverstein, Charles, *Man to Man: Gay Couples in America*. New York: William Morrow & Company, 1982.

<sup>11</sup> Silverstein calls this group "comrades". But, following Mitch Walker, I am calling them insiders. cf. *Visionary Love: a Spirit Book of Gay Mythology*.

<sup>12</sup> The male-female differences described by Carole Gilligan are relevant here. In *a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982

<sup>13</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

## 5

## Athena, Mentor and Protégé

“The worship of God is the recognition of his gifts in other men.” -BLAKE

In 1991 we witnessed a remarkable event. A book by a poet on the psychology of men became a best-seller, nationwide. Robert Bly, who has been in the forefront of men’s consciousness-raising with his lectures and workshops for men, has summarized his understanding in *Iron John*:<sup>1</sup> In it he gives strong emphasis to the importance of relationship between older and younger males for male initiation. He argues that the traditional relationship between fathers and sons was lost in the industrial revolution, when sons no longer learned their crafts by working beside their fathers, and when older males no longer guided younger ones through rituals of initiation. All this amounts to a wound, the pain of an unmet need, because this relationship between older and younger males is of profound importance to both. He gives an arresting quote from Jungian psychologist, Robert Moore: “If you’re a young man and you’re not being admired by an older one, you’re being hurt.”

Bly himself makes use of a European folk tale, “*Iron John*,” to explore issues of male development. There are also two other well-known myth-patterns available to us. Both are Greek, and both go back to Homeric sources. One is the Zeus-Ganymede pattern. Another is Mentor-Protégé. We will see that they are related, but operate on somewhat different levels. Zeus/Ganymede is prior, in a way, since it

deals with the God, Zeus, and hence with a deeper archetypal pattern. The original Mentor, in *The Odyssey*, was a human being, although he was “channeling” the goddess, Athena. Let’s start with the human level.

k

## MENTORS AND PROTÉGÉS ~ THE YALE STUDY

In 1978, Daniel Levinson and his team of psychological researchers at Yale published results of their on-going developmental study of men. They found that successful men generally had three things in common: a mentor, a personal dream which they could follow, and a significant woman, not always a wife. The mentor was described as an older man, generally by 8 to 15 years, who befriends and helps the younger man in his development.

This was the first serious mention of mentorship in the psychological literature. Moreover, the subject was described in emotional, even passionate terms. Levinson compared them to love affairs: mentors and protégés met and fell in love. As in other love affairs the ending of their relationships were fraught with pain, such that the partners could not, at least for a time, feel comfortable in each others company. Mentor relationships occurred in many different vocations and for some, such as upper echelon jobs in business or government, might even be necessary to enter the field. A person could not obtain training in the necessary skills in any other way.

It is remarkable that a common relationship involving this degree of feeling should have been overlooked by the field of psychology. Levinson’s study opened the door to

considering the role of Eros in an important learning situation. That Eros belongs in education I have never doubted, but I have never seen it treated seriously. The few scientific studies of apprenticeship ignore it, though I'm sure many apprentice/master relations involved Eros. It is amazing to me that I can find no mention of it in George Leonard's otherwise excellent and inspiring book, *Education and Ecstasy*<sup>2</sup>

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ERASTES AND EREMENOS,  
THE GREEK INITIATORY FRIENDSHIP

The classical Greeks, of course, were not so ignorant of the power of such relationships. As we have seen, their model for frankly erotic friendship between males was between older (in their twenties) and younger (beardless) males. This relationship was entered into with permission of the father, and, in some regions, included a ritual kidnapping of the youth by the erastes. In the Cretan model, the two stayed together for a time during which the older male taught the youth certain skills, such as hunting. He also initiated the youth sexually, taking the active role in anal intercourse. At the end of the initiatory period the erastes gave certain ritually specified gifts including an ox and a wine cup. At the end of that period also, the sexual phase was expected to end and the relationship of Eros (er-astes, er-emenos) shifted to a more equal, less passionate friendship (filia).

It seems to me that this pattern is essentially the same as the one observed by Levinson, if we take into account differences in sexual mores and culture. The Greek and

Cretan patterns were adapted to a far simpler world, in which the skills of high caste men—hunting, fighting, making love—were correspondingly simple. Levinson's men learned far more complex skills from their mentors, without culturally approved patterns for sexual expression, yet the emotional intensity of their bonds remains clear.

Inquiring further, we find that mentorship has its roots in Greek mythology. In fact, "Mentor" comes from Homer's *Odyssey*.

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THE STORY OF MENTOR AND TELEMACHUS

The *Odyssey* is often described as the tale of Ulysses' long voyage home after the defeat of Troy. What is less often recognized is that there is a companion theme, interwoven with the first, which concerns Ulysses' son, Telemachus, and his development from helplessness to masculine strength. This theme is introduced in Book I, and its resolution, at the end, is due in part to Mentor, Ulysses' friend. It is this Mentor who gives us the word "mentor" for someone who teaches a younger person.

At the beginning, Telemachus is in a helpless position. His father has been gone for twenty years, his fate unknown. His mother is surrounded by suitors, who press her to marry one of them, and who are eating up her fortune, killing the remaining sheep for their banquets, and threatening to do violence to Telemachus when he ventures to object. At this point Athena obtains permission from her father, Zeus, to help Telemachus.

"I will go to Ithaca, to put heart into Ulysses' son Telemachus; I will embolden him to call the Achaeans in assembly, and speak out to the suitors of his mother Penelope, who persist in eating up any number of his sheep and oxen; I will also conduct him to Sparta and to Pylos, to see if he can hear anything about the return of his dear father—for this will make people speak well of him."

She then flew down from the summit of Olympus to Ithaca and appeared at the gateway of Ulysses' house disguised as a visitor, Mentos. Telemachus welcomed him, not knowing her divine identity, and proceeded to pour out his sorrows. His father was dead, he thought, and he doubted sometimes whether Ulysses was his father, saying "it is a wise child that knows his own father." He was powerless against the suitors, who were ruining him.

Mentos explained that his father was a friend of Ulysses, and proceeds to encourage Telemachus: "There is no fear of your race dying out yet, while Penelope has such a fine son as you are." He advised him to call the city elders together to make complaint against the suitors, and then to sail off in search of news of his father. Following this advice, Telemachus immediately challenged the suitors to meet him in the assembly next day, and they "marveled at the boldness of his speech."<sup>3</sup> In his heart, Telemachus "knew that it had been the goddess"<sup>4</sup> who had visited him.

In Book II, Athena comes to Telemachus in the form of Mentor, the friend whom Ulysses left in charge of the household. She/he tells him,

"Telemachus, if you are made of the same stuff as your father you will be neither fool nor coward henceforward, for Ulysses never broke his word nor left his work half done. If, then you take after him your voyage will not be fruitless, but unless you have the blood of Ulysses and of Penelope in your veins I see no likelihood of your succeeding. Sons are seldom as good men as their fathers; they are generally worse, not better; still, as you are not going to be either fool or coward henceforward, and are not entirely without some share of your father's wise discernment, I look with hope upon your undertaking. But mind you never make common cause with any of those foolish suitors, for their have neither sense nor virtue, and give no thought to death and to the doom that will shortly fall on one and all of them, so that they shall perish on the same day. As for your voyage, it shall not be long delayed; your father was such an old friend of mine that I will find you a ship and will come with you myself."

Mentor then arranges for both ship and crew, and Telemachus sails off at his side in the stern of the vessel.

By the time Ulysses finally returns, Telemachus has become a bold and able man who confronts the suitors and assists his father in entering the house, disguised as a beggar.

Still later (Book XXII) Athena again returns as Mentor to assist Ulysses and Telemachus in killing the remaining suitors. Once again Ulysses and Telemachus know in their hearts that this is really Athena.

## ATHENA AS MENTOR

The spirit which appears to Telemachus is Athena, the daughter of Zeus. She sprung from Zeus's forehead, of all places, and she did not have a mother. Zeus created her by himself. She is his good and loyal daughter. Of all the Greek goddesses, she is most aligned with masculine values, which include intelligence and technical mastery. In another context, it was Athena who inspired the Athenians to undertake the commerce which compensated for their depleted agriculture and made them strongest among the Greek city-states. She gave them technology and commerce. She is a warrior Goddess, who leads to victory through strategy as well as strength. She is a virgin, little attracted to romance and dalliance. Function and organization are more important to her than sentiment and intimacy.

Athena's relationship with Zeus is interesting in another regard, because quite different patterns of male Eros are involved. In the next chapter the story of Zeus and Gany-mede will be introduced as another pattern of male Eros. The Mentor/Athena pattern seems to be derived from Zeus, yet has its characteristic focus on the empowering of the younger man.

I have no explanation for the fact that Athena came as Mentos as well as Mentor. One was a stranger, the visiting son of a king who had been Ulysses' friend. The other was the man left by Ulysses to be in charge of his house. Being a goddess, Athena clearly has the power to come in many forms. Otherwise their function is nearly identical, and it may be (though I am not a classical scholar) that the two names simply come from variant texts, from the numerous

Homeric sources combined in this work. The similarity in the names seems to support this interpretation, and, at any rate, it is "mentor" which comes down in our language to denote an older man who sponsors a younger one.

It is curious that the spirit of mentorship is feminine, even though the mentor is generally male. It seems to mean that the Eros between mentors and protégés is feminine, or, in other words, that the soul or anima of both men is involved. Their femininity, their feeling, is deeply involved.

The gift of mentorship, like Athena herself, is mental, intellectual, technical. The mentor helps to develop skills and mastery in the protégé. The Odyssey does not emphasize any strongly passionate aspect to the relationship, although their companionship on board ship is clearly reassuring. There is one clue that this is a companionship of unusual intensity: Telemachus frequently understands that it is the goddess who has come to him. He is aware that this is no ordinary presence. It is awesome and moving, and capable of instilling great strength.

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## THE NATURE OF MENTOR

In this tale, the mentor is taking the place of the father. He is a friend of the father, and he has the interest a father might have in strengthening the younger man, fostering his determination and his self-esteem. At the time of the youth's greatest discouragement and self-doubt, he reminds him of his parentage and his own value.

But let's look at what Mentor/Mentos actually did: he took an interest in the boy, whom others were ridiculing; he

asked what was wrong, and listened while Telemachus told him; he gave recognition to the boy, largely by acknowledging the high quality of his parents and urging him to show their strength and courage. This was a pretty effective start, and by the end of the interaction Telemachus was fired with new purpose.

Next, as Mentor, he spoke in support of Telemachus' position before the council of elders. Then he suggested a plan of action, the sea voyage to find his father, and actually organized its implementation: he hired the boat and found the seamen. Thus he acted as sponsor in the public arena, gave direction and considerable practical help. Finally, he was available to the boy as a companion and friend.

Not that much feeling is evident: though the actions are kind and supportive, they are not passionate. Neither Mentor nor Athena is "smitten" with Telemachus. It is because of friendship with the father that they take an interest in the son. Athena is interested, not because the boy is young and beautiful, but because he has possibilities: given a little help, he will go far. Whether they snuggle close together in the stern of that vessel we are not told, but they are likely to have some good, inspiring conversations.

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### THE ROLE OF A MENTOR

The mentor, according to Levinson, is a somewhat older man whose primary role is "to be a transitional figure, one who fosters the young [individual's] development from child-in-relation to parent-adults to adult-in-peer-relation-with-other-adults." The relationship exists specifically

because the younger man has not yet achieved manhood—status as a recognized adult—and because the mentor can bring that about.

"The mentor represents a mixture of parent and peer; he must be both and not purely either one. If he is entirely a peer, he cannot represent the advanced level toward which the younger man is striving. If he is very parental, it is difficult for both of them to overcome the generational differences and move toward the peer relationship that is the ultimate (though never fully realized) goal of the relationship."<sup>5</sup>

These relationships proceed much like love affairs, with a period of great tenderness and inspiration at the beginning, and conflict and bitterness later. At the end, the protégé, feeling more confident in his own powers, may feel stifled and overprotected by the mentor, while the mentor finds him "inexplicably touchy, unreceptive to even the best of counsel, irrationally rebellious and ungrateful."

"And so it ends. Much of its value may be realized—as with love relationships generally—after the termination. The conclusion of the main phase does not put an end to the meaning of the relationship. Following the separation, the younger man may take the admired qualities of the mentor more fully into himself. He may become better able to learn from himself, to listen to the voices within. His personality is enriched as he makes the mentor a more intrinsic part of himself."<sup>6</sup>

Everywhere we look, this role of the mentor can be seen as an important influence in a younger man's life. It is an

essential requirement for men who are to enter the upper reaches of success. We find it in the preparation of United States Senators and other politicians. It is the entry to top level executive positions in business. Robertson Davies, in one of his novels involving an entrepreneur who frequently sponsors younger executives, jokingly calls it "corporate homosexuality." Artists and scientists who excel in their fields generally have had significant and inspiring teachers, mentors. It seems that having an older friend and guide at some critical time can be essential for developing confidence in oneself and one's ability.

In spite of such apparent importance, the mentor-protégé relationship has hardly been mentioned in psychological literature. Can this be due to a cultural aversion to acknowledging that men can care this intensely about one another? Levinson and his colleagues were virtually the first psychologists to write about mentorship. What was especially remarkable was their recognition of its passionate and emotional quality—a "love relationship"—clearly in the domain of Eros.

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#### SIX MENTORS AND PROTÉGÉS ~ THE ZUCKER STUDY

David Zucker was one of my students at The University for Humanistic Studies in San Diego. Having just emerged, bitter and disappointed, from a mentor/protégé relationship, he was about to write the experience off as a neurotic father-projection, when I encouraged him to use it as a basis for his doctoral dissertation.<sup>7</sup> He and his mentor had

taught movement classes together during a more felicitous period in their relationship, and I had been impressed by their unity. It was as if they both were moving with the same energy. To me it had been beautiful.

Eventually Zucker interviewed six pairs of men who had been in mentor/protégé relationships, which had ended one to five years before. The interview process was sufficiently confidential that the respondents felt safe in revealing intimate and emotional details of what had taken place. He then examined the interview material for common themes, using the phenomenological method. (The "phenomenological method" is the means by which psychological researchers open themselves, however stiffly, to intuitive reason.)

Although there were differences among the six relationships, there were definite patterns which could be discerned. Each relationship had had a similar beginning, middle, and end.

The beginning was characterized by an intense meeting, much like falling in love. Generally the younger man was in a period of self-doubt and confusion, and he admired the older man seeing him as "having it all together." This aspect of the protégé's feelings is new information which the Zucker study gives us. It is the protégé's state of uncertainty which makes him receptive to the relationship. The mentor, in turn, generally saw the protégé as having talents and possibilities: he recognized him, and responded to his need. The two then embarked on a period of delight, "lost in an amazement of love and friendship and intimacy," in Aristophanes' phrase.

The middle period was characterized by creativity. Each of the pair is inspired by the relationship, and new quality appears in their work as they collaborate together. It is important to recognize that both are benefiting from the relationship in this phase: the gain is not only for one. (In fact, when the mentor can acknowledge his own need and his own benefit the situation is likely to have a more balanced outcome.) One of the pairs in Zucker's study was working in dance and movement, another pair worked in the area of scientific methodology, while three of the mentors were therapists, teaching therapeutic technique.

In the ending stage, the younger men rebelled and broke away from such close involvement. As Levinson's group also recognized, the protégés began making greater demands for equality and felt the mentor to be stifling and overprotective. They either had to break away or establish greater equality in the friendship. The ending stage was a touchy period, painful for both partners, and resembled the end of a love affair.

In spite of their clearly erotic character, none of the relationships studied by Zucker was fully sexualized. The issue was an occasion for conflict between two of the men, the mentor insisting, the protégé resisting, but most of the pairs simply did not explore the sexual dimension. This is interesting in view of the fact that several of the mentors were openly homosexual, and therefore open to male Eros in sexual form. These mentors felt that overt sexuality would have been disruptive. Perhaps this was an artifact of the small sample in this study, but it may also imply something

about mentorship. Perhaps the sublimated character of Athena's interest requires a delicate hand with sexuality.

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#### ATHENA IN MENTOR'S FORM

What does it mean that Athena came to her protégé, Telemachus, in Mentor's form? If we can understand this in archetypal terms, perhaps we can understand something of the power and depth of these actual relationships.

Let us say that there are two levels of meaning in any situation. One is external, the other internal: exoteric and esoteric, the profane and the sacred. The difference is not in the reality itself, but in how it is experienced. The ordinary external mode of experience gives us ordinary apparent reality. But the same situation, felt from one's core of feeling, is fraught with Meaning. This feeling-perception of Meaning is the realm of myth. This is not an allegorical intellectualization, like some English poem from the eighteenth century. Core experience allows us to sense a deeper, richer context of the thing. It is also not any random projection from the interior world of the viewer, but a particular and special territory found within.

Sometimes something happens which is out of the ordinary and the mundane. It seems deeply significant. If it is a person, they seem more intense than life. In addition to their ordinary personality, something is working through them. Nowadays, in psycho-pop culture, we speak of "channeling." Mostly, I think, people who channel other entities are merely avoiding personal responsibility for their insight, or lack of it. But sometimes a creative individual may be able to allow larger-than-life patterns to play through him.

We do not know what Mentor thought he was doing. Homer, who saw the mythical level constantly, in all these events, baldly describes the action as Athena's own doing. Telemachus "knew in his heart" that Athena had come to him. In other words, he had an experience of special Meaning beyond the merely personal in these encounters with Mentos/Mentor. Is this a parallel to the feelings Zucker's protégés had about their mentors "having it all together" in the beginning stages of those relationships?

I am sure that many of these mentor/protégé relationships are not so intense, being more pedestrian and functional. Surely not every executive or Senator becomes so involved as Zucker's respondents did with the junior men they decide to sponsor. But oftentimes these meetings must be very intense, when both parties feel special significance, meaning and destiny in each other's presence. It was because Telemachus sensed that special meaning in Mentor that he could so quickly take heart and confront the suitors before the elders of Ithaca. The present-day protégé may be in awe of the special meaning and presence he feels in the mentor.

Perhaps Homer's Mentor was only conscious of helping his friend's son. Perhaps the present-day mentor is often less aware of the potency of the archetype he is carrying than is the protégé, given the degree of the latter's distress.

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#### THE APPRENTICESHIP CONTRACT

It seems worth repeating that most people do not invent their lives. If there is a cultural pattern for what we are do-

ing, we proceed quite well. But if there is not, we may not notice an opportunity even when our deepest needs and longings are involved.

In the case of mentorship, such needs are clearly present. We have seen that successful men have had mentors, and that mentorship may be a fundamental need for a young man, an aching void, waiting to be filled (as Robert Bly suggests). It may well be, as the Zeus/Ganymede theme will soon imply, that the need for mentorship is equally strong from the side of the mentor.

Let's say an older and a younger male have been drawn together. They have an attraction, and it seems to be based on the mentor model. They need a name, a category which allows them to think about what they are doing. "Mentor" is fine, but "Protégé" seems a little strange to call someone. They could try "Telemachus", but it is literary and obscure. So. . . why not call the relation "Apprenticeship," the protégé "Apprentice?"

Apprenticeship is an ancient and honorable stage of learning. Crafts have been transmitted that way for thousands of years. The word enjoys currency with most people, and yet it is vague enough to leave room for definition. Many richly rewarding friendships can take place under this category.

It is useful to have the agreements clear. Given the potential intensity these relationships can have, it is useful to have practical things very clear. I think of it, roughly, as a contract:

1. The apprentice feels there is something in the mentor—his knowledge, his work, his wisdom, being or consciousness—from which he can learn.

2. The apprentice wants to be in the space of the mentor, in order to learn from him.

3. The apprentice is willing to assist the mentor, in various ways, in recompense for the learning. He is not there to be extra work or an additional burden. He pulls his own weight; he helps out. The situation is better for his being there. Sometimes, but not always, the apprentice may be living with the mentor, working for room and board.

4. The mentor is committed to the learning process, gives attention to it, and provides materials and experiences which further it. The Apprentice is not there simply to be exploited. He works in order to learn.

5. When the inevitable human misunderstandings come up, they can be talked out (at least in principle) and the relationship can return to its original goals.

6. The agreement is made for a specified amount of time—a month or two is good—after which it can be evaluated, ended or extended.

This is the agreement which has worked well for me. By calling the relationship an “apprenticeship”, we give it a name, a convenient box to put it in. It defines the goal as one of learning. It establishes that the relationship is an exchange: if either person comes to feel that the exchange is not equal, the pair must process and re negotiate. It is also useful to define an time limit for the arrangement, or a series of endings which may be extended. That way the partners can enter into the relationship without feeling trapped.

In Australia I met Ian, a young accounting clerk who was in my workshop. He followed me back to the United States and lived with my family for nearly a year. What he wanted to learn was

somewhat vague, but he was attracted by the whole range of psychological and body-oriented skills he saw around him here.

The fact that we had agreed on a work-exchange led to some very interesting developments which were significant for his growth. For example, when I asked him to sand some wooden benches, he resisted. Prejudice against physical labor came up, and resentment about being “forced” to work. When he went ahead and sanded the benches, he discovered the beauty of working with his hands on wood. As an accountant, he had never done that, and now a very different relationship to the material world began to open up for him.

Eventually we had a very creative outcome. Three of us had been thinking of starting a class in dreams and imagination, Ian’s interest was just the catalyst we needed to get the project going. “The Imaginal Seminar” which started then has been offered quarterly for nearly fifteen years.

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#### IN SUM

The Mentor/Protegé relationship is an important bonding between older and younger males, grounded in classical myth, yet largely ignored in contemporary canons of our society. It is erotic in the sense that strong feelings of love may be involved, and it is important for the development of many young people at certain stages.

The protégé is receptive to the relationship because, feeling confused and uncertain about himself, he is eager to identify with the mentor, whom he sees as possessing the

character and skills he would like to emulate. This receptivity probably sparks an answering feeling in the mentor, who sees in the younger person qualities and possibilities which are ripe for development. His recognition of the younger person is the answering response.

The bond benefits the mentor as well as well, for in response to the younger person's respect and interest, he develops and changes; he benefits creatively, and, being loved, he is touched and affected. He may discover in mentorship a rich new source of relatedness and intimacy. It is important that the mentor be able to allow this reciprocal flow: if he is never able to relinquish the superiority of his knowledge, age, and position, he will thwart the fullest creative possibilities in the situation.

As befits the archetypal role of Athena in mentorship, the criterion for success in the relationship is creativity. Does the protégé grow and thrive? Does the mentor increase in creativity?

Based as it is on an inequality of power and status, this form of friendship is temporary. The protégé must, if the relationship is successful, realize his own power and move away from the original closeness he felt with the mentor. The breaking-away can be very painful, and woe to the mentor who focuses too much of his emotional needs on the protégé. The fruit of their bond is precisely the protégé's growing power and independence, and it is sometimes possible to restructure the friendship to accommodate to his new maturity.

Of course, mentorship is not limited to males. I studied with two women, who were very significant mentors to me, and I have had several relationships with female students who were definitely protégés. In all these situations, though, I felt constrained (is it only my hangups?) by the sex-difference, and I cannot say that we were free to open up the fullest degree of intimacy. Women often have female mentors, especially in these feminist times when power is no longer perceived as the prerogative of males. I suspect that such female relationships have their own myths, however, which would reveal different subtleties.

<sup>1</sup> Bly, Robert. *Iron John: a Book about Men*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Levinson, D. J., et al. *The Seasons of a Man's Life*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1978

<sup>3</sup> New York: Delacorte Press, 1968

<sup>4</sup> *Odyssey*, Bk I, line 80

<sup>5</sup> Bk I, line 215

<sup>6</sup> Bk I, line 223

<sup>7</sup> Bk I, line 381.

<sup>8</sup> Bk I, line 420.

<sup>9</sup> Bk II, line 267.

<sup>10</sup> Bk XXII, line 210.

<sup>11</sup> *Op.cit.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* p. 99.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p. 101.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* p. 101

<sup>15</sup> Robertson Davies, *Fifth Business*. New York: Viking Penguin, Inc. 1976.

<sup>16</sup> Zucker, D. "The mentor/Protegé Relationship: a Phenomenological inquiry." Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, University for Humanistic Studies, San Diego, 1981.

# 6

## Zeus and Ganymede

A few months ago I looked into an elegant antique store in Tel Aviv and saw an excellent bronze, in the 19th-Century romantic style, of a beautiful youth touched by the hovering wing of an eagle. The eagle symbolizes Zeus in one of his traditional forms. The youth is Ganymede. The sculpture depicts the best known myth of love between older and younger males in Western civilization.

Zeus was, of course, the chief of the Olympian gods. Ganymede was a beautiful young boy, son of an early king of Troy. The enamoured Zeus came to him in the form of an eagle and carried him off to Olympus. Ganymede was made the immortal cup-bearer to the gods. His perpetual role of service is commemorated in the star constellation, Aquarius, "the Cup-Bearer."

It is a short story, but what a stir it has caused in the course of history! Its theme was often used by Roman artists. Many Renaissance artists including Michelangelo and Correggio painted it. Innumerable 19th Century artists portrayed the theme. Apparently it was a favored image for affluent parlors in that era, for I could find similar bronzes, or paintings or prints, in almost any antique shop in the Western world. It is a myth with durable appeal, evidently expressing something archetypal in the human soul.

What is so appealing about this myth? That Age, in its authority, is attracted to Youth? That a patriarchal deity is

nonetheless loving? That young men long for the love of older men? What is that love, and what is it that attracts us? Zeus/Ganymede apparently expresses a type of passionate feeling which forms the foundation of relationships between older and younger males.

Zeus/Ganymede is obviously more erotic than the story of Mentor and Telemachus. Mentor was carrying a more sublimated passion. He did not swoop down and carry off Telemachus in order to have him always (as a servant). He, or rather Athena who was acting through him, was specifically interested in fostering the strength of the young man.

Yet the two themes are obviously related, as the Homeric myths tell us: that Athena was the daughter of Zeus, suggests a related, but derived element of feeling. Mentor, under her inspiration, was experiencing a derived form of the Zeusian passion for a younger man.

In Zeus/Ganymede we again find both sexual and spiritual possibilities in a mythical tradition—Eros as both sexual and spiritual attraction. The earlier Homeric texts leave the sexuality between Zeus and Ganymede ambiguous. To Plato, love inspired by Zeus was philosophical and spiritual rather than merely physical. Later classical authors, such as Ovid, who was inclined to be a little arch about erotic matters, assumed the overt sexuality of the relationship.

Michelangelo, grasping the bull firmly by both horns drew two pictures of Zeus and Ganymede. In one the (not so young) man is embraced by the Zeusian eagle and carried upward, apparently above earthly desire. Transcendence has been achieved through love of the Divine. The most splen-



Michelangelo:  
the Rape of Ganymede - 1



Michelangelo:  
the Rape of Ganymede- 2

did spiritual realizations are clearly their constant concern. In the second drawing Ganymede is lying under the eagle, which is pecking at his breast. The drawing "symbolizes the sufferings of those who abandon themselves to physical love."<sup>1</sup>

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#### THE NATURE OF ZEUS

Zeus was the chief god of Olympus, the prototype image of patriarchal authority, dwelling in the sky and speaking through the thunder. Zeus gave kings their authority and protected their power. He maintained the laws and punished transgressors. He fathered several of the Olympian gods: Apollo and Hermes, favorite sons, Ares and Hephaestus, who were not favored, and his daughters, Athena, and Artemis. As a father he was generally benign and protective of his children. One son, Dionysus, he even carried to term in his thigh after the mother was killed. Although he could be arbitrary and enraged, fairness and justice were his attributes, and he took good care of the people he favored.

A philanderer, Zeus had many affairs, especially with mortal women. He came to these amours in many disguises - a bull, a swan, an eagle. One might say that Zeus, when attracted, was artful. Hera, his immortal wife, the deity of marriage and domestic stability, was always jealous and frequently destructive toward those he loved.

His own birth involved strife and competition with his father, Chronos, who had tried to assure his power by eating his children as soon as they were born. Through a trick, Zeus escaped and subsequently overcame his father. This is

pretty Oedipal stuff, although Zeus antedates Oedipus by several generations. Somehow the patriarchal viewpoint often seems to be associated with competition between fathers and sons and destructiveness between males.

Jean Shinoda Bolen, in her application of Greek gods to human males, has this to say about Zeus's psychology. His viewpoint is Olympian, the broad overview, the perspective of the eagle. He is more interested in the forest than in the trees. He is decisive, accustomed to making decisions. His way of loving is a bit distant and aloof [rather like William Randolph Hearst benignly wishing his guests to have a good time without actually mixing with them]. He uses people for his own broad purposes, though he is fair, and tends to work for mutual advantage. These inferred qualities may seem a bit removed from the original sources, but Bolen's intuitive extensions of the myth to human affairs can help us understand some aspects of relationships based on the Zeus-Ganymede pattern.

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#### GANYMEDE, THE BEAUTIFUL YOUTH

Ganymede was, with one exception, Zeus's only male passion. He is the very archetype of the beloved and of the beautiful youth. We don't know much else about him. How did he feel about Zeus? about being carried away? about his eternal task of service? I think we are only left with an image of beauty, yielding and compliant, which may be the most important part of his appeal—an old man's dream.

We do know that Zeus, after carrying the youth away, returned to the grieving father and gave him a gift of horses.

This is consistent with the honorable and formal way in which the Greek lovers contracted with the fathers of the youths they loved.

It is interesting that Shinoda-Bolen does not discuss Ganymede as a type of human male. Although he is not a god, and therefore does not belong in her pantheon, he does live on Olympus, and he typifies certain young (and not so young) men.

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#### HADRIAN AND ANTINOÛS

When we look for historical examples of this pattern, Hadrian and Antinoüs were surely the most famous. Hadrian was Roman Emperor (ad 117-138), the most powerful man on earth in his time. Antinous, at around the age of 18, became his favorite.

In the town of Bithynium-Claudiopolis in northwest Asia Minor, Hadrian encountered a languid youth, born about 110, by the name of Antinoüs. Captivated by him, Hadrian made Antinoüs his companion. When, as they journeyed together along the Nile in 130, the boy fell into the river and drowned, Hadrian was desolate and wept openly. In antiquity a report circulated and was widely believed that Antinoüs had cast himself deliberately into the river as a part of some sacred sacrifice. Although Hadrian himself denied, this, the sober 3rd-century historian, Dio Cassius, thought it was the truth. The religious character, if such there was, of the relation between Hadrian and the boy is totally elusive. The emotional involvement is, however, quite clear. Sensing

Hadrian's grief, the Greek world strove to provide suitable consolation for the bereaved and honor for the deceased. Cults of Antinoös sprang up all over the East and then spread to the West. Statues of the boy became a common sight; his unheroic shape introduced a new and important element into the art of the Roman empire. In Egypt the city of Antinoöpolis commemorated his death.

What was it like being the acknowledged young lover of the most powerful man on earth? Hadrian was a sensitive, cultured, artistic man, as well as a military general and a skillful administrator. Antinoös is described as "languid", apparently by ancient texts.

My guess is that Hadrian was enamored of Antinoös' languor. An in-drawn dreamy boy can be very alluring, as if some extreme beauty of soul, some great talent might lie at the heart of that mysterious introversion. Hadrian, the great man of action and external accomplishment, nevertheless has the sensitive nature of a poet, an artist. He sees this aspect of himself in an immature boy whom he adopts as his companion. At this point (ad 128) Hadrian is 52 and has been emperor for eleven years. Antinoös is 18. The relationship lasts for two years.

The death of Antinoös is interesting. What is the nature of this accident? Did he, consciously or unconsciously, participate in bringing it about? Perhaps there were intolerable aspects to the role of Emperor's companion that he sought to escape. One thing I notice about alluringly in-drawn young men is that they are likely to be uncertain about themselves, or else confused and overwhelmed. Were there pressures or expectations that were too much for his "languid" nature?

Marguerite Yourcenar, in her *Memoirs of Hadrian*<sup>2</sup>, gives an exquisitely sensitive reconstruction of the relationship, especially the spirituality of Hadrian's perception of the boy. She sees the death as a sacrificial suicide, Antinoös giving his life for Hadrian under the influence of Egyptian soothsayers. There are also emotional cross-currents, for example Hadrian's occasional interest in other erotic partners, and the boy's conflict about growing older. The novelist portrays Antinoös in the difficult position of being completely absorbed in an older man whose interest might wander, or who might someday find him less attractive.

However we reconstruct these events, it seems touching, and significant that even a Roman Emperor, even one of singular talent and character, cannot realize the outcome of the Zeus/Ganymede myth. Whereas the mythical Ganymede remains forever a servant, cup-bearer to the gods, it appears that on the human level a beloved youth is unlikely to remain eternally yielding and compliant.

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#### WHAT'S IN IT FOR ZEUS?

As I grow older I discover that youth itself, male or female, is beautiful. It is alive with a glow which no longer burns so brightly in my own body. There is vigor, which I am losing, and will continue to lose. There is innocence and naiveté, though not so much these days as formerly. In them I feel the Eros of life itself, as it appears in younger people.

I cannot imagine that most men do not find boys beautiful, especially at certain times, like early puberty, when their eyes look somewhat shocked, and they are as beautiful as girls. There

is a later time in adolescence, much celebrated by Plato, when Reason enters. The boy now has intelligence and presence: he is now a person, relating as a person. Who is not charmed? Still later, during young manhood, he may show character or courage or some special talent in meeting the challenges of his newly adult life, and this can be beautiful—and beauty, I know, is the sure sign of the presence of Eros,.

In the myth, Zeus is attracted by the young man's beauty. On the human level, an older man shares in the boy's youthfulness. This may mean, literally, his physical youth. Medieval physicians in Europe sometimes prescribed that elderly patients sleep with adolescents, quite non-sexually, for the curative benefits of their energy.

It may also be the innocence or spiritual openness of youth which is attractive. John Sanford,<sup>3</sup> a Jungian therapist, suggests that an older man is sometimes drawn to a younger one as a projection of his own spiritual essence, just as, when a man falls in love with a woman, he has projected his "anima", his internal feminine complex, onto her. Jungians have been accustomed to look for the projection of "Shadow" in same-sex relationships. Sanford offers that it may not be Shadow, but "Self" which is projected. Especially where the man is attracted by the androgyny of the younger male, he may be seeing his own androgynous inner core which is the seat of spirituality. It is a spiritual projection. Something of the kind seems to have occurred with Hadrian and Antinoüs.

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#### THE PROBLEM OF POWER

Of course, the main problem to be examined in this pattern is the disparity in power. In the myth, Zeus got a servant, since Ganymede remained on Olympus as cup bearer to the gods. A servant is a compliant person who does what his master wants him to do. Insofar as the myth betokened the erastes/eremenos initiation of the classical Greeks, Ganymede remained incomplete in his initiation, just short of manhood. This points to a negative aspect of the pattern, which may also be expressed in human life. The older male may want the younger to remain docile and submissive rather than growing up. To the extent that Zeus is an archetype of patriarchal domination, the human who enacts his myth may want to keep control over his loved one rather than giving him freedom to grow up.

There is an English word, "minion", derived from a French word for 'darling,' which refers to a favorite servant, a beloved subordinate. In other ages, when economic differences were taken more for granted, there must have been many of these beloved servants, whose masters were their patrons. Patronage is a game of power which must be very attractive to anyone with the slightest affinity to Zeus. Zeus likes to be benevolent, generous with his favorites, but of course, in our human world power tends to corrupt. Even the most resolute democrat may become arrogant with servants. (It is instructive, and very embarrassing to watch American tourists reacting to their economic advantage in a Mexican border town.) So poor Ganymede may find himself buffeted by Zeus' whims, manipulated by his shifting moods, blackmailed by the possible loss of his favor. Samuel

Johnson's dictionary definition of patron was: "One who countenances, supports, or protects. Commonly a wretch who supports with insolence, and is paid with flattery."

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#### WHAT'S IN IT FOR GANYMEDE?

I know the attraction between me and younger men is not one sided. I can feel their interest. Sometimes they like to experience themselves in my eyes. They like to talk about themselves. They like my attention. When it is only self-centered-

ness, I inwardly yawn, bored by their immaturity. At other times they recognize me as another person. We are then mutually engaged.

More rarely, I have learned to sense a certain atmosphere of yielding. The air between us becomes sweet. I feel admiration coming from him, perhaps a little awe. I am older, wiser, experienced and powerful in his eyes, and I feel these qualities stir in response to this pleasant mirror.

In the myth Ganymede is chosen, and by the most powerful god. The power difference is attractive. For a young male, not fully established in his own manhood, it can be important to be chosen and loved. Lacking



Statue of Antinoüs,  
Roman Period

power other than youth and beauty, he may also like to share in the reflected power of the older male.

There can be pleasure in the surrender to another person's power. Exercising one's own will inevitably involves doubt, guilt and anxiety. Now, in the protection of a stronger male, these tensions can be eased. The other face of this is, of course, that surrender can be threatening, as if one were being emasculated, rendered weak and helpless.

He may also enjoy serving. This aspect was expressed in a story told me by a psychotherapist.

He had answered a classified ad placed by someone who was looking for a relationship with an "older man." The advertiser proved to be extremely developed, an accomplished artist of considerable sensitivity. Unfortunately he was looking for a much older man, and my friend, at age 55, did not qualify. This young man, who was of Japanese descent, informed my friend that many boys in Japan prefer older men, whom they love to serve.

#### AN ASIDE ABOUT PATRIARCHY

Zeus is not popular these days. Feminism has raised our consciousness about male domination, and both men and women are apt to blame their ills on something called "The Patriarchy", which seems to me to be very inadequately conceptualized. Are we imagining a shadowy assembly of old white men who exist somewhere plotting to hold on to their unfair share of power. Or are we thinking of a societal frame of mind, such as the hierarchical, male-dominated family patterns which are part of Christian Fundamentalism?

Zeus is the very figure of patriarch, historically an imposed image. The early Greeks, the Arcadians, appear to

have been Goddess worshipers, characterized by rather sensitive art and culture. They were overrun by an invading people, male-dominated Dorians. All the competing mythologies were recast, integrating Zeus as the dominant deity. Thus, all of Zeus' doings are suspect, including his attraction to Ganymede, which must surely be only an aberration of, well, "The Patriarchy".

Such are my uneasy thoughts as I write and rewrite this chapter. I have heard a woman blame all child sexual-abuse upon "The Patriarch", and another insist that all men, however well-intentioned, are assisted in their domination over women, by every act of rape. It is not comfortable to be a middle-aged Caucasian male these days. Gray hair is sometimes uncomfortably attractive as a moving target for angry projections.

Now, I do not doubt that there is a power elite, nor that it is primarily white, and male, or that it manipulates us all to maintain its hold on power. But I do doubt that "The Patriarch" is the best name we have for it. "Patriarch" is derived from pater, meaning "father", and we need to be careful not to throw the old man out with the bath water. For one thing, the majority of males, not belonging to the power-elite, have suffered nearly as much at its hands as have women and children. For another, "Patriarch" is a principle of consciousness, an archetype, which is just as essential to the individual psyche as "Matriarch" or "The Divine Child" or any other. Mental well-being demands that each of us be in a healthy, positive relationship with each of the archetypes. Zeus is just one face, one name, for this archetype of the male with authority. Every mythology

has a corresponding figure, and authority is not synonymous with the abuse of authority. The attack upon the father in contemporary American culture is at least partly responsible for the weakening of family bonds, and any boy raised by a single mother who continually slanders his absent father will have significant difficulty in consolidating his own manhood. He needs a positive internal image of a father in order to become one. The commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long. . ." is probably, in its deepest significance, an internal prescription to keep a good relationship with the twin pillars of one's energy.

Robin Morgan, in her excellent analysis of terrorism shifts from blaming "The Patriarchy" to making her case against "androcentric society", society which is centered upon males at the expense of the interests of women and children. It seems a felicitous change of name, to me. Surely we all need to see through our androcentric illusions, to make place for all of the members of humanity. But leave the patriarch in peace: he needs it, and we need him. He may need to alter many of his assumptions, but if he has no honorable place we all will (do) suffer.

Zeus might do well to alter some of his assumptions as well. He is touchy, even furious in defense of his power, and he is an extremely tricky seducer. But he has other aspects which are quite valuable: it is his high, broad viewpoint which can add reflection, philosophical inquiry, perspective. He is fair, benevolent, and not a bad father, on the whole.

He is powerful, and if hierarchical concepts of power need to be replaced by more cooperative forms, if dominance needs to give way to sharing and participation, nev-

ertheless we need to remember that it is power over which has to go, not power to. All that being said, the relationships which take place within the archetype of Zeus are going to involve, among other things, power. This aspect may be attractive to a younger male who is hoping someday to possess a similar power.

This difference in power can lead to many games and manipulations going on below the surface of a Zeus-Ganymede relationship—as in all unequal relationships. Zeus may use his power to control and dominate. Ganymede may have neurotic blocks about developing his own power. Weakness often being associated with treachery, he may have quite destructive ways of stealing the power of the older partner.

In addition to power, though, the attraction of Zeus may be his benevolent aspect, his fairness, his clarity of viewpoint, and his philosophical perspective. The ability to rise above particulars to see the larger picture is not a characteristic of most of the Greek Goddesses, who were bitterly partisan in the Trojan war, and often unfair, petty and cruel in many of their other stories. On the archetypal, internal level, we all of us need positive masculine and feminine images at work in our psyches.

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#### LOOKING FOR A SON LOOKING FOR A FATHER

Surely the primary dynamic in Zeus and Ganymede has to do with fathers and sons. Many boys have not received all that they needed from their own fathers. Robert Bly has made much of the unsatisfied longing he finds in males.<sup>4</sup>

The traditional relationships between fathers and sons have been lost as a result of the industrial revolution. Sons no longer learn their trades from their fathers, or even know much about the work they do. Nor are boys ritually initiated into manhood by older men as they were in traditional societies. Bly feels this leaves an aching void their psyches. The need for an older male's support and guidance is fundamental and organic. Fatherless boys are left without structure, guidance, limits, purpose, or definition. They may try to make up for their lack by joining gangs, but their real needs cannot be met by other boys who are equally lacking. Bly suggests that there is an ominous consequence of the lack of father-son contact. The son fills the empty space where a father should be with morose and paranoid imaginings. The father, and paternal authority itself, comes to be seen as demonic, manipulative, destructive.

For a man to do well in life he needs an interior sense of self-respect and appreciation which grows out of successful interaction with his father. Mothers cannot give it: theirs is a different kind of love. What a father rightfully gives his son is support, approval, encouragement, and above all recognition as a person. When the father is missing, many boys do not succeed in breaking from the maternal grip. They do not have the sponsorship of a father who introduces them into a man's world. Even when present in the home, a father may be emotionally unable to give these things. Many are abusive, caught up in rivalry with their sons, or withdrawn and indifferent. Their sons are going to be looking elsewhere for what they need.

Older men look for sons for some of the same reasons they are prompted to beget them. In fact, another man's son has some advantages over one's own. By the time all the emotional bric-a-brac of the childhood years has been set in place, a father and son may be unable to enjoy emotional intimacy. Too many wounds have been inflicted; the taboo against physical incest may inhibit emotional intimacy, and the son's own development may require that he become independent of the father just when the father would most enjoy closeness. All these factors conspire to leave men looking for unrelated sons, and young men looking for substitute fathers.

Such searching for substitute fathers and sons may, to some psychologists, seem only a neurotic expression and a hopeless pursuit. But it may be that another "father" can in fact supply what is missing, so that the "son" can continue to grow. It may be that a man can complete some part of his fatherhood with someone else's son. Many desires seem to be clues to what is missing, to what would make us whole. In this more affirmative view, human impulses are not so much to be opposed as allowed, channeled, permitted to evolve. An apparently deviant impulse is not a perversion unless it gets caught in a repetitive loop which tantalizes without ever satisfying the basic need which drives it. "Follow the way of heart", as Carlos Castaneda's shaman-mentor, Don Juan counsels, may translate into the words of the song, "Do it 'til you're satisfied".

It is important that they can be erotically open to one another. Whatever they do with the issue of sex, they can connect more easily than if they were related, because the

incest barrier is down. This makes it easier to complete certain steps which each of them needs to take.

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#### SEXUALITY

In its erotic aspects, Zeus-Ganymede is obviously a touchy relationship. Whereas Eros between two youthful males can somehow be excused, what is an older man doing with a young one? Overt sexual desire is especially shameful, and humiliation can be the lot of the older man. The "chicken-hawk", the sexual pursuer of young boys, is an object of derision and sometimes severe punishment in our society. The Greeks derided him as well. Perhaps this is why, of all the gods with homoerotic leanings, Zeus got the most publicity, and on the basis of the fewest lines of copy.

In 1990 the priest who heads Covenant House, a charitable organization which gives runaway teenage boys food and shelter, was caught up in a scandal. He was charged with having sex with some of the boys in his care. Amid public outrage, he was investigated, and the very existence of the charity he leads was endangered. This strikes me as preposterous. Surely the fact that he engaged in sex with some boys does not invalidate the love which must have motivated his work. It may also be that his youthful partners were more than passive victims, for it is my experience that the erotic attraction between Zeus and Ganymede is by no means one-sided.

At least the Greeks knew that sex with youths could be a valid part of their growth and initiation into manhood. It was

not destructive to their later development, but gave them insight into masculine power, and perhaps a bit of seminal magic as well. Down below the words and social faces, sex can be direct and basic, communicating multiple lessons of masculine physicality, love and recognition.k

#### ZEUS AND SPIRITUAL RELATIONSHIP

Plato's view of Zeus emphasizes his importance in reaching spiritual intimacy. For him, Zeus is the spirit which motivates philosophers, people who love wisdom. They are the same ones who, in loving, are attracted to communion with a beautiful soul. Perhaps we must, again, inquire whether there are not a range of possible relationships which are influenced by this archetype.

Once, when I was leading a workshop at a university, I met a student, L., who had been given the task of arranging for my room and board. We smoked herb (that being 1968) and fell into a very deep conversation during which we became very close. I did a Rolfing session on him, one of the most profound I have ever experienced. Later he came frequently to visit me and my family, during which I did more Rolfing sessions. It is difficult to describe how beautiful he was to me then. He was some kind of golden youth. Light seemed to emanate from his body. I was unused to so much erotic feeling toward another man. While I did not fantasize about him sexually, I certainly wanted to be physically close. I felt confusion and discomfort, and eventually I sent him away.

Fifteen years passed before I saw this man again. Still wondering whether my feelings for him had been merely lustful, I asked him how he

had experienced those early Rolfing sessions. He replied "I discovered my Christ body!" The result of this spiritual experience was that he became a devoted meditator, and eventually a counselor guiding other people in their meditation practices.

I learned a lot from this experience. It was before I knew how to bind sexual energy, and before I knew about the global nature of Eros. The luminosity of L's beauty at that time was a projection, out of the intensity of what I was feeling. I would say now that I was projecting my own spiritual being, my Essence. It was a spiritual beauty in that sense. Of greatest interest is his reaction to it. Basking in the glow of my perception of him, he discovered his own archetypal perfection, his "Christ-body." I think this is in the nature of a Zeus/Ganymede transaction, one of its possibilities.

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Zeus and Ganymede, Mentor and Protégé—love between a man and a youth. Zeus seems more preoccupied with his own needs, his erotic attraction, his need for a spiritual mirror or a yielding servant. Mentor is more disinterested, more interested in developing Protégé. Ganymede is somewhat passive, in need of rescue, but Protégé is eagerly collecting his own growth. Zeus swoops down and carries away; Mentor gives assistance on the spot. Disparity in power is the essence of Zeus and Ganymede; developing power in the young Beloved is the theme of Mentor.

In fact, sorting out these two elements is probably critical for any older-younger male relationship. It was to reach

this point in my own understanding that I started this book. One relationship had begun with the yearnings of Zeus but ended with a considerably empowered young Protégé. For reasons which lie far below the surface of my understanding, I needed to live out this process with such a person.

<sup>1</sup> Benet, William Rose. *The Reader's Encyclopedia*. New York, Thomas Crowell Co, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> Beudeley, C. *L'Amour Bleu*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1978.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 98.

<sup>4</sup> Chronos, or Saturn, is often taken as the archetype of the destructive rivalry which older men may feel toward younger men. This is the Senex-Puer, old man-boy strife. King Saul fell into the trap of Chronos with David, rather than enjoying the possibility of a Zeus-Ganymede relationship.

<sup>5</sup> *Gods in Everyman*. pp. 55-65

<sup>6</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1976, 8, 540. Text article on Hadrian.

<sup>7</sup> Yourcenar, Marguerite. *Memoires d'Hadrian*. 1954. English translation published by Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, New York.

<sup>8</sup> *Hidden Partners*

<sup>9</sup> Morgan, Robin. *The Demon Lover: on the Sexuality of Terrorism*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1989.

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*

# 7

## Shadow

Shadow, as Jung defined it, is the cluster of elements which are excluded from the way one thinks of himself ("ego") and presents himself to others ("persona"). Shadow, of course, plays itself out in a great deal of sexual behavior between men, simply because sexuality is forbidden, and therefore is relegated to the realm of shadow.

In the Christian tradition, shadow is given form and face as "The Devil." About the devil, we have two clues: first, he was what the Christians made of poor old Pan. Second, Dante found him in the bottom ring of Hell, up to his waist in a frozen lake, caught in his own isolation.

### THE NATURE OF PAN

Pan, like Eros, is an ancient god. His name means "All" in Greek, and possibly, like Eros, he was originally some Arcadian Creator-God. Later, as "god of pastures, forests, flocks and herds"<sup>1</sup> he came to represent the wildness of nature. With the agricultural revolution people began settling in villages because they had learned to cultivate food rather than forage for it. As former hunter-gatherers the wildness of nature must have come to mean a great deal to them. Village life had its order, often quite oppressive order, based on a power structure which reflected the needs of landowners as opposed to those who did not own land. They must have remembered another, freer life. The image of Pan expressed that freer life and certain spontaneous states which might

well up within an ordered life. Sudden breaking of bounds, the randy arousal of sex, eruptions of irresistible fear—in all of these could be seen the hand of wild nature. From “Pan” we get the word “panic,” the knee-buckling terror which can cause even the most determined warrior to flee.

By classical times Pan had acquired the image of goat and man, combined. He had hairy legs, goat feet, horns. He played on his reed-pipes tunes which might be the breeze of nature or at other times nameless songs which lured men to madness. Nature was a potent force, not to be denied.

Enkidu, in the Gilgamesh Epic, is a Pan figure, another face for the archetype. With hair all over his body and locks on his head as long as a woman’s, he lived with the animals on the steppe. Gilgamesh, on the other hand, was king of a city, usually the image of the ego in its domain of consciousness. The story of Enkidu and Gilgamesh, then, is also the inner story of a man’s relationship to his own wild nature. Robert Bly<sup>2</sup> has taken this line also in his interpretation of the European folk tale of Iron Hans, a wild man dragged from the bottom of a mysterious lake and taken in a cage to a king’s castle. The tale revolves around the friendship between the king’s son and the wild man. It is Bly’s belief that recovering this innate wildness in ourselves is a crucial project for contemporary men.

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#### PAN’S SEXUALITY

In Saratoga, Florida, there is an art museum which houses the collection of the Ringling family, owners of the circus of the same name. Their collection consists mainly

of Spanish and Dutch paintings of the 17th Century. At the very end of the last corridor of the Dutch collection is one painting by Jan Steen, whose name is synonymous with paintings of human beings in wild and unrestrained situations. This work depicts a nighttime woodland scene: boys are carrying girls off to secluded nooks; couples are lying together; farther in the background several men are standing alone, apparently cruising, and the whole scene was swirling around an indistinct, yet radiant Presence which on closer scrutiny appears to be Pan. It is appropriate to Pan’s situation that many of the paintings around him in the museum are so ponderously official. The entry way is hung with Rubens’ tapestry designs, frank propaganda intended to identify the Spanish Hapsburgs with the Catholic Church, the saints, and the holy Eucharist. The collection is heavy with religious art, primarily Spanish. Pan in this museum is in his usual place, beyond the far edge of officially sanctioned conventionality.

Pan is the spirit of Great Nature and all that is wild in us. The relationship between Pan and Shadow becomes apparent in the adventurous side of Shadow sexuality. In many large cities there are parks where men can find homosexual action. The hunting, the danger, the excitement, the unexpected elements of these scenes goes beyond the merely forbidden. There is natural theater here, rather like a huge game. The wilder and more uncultivated the bushes in which the action takes place, the more we can expect to find Pan.

One friend tells me he goes to a gay bath house, not to engage in sex, but to be in an atmosphere in which people are putting aside their conventional

masks. After a day of working, of maintaining his propriety and his persona, he comes home to relax. "But sometimes, late at night I feel restless. Everything seems too constricted, too proper. I wonder, is this the whole thing, to throw up a persona which has nothing to do with life? To live out roles on a stage and never realize that they are not real? That's when I go to the baths, just to be around something a little more basic."

#### THE REPRESSION OF PAN

"Legend has it that at the time of the Crucifixion, just when the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, a cry swept across the ocean in the hearing of many, 'Great Pan is dead,' and that at the same time the responses of the oracles ceased forever."<sup>3</sup>

Christianity, for reasons which have been discussed in many books, has a strange relationship with nature. Nature is corrupt and in need of redemption. Nature exists to be controlled and exploited. Everywhere Christianity spread, the older nature religions were repressed. The Inquisition in Europe was merely the culmination of the trend. Directed in part against the older nature traditions still extant, "Witchcraft" was its special target. This meant, among other things, the practices of "Wicca", a northern-European nature tradition. Thus it was that we lost a tradition of natural healing and nature wisdom dating back 30,000 years to Cro-Magnon times. It seems that medicine, as a male-dominated profession, became entrenched at that time. The handbook of the witch hunt, the *Maleus Malefactorum*, counselled that, when one is uncertain whether an illness is caused by witchcraft, one should ask one's physician.

Earlier, Judaism had actively repressed the nature religions. The great hue and cry against Baal in the Old Testament is against a religion of nature. A sky god who guides a wandering people is different from the gods of a people who are settled in a particular place. The early Jews, united by a tribal god, migrated into the "promised land", which they found populated by people who had many little gods of place. Any field or grove, stream or rock can seem to have a special spirit. These spirits were called "baals". The Jews suppressed Baal as much as they could, in favor of their own Only One God. They gave Baal a bad name. Shinto, the nature religion of Japan, honors spirits such as these, probably in much the same way. Little sculptured "houses" in the bottom of their gardens are for the spirits that dwell there—their Baals.

In Greece the deity of nature-in-the-wild was Pan. The Greeks had celebrated him, The Christians saw him in a very different light. The horns and hooves which had expressed his wildness became the signs of Evil. Given the Original Sin of Adam and Eve, our basic human nature is, well, fallen. The pull of our own physical and sensual nature is a pull away from God and therefore evil. Thus the Pan within becomes The Devil. Old Nick.

This new, negative Pan was used to embroider the case against Wicca in Europe. "Witches" consorted with the Devil in unspeakable rituals. They were therefore possessed by evil and must be killed. A relationship with Pan, one's own spontaneous nature, had become a thing of dread, a pact with the Devil.

## THE DEVIL'S SEXUALITY

Predictably, the Devil's sexuality was a great deal nastier than Pan's. He was accused of every perversity, every deviant impulse a medieval imagination could come up with to impugn in someone else. What had been wild and spontaneous in Pan became grotesque and convoluted in Old Nick. Natural sexuality was split in two. Guilt and Lust begin their cyclic combat, and the Forbidden Impulse was substituted for innocent promptings.

The attraction of this kind of sexuality is not so much to the thing itself as to the fact that it is forbidden, or at least naughty. Often it is the forbidden "dirt" of bathroom functions which gets associated with sexuality: sex in toilets, sex involving urine and feces. Other more serious forms of the forbidden can get enacted: cruelty, torture, domination all lie outside the scope of the acceptable. This is the territory charted by the Marquis de Sade, in the hateful and destructive fantasies he explored in his writing.

This is fantasy sex. The actual partner is used only as a figure in a drama, his own human reality ignored. The erotic energy which might otherwise bring two people through the steps of mutual recognition and intimacy does not lead out of the narcissistic box. There are plenty of partners who are willing, who are enacting their own fantasy dramas and have no interest in deeper relationship.

## THE DEVIL'S SOLITUDE

The Devil which Dante found in the bottom ring of Hell is more sophisticated than the Pan-linked one we have been considering. He is originally Lucifer or Satan, the archangel

who rebelled against God and was thrown out of heaven into the pit of hell.

Dante's poem is truly profound, a Divine Comedy. Beginning in a state of despair, cut off from his former certainties about life, the poet is led by the shade of Virgil through descending rings of the Inferno. The Lucifer he encounters at the bottom of the pit is his own dualistic ego.

The emperor of the woeful realm issued forth from the ice from the middle of his breast. . . three faces on his head [denoting Impotence, Ignorance, and Hate]. . . Beneath. . . two great wings, of size befitting so great a bird. . . no feathers, but their fashion was of a bat; and he was flapping them so that three winds were proceeding from him whereby [the lake] was frozen. With six eyes he was weeping, and over three chins were trickling the tears and bloody drivel. At each mouth he was crushing a sinner with his teeth. . .<sup>4</sup>

Here is Satan at the center of a frozen lake—frozen by the beating of his own wings. What an image of narcissistic solitude! Virgil led Dante through the very center, past Lucifer's groin to get to the other side, to Purgatory and later Paradise. By going all the way down, Dante found he was on the way up again.

This is the Devil which must be faced in order to move beyond. It is a more psychological view of evil, which is seen as separation from God, and ultimate solitude. This is not the infantile perversity of Old Nick but the complex tragedy of duality and separation. This Devil is the ego itself, impotent, ignorant, and filled with hatred. The Fall is a fall from unity and relatedness.

Translated into less psychedelic terms, it is an image of narcissism: the inability to make a bridge between one's interior, one's needs and desires, and the reality of another person. At this level, hell is cold, not hot. It is also painful and lonely. To pass beyond, it may be necessary to look squarely at the immensity of one's own self-absorption and the intense fear of intimacy which may be holding it in place.

#### SHADOW SEXUALITY

Shadow sexuality is therefore the expression of elements which are out of bounds. Where Pan predominates, this may simply be the call of the wild, the escape from civilized strictures. Where people are more opposed to their natural urges, Shadow becomes Devil, and their sexuality becomes an expression of forbidden things.

Impersonality is another characteristic of shadow sexuality, especially if the emphasis is on the forbidden. Pan's embrace is goatish, but sometimes passionate, not utterly disinterested in his partners. The Devil is caught in narcissistic solitude.

Sometimes shadow sexuality is the only script available for a young male who is attracted to other males.

My friend Gregory brought this home forcibly to me. He declared himself as a homosexual at the age of 16. He says his impulses at the time were largely romantic: he wanted to love and be close to another male. However, John Rechy's book, *City of Night*,<sup>5</sup> which had appeared a few years earlier, was a powerful guide in shaping his approach to male eroticism. Rechy's book is definitely not romantic. It is about extreme sexual encounters, generally between strangers,

often in public toilets. Shadow sexuality. That was the manual which guided Gregory. He feels he largely missed the point of his early feelings toward men. Rechy's *City of Night* was the only script he could find.

#### HOMOSEXUALITY AS SHADOW

Traditional Christian morality has rejected homosexuality largely as it has rejected its own shadow in other ways. The Bible forbids a man to lie with another man "as if he were a woman."<sup>6</sup> Sex between them falls generally into the



Rubens: Two Satyrs

category of "sodomy", although the word originally referred to anal intercourse alone. On these grounds people caught engaging in it were executed by church authorities, busy combating evil by killing it in someone else.

The same thing has been true in the formulations of the mental health establishment. Until 1973, when the American Psychiatric Association decided that homosexuality per se is not an indication of psychopathology, the official line was that sexual activity between people of the same sex was ipso facto indication of illness. Since psychopathology amounts to the 20th Century's concept of sin, this was merely an honorable and gentlemanly way of pointing at Shadow. The newer approach leaves open more possibility that there might be healthy and positive aspects to male love, even if it is sexually expressed.

Jungian psychologists, to whose theory the term "Shadow" originally belonged, have generally seen the attraction between men in terms of the projection of shadow. Since they see the projection of Anima in a man's love of a woman, and Animus in a woman's love of a man, they logically needed to look for a similar projection when the object is of the same sex. Since the Shadow, as a personification of unaccepted elements, is generally represented by same-sex figures in dreams, it was the logical choice. A man must be seeing his own unacceptable side in the man he loves.

But we have seen that there are many other mythical bases for Eros between men. "The Friend" is not an archetype which necessarily involves shadow. Zeus and Ganymede as well as Mentor and Protegé are not projecting shadow. A relationship may very well display more than one archetype

at work, but shadow is not necessarily involved in all love between men.

We must conclude that Shadow is specific to a much narrower range of homoerotic behaviors. We will adhere to our intention to look for shadow where emphasis is on behaviors which are forbidden, or where they seem impersonal. Forbidden in this case means counter to the conscious values of the person, rather than forbidden by society, since social consensus has broken down in the area of sexuality.

Related, but slightly different is the Pan form of shadow. Here nature wishes to burst free of conventional constraints. It is a potentially more positive side of the archetype. Freedom torn from the clutches of banality and conformity can be the soil of wisdom and maturity.

Camille Paglia, that intellectual provocateuse who has perhaps thought more deeply and less idealistically about sexuality than anyone else in her academic generation, concludes that males use casual sex as part of their overall need to escape, to maintain their freedom from the Maternal:

One of the problems that most vexed me in my meditation on sex is the promiscuity of gay men. Again and again, I was astonished to learn from gay friends of hot spots in notorious toilets at the diner, the bus terminal, or, Minerva help us, the Yale library. What gives? Women, straight or gay, do not make a life-style of offering themselves without cost to random strangers in sleazy public settings.

At last, I saw it. Gay men are guardians of the masculine impulse. To have anonymous sex in a dark alleyway is to pay homage to the dream of male freedom. The unknown stranger is a wan-

dering pagan god. The alter, as in prehistory, is anywhere you kneel. Similarly, straight men who visit prostitutes are valiantly striving to keep sex free from emotion, duty, family—in other words from society, religion, and procreative Mother Nature.

#### PROJECTION AND REPRESSION OF SHADOW

Seeing one's own disavowed traits in another person is a practice honored by long tradition. Societies do it: the cold war was a spectacle of the two superpowers seeing their own flaws in the other. Sometimes I think the United States has a particular need for an enemy, which it can attack rather than facing its own shortcomings. The current War-On-Drugs seems to be our latest application of the principle, allowing us to punish black males from ghettos, drug-users, and small-time pushers rather than look squarely at our social problems. Now, more than ever, people who want simple, "moral" solutions need someone evil to blame.

Homosexuals have always been a target. The Bible forbids sexuality between men, and we have the vivid example of God punishing the cities of Sodom and Gomorra for homosexual offenses. There are many examples of men being killed for homosexuality between the late Roman Empire and the late middle ages. A portion of the people executed by the Inquisition were homosexual men. This was not an insignificant number: an estimated 8 million people, 6 million of them women, died under its ministry between 1492, its inception, and 1600 when its fires had burned a little lower. An average of two Englishmen a year were executed for homosexuality during the opening years

of the nineteenth century. As late as 1895 so prominent a figure as Oscar Wilde was sent to prison for two years for a sexual relationship with a consenting Peer.

For sheer, frenzied intensity of homophobia, it is difficult to match the 19th Century British practice of pillorying homosexuals. Pillorying involved exposing criminals to the punishment of crowds, which would throw whatever they cared to throw without restraint. The following eye-witness account describes what happened to a group of gay men who were entrapped by police in a private club in 1820:

"It is impossible for language to convey an adequate idea of the universal expression of execration which accompanied these monsters on their journey [from jail to prison]. It was fortunate for them that the weather was dry; had it been otherwise they would have been smothered. From the moment the cart was in motion, the fury of the mob began to display itself in showers of mud and filth of every kind. Before the cart reached Temple-bar, the wretches were so thickly covered with filth, that a vestige of the human figure was scarcely discernible. They were chained, and placed in such a manner, that they could not lie down in the cart, and could only hide and shelter their heads from the storm by stooping, which, however, could afford but little protection,—Some of them were cut in the head with brickbats, and bled profusely; and the streets, as they passed, resounded with the universal shouts and execrations of the populace. . . .

"Before any of them reached the place of punishment, their faces were completely disfigured by blows and mud, and before they mounted

their whole persons appeared one heap of filth. Upwards of fifty women were permitted to stand in the ring, who assailed them incessantly with mud, dead cats, rotten eggs, potatoes, and buckets filled with blood, offal, and dung, which were brought by a number of butchers' men from St. James's market. These criminals were very roughly handled.

Think of being surrounded by thirty- or forty-thousand people, shouting hatred and throwing shit! People were often blinded or even killed in these events, which attracted huge crowds when the subjects were homosexual.

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It is interesting, by the way, to examine the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in the Bible.<sup>7</sup> We can see how a general antagonism to sexuality has magnified a narrower situation into a wider prohibition. Two angels came to Sodom at evening time, and Lot, who was sitting near the city gate, invited them to his home. These angels must have been quite a sight for, "before they lay down" all the men of Sodom, "old and young, from every quarter" surrounded Lot's house and demanded that the strangers be sent out to them so that they could "know" them. Lot offered to bring out his virgin daughters. which may not seem very savory to modern feminists: "Do ye to them as is good in your eyes, only unto these men do nothing for therefore they came under the shadow of my roof"<sup>8</sup> The angels then took matters into their own hands, smote the attacking men with blindness, and undertook to save Lot and his family from the subsequent destruction of the city.

The gang-rape of strangers is arguably very immoral. For its stigma to be attached to sexual love between men in general seems like overkill. We can see here the extent of the anti-sexual bias of the Judeo-Christian tradition, a bias which has rendered Eros between men a dangerous and guilty affair.

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Shadow has a way of expressing itself no matter what the frontal personality may wish. The same thing happens to societies. An individual man battling his erotic attraction to other males may find the urge returning in less desirable forms. Likewise in society the repression of sex between men does not make it go away, it only makes it guilty and conflicted, more protruberated in its manifestations.

One consequence is that erotic attractions which might naturally be tender and loving may harden into heartless and impersonal enactments of forbidden sexual fantasies. The tender baby is discarded in an effort to get rid of the menace of the bath water.

The members of different ethnic groups have always been useful targets for Shadow projections. Black men, in particular, are carriers of white projections of penile immensity and sexual prowess, well-established in the Arabian Nights, and before that, in Roman times. Can this be one cause for the fact that, in the United States, 23% of those between 20 and 30 are in some form of detention or probation?<sup>9</sup> Any ethnic group can serve as a useful target for shadow projection. Anyone who is not of one's own background can lie outside the constraints of one's particular

system of taboos. Blacks, Asians, Latinos, Arabs, all have carried the blessed irrelevance to caste- and class-roles which one needs to "get down" and "get off."

#### FORBIDDEN SEXUALITY

Any erotic play between men which serves primarily to express forbidden sexual impulses is therefore an indication that the Shadow archetype is present. However differently someone else might conceive of the same behaviors, if they are largely forbidden to the individual, if he is merely having a night off from his ordinary values, Shadow is at work.

Because Shadow behaviors are forbidden behaviors, then people with whom one enacts them are also outside the boundaries of the acceptable and the acknowledged. Here is where love and sex get separated. One does not love someone with whom one is doing something dirty. Sex becomes impersonal, the act more important than the partner. Like Dante's Satan, one is left frozen to the waist in the lake of one's own isolation.

#### THE EXPRESSION OF SEXUAL FANTASY

The range of shadow sexuality is naturally very broad, since what is forbidden and therefore attractive covers the entire realm of sexuality.

Any good love-making allows the lovers to play and improvise. It is one of the advantages of love's rituals that we can drop our ordinary identities and allow other elements free play. Vestiges of early childhood eroticism manifest in the way we kiss and rub, probe and nuzzle. Within the limits of good play, anything goes. We can be free.

Shadow sexuality takes those limits one step wider, because we are not constrained by the requirement that

the partner accept us or that the relationship last. If the partner is not part of the equation, then one is focused on the enactment of whatever fantasy beckons. Partner is only an instrument in the process, not an entity in his own right. Narcissism rules.

#### THE ANALITY OF SHADOW

Martin Luther threw an inkwell at the Devil who came to him while he was sitting on the toilet. Erik Erikson<sup>10</sup> has examined the incident to establish a connection between Luther's excretory function and his vision of the Devil. This reasoning brings anality and evil together, and hence is useful in understanding Shadow. Excrement is dirty, yet the sensations from the anus can be voluptuous. This voluptuousness belongs especially, but by no means exclusively, to the toddler phase of childhood, when the bowels are slowly becoming subject to control and are experienced as having a variety of erotic and aggressive possibilities. Since excrement is dirty, and rebellion against parental authority at this age can be expressed by withholding feces or by depositing it in undesired times and places, the entire function can come to carry heavy symbolism of evil.

Shadow sex, inasmuch as it serves to express forbidden impulses, has a heyday with anal sexuality. Cruelty, domination, submission, control, and all the other elements of a child's theater of anal aggression can be found at every hand in homosexuality which is dominated by Shadow. The voluptuous aspect of anal sensuality may also be relegated to the shadow. Men who are guiltily motivated by this need seek the pleasure of being penetrated without the quite complex and tender interpersonal bonding which can be

its result under more positive circumstances. On a more positive note, the acceptance of anal voluptuousness can offer the empowering liberation from unnecessary taboo.

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#### THE USEFULNESS OF SHADOW SEXUALITY

Shadow-dominated sexuality has many disadvantages. It is sex coming from the actions of shadow which is most likely to destroy friendship. In the typical case two friends get drunk together or something else causes their defenses against the shadow to be lowered, and they engage in some sexual episode. When the defenses go up again, it often happens that the friend is repressed along with the unaccepted sexual impulses.

Sex without relatedness can also lead easily to the compulsive short-circuitry we call perversion, symbolic enactments which never succeed in meeting the actual needs they symbolize. When sex is being used in an attempt to find intimacy, yet intimacy is also too frightening to attempt, the possibility of repetitive compulsion is very great. The Greeks were merciless in their derision of purely lustful men in pursuit of youths. They recognized the foolish and repetitive character of purely sexual motivation. They idealized soul-relatedness, and they disparaged shadow sex (at least publicly).

At a minimum shadow sex brings things out into the open. The principle agent of personal evolution and growth is one's own awareness. If a person is motivated to be aware in his life and to make use of whatever emerges for his own self-understanding and growth, allowing the Shadow a little

play can be quite useful. The latitude of shadow sex, broader than social norms allow, can be just the chance one needs to find out something important about himself.

This is especially true of the Pan side of shadow. Wild exploration, bursting the boundaries, may be what a person needs to gain perspective. The view can be exhilarating and instructive and lead to growth.

It is the impersonality of Shadow Eros which is its greatest limitation. In the archetypal patterns explored in previous chapters the relationship to a beloved partner is a dominating factor. If sexuality becomes a part of their play, it does not take the entire stage. The presence of another person, fully acknowledged, starts immediately to transform sex. By its very definition the shadow consists of excluded elements of personality. Where consciousness is involved, shadow is dispelled. Lovers in relationship with each other may explore whatever sexual games attract them, even opening doors which were previously forbidden. But the devilish lure of The Forbidden is not so attractive when one is really relating to another soul.

<sup>1</sup> Benet, *The Reader's Encyclopedia*

<sup>2</sup> Esalen Recordings.

<sup>3</sup> Benet, W. R. *The Readers' Encyclopedia*.

<sup>4</sup> Johnson, Don. *Body*.

<sup>5</sup> The story of Satan's fall is told by Milton in *Paradise Lost*.

<sup>6</sup> *Inferno*, Canto XXXIV.

<sup>7</sup> Rechy, John. *City of Night*.

<sup>8</sup> For example, in *Leviticus 18*: "You must not lie with a man as with a woman. This is a hateful thing."

<sup>9</sup> Paglia, Camille. "Homosexuality at the Fin de Siecle." In *Sex, Art, and American Culture*. New York: Vantage Books, 1992.

<sup>10</sup>The Trying and Pillorying of the Vere Street Club. quoted in Crompton, L. Byron and Greek Love: Homophobia in 19th-Century England. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1985

<sup>11</sup>Genesis 19.

<sup>12</sup>verse 8.

<sup>13</sup>Herald Tribune in March, 1990.

<sup>14</sup>Erikson, E. Young Man Luther New York: W. W. Norton, 19

## 8

### Phallos

In 1786 Richard Payne Knight, a distinguished English scholar and antiquarian, published a book entitled *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus*.<sup>1</sup> When traveling near Naples, he had observed women wearing amulets either directly or symbolically depicting sexual organs. These amulets were exactly the same as very ancient ones from the same district. He also reported vendors selling wax figures representing the phallos to women who offered them as vows in the service of St. Cosmus and St. Damianus. Proceeding from these observations he developed an earnest, scholarly discourse on the ancient worship of Priapus, or generative force, among the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Celts, Iberians, and many other ancient peoples. He concluded that phallic worship was a universal consequence of the nature of human beings, and that it exists everywhere it has not been actively suppressed.

He was careful to distinguish this worship from licentiousness or impurity, on grounds that any natural function, practiced moderately, cannot be immoral. Nevertheless, what we now think of as Victorian prudery was solidly in place by the late 18th Century: the ensuing storm of criticism forced him to recall the book from circulation. He got on with his other, less controversial studies, and at his death bequeathed his enormous collection of phallic antiquities to the British Museum.

Knight used for his topic the name of Priapus, a Greek god of vegetable and animal fertility who was often represented with an enormous phallos. Since then, scholars have come to use "Phallos" as a more general term, less limited to a single culture.

Eighty years later, another English scholar, Thomas Wright, probed again this forbidden territory in *The Worship of the Generative Powers during the Middle Ages of Western Europe*. (1866).<sup>2</sup> Wright illustrated his study with numerous engravings of statuary and architectural detail. Like Knight, he concluded that "The worship of the reproductive organs as representing the fertilizing, protecting, and saving powers of nature. . .prevailed universally."<sup>3</sup>

What these two men knew was that sexual organs, both male and female, have always and everywhere been endowed with magical significance, quite apart from the personal characteristics of their owners. Subsequent studies have borne them out: phallos-centered rites, even religions, have ever been part of the practice of mankind. "Phallic worship" was the term used by horrified Christians encountering other cultures, but these are nature-religions. The penis, whether as particular or as abstraction, is certainly part of nature.

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Ritual honor of the Phallos may take many forms. In the Shiva branch of Hinduism, the Shiva-lingam, the great cosmic phallos, refers to Shiva's phallus, but in the sense of his up-welling creative power. A Shiva worshipper would be offended by too-sexual an interpretation of the symbol.

It is so far abstracted as to be an expression of elementary force, rather like the yang element in Chinese cosmology. Other examples of phallic religion are probably more, well, penile, as the explicitly sexual sculptures on Tantric temples in India suggest.

This projection of awe and wonder upon the penis is doubtless involved in the attraction between men and deserves separate consideration if we are to understand the erotic urges which draw them together. Surely sexual encounters between men must often involve elements of Phallic Myth. In addition to the relational considerations of the earlier themes we have considered, and beyond the down-and-dirty expressions of the forbidden Shadow, there are deep, primary, and primitive levels to the sexual transaction which involve mystical elaboration of the equipment itself. This is no longer "penis", but "Phallos," and it is an archetype. We are in the presence of the Phallos-as-Archetype any time special magical or mystical significance is attributed to the sexual organ.

### PHALLOS AS ARCHETYPE

As every man and boy knows, the penis has a life of its own. It waxes when we do not want it to, and it wanes when we want it to keep waxing. We can influence it; we can learn its habits and cooperate with it, but we do not make it happen. In vernacular language, "cock" expresses this aspect of penile experience quite well. Like the rooster to which it refers, it has a life of its own, it is indiscriminate, unresponsive to reason, and it is particularly lively in the morning. Obviously to the innocent, "prescientific" (literally 'before knowledge') mind, something special is involved.

C. G. Jung's Dream, reported in *Dreams, Memories and Reflections*, is a well-known expression of the numinous phallic force. He was between three and four years old when he had this dream, which evidently preoccupied him all of his life. In the dream he had discovered a dark hole with a stone stairway leading down into the ground. He descended fearfully:

At the bottom was a doorway with a round arch, closed off by a green curtain. It was a big, heavy curtain of worked stuff like brocade, and it looked very sumptuous. Curious to see what might be hidden behind, I pushed it aside. I saw before me in the dim light a rectangular chamber about thirty feet long. The ceiling was arched and of hewn stone. The floor was laid with flagstones, and in the center a red carpet ran from the entrance to a low platform. On this platform stood a wonderfully rich golden throne. . . a real king's throne in a fairy tale. Something was standing on it which I thought at first was a tree trunk twelve to fifteen feet high and about one and a half to two feet thick. It was a huge thing, reaching almost to the ceiling. but it was of a curious composition. It was made of skin and naked flesh, and on top there was something like a rounded head with no face and no hair. On the very top of the head was a single eye, gazing motionlessly upwards.

It was fairly light in the room, although there were no windows and no apparent source of light. Above the head, however, was an aura of brightness. The thing did not move, yet I had the feeling that it might at any moment crawl off the throne like a worm and creep towards me. I was paralyzed with terror. At that moment I heard from outside

and above me my mother's voice! She called out, "yes, just look at him. That is the man-eater!" . . . I awoke sweating and scared to death<sup>4</sup>

This dream captures the powerful, mysterious, magical quality which we call "numinous," and it is obviously associated with a huge representation of the Phallos, dreamed by a very small boy. We can imagine that similar elements of awe, terror and fascination lie in the background of many sexual transactions which focus on the male genitals.

#### PURUSHA: PHALLOS AS A SPIRITUAL PATH

Being unable, or unwilling to do the topic full justice, I propose to examine the life and writings of one admirable and intelligent man who seems to exemplify the ritual focus on Phallos.

I feel justified in writing about "Purusha" without taking excessive steps to conceal his identity, because he produced a movie and a book which documented his sexual development and his beliefs. I did not agree with him in many of his conclusions, but I admired his honesty, consistency, and his willingness to make his position known. His real name was something else, but he published his later views about radical sexuality under the name of Purusha, a Sanskrit name for "perfected consciousness." This is a man who felt he was discovering profound truths through his sexuality.

He was monastic in character, and, indeed, he had been educated in a Catholic seminary. Although he left the church, he retained his strong focus on spiritual growth and experience. His sexuality became the vehicle of this growth, an important part of his path.

His earlier piece was a movie, *A Very Natural Thing*,<sup>5</sup> partly autobiographical in theme, which portrays a young Catholic seminarian who leaves the church to enter gay life. Despite a love affair with another man, the hero opts to live alone without relational attachment. This was important, because Purusha himself consistently avoided personal entanglements in favor of the purely sexual-spiritual discoveries he was making. To the end of his life he lived a semi-reclusive life-style with his books and his music. A friend was someone he permitted to visit once a month.

In 1981 he published a book entitled *The Divine Androgyne* in which he outlined his views. This book is intended as a most serious argument for sexuality as a spiritual path. He introduces his project this way:

"Call me Purusha—Purusha the Androgyne. That is the name I have given to my unrepressed self, who emerges from within me each day like a mysterious new dimension of my identity, or like a different person. By now I feel that the unconscious components have merged and recombined with my conscious self to become the whole me—the original, natural, primitive, erotic and mythological version of what I have been trying to be and would have been from the beginning of my life, had I not gotten so mixed up in repressing and self-invalidating. The experience has been like falling in love again with all those mysterious strangers I've been falling in love with all my life, only now this intense experience is happening primarily within myself and only secondarily with others.<sup>6</sup>

"I am finding that the more I lift my repressions and liberate myself from residual patterns of negative thinking and self-invalidation, the more I enter into a state of consciousness which I characterize as very erotic, very ecstatic, and very cosmic. At first I thought I might be discovering something "new," but now it seems to me more like I have finally tapped into what the natural unrepressed state of human consciousness could be, and into the process which has been going on forever in Universe.<sup>7</sup>

". . . [I]f a person is interested in consistent, regular, even daily experiences of ecstasy at the highest levels of intensity, the kind that in the erotically sublimated religious traditions go by the names of "mystical union with God" or "heaven" (in the Western spiritual traditions) and of "enlightenment," samadhi, satori, or nirvana (in the Eastern spiritual traditions), then my highest recommendation goes to eroticism and sex. It is the direct path, the shortest distance between you and ecstasy; that is, the quickest, easiest, most inexpensive, most accessible and most pleasurable pathway with the least amount of repression or sublimation.<sup>8</sup>

Purusha did not consider his position in terms of Phallic Worship, but rather as "Androgyny," the union of masculine and feminine. I always felt that Purusha was over-literal in his understanding of androgyny: masculinity was associated with the penis, femininity with receptivity in anal intercourse. I confess I never found him either androgynous or feminine, but rather dry and rationally masculine. He was, however, deeply committed to finding spiritual experience through sexual ecstasy, a kind of priest of "Phallos."

The main component of his sexual-spirituality was the pursuit of ecstatic states through phallic, anal, and other erotic stimulation, either alone or with partners. Ultimately he came to value masturbation most highly: sex with partners was a chance to share what had been learned from his own masturbation. His book describes in elaborate detail his ritualized approach to masturbation, with music, incense, and other paraphernalia. He published pictures of himself at the height of these ecstatic moments. Consistent with the conclusion of his movie, he includes a long chapter rejecting couple-relationships in favor of multiple, long-term friendships with other "advanced androgynes." Although he makes many references to the "heart chakra," and heart communication during love-making, I felt that his mind and his body were very developed, but his heart seemed as inaccessible as that of any over-rational male.

I did feel that he had accomplished some real spiritual development, though. Consistent with his earlier monastic life, he remained a monk, but his practice became, in part, a sexual-erotic meditation. When he was facing death (from AIDS), he evidenced a stalwart, Zen-like calm. Indeed, he said he preferred to die rather than live to see AIDS force the postponement of the Erotic Revolution to which he was so committed.

#### RITUALIZATION OF SEX BETWEEN MALES

Sexual intercourse between men has often been treated as a ritual in which power is transmitted. On the walls of a temple in Greece there are ancient graffiti. The inscriptions date from the sixth century bce, and repeat largely the same message: "[So-and-so], the son of [So-and-so] had sexual

intercourse with [So-and-so], the son of [So-and-so]." The word used for intercourse clearly implies that it was licit, as proscribed by the cultural mores of the time. These were the Dorian Greeks, invaders from the Eastern steppe, who brought with them a patriarchal religion (Zeus), and a frank embracing of male eroticism. The inscriptions celebrate rituals of anal intercourse between young men and their older partners, lawfully joined together.

While qualities of mentorship were doubtless involved, there is something more. We are told by numerous sources that the Dorian Greeks, as well as various tribes in New Guinea, the Australian bush, and elsewhere, consider that receiving anal intercourse is necessary for a youth to consolidate his own manhood. This ritual enactment of sexuality is understood to transmit power.

Oral sexuality can also have ritual implications, a worship of the partner's phallos. It can express deep love and acceptance, for example, or a willingness to meet without reserve. Its ritual implications may be quite different from anal intercourse, however, less binding in its effects, less profoundly initiatory.

#### THE SEXUALIZATION OF INTIMACY

So much sexuality takes place because people are unaware of the possibilities of deep intimacy, or because they fear it. In that sense, phallos carries yet another projection: it is a substitute for intimacy. Insofar as intimacy is a profound spiritual urge, this is a powerful projection indeed.

The dilemma is a common one: two people would like to become close, but they do not know how. Perhaps they are afraid of real intimacy—it means giving up so much

safety, independence, security. The walls of the ego have to come down. So, not knowing what else to do, they engage in sex. In this way sexual activity may come to stand for a deep and recurring urge, yet be unable to satisfy that urge. It is the recipe for perversion: a closed tape-loop of desire and unfulfillment. All the power of a human being longing to be in full disclosure and presence with another is shunted over into genital preoccupation. Now phallos is carrying yet another symbolic meaning.

#### THE PROJECTION OF PHALLIC POWER

Another common pattern in the sexualization of Eros involves a major pitfall. When I am not in touch with my own beauty and masculine potency, I am particularly susceptible to pursuing them in other people. For a young boy, uncertain of his manhood, it may be appropriate to identify with an older man, and be very attracted to his potency. When his older model shares with him that power, either sexually or non-sexuality, it can be delight. But when a man finds himself mooning over many young and virile boys, more concerned with their sexual parts than with his own, he may well be projecting his own potency on someone else's phallos, and he may need to find out what has become of his delight in the pleasurable feelings of his own genitalia. In this sense, the derisive image of the homosexual as an impotent weakling can hold some truth. When it is the truth, it is time to find out what is blocking one's own sexual energy and feeling.

#### PHALLIC INTEREST AND CREATIVITY

When New Orleans artist Denis Ruiz first encountered the Macintosh computer and its drawing program, MacPaint, his way of mastering these new tools was to engage his erotic interest with phallic content.



Two Phallic Drawings by Denis Ruiz, 1985

## IN SUM

The projection of phallic numinosity is probably a part of any sexual transaction between men. Some 'worship' is usually involved. It can become an actual path of spiritual development, but it can also become an avoidance of more human intimacy, or else a projection of one's own genital power and delight onto another person.

<sup>1</sup> reprinted in *Sexual Symbolism a History of Phallic Worship* New York: Julian Press, 1957.

<sup>2</sup> also reprinted in *Sexual Symbolism*.

<sup>3</sup> P. 195.

<sup>4</sup> Jung, C. G. *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*.

<sup>5</sup> Distributed in 1974.

<sup>6</sup> Purusha [Larkin, P.], *The Divine Androgyne: Adventures in Cosmic Erotic Ecstasy and Androgyne Body consciousness*. San Diego, CA: Sanctuary Publications, 1981. P. 1

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

## 9

## "Platonic" Love

The West has a healthy tradition of erotic friendship which focuses on soul. The medieval troubadours articulated an elevated spiritual love both passionate and unsullied by physical sexuality. Our idealized romantic concepts of marriage, of lifelong companionship based upon love and sincerity, can be traced directly to Rousseau at the beginning of the Romantic movement. Spiritual love revolves around the deeply intimate enjoyment of another person, not as an object of sexual pleasure, but as a deeply unique personal existence. Under what circumstances does this spiritual friendship take place? How can it be nurtured? How is sexuality involved? What are its outcomes?

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Plato gave us the classic concept of spiritual friendship, Platonic love. Returning to the original source of this concept yields greater precision than its conventional interpretation as well as some delightful surprises. In the next chapter we will examine the actual spiritual friendship between two thirteenth century Islamic mystics, a relationship whose creative results are still being lived out today.

The man next door tells me he has rented a room in his apartment to a woman. He expects that the relationship will be "Platonic", by which he means that they will not be involved sexually. Without sex, he says, things are much less "com-

plicated”, and they will be able to relate comfortably and without passion in their common living space.

Thus the sublime is rendered ridiculous, or at least trivial, in the course of human usage. This tepid notion of non-sexual friendship is far from Plato’s own.

k

The original description of Platonic love was given in *Phaedrus*, the dialogue between Socrates and the fair youth of that name on a hot summer day underneath a shade tree outside the walls of Athens. Socrates had a great deal more to say about love in *The Symposium*, and we will discuss that account of the stages of love in another chapter, but this is the source for “Platonic” love itself.

As the drama of the dialogue unfolds, we find that *Phaedrus* has been very impressed by a carefully reasoned piece of rhetoric by his friend, *Lysias*, who has argued that a youth would do better to accept the advances of a someone who is not in love with him than someone who is. Non-lovers are sane, not quarrelsome or silly, and not possessive. Such a coolly self-interested relationship is of more benefit to both parties.

Socrates at first undertakes to argue the same case, but to do it better than *Lysias*. Having done so, he then says he is feeling inner promptings which warn him that he may have blasphemed the god, *Eros*. In atonement, he begins the famous discourse in favor of the lover and of love from which we get the classic concept of spiritual, or “Platonic” love.

He begins with an image of the soul before it enters the body: The soul is like a charioteer with two winged horses. The horses have two distinct temperaments, one being fine and noble, directed toward higher things, and obedient to the control of the charioteer. The other horse is willful, difficult to control, and not at all interested in that which is righteous. In spite of this inherent conflict, some souls manage to drive the chariot to divine regions where they are nourished by visions of beauty, wisdom, goodness and the like. Fortunate souls have many such experiences and a good memory of them even after they enter the body, so that they become philosophers. There are various gradations in this which lead to a descending scale of denser vocational possibilities, at the bottom of which are the politicians, who seem to have been no more lofty in Plato’s day than in our own. Depending on the sublimity of soul, some will escape rebirth quickly, and others not for thousands of years.

Once in the body, however, we come to the subject of love. Because the soul has been initiated into the beatific vision, it is able to perceive Beauty, which alone of all the transcendent ideas, can be seen with the eyes. The human comes to see this beauty in another person.

“Now he who is not newly initiated or who has become corrupted, does not easily rise out of this world to the sight of true beauty in the other: he looks only at her earthly namesake, and instead of being awed at the sight of her, he is given over to pleasure, and like a brutish beast he rushes on to enjoy and beget. . . . But he whose initiation is recent, and who has been the spectator of many glories in the other world is amazed when he sees

any one having a god-like face or form, which is the expression of divine beauty; and at first a shudder runs through him; then looking upon the face of his beloved as of a god he reverences him. . .then while he gazes on him there is a sort of reaction, and the shudder passes into an unusual heat and perspiration; for, as he receives the effluence of beauty through the eyes. . .the wings [begin] to grow.

"During this process the whole soul is all in a state of ebullition and effervescence,—which may be compared to the irritation and uneasiness in the gums at the time of cutting teeth,—bubbles up, and has a feeling of uneasiness and tickling; but when in like manner the soul is beginning to grow wings, the beauty of the beloved meets her eye and she receives the sensible warm motion of particles which flow towards her. . .and is refreshed and warmed by them, and then she ceases from her pain with joy. But when she is parted from her beloved and her moisture fails, [the germinating wings throb with pain],<sup>1</sup>

Seeing the beauty of the beloved enables the soul to regain its wings. The presence of the beloved relieves the pain of the wing-growing process. Notice how the soul is called "she".

The selection of the beloved is influenced by the particular divinity the lover worships—or as Jean Shinoda-Bolen would say, which God defines the type of man he is. Each person looks for this divine image in the one he loves. For example, "the followers of Zeus desire that [the beloved] have a soul like him; and therefore they seek out some one of a philosophical and imperial nature, and when they have

found him and loved him, they do all they can to confirm such a nature in him. . . And they have the less difficulty in finding the nature of their own god in themselves. . ."2 Followers of Ares, or Apollo or any other god do the same thing, according to the qualities of the god they emulate and worship. It appears to Plato that the spirit of Zeus is particularly related to the love of knowledge (philosophy) and the love of soul.

And now, our lover having found his beloved, we come to the description of Platonic love itself. At this point Socrates describes the horses in greater detail. In the first place, having come to earth, they now have no wings. The good horse is:

upright and cleanly made; he has a lofty neck and an aquiline nose; his color is white and his eyes dark; he is a lover of honor and modesty and temperance, and the follower of true glory; he needs no touch of the whip, but is guided by word and admonition only. The other is a crooked lumbering animal, put together any how; he has a short thick neck: he is flat-faced and of a dark color, with gray eyes and blood-red complexion; the mate of insolence and pride; shag-eared and deaf, hardly yielding to whip and spur.

Predictably, there is a conflict when this soul is in the presence of the beloved: The charioteer is "full of the prickings and ticklings of desire"<sup>3</sup>, but the obedient steed, "then as always under the government of shame, refrains from leaping on the beloved."<sup>4</sup> The other, of course, "gives all manner of trouble. . .to. . . the charioteer, whom he forces to approach the beloved and the remember the joys of love."

Back and forth the conflict goes, with the unruly steed again and again having to be pulled back and brought to its knees, until at last it is under control "and from that time forward the soul of the lover follows the beloved in modesty and holy fear."<sup>5</sup> The sexual temptation is overcome, at least for the time being.

Now the beloved receives the lover into communion and intimacy, is amazed at the good-will of the lover, and recognizes that the inspired friend is worth all his other friends and kinsmen. He begins to feel answering love (Anteros) and even desire for the lover. In fact, it appears that the little beloved has an unruly steed of his own.

After this their happiness depends upon their self-control; if the better elements of the mind which lead to order and philosophy prevail, then they pass their life here in happiness and harmony—masters of themselves and orderly—enslaving the vicious and emancipating the virtuous elements of the soul; and when the end comes, they are light and winged for flight, having conquered in one of the three heavenly or truly Olympian victories.<sup>6</sup>

What happens if they slip? "[T]hen probably, after wine or in some other careless hour the two wanton animals take the two souls when off their guard and bring them together, and they accomplish that desire of their hearts which to the many is bliss, and this having once enjoyed they continue to enjoy, yet rarely because they have not the approval of the whole soul."<sup>7</sup> All is not lost even in this case:

They too are dear, but not so dear to one another as the others, either at the time of their

love or afterwards.... At last they pass out of the body, unwinged, but eager to soar, and thus obtain no mean reward of love and madness. For those who have once begun the heavenward pilgrimage may not go down again to darkness and the journey beneath the earth, but they live in light always; happy companions in their pilgrimage, and when the time comes at which they receive their wings they have the same plumage because of their love."<sup>8</sup>

### k

On the basis of this Platonic flashback what can we say now about Platonic love?

1. Platonic Love is defined in terms of a transcendent reality of soul. It has no meaning in terms of the apparent world alone. There is another order of reality in which Meaning exists.

2. Platonic love is not passionless. The very sight of the beloved starts the soul remembering its wings. The Beloved is an essential part of the awakening of one's own soul. Separation is pain; togetherness is bliss. Intense desires are involved.

3. Platonic love is specifically inspired by Zeus. Zeus is the spirit of philosophers, and the love of soul is essentially related to philosophy, which is, for Plato, closely related to the remembrance of transcendent Reality. Other lovers project different gods upon the beloved, such as Ares or Apollo, which lead to experiences in love which are different from the Platonic. It is difficult to imagine the Ares man controlling his errant steed.<sup>9</sup> Apollo-inspired love, as

we have seen in Chapter Four, is not so deeply reflective or soulful as this.

4. The Platonic approach to love is itself a method of spiritual development.

5. Not everybody is suited for Platonic love. Baser natures go straight for physical pleasure. They have no remembrance for the Eternal Reality which is glimpsed in the beauty of the beloved.

6. Platonic love is not asexual. The desire to make sexual love is controlled with the greatest difficulty, if at all. Any tendency to equate Platonic love with tepid indifference is misleading. It is precisely because their desire is so intense that two lovers may reach the highest realms of spiritual intimacy and recognition.

7. There are two indispensable elements of the soul, one tending toward nobility and aesthetic truth, the other toward physical satisfaction.

8. To reach the most sublime levels of Platonic love requires that the temptation to overt sexuality be controlled. Couples which succeed in controlling sexuality enjoy the most intense intimacy and love, and when they die they are "light and winged for flight." Forbearance from sex is necessary for this type of spiritual evolution.

9. A little bit of sex does not destroy the outcome. Couples which become sexual lovers are somewhat less intimately dear to one another, yet they too have evolved in the spiritual dimension.

10. Plato is writing about a very special relationship involving very special qualities of intimacy and communion. It is beyond sexual. The spiritual energy of the

relationship is Zeus. It is the attitude of the philosopher (philo = love, sophia = wisdom). The enjoyment of beauty in another person's soul is a part of the urge for knowledge and wisdom.

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#### SOCRATES' LADDER OF LOVE

In the Symposium we hear more about the creativity of these relationships. The basic idea is that creativity grows out of the desire for immortality. The obvious way to have immortality, of a kind, is to have children, and this is the way most people create. They love with the body, and the outcome is children.

But some people love the mind, the consciousness of the other. For them, immortality can be found in their creativity. The energy between spiritual lovers leads them to create together. For them, the outcome is "poetry and philosophy."

To complete the picture of Platonic love as a path of spiritual development, let's consider Socrates' description of a ladder of spiritual realization based on love. He says his teacher, Diotima, a priestess who has given him this information as a mystical initiation:

"For he who would proceed aright in this matter should begin in youth to visit beautiful forms; and first, if he be guided by his instructor aright, to love one such form only—out of that he should create fair thoughts; and soon he will of himself perceive that the beauty of one form is akin to the beauty of another; and then if beauty of form in general is his pursuit, how foolish would he be

not to recognize that the beauty in every form is one and the same! And when he perceives this he will abate his violent love of the one, which he will despise and deem a small thing, and will become a lover of all beautiful forms; in the next stage he will consider that the beauty of the mind is more honorable than the beauty of the outward form. So that if a virtuous soul have but a little comeliness, he will be content to love and tend him, and will search out and bring to the birth thoughts which may improve the young, until he is compelled to contemplate and see the beauty of institutions and laws, and to understand that the beauty of them all is of one family, and that personal beauty is a trifle; and after laws and institutions he will go on to the sciences, that he may see their beauty, being not like a servant in love with the beauty of one youth or man or institution, himself a slave mean and narrow-minded, but drawing towards and contemplating the vast sea of beauty, he will create many fair and noble thoughts and notions in boundless love of wisdom; until on that shore he grows and waxes strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him of a single science, which is the science of beauty everywhere. To this I will proceed; please give me your very best attention:

“He who has been instructed thus far in the things of love, and who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession, when he comes toward the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wondrous beauty (and this, Socrates, is the final cause of all our former toils)—a nature which in the first place is everlasting, not growing and decaying, or waxing and waning; secondly, not fair in one point of view and foul in another, or at

one time or in one relation or at one place fair, at another time or in another relation or at another place foul, as if fair to some and foul to others, or in the likeness of a face or hands or another part of the bodily frame, or in any form of speech or knowledge, or existing in any other being, as for example, in an animal, or in heaven, or in earth, or in any other place; but beauty absolute, separate, simple, and everlasting, without diminution and without increase, or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things. He who, from these ascending under the influence of true love, begins to perceive that beauty is not far from the end. And the true order of going, or being led by another, to the things of love, is to begin from the beauties of earth and mount upwards for the sake of that other beauty, using these as steps only, and from one going on to two and from two to all fair forms, and from fair forms to fair practices, and from fair practices to fair notions, until from fair notions he arrives at the notion of absolute beauty, and at last knows what the essence of beauty is. This, my dear Socrates’ said the stranger of Mantinea, ‘is that life above all others which man should live, in the contemplation of beauty absolute, a beauty which if you once beheld, you would see not to be after the measure of gold, and garments, and fair boys and youths, whose presence now entrances you; and you and many a one would be content to live seeing them only and conversing with them without meat or drink, if that were possible—you only want to look at them and to be with them. But what if man had eyes to see the true beauty—the divine beauty, if mean pure and clear and unalloyed, not clogged with the pollutions of mortality and all the colors

and vanities of human life—thither looking, and holding converse with the true beauty simple and divine? Remember how in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of a reality), and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become the friend of god and immortal, if mortal man may. Would that be an ignoble life?"<sup>11</sup>

Socrates also seems to be describing the evolution of a samadhi of the heart, a vision of God similar to Rumi's, beyond the particular human object of adoration. He has not made any reference here to the need to avoid sexuality in the relationship. In fact, there is little technical information about how such a development is to be brought about. The way of love has quite mysteriously led to the beatific vision. But that love is a spiritual method is clear, for Socrates adds,

"...in the attainment of this end human nature will not easily find a helper better than love."<sup>12</sup>

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#### DIFFICULTIES OF PLATONIC LOVE

If Platonic love is a very particular pattern of relationship, and if it is not everyone's cup of archetype tea, then for many the "transcendence" of sexuality is going to be very difficult.

The Victorians lauded "Platonic" love as a general value for all relationships, male and female. It fit the picture of purity which that society fancied as ideal, a costume it had

fashioned for itself to look at in the mirror.

Males were educated together in the classical curricula, which included Plato (though students were protected from the more sexually explicit passages until the mid 19th-Century). It is no surprise that romantic friendships occurred frequently both in schools and universities and became very intense. At the same time, homosexual behaviors were still being punished by law, sometimes quite severely. The interest of society in keeping relationships "pure" was manifestly clear. Two English novels take up the subject, and both poignantly depict the problems encountered by males who simply attempt to suppress the sexual energy involved in their intimacy.

k

Mary Renault entitled her novel *The Charioteer*<sup>10</sup> in reference to Plato's image of the soul. The protagonist is achingly in love with a younger man, with whom he discusses Platonic friendship. He actually gives him a copy of *Phaedrus*. They veer toward one another and then away, in allusions so implicit that they are painful to the reader: – will they never get together? They never do, and it seems like a shame, even though it is difficult to follow exactly what they were trying to say to one another. Sex is sacrificed to an exaggerated sense of nobility and the relationship itself, potentially so rich and beautiful, is ultimately lost. Renault, who has written with beautiful sensitivity about homosexual relationships in classical times, is by no means puritanical in her handling of the subject. Here she seems to be describing the difficulty of holding an intense attraction up to a

standard of non-sexual love simply as a noble ideal.

E. M. Forster's novel, *Maurice*,<sup>11</sup> follows the development of a student friendship in which sex is carefully avoided, largely in deference to the wishes of one of the pair. Ultimately Maurice turns away from the sterility of this relationship, which has been passionately important to him, to another, more sexual union with a working-class male. The first friendship, which is ultimately shown to be empty, is replaced by a more corporeal reality. Forster, himself an homosexual, simply rejects the sexual suppression as sterile idealism, an expression of an out-of-touch society.<sup>12</sup>

It is apparent in both of these novels that the struggle to channel sexuality into spiritual friendship is not so easy, especially for young men. Idealism is not enough to tame the wanton steeds. Is Platonic friendship even possible? Apart from Plato's high-flown metaphor, can any relationship be so intense-and-yet-restrained? Are non-sexual objects really interesting to us? Is it possible to alter sexual energy?

### k

How is this kind of relationship to be approached? The erotic energy must be there if the friendship is to be intense, yet the highest reaches of spiritual communion require that sexuality be rechanneled. Therefore we need a genuine psychology of sex, which takes its spiritual possibilities into account. Neither Idealizing nor moralizing will work: we need technique.

In my experience, the *Phaedrus* is not a bad technical guide. If both partners in a passionate attraction see an

advantage in avoiding explicit sexuality, they can beat back temptation repeatedly until it changes into an "answering consciousness." It helps, though, if their needs for sexual intimacy are being met in other relationships.

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus* 251-252

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 252

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 253

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 253

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 254

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 254

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 256

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 256

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 256

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Shinoda-Bolen, *op. cit.*, Chapter 8.

<sup>11</sup> Renault, Mary, *The Charioteer*, New York: Pantheon, 1959.

<sup>12</sup> Forster, E. M., *Maurice*. London: Edward Arnold, 1971

<sup>13</sup> Summers, Claude J. E., *M. Forster*, New York: Ungar, 1987

# Interlude

## San Diego de Alcalá and the Crown Prince of Spain

I cannot pass up this story, but I don't know where to put it. Here are two male bodies together in some sort of mystical union, with the most creative and dramatic consequences, yet it seems not to fit any category I have yet offered in this book.

San Diego, California is named for a certain Diego of Alcalá, a Franciscan lay-brother who died in 1463. He was noted for his asceticism and for his humility. After a career as missionary in the Canary Islands, he lived in a succession of monasteries and died at Alcalá at an advanced age. After his death his "severely mortified" body did not suffer rigor-mortis or corruption, and miraculous cures were reported.<sup>1</sup>

Ninety-nine years later, the body of Fray Diego, still sweet-smelling as the account says, was removed from its iron coffin and placed in bed with Don Carlos, the 18-year-old Infante, or Crown Prince, of Spain. This youth had unfortunately slipped and fallen in a dark staircase while sneaking out of the palace to meet with a porter's daughter. He had hit his head and since then had lain in a coma for which no medical remedy could be found. After many medical conferences it was decided to bring out the body of blessed Fray Diego and put it in bed with the Infante. The comatose prince lay that night with the dry but incorrupt

body, his head wrapped in Fray Diego's headcloth, and the next morning he began to recover. The kingdom rejoiced, and the relieved father, King Philip II, undertook a 35 year campaign to have Fray Diego recognized as a saint by the Roman Church.

Don Carlos was a rather unpromising young man. Probably as a result of his family's inbreeding, he was misshapen and emotionally unbalanced. He had the underslung jaw of the Hapsburg family. He was moody, impulsive, and difficult to control. But as King Philip's heir the miracle of his survival had important political aspects.

Certainly it is the political context which gives importance as well as pathos to the story. Philip II is one of the fascinating figures in European history. Having inherited Spain, the Low Countries, Burgundy, much of Italy, and the Spanish Colonial Empire, he was Europe's most powerful monarch between 1556 and 1598—a pivotal figure in a pivotal century. A century after the invention of printing, Post-Renaissance Europe was seething with new ways of thinking. Religious Reformation was the dominant issue, and it was Philip's fate to be the very figure of the conservative reaction. He fought ruthlessly and relentlessly against 'heresy' and the erosion of autocratic power.

Historians tend to make widely different, very intense, judgments about him; so the character of this king has had various interpretations. Because of his persecutions he has generally been seen as a monster by Protestants throughout Europe. He connived in the most manipulative way to interfere in the affairs of France. He was hated and feared

by the English, against whom he sent an immense fleet, the Armada, for a storm-thwarted invasion.

The Spanish have a much more favorable view. They see him as embodying a certain traditional nobility, religious sincerity, and austere dedication. In his means of policy and his cruel treatment of heretics and rebels he did not differ so much from general practices of the period.

All agree that he was an incredibly active administrator, spending many hours reading dispatches, agonizing over decisions, writing and re-writing, delaying, questioning. He kept the reins of government in his own hands, resulting in interminable delays, lost strategic opportunities, foolish mistakes. From the conflicting views of many historians emerges the picture of a man of modest talent, wrestling with immense responsibilities, determined about religious orthodoxy and the Divine origin of his own power, and resorting to rather compulsive and neurotic means to deal with it all. (His crabbed handwritten notes in the margins of dispatches questioned the motives of their senders, even corrected their spelling!)

It is clear that during that long reign (1556-98) Spain was ruined by monetary inflation caused by the flood of gold from Mexico and Peru, and by the cost of Philip's foreign wars.

This is the distraught father who, having called fifty conferences of medical experts, having attended fourteen of these conferences himself, finally resorted to Fray Diego:

"King Philip and his court went in solemn procession to the church; and in their presence the mouldering remains of the good father, still

sweet to the nostrils, as we are told, was taken from their iron coffin and transported to the prince's apartment. They were laid on his bed; and the cloth that wrapped the skull of the dead man was placed on the forehead of Carlos."<sup>2</sup>

The case is well-documented. A lively debate has raged through the centuries between those medical practitioners (largely Spanish) who do and those (mostly English) who do not accept miraculous intervention as the cause of Don Carlos' recovery.

On the face of it, a desiccated corpse in bed with a comatose prince seems to have little to do with Eros between males. On the other hand, spiritual energy and intimacy is at the core of friendship. Can we say these can only exist between conscious, consenting, and alive adults?

What about the body, which all contemporary observers agreed did not rot? When Yogananda, author of *Autobiography of a Yogi* and founder of the Self-Realization Fellowship, died, a mortician observed, and certified<sup>3</sup>, that his body did not show the usual signs of decomposition. Is it impossible that Fray Diego's body still transmitted the energy and spirit of a holy man, or that Don Carlos benefitted from lying in proximity with it? Can we say with certainty that this is altogether different from the spiritual contact between two men who are both alive?

But to me the role of the father, King Philip, is most interesting. I think the creative Eros lay between the King and the Saint. This monarch was absolutely steeped in religion as a child. He was tutored by an aging archbishop, and he was allowed only one other child as a friend. The

very arena of his imagination must have been Religion. Concerned for his son, he prays to a saint.

As a Protestant, I can hardly comprehend the role of saints in the spiritual imagination of those days. First of all, it is difficult to grasp how terrified of Hell people were in those days. One could fall into eternal, and vividly imagined torment with any misstep. God being as remote as He was judgemental, the medieval Christians pinned their hopes on a intermediate body of saints, hovering somewhere between earth and heaven. These more accessible beings could be loved and cajoled, and they could intercede with God on behalf of human beings. Philip, in praying to Fray Diego, was relating, in his imagination, to a man of special purity and innocence, a man whose very body was incorrupt. Is this investment of imagination in an ideal spiritual being so different from the way in which a lover imagines his beloved? Isn't there an interest here which is like an erotic attraction? Spanish mystics of the time, such as Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross make clear the erotic nature of their visions of the Divine.

Following this line of reasoning, we have Philip investing his longing in a saint. An energetic polarity is set up between the king and his image of the saint. Did he feel an answering Presence? The outcome of this prayer, plus the actual introduction of the corpse and burial cloth into the prince's bed, is the boy's recovery. I don't know how miracles come to be, but this one surely involved the prayerful imagination of King Philip.

Unfortunately, the miraculous recovery did not set Don Carlos in a more promising course. He grew more difficult to tolerate, more threatening to his family's interests (there is some evidence that he was in contact with the Dutch rebels), until his exasperated father had him imprisoned in a suite in the palace, where he died, still under arrest. William of Orange, the leader of the Dutch Protestant rebels, accused Philip of his son's murder, but this is considered unlikely by historians, in view of Philip's general attitude toward his children.

For a century or more Fray Diego's body was a regular fixture in Spanish royal death scenes. During the 17th Century it was brought out in hopes of reviving Philip IV, his son Philip Prospero, Carlos II, and several of their queens. No further miracles were reported.

I have been unable to ascertain the present state of San Diego's body.

<sup>1</sup> Catholic Encyclopedia, v. iv. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967

<sup>2</sup> Walsh, William Thomas. Philip II. London and New York: Sheed & Ward, 1937, p. 329.

<sup>3</sup> The certificate is included as an appendix in the Yogananda's Autobiography of a Yogi.

# 10

## Rumi and Shams:

Surely the friendship between Rumi and Shams qualifies for the Platonic ideal. This relationship, occurring between a man in his late 30's and another his late 50's, is one of the most powerful and creative in the history of spiritual friendship. One man was a theological lecturer, already dedicated to a spiritual path; the other was an awakened mystic. It seems unlikely that overt sexuality played a role in their intimacy, yet Eros is everywhere apparent in its passionate quality. This erotic quality was never denied, even though interaction involved the most intense spiritual perception. Rumi found God in Shams!

They try to say what you are, spiritual or sexual?  
They wonder about Solomon and all his wives.  
In the body of the world, they say,  
There is a soul, and you are that.  
But we have ways within each other  
That will never be said by anyone.<sup>1</sup>

Jelál al-Din M. Rumi (1207-1273) was poet-mystic who founded the Mevlana sect of Sufism. His transformation and ultimate realization of union with God was a direct outgrowth of his friendship with Shams of Tabriz.

Following in his father's profession, Rumi became a famous lecturer on Islamic theology. Ten thousand students, including princes and viziers (of the Selcuk Turkish Empire), are said to have attended his lectures. In his mid-thirties he

appears to have become dissatisfied with his life and work. At that time he met Shams.

Shams of Tabriz has been described by a present-day writer as "an itinerant alchemist,"<sup>2</sup> He was twenty-two years older than Rumi, nearly 60 when they met. It is known that he received his training in Sufism under the master, Abu Baker Zambil Baf, a basket weaver in Tabriz.<sup>3</sup> Apparently he reached a state of being in which his teacher could no longer guide him. He began traveling, following his inner perception, and eventually reached a state of perfected consciousness.

Rumi has written quite a lot about Shams and we can infer that he was a very clear being, calm and strong. "Individuality in non-individuality", says Rumi, "a free man, a magnetic, universal man, and one who understands an ocean of symbols beneath the inward state."<sup>4</sup>

We can assume that Shams had reached some extraordinary state of consciousness. Rumi's descriptions of him seem to describe a person in continual contact with Cosmic Consciousness: intuitively perceptive, aware of the Unity in plurality, the unending circulation between the uncreated and creation, "an unfolding of Mankind in the memory of the universe in evolution."<sup>5</sup>

After years of seeking a congenial soul, Shams at last met Rumi, whom he found to be his own "potential soul."<sup>6</sup> Their encounter was an extraordinary recognition. Through Shams, Rumi experienced the Actual Divine, rather than the intellectualizations of his previous theological study. This was the Real that he had hitherto been only talking about.

Later Rumi was to write:

"When he stimulated my thought from the depth of my psychic sea, the phantom of light arose. Shams was the light of the eye, the clarity of reason, the brightness of the soul and the enlightenment of the heart. Shams was a universal man who took away my reason and religion. He was the form of every happiness."<sup>7</sup>

Shams seems to have been equally delighted to meet Rumi. We can speculate that fully enlightened beings like to have someone to talk to: a truly answering consciousness, able to see all the turns, levels, twists, and intuitive recognitions, someone to share. Rumi quotes Shams as saying "O you, awakened by me; O you, drunk by me: when I found your way sincere, I fell at your feet."<sup>8</sup>

Rumi was receptive. Today we would say he was "burnt-out", in a crisis with his work, discouraged with the limitations of what he had been doing. Now, with Shams, he found his new direction, the goal of becoming a universal self, instead of a prominent Moslem theologian.

Rumi stopped preaching, cut himself off from his former associates and consorted only with Shams. All the while his students were pressuring him to come back. According to his son's later account, the public condemned this association, calling Shams a magician who had enchanted Rumi, driven him mad. They saw the hand of the devil at work.

What were these two up to? How are we to understand the spiritual quality of their intimacy? For this we need a spiritual psychology which goes beyond the conventional limits or academic understanding. Ken Wilber<sup>7</sup> has offered

one possible solution. He extends the Freudian concept of stages of ego development by adding several stages from Indian spiritual traditions. There are steps which go beyond that mature ego which is the goal of psychoanalytic therapy: steps of development all the way to the stage of "Unity", in which the personality is experiencing Divine Consciousness, or "God." Other terms for this state are "samadhi" (in the Indian tradition) or "mystical union" ("unio mystica" in the Christian tradition).

It is useful to distinguish between spiritual experience and religion. Religion is a structure of beliefs embraced by people who may not have had spiritual experience. Belief has little to do with experience. Yet God is an experience (whatever else it might be) which human beings have been having from time immemorial.

It is possible to experience God in the presence of another human being. A personal example:

I once saw what people call "God" in the course of a 3-month spiritual training with the Arica School. The exercise was to gaze into the left eye of my partner while maintaining an empty mind. During one stage of the meditation there was some erotic feeling between us which gradually shifted to other parts of the body. After several minutes his face started to seem very familiar, as if it were somehow my own face. Then the familiar feeling grew even stronger as if it were something remembered from the beginning of time. It was more my Self than myself. There was a silent sense of oscillation (rather like the accelerating clappers used in a Zen monastery) and then both of us seemed to dissolve into a Greater Reality. All that

was Real was this unutterably familiar "Ancient of Days" –how could I have forgotten This?–, a "Ground of Being" which included me, and my partner, and everything else in the universe. The Being was Conscious. It was the deepest part of me, yet incomparably more vast. All that I had identified as myself and my personal reality was simply not Reality on this deeper level.

We had gone into "samadhi," the mystical union with God for a few moments. It is interesting that this partner and I have never had much personal interest in one another. We are long-time acquaintances who never seek each other out.

It was very clear that words could never penetrate to the reality of what had been revealed. This is true of every account of "samadhi:" the ineffable, unverbalizable nature of the experience is always emphasized. It is not found in those instances in which people confidently state that "God" told them such-and-such. In such cases the reference is, at best, to some intuitive inference, or, at worst, to a rascal's appropriation of God to his own ends. Televangelists seem quite sure about what "God" intends, but their experiences never seem ineffable.

In the above example, neither my partner nor I were in continual contact with the Unity level of consciousness in our ordinary lives. What happens when someone has achieved this state on a more permanent basis? Many accounts of meetings with gurus give the answer. The receptive seeker meets the guru, sees Divine Consciousness in the guru's eyes, and is temporarily transported into a higher state by the experience. Richard Alpert, returning from India as

Ram Dass in the late 'Sixties gave such an account of his meetings with his guru. So does Joseph Chilton Pierce in his book about the guru, Muktananda.<sup>9</sup>

Rumi was similarly and repeatedly transported into Divine Consciousness by his contacts with Shams. He was continually learning from these experiences so that his understanding of ultimate reality was deepened.

All this must have been very intense for him. He worked out a kind of improvisational dancing, singing and music which gave his emerging feeling spontaneous expression and vehicle for development. This movement and music, called Sam'a, became his religious practice. Arasteh says it is surprising he was not killed—the sight of a prominent Muslim leader dancing and singing was quite an affront to community standards. At a later time he had to defend this meditative dancing against charges of immorality, since dancing was forbidden in the Islamic law. His singing and dancing also served as a vehicle to work through his feelings after Shams was taken away.

This first part of the Rumi-Shams friendship comes close to Plato's description of ideal love. What made it possible? Surely the two men were spiritually developed in the way Plato described. Significantly, they were quite a bit older than the erastes-eremenos, man-and-boy model admired by the Greeks. Finally, Shams had practiced particular techniques of development which had brought him to his elevated level of consciousness.

Sham's attainment allowed both of these men to experience rapturous love and intimacy, erotic to the highest degree, without requiring overt sexuality. Rumi often de-

rided the body and its gross sexuality as an illusion hiding the greater truth of soul.

Yet they were exploring intensely erotic intimacy. How could they do it? The present-day characterization of Shams as “an itinerant alchemist” seems relevant, for “alchemy” has always had as one of its goals the interior development of the psyche.<sup>10</sup> The “transmutation” of the baser nature into the immortal and the spiritual, while employing metallurgical and chemical images, refers to changes in (sexual) energy within the body. In other words, the term, “alchemist”, when applied to Shams, implies someone who has learned to contain and circulate sexual energy to produce spiritual development.

We do not know what “alchemy” Shams practiced, but I would like to assume that it was somewhat like Taoist Alchemy of China, and also like the “Psycho-alchemy” practiced in the Arica School.<sup>11</sup>

### RUMI, PART TWO: THE YOGA OF LONGING

It is one thing to enjoy Divine Consciousness in the company of an enlightened Friend; it is quite another to deal with one’s longing after the Friend is gone.

Shams was eventually driven away by the jealousy of Rumi’s students. There were riots, in which one of Rumi’s sons was killed. Shams went away once, but came back after the community made promises to accept him. Then violence broke out again; some accounts suggest that Shams was murdered. At any rate he departed again, this time permanently. As a result, Rumi was left isolated from the community, and without the security of his companionship

with Shams. Instead of returning to his former work, Rumi continued his sam’a and life in isolation.

What Rumi did with his longing was amazingly creative and has significance for any lover. He transformed his pain into spiritual development and into the founding of a spiritual movement.

Rumi was now forty-one, and his spiritual quest became intense. His son says he danced—whirled—for days and nights. He longed for Shams, and he had to turn this longing into spiritual evolution. He had seen God in Shams, but without the presence of Shams he had to find Divine Consciousness in himself. Shams had given him insight into the illusions of the social ego and the action of desires, and now he had to establish his own foundation in absolute consciousness.

Rumi’s poetry allows us to follow at least the outlines of this process. In the *Diwan-e-Shams Tabriz* his devotion is to God-as-seen-in-Shams. This is love poetry, with longing and pain and ecstasy so passionate one wonders how it could have been addressed to another man. One example will demonstrate the intensity of Rumi’s longing, and the extent to which it was centered upon the person of Shams:

O heart don’t complain, so that my beloved may not  
hear;  
O heart, aren’t you afraid of my constant longing?  
Don’t you remember that one day when talking he  
said:  
“Don’t seek my state anymore.”  
O heart don’t mingle with my blood or in my river of  
tears;

Haven't you heard from dawn to dusk these bitter complaints?

Know your own capacity, don't mention that garden of union.

Isn't it enough that you have become aware of its thorns?

I said, "Save my soul. I need you to keep me company.

You are my deliverer. I am heavy in head, oh my intoxicated Saqi!"

He laughed and replied, "O son, it's true, but don't go to excess."

Then he began: "O you, awakened by me; O you, drunk by me:

When I found your way sincere, I fell at your feet."

I said, "I am naught in the world, if you do not become my companion."

He replied, "Be naught in this world so that you clearly see my face.

Lose the self so – if you want that; in selflessness know my state."

I said, "so in your trap, how can I lose the self without your [help]?"

Sell me one cup as the price of life, then see my market."

I repeated, "O my beloved, I am sad. Your features leave me bewildered.

I am without heart, without life. Now remain as my heart's desire."

He answered, "from many beloveds I have snatched their prayer carpets.

Especially you, simple-hearted one, have tossed my actions to the wind.

Yet I bestow upon you a soul and the world. You will become one like the soul of souls.

Become the commander of paradise in the palace of angels;

Now become a king in the heart of my secrets.

In joyous dance enter the garden of my mysteries."

My king, Shams al-Din, commander of Gabriel,

How happy is my soul and life, from you, the brightness of my garden.<sup>12</sup>

Rumi's development can be divided into several clear steps:

First, he embraced his longing. He accepted his pain and valued it as an expression of his soul.

Next, he became aware that his longing was for God, and that in fact, all longing is ultimately for union with God.

Third, he became aware that God was longing for him.

Finally, he became aware that The Lover, The Beloved, and Love Itself are all One.

At the completion of this process his poetry expresses ecstatic union with God, whom he has found in the center of his own being. Shams is no longer the image and symbol of the Beloved. The image has been transcended.

On the basis of these discoveries Rumi could articulate an effective spiritual psychology which could lead other people to find union with God. He had found a way, a path of the heart, which reached a state of unity.

TECHNIQUE: Try embracing your own longing.

Assume that the pain in your heart is a valuable expression of your soul, and then embrace your own heart. You can embrace it literally, putting your arms around your chest, or you can simply imagine that you are holding your heart in your hands.

The trick is to be both the lover and the beloved. You are in touch with the feeling in your heart, yet not completely submerged in its emotion. You are outside of your heart as well directing love and understanding toward it.

If you manage to strike the balance between the two, there will be a subtle shift. Something will actually change.

#### LOVER, BELOVED, AND LOVE ITSELF ARE ALL ONE

This is a description of Bhava Samadhi, the union with God in the heart center. The path of friendship has reached its highest possibility. The individual human friend has been the gateway to Divine Love. Longing has borne its fruit.

"The Friend" is ultimately a messenger of The Divine. What moves us in our attraction to a friend is ultimately our long-forgotten yearning for union with God. Even the most apparently perverse erotic attraction, the most futile fascination, may have as its seed this longing for God. Every wish is holy, in the sense that it is a wish for wholeness. Erotic attraction between males, the stone that the builders rejected, has become the cornerstone of the temple.

Socrates, in the famous ladder of love he describes in Symposium,<sup>13</sup> says much the same thing, though, of course, he felt no need to apologize for loving males. Socrates also seems to be describing the evolution of a samadhi of the heart, a vision of God similar to Rumi's, beyond the par-

ticular human object of adoration. The way of love has led to the beatific vision. Indeed, as Socrates adds,

"...in the attainment of this end human nature will not easily find a helper better than love.

What Rumi makes clear is that the longing itself is precious and must be carefully nurtured. If it is squandered in distractions or diverted to new, substitute friends, it fails to bloom. It is not the presence of the beloved friend, but his absence, which leads to the highest realization. Rumi embraced his pain, worked it through in creative activity—poetry, singing, movement—until the flower appeared.

<sup>1</sup> Robert Bly

<sup>2</sup> Helminski, Edmund (tr). The Ruins of the Heart: Selected Lyric Poetry of Jelálludin Rumi. Putney: Threshold Press, 1981 Quoted from the Preface.

<sup>3</sup> In this narration I am following, rather closely, the work of A. Reza Arasteh. Rumi the Persian: Rebirth in Creativity and Love. Tucson: Omen Press, 1972.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 58

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 59

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 57

<sup>7</sup> Rumi, Diwan-e-Shams Tabriz Quoted by Arasteh, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 61

<sup>9</sup> Pierce, Joseph Chilton.

<sup>10</sup> Its more public goal has generally been the transmutation of base metals into gold, but that pursuit has often been symbolic, a metaphor for the transmutation of the baser human nature into its immortal and spiritual Essence.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Wilhelm, R. (tr) The Secret of the Golden Flower. The descriptions of alchemical experience in this and other similar Chinese texts are virtually impossible to decipher unless one has practiced similar exercises. Phrases like "The King enters the Golden Chamber" make no sense unless one has felt the energy circulating internally. Master Mantak Chia teaches a form of Taoist alchemy in New York City.

<sup>12</sup> Arasteh, op. cit., pp. 61-2

<sup>13</sup> Symposium, ¶209-213.

