

## The Masculinity of Consciousness and the Femininity of Individuation

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**Abstract:** Consciousness is associated with the distancing of the self from its maternal origin; the domination of rational, disembodied, transcendent technology over irrational, sensual and chthonic mother earth - a hubristic disavowal of the feminine. Individuation, however, involves the opposite – a conscious and undefended embrace of beauty, anima, and the unconscious.

### The Feminine Face of Love

Referring to the birth of consciousness, Edinger (1972) observes, “It all begins because Adam and Eve dare to act on their desire to be like God”<sup>i</sup>, or more to the point, as Corbin notes, “Adam...wanted-to-be-God”<sup>ii</sup>. The ‘sin’ of *hubris*, or the appropriation of what is the gods’ for oneself, is the only sin that is common to all religions, epochs, and cultures. Edinger argues that hubris - in the form of partaking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, thereby representing the desire to usurp God’s power - is the original sin of Christianity. But even more subtly, consciousness begins with the will to deviate from the given, or natural, state of existence. It is a rejection of nature *as it is* and the desire to have and seize something other than what is given. Divine power is actively assumed, taken, or stolen rather than granted, accepted, or received.

The myth of Cain and Abel illustrates a further distancing of consciousness away from the original or natural state. Cain, who can be seen as representing the domination of the earth via the engineered and civilized technology of farming, symbolizes a profound move *contra naturam* - the initial departure from an original thrownness. Abel, however, accepts the given way of living in harmony with the earth as other creatures do by way of hunting and gathering. Abel’s relationship to life is receptive; he humbly receives what is given. Cain cultivates, manipulates, plows and plunges into the earth. He arrogantly asserts his will and takes from her. With Cain’s murder of his brother, “The earth was irrigated with Abel’s blood”<sup>iii</sup>. The seeping of Abel’s blood into the earth signifies further the defeat of the earthly feminine instincts from consciousness. Her banishment into the dark depths of the chthonic underworld enables the strengthening reign of hubris over *humility* - derived from the Latin word *humus* (ground, soil, earth), from the Greek *chthon*.

Hubris in its ultimate form can be seen as the wish for “the murder of the father”<sup>iv</sup>, resulting in complete separation and autonomy from God. Hell, as portrayed in Milton’s (1674) *Paradise Lost*, was founded on the absolute unwillingness to accept the authority of God. As the demons sang:

We know no time when we were not as now;  
 Know none before us, *self-begot, self-raised*  
 By our own quickening power, when fatal course  
 Had circled his full orb, the birth mature  
 Of this our native Heaven, ethereal sons.  
*Our puissance is our own*<sup>v</sup>

In the proud assertions of self-creation, full alienation from the Self is complete and the ego has triumphed. As Satan says, “Here at least we shall be *free*...better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.”<sup>vi</sup>

Love, as a manifestation of the divine feminine, the bearer of wild, natural, chthonic, deeply intimate relating, maternal and overlooking, fully welcoming and inclusive in its undefended humility, is alien to hubris. Like Psyche in her willingness to bear unbearable suffering and torment in her search for her beloved Eros, Sardello (1995) relates the Gnostic myth of Sophia’s fall into Chaos, a fall which

results in every psychic torment imaginable - fear, anxiety, passion, terror, despair, sadness, and sorrow...Even as she is saved from her suffering, she is reluctant to depart from Chaos, for she is filled with compassion for Earth...She divides herself in two, the heavenly Sophia returning to Depth and Silence and the

earthly Sophia waiting and being a reminder to the human soul to strive toward the development of unity. (pp. 53-54)

Such is the devotion and eternal faithfulness inherent in love. While hubris turns away, love turns toward the beloved, bringing near and holding fast, in timeless longing of re-union as expressed by the divine *coniunctio*. Because love is “always reminding us that we are the created, not the creator,” (Goodchild, p. 33) love *dissolves the ‘sin’ of hubris*. Such love surrenders the ego’s will to the greater will of the Self, in recognition of the necessity of sacrificing itself, as it can never integrate the Self but only make itself prostrate before it (von Franz, 1980). “The willingness to fall into chaos and to be undone is what allows the threads of cosmic love to knit us back together into an authentic earthy life under the stars, uniting above and below as the ancient alchemical text says so simply, with one another, with an-Other” (Goodchild, p. 212).

As the masculine arc of consciousness, civilization and power has developed, so too has the masculine attitude influenced our view and vocabulary of love. We perceive our beloved as a *projected* image of our own souls. As we are pierced by mighty Eros’ spear we shoot our own arrow into the world and fall in love with the soul-image revealed to us.

For Freud, masculine Eros is eternally at odds with his immortal enemy Thanatos – aggression and destruction and death. Accordingly, there is nothing so completely at variance with original human nature as the injunction to *love one another*. The existence of a primary hostility in mankind one toward another must inevitably express itself through profound violence unless checked at all costs through powerful cultural impositions on the will. The shadow side of Eros is not merely suffering, but Death. For

Freud, the definition of erotic love must always consider projection, narcissism, displacement and wish fulfillment, and include aspects of a child's psychosexual development. (Levine, 2000).

From a Jungian perspective, we fall in love as a function of experiencing mutual anima and animus projections between a man and a woman. In such a state, "one's sense of personal worth is enhanced in the presence of the person who represents the soul image in projected form, but a corresponding loss of soul and emptiness may result if the connection is not maintained. The projective phase, the unconscious identification of another person with the soul image in one's own psyche...inevitably ends, with varying degrees of animosity, because no actual person can live up to the fantastic expectations that accompany a projected soul image" (Hall, 1983, p. 16).

Freud (1930) poignantly observed that, "We are never so defenseless against suffering as when we love, never so forlornly unhappy as when we have lost our love-object or its love" (p. 38). Though his technical descriptions of love fail in capturing its power, the reduction of love to a functional mechanism in service of survival (Freud, 1930) succeeds beautifully in accurately characterizing the ego as utterly insufficient to express and receive cosmic love.

Likewise, the reduction of love to a complex in which unconscious archetypal images are projected outward and for which reason we become fascinated with the 'beloved' – we fall in love with and come to know our own soul - characterizes the phenomenon of love as a function of individuation, when something else whispers that it may be the other way around. Love would refer "not only to what goes on between two people, but also to that cosmic force which fuels the individuation process and unites

humankind with all creation” (Goodchild, p. 9). We speak of the ecstatic pierce of love’s sharp arrow, uhn! into the breast, causing or because of the breath-taking, soul-stealing image of beauty before us - our beloved! And our description of love begins to align with our experience of love - as the *why* of our being, as the promise and remembrance of the divine *coniunctio*, as joy beyond imagining in re-union with God.

Giegerich (2005) is critical of the concept of projection due to its inherent protection of the ego. As noted above, projection describes the subject ejecting an internal unconscious content out into the external world from a fixed place (one might imagine a person throwing a stone from the shore, or a spear into the forest) with the therapeutic expectation of ‘withdrawing’ the projection back inside of oneself. According to Giegerich, “What turns projection into a psychological problem is that the movement stops with the throw” (2005, p. 89). Such an aggressive-passive *stopping at the throw* is an abortive move by the ego in that one’s focus is trained on the object rather than on how the object is seen, on the entity itself rather than one’s *relationship* with it. *The feminine instinctual lunge after the projection is suppressed*, and the possible sloughing off of the ego by exposure to new territory is prevented, as is individuation. The ego remains intact. "The intent is always to achieve change, but to keep the subject as something fixed out of the process and to immunize him" (Giegerich, 2005, p. 95) from transformation. In not "leaping after" the projected content or dream material - but rather noticing it, 'feeling' it, or 'giving creative expression to it by the ego complex' - we still get to avoid being transformed by it. Rather than entering into the experience of the *relationship*, enduring the torment and exhilaration and transformation of desire, we stand still, fixed upon the object of desire.

Soul asks that we “leap after” the projection, that we *go into the world* and go get it! In leaping after the throw, “projection...opens up my soul the whole world as its inner space; it procures for the soul an extendedness over the world so that it begins to carry its title *anima mundi* with full right” (Giegerich, 2005, p. 84). It is as if we cannot really reclaim our soul until we have been transformed by the world we experience in the very act of catching up with the projection.

It is true, at times one must stand firm and say “no” to a complex. Love in the way of the divine feminine as described here however, would seem to invite us to say “yes” to the complex.<sup>vii</sup> Saying *yes* is love as fully engaging in life, love as leaping after projections into the chaos of our shadow aspects. It is the leap as the journey to the beloved, into the suffering aspects of love, and again signals a relinquishing of the ego’s defended posture, a surrender into that which is greater than the ego and a willingness to allow the complex its function. Love has us jump in after the stone we threw and begin to thrash about and swim, or set off into the jungle into which we threw our spear, so to speak. We allow ourselves to become changed and transformed by the whole world, and only through that experience can we earn the projection back, are we allowed to re-claim the gift we threw away.

Freud observed that all love is unrequited love (Levine, 2000), precisely because our projections interfere with our ability to perceive the other as they are, and therefore stop short our love from ever truly touching our beloved. What might it be like to perceive the other as they are, to see beyond the dark veil of projections? Is it possible that the withdrawal of projections might remove distortions thereby “revealing the mystery of the Other” (Goodchild, p. 10)? According to von Franz, “If we could see

through all our projections down to the last traces, our personality would be extended to cosmic dimensions” (von Franz, 1980, p. 14).

The notion of the dissolution of projections invites a vision of stillness, a calm clarity of perception. In lieu of a masculine active movement outward into the world, we might imagine a complementary feminine invitation into interiority, into the depths within. One is now open to *receiving*, to beholding and communing with the *anima mundi*, which can only be apprehended at the level of the Self, as experienced when greeted from the heart of beauty (Hillman, 1992). Such beauty is received through *aisthesis*, revealed when *heard, smelled, inhaled, beheld, welcomed*. Hillman appeals to Corbin’s rendering of beauty as “the supreme theophany, divine self-revelation,” in that beauty is present in the very manifestation of *anima mundi*. Here we are to recognize that beauty appears in the actual images themselves, such that the very beholding of them, the “sniffing, gasping, breathing in of the world” enables the “transfiguration of matter” which “occurs through wonder” (1992, p. 47). It is the rapturous beholding of beauty in manifest images, or the aesthetic response of the heart, that reveals divine immanence in the world. Such soul-making happens in the receiving, the *taking in* of an object. In a divinely feminine attitude, we allow ourselves to be penetrated and filled up and moved by the image, thereby activating *its* imagination “so that it shows its heart and reveals its soul.” In this way, the things of the world are saved by the *anima mundi*, “by their own souls and our simple gasping at this imaginal loveliness.”

In fact, the withdrawal of projections has a profound and numinous effect on interpersonal relationships. As von Franz observes:



It happens again and again in psychological practice that when a person has been caught in blinding projections...and they are then withdrawn, in many cases this in no way annuls or sets aside the *relationship*. On the contrary, a genuine, “deeper” relation emerges, no longer rooted in egoistic moods, struggles, or illusions but rather in the feeling of being connected to one another via an absolute, objective principle. (1980, p. 174)

Relationships based on the objective psyche or the Self, rather than on projections, “give rise to a feeling of immediate, timeless ‘being together.’...In this world created by the Self we meet all those many to whom we belong, whose hearts we touch.” It is here that, as Jung (Letters, I, p. 298) says, “there is no distance, but immediate presence.”

This “world created by the Self” shares many characteristics of the *mundus imaginalis* as related by Corbin. The imaginal world of Sufi mysticism is described as a place of union, of holy reciprocity, where divine, spiritual, and human love become one in the being of the lover. For love, after all, is the mode of knowledge whereby one being knows another. Such is the nature of the “etheric cosmos” where prophetic and mystical visions occur. Here theophanies appear in their reality, and hierohistories like the Grail have their truth. Here, above all, is the place of resurrection, of presence, of the first encounter with the truth, where the Gnostic, awakening to himself/herself meets himself/herself as if for the first time. (Corbin, 1998, p. xx)

Nor are the *mundus imaginalis* and the imaginal world of the Self readily apparent to consciousness. According to Corbin (1998), “to attain to the world of subtle matter one must have an organ of cognition distinct from both pure intellect and from the senses.

This organ of cognition and truth is the Imagination, and the realm to which it corresponds...is the Imaginal World, which is also the world of the soul “(p. xxi).

Similarly, von Franz notes that we do not have organs to perceive unconscious archetypal imagery directly - “in consciousness the means of reception necessary to the admission of something new coming from the unconscious are missing” (von Franz, p. 88). However, active imagination can open up a way from consciousness to the imaginal world of the unconscious. In addition, “We can respond from the heart, reawaken the heart. In the ancient world, the organ of perception was the heart” (Hillman, 1992, p. 107).

Hillman (1989) notes the difference between a reflective psychology that has consciousness as its aim as opposed to therapy as the love of soul. In the first, the instruction is to “Know Thyself,” which although a worthy goal, is inadequate to inspire creativity. In the second, however, the instruction becomes “Reveal Thyself”, which is the same as the commandment to love, since nowhere are we more revealed than in our loving.” As we courageously move from enlightenment and knowledge into undefended transparency, we become known to one another and tenderly “...let the world, both real and subtle, and the Beloved that lies at its heart, *reveal to you* ‘thine original face’” (Goodchild, 2001, p. 212, my emphasis).

In these imaginal worlds, as Corbin describes, “There is only revelation. There can be only revelation” (p. xxxii). It is here, in the stillness of this very moment of quiet waiting, that we may receive the holy mystery of love. “For at each moment that you really read, as you read now what is before you, that you listen to the Angel, and to the Earth, and to Woman, you receive Everything, Everything, in your absolute poverty.”

The way of relating beyond projecting, the exquisite receptivity of the divine feminine, is the way of theophanic revelation. It is a recognition of the soul's purpose as serving something greater than itself. According to Ibn 'Arabi, "Those to whom god remains veiled pray to the god who in their belief is their lord to have compassion on them. But the intuitive mystics ask that divine compassion be fulfilled through them" (Corbin, 1969, p. 117). Such a way of loving is a move from one's own (projected) world outward (or inward) into God's (revealed) world. We are reminded of the words of St. Claire, "I no longer wish to be understood, but to understand. I am not asking to be loved, but to love!" And similarly St. Francis' prayer asks, "Make me an instrument of thy peace." How amazing - receiving is not passive, but active, in that it activates the soul!

The feminine face of love urges the fundamental reconciliation with the ego toward the Self, with a humility and defenselessness that seeks only to reunite with her divine beloved. She transforms the act of projection with her instinctive and unrestrained leap into the world after the throw, thereby enabling the ego to be *transformed through intimate relationship* with the world. Such love says *yes* to complexes and the shadow, in acknowledgment of the indestructibility of what is true in oneself, *yes as a knowing that nothing real can ever perish or be forgotten*. The feminine face of love smiles and waits in warm recognition and eternal devotion to her beloved, tenderly inviting the soul of the world into the deepest reaches of herself, hosting the mutual revelation of Self and soul.

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<sup>i</sup> Edinger, E. F. (1972). *Ego and archetype*, (p. 18)

<sup>ii</sup> Corbin, (1998, p. xxxiii)

<sup>iii</sup> ” (Glenthøj , 1997, p. 177)

<sup>iv</sup> (Freud, 1930, p. 120)

<sup>v</sup> (Milton, Book V:859–864, my emphasis)

<sup>vi</sup> (Milton, Book 1:259-264)

<sup>vii</sup> J. C. Knapp, personal communication