



“Gender Equations: Experiences of the Syzygy on the Archetypal Spectrum”

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Graphic details in the familiar biblical account of The Golden Calf paint in broad-stroke an ancient picture pertinent to the current moral tension, issues of sex and gender and respect of persons that we have gathered in Charlotte to contemplate. We read that Moses’ long delay in descending from Mount Sinai with the tablets of law so frustrated the mixed needs of the religiously heterodox exiles of Egypt that they demanded of Aaron the high priest that he fashion other gods to lead them. Their golden earrings and jewelry were thus melted down and recast in the image of a golden calf. An altar to the moon-horned Mother Goddess Hathor was erected and rites celebrated in her honor, replete with profuse drinking, feasting and orgiastic sex. Hearing not mourners or battle cries as he first supposed but noisy revelers and seeing them running wild Moses proclaims: “Who is on the Lord’s side? Come to me!” ... “Put your sword on your side, each of you! Go back and forth throughout the camp, and each of you kill your brother, your friend, and your neighbor. The sons of Levi did as Moses commanded, and about three thousand of the people fell that day.” (Ex 32.26-8)

[Comment: The Feminine presides over gender in general, is intimately associated with polytheism and accordingly validates and celebrates the body and sensuality as religiously significant.]

Having used the term Gender Equations in my title I recall the provocative remark by another renegade high priest, our own Edward C. Whitmont, author of *Return of*

*the Goddess* and fine work on the Scapegoat and scapegoating that deeply impressed me some weeks before I decided to pursue Jungian training that *an individual's entire predisposition to sexuality is psychically predetermined*. What I have to share today goes back to precisely that intriguing statement. And thus by gender equation I 'simply' refer to everything the individual brings with them intra-psychically (hence relationally) to the present moment: the carry-through of their birth, maternal bonding and parental care (or tragic want of it) experience in the family system with all its primary relational dyads; the reverberation of decisive traumas, behavioral patterns, preferences and identity (clarified or in transition) and the psychic images and dreams currently emergent in their individuation process. The endless dance of the syzygy colors our moods, our perceptions and entire approach to sex, love, and world. Its oscillations influence how we draw upon the masculine or the feminine aspects of our psyches. While Mother will always remain primary and the parental syzygy a classic fact and archetypal touchstone for the individual's psyche, Jung's original theoretical symmetry where the partial personalities of anima and animus are quite strictly conceived as the inner contra-sexual opposite of one's empirical sex has perforce given way to a broader perspective - first and foremost through decades of accumulated analytical observations that archetypes (conspicuously the anima) are transpersonal factors experienced by everyone and gender a far more subtle and complex affair than the particular body in which anima and animus work dynamically and creatively together in syzygy. What I often call the Jung's' and von Franz's "logos-only animus" remains useful in its place despite its want of eros and our legacy of often using the term "animus" pejoratively. Likewise our correlation of Eros to the Feminine principle is also reasonable enough *if we reckon with the fact he is her penetrating son and arrow of love and for this reason appears pervasively as masculine or androgynous historically (Hermes, Phanes.)* But again, this is no real problem and contextually appropriate since, penis be what it may - *phallus knows no gender!* And what an imaginal harvest beyond "the animus" springs from specific attention to the multiple *possessors* of this creative token:

The phallus-penis riddle has long troubled psychology, and this trouble will

continue because this riddle is an essential mystery of the psyche and not merely a difficult psychological problem. A revelation of this riddle is at the core of initiation and of the mysteries for men and for women--not only in antiquity. (Hillman, *The Myth of Analysis*. P. 64.)

[Sexuality changes as the Gods who carry its token - the phallus-penis -- change through life's phases. Pan, Priapus, Hermes, Dionysus, Zeus, Apollo, Eros, the Kouroi, Kabeiroi, Sileni, Satyrs, Centaurs—each represents a fantasy pattern through which the instinct can be experienced. Hillman, *MA*. p. 63.]

The contribution of archetypal psychology to de-literalizing physiology as gender as well as its historically rooted yet open phenomenological purview should never be lost on us. In any case the anima-animus question is always one of admixture and far-reaching in its implication for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered individuals though already clearly perceptible in the preferred roles, specific desires or erotic preoccupations that anyone discovers within themselves along life's experiential pathway. I think here bisexual men I work with who want to marry and have kids with a woman who expects monogamy: "How much will the other urge want from me?"

Regarding "Experiences of the Syzygy on the Archetypal Spectrum," I proceed with an articulate and highly instructive passage on the archetypal heights and depths by religious historian, Mircea Eliade - his essay on "Solar Hierophanies," appearances of the Sun as divinity (with a lunar counterpoint.) It is fairly congenial with Jung's familiar use of the color spectrum to characterize the polarity of the archetype (ultraviolet as spirit / infrared as instinct) in *Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*. And its pertinence to our biblical tale as well as to the spirit-instinct polarity within sexuality and the body is glaring, however darkly!

The final result of giving absolute supremacy to solar hierophanies ... can be seen in the excesses of ascetic Indian sects whose members go on staring at the sun until they become completely blind. This is a case of the "dryness" and "sterility" of a purely solar order of things, which carries its limited logic to extremes. The counterpart of it is a species of "decay from damp," the turning of men into "seeds," which occurs in those sects which give the same sort of total acceptance to the nocturnal, lunar or earthly order of things. It is almost the automatic fate of those who accept only one aspect of the sun hierophanies to be driven to a state of "blindness" and "dryness," while those who fix themselves exclusively upon the "nocturnal sphere of the mind" are

led into a state of permanent orgy and dissolution—a return to a sort of larval state. (*Patterns in Comparative Religion*, pg. 147.)

While framed by Eliade in ritual and cultic terms the imagery of sex and gender as syzygy can present variously anywhere on this spectrum, or deeper. Secondly and in keeping let's briefly consider how human beings have responded historically to the psychological factors cited along an archetypal polytheistic spectrum with reference to a most immediate and often startling phenomenon: that of ritual cross-dressing. Recall here the old patriarchal Christian proposition that sex is intended for propagation - or forfeits its legitimacy. Standing in immediate contrast to that view and indeed evermore the contemporary fact is that reproduction is a mere *footnote* to sexuality. Add to this the pervasive medieval suspicion (in fact an extremely fruitful observation) that alternative sexual inclinations automatically indicate alternative *religious* inclinations and we're really coming into focus. Naturally all this is replete with conflicts between the concrete and the psychical, the literal and the imaginal - but so is Life! Then again in passing - "hermaphrodite" refers to actual physiology while "androgyny" possesses the psychic nuance. In any case in antiquity one finds cross-dressing in cult rituals as varied as those of Asia Minor's Cybele and Attis or the familiar Aphrodite and Adonis (these mother-son pairs the classic Western examples the son-lover motif that Eric Neumann explores.) In a secular and ritual key cross-dressing is ubiquitous among eunuchs and transvestite hierodules in Near Eastern tradition. There is even a cross-dressing episode in the heroic life of Heracles and in that great that revolt against over-rigid gender roles, the *Bacchae* of Euripides, where King Pentheus is seductively groomed by Dionysus to go meet the maenads in female attire. Jung speaks of the bisexual matrix at the heart of this:

[If] the hermaphrodite were only a product of primitive non-differentiation, we would have to expect that it would soon [have been] eliminated with increasing civilization. This is by no means the case; on the contrary, man's imagination has been preoccupied with this idea over and over again on the high and even the highest levels of culture, as we see from the late Greek and syncretic philosophy of Gnosticism. The hermaphroditic *rebis* has an important part to play in the natural philosophy of the Middle Ages. And in our own day we hear of Christ's androgyny in Catholic mysticism. (Jung, C.G, "The Psychology of the Child Archetype." *CW* 9i, 292.)

Why Has This So Long Been The Case? [Image: Plato's Androgyny]



In “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” (1922) Freud devotes 50 pages of hard reasoning to an attempt to discern the origins of sexuality before opining that no scientific method can penetrate such profound darkness. He then resorts to an explanation (familiar to Jung) that fulfills his psychoanalytic requirements, but “is of so fantastic a kind - a myth rather than a scientific explanation.” Freud speaks of the human desire to return to an earlier state of things, proceeding then to a tale from Plato’s *Symposium* of the original human being with four arms, four legs, two face, dual privy parts and capable of cart-wheeling across the earth at high speed! So overweening was its temperament that Zeus was forced to cut it in twain as it sought to storm Olympus. Henceforth it seeks to embrace and regain its glory, its human wholeness and reconciliation with the Divine in One.

[Comment: Here is Hermes cut in two to reveal (per Kerényi) Eros pursuing Psyche in urgent tandem. Then again, so fundamental to our mortal childhoods, stands the Great the Mother and her Divine Child [the Holy Syzygy of developmentalism and transference analysis!] Jung sees in her the first incarnation of the anima archetype, gateway to the unconscious, to the “’realm of the Mothers,’” adding that regression left undisturbed does not stop with the personal mother but goes back beyond her to an “immemorial world of archetypal possibilities where ‘thronged round with the images of all creation’ slumbers the divine child [androgynous] patiently awaiting his conscious recognition.” (CW5, pp. 508 / Goethe’s *Faust*) Thus Jung’s answer to Freud’s “return to an earlier state of things,” on which Eliade expands in a fantastic way in his *Myth of the Eternal Return*.\* But let’s pause here! Take a deep breath - clear for a moment...

In Thomas Mann’s novel *The Magic Mountain* youthful protagonist and tuberculosis patient, Hans Castorp hikes to an unusually high altitude when he grows dizzy suffers a

nosebleed and lies back on a fallen tree trunk to collect himself. His consciousness spontaneously returns to a particular moment in childhood where a fellow schoolboy merits his charmed attention by kindly giving him a shiny new pencil. That original experience of identification attraction and delight is psychically alive in the text and opens a query regarding the nature of such affections for Hans Castorp, for Thomas Mann and for the reader. The memory of this passage was the first of the germinal fantasies to emerge in contemplating this offering for you today. And thus in the spirit of this vignette - with its psychical shimmer and regressive gradient, its spatial and temporal ambiguity, its healthy narcissism and simplicity, I encourage your own recall of an equivalent *moment* in childhood such as we all have experienced where the bodily and conceptual particulars of sex and gender were yet remote from your gleeful spontaneous attraction!

Formative fantasies as the mystery of sex and gender grows see the likes of young boys tucking their boy-parts back out of view as they stand different ways in front of the mirror or girls play at holding a garden hose out front and laughing about their brothers. Myriad sexual myths are concocted among peers. Jung talks about the importance of this early fantasy activity for concept building. This a carry-through of what Freud called infantile sexuality and the “polymorphous perverse child” to which James Hillman once responded, “Ah, that marvelous mythical creature!”\*

A little sister, Goethe’s “New Paris” and Joya’s dream as mirroring participants in the syzygy: A repetitious dream of childhood demonstrates just how early in life the personal anima (one side of our gender equation) can appear on the scene. It recurred any number of times when the dreamer was 5-7 years of age and once more in late adolescence.

I am sitting on the toilet in my parents’ bathroom, when the door is opened by a little blonde sister [dream’s creation] in a white nightgown with blue ribbons at the bodice. She looks at me and giggles before walking across the room to turn on the water faucet. I awaken having wet the bed.

The dream dates from the first years of school, when private bodily matters are steadily constrained by the persona and relational matters extend beyond the family to the public arena in new and individual ways. The last repetition resulted in nocturnal emission

rather than simple incontinence. The water faucet reflects not only the perception of an obvious penis-faucet equation, but represents a first little shift from the concrete to the imaginal - water like semen, a flow of spontaneous fantasy over which the anima presides. Here the male dream-ego meets his sister anima counterpart in a dyad of differentiation that moves within an androgynous current. I carry this forward with two complimentary items, one a vignette from Goethe's autobiography and another equally ingenious dream of a lively 45 year-old woman. Note the dream-ego of each: the first with its vision of a female triad, the second with the startling appearance of three little men. Goethe paints a scene with a similarity to the dream of childhood just recounted, but in which the dreamer appears in a more dignified setting than his parents' bathroom while remaining closely related to the parental dyad and open to the appearance of a surprisingly visitor:

On the night before Whit Sunday, not long since, I dreamed that I stood before a mirror, engaged with the new summer clothes, which my dear parents had given me for the holiday. The dress consisted of shoes of polished leather, with large silver buckles, fine cotton stockings, black nether garments of serge, and a green sash with gold buttons. The waistcoat of gold cloth was cut out of my father's bridal waistcoat. My hair had been frizzled and powdered, and my curls stuck out from my hair like little wings; but I could not finish dressing myself, because I kept confusing the different articles, the first always falling off as soon as I was about to put on the next. ("The New Paris: A Boy's Tale," *Autobiography and Annals: Truth and Poetry*)

The boy's confusion in dressing and such trickery from an autonomous agency are part and parcel of the ego's experience of the psyche. While rejoicing in his youthful elegance, the attire his parents have provided him is by no means the sole measure of the child. He has an identity of his own to discover. The boy's waistcoat clearly betoken the parental syzygy. But with his coiffure specifically winged, his mirror a testament to self-reflection, the dream's appearance at Pentecost, and the spirited visitor who appears amidst the confusion bespeaks the essence of this precocious boy's nascent personality:

In this dilemma, a young and handsome man came to me, and greeted me in the friendliest manner, "O! You are welcome!" said I, "I am glad to see you here." "Do you know me, then?" replied he, smiling. "Why not?" was my no less smiling answer; "you are Mercury—I have often enough seen you represented in

engravings.” “I am indeed,” replied he; “and am sent to you by the gods on an important errand. Do you see these three apples?” (Ibid, pg. 37.)

The story then employs elements from the Judgement of Paris and his fateful choice from among Athena, Hera and Aphrodite. This new Paris is enchanted by three tiny sylphes who dance on his fingertips before he eventually enters a lovely alchemical garden to deal with three beautiful young women himself. The appearance of the three female familiars of Mercury in the dream anticipates fresh developments:

Joya’s dream of “Special Ops”

In a decorative garden I sit beside a pool of clear water where I see a pair of tiny “mer-people” only inches tall swimming toward me: the mermaid very beautiful and he too is a perfect example of manly beauty. As they near the pool’s edge they transform in to three little men who emerge from the pool and begin climbing up my right pant leg to my knee, then catch the sleeve of my blouse and continue scaling my arm until I am holding out my hand palm upon which the three men then stand. Trained in special ops tactics they each wear special outfits and gear: one is a paratroop commando, one a communications expert and the third a frogman with a mask fins and three little tanks on his back.

Note that the previous dream sees a boy counter-posed by the triple anima with her characteristic precedence over fantasy, imagery and emotional modulations. While no less charming, Joya’s dream pairs her with a more practical, action-in-the-world animus, a remarkably hermetic triad right in the palm of her hand and fit for action. In this sampler of experiences of the syzygy on an archetypal spectrum, I have eschewed a literalistic pursuit of sacred marriage (*hierogamos*) focusing rather on the processes of masculine-feminine elements in each person regardless of their given body! This changes our perception of relationship quite decisively as simply *looking at it that way* is already a step out of the structures and strictures of patriarchal marriage and older Jungian views on the role of husbands or wives - without taking much away from them! Hillman once checked out the actual demographics of the “nuclear family” in the US to find a minority of households fit the stereotype. Still, the family remains as an indispensable organ in society given history and its archetypal roots. Here emphasis turns to the *numinous* qualities of the varied emotionally decisive syzygies born within family archetype. Recall how



much patients unpack regarding siblings along with mom and dad and how frequently their dreams spontaneously create a sister, brother, parent or entire families they have never knew! Here Robert Stein's observation in *Incest and Human Love* (1973) leads us back to a paradigmatic syzygy (and others) we've already met:

Within the family situation there exists the potential for the following archetypal constellations—Mother-Father, Mother-Son, Mother-Daughter, Father-Son, Father-Daughter, Brother-Sister, Brother-Brother, Sister-Sister. What this means is that a child is capable of experiencing all these archetypal combinations, regardless of his or her sex. While these archetypes refer to internal images, they are initially released by and experienced in relationship to an external object (mother, father, sibling.) (Stein, p. xv) \*\*

Given the enormous power of parents, with their potential narcissistic invasions and ambivalent emotions or (shifting to the intrapsychic) those internalized parental imagos that are simply too laced with trickery to be confronted or escaped, special implication for individuation may arise from *sibling* dyads. I have encountered any number of situations where not only sex but extremely intimate emotional bonds have served, as it were, to keep siblings afloat in an otherwise intolerable family. (One notes in passing that siblings are genetically more akin to one another than they are to either biological parent.) Sisters and brothers share the same generation, they represent the earliest and most intimate human likeness to one another with the fundamental exception of gender, and are thus prototypical for early constellations of anima and animus in psyche of siblings. But as Stein indicates and we have observed the archetype of sister and brother (other familial dyads can pop up completely on it own! (TePaske, *Sexuality and the Religious Imagination*. p. 133-4)



“Union of Brother and Sister Offered the Cup of Love”

It is no accident that the essential gendered personages in the art and literature of alchemy are commonly portrayed as an incestuous brother-sister pair. They reflect our human desire to return to an earlier state of things - not just to Freud's *thanatos* (though the ego may feel that way) but back to the very wellspring of consciousness, imagination, identity. Back to the mercurial edge where all we imagine ourselves to be in terms of history, parents, siblings and the objects of our affection encounter a deeper organization, psychic power and a gracious sustenance at the very heart of Jung's provocative statement: "Incest symbolizes union with one's own being, it means individuation or becoming a self." (The Psychology of the Transference, CW 16, par. 218.)

Video: "The Lost Boys" 1987 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrMLMV6E4CM>



Extemp: Tragedies of Sexual Abuse. Trauma not our primary emphasis but its pervasive impact on sexuality and gender cannot be passed-by with no mention. Above: Unveiling the perplexity a man joined at the hip to Diana of Ephesus (!) Item: Self-portrait by Alfred Kubin with marked gender conflict (Czech, 1877-1959) [Jung cites Kubin's book *Die andere Zeite/The Other Side* in various *CW* contexts.] Item: Local x-press ads inevitably brim with myriad object-relational disasters. Item: Patient dream of being stuck between 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> floor where little girl/boy pair vanish in bloody terrorist attack. (Pt sent to be 'cured' of being gay as 4 year-old.) Item: Patient's lesbian course deeply reactive to older brother's sex with her in teen years. Poem of moments with a young female lover on starlit night: "And the only ones watching were the angels who gazed through our four eyes."

Reactions to the Ambiguity of the Transgendered Person: Just as a tell tale Freudian-slip, the extended response time of a stimuli word in Jung's association experiment or flashes in increasing orders of magnitude, complexes may be struck that resonate all the way back through "everything a person brings with them intra-psychically" to the present moment - perhaps a deep shiver, revulsion, an unholy fascination or the

blurring of dissociated consciousness with all its antecedents - *biographical or archetypal!* Remember the 1992 film *The Crying Game* where the drama proceeded to the couple's first intimacy when suddenly the new girlfriend appeared in phallic profile? How like the conspicuously hermetic dream motif I've encountered on occasion where the alluring other catches one's eye only to throw aside their bed sheet or disappear around a corner only to appear suddenly phallic. One patient once grew very attracted to someone after a number of party conversations only to arrive in session absolutely complex-ridden after a big surprise a first real contact.



Raphael Sanzio



Hermaphroditos

In sickness or in health, as profanity or the sacred the creative dynamism of the syzygy flows on - an endless current of passion and imagination in the psyche, in life and in all Nature. And just as we've side-stepped physiology as gender, patriarchal marriage and the *hieros gamos* as our goal, we conclude - *se la vie* - with a palpable mystery of personality and the epiphany of Hermes on a quiet Sunday morning.

Sonnet 20 by William Shakespeare

A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted  
Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion;  
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted  
With shifting change, as is false women's fashion;  
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,  
Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;  
A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,  
Much steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.  
And for a woman wert thou first created;  
Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-doting,  
And by addition me of thee defeated,  
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.  
But since she prick'd thee out for women's pleasure,  
Mine be thy love and thy love's use their treasure.

The Cadeusus come alive!

Strolling in Temescal Canyon at the edge of the Santa Monica Mountains my wife and I once happened upon an adult pair of huge Southern California Rattlesnakes fully engaged in an intense Sunday morning sexual encounter. Tightly coiled at the waist with their upper bodies extending over two feet in the air, they ever so slowly swung their precisely scaled triangular heads gently past one another in very wide opposing arcs before the male suddenly threw a fresh coil around his mate and they fell to the earth with a sharply audible hiss of exhalation. Again they gradually arose to enact the same rhythmic dance, four or so repetitions of which held our attention until chatty hikers' voices sent me off for help protecting our amorous friends in their path. She herself was glorious: a gracious full-bodied black woman six feet tall in a khaki uniform, badge and a crisp flat-brimmed hat indented four-fold, who took the snakes one by one to safety in a fern fringed stream bed leading into the woods.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-lrmsVd4s5c>

#### Auxiliary Notes

\*Jesus saw infants being suckled. He said to his disciples, "These infants being suckled are like those who enter the kingdom." They said to him, "Shall we then, as children, enter the kingdom?" Jesus said to them, "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female female; when you fashion eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and a likeness in place of a likeness; then will you enter [the kingdom]." (*Gospel of Thomas*, NHL pg. 129.)

\*\*Briefly amplifying the numinous dimension of Stein's family dyads illustrates the depth of fascination germane to each dyad: the mystery of the Mother-Son dyad in Christianity or the rites of Cybele and Attis; the Mother-Daughter dyad in the Eleusinian Mysteries of Demeter and Persephone; the Father-Son dyad in Christianity or in Roman Mithraism (where initiates move through seven grades of initiation from Mercury, the puer, to Saturn, the old man); the Father-Daughter dyad in the myths of Zeus & Athena or Agamemnon and Iphigenia; the Brother-Brother dyads of Egypt, the Old Testament, or Greek heroic mythology; Sister-Sister dyads celebrated in the cult of Artemis, in Amazon lore, or among the women of Lesbos. (TePaske, *SRI*, p. 134-5)

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