

The True Masculine and the True Feminine

Are These the Same As Jung's Anima and Animus?

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Masculine and Feminine

Both C. S. Lewis and Leanne Payne have written movingly about the masculine and feminine as essential qualities of the creation that reflect God's own nature. They exist prior to human masculinity and femininity and thus they determine gender—they are not determined by it, as we are apt to assume. Within all creatures, the relationship between masculine and feminine largely determines the nature and character of that creature. This is most easily seen in creatures (ordained elements of God's creation) that are themselves composed of two physically single beings—a *couple*, for example. But it is equally true within an individual, single being—a *person*.

When Mario Bergner writes of "setting love in order" (the title of his book), he is speaking simply and eloquently of the relationship *between* masculine and feminine: it is the ordered relation between these preexisting essences that determine the quality and character of a relationship as also of the people who comprise it. We understand much about a man when we are able to describe the role of masculinity in his life, in what way he embodies or fails to embody it, and how it relates to the feminine qualities in his character: whether he honors these or not, whether he accepts them in proper measure or projects them outside himself onto others, whether he loves them or hates them, and whether masculine and feminine within him serve each other or are at war.

In his greatest cycle of poems, the *Four Quartets*, T. S. Eliot tells us:

In that open field
If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close,
On a Summer midnight, you can hear the music
Of the weak pipe and the little drum
And see them dancing around the bonfire
The association of man and woman
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie—
A dignified and commodious sacrament.
Two and two, necessarye conjunction. . .

But it is God Himself who is the very Love that ordains this dance as the proper order of our lives. Because of our brokenness, we fail, in different ways at different times and in differing measure, to dance before Him in joy as He wishes and as gives Him greatest delight. And so He comes to our rescue, in the only way that we can be saved from ourselves. In Eliot's words, again, from the same cycle of poems:

The dove descending breaks the air

With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Who then devised the torment? Love.
Love is the unfamiliar Name
Behind the hands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame
Which human power cannot remove.
We only live, only suspire
Consumed by either fire or fire.

In God's loving will for our lives, the dance is ordered both between us and within us. When, in our brokenness, we halt it within us, it stops as well between us. To be truly men and truly women—masculine men and feminine women—the divinely ordered dance must once again resume, at the cost of fire.

True masculinity, not just a transcendent essence, but an immanent, manifest quality of character in men, is always wedded to the true feminine: his essential quality of leading softened by the longing to yield to the tender needs of others. Thus does a broken man, a caricatured embodiment of God's design, become a true man.

True femininity, not just as a transcendent essence but as an immanent manifest quality of character in true women, is always wedded to the true masculine: her essential quality of yielding strengthened by the ability to point toward the noblest goals. Thus does a broken woman, a caricatured embodiment of God's design, become a true woman.

Of course, no creature is perfect—nor becomes so in this life—but in basic psychological and spiritual health (again both within persons and between them), it is the easy conjunction of the dance, however imperfect that shines forth, not the individual partners. One of the chief characteristics of psychological and spiritual disease, is thus precisely the falling apart—both within and between—of man and woman: masculinity aggregating itself together in soul and society; femininity aggregating itself together in soul and society like the single-gender anti-sex leagues of Orwell's hideous vision in *1984*. The result is falsely masculine (or feminine) men; falsely feminine (or masculine) women; everywhere, within and between, broken vows and betrothals.

Anima and Animus

In the psychological theory of C. G. Jung, the feminine within a man is called the *anima*, and the masculine within a woman is called the *animus*. For Jung, the anima and animus were "archetypes": predetermined, preexisting configurations of the personality that have a priori independence and autonomy within the overall personality. In his view, the anima and animus are distinct sub-personalities within the psyche, intrinsically separate from the known, conscious personality and capable of, as it were, "taking over the body" (really, the brain), from time to time, producing attitudes, feelings, and actions surprisingly at odds with the everyday, "conscious" personality and sense of identity. Jungian literature even uses the term "possessed" to describe the intrusion of the anima or animus, borrowing it from religion and giving it a psychological, instead of spiritual, cast.

Thus, an otherwise highly rational, controlled, perhaps "macho" man, who falls into a fit of sentimentality or pique (however briefly or drawn-out), Jung describes as having unconsciously¹ become "anima-possessed." Possessed, that is, by a "feminine self" that is relatively primitive and

undeveloped. Similarly, an otherwise compliant, even subservient woman, who suddenly develops a set of fierce, inflexible, largely unsubstantiated opinions, Jung describes as having unconsciously become “animus-possessed.” Possessed, that is, by a “masculine self” that is relatively primitive and undeveloped.

Jung’s comments about homosexuality are consistent with this model. He describes (many) male homosexuals as “identified with the anima” (a state of more-or-less permanent “possession”). By this he means that they have rejected an open identification with masculinity and have adopted instead a feminized identity (and similarly with respect to the animus for many female homosexuals). Homosexual cure, in his view, comes about by establishing a relationship to, rather than an identification with, the anima or animus.² There are numerous examples of Jungian analysis successfully treating homosexuals.

With respect to masculine and feminine, psychological progress, in Jung’s view, whether in the context of homosexuality or not, thus consists essentially of the following steps:

1. The individual becomes aware within his overall personality of the existence of an autonomous “being” or “self” within, who is of the opposite gender and who embodies a whole set of contrary attitudes, feelings, and actions. This he does by observing himself, his behaviors, fantasies, moods, and dreams (with the assistance of others) and thus noting that his behavior and mental states over time are not as consistent with his image of himself as he would like to believe.
2. In his imagination, he learns to envision in personified form this separate being within. In the Jungian view, these personifications are not merely poetic, but (psychologically) actual. There really *is* a separate being within and one must learn to recognize her (or him).
3. Treating this now-acknowledged and -recognized being as a true “other,” one begins a dialogue, in imagination, with or without technical aids (e.g., painting, drawing, writing). Much of Jung’s autobiography is taken up with accounts of his own dialogues with “his anima” (as well as other beings he discovered within).
4. This newly discovered and related to inner being will now bring to the individual—consciously and deliberately—a wealth of new insights and attitudes previously unavailable to him.³ And so, the personality will become enriched. Indeed, Jung chose the terms *anima* and *animus* from the Latin word for soul, *anima*, because it was his belief that the anima in the man and the animus in the woman *are* the soul, and that the enrichment they bring via ongoing dialogue (“they relate the ego to the unconscious”) constitutes spiritual development. Jung practices this form of imaginative inner dialogue (which he called “active imagination”) from childhood on. Only at the very end of his life did he apparently cease, commenting briefly, and cryptically, that he now “no longer needed” to have a dialogue with his anima, so much had he already absorbed from her.

There are, however, major problems with Jung’s formulation, if not with some of his clinical observations:

- A split-off, autonomous, independent, unconscious aggregate (“complex”) of feminine traits in a man (or of masculine traits in a woman) is pathological, not normal.
- Such deep splits in the psyche surely exist, but only in some people.
- They arise as a consequence of trauma and are a defense against conscious suffering.⁴
- A split-off anima (or animus) can and should be healed, so as to disappear into (be “integrated” with other traits in) the personality as a whole. This should happen as quickly as possible, not

waiting only until the last minute, as Jung apparently did, since such splits form the basis of much that is tragically destructive in human relationships.

- Healing of *an anima* or *an animus*—let us use the terms properly, as referring to illness to be healed, not to something normal, and certainly not a benefit⁵—requires (among other things) a deep immersion in the suffering that produced the split(s) in the first place. To maintain the split is to avoid this redemptive suffering. A (relatively) seamless dance between masculine and feminine qualities in a person is not only highly desirable, it is quite possible and need not take a lifetime of effort to achieve. Extended periods of such gracefulness form the foundation of all mature, stable marriages, for example.
- Under conditions of relative well-being, personifications of the feminine in men and of the masculine⁶ in women are just that, poetic personifications, metaphors (as in Eliot's poetry above), that can help us perceive and better understand ultimate reality. But only under extremely sad conditions do these personifications need to take on a life of their own.
- When they do, the personality they configure turns false—a false self, containing within it many unhealed splits.
- Active imagination is *not* prayer and is entirely unrelated to prayer (contrary to the claims of Jungian churchmen: vide Kelsey). It easily can be admixed with prayer (especially when first learning active imagination) and especially with listening prayer, causing much confusion. (To begin active imagination, one holds an image in mind and patiently waits to see what changes it spontaneously undergoes. Later one may learn to have very active dialogues with these figures, but note the following.) Active imagination reveals existing splits in the psyche and can thus be useful diagnostically, as it were. People like Jung, for whom inner personifications take on an almost (and at times for him completely) hallucinatory reality for extended periods of time have very serious splits in their psyches. The many people whose woundedness does not involve such deep divisions will not be able to deliberately cultivate such vividly, at times frighteningly, autonomous “active imaginations,” no matter how much they try.⁷
- Active imagination can quickly become a way of *practicing*, and hence deepening, splits in the psyche. It is a method of *practicing the presence of the false self*. In this way, one cultivates a diseased fantasy life whose seductive strength arises both from its fascinating autonomy and its capacity to wall off personal suffering.
- Because this fantasy life has no moral underpinnings, because it helps to reinforce an experience of autonomous inner “beings” accessible via imagination, and because it is a defense against redemptive suffering, it easily allies with and quickly becomes a Gnostic form of spirituality with powerfully occult overtones.⁸
- Neither the anima nor animus is the soul. They are fragments of a fragmented self. Jungian psychological development (“the individuation process”) is thus not the same as salvation and progressive sanctification, in spite of Jung's attempt to map these processes onto a Christian structure. “Individuation” as Jung means it is the process of elementary psychological development (“individuation” as, for example, Mahler means it—the child become a single person) but projected into a “religious” (more specifically Gnostic or occult) framework. Because it is projected, it is at once “experienced” (in imagery) and largely avoided (in reality).

- Finally, Jung's formulation of homosexuality is not quite right, even though he is correct clinically in identifying homosexuals as people who typically do have very distinct "animae"—split-off, aggregated countersexual parts of their personalities. (For this reason, by the way, occultists, fascinated and embroiled as they are with the "spirit personalities," predictably lace their rituals with homosexual practices.)

A more correct formulation is as follows (I will speak of men): The male homosexual has not established a basic, healthy masculine identity with which he is comfortable. (He does have a masculine identity of a kind, however, not a feminine one). Part of the healthy masculine identity he has not yet attained—indeed, one of its defining features—is that it longs for, admires, and seeks union with the feminine. Feminine women are therefore attractive to the man with a relatively well-established, healthy masculine identity. (This is to speak of matters *between* people.) But the male homosexual flees from the feminine, and he flees from it both between people and within himself.

He flees from it because he does not have the kind of masculine identity that is comfortable with women as women (including, especially, their sexuality as women), nor with his own feminine traits. As a consequence, out of fear, he "pushes away," as it were, the feminine within himself as well—this is the "anima" that remains split off.

But what happens to this "anima"? It does indeed now exist in his psyche as a split-off "complex." It exerts its influence on him, but in a fashion that is unmodified by the friction of actual, full intergender relationships, as well as by true contact with God's gentling strength. It is inaccessible to maturation and thus remains primitive and childlike. He does not "see" it as it determines his behavior, causing him to appear to others as a caricature of femininity. He subjectively experiences his own sense of identity as masculine, but he appears to the world as a false woman.

This state is not truly one of "identification," as Jung's theory proposes. The idea that a split psyche is normal (a psyche composed of multiple sub-selves) lends itself to the idea that one may identify with this part or that, sometimes for long periods of time, sometimes short, perhaps in a rapidly shifting alteration (as in borderline personality disorder) or sequence (as in multiple personality disorder). It also leads to Jung's mistaken idea that "psychological health" consists in having a more-or-less solid identification with one, appropriate part of the psyche (having a "strong ego") while gaining ever-increasing "access" to the other, separated, "unconscious" parts. This idea, in turn, has led quickly, and not surprisingly, to the more politically correct notion now prevalent in Jungianism since Jung that identification with *any* preferred part of the psyche is healthy: as in the title of one prominent Jungian's book, *The Plurality of the Psyche* (Andrew Samuels).

In fact, a better model to describe what is happening when there is an anima present in a man (or an animus in a woman) is provided by the British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein. She uses the (somewhat awkward) term *projective identification* to describe this and related splits.

In the projective identification, the split-off, frightening, unacknowledged part of the self (e.g., an anima) is "gotten rid of" by projection onto others—thus women become not desirable, but feared (they are feared as women; as neutral "persons" there is no problem). But this "getting rid" is only a subjective illusion. An anima remains active in the personality, but now no longer under some degree of volitional control. It becomes, instead, an unwitting compulsion, its characteristics acted out unawares. Thus the fey, sometimes "bitchy" qualities of male gay behavior, the drama and barbed humor enact the particular, distorted, frightening image of woman that needs to be kept at a distance.⁹ Since in distorted fashion actual women are also "seen" as being this way, they are kept at a distance as well. Thus the gay man at once projects his anima and is "possessed" by what he projects—hence "projective identification."

Although the establishment of a basic, ever more solid and healthy masculine identity is a critical part of healing for a male homosexual, the establishment in his personality of integrated, modulated, mature feminine qualities—the true feminine—is an equally important part of his healing. When he honors and

cherishes the true feminine within, *that* is when the growing man becomes most fully masculine.

Of course, this dimension of healing is hardly unique to homosexuality. For the truth is that in the healing of all forms of brokenness (whatever the clinical condition in which the personality is torn apart into multiple selves), the true masculine calls out and supports the true feminine—both within and between; and the true feminine nurtures and heals the true masculine—both within and between. The integrated person, like the good marriage, is but “one flesh.” The true man can be feminine, when it is required, without fearing that he has thereby becomes less masculine; the true woman can be masculine, when it is required, without fearing that she has thereby becomes less feminine. Neither seeks comfort in a false self, in a compulsive, “projective identification” with the image of the opposite sex.

at the still point, there the dance is . . .

The release from action and suffering, release from the inner

And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded

By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving . . .

Notes

The True Masculine and the True Feminine

1. In Jungian theory, “unconscious” does not mean repressed (forgotten), as it does in classical psychoanalysis. In the context above, it simply means “unwittingly,” more specifically because the whole “complex” (or archetype) is split off and has never been part of conscious awareness.

2. Jungians since Jung have become so completely politically correct that Jung’s rather more critical—and sometimes helpful—ideas on the subject are conveniently ignored by them. For example, in his recent *Sacrament of Sexuality: The Spirituality and Psychology of Sex* (Element: Rockport, Mass. [1991]), Morton Kelsey, a Jungian analyst and Episcopal priest, uncritically adopts and promotes the fraudulent data on homosexuality of Alfred Kinsey, states badly and incorrectly that homosexual change is “extremely rare,” and enthusiastically adopts and promotes the position of Dr. Blanche Baker of the Mattachine Society (one of the oldest gay activist organizations):

Just as some people prefer blondes and other brunettes, I think that the fact that a given person may prefer the love of his own sex is his personal business. Now this does not mean that homosexuals may not become neurotic—I think that they often do because society is so hostile to them and their own families do not understand them, so they are subject to a great many pressures and a great deal of unhappiness (192).

3. Often, though not always, these become available supernaturally, through “meaningful coincidences” (“synchronicity”), precognitive dreams, divination, or simply direct conversation. Examples of all these may be found in Jung’s own autobiography, *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*.

4. More precisely: trauma prevents the normal synthesis of the psyche into an integrated whole and allows the unhealthy persistence of natural, underlying divisions. These divisions are based on the differences in mental, emotional, and behavioral states produced by the various instinctive drives, as well as on the tendency to separate in memory painful from pleasurable experiences. Sharp psychic divisions are readily apparent in the dramatic and rapid shifts in mood and behavior seen in infants. As the child matures, these divisions become far less sharp and memory synthesizes *all* experience (painful and pleasurable) into a single, coherent, continuous whole.

5. This manner of speaking—*an anima, an animus*—has a number of advantages. It not only allows us to speak correctly of a fragmented psyche as metaphorically ill (“What do you think he is suffering from?” “Oh, he has *an anima*,” as in “Oh, he returned from Mexico with *a parasite*”), it actually restores to Jung’s concept the correct tone. For he himself amplifies the notion of “the anima” by reference to such mythological creatures as nixies or sprites. By their seducing illusions, these creatures draw men to their deaths. Or to succubi, fantasy women who drain the life out of the men possessed by them. In spite of these references, Jung obscures their pathology by the normalizing forms, “*the anima*” or “*the animus*,” as though these were normal organs of the psyche, present in everyone.

6. The use here of “the,” and the non-personified, adjectival form, reinforces the normality of non-split-off qualities of character.

7. A cruel irony is generated within many Jungian communities (analysts, trainees, analysts) by the cachet attached to active imagination. Everyone scrambles to imitate Jung. Those who can’t often feel inferior and inadequately “conscious.” In the seventies, especially in the United States, many thus turned to hallucinogenic drugs to enhance their hallucinatory experiences.

8. Chief characteristics of historical Gnosticism, including Gnostic Christianity (now wildly popular in many seminaries and divinity schools), are: (1) amorality (the synthesis of good and evil in the godhead); (2) a hierarchy of “spiritual” creatures that impart “gnosis,” or wisdom; (3) the belief that this “gnosis” is sufficient for salvation; and (4) the rejection, therefore, as unnecessary, of atoning sacrifice—by Christ, or anyone else, for that matter.

9. This powerful image also exerts a compulsive attraction, in the same way that any frightening fantasy will, so long as it is kept at a distance: hence the “perverse,” almost universal pleasure associated with “horror” stories; likewise the gay fascination with “drag.”