

# DIVINE MADNESS

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# DIVINE MADNESS

*Archetypes of Romantic Love*

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For Mary, Kathy, Dani, and  
above all Susan,  
in love and gratitude.



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# 1

## *Romantic Love and the Love of God*

If puppy love is foolishness, a mature romantic love is full-blown madness. The lover has strayed from the highways and mainstreams of our placid and well-planned common life to build a solitary hut somewhere in a wilderness of disgraceful and deranged notions. There is no convincing the love-mad of their errors and delusions; they would rather disabuse us of ours. Whether love is an insanity grandiosely claiming to be wise, or a sublime wisdom masquerading as folly, seems not to admit of calm debate. We do not persuade one another about love. We find ourselves already lined up on opposite sides: one throng facing east, eyes sharp and clear; the other facing west, eyes hooded with scales.

Although, aside from periods of famine, it is hard to imagine a time when eros did not occupy a prominent position in human culture and society, romantic love as we know it today is an outgrowth of the courtly ideal, which sprang up suddenly as a dominant theme in twelfth-century Europe. Denis de Rougemont's classic book, *Love in the Western World*, traces its beginnings to one William IX, Count of Poitier and Duke of Aquitaine, who can be called the first troubadour. He wrote ribald songs boasting about his sexual prowess and kept a notorious woman, known as La Dangereuse, in a tower of his castle. When two of his repudiated wives formed a convent to liberate women from the servitude of sex, William retaliated by forming an anticonvent of courtesans whom he praised in songs resembling monastic hymns.

This theatrical gesture turned out to be less silly than it may sound. William of Poitier and Aquitaine was a complicated man: petty, cynical, self-indulgent, insensitive and mean to his wives, but still high-minded and very much in earnest in other ways. His versifying and irreverent mockery was more than a passing whimsey for him; rather it drew him into a compelling and transformative lifelong project. His songs gradually began to shift from the lewd to the spiritual. Very likely the religious form of the monastic hymns he was satirizing exerted an influence on the imagery and ideas of his songs. For, although they

retained their erotic quality, a different order of longing began to find expression in them.

In particular, William started exploring an image he referred to as "The Unknown Lady." From the day he first dreamed of her while out riding, his compositions began to voice a deeper aspiration underlying his promiscuity. The Unknown Lady assumed greater and greater importance as William came to know her better. She grew into a kind of erotic, mystical queen whom he served with his whole heart and soul. He did not know what difficulties and tasks she had in store for him, but he was burning to undergo them, so great was her worth. Obedience to her coincided with perfect fidelity to himself. "Through her alone," he sang, "shall I be saved."

The fact that within a few years hundreds of troubadours were wandering about Europe indicates that the work of this satirical libertine had far more than personal implications. The songs expressed an important unconscious yearning in European culture as a whole. De Rougemont argues that there were two roots of this movement, both religious: one came out of a dualistic understanding of Christianity and the other from Islamic mysticism.

The Christian movement was Catharism, a dualistic philosophy that held that God had created only the spiritual world, the good portion of reality, whereas Satan had created the material world intrinsically evil. The human condition, therefore, is characterized by the incarnation of a sublime spirit, and the primary task of human existence is to free that spirit from its imprisonment in an evil body. The Cathars quite logically condoned suicide and forbade sexual intercourse, which they saw as a demonic device to imprison free souls in bodies. They considered marriage an "organized vice" and favored celibacy as the best way to deal with human sexuality. Still they tolerated casual sex, especially sodomy, for these practices, while avoiding the imprisonment of souls, relieved instinctual pressures for the great majority of individuals who did not qualify to be counted among the elect.

Catharism, therefore, requires a spiritualized love that denies or, at its weakest, tolerates the body. It finds expression in the fundamental principle of courtly love, whereby the knight dedicates all his efforts to the service of a lady he may have no hope ever of marrying. He is inspired by an erotic spirituality to do great deeds that advance both his kingdom and his own honor. Such a spiritual love exists outside of

convention and free from the procreative instinct. In its most characteristic form, as we see in the stories of Tristan and Isolde or Lancelot and Guinevere, the most virtuous and powerful knight of the kingdom is the queen's lover. Because they cannot be married, their love is forced into an essentially spiritual form, or else it is illicit.

Unlawful as this love may be, however, the stories agree that God surely tolerates and may even actively favor the union. For example, in the story of Tristan and Isolde, the lovers are brought together again and again by fortuitous (God-directed) natural events, such as the currents of the sea and the birds of the air. They are saved from death and punishment by gusts of wind; and Isolde at one point passes a "divine judgment" by lifting a red-hot iron bar without burning her hands. When Tristan is bringing Isolde back home to be wed to his king, they inadvertently drink a love potion, and after this no power can dissolve their union. In one of the five earliest versions of the tale, Beroul's *Romance of Tristan*, they are confronted by the Hermit Ogrin who tells them they are living in sin. They protest that it cannot be sin, as they have drunk a potion that puts it beyond the power of their wills to separate. The Hermit *accepts* the argument and takes them under his roof.

The second cultural current that contributes to the tradition of romantic love in the West is Sufism, the mystical tradition in Islam. Although Islamic mysticism embraces a multitude of divergent doctrines, practices, and attitudes, the vast majority of Sufis hold that love is the only genuine way of coming to know God. Islam itself has even been called a "love-mad" religion (Schimmel, 1982: 11-13). In the Sufi view, "Everything in the world is in some mysterious way connected with Love and expresses either the longing of the lover or sings of the beauty and glory of the eternal Beloved who hides His face behind a thousand forms" (ibid., 77f.). Love between men and women is part of *divine* love, for the human experience both conceals and reveals the ultimate Lover and the ultimate Beloved. Indeed the love of God is really the only love there is. Divine love is the depth, meaning, and esoteric secret residing in profane love. The eleventh-century Sufi Ibn al-Arabi writes:

It is God who in each loved one manifests himself to the gaze of each lover . . . for it is impossible to adore a being without imagining the divinity present in that being. . . . Thus it goes for love: a creature really loves no one but his Creator. (Corbin, 111)

The romantic love that results from Cathar and Sufi currents, therefore, is a powerful expression of the human spirit. It is an ennobling bond between two human souls who are separated by physical, moral, and social constraints—typically in opposition to the rules of matrimony and liberated from the procreative instinct. Its sublime goal is a mature and individuated love of God. Just as God is one, so are we one with God and with one another when we love.

Those on the way are almost invisible  
to those who are not. A man or a woman  
recognizes God and starts out. The others  
say he, or she, is losing faith.

(Rumi, 1986: 44)

We are, indeed, talking about a matter of faith—but not the kind of faith that can be written down as a set of propositions. Rather it is the faith that is rooted in our life experience. The Greeks called it *gnosis*: either you have had the experience, and know the truth about the invisible, or you have not. What is more, “gnostics,” the mystic *cognoscenti*, love their madness and believe it has peeled the scales from their eyes. Their opponents say that love has blinded them. This book sides with the madmen and explores their madness sympathetically: its rapture, its pain, its wisdom, its power to lead us astray, and its fiery pillar that leads us through the night of our ignorance toward a promised land that is glorious in ways we have not dreamed—but is generally not at all the way we had always imagined it would be.

Perhaps the most articulate mad lover of all time was Jelaluddin Rumi, a thirteenth-century Muslim from Iran who fled the Mongols to Turkey, where he succeeded his father as an expert theologian and had a sizable following of orthodox believers. He scandalized them all, however, when one day a weirdly dressed mystic, or “Sufi,” appeared on the edge of his audience. This man, Shamsuddin of Tabriz, fascinated Rumi, who closeted himself with the newcomer to learn a more emotional and flamboyant way of loving God. He came out of seclusion dancing, and introduced musical instruments (forbidden to orthodox Islam) and the whirling dance of the dervishes to his skeptical followers. They killed Shams in hopes of getting back their beloved teacher; but divine madness, once experienced, cannot be renounced. Rumi became Islam’s greatest poet and most famous lover of God. He says,

Let the lover be disgraceful, crazy,  
absent minded. Someone sober  
will worry about events going badly.  
Let the lover be.

(1986: 7)

Leave the lover alone because he or she is onto something the rest of us have missed. We find a sense of wholeness in love that reveals the poverty of life without it. Plato expressed these sentiments in his *Symposium*: he has Aristophanes relate a legend whereby we humans were originally round hermaphrodites, spheres with four arms, four legs, and two genders, each. In this time before time, we were whole and satisfied. But later we were separated into male and female halves, each going about restlessly in search of its mate—each of us haunted by an inchoate memory of the wholeness toward which our entire being tends. When we fall in love, we slip into feelings of oneness and completeness; our aching comes to rest. And when we lose our beloved, we plunge into an emptiness and insufficiency like nothing we have ever known before. From the outside, it looks like the most pitiful derangement, to suffer so at being no more than human. But the lover seems to have found a deeper truth. There is wisdom in that suffering—and a sublime kind of joy.

When I am with you, we stay up all night.  
When you're not here, I can't go to sleep.

Praise God for these two insomnias!  
And the difference between them.

(Ibid., 1984: Quatrain 36)

In the one case our beloved is so near us, and our enjoyment so important, intense, and soul-satisfying, that we cannot bear the vague parting that sleep brings. In the other case we actually love the insomnia and pain we experience during a night alone, for this binds us to our beloved in a new and no less significant way. Our beloved is present, also, in his or her absence. Even this pain is a blessing because it reveals another dimension of our union. We even find we need the separation in order to appreciate, by its contrast with the bliss of togetherness, the shaft of light that binds our minds and hearts and spirits. If we have ever fallen in love, we have known the agonizing bliss of union of which Rumi sings.

Rumi and most of the other love-mad poets of Islam refer again and again to the legends of the human lovers Layla and Majnun to describe their own love affair with God. These legends were part of Middle Eastern folklore long before the coming of Islam in the seventh century. Although the stories are filled with a great number of incidents, there is no beginning, middle, or end of a single narrative. Majnun, whose name means “madman,” and Layla, whose name means “night,” are a pair of lovers who—like the Sufi and God—almost never see one another. She lives under the constant guard of her tribesmen, who would be dishonored if they were to let her wed such a tramp as Majnun. Meanwhile, he lives alone in the wilderness with only wild animals for companions. Love fills them both and makes them sensitive to the messages they hear in birdsongs and to the sounds of one another’s sighs carried for miles on the desert breezes. Gradually they discover that they have become more a single unified being than mere bodily togetherness could ever have effected. Because they have become one in soul and substance, they find that they no longer need to see one another face to face. The Persian poet, Nizami, collected most of the lovers’ legends into a single poem, which mainly follows the life of Majnun and observes how love transforms everything he is and does. He becomes, in fact, a kind of hermit troubadour:

Love was glowing in [Majnun]. When it burst into flames it also took hold of his tongue, the words streaming unbidden from his lips, verses strung together like pearls in a necklace. Carelessly he cast them away. . . . Was he not rich? Was he not free? Had he not severed the rope which keeps men tied together? (Nizami, 1966: 126)

Their oneness transforms them, painfully but gloriously; it also separates them from their fellow humans and makes them outcasts: “Once I was Layla . . . now I am madder . . . than a thousand Majnuns” (*ibid.*, 145).

According to the Sufi, this state is just as true of God-intoxication as it is of human love. It is a madness to be desired, because the Majnuns of the world are tuned in to a deeper reality than are the ordinary run of people. The true lover knows a different love and a different universe. Nizami’s poem says of Layla:

Love, if not true, is but a plaything of the senses, fading like youth.  
Time perishes, not true love. All may be imagination and delusion,

but not love. The charcoal brazier on which it burns is eternity itself, without beginning or end. (Ibid., 35)

The Christian mystics, too, are aware of this divine madness that comes over them. It is a mad wisdom that is scorned by the uninitiated but reveals the Beloved in everything the lover encounters. An Italian Franciscan of the thirteenth century, Jacopone da Todi, filled a large volume with poems of praise to his divine Beloved. He treats madness like this:

I know well, O highest Wisdom  
That if I am mad, it is Your doing—  
This dates from the day I surrendered myself to Love,  
Laid aside my old self and put on You  
And was drawn—I know not how—to new life.  
(262)

This book—as a series of psychological meditations on the nature of romantic love and human relationship—takes the apparently religious perspective that the love of God lies at the root of human love; *apparently* religious, because it is not at all an arbitrary doctrine that we can elect to follow, as one might change churches after a dispute with a pastor. What religion calls the love of God expresses the foundational and central activity of the human psyche, and human love is real and satisfying only insofar as it expresses this root matter. Because the human psyche has the structure that it has, human love is but a species of divine love. The mystics recognize this in seeing the love of God as the meaning of human love. And, having arrived at this insight, they have traditionally seized upon romantic love as a model to explain the love of God to their followers.

Whether our beloved is human or divine, there is no escaping love's madness or its pain. Unity belongs to the soul, but we are bodily beings, and body brings about separation, distance, and pain. Tristan, in Richard Wagner's version, curses the love potion that brought him all his pain. In this psychological reading of the legend, Tristan knows that the poisonous potion had always been stored in his own heart and not in some bottle on a shelf.

The terrible drink,  
which made me familiar, with direst anguish,

I myself, myself,  
did brew!

. . .

Oh, terrible draught that I brewed,  
that poured into me,  
bliss I ever enjoyed  
sipping--  
be accursed!  
Accursed be he who brewed you!

(Act 3)

The mystic knows this pain very well and has learned that there is no remedy for it, other than the pain itself (Wilson and Pourjavady, 81). The pain even has a certain pleasure in it. The Sufi poet Nasimi puts it this way:

Old Man Love:  
"Come in, come in:  
don't loiter around  
outside!"  
Inside:  
SPLENDOR,  
cups of pain.

(Ibid., 74)

The sixteenth-century Spanish mystic John of the Cross says that the pain increases as the soul draws nearer to God, because nearness leads to a progressively "greater experience within yourself of the void of God" (*Canticle*, 13.1). God's presence, we would have to say, is simultaneously God's distance. The only solution, both for John of the Cross and for Tristan, is death: "Why, since You wounded this heart until it has become sorely wounded, did You not heal it by wholly slaying it with love?" (ibid., 9.3). Rumi says:

First there's dying,  
then Union, like gnats inside the wind.

(1987: 51)

In the literature of romantic and courtly love, there are only two ways by which the lovers can overcome the painful distance that is proof of love's absoluteness and purity. The first is madness, a complete

leaving of one's senses and of the world of consensual reality. Only a madman like Majnun could believe he has become Layla. Wagner's Isolde, singing her final words beside the dead body of Tristan, has a vision of him smiling and the two of them together. Oscar Wilde's *Salome* achieves union with John the Baptist, when she is handed his head on a silver platter:

Ah! I have kissed thy mouth, Jokanaan. I have kissed thy mouth. There was a bitter taste on thy lips. Was it the taste of blood? But perchance it is the taste of love. They say that love hath a bitter taste. But what of that? What of that? I have kissed thy mouth, Jokanaan. (120)

The other way to overcome the painful distance of romantic love is death. In the Tristan legend, rose bushes grow from the separate graves of the lovers and entwine as a single plant, seeming physical proof that love continues—unabated and unhindered—beyond the grave. Romeo and Juliet lie in the same grave, and Nizami predicts that “One tent will hold [Layla and Majnun] in the world above” (199). Death is the only logical fulfillment in romantic love, for soul can directly cleave to soul only in a world where separate bodies have been completely transcended. Madness and death both do away with the hindrances of body, social convention, consciousness, and even individuality.

In psychological language, whether we speak of madness or death, the goal of love appears to be nothing less than a loss of ego and fusion with the beloved. This is dangerous territory, indeed: for are not most psychopathologies characterized by a weakening and loss of ego function? Loss of boundaries between self and others has in today's argot become nearly the hallmark of serious psychological dysfunction. Similarly, Freud spoke of the illusion of religious striving, and Jungians speak of projecting animus and anima, as false images, onto our beloved so that we see only our own fanciful image of what we want our beloved to be. In all cases, there seems to be something “sick” about the love that is so highly esteemed in the literatures of romantic love and of mysticism.

In Sufism there is a concept that allows us to see this loss of ego in a favorable light. The Arabic *fana* is a verb that means to disappear, vanish or perish, pass away. It refers to “the passing away of the individual self in Universal Being” (Nicholson, 1921: 17). “The transient, evanescent side of a man must pass away in order that something or

someone lasting may reign supreme in him" (Rice, 76). *Fana* is a state of ecstatic contemplation of divine beauty (Nicholson, 1963: 18). Rumi describes it often; for example, from the fifth book of his great poem, the *Mathnawi*:

One morning a beloved said to her lover to test him, "Oh so-and-so, I wonder, do you love me more, or yourself? Tell the truth, oh man of sorrows!"

He replied, "I have been so annihilated within thee that I am full of thee from head to foot.

Nothing is left of my own existence but the name. In my existence, oh sweet one, there is naught but thee.

I have been annihilated like vinegar in an ocean of honey."  
(Chittick, 180)

Christian mystics, too, have had experiences, which they describe in similar language to that of the Sufis speaking of *fana*. They had the experience, but not the concept. For example, John of the Cross says:

This spiritual marriage . . . is a total transformation in the Beloved in which each surrenders the entire possession of self to the other with a certain consummation of the union of love. The soul thereby becomes divine, becomes God through participation, insofar as it is possible in this life (*Canticle*, 22.3).

Also the German mystic, Meister Eckhart, whose life bridged the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, was familiar with the experience:

But if I am to perceive God so, without a medium, then I must just become him, and he must become me. I say more: God must just become me, and I must just become God, so completely one that this "he" and this "I" become and are one "is," and in that isness, eternally perform one work (208).

These words indicate that the mystics were very close to the experience of William of Poitier and Aquitaine, when he said that obedience to his Unknown Lady coincided with perfect fidelity to himself.

The passing away of *fana* is always joined with the continuation in a higher, more real existence, which is called *baqa*. The Iranian psychologist and mystic Reza Arasteh describes this pair of concepts in almost Jungian language: "*Fana* is the loss of ego and *baqa* is gain of self" (x). He distinguishes between ego and Self as Jung does. Ego is the conscious

agent, while Self is the greater and eternal personality, the potential for wholeness residing within the unconscious of the human individual.

The distinction between ego and Self requires a little more attention, for *self* is a term that is used quite loosely, both in ordinary conversation and by psychologists. In the first place, we often talk of “myself” in order to indicate only the ego. Thus, what do I think of myself? Do I have confidence in myself? These questions point to my conscious self-image, though they may imply the existence of deeper, unconscious realities. The term *self* is used in another sense by Heinz Kohut and the so-called Self Psychologists to refer to a deep structure that forms the foundation of ego. They speak of the kind of support and “mirroring” that an infant needs from its parents in order to develop a “coherent self structure.” In this sense, self is something built up over the course of an infancy or a lifetime and is very closely associated with consciousness and with the individual differences that obtain among people. The Kohutian self may therefore be located between the loose, everyday meaning of *self* and the more restricted Jungian *Self*.

*Self* will be capitalized in this book when it refers specifically to the Jungian meaning of the term; but even this has at least two senses. In its most proper sense, *Self* refers to an ontological structure of the psyche, that is, something that belongs to the fundamental makeup of the human soul. It is the archetype of order by which opposing principles are harmonized and balanced. When our life becomes too much one-sided, it is the *Self* that presents us with compensating images and symptoms to encourage or even to force us to bring ourselves back into balance. This is the *Self an sich* (in itself), which we do not experience directly, but only in its effects. In its other sense, *Self* is this principle of order as we *experience* it. It is our sense of having a “greater personality” that is far larger and wiser than the ego. We do not possess or control this greater personality, but find ourselves contained by it. It is not so abstract as the *Self an sich* but expresses itself in each individual’s unique way of seeing and experiencing. It is potentially the lived *Self*.

While we all have a *Self* in this Jungian sense, many people are unaware of it. We may live entirely in our ego unless we undergo the experience of *fana* and thereby find ourselves centered and made whole. It is a revolutionary and transformative experience that is both humbling (as regards the ego) and expansive (as regards the discovery of *Self*). It parallels the encounter with God, in which we are overwhelmed with

our creaturehood (humbled ego) and find ourselves enlightened by an intuitive grasp of the greater context of things (gain of Self). In the human interpersonal experience of romantic love, the same kind of passing away (*fana*) leads to wholeness and centering.

In the passing away from ego and into Self of *fana*, Sufis recognize a progressive series of steps that have an important application to romantic love. They claim that the mystic can pass away into God by passing *through* another human being. There is typically a three stage process. The individual Sufi passes away into his own spiritual guide. But the guide's authority proceeds from the fact that he has already passed away into the Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad, for his part, expressed by his very being the ultimate *fana*, the passing away into Allah. Schimmel writes:

The perfect sheikh is he who has become annihilated in the Prophet Muhammad. United with the *haqiqa muhammadiyya* (the Muhammadan Truth), he becomes the Perfect Man and thus leads his disciples with a guidance granted directly by God. (1975: 237)

A Christian will perhaps be reminded of the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John (17:21): "That they may all be one: even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

Rumi's experience along these lines was rather disreputable. After being seduced by Shams into giving up his position as a respectable theologian to become a dancing, singing poet, mad with the love of God, he also lost Shams through assassination. His followers, who hoped for Rumi's return to "sanity," were disappointed, for in a deeper sense he never lost Shams. He wrote lyric after lyric praising Shams and God in the same breath. In Arabic, the meaning of Shamsuddin is "Sun of the religion"; and that Sun is the Sun of the Universe, or God.

Not alone I keep on singing  
 Shamsuddin and Shamsuddin,  
 But the nightingale in gardens  
 sings, the partridge in the hills  
 Day of splendor: Shamsuddin, and  
 turning heaven: Shamsuddin!  
 Mine of jewels: Shamsuddin, and  
 Shamsuddin is day and night.  
 (Schimmel, 1982: 88)

Although he sang of Shams, Rumi continually found replacements for his mentor, human beings through whom he could pass away into God. One of these, an illiterate goldsmith named Salahuddin Zarkub, was particularly repugnant to Rumi's followers. Rumi, however, defended him as the means of *fana* into God:

He who came in a red frock in years past,  
 He came this year in a brown garb.  
 The Turk about whom you had heard that time  
 Appeared as an Arab this year . . .  
 The wine is one, only the bottles are different—  
 How beautifully does this wine intoxicate us!  
 (Ibid., 91)

If human beings are bottles containing the wine of God, the significance of the "Unknown Lady" in the songs of William of Poitiers and Aquitaine becomes clear. She is more than "anima," in the sense of a false image that leads us astray and prevents us from getting to know our beloved. The Unknown Lady contains and manifests the Self for William. The same may be said for Layla and Majnun. The reason their story is such a favorite example for the Sufis is that in passing away into one another, they pass away into God. If they can do it, why not we?

Jung points the way for a psychological understanding of this possibility, saying that when the anima is no longer projected but appreciated as an inner figure within a man, her function is to mediate between ego and Self (1928/35: par. 374). Anima and animus, like Self, are structural components of the psyche. While Self is the archetype of wholeness and balance, anima and animus are the archetypes of relationship. Like Self, they belong to the "collective unconscious," our common human heritage that is as much a "given" of the human condition as two arms and two legs. All of us are born bisexual, in the sense that we all have both male and female characteristics. Owing to the distribution of genes and the influence of our environment, we tend to identify, consciously, with one sex or the other. What is not developed consciously remains in the unconscious. Consequently, a man has a feminine soul (*anima* means "soul" in Latin) and a woman's unconscious has a masculine quality (*animus*).

In Jungian psychology there is a good deal of theorizing and some debate over the characteristic differences between animus and anima.

In this book, however, I will be dealing only with those aspects of anima and animus in which they are strictly equivalent to one another and the gender differences are of little importance. The problem created by the gender-specific language of *anima* and *animus* corresponds directly to the difficulties English has with the third-person singular pronouns *he* and *she*. I have tried to avoid gender-specific language as much as possible, for I believe what I say to be applicable equally to women and men. However, when it cannot be avoided, I shall write as a heterosexual male, calling the lover male and the beloved female. Readers may reverse one or both of the pronouns without damage to the argument.

The simplest way to understand animus and anima is to say that when we fall in love, the man unconsciously projects his anima onto the woman and the woman her animus onto the man. We thereby invest one another with a mysterious and mythological power that is so foreign to our ego that we are sure it is "objective." We wonder how we can have been favored with such good luck as to have fallen for such a goddess, or such bad luck as to be obsessed with a demon. Generally it is a god or goddess we see in one another, so that anima and animus perform the very important service of giving relationship a compelling interest for us.

Anima and animus may, however, be involved in a disservice we can do ourselves, if we fall in love with an illusion. In illusory romantic love, the lover is bewitched by his own projected anima and never comes to know the unique personality of his beloved. The same may, of course, be true of us when we believe ourselves burning with love for God. The soul may, in the words of Augustine, be "constructing an image of unreality and placing its hope and love in a lie" (223). In the extreme case, we can become so possessed by an illusory image of our beloved that we are kept out of engagement with the "real" world. This is portrayed in fairy tales when the young man falls in love with a mermaid or a fairy and allows himself to be drawn into an alien world. Eventually it becomes unsatisfying, and he asks permission to go back home. Sometimes the fairy world has been so fascinating that three or four centuries have passed before a single thought of the world of space and time ever crosses his mind.

In such cases we may say that our anima or animus has led us astray. It has not mediated between ego and Self. It has broken out of its place

in the psyche and stands for disarray rather than the harmony of the Self. We become fascinated by something that is peripheral to our real life. If we have fallen in love this way, we have, indeed, “passed away.” We have lost the “reality function” of the ego. But we have not gained the Self. We are alienated from ourselves and unhappy.

It would be nice if there were some kind of formula for discovering the difference between true and illusory *fana*. The Catholic church is not alone among orthodoxies that have tried to protect against heresy by inventing such formulas—usually with mixed results. In one case the great mystic Teresa of Avila fell afoul of a well-intentioned rule that all visions must be reported to one’s confessor. A rather thickheaded and inexperienced Jesuit told her to “give the fig” to her visions. “The fig” was an obscene gesture that corresponds to what today would be called “the finger.” Genuine mystic that she was, she did not doubt her ability to discern visions sent by Christ from those sent by Satan. Still she could not disobey her confessor. So she sobbed and begged forgiveness when she gave “the fig” to the Christ visions. She claimed the difference between the two kinds of visions lay in the feelings associated with the images. She said the Christ visions were characterized by a “purity” of feeling that would “release her from all other loves” (Lincoln, 61).

This is characteristic of true *fana*, that it connects us with the Self and that we experience it as integrating, centering, and whole-making. Teresa’s *fana* connects her with God, the ultimate Center; and the effects of this are a feeling of harmony and monumental significance. All the other loves she might have had are exposed in their insubstantiality and off-centeredness. She has found the touchstone for reality. In contrast, an illusory *fana* is an incautious submission to something peripheral and less than ultimate. We pass away into irreality.

For all its insubstantiality from the viewpoint of the Self, illusory *fana* can be awfully compelling. It may take the form of a painful fusion in which each partner seems to lose his soul. Instead of finding our way to a wholeness where we can relax into our greater being, we fall victim to a compulsive and usually aggressive striving for satisfaction in which each of us attempts to possess and control the other. Alban Berg’s opera *Lulu* richly illustrates this kind of failure of *fana*. The title character uses her lovers as much as they use her. A portrait of her in the bloom of her youth dominates every scene of the drama. In the last act, Lulu and her

pitifully enchained hangers-on have lost all their money in the stock market crash and are living in a London garret on the proceeds from Lulu's prostitution. One of them finds the lost portrait and Alwa, who appears to be the character Berg himself identified with, rhapsodizes over it:

Alwa: (*Suddenly with new animation.*) . . . With this picture before me, I feel my self-respect is recovered. I understand the fate which compels me. (*Somewhat elegiac.*) Who stands before those lips with their promise of pleasure, before those eyes as innocent as the eyes of children, before this white and rosy-ripening body, and still feels safe within his bourgeois code of rules, let such a man cast the first stone at us! (Act 3)

The emphasis on image here is no accident, The portrait was painted many years before, when Lulu was just married to her first husband and the future looked rosy. Now, many years, marriages, love affairs, murders, and suicides later, her eros-possessed followers are still in love with the old picture. There has been no growth, either in the characters or in their expectations. They have only led themselves more and more hopelessly into their self-destructive dead-end. Lulu's lovers and admirers try to possess an anima image of her instead of seeing her for who she is. They get stuck in a tortured irreality instead of passing away *through* Lulu, as the Sufi's *fana* leads through his master into God. They have come to know neither her nor themselves. They get hung up on the image and have no concern for the truth it symbolizes and reveals. They have fallen in love with the image rather than the woman. In religious language, we would say that this pseudo-*fana*, which stops at the image rather than proceeding on to the truth it stands for, is idolatry.

When we get hung up on a particular image of our beloved, we do not allow the beloved to become what she must. In order to possess her, we freeze her within a specific image. It is an illustration of determined one-sidedness in an ego that has definitely not passed away. Whether we are whisked away from reality by our fascination with an anima or animus image or try to force our beloved into the mold of our projection, the image we cherish of our beloved operates as a *mask* to hide her from us.

But anima and animus need not always function as *masks* that hide the truth. They may act also as *lenses* that bring the truth into focus: the truth about our Self as well as the truth about our beloved. This,

in fact, is the import of the Sufi notion of *fana*. Animus and anima are the psyche's organs, as it were, that allow us to see with the heart. The knowing of truth we have through *fana* is affective rather than cognitive. This is the constant theme of the mystics of the major religions. For example, the anonymous Christian author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* says: "God . . . is always incomprehensible to . . . the knowing power. But to . . . the loving power, he is entirely comprehensible in each one individually" (123). If the human soul is capable of passing away through love of the spiritual master into an affective contemplation of divine Truth, the soul must also be capable of passing through the anima or animus image to the Self of the beloved.

Ibn al-Arabi claims precisely this regarding his relationship with the beautiful Iranian girl Nizam, whom he came to know in Mecca. A reference to her in his writings is, he says, an allusion to "a sublime and divine, essential and sacrosanct *Wisdom*, which manifested itself visibly to the author of these poems with such sweetness as to provoke in him joy and happiness, emotion and delight" (Corbin, 139). Henry Corbin comments on these words, as follows:

We perceive how a being apprehended directly by the Imagination is transfigured into a symbol thanks to a theophanic light, that is, a light which reveals its dimension of transcendence. From the very first the figure of the young girl was apprehended by the Imagination on a visionary plane in which it was manifested as an "apparitional Figure" (*surat mithaliya*) of *Sophia aeterna*. (Ibid.)

This is an experience of anima that is transparent to the Self it mediates. Ibn al-Arabi sees through the lens of his Nizam projection all the way to the ultimate Center. The anima is not acting as a mask here, but as a lens. His affective seeing does not stop short with the image; rather he sees *in* the anima, or *through* the anima, a divine vision—Sophia. In Christian language, Sophia refers to the Holy Spirit; for it is always the Old Testament wisdom (*sophia*) literature that the churches employ to shed light on the nature of the divine indwelling Spirit. Thus Ibn al-Arabi sees God in Nizam. She is the occasion of his *fana*. He passes *through her* to the Truth. In the language of Jungian psychology we would say that that divine woman, Sophia, is an image of his anima. And the *divinity* in that woman is an intimation of the Self that she mediates to him.

Ibn al-Arabi is not afloat in a neurotic, illusory cloud. True, Sophia is just about the grandest form the anima can take; and the Persian girl, Nizam, beautiful and cultured though she may be, needs the eye of an Ibn al-Arabi to *become* Sophia. The imagination of the heart is surely involved. But on the strength of the consistent wisdom in Ibn al-Arabi's writings, I believe he was seeing Nizam through the lens of his anima. His numinous vision is true because it is anchored in the Self. This is precisely the kind of experience Jung refers to when he speaks of the anima's "higher function." When the anima becomes "depotentiated" of her demonic power, Jung tells us, and no longer controls us as an autonomous complex of the unconscious, she becomes "a psychological function of an intuitive nature, akin to what the primitives mean when they say, 'He has gone into the forest to talk with the spirits'" (1928/35: par. 374).

The demonic power of the anima or animus resides in its bewitching mask. When we can see through that to the psychological realities that it symbolizes, our intuition can "hear the spirits talk." Our ego and our Self are acting in unison, linked by our anima or animus. When we hear the spirits talk and understand what they are saying, we acquire a more profound understanding of what is before us. The spirits belong to the archetypal world of the collective unconscious. They have a broader perspective than that of our conscious ego. Whereas we tend to understand things in the context of other mundane events, they see things against the background of the largest possible reality, the All. The spirits *know* the All, and they appreciate every object, person, and event in the context of that Wholeness.

*God* is the name we give to the center, source, depth, and end of the All. Similarly, the *love* of God is the center, source, depth, and end of romantic love. We can appreciate this in an experiential, transformative, and enlightening manner only when we have learned to use our anima or animus as a lens. As long as they mask our beloved from us, the relationship between romantic love and the love of God remains merely theoretical.

When anima and animus act as a lens, they bring the Self and its designs into focus. This applies in two directions. On the one hand, we become centered ourselves; and on the other, the lens of anima brings the unique individuality of our beloved into focus. Subsequent chapters will develop these themes. Here it is only necessary to appreciate

the metaphor of anima as lens and that it brings something wonderful into focus for both partners.

Also something *accurate* is brought into focus. The lens image suggests eyeglasses, microscopes, and telescopes; I learn to know my beloved down to her minutest detail, and I see deep into the inner space of her world. Because I see her through the intimate lens of anima, I see something that perhaps no one else has been fortunate to behold. I sometimes may see what she has never known about herself; and in my seeing, I reveal it to her—just as she discloses new vistas of my inner space. Our lenses enable us to become explorers of one another's continents and seas; and at the same time we come to know our own.

Anima and animus are not just internal organs in our psyche, somehow stuck inside our skin. They relate us to our beloved. They are the archetypes of relationship. Their function does not end by mediating to us our Self, as a purely internal event. They stand outside us, between us and our beloved. They open us to one another, connect us. They are more than the ocular metaphor of lens can convey, for our feelings sweep further than our eyes can see, into territory of quite another variety.

Furthermore, when our animus or anima has enabled this kind of connection with our beloved, we find that mere physical presence—however desirable—is no longer necessary for us to enjoy the transformative intermingling of our beings. Such a realization lies behind the ideal of courtly love, insofar as the errant knight is inspired by a lady who is comfortably lodged back home and whom he can barely approach even when he returns. Distance causes pain; but as the lover of God knows, distance is another form of presence. On the contrary, if our relationship has been characterized primarily by the projection of anima and animus as masks, we may not have found any satisfaction to ameliorate our distance. A genuine appreciation of our Self-Self connection is necessary if our love is to grow from the separations imposed by physical distance, quarreling, and the like.

Rumi, in all his poems, speaks of his love for God. He tells us the Sufi loves the night, when he can be alone either with God's soothing presence or torturing absence. We know what Rumi means if we have ever seen another through the lens of our anima or animus. We have known the love of God in the *fana* by which we have passed through

our beloved into an extraordinary clarity. Such a night is the center around which our life revolves:

Night comes so people can sleep like fish  
in black water. Then day.

Some people pick up their tools.  
Others become the making itself.

(1986: 38)

The black water he speaks of may also be called the black tresses of Layla, who personifies the night. Water and ocean in Rumi's symbolic language always refer to God or the life *in* God that we enter through our *fana*. Rumi also tells us that these moments of union in which we "sleep like fish" transform the rest of life. If we have really passed away, we no longer "pick up our tools" and work at things from the outside. We become our work; and our daytime life, too, is suffused with love.

In a similar vein, Jung says that analysis does not work unless the analysand fulfills his "duty to life" (1917/43: par. 113). Psychological transformation does not happen only—or even primarily—in the consulting room. Rather, God willing, patients gain a certain understanding in the therapeutic dialogue that sends them back out into life. When we fall in love, we find ourselves caught in a flow of psychic energy that takes us passionately into life; and this is by no means limited to erotic pursuits. In my practice as an analyst, I have seen repeatedly that a man's professional life and his life in relationship are connected. When he loses contact with his anima, he loses interest in both spheres; and when he regains it in one, he regains it in the other. Hillman says as much in his book on anima: "Loss of anima means both the loss of internal animation and external animism" (1985: 109). Anima and animus are not something to be conquered. They must be lived. That is to say, we must live the life into which they draw us. For they open to us the course of our individuation when they mediate the Self and bring our beloved into focus. Most people experience this draw of destiny in an unmistakable manner only through relationship. How to follow such a fascination, and not get led astray, is not easy. This is why Jung says, "If the encounter with the shadow is the 'apprentice-piece' in the individual's development, then that with the anima is the 'master-piece'" (1934/54: par. 61).

Anima and animus lead us on a path of recreating ourselves. This book describes the psychological and spiritual dimensions of that path. It is both archetypal and personal. We all have a great deal in common as we pursue this course, but it is in each case an individual journey. The guidelines are found within, in our development through anima and animus of a confident relationship with Self.

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