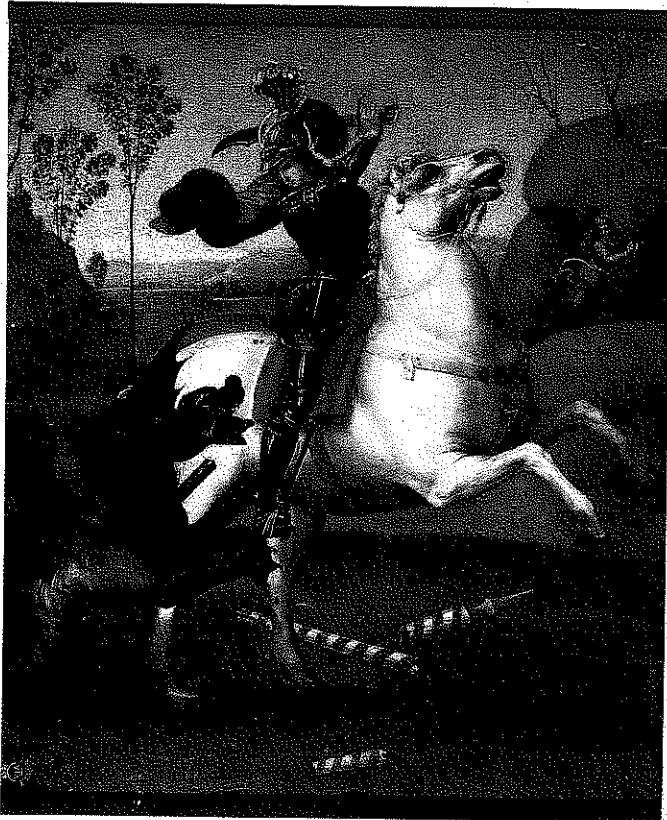


REVISED EDITION

# HE



UNDERSTANDING  
MASCULINE PSYCHOLOGY

ROBERT A. JOHNSON

HE

the embrace was chaste and worthy of the knight's vow that he never seduce or be seduced by a fair maiden; a vow he must keep if he is to win a vision of the Grail.

Many inner truths are shorn of their true power by being transposed to a level inconsistent with their power and depth. Viewing the virgin birth of Christ as only a historical event will blur the sight of a vital law which is needed when you are called upon to make that interior mating of the human soul with the Divine Spirit which is the true genesis of one's individuality.

Much of our religious heritage is a map or set of instructions for the deepest meaning of our interior life, not a set of laws for outer conduct. To relate to our religious teaching only in its literal dimension is to lose its spiritual meaning. This dimension of materialism is far more harmful than much of what is usually condemned under that dark name.

## Chastity

one

Gournamond's instruction—never to seduce a fair maiden or be seduced by her—is of such profound importance to our story that it is worthy of a chapter in its own right.

It is important to remember that we are studying a myth much as one would study a dream, and many of the same laws apply. A dream is almost entirely an inner matter and every part of a dream is to be construed as part of the dreamer. Example: if a man dreams of a fair damsel; it is almost certain that his own feminine inner capacity is being addressed. It is only too easy to literalize such a dream figure and explain it as one's sexual interest or a comment on one's current girlfriend. If one makes this error the true depth of the dream will be lost.<sup>1</sup> So also in myth;

<sup>1</sup>See Robert A. Johnson, *Inner Work: Using Dreams and Active Imagination for Personal Growth* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1986), for a further elaboration of this principle.

if we take Gournamond's instruction in a literal sense, we will have little but a caricature of medieval chivalry before us.

What is this inner femininity which Parsifal is to stay aloof from? It is all the softness of femininity that is so valuable in an inner sense but that would vitiate him if he mistook it and lived it in an outer sense.

#### MOOD AND FEELING

Feeling is the ability to value: mood is being overtaken or possessed by the inner feminine. To feel is the sublime art of having a value structure and a sense of meaning—where one belongs, where one's allegiance is, where one's roots are. To mood (we are already in difficulty since there is no adequate term for being caught up in a mood) is to be in the grips of the feminine part of our nature, to be overwhelmed by an irrational element that plays havoc with a man's outer life. The feminine side of a man is to connect him within the depths of his inner being and to make a bridge to his deepest self.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Mood, strictly speaking, should be confined to describing a man's experience since the parallel phenomenon in a woman is sufficiently different to require a different term. But no term exists for this and we have no adequate language to describe this parallel experience in a woman's life. In this context a woman's parallel to male moods is being delivered over to her inner masculine side and thus subject to a sharpness, a puncturing, a challenging,

Often a man has to make a choice between feeling and mood. If he is engaging in one of these, there is no room for the other. A mood prohibits true feeling, even though a mood may appear to be feeling. If a man is engaging in a mood—or, more accurately, when a mood has engaged him—he automatically forfeits the ability for true feeling and thus for relationship and creativity. In the old language he has seduced or been seduced by his interior femininity. A man never wears femininity outwardly with any validity. A man overwhelmed by a mood is a sundial in moonlight telling the wrong time. His interior femininity serves him well as "la femme inspiratrice" when she is rightly placed; but she does not serve him well when he wears her as an outer garment and uses her to relate to his outer world. "Uses" is the pertinent word here; anyone and everything around a man feels "used" when he relates to the world by way of a mood. Seduction, indeed! Feeling, on the contrary, is a sublime part of a man's equipment and brings warmth, gentleness, relatedness, and perception.

We often project our relationship, or lack of one,

a needling quality which is a type of poor quality masculinity. This is similar to a man's mood, which is a type of poor quality femininity. For a more adequate discussion of the subject see Robert A. Johnson, *See: Understanding Feminine Psychology*, Revised Edition (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1989).

with our inner femininity onto an outer flesh-and-blood woman. Human woman is a miracle in her own right, a beauty which will be obscured if we try to put the laws of inner woman upon her. So, too, is inner woman clouded if we treat her in an outer way.<sup>3</sup>

Man has only two alternatives for relationship to his inner woman: either he rejects her and she turns against him in the form of bad moods and undermining seductions, or he accepts her and finds within a companion who walks through life with him giving him warmth and strength. If a man falls under the spell of a mood, that is, if he misconstrues her as being "out there," he loses his capacity for relationship. This is true even though it might be a "good mood" or a "bad" one.

Creativity in a man is directly linked with his inner feminine capacity for growth and creation. Genius in a man is his interior feminine capacity to give birth; it is his masculinity which gives him capacity for putting that creativity into form and structure in the outer world.

Goethe, in his masterpiece, *Faust*, came to the noble conclusion late in his life that it is the province of man to serve woman. He ends *Faust* with the lines

<sup>3</sup>See Robert A. Johnson, *Me: Understanding the Psychology of Romantic Love*, (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1983), for further discussion of this subject.

"The Eternal Feminine draws us onward"—certainly a reference to the inner woman. To serve the Grail is to serve the inner woman.

An alert woman knows the instant a man in her life succumbs to a mood for all relating stops that very instant. A glazed look comes over the eyes of the man and the woman knows he has abdicated from any relationship. Even a good mood costs one relationship. All ability to relate, objectivity and creativity, come to an end when mood takes control. In Hindu terminology, serving the goddess Maya (the equivalent of our anima moods) costs one all reality and substitutes a vaporous unreality in its place. Myth often overstates its case in its timeless language, and one's chance for a vision of the Grail is not lost forever. But so long as the mood is dominant there is no Grail: the mood imprints its character on the objective world and all objective vision of the true splendor of the world is lost. One literally sells one's birthright for a mess of illusion.

The worst characteristic of mood possession is that it robs one of all sense of meaning. Suddenly the "out there" is dominant in one's inner life and the inner meaning of life is lost. One is then at the mercy of the "out there" for one's sense of value or happiness. One is so tied to a new purchase or gaining the favor of someone that he is unaware of his own inner meaning, which is the only stable value he has.

Mood possession also robs him of the objective world and its true beauty and magnificence, a deep meaning in its own right.

#### DEPRESSION AND INFLATION

Depression and inflation are other names for mood. Both give one a sense of being overwhelmed by something other than one's true self. This is weakness and incompetence in a man.

Moods turn one to outer things or people for one's sense of value and meaning. What American garage is not piled high with things that a man bought hoping they would bring him a sense of meaning—only to be discarded when they failed to bring whatever he longed for? Material things are valid in their own right and bring high value when related to properly; but when one asks them to carry an inner value they fail miserably. The one exception to this law is when some physical object carries an inner value that is meaningful as a symbol or in a ceremony. A gift from a friend can symbolize the high value between two people if it is consciously invested with this value. It will fail him and add to the collection in the garage if he asks it to carry that value aside from symbol or ceremony.

No thing in itself is either good or bad; a man may take out his fishing gear one Saturday and have a

wonderful and relaxing time fishing. The next Saturday he may have a bad anima attack and come home from fishing in a terrible mood. It is the level of consciousness that determines the difference between these two experiences. Outer value and inner value are both profoundly real; it is only when they are mixed or contaminated with each other that they can cause trouble.

A man is not master in his own interior house when he is in a mood. A usurper has taken first place and the man's response will be to fight the usurper. Unfortunately, he often chooses to fight this battle on the wrong level—in other words he will fight with his wife or his environment instead of facing the battle within, which would be the only appropriate action. Mythology describes the hero's battle with his internal self as the encounter with the dragon, and modern man has no fewer dragon battles than did his medieval counterpart. You can update mythology and make it dramatically alive if you can find the modern stage on which the dragon battles, even fair maidens and red knights will play out their drama.

#### HAPPINESS

Good moods are no less dangerous than the dark ones. To demand happiness from one's environment

is the dark art of seducing the interior fair maiden. This obscures the Grail no less than being seduced by fair maiden, though it is less obvious.

Here is a differentiation easy to miss: that exuberant, top-of-the-world, bubbling, half-out-of-control mood so highly prized among men is also mood possession and is as dangerous as the dark mood. In a dark mood a man has seduced his anima and has her by the throat saying, "You are going to make me happy—or else!" This is to draw her into the lesser affairs of the ego's demands for happiness or one's restless quest for entertainment.

To be caught by an exuberant mood is also to be seduced by the inner woman. She wafts him off to dizzy heights of inflation and gives him a wonderful facsimile of the happiness he legitimately wants. Such a seduction exacts a high price later in the form of a depression that brings the man down to earth again. Fate spends much time bringing a man up from his depression or down from his inflation. It is this ground level which the ancient Chinese called the *tao*, the middle way. It is here that the Grail exists and happiness worthy of the name can be found. This is not a kind of gray average place or a place of compromise but is the place of true color, meaning,

and happiness. It is nothing less than Reality, our true home.

One form of seduction is to wring pleasure from an experience in advance. I know two young fellows who planned a camping trip. In their glory, for days ahead of the trip, they planned how great it was going to be. All the mood characteristics arose. Bits of equipment suddenly became Holy Grails: they marveled at the sharpness of this knife or the efficiency of that bit of rope. These fellows milked all the happiness out of that experience far in advance. Later I found that they went to the anticipated place, kicked around for half a day, couldn't think of anything to do, got into the car and came home the same day—there was nothing there. They had seduced the life out of the experience in advance.

Modern western man has some basic misconceptions about the nature of happiness. The origin of the word is instructive: *happiness* stems from the root verb *to happen*, which implies that our happiness is what happens. Simple people in less complicated parts of the world function in this manner and exhibit a happiness and tranquility that is a puzzle to us. How can a peasant in India with so little to be happy about be so happy? Or how can the peon in Mexico, again with so little to be happy about, be as carefree as he appears? These people know the art of *happiness*, contentment with what is. Their happiness is what hap-

pens. If you can not be happy at the prospect of lunch it is not likely you will be happy over anything.

A Hindu sage taught that the highest form of worship was simply to be happy. But this was happy in its profound sense, not a mood.

Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk, once said that a monk may often be happy but he never has a good time. This is another way of differentiating happiness from mood.

For many years of my life I thought one came down with a mood just as one comes down with a cold. But slowly I learned that moods are a product of purposeful unconsciousness and can be rectified by the very consciousness one worked so hard to evade.

One can contrast mood with enthusiasm. The latter is one of the most beautiful words in our vocabulary. It means "to be filled with God," *en-theo-ism*. It is a highly rewarding and valid experience to touch an enthusiasm. At the very opposite end of the scale it is painful to be possessed by a mood. When you laugh it is a divine act if you are filled with the joy of God; but it is blasphemy if you are swept off your feet by a mood. Happiness is entirely legitimate; mood invites the ensuing depression.

A woman faces a delicate challenge when her man

has fallen into a mood. If she brings forth her parallel to it and begins needing him she sets off a highly negative exchange. Yet, a point of genius is possible for her in this situation; if she can be more feminine than the man's mood, react out of her deepest femininity—as contrasted with his misplaced femininity—this will give the man a vantage point of reality from which he can move out of his poor quality mood. It is a severe temptation to a woman to needle or puncture; but her own natural femininity is never more creative than when it can be an anchor for a man caught in the whirlwind of his interior femininity. This requires a conscious and well-developed femininity in a woman. It is the result of the many dragon battles she must fight to safeguard her own inner feminine kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

A woman must also understand that a man is much less in control or aware of things feminine than she is. Many women presume that a man should be as able as she to control the ever-shifting play of light and dark, angel and witch in the feminine element. No man is capable of the same kind of control as she has, and if a woman understands this she can be patient and understanding as the man bumbles along some light years behind her in his feminine

<sup>4</sup>How badly we flounder for terminology to express these things. Where is our word for queendom?

understanding. The reverse is true in some other departments of life.

In our myth Parsifal and Blanche Fleur make a perfect example of the correct relationship of man and inner woman. They are close to each other, each warms the other and makes life meaningful for the other; but there is no seduction. This is a sublime definition of man and inner woman; but if it were taken as example of man and flesh-and-blood woman it would be a ridiculous boy scout story. This misconstruing of levels has caused havoc with those following the medieval instructions of the way-of-the-knight. Inner relationships have their own inextinguishable laws of conduct; outer relationships have their own equally explicit laws. Do not mix the two.

## The Grail Castle

Our story goes on.

Parsifal has traveled all day in his heroic quest and at nightfall asks someone if there is a lodge or tavern anywhere nearby where he can spend the night. He is informed that there is no habitation within thirty miles.

A little later Parsifal finds a man in a boat fishing on a lake. He asks the man if there is any place to stay the night. The fisherman, who is the Fisher King, invites him to his humble abode, "Just go down the road a little way, turn left, cross the drawbridge." Parsifal does this and the drawbridge snaps shut just as he crosses it and ticks the back hooves of his horse. It is very dangerous to enter into the Grail castle, for