

# THE CULTURE OF HONOURING



**Mark Josephs-Serra**



*a social movement  
for the honouring of both  
the feminine and the masculine*

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## PLEASE NOTE

'Masculine' doesn't mean 'men.' And 'Feminine' doesn't mean 'women.' 'Men' and 'Women' means bodies, whereas 'Masculine' and 'Feminine' are energies inside us all. Simultaneously, there is an undeniable connection between 'Men' and 'Masculinity', and 'Women' and 'Femininity'.

It is dangerous to make male and female bodies synonymous with masculine and feminine energies. It is also dangerous to minimise the connection between men and masculinity, and women and femininity.

"The Culture Of Honouring is a cutting-edge endeavour. It is rare for personal and social development to be found within a unified vision. But unless they are, our social change will be superficial, and our self-development incomplete."

"We have inherited a culture shaped by a masculinity that was terrified of the feminine (and therefore needed to oppress it), and a femininity that was terrified of the masculine. A lot has happened to re-shape this inheritance in the last century, but a genuinely new inheritance will only be shaped by a masculinity and femininity that are not afraid of each other, or above all - of themselves... a masculinity and femininity that that can honour their own power enough to be able to honour each other's."

"The re-visioning and 're-programming' of our masculinity and femininity is not a quick or easy task. It is a lifelong path. And beyond that - it is a multi-generational endeavour. It is our most profound personal and collective evolutionary challenge. It is an endeavour to undertake for ourselves, yes - but also for our children and our children's children."

“Our minds and hearts are caught in a very modern conditioning that results in our experiencing ourselves as ‘unique individuals’, which we are – but modernity stresses this at the expense of an equally true seemingly-opposite truth: that we are all frighteningly and thrillingly similar beings, with similar longings of the heart, similar fears, similar conditionings to negotiate, and a very similar need of each other.”

“Our left-brain masculine and right-brain feminine tendencies shape the individual psyche, and therefore, inevitably, they are also the fundamental forces that shape cultures. They are the elementary and elemental roots of our existence as social beings. In a very obvious way, the masculine and feminine are the two roots of family, and therefore of community. And cultures, however they might be governed, are essentially networks of communities. Therefore: to the degree we honour the feminine and the masculine in ourselves and each other, to that degree a Culture of Honouring will emerge.”

## PLEASE NOTE

There are all sorts of exceptions and variables within what I am saying here. But I am painting in big brush strokes, on a big canvas. This is the bigger picture.

## THE NEXT EVOLUTIONARY WAVE

The feminine has only recently begun re-claiming her power. Many women still think feminine power means to be like the men! They are still afraid of their emotional authority, and their natural, sensual, non-rational wisdom. We need to honour the emergence of profoundly feminine power.

The masculine is even less clear about the nature of its power. Tossed about in reaction to feminism, the masculine is still floundering somewhere between nostalgia for the Macho Man and a guilt-ridden need to prove he is a good and caring New Man. Most men have little sense of their real power – the power of being physically potent, with a fierce heart, and a high, inspired vision. We need to honour the emergence of true masculine power.

And the empowered masculine and feminine need each other in order to emerge. So we need to support each other. This means communities of men and women who understand that the imbalance and disempowerment of the feminine and masculine have led us to a state of emotional, psychological, social, economic and environmental disturbance – communities who understand that a truly mature culture can only be built upon the foundation of a balanced and equal honouring of both of these principles. And who understand that this honouring cannot just be theoretical, or philosophical – that it needs to be won with the blood and sweat of our hearts.

We need communities of men and women who understand that if we want to genuinely emerge from the arid and abusive legacy of a dying patriarchy – and if we truly want to offer something whole and soulful and life-affirming to our children and children's children – then we HAVE to cultivate a self-honouring, and mutually-honouring, masculinity and femininity. Anything else will only cultivate another distortion.

And this won't be easy. It will take centuries. We are ALMOST ALL of us frighteningly emotionally immature. And I speak as someone who has been involved in the study and teaching of self-

development for over 40 years. To truly self-honour, and honour another, requires enormous maturity. And we have very little of it.

In most cases, the masculine is too immature to open to the feminine, and avoids her either by repressing her, or by pandering to her. He is too immature to feel her, just feel her, and feel the consequences of masculine domination, and not be crushed or re-absorbed, but just receive her in her rage and pain – and discover her tender heart.

And this perpetuates her rage, and bitterness, and withdrawal. And their shared healing cannot begin. And she, for her part, can then only heal in isolation, overcast by sadness, even despair. Or if she does remain in connection with this avoidant masculine she lives in compromise, denying her own seeing, manipulating, resenting, even humiliating...

These are harsh words. But the emotional reality is harsh. Even among the most emotionally mature among us these tendencies are still difficult to negotiate.

And this emotional reality does not just exist at the personal level, it exists at the level of marriage/partnership, at the level of family, of community, of society, of civilization – it pervades all of our interactions.

And it affects us both internally and externally. It repercussions in every sphere of our activity as a race, and upon everything we touch. For the most part we still govern ourselves, manufacture, travel, do business, fight and eat in an emotionally absent, alienated, abstract-mental, left-brain, so-called streamlined, masculine-dominant way. Which less and less of us want. But we just don't know the way out.

And yes, the feminist critique explained all of this. But the 'liberation' of women was only the first step. The next step is that men, and all predominantly masculine individuals, and all things moved by the masculine principle need to open to the feminine principle, to women, to feminine individuals, and to their own femininity. And quite frankly, most men aren't man enough to



open to their femininity.

'Not man enough' meaning there is not enough masculinity, not enough *authentic* masculinity – which is not the bravado of the macho man. Most men, and masculine women, are terrified that if they open to their femininity they will become soft, weak, overpowered, and, ultimately, destroyed. And the fact is: they're right! Not that they will be destroyed – but that, precisely because they don't have enough authentic masculinity, their premature opening to the feminine will result in them becoming less potent, less decisive, less capable of leadership, and less sexually attractive.

For a man to fully open to his femininity – and not become feminised, or subservient to women, he has to be VERY masculine. 'Very masculine' means he has to have grown up beyond his only-natural sense of inferiority to women (after all, he was a baby at HER breast), and faced both his neediness towards, and hatred of, women – and matured into a place of self-honouring that does not depend on anybody else's approval.

Only then can any masculine individual fully open to the millennial pain of the feminine (and the very intimate and personal pain of the feminine), and only then does he become fully trustworthy, and only then can the feminine completely soften and offer her gifts – which are the emotional and sensual sensitivity, and maturity, and authority, which are the antidote to our so-called-post-patriarchal malaise.

So there is work for the masculine to do. But the situation is too urgent and critical for us to wait until it is complete and he can 'fully' open to the feminine (and anyway emotional maturity isn't linear). So he'll have to do what he can with his brothers, and then do his best when he meets his sisters. And go back and forth, and mess up sometimes (in fact, probably – often), but nevertheless keep on going, back and forth, drawing resolve and strength and depth from brotherhood, and then allowing his sword to be tempered in the fire of sisterhood and community.

If the masculine cannot hear this, then, in desperation, the

feminine will go it alone. And (give it a few centuries), we will enter a matriarchal era, another imbalance, an age of repression of the masculine, and another eventual inevitable upheaval as the masculine reasserts itself and reclaims its dignity.

This does not mean that feminine individuals haven't got their 'stuff', or that 'it's only the masculine that needs to change'. Everyone has their 'stuff' - their personal history and pain and challenges. But to whatever degree an individual is connected with their femininity (and again, to blunt, and also obvious: it's mostly the women who are connected with their femininity), to that degree they have the potential to take us into intimacy with ourselves, each other, and all of life. And it is in this intimacy-with-life that we will be able to re-shape ourselves and our culture and our world.

It is in this feminine-induced intimacy-with-life that both men and women find the trust and openness to heal their inherited conditionings - the inheritance of the macho man and the prematurely feminised man, and the inheritance of the submissive woman and the angry, bitter mis-empowered woman. And it is in this feminine-induced intimacy that we can support each other in opening to our archetypal masculinity and femininity, beyond stereotypes, and beyond gender roles.

So we are talking about a collective evolutionary maturity-project of vast proportions. We need to take feminism further. We need to combine feminism and masculinism, honour both, and work together towards a culture of honouring. This is our most mature collective evolutionary impulse. There are many other impulses. But this is our most mature. And for those of us who have the maturity to be able to see the necessity and difficulty of this impulse, it is a choiceless choice. It is not necessarily what we want to do. We see it is what needs to happen.

Those of us with enough maturity to see beyond our own limited sense of self, and recognise that we are cells within the body of society, pack animals, culturally-conditioned creatures shaping the culture that shaped us, participators in (not spectators of) the evolution of our culture and race and planet.... we see the

choiceless choice. Even if it seems a daunting and impossibly heroic endeavour, we choose - if not on our own behalf, then on behalf of our grandchildren and great grandchildren. We choose to heal. We choose to open to each other. We choose to participate. We choose to band together, and re-work our hearts, and the way we were taught to relate, and the way we were trained to run a culture.

We choose to re-honour the masculine, to re-invoke its nobility. We choose to have faith in men, in their longing for heartfelt truth, and service to life - beyond abstract ideas and moral principles. And we choose to honour the pain of men, who have also suffered under patriarchy.

We choose to re-honour the feminine, to re-invoke the glory and beauty of her depths. We choose to have faith in women, in their longing to relax into their overflowing eroticism, to just be trusted, to be able to guide the creative purposefulness of men with the tenderness and fierceness of their hearts.

We choose to not pin men down into 'the masculine', nor women into 'the feminine'. But we also choose to honour the neurological, biological, psycho-physical and culturally-conditioned connections between men and the masculine, and women and the feminine.

We could put it this way: 'the-collective-of-women' holds the feminine, and 'the-collective-of-men' holds the masculine. This is why we need to move beyond our individualised therapies and growth-work and human-potential work, into community-focussed, personal-is-political, political-is-personal, collectivised healing and activism.

But we cannot shirk the mirror of masculine-disempowered-dominance, and feminine-disempowered-submission, which lives on in our bones - whether as it has for millennia, or in the form of reaction to that conditioning. We have to face the way in which this patriarchal inheritance (and immature reaction to this inheritance), continues to shape our minds, our everyday lives, and the social, economic, military and political infrastructures that shape our culture.

And we need to explore which social structures would accurately reflect a balance of the masculine and feminine. At the moment, whether by intention or default, there seems to be a movement towards local sustainable community. But we shall see. We need to create forms from the inside out, not the outside in.

'Inside out' means emerging from a mood of intimacy-with-life, in which the masculine inclination to structure and form can be touched by the feminine heart. 'Outside in', which has always been the case until now, means imposing one-size-fits-all ideas (however brilliant) upon our multifaceted humanity, and suffering the straight-jacketed consequences.

Is this idea of honouring both the masculine and feminine another such idea? By definition, this cannot be another impositional masculine-power-over concept because it honours the anarchic, un-philosophisable, heart-following, flowing feminine from the start.

Feminism was the most powerful psycho-evolutionary cultural wave of the twentieth century. From a bigger perspective though, it was only the most recent wave in an evolutionary ocean that has been demanding equality and the-truth-of-the-heart (as against the concocted truths of our religious, philosophical and scientific minds) for thousands of years.

All that I am articulating here, that we are working for within The Culture Of Honouring, and that millions of others around the globe are working for in their own ways, in their own fields, is the next evolutionary wave - following fast behind the feminist wave, resonant with the feminist wave, carrying the same energy of rightness and togetherness, calling out now not only to the feminine to stand up, but to the masculine to join her in her saturation with compromise, and to shape together a culture that honours both the masculine and the feminine in the fullness of their power.

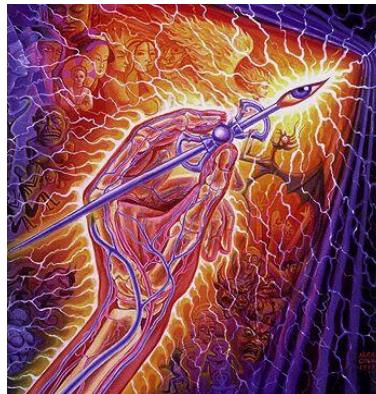
## PREFACE

On a personal note ~ I see myself as a kind of 'social sculptor' - sculpting in the material that surrounds me - contemporary 'western' culture. The Culture of Honouring is my art piece.

And it's participatory art. You're invited to take part. It's life-art.

One tool I use is my experience of The Feminine in her power, and The Masculine not diminished, but elevated by knowing Her. Another tool is my experience of the meeting of The Masculine and The Feminine. We have such shrivelled expectations of relationship, and without an expanded vision of the potential of relationship our unions disintegrate, and our communities disintegrate...

The Culture of Honouring Project distributes these tools, but all I really know is that I am following my deepest, most heartfelt longing.



We are emerging from a patriarchal era of control and suppression of The Feminine – and therefore we need to re-honour The Feminine. However, in demeaning and abusing The Feminine, The Masculine has profoundly distorted itself. Therefore, without minimising who's done what (and who's still doing), The Masculine also needs re-honouring.

To sculpt well we need to deconstruct our dulled self-worth. We then need to uncover and call forth more daring and noble images of ourselves. Next, we need to live them out, next to each other – and see what happens: carving our art piece as we go. We are the art. We are evolution. The challenge is not just the eco crisis – that is just the face of our dishonouring.

We are shaping the culture of the future with the tools of our collective imagination and our innermost commitments.

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Thank you for requesting this e-book. It's a scattering of poems, sketches and essays, which I hope will amuse you, engage you, and speak to your heart.

For up to date information on our courses and events for men, women and couples, please go to our website. And if you have any questions at all – from the practical to the philosophical – please feel free to e-mail or phone us. Full contact details are at the end of this e-book.

The Culture Of Honouring is a social movement that echoes the feminist maxim 'the political is personal' (and the personal is political), and that therefore deep cultural change can only emerge from the depths of our hearts and souls. The Culture Of Honouring echoes this maxim, and carries its relevance forward into the twenty first century. If you feel in alignment with us, please consider joining us and becoming a member. As well as offering your support, you will be able to stay in touch with us through members-only conference calls, forums, and so on. There's full information at the end of this e-book.

And finally... whoever and wherever you are – whatever you want in your heart of heart of hearts: I want that for you too.

In honour of our deepest power,  
Mark Josephs-Serra, Devon (UK), October 2009

## THE THREE WOMEN AND MEN INSIDE ALL MEN AND WOMEN

Most people coming to The Culture Of Honouring Project already have their own disciplines and therapies. We offer the vocabulary of 'The Three Men' and 'The Three Women' (more accurately, 'the three masculines' and 'the three feminines'), as a complementary way of talking about, and supporting each other, in the re-honouring of ourselves and our relationships.

You might have heard the saying "we are not human beings trying to experience 'consciousness', we are consciousness trying to experience being human". Taking that further, we might say that the most primary aspect of our being human is our masculinity and femininity. The Three Men and The Three Women offer us a framework for working towards the reclaiming of the fullness of our masculinity and femininity ~ so that we can be here together as fully embodied, conscious beings...

### The Three Men

The First Man is can be powerful,  
but he is emotionally under-developed,  
and therefore often destructive.

He is a man's man.

The Second Man is sensitive,  
and well-intended,  
but his guilt and shame make him weak.

He is a woman's man.

The Third Man is uncompromisingly committed  
to himself ~

to his own truth and life and death.

Because of this  
he is powerful and sensitive enough to hear Woman,  
and be guided by her.  
Because of this  
Woman lets this Man lead her.

### The Three Women

The First Woman is tender and kind,  
but afraid.  
Because she is afraid  
she disempowers herself,  
competes with her 'sisters',  
and colludes with the abusive power of First Man.

The Second Woman is righteous, but reactive.  
She feels liberated and empowered.  
She is in solidarity with her 'sisters'.  
She refuses to collude.  
She condemns First Man,  
and scorns the weakness of Second Man.  
She is angry.

The Third Woman knows  
the power of Woman ~  
the power of the fiercely vulnerable heart.  
She is not in imitation of the power of Man.  
Her power is the power of inter-connectedness,  
and surrender to the wisdom of her body.

Third Woman welcomes  
the penetration of Third Man  
because he doesn't take, he gives.  
He doesn't enter her from need,  
but from presentness and desire.

Third Woman delights  
in his physical and emotional penetration  
because he doesn't use her,  
he honours her.



## FEMININE RAGE IS THE GATEWAY

The masculine is beautiful. The feminine is beautiful. When either one tries to suppress the other, we get into an ugly mess. (We're not talking 'men' and 'women' here, by the way. 'Men' and 'women' is about bodies. 'Masculine' and 'feminine' happen inside all bodies. And outside all bodies, for that matter.) But of course, it's the masculine that's been dominant, and the feminine that's been shadowed. So what?

At the personal level: because this patriarchal inheritance is in our twenty-first century bones – and not just men's bones – (and please read between the lines of my outrageous generalising), we're practically deaf to the calls of our bodies, to the whispers of our intuitions, to the symphonies of our imaginations, to the passions of our hearts, and even to the unique integrity of our personal minds. And that's just at the personal level! And as we all know: the Empire Strikes Back! Whatever we cast to the shadows will scream and shout, then scream and shout a bit more, and then – if we're still not willing to listen: explode in our faces! At the personal level the 'striking back' of the shadowed-feminine is in our all-pervading loneliness, hollowness and uninspired mediocrity – numbed-down by our endless addictions. Through our addictions we seek the feminine, we seek intimacy, naturalness, flow, wildness, the erotic, the ecstatic – but end up digging ourselves deeper into the pit of disconnected masculine dominance.

At the interpersonal level: masculine dominance means relationships based on principles and functionality (reinforced by intimidation or overt violence), obsessive and utterly-disappointing sex, and day-to-day life in a cut-off, monotone, non-emotional flatland. The shadowed-feminine, of course, (in both men and women, but mostly in women) is freaking out. Over half of our marriages end in divorce (less and less of us get married anyway), the children are bewildered and suffering, and individualism (with perhaps some serial-monogamy along the way) is fast becoming the disillusioned norm.

At the social and environmental and political levels: masculine dominance is generating the same kind of havoc (who said Feminism has done all it needed to do?!). The same unwillingness to hear and feel the pain (without becoming defensive) – whether of another, of animals, of trees or the land, or of nations – is generating superficial functional fix-it social policies, increasingly abstract and complex mechanisms of dependence, fiercely competitive and rapacious economics, and (last but not least) total global environmental devastation.

But enough! The point is clear: the beauty and dangerous wisdom of the feminine has been shadowed-out, and (at all of these levels) we're in an ugly, ignorant mess. So what to do? Clearly, we might say, bring the feminine out of the shadows – and honour her. Yes, definitely. But this isn't as easy as it might sound. I'm going to give one main reason....

Feminine Rage. The masculine does have a lot to answer for. So whenever the feminine comes out of the shadows she's justifiably raging. Unfortunately for the masculine, this is the way it is. And not only is it unavoidable, but any attempt to avoid her rage will just make her rage more. After all, the whole point is that she hasn't been heard and respected. So, first things first! And if the masculine can't hear her rage, then why should she believe that he'll hear anything else. Feminine Rage is the sound-barrier, so to speak. It's the turbulence through which the masculine and feminine need to pass TOGETHER if the feminine is to come out of the shadows. It's the gateway. Now two reasons (one for each of them) why this is difficult.

For the feminine: there's fear. If she stands up she's going to be verbally and/or physically beaten back down. So there's real, immediate danger. There's also the fear of her own power – she hasn't been in contact with it, and she's afraid of what she doesn't know. And then there's the fear that if she stands up for all she knows, and claims the authoritative power of her feminine knowing, she will be shamed, scorned, and abandoned.

For the masculine: (surprise, surprise) it's also fear – but of a different nature. He just can't take it. The rage is just

overwhelming. He hasn't got enough solid ground of his own to stand on. Because of the lack of role models, non-macho masculine community, and masculine individuation, he's still standing on feminine ground. So when she rages at him, his whole world shakes. He can't help contracting and defending. And this aborts her rage.

So, once again – what to do? Clearly, for the shadowed-feminine to re-emerge, both the masculine and the feminine need help. They both need support to help them negotiate the Feminine Rage sound barrier. Put slightly differently: both the feminine and masculine need help with their own shadowed-power.

This is particularly interesting in relation to the masculine, because few would disagree that the feminine has her own power in the shadows, and that she has to reach in there and reclaim it. But it's also true of the masculine, and this explains why the Feminist call to equality – which most of us accept in theory – is progressing so slowly. True masculine power is also in the shadows. True masculine power is profoundly spiritual, dignified, devoted to truth, self-surrendering, and unlimitedly creative. But we mock the high ideals and nobility of the true masculine. We don't trust it, and inhibit its growth -keeping it shadowed. Why?

Again, it's fear. We don't trust it. And again – with good cause. We think we've seen masculine power, and we've had enough of it! But the masculine power of the patriarchy is just a fake imitation. It might look strong, but it is just controlling. True masculine power doesn't want to control the feminine, it adores the feminine, it delights in her, it worships her! Fake masculine power is full of words and concepts of true-and-false, and will defend them, no matter what. True masculine power directly experiences its own heart-breaking aloneness before 'God' (or 'Life', or 'The Mystery', or 'Eternity', or whatever term we might prefer) – it doesn't feed on ideas of truth. At the same time, it knows its own unlimited, divine, creative potency. It doesn't need to control!

Not only this, but this true masculine power is aware of its own emotional and intuitive limitations – and therefore allows itself to be guided by the feminine. It is almost as if it is so supra-human

that it struggles with its humanity and, acknowledging the profound and sacred humanity of the feminine, lets itself be grounded by her. As it lands, and discovers that it hasn't been diminished by following the feminine's guidance (and that the feminine is completely relieved, respectful and welcoming), the masculine becomes more and more rooted in its power. In this way, true masculine power grows with the help of the feminine. (As against patriarchal power, which gets fatter - and also harder and drier - by crushing the feminine.)

So he needs her, but the other side to this is: that feminine power also flourishes with the support of the masculine. She needs him too. As the masculine becomes safer, she feels safer to emerge. Her resonance with the sacred mystery of the seasons, her amoral abandon, her free-wheeling passion and thunder - can be, to say the last, quite daunting. As I have said - not only for the masculine, but also for herself. But as he holds firm, not seeking sustenance in her, but drawing it from his own holy masculinity, she is liberated from the pressure to appear in any one way. She can flow in her unreasonable, unpredictable, authentic femininity. For the truly powerful masculine this is eroticism itself. He bows before this display of beauty. And just as her emotional-wisdom grounds his power, her power is grounded by his honouring.

So where does this leave us? Well, in all sorts of places! But firstly, the argument so far:

1. that the patriarchal inheritance, with its shadowed-feminine, has created a right mess at all levels - personal, interpersonal, social, environmental, political, etc.,
2. that in order to redress this situation we need to cross through the sound-barrier-gateway of feminine rage,
3. that the fearful masculine and fearful feminine BOTH need to reclaim their shadowed-power in order to do this,
4. that they need each other to do this.

This is all very well if we are talking personal development, even 'relationship work' - but what does it mean if we are talking at the level, say, of the environment? Whether we believe in Gaia or not (i.e. whether or not we agree that the planet is a living, breathing organism with a sense of its own identity), every cause has an

effect, and we have so abused this material world (and material = matter = Mater = Mother) that now, according to all authoritative reports, we're due for comeback time. In other words, whether we call it the sound-barrier of feminine rage or not, we're going to have to pass through a shaky period together. A 'dark night before an early dawn' to quote Professor Christopher Bache. And again, we're going to need each other.

Similarly, the predicted collapse of our fragile and extraordinarily complex global economic and political infrastructure might also be seen as the inevitable outcome of a patriarchal approach – focussed on abstract ideals, compensation for a lack of true power, and emotionally cut-off and cruel policies and interventions. And therefore: as an expression of the rage of the feminine. In fact, these are sociological structures, people-structures - not environmental or climatic forces – and operate in the same way as the personal and interpersonal dynamics we looked at earlier. Personal psychological disruption, relationship crises, and societal collapse all reflect the same imbalance – the same distancing from, and demeaning of, the feminine. It's just a difference of scale. If we see the inevitability of feminine rage at the personal and interpersonal levels, then it must also be inevitable at the level of our global political infrastructure. And again, whatever the likely extent of such a collapse, to that extent we're going to need each other.

And so.... my suggestion is this: that we begin community projects which honour and nurture the true power of BOTH the masculine and the feminine. That we gather individual emotional strength, and maturity in relating - and that we practice walking through the gateway of feminine rage together, as communities. By 'practice' I mean that we hold this as a collective, community context. It becomes what we're busy with. That we become busy learning to walk through the feminine rage sound-barrier-gateway together. We practice it: we fail, we succeed, we practice – personally, interpersonally, environmentally, politically. In this way, empowered local communities could become the basic building blocks of a more decentralised, more balanced, culture of the future.

The shadowed-feminine is now out-raging, she is flowing over. We need to understand this. Lots of us need to. We need to understand the post-patriarchal evolutionary moment we're in. We need this context as a unifying backdrop for our diverse attempts to help out. And we need to work with the situation together - in community, in deep community. Her rage is our evolutionary gateway. Her rage is both the eruption of her own power, and her thunderous demand for the true power of the masculine. It is our most intimate collective challenge.

## THE LAKE OF POWER: A FAIRY TALE

Her hair was the summer clouds. Her feet were the mountain meadows. Her womb was the lake of power. The forests bowed before her. The stars would sing for her, and tell her tales of lightness. But none could console Isandra.

Her father, the Sun God, had denounced her, when she was just thirteen, and her hair had never been cut – for she had dared to question his judgement when he had overruled her mother, the drunken Whore of the Night Sky.

And so Isandra had been forced to marry her brother, the heartless Isidru, Prince of the Sun – he who had refused to tend his mother when she had fallen on stone and been soaked in blood.

Denounced before her marriage, and now denounced for having fled, Isandra's tears fell like sweet rain, her sobs echoed through the world like warm, loving thunder.

Isandra sobbed for a father who would bless her with strength, she sobbed for a mother who would guide her to her heart, and for a husband who would honour her soul. Her sobs echoed from one mountain to the next, until eventually they aroused the sleeping Mountain God.

The Mountain God glanced lovingly upon his sleeping son as he went out of their cave, and stood listening to Isandra's tortured yet most beautiful grieving. Calling her to him, The Mountain God instructed Isandra to attend the court of the Great Lake Queen.

When Isandra came before the Great Lake Queen she saw her own feminine soul reflected in the Great Queen's eyes. She saw its deliciousness, and its unfathomable wisdom, and she was overcome with devotion. "Sit here, with me, by the Great Lake" said the Queen, "let your tears fall into her, and drink of her every morning at dawn, and every evening at dusk".

And so Isandra wept and drank for twenty six years, by the Great Lake, where no man went. Isandra was filled with such power that once, when Isidru came with a hundred warriors to capture her and punish her for daring to leave him, Isandra turned them into a forest, with the gentlest wave of her hand.

One day the Mountain God's son, the Mountain Prince, came to the court of the Great Lake Queen, and saw Isandra beside the lake. Filled with reverence and desire, he approached her. Isandra saw he was dusty from living in a cave, and invited him to bathe with her in the Great Lake. The Mountain Prince asked if he might drink of the Great Lake. "The risk is yours to take" smiled Isandra.

And a new kingdom was established, between the Mountains and the Great Lake, where Isandra taught their daughters to be proud, and the Great Prince taught their mountainous sons to swim.



## INNER MARRIAGE, THE MEN'S MOVEMENT AND THE FEMININE

*Within himself he has opened to the daunting freedom and creative potency of the masculine, and the overwhelming mystery and wisdom of the feminine. The masculine in him energises his feminine. The feminine in him grounds his masculine. These universal energies are erotically united inside him. This is Inner Marriage.*

*And the courtship is hell! After all ~ why are we not already rested in the full nobility of the masculine? Why are we not already surrendered to the full splendour of the feminine? Whatever our reasons ~ they are what need to burn. The First Man in us says 'no'. The Second Man in us says 'yes' because he ought to. The emerging Third Man says 'yes' because he is already committed to facing being alive.*

In the 1990's the Men's Movement seemed to be gathering quite some momentum. Iron John was a bestseller, men's groups were popping up everywhere, and men were enquiring into the essence of manhood. Since then there has been some integration of this enquiry into mainstream culture, but the enquiry itself seems to have lost its erection, so to speak. The main thrust of menswork today seems to be the Men's Rights Movement, which has its pros and cons, but certainly isn't pursuing the enquiry into the essence of what it means to be a man.

This is a vast generalisation of course, and some menswork has continued (some of it quite vigorously), but I retreated from menswork for some time because I came to feel that we could only go so far without the women. And my sense is that most of the menswork that continues, although completely worthwhile, will eventually come to the dead end we came to...

In the 1990's I started lots of men's groups, camps and workshops, but then I took a break. I even left a men's group I'd been in for many years. To caricature things (but also be brutally honest) it looked a bit like this:

I meet a male friend, Bob.

Me: How's it going with your partner, Jenny?

Bob: Yeah, fine. You know, ups and downs.

Later that day I meet Jenny.

Me: How's it going with Bob?

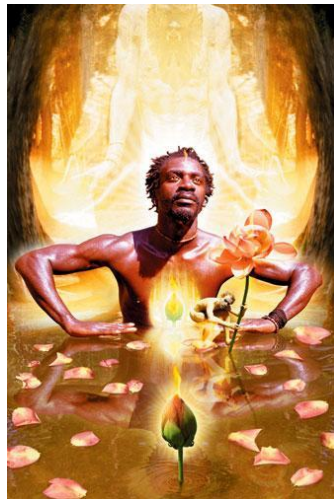
Jenny: Well, we're in crisis. I think we might be splitting up.

There was so much emotional disconnection in the men. The sharing, and even the catharsis, that was happening in our men's groups wasn't carrying over into our lives. There was a chronic, ingrained resistance to the feminine - and whether we were gay or hetero, our feminine partners were freaking out.

The masculine wasn't in deep, intimate connection with the feminine. We were cultivating our masculine together, and our feminine - but in everyday life things just weren't coming together. We weren't showing up in ways that won the respect our masculine so much wanted, and our feminine was just underdeveloped. We felt criticised, unsupported and undermined by our feminine partners, and they were feeling unprotected, unheard and unloved. The more they expressed their discomfort, the more defensive we'd become. When, inevitably, they expressed their discomfort in unreasonable and unfair ways, we'd latch onto the unfairness - in order to avoid the point: that we were shrivelled and contracted and defensive, and that they were deeply disillusioned with the men to whom they'd given themselves. Disillusioned, and sometimes desperate.

I am not only talking about 'others' here. I too was defended from my wife's pain. I too felt blamed. Like so many men, I didn't know how to expand into the fullness of my masculinity - I didn't even know what it was. I was caught inside my own smallness, my own little ego. And fighting for its survival felt like life or death. Because of all this, my personal enquiry into manhood, once I had withdrawn from the men's movement, had two concerns, (1) the freedom and genuine empowerment that allows the masculine to be open to the feminine, and (2) the deepening of my seeing into the heartfelt essence of the feminine.

Gradually I came to see and understand the choice I had: to identify either as a lone male ego, or as a participant in the collective evolution of the genders. I came to appreciate the fundamental natures of the masculine and feminine: how the masculine pulls in one direction – upwards, to the stars, to aloneness, to power, to purpose, to achievement, to freedom; and how the feminine pulls in the other – downwards, to the earth, to the senses, into connectedness, authentic relationship, towards pleasure and pain, and love. And I felt how this pulling in different directions is the erotic charge between them.



The problem is when these two charges get too far apart, or too close. The First Man stays too far away. He's in his masculinity but, frankly, because he's not connected to the feminine, he's a bastard. He's the patriarchal part of us who's responsible for the environmental and social fragmentation we're now in. But the new-agey Second Man gets too close. He gets so close he gets feminised. And there's a big difference between being in-connection with the feminine (while rooted in the masculine), and being feminised. But either way, whether too far away or too close, there's no erotic charge - and this erotic charge is not just sexual, it's the excitement and creativity that enlivens our lives.

The problem for the masculine is individuation. In other words, while he still fears being reabsorbed into mother, while he's not separated-out and secure, and identified with the masculine, then he can't maintain an openness towards the feminine. He has to be too far away or, in guilt and disempowerment, too close.

Full individuation is a profound journey into our aloneness, and into the unknown. It eventually opens out into peace, presentness and oneness – but it's intense, and it requires not-less-than-everything. It's a letting-go, a falling, and it requires great intellectual and spiritual skill. But it's the hero's journey the masculine has to make. It's the homecoming of the masculine to itself.

From here the masculine can allow itself to be grounded and kept in-connection by the feminine – without feeling criticised or disrespected. Which is where the women, and feminine-dominant men, come in. At this point the masculine is finally able to receive them. At home in itself, the masculine is now able to receive the attunement the feminine offers – without flying off into spirit, or into some mental idealism, or just into numbness or disassociation.

Gradually the masculine becomes capable of maintaining continuous connection with the feminine. Not too close, not too distant. The Third Man. Open to himself, open to her. And through openness to her, opening to his own femininity. Opening to his own masculinity, opening to his own femininity. Power, Feeling. Eternity, time-and-space. Exquisite balance. Inner Marriage.

As we stabilise in The Third Man, The First Man and The Second Man are still there too – always ready to make their disempowering and disempowered contributions. The guidance of the feminine remains essential. And in humility, whenever we lose touch with ourselves (and therefore resist her), we just have to pick ourselves up, and forgive ourselves. In practice, rather than holding the idea of 'becoming The Third Man' as a destination to be reached, it is probably more nourishing to think in terms of the First, Second And Third Men each rising and falling within us,

continuously – and accepting that, without abandoning our destination.

As we become committed to the journey of The Third Man we become more and more comfortable in the exquisite beauty of the unknown ‘now’, and from this place can honour the truth of the reflection our personalities receive from the feminine. But to sustain this commitment we need the support of other men, other men who are equally committed. We need their community. When my commitment is strong it sustains them, and when my commitment is weak their strength sustains me.

In this way, lacking the ‘vertical’ support that men once received from their fathers, their grandfathers and the elders of the culture, we receive the ‘horizontal’ support system of a brotherhood committed to a shared context: the path of The Third Man – a male community committed to honouring both the masculine and the feminine.

And this, of course, brings us back to men’s groups, or at least to male community. Whether or not it is a statistical fact that The Men’s Movement has gone into a bit of a lull, I am convinced that as men we can only go so far alone, and that our next evolutionary step is to honour the superior emotional knowing of the feminine, and to bow to her guidance – which is, of course, really, really tough for our egos.

It’s up to each of us. We can take this evolutionary invitation, or not. The choice is: to go on our personal journeys of aloneness, freedom and empowerment, open to the feminine and let go into the bliss of wholeness; or remain stuck up egoic little pricks, caught in our minds, bickering tooth and nail, defending by attacking (or defending by grovelling), and perpetuating the chaos of a disintegrating patriarchy.

As I see it, for the Men’s Movement to have an evolutionary future, there will need to be enough men with enough determination and humility to take up the invitation to masculine empowerment AND feminine empowerment. We need context, and we need commitment. This will create an atmosphere of

solidarity that will strengthen us enough to be able to fall to our knees – again and again. Which, paradoxically, and heart-breakingly, is where true masculine power is honed for use in the world.

“YOU’VE BEEN DOWN THAT ROAD BEFORE, AND YOU KNOW WHERE IT LEADS.”

(Trinity To Neo In The Matrix)

or

“EITHER THE MASCULINE SURRENDERS, PUTS THE DISHCLOTH DOWN AND ACCEPTS FEMININE GUIDANCE, OR (TO THE DEGREE IT RESISTS) BECOMES A DEHUMANISED DANGER TO THE SPECIES.”

or

“THE ETERNAL FEMININE DRAWS US ONWARDS.”

(Final Lines Of Goethe’s masterpiece ‘Faust’)

I twitch, I swivel.  
It’s injustice!  
I turn away,  
I cannot look directly  
into her,  
at her  
speaking eyes.  
She’s too much.  
I didn’t do it!  
I get busy.  
I am too little.  
Anyway, I didn’t mean it,  
not the way she says I did.  
I am not enough  
to face this woman,  
her anger makes me  
tidy up.

“Stop the tidying!”

She gets firmer,  
standing on the ground of heart.  
I get busier  
in my mind  
I’m going faster

racing piecing jigsaw bits of words together,  
unconvincing  
even me.

Oh my god,  
she's getting righteous.  
Now I'll have to  
grab the dishcloth,  
wipe the surface,  
can't go deeply  
into conflict ~  
I'll hit if she's says another word.  
No I shouldn't.  
God, I'm screaming!  
Chucked the dishcloth in her face.  
Now I'm charging out the door.  
I don't know how it got to this.

Oh no,  
she's crying!  
Here's the bit I hate the most.  
I didn't do it,  
not the way she said I did.  
And anyway, I've done good things.  
Why doesn't she ever shout out those?  
God I hate her!  
God I hate me!  
God I hate this sticky mess!  
If I slam this door I know from last time  
it'll go on for days, for weeks.

OK, I'll listen!  
Stop your crying.  
I get the dishcloth at her feet.  
    "All I want is you to hear me."  
God I hate those words again.  
    "Can't you listen?"  
No I can't!  
I'm off again!  
Oh my god, now I'm leaving.  
Who's is the hand that's slamming the door?



Oh my god, it's mine!

Here I am now  
with the dishcloth in my hand,  
on the street  
and raging for a damn good reason,  
but to tell the truth  
I don't know what it is.

Shit!  
OK!  
And with a surge of effort,  
in I go again,  
cloth in hand.  
    "Why have you come?  
    To bring the cloth back?"  
No, I've come to try and hear.

And so she tells me,  
and I get it.  
If only I'd heard her first time round.  
Yes I did it.  
Yes I did.  
Yes, I do admit I was defensive.  
Yes, I know I always do.  
Yes, I know that men do typically...  
Hey, this has gone too far!

    "Are you going to slam the door again?  
    Don't forget the dishcloth, dear!"  
Ha, ha, ha!  
OK, I'm staying.  
    "But then you'll have to look at me."

And so I look  
and see the loving  
and the disappointment there.  
Yes, I messed up.  
And she wants me.  
And I can forgive myself.

“Do you think next time  
you twitch and swivel  
you can have the space to notice  
you’re avoiding  
feeling pain,  
feeling criticised again?  
Do you believe  
I don’t need a perfect man?  
I don’t need your  
improvement project.  
For me you’re a perfect imperfect man.  
Look in my eyes:  
I love you.  
And I know this will continue  
until you look at yourself  
through me.  
Then, my love, you’ll put the dishcloth down.”

## EROTIC IS NOT PORN

Erotic is not porn.

Porn is all flames and balls and pubic hair -  
no head, no heart.

Erotic is not godly.

Godly is all air and head and holy-holy -  
no genitals, no heart.

Erotic is not being-in-love.

Being-in-love is all heart, all wet and sentimental -  
no genitals, no head.

Erotic is paradise on earth, the garden -  
innocent, sparkling, soft.

Erotic is sex with god's blessing.

Erotic is sex with god watching.

Erotic is genitals  
swollen with passion,  
just  
offering.

Their eyes of devotion  
tortured with sweet lust,  
just  
beholding.

Erotic has nothing to do with sex.

Erotic is the masculine descended, but still high -  
the Sun God in the flesh -  
the meat that throbs with the light.

Erotic is the feminine ascended, but still dirty -  
the Earth Goddess on fire -  
the epiphany of spirit as lust.

Erotic is The Great Union.

Without her he is nowhere.

Without him she is nothing.

When they meet,  
their porno-godly-love stops clocks, and worlds,  
and explains everything.

POWER TO THE FEMININE!  
POWER TO THE MASCULINE!

*Introducing 'The Archetypal Approach' To Relationships*

"We never row" one couple said, as they introduced themselves at the workshop. Elisabeth and I, who were facilitating, both thought "oh, poor them!" If you could've seen the thought bubbles above our heads, you'd have seen one relating to the feminine, and one relating to the masculine.

The feminine one would've been full of questions like "has she given up on him?", "has she given up trying to call him back into intimacy?", "has she become bitter, detached?", "is she scared of him, physically?", "is she afraid of her own feminine power?", "is she afraid of being abandoned?" "why isn't the feminine standing up in this relationship?", "why isn't she insisting the masculine keep returning to intimacy? That's the feminine's job!", "why is she so disempowered?"

And then the other bubble above our heads, the one relating to the masculine, would've been full of questions like "what has he done with his anger?", "is he ashamed of his masculine power?", "is he pretending to be nice and sweet and kind all the time ~ an unthreatening 'new man'?", "does he intimidate her physically, or does he intimidate her covertly, with a silent, rumbling disowned anger?", "does he cut-off and disappear?", "where does he run away to ~ pornography, work, alcohol, spirituality...?", "why isn't the masculine in its power in this relationship ~ it must be so painful to feel so disempowered in front of the feminine", "why can't he be both powerful and intimate at the same time?"

Don't get us wrong ~ we don't run workshops on teaching couples to row! We run courses on empowered relationships. We want to see the masculine in his power, and the feminine in her power ~ because that's where the magic happens.

When the feminine comes into her power (which is the power of body-knowing, and inter-connectedness, and the power of a fiercely vulnerable heart), then she is both formidable and tender.

But to own this power she has to travel deeply into trusting her feminine nature, and into trust itself. She has to take her wounded little girl in her arms and rock her softly ~ while standing up uncompromisingly and unapologetically for all that is authentic, for all that opens her body and heart.

The masculine who is in relationship with the empowered feminine ~ or, at least with the feminine that is committed to her own empowerment ~ is truly fortunate and blessed. But he better get his balls strapped on! She won't put up with an iota of inauthenticity. And he'll only be able to take it if he is totally committed to his own empowerment.

The masculine comes into his power when his raw animal energy and sexual potency gets put in the service of awareness and self-knowledge and truth. He follows the path of honesty, surrendering through layers and layers of male conditioning, shedding skin after skin of false-power, power-over, and every fear of inferiority and inadequacy. Gradually the masculine comes to a place of presentness and power-in-himself. This delights the feminine and opens her body and heart. But the path is not easy, and every step forward is accompanied by a step backwards, and at such times the feminine will say 'no', and the masculine will need to be powerful enough to be humble.

We're emerging from thousands of years in which the disempowered masculine has dominated and abused the disempowered feminine. But just because today the feminine is standing up, that doesn't mean she automatically understands the true nature of feminine power. And as the masculine lets go of false-power (and then of false-softness), it also faces massive questions about the nature of its true power.

This is the work we are passionate about. We run a project called The Culture Of Honouring Project. We run courses for men, courses for women, and courses for couples: honouring the empowerment of the feminine, honouring the empowerment of the masculine, and honouring the potential of their union.

This work is about starting a fire underneath the bum of the feminine, and another fire under the bum of the masculine! We want them both on fire with their own commitment to themselves. Relationships are not about compromise. How often have you stood in awe in front of your partner? How often have you seen that through him you meet Man, through her you meet Woman? Through you and your partner Woman and Man, Yin and Yang, the two great energies of the universe meet. For thousands of years these two great forces have not been meeting. The masculine has been the persecutor, and the feminine has been the victim. And in that, both have been in distortion.

The masculine and feminine are evolving in and through us. We are evolution! We stand with our ancestors behind us, with our brothers and sisters alongside us, on the cusp, the leading-edge, of evolution. There is no such thing as a bystander to evolution. There are no spectators. We are all involved.

We are all involved ~ and we are all conditioned! We are all full of the conditioning of history, and we need to form brotherhoods and sisterhoods to support each other in de-conditioning ourselves, in re-empowering ourselves, and in opening to a new potential which is neither matriarchal nor patriarchal but which equally honours us all.

So let's get practical: what does this actually mean in our everyday super-busy lives? What does all of this mean when we've got to pick up the kids from school, get the shopping done, remember Auntie Belinda's birthday, and make enough money to keep up a half-way-decent lifestyle? Is all of this ridiculously grandiose and irrelevant, or can it be integrated into our already over-full lives?

Firstly, yes, you are going to have to take some time out. We're talking here about an entirely new approach to manhood, womanhood and relationships. We call it The Archetypal Approach. There's a relationship crisis in our culture ~ most conventional relationships end in separation or divorce, and the statistics among 'growth working couples' are actually worse, not better. (Having been conditioned to expect Hollywood-like happy-ever-afterness, we can only wade through our treacherous 'stuff' for so

long before it becomes unbearable ~ and we split up, yet again.)  
And the Tantra path people, in terms of separation-statistics, are even worse!

Please pause and ask yourself ~ is this article is just more hype, or is it actually introducing a new approach to relationships? Has there ever been an era in which the feminine was honoured in the authority of her connectedness and her body-knowing, in which the masculine was simultaneously honoured in the fierceness of his devotion to truth ~ and in which they saw themselves as allies in shedding their conditionings, and in meeting in their fullness? Probably not. So this is both a very big picture, and a very personal one ~ and, yes, you are going to have to take time out to explore it.

And then, once you've glimpsed the potential, you're going to need to walk towards it ~ and that takes commitment. And community. The buzzwords we use are Context, Commitment, Community and Compassion. Once we're on the path, we need each other. We need to hear other couples' struggles and breakthroughs. We become mirrors for each other's relationships. We see how similar other couples' relationships are to our own. We draw strength and compassion (for each other and for ourselves) from meeting up together, and from friendships with other couples.

Couples often say to us that this approach is what they always wanted ~ that it was as if we were giving them a way to live the potential they'd always known they had. For our part, it is always an honour to see the feminine and the masculine standing up in their power, and a sacred joy to see them come before each other.

## HOW TO HONOUR IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS

Historically, not so many centuries ago, in most cultures, and certainly in ours 'to be feminine' meant to serve the masculine. 'To be masculine' meant to serve god. This was the cultural and existential alignment. This arrangement was said to align us with life's meaning.

By the turn of the twentieth century, in our own capitalist culture this alignment had weakened enough for the feminine to begin shaking its way out. It said it was equal to the masculine. It would no longer be subservient. It did not need the masculine to be aligned with meaning. It had its own meaning.

Actually, the rise of the feminine is older than Feminism. It is the rise of the modern age. But the point here is that Feminism expressed the feminine's rejection of the old alignment. There is a Spanish proverb "mejor sola que mal acompañada" ~ better to travel alone than to travel in bad company.

The masculine tried to win her back ~ by forcing her back into subservience (to no avail), or by being more feminine (only to receive her scorn). For example...

The Time: 1990-ish.

The Place: men retreat to a weekend workshop, to examine male identity....

AT THE MEN'S WORKSHOP:

1: "I masturbated on a pornographic magazine the other night.

And you know what ~ I felt awful."

2: "Well, that's incredible ~ that's what happened to me too.

I mean, of course, there was pleasure.

I mean, when I came it was great.

But immediately afterwards, I felt shit."

1: "Yeah, me too."

2: "So good to be able to talk about these things."

1: "Yeah, just to be open, and own our feelings ~ whether it's what we're supposed to feel or not!"



2: "Yeah, I just feel so much more self-accepting talking to you about this."

1: "Yeah, I feel much better too."

LATER AT HOME WITH HIS WIFE:

1: "In the group this evening I was talking about how I've been masturbating

on pornographic magazines...

3: "You've what?"

How could you!

How can you objectify and use the female body in that way?

How can you be so cut off?

Why aren't you as excited by real relationship?

Why....

1: "But it all seemed OK when I was at the men's group, I ...

Men's-group men like these have been at the forefront of our cultural enquiry. (Most men still haven't got to the group.) They have been (and still are) crucial for the development of our adult masculinity. They are expressions of the vital teenage-masculine stage. But masculine-dominant men's groups can only go so far. Masculine-dominant men can 'own their feminine' by talking about feelings, by feeling, by relating. But the reality of their relationship with the feminine will only ever really be known in the presence of feminine-dominant women and men.

Much as the masculine (whether in a man or a woman) might not like it: it can only be defined in relation to the feminine. (In an all-masculine world, 'masculinity' would have no meaning.) To fully find itself the masculine must be in relationship with the feminine. It must be in appropriate relationship with the feminine. And the feminine is more sensually, emotionally, psychologically and intuitively aware than the masculine. She is more here - on planet Earth! So appropriate means: the feminine guides the masculine. The masculine pilots, but the feminine navigates. His creative power leads, but she keeps him grounded in the felt moment-to-moment reality we inhabit here together.

This is absolutely impossible for the immature, unindividuated masculine. The ego is just too big! In everyday life this is only consistently possible for a masculinity that has not just 'owned its feelings', but that has followed the path of honesty to its conclusion. It has completed its adolescence. It is a masculinity that has arrived at its essence ~ its selfless power.

This masculine essence can be found by completely opening (1) to (what seems like) one's utter aloneness, and (2) to (what seems like) the utter meaninglessness of everything. By letting go of all holding on to others, and to all ideologies, it falls into itself, its essence. The homecoming and freedom the masculine then experiences involves no beliefs, no faith. It is a totally unsentimental, no-bullshit spirituality. This mature masculine stands in the delicious felt-experience of the unknown, moment to moment. He experiences the heartbreaking, exquisite mystery that underlies and permeates all of our everyday dealings.

From here, in order to navigate this mystery, he listens to the feminine - not to woman, to the feminine. Yes, the majority of women have privileged access to the feminine. But this doesn't mean they have necessarily matured into living from the adult feminine. And whether in a man or a woman, the feminine that guides is the adult feminine - the feminine that has arrived in its fullness. We will return to this in a moment. Enough to say, that it is the adult feminine who is attuned to sensory and emotional reality, who feels the truth of every encounter. Whatever's being presented, or said, the mature feminine always knows what's really taking place.

The adult masculine is capable of honouring this feminine wisdom. He is not threatened by it. He is not afraid of being dominated or smothered by the feminine. She becomes his most intimate ally. He welcomes her guidance, he relies on it. He lives at the centre of his own experience, and whatever happens WITHIN HIS experience ~ happens WITHIN HIS experience. Nothing can ever change that. Nothing can ever diminish him in any way.

The feminine longs for this loving masculine power ~ this unthreatened, individuated openness. She has longed for it for

millennia. A century ago she said 'no', but without any clear 'yes'. Only now, by the grace of a hundred years of therapy and our increasing emotional literacy 9is the masculine beginning to keep coming back, and keep on being rejected, until she says "ah, finally, yes, this is it, this feels right ~ this is what I have been waiting for!"

And she does say 'yes' to him. When the masculine is in relationship with its own vastness and bliss, it can honour the feminine without the slightest disempowerment. It is his pleasure. And it is hers. Beyond any religion or need for ritual, in their heart of hearts, they are wed.

In practice, as he matures, of course, the masculine IS threatened. In fact, he is devastated, again and again, by the reflections of himself he sees looking back at him from the mirror of the feminine. In practice, the childish, the teenage and the adult masculines are all present within us simultaneously. Their three voices mix and emerge in different combinations on different occasions. Sometimes the childish masculine shouts and slams doors, or even hits her. He'd rather destroy the mirror than accept its obviousness. It's too painful. His is the tortuous "no!!!"

At other moments the adult voice is louder than the others, and the masculine manages to really look into the eyes of the feminine. He sees her anger and he sees her pain, but he also sees her love. He sees her yearning, her calling. And he surrenders. He knows she's right. He looks into the mirror. He sees his shortcomings. He is humbled. And to his amazement, she doesn't condemn him. Quite the contrary. They embrace.

There are a thousand twists and turns. A thousand doors that get slammed, walls that get punched, mugs and cups and plates that get smashed ~ rows and tears and crises and reconciliations. There are times when they just can't go on, times when it seems impossible they'll ever row again. The unindividuated masculine doesn't go down without a fight.

Yes, the immaturity of the feminine doesn't help - the childish feminine's self-betrayal and manipulation, the teenage feminine's

bitterness and fury. It clouds her guidance. Like the masculine, the feminine needs to retreat to its own weekend workshops, to feminine-only circles – to learn to differentiate the healthy-neurotic level of personal experience from the deep, universal level of mature feminine experience. It needs to be alone with its own kind – soaking up the atmosphere of many feminines together, imbibing the ancestral, archetypal feminine world.

Yes, masculine-dominant men and women receive absolutely ego-piercing mirroring from their feminine-dominant partners. And it is so easy for them to dismiss the mirror because of the way it's being held up. But as the masculine matures, dropping ever-deeper into his own aloneness, becoming more and more intimate with his own experience, offering less and less resistance, his way of being supports the healing of the feminine, making it easier for her to let go of her insecurities, to speak from the power of the mature feminine, and be the perfect mirror she is.

I believe this mature feminine was the deep evolutionary impulse within Feminism - even if Feminism didn't know it. Now, a century-or-so later, we're just beginning to be able to name her, and the question that challenges us is whether or not the masculine can meet and honour this mature feminine? Can we develop enough masculine potency to be able to truly face her, and open to her, and let her guide our relationships?



## THE JAPANESE WATER-CRYSTAL MAN, COSMIC SEX, AND THE REVOLUTION - YOUR LOCAL AREA ACTION PLAN (IN THREE NOT-SO-EASY STEPS)

### A Quick Intro

Honouring self-and-other isn't only about honouring everyone (that goes without saying), it's about honouring all of everyone – our own and each others' masculine upwards-looking, moral upstandingness, and our feminine downwards-pulling, lustfulness and love.

For those of us who want to fully honour the fullness of who we are, I propose we soulfully and deliberately construct the community structures (social and economic) that will support us.

What about everyone else? Well, although Dr. Rupert Sheldrake's 'morphic field theory' explains it much more elegantly, it basically comes down to the hundred monkeys. Once enough of us are supporting each other in trying to live 'in honouring', that possibility will become available to the whole species... But first steps first. The question is this: we who SAY we understand what it is to honour and be-honoured, and SAY it is our heart's longing to truly honour both the masculine and the feminine – are we really WILLING to go beyond our fragmented individualistic lifestyles, and make a concerted and unified effort to construct a culture that would be the expression of our shared heart's longing?

We are trying to emerge from a patriarchal age dominated by a harsh and disassociated dog-eats-dog masculinity, but find ourselves floundering about in a sloppy and cynical feminised age of cat-eats-cat hedonism! We need to reconnect with what really moves the heart of the masculine, and what really fulfils and opens the feminine.

Only then, once we've begun to stabilise in our knowing of the masculine and feminine, as individuals, and have begun relating to each other from this knowing, will we be authentically motivated to work TOGETHER to construct a culture that reflects

our deepest, most heartfelt longing. Until then our community reconstruction, even if it is based on the principle of honouring, will be an intellectualisation with little true revolutionary potency.

To find the unified passion, and the unified passionate will, to dare to try to change the shape of our culture we will need to commit, first and foremost to our own heart's journey of honouring. This will open, unavoidably, into well-wishing every other's heart's journey, and to a deepening honouring of everything above our heads, around our bodies, and beneath our feet.

So here's the not-so-easy three step programme, for your consideration (ladies and gentlemen) - a plan, a challenge, and, of course, an invitation...

1. We enquire into masculinity and femininity, and how they relate to each other
2. We enquire into our relationship with 'nature', and deepen our sense of community
3. We apply all of this practically
- 4.

What does all of this really mean? Let's go one by one...

### Step One - We Enquire Into Masculinity And Femininity, And How They Relate To Each Other

In order to facilitate this enquiry I am going to offer a model of masculinity and femininity, and how they relate. This model is influenced by modern teachers such as David Deida, Barry Long, John Welwood and Daniel Odier, the perennial and tantric philosophical traditions, and by my own lived enquiry in solitude, in intimate relationship and in community. I am not, of course, proposing an academic enquiry. I am proposing an existential enquiry - the sort Buddhism proposes when it says 'meditate, look within, and you will experience your true'. Put bluntly, it's not the pontifactory academic model, but the suck-it-and-see model, in which you yourself become the object of the enquiry.

The experiments of the Japanese scientist Dr Masaru Emoto (the one who takes the photos of water-crystals) are fantastic, simple, graphic illustrations of my model of the fundamental natures of the masculine and feminine. He tells water "I hate you", and its crystals cringe and deform. He tells the water "I love you", and they sparkle and expand. Now - water is matter, which comes from the Latin 'mater' meaning mother. Matter (including water) is the expression of the feminine principle, and in his experiments we can see how it (she) offers us the utterly and perfectly reliable reflection of our intentions, our creative (or destructive) impulses, our consciousness - in other words, of the masculine principle. It's as simple as that. The feminine perfectly reflects the masculine.

Don't get hung up on 'man' and 'woman'. We all have masculine, and we all have feminine. However, on the other hand, there IS a particular connection between woman and the feminine, and man and the masculine - and to deny this is to flip into a kind of anti-sexist fundamentalism. So (just to stress this point) let's take the stereotypical example of a heterosexual couple with a masculine-dominant man and a feminine-dominant woman. Like the water-crystals, her deepest feminine nature (deeper than the surface waves of her personality) will always, always, always offer the perfect and infallible reflection of mood, of intention, of authenticity, of reliability - she feels and knows it all. Like the water. I know that's hard to swallow. It's hard for the feminine - so much power to own! And it's hard for the masculine - again, so much power, and yet a demand for such humility. Whichever way he turns, he's standing in front of the same mirror! Yes, there are a thousand and one subtleties we'll need to discuss, but this is the hub of it.

In Step One we get to know essence-of-masculine. Our masculine gets to know the egolessness that is required for relationship. In order to do this he must connect with TRUTH. Sorry - I know it's an unpopular word in this relativistic age of 'your truth' and 'my truth' and 'everyone's truth', but THE truth (deeper and more fundamental than any faith, or philosophy, or even enlightenment) is that here, in the ever-evolving present: all is unlimited and eternal sacred mystery - anything less is simply a lack of appreciation. Even if we have 'found God', or 'oneness', or 'self-

realisation' – all is sacred mystery. And connection with truth, and devotion to truth, identification with truth, surrender to truth – all of these are supremely important to the masculine. Which is just as well, because without this, he will feel impotent and desperate in the face of the ego-shattering mirror of the feminine. But standing in sacredness he experiences true masculine power. And the masculine will die for his truth. Masculine men go to war willingly for their truths. This is why it is so important that the masculine attunes to the truth, and not to belief systems.

How to check he's got it? How to make sure it's not another belief-posture - another mentally-, intellectually-, or spiritually-correct standpoint? By placing him in front of the feminine! She will earth him. She will expose any pretence. She will crack him. She will bring him into intimacy – if, that is, he accepts what the water-crystals show: the precision and perfection of her reflection. Which he won't. At least, not at first. At least, not all the time. Which is why stage one for the feminine is cultivation of her power.

Just as the masculine won't be able to take the personality-shattering mirroring of the feminine unless he is rooted in the power of devotion, presentness and sacredness, the feminine won't be able to be in full relationship with the masculine until she is rooted in complete confidence in her own deepest nature and knowing. And I know this sounds TOTALLY corny, and 'naïf', and all sorts of words like that, but: her deepest nature is love. How do we know? Back to the water...

Dr Emoto's photos show that the most perfectly formed water-crystals take shape when the intention we direct towards the water is (in his words) 'love and gratitude'. In other words, water (and by extension, all matter) in its natural condition is resonant with the vibration of love. It is vibrating love. The more undisturbed the jungle river, the desert oasis, the iceberg - the more it is emanating love. Thus, very, very importantly: although the feminine is 'passive' and receptive to the input of the masculine, it is also 'active' and has an impulse of its own: to radiate love. It radiates love. Its reflection is not that of an empty mirror, but the reaction of love.



This doesn't mean the feminine is all candy-flossy and lovey-dovey – that brand of pink and fluffy femininity is just a disempowered, collusive patriarchal imitation. No, it means that – in all of her birthing and dying, her summers and winters, her sunshine and her storms, at her molecular core the feminine is the expression of love. And this is what feminine-dominant men and women have to own. This is what they have to open to, and root in, in order to be able to guide the masculine in his timeless flight of truth.

And this is the challenge of relationship. The masculine and feminine both need to root in their essences in order not to get caught in the foam and spray of personality conflict, numbness and disillusion. This means years of practice. It is a path. They both need to spend time rooted in their essences. Only then can they differentiate between essence and personality. Only then can they distinguish personality reactivities from archetypal responses. This means masculine community that supports the masculine in rooting in presentness, sacred mystery and truth, and feminine community that supports the feminine in rooting in the raw power of love. And it means couples who embark on the journey of relationship understanding that they are not just two personalities bound in romance and/or duty, but also two representatives of the fundamental principles of existence, seeking to manifest the marriage of matter and spirit, love and will, beauty and truth. As the Buddhists would have it: life itself seeking the realisation of the oneness of samsara and nirvana. Or as the Christian prayer would have it: seeking to manifest heaven on earth.

### Step Two - We Enquire Into Our Relationship With 'Nature' And (At The Same Time) Deepen Our Sense Of Community

I've put the word 'nature' in inverted commas because 'nature' isn't just trees and flowers and tigers and worms – everything is nature. It's just that, unlike the undisturbed water-crystals that resonate with love, some nature is in a less 'natural' condition. And also: 'nature' is not 'out there somewhere'. We are nature too. And we are not in our natural state right now either.

Which brings us to step two - which is all about expansion. It is about expanding our vision of the masculine/feminine dynamic. It's about seeing it at play outside the personal and social domains, out in nature - in other words, it's about seeing it everywhere. We had to begin understanding these cosmic principles at a personal and interpersonal level, otherwise our understanding would've been abstract and ungrounded. But now that we've 'got' that to some extent, we need to explore the full picture: the possibility that the whole of creation (matter, mother, gaia - the feminine) is a reflection of (masculine) consciousness. In this sense - although (in general) women have a privileged connection with the feminine, and men with the masculine - we are all feminine bodies, enlivened by masculine consciousness. In Hindu terms, we are all Shakti, enlivened by Shiva. And in this sense (whether there is an overarching Divinity or not), we are all co-creators of reality.

Is this true or not? Quantum Physics seems to be suggesting it is. But it is certainly not as simple as 'you create your own reality' (in the usual new-agey sense), which at best would be an individualistic and incomplete concept. After all, even if we are all masculine-consciousnesses eternally dancing in the mirror of our reflections, there are many consciousnesses - not only those of individuals, but those of families, communities, races and religions, and those of other species, even of trees and plants. But again, this is not an academic question. It cannot be answered intellectually. It's another suck-it-and-see.

One thing does seem certain though - that we have an overly individualistic self-conception, that we overestimate the degree to which we are free-thinking, uniquely creative beings, and that we underestimate the degree to which we are conditioned by the DNA of our ancestors, and the belief systems and behavioural conditionings circulating in our cultures. In a very real physical and psychological way, we are cells within the molecules of larger communities. And our isolated and narcissistic individualism is a distortion.

By gathering together in large numbers, and sharing our awe, our humility, our humanity and our divinity - we soften the edges of our individualism and separatism. And we augment the 'morphic

field' of community. The resonance swells. In the words of sound therapist Jonathan Goldman, we 'entrain'. The classic example of entrainment is a the room of pendulum clocks set at random, which within twenty four hours somehow synchronise. By gathering in community we begin to experience ourselves as belonging, as faces of the collective - as personalities who all offer one unique reflection of something that unites us all.

But this isn't enough. All community has a context. There's even a context to the sense of community we feel at a rock concert, or a football match. So it's very important to celebrate together, but our collectivity must be carefully contextualised. And in this case that means that the celebration must be imbued with the honouring of the masculine and the feminine. How to do this? Well, the equinoxes and solstices offer four perfect opportunities.

The summer solstice offers the perfect opportunity to honour the masculine. There's something vast and open and sky-bound about midsummer, something quintessentially masculine. And the winter solstice is the perfect opportunity to honour the feminine - it's an outwardly dark time, that pulls us into ourselves - which is what the feminine does. (Christmas and the many midwinter Festivals of Light honour the re-insemination of the masculine principle - to be re-born in the Spring. And that's fine. Like in the yin-yang symbol, there's a tiny spot of light within the dark - and vice versa. But it is, of course, a blatant and ironic perpetuation of our patriarchal inheritance to honour the tiny spot, and totally omit any honouring of the vast darkness that surrounds it!)

And then finally, there are the spring and autumn equinoxes, which are times of balance of the light and dark - and which offer perfect opportunities to honour the masculine and feminine side by side. This then is step three - in which we expand our enquiry into the fundamental natures of the masculine and feminine onto the cosmic canvas of sun and moon and seasons. And at the same time, as we gather together to celebrate - we transcend our individualistic isolation, and expand and consolidate the energy field of community.

### Step Three - We Apply All Of This Practically

By now, having become immersed together in the vocabulary of masculine/feminine dynamics, we will be faced with the stunning contradiction between all we are trying to live within ourselves, in our relating, in our seasonal celebrations – and the dominant culture that surrounds us, and controls the speed and direction of the bulk of our activity.

Sociologists talk about the ‘privatisation’ of spirituality – by which they mean that in a secular age, it’s something you keep to yourself... and make sure you’re back in the office on Monday morning. Unlike religious cultures in which everything from table manners, to child rearing, to commercial law, to political ethics was/is determined by reference to the religion, in today’s fast-forwarded ‘western’ world all is decided, at best, by reasonableness – and anything supposedly supra-reasonable is kept well out of the flow of mainstream culture.

However, this split just doesn’t work for those of us who wish to honour ourselves, and the life-force that runs through us - and honour the world we live in, and hear her, respond to her, and be guided by her. Honouring is not an intellectual thing. ‘To honour’ is a verb, a doing word – and in this third and final step we complete the move from being to doing or, more accurately, we begin to bring our being into complete congruence with our doing.

The problem is that right now we’re caught up in a cultural machine that is the reflection of the collective consciousness of our times – so (a) it requires an almost superhuman determination to be even a quite-ethical-consumer, or fairly-green, and (b) even if we are above-average eco-friendly, it doesn’t really make that much of a difference. “Nevertheless” comes the retort, “better to light one candle than curse the darkness”. Yes, but if this third step is preceded by the other two, we can have lots of candles – which we can light at the same time, and point in the same direction. In other words, we will already be united in our shared context, and therefore be able to take collective action – which will make it much easier, and much more effective.

This is not about social, environmental and political change from an ethical or moral point of view, or even from a survival point of view (because of impending climatic disaster, or because the oil's going to run out). It is simply that the masculine and feminine seek to align – fully. And the creation of A Culture Of Honouring is the full alignment. At the individual level, to stop short of their union is to not be fully alive. At the collective level, to stop short of A Culture Of Honouring is to frustrate evolution.

Yes, Dr Emoto's photos show the exquisite and sacred precision with which the feminine mirrors the masculine, but this doesn't mean (as some of the spiritually inclined would have it) that therefore "all you have to do is work on yourself, and the outside world will look after itself". This is another misunderstanding (a la 'you alone create your reality') – a 'leaned-back' one, which perpetuates the privatisation of spirituality, and therefore the continued dominance of materialistic consciousness in the public arena. No, we have to act because although in essence we are not-of-this-world – this world is made of us. It is our mirror. In the social and environmental degradation we see around us, we see the mirror of our being. The world invites us to look upon our own degradation – and offers us choice. We are evolution. We are not spectators on the sidelines of evolution. Evolution is us.

Some of us (probably most of us) know the ridiculousness of eating food that's shipped in refrigerators from the other side of the globe, we see the banality of consumerism, and we see the wrongness of our over-eating while our brothers and sisters in other countries under-eat, or starve. But the grooves and ruts the dominant culture runs along keep us separate from each other, and busy fluttering at the surface level of our personalities. However, by cultivating steps one and two, we prepare for collective action that springs from a shared meta-context – giving us unity, inspiration, and power-in-numbers. But the crucial point is to begin with step one - otherwise this will just be another well-intentioned revolution.

*Links to the work of Sheldrake, Emoto, Odier, Welwood, Deida, Long and Goldman can be found on the Culture Of Honouring website.*

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*a social movement for the honouring of both the feminine and the masculine*