

## THE REVOLUTIONARY CHALLENGE OF GAY-CENTERED INNER WORK

*How do you think gay men should confront their Shadow?  
And what's the purpose?*

—From a letter to the author

Let me answer your questions this way.

There are gay men today trying to explore and fulfill an authentic living homosexual tradition, a tradition going back before Plato which will likewise stretch into the distant future. It is the archetypal tradition of gay-centered Spirit, that is, honoring and practicing the self-realization of the “god-ness” within gayness itself, its sacred progenitor, its royal mysterium. It is this Gay Spirit that creates homosexual love as a magnetic center of inner value, compelling our sexual orientation and identity. Out of this Spirit comes a sensibility and a procreativity of stunning importance not only to us but for all humanity. To not only participate in but also wake up to this fecund Gay Spirit self-consciously, to seek its knowledge and wisdom in ever more purposeful and actualizing ways, is to join with our mystical forebears to fulfill the revolutionary promise of our gayness and thereby help usher humanity through its current crisis to a more humane and mature form of social life.

This is the way of Faerie consciousness today, the path of Gay Spirit Self-realization. This is the tradition into which I myself was initiated through an earth-shattering inner descent that overtook me starting in late 1974, as recounted in my book *Visionary Love* (Treeroots Press, 1980). Through a profound and prolonged confrontation with my own Gay Shadow, with the place inside where I felt deeply inferior and wounded, I gradually came into psychological relationship not only with what had previously thwarted inner healing but with an underlying archetypal Force that I can only call Homodeity. In

consequence of the all-consuming impact of what felt like a wholly unanticipated and unspeakably profound spiritual initiation, I vowed from then on to dedicate my life and work to this sacred homosexual path and its ultimate unfolding in us all. From then on I sought to honor this archetypal truth of Self-realization by living each moment as a gay man in utmost psychological self-honesty, seeking thereby to fully feel and engage my gay feelings, heart and psyche in an ever-deepening alchemy of love, learning, growth and initiation inside, and striving to engage this homo-focused way of mindful evolutionary being with others as authentically and fully as I could.

As this new understanding sprouted in me I began to discover writings on gay-centered thought, and then in 1976 I met Harry Hay, the principal founder of the '50s Mattachine Society. Harry was the first person I ever encountered who also seemed to *see* Gay Spirit, who had a visionary intensity and conscious depth of commitment to that Spirit like what had been granted me through my inner initiation, such that as soon as I saw him a shock of deepest recognition surged through me. In fact we both felt an instant beckoning mutuality, and soon thereafter we banded tightly together to explore and advance the cause of Gay Spirit Self-realization, entering several years of intense effort and planning for a truly indigenous gay-centered spiritual movement that we eventually called the Radical Faeries (and which since its founding in 1979 has gone on to expansive growth in the U.S. and globally).

However, all the while that I was engaged in these efforts with Harry and the other Faeries, I was also gradually discovering to my growing dismay that no matter how "spiritual" they seemed they still, like all people who haven't systematically explored their personal psychology, acted-out from unconscious agendas of unresolved emotional issues. For example, I saw Harry, the propounder of "subject-Subject consciousness," unselfconsciously dominating and manipulating Faerie groups he was in while viciously demolishing the humanity of any Faerie who dared to resist him. Yet if I raised this issue in any way, even most politely, I was completely dismissed out of hand and even required to apologize, a humiliating and enraging experi-

ence. It turned out that nobody said nor was allowed to say anything upfrontly about any kind of psychological “funny business” that might be going on, and in fact this was an unstated rule remorselessly (and unconsciously) enforced. Through this painful realization, I saw that following and even centering on Gay Spirit does not necessarily wake a person up psychologically.

As I continued working with my own feelings through all this, I began to see more clearly both the full scope of the problem and its solution, that since Gay Spirit arises and lives in the psyche, one must face one’s psyche in an actual and full way to truly reach a fuller partnership with Gay Spirit, one must develop psychological self-awareness, and that in practice this requires a thorough encounter with one’s Gay Shadow, with what is actually most disturbing and most resisted against inside one’s own emotions.

The truth is, I have found that we are all thoroughly Shadow-ridden in the most unconscious of ways. In my experience, only people willing to ongoingly face their Shadow in full honesty can seriously enter their own psychology. Only by learning to fully partner and explore encounters with shameful inferior feelings can we redeem the “other half” of our complete psychological wholeness in Gay Spirit, and thus come into fulfillment of the awesome potentials that are our patrimony. This is why I have come to focus on exploring and articulating a gay-centered approach to gay inferior feeling life, living and differentiating that approach since my initial revelation through my friendship with Harry Hay til now.

In my experience, we gay men have only begun to scratch the surface of dealing with our “unfinished business” from dysfunctional/homophobic familial/social upbringings. And my concern in relation to Shadow is not to “fix” what’s “wrong” with gay men but to actualize our finest, deepest and most creative tendencies of Gay Spirit. To encounter and work through the “problem” of the Shadow-side in gay psyche is to undergo the greatest Grail Quest of homosexual realization, and in my opinion this is the Call to true gay adulthood. It is to make a partnership with that wounded inferiority provoked by the

yearning for gay love so as to enter our own psyche and reclaim it as gay, re-owning projections not only to work through unfinished business but to become a worthy companion to the Sacred Spirit. This is the truest meaning and fulfillment of Homosexual Romance that I know of. And as I have also discovered through experience, those who are not actively answering this Call to psychological responsibility are instead, just like our biological families and the rest of society, busily unconsciously acting out and projecting covert Shadow agendas of unfinished business with violence and destruction.

Gay Spirit and Gay Shadow I find are two sides of one coin, and there needs to be a Sacred Wedding instead of the cop-out of pursuing the Light while squashing (or avoiding or "letting go of" etc. etc.) the Dark. This dilemma encapsulates what I believe will be the central politics of the coming century, a new politics of the individual psyche and its internal liberation. Stated in plain language, this revolutionary politics will demand that "the ongoing murderous genocide of the Shadow-side must cease!" A thorough exploration of inferior-feeling life in relation to Self-realization of Spirit is called for. Yet as is always true under actual revolutionary conditions, such understanding is highly dangerous because it summons a real power that seriously threatens the reigning oppressors, which in this case means the forces of toxic repression that are ensconced in the very psyche of the person seeking such understanding! The revolutionary nature of this truth is nowhere better demonstrated than when it provokes a hot resistance in the perceiver, since ironically that very resistance is at the same time the doorway to a new, necessary and actual liberation. We have all been raised and live in a ferocious psychological tyranny of unconscious repression and scapegoating projection, and the overthrow of that fascistic domination in oneself and in all people is the real revolution to come.

So in response to your question of why should a gay man confront his Shadow, my answer is that your very need to ask the question reveals your own condition: that you yourself must be dominated in an emotional sense by your own Gay Shadow, that you do not appreciate how your own secret issues

of unresolved pain, shame, rage and unmet need in your own sense of self decisively taint all your thoughts and actions. I have not yet met a single person without a dominating Shadow, and taking responsibility for that basic fact strikes me as the only alternative to participating in a monstrous social system where people smarmily collude to murder their own nasty feelings and issues while secretly acting them out in vicious underhanded ways, starting in the family. As long as people collude in such a rapacious false-self system, whether consciously or not, they are fatally compromised. To wake up to one's Shadow, therefore, to seek growingly conscious relationship with it, is to withdraw from unconscious merger in the irresponsible mass mind and move towards actual emotional adulthood and autonomous individuality. This is the principle of psychological Self-realization, as C.G.Jung would say, individuation or wholeness of self.

As to why a gay man should seek to partner and come to terms with his Gay Shadow, consider that, in gay-identified persons, the sense of sexual identity arises from an overwhelming, compelling experience of fundamental Eros homosexual in nature, which is a psychological experience occurring within a gay psyche. How much, then, will Gay Shadow dominate experience of Gay Spirit and Gay Soul in that psyche, since Shadow dominates in all psyches raised to castrate the dark side of the mind, and since gay minds additionally must carry a violent collective scapegoat myth that says gayness itself is evil, rot and ruin? Perhaps the cruelest effect of homophobia is the internal creation of a hugely crushed/crushing Gay Shadow, whose subsequent protection by the person's own psychological defenses brings a veritable Trojan Horse into the innermost citadel of their Gay Soul, where it can perpetually poison and betray their finest potentials.

If so, then it is our fundamental duty to expose this issue and face it squarely. In fact, it is the greatest political and moral challenge of our times. Yet this challenge I find is actually the hardest thing for anyone to do unless they have to, to really face their own Shadow. Therefore, engaging Gay Shadow takes focus, persistence, and serious confrontation in the arena of self-

honesty. For you, perhaps this could start with identifying feelings of strong shaming judgment about aspects of self or others. If you examine your feelings of offense and shame carefully they will lead you inside to a world of the hurt self, where a wounded, terrified boy has lurked for decades full of unresolved painful experiences. Following these experiences out by continuously expressing, processing and mirroring them leads not just to "healing" that little boy but to his being drawn into a profoundly deeper initiation inside, whereby his truest capacities and most spiritual gifts may unfold. Learning to practice *gay-centered inner work* is the developing of focus and method to undertake such a crucial initiation into archetypal Gay Spirit and the fullest re-owning of Gay Soul's promise. Only then can we say we are becoming a truly free and fulfilling people as gay.

In actuality, shameful Gay Shadow is our central problem and thus our central doorway. Obviously to successfully grapple with such a profound challenge is a developing goal still only in its earliest infancy, as the pathetic failure of current gay liberation concepts and practices shows. Nor is it sufficient to simply talk about this issue, as it is most importantly a problem of experience. Yet there are a growing number of people beginning to seriously explore the practical psychology of archetypal Gay-Centeredness through gay-centered inner work, who are thereby living out the evolving birth of nothing less than a gay liberation for the 21st century and beyond, a new liberation of the inner world of gay psyche to go with our progress in achieving external relationships and social rights. Only on this basis, through a purposeful individuation of psychological self to match our external life, can I foresee a gay maturation and spirituality worthy of those names rather than a mere front for unfinished family business and unexamined emotional assumptions.

Now is the time to seize this epochal understanding, for we are with growing momentum entering a post-AIDS world of deepening moral and spiritual bankruptcy that desperately cries out for redress. The encounter with death requires nothing less than an apotheosis risen from the very failure of modern

life and gay liberation to sufficiently nurture authentic Gay Self-realization. By facing the challenge of psychological hypocrisy in ourselves through gay-centered inner work we model the way to a necessary transformation for all, thus advancing our most hallowed traditions of archetypal Gay-Centeredness into humanity's evolutionary future, into the necessary post-Christian Aeon of Aquarius the Waterbearer, who after all was Ganymede, the Beloved Companion and Servant of Zeus.

