

## A RECENT GAY-CENTERED HISTORY LESSON

In a stunning philosophical reversal, Harry Hay, perhaps the principal founder of contemporary gay-centered thought (see his book *Radically Gay*) and longtime opponent of focusing on the issue of Gay Shadow, admits in an interview published June 26, 1998 in the Los Angeles gay paper *Frontiers* (pp. 99-103) that he is now “concentrating on removing the self-loathing that most gay men find themselves born into” through facing and engaging with it, such as at summer workshops he is leading in Oregon. He remarks that “if you come right down to it, what we have been doing for years and years and years is we have been covering it up by liquor and by drugs, hiding our basic insecurities about ourselves and who we are and how we relate,” that actually most gay men are still “saturated with” self-loathing, and that “this is something we’ve never brought up, this is something we’ve never talked about” before, even though it is “the big thing that’s facing us all at the present time.”

What is so highly ironic about these statements, is that from the time Harry first met me in 1976, a meeting and association that led to the birth of the Radical Faerie movement (see Stuart Timmons, *The Trouble With Harry Hay*), I was focusing on and espousing relations with gay psyche and Shadow, a focus Harry found personally threatening and philosophically repugnant, and which directly led to the angry dissolution of our association in 1981. At that time and after many rebuffed attempts to address this issue in our friendship, I forthrightly denounced the dangerous and aggressive hostility against facing psyche which Harry was persistently promoting, and then I and Don Kilhefner, another Faerie founder who also repudiated the sway of unconsciousness, started a new group, Treeroots, to specifically address gay liberation psychology, while Harry, dismissing me as theoretically “hetero,” continued



to develop his focus on extrovert celebrations of gay-centered space in the Radical Faerie movement.

Now we see Harry in his interview ingenuously admitting, as if it had just occurred to him, that the challenge of Gay Shadow is actually paramount to gay men's further progress, and that heretofore he hadn't named this fact. In that way Harry's statement really amounts to an indirect *mea culpa* in which he admits that his stubborn resistance to Shadow issues was wrong, that in spite of all his prior vehement denunciations and disregardings both theoretical and practical, purposeful struggle for the further advance of gay liberation has moved irrevocably into the terrain of gay psyche and must come through engaging the ferocious inferior-feeling life still lurking all too sinisterly there.

At the same time, we can also recognize in the indirectness of Harry's *mea culpa* a continuing psychological naiveté and hypocritical lack of self-awareness that can be seen repeatedly in his interview. For example, he argues that denial of Gay Shadow keeps us from "recognizing that our gayness is a gift of mother nature to us, giving us a window on the world that others don't have," yet I and many others for years witnessed Harry propounding the Gay Window while unselfconsciously dominating and violating other gay men, a contradiction demonstrating that even assertively naming that Window in no way necessarily goes with facing denial. Although it is important to honor Harry's pioneering articulation of a homocentric view, it is actually fulfillment of that view's promise, not just its recognition, which unconscious Gay Shadow crucially foils.

Harry's born-again approach to gay psychology comes out further where he always names Gay Shadow as "self-loathing," and where in each of its three references it is named for the sake of now eliminating it: "removing the self-loathing," "helping ourselves overcome the self-loathing," "the big thing that's facing us...is to get rid of the self-loathing." Here we see not only appropriate opposition to internalized homophobia but continued demonization of Gay Shadow and thus of important and necessary aspects of the Gay Self. It is only in the further differentiation and reconciliation of all the disparate aspects of the Gay Self's fullest wholeness that true homosexual



individuation can occur, and not simply in an “overcoming” of the obstacles and resistances offered by the gay unconscious. For this reason Harry’s intellectual and practical change of heart signals, not any leadership in this new area but, in order I think to retain even a shred of personal and theoretical integrity regarding the world of gay psyche that he has done so much to enable, his inevitable obeisance to the overwhelming fact that the next stage of gay liberation lies in the growing theory and practice of gay-centered inner work, through which encounter with Gay Shadow leads to the profoundest journeys of gay spiritual erotic initiation and Self-realization.

After all, as we should keep in mind and as Harry notes in his interview, his efforts in formulating the first *Mattachine* and its philosophy were concerned to “change our attitude about ourselves and about each other from a negative one to a positive one,” “to organize ourselves...to find out who we were” from an auspicious point of view, working to develop “our own self-image, our own feeling of appreciation of ourselves and each other.” The profound success of this effort manifests as the victorious basis for today’s modern embrace of positive gay identity, community and healthy psychological functioning. In that sense, Harry’s initial intuition has now flowered against all resistance into an increasingly claimed right to be gay-identified and to freely, fiercely and most fully validate, expand and explore our gayness.

It only makes sense, then, that as Harry’s initial efforts with that of many others have now led to a decisive conscious shift from negative to positive, so now on that basis we can turn to working on a shift in relation to our gay unconscious, where a powerful homophobic negativism still dominates in the form of unresolved shame, pain, rage and unmet needs, whereby our gayness and its potential are still colonized, dehumanized, poisoned by oppression. Therefore, with the degree of reconciliation between gay ego and unconscious afforded by the success of Harry’s theory and practice of gay liberation, an entirely new and greater, necessary and inevitable extension of that gay liberation and growth can and must now occur. In other words, the gay liberation movement is most fundamentally about



the full realization of Homosexual True Self, which is a lifelong proposition, and so to come out as gay and take one's rightful gay place in the world is not the end of becoming gay or resolving internalized homophobia, but only the actual beginning. Thus as homosexual development successfully moves to individuate an adult gay ego personality achieving fulfillment through full participation in the realms of satisfying social life, then the table is so to speak being set for a new and even more wonderful meal to also be served, the sustenance of beneficent gay ego-psyche relations not only fueling an extrovert-oriented gay identity and life but in a deeper espousal of Gay Spirit's archetypal fertility birthing the inward maturational development of that positive gay self through encounter with its now split-off negative side, and undergoing thereby that creation of psychological self-consciousness which constitutes a sacred descent to the mystical wedding of the alchemical *coniunctio*. To espouse, delineate and practice psychologically-based methods to comprehend and facilitate this next step in gay liberation theory and practice thereby constitutes the most responsible, loving way of receiving Harry's legacy and passing it on to the future, it is to claim a gay identity and freedom of association not only to fuck and partner but to enter our own gay beingness itself and learn to work with that being in terms of differentiating unresolved feelings and issues. Thereby, and in my opinion only thereby, can we truly fulfill Harry's intent for us, and not only his intent but that of all our gay forebears, Edward Carpenter and Karl Ulrichs back to Plato and even prior to the first composers of *Gilgamesh*, that great stream of Gay Self-realization by which archetypal homosexual psyche actualizes itself and thus fulfills its evolutionary procreative duty, a mighty stream of transformational libido that flows within our own gay hearts today, and that will similarly flow on in gay generations to come.

Now we live in an era where collective social roles and identities are increasingly losing their hold over defining the individual, for everybody, and so we stand at the dawn of an entirely new epoch, at the birth of the politics of the individual psyche.

Human society initially evolved as a sort of group or



collective identity and mind which has been gradually devolving to the individual. In that progression our time is still but "prehistoric," still only proto-individual, with people still born into collective answers to individual being. The process of psychological collectivization results for the individual in a shame-based personality where internal ego control is shaped by viciously repressive defenses that continuously murder one's own unconscious as a way of managing it, that establish a false sense of self which betrays one's authentic True Self and its destiny to the exploitative power relations of the external social collective.

Such a violent, controlling system of personality and society amounts to a form of *psychological fascism* that arose as humanity's initial answer to animal instincts, as a way to shape expression of the primordial archetypes of the mind, but which is now as outdated as instinctual control was when human consciousness first began to differentiate from our animal ancestors. The evolutionary rise of a collective psychology required the extensive development of the psychological mechanism of repression so the individual could conform to an increasingly differentiated and complex social collectivity, and this growing repression in turn eventually served to facilitate constellation of the ego complex, of a conscious sense of cohesive personal identity separate from the unconscious. Yet due to the unchecked continuation of this same evolutionary process, the forces of collective repression now oppose the actualization of the ego's full individuality just as that individuality now seeks to become ever more true to itself. In the face of continuously magnifying pressure from these inherent contradictions, the ancient political system of a collective psyche must give way. Its intrinsically violent and hypocritical violation of personhood in the name of giving that person meaning and value is too wastefully immoral to long continue into an era where each individual's finest capacities and potentials are needed if humanity is to avoid the dreadful fate of becoming an evolutionary dead end.

As modern Westernized societies continue to "advance," they increasingly provoke the very contradictions that will force



the democratic birth of the psychological individual. While in today's world some people may have achieved an extrovert life of democratic rights and dignity, internally no such conditions yet prevail. Internally the domination, cruelty and exploitation of a dictatorship still abide. Therefore the surging drive toward internal individuality — toward a true democratic political and social actuality — will not succeed anywhere except through great struggle and pain, for its success means the utter overthrow of universalized definitions of personhood, responsibility, family and society that still reign inside the individual as they do communally even in so-called democratic societies. The current forces of rulership, though weakened by the need for fundamental change, will still do all in their power to thwart and obliterate this coming revolution of basic values, thus its coming will amount to a quantum leap heralded by a total war waged against its arrival.

It is here in terms of this coming epochal war for the soul of humanity that our gay potential can play a key role. By first learning to overthrow our own internalized fascism through gay-centered inner work, an innovative task for which the concatenation of our archetypal gay nature, our ostracism by homophobia and the rise of our modern liberation movement uniquely equips us to face, we thereby model and mediate in our own gay personhoods that great transition through which all of humanity must subsequently go.

Seen in this way, gay-centered inner work emerges as the next phase of a liberation movement with profound implications for all people and for the birth of real democracy, because it is a movement uniquely founded in the deepest experience and espousal of individual truth and self-authenticity. Therefore, today's concatenation of historic forces is giving birth to a grassroots democratic process of honest Gay Self-realization whose innate potential is open to all gay men by simple virtue of struggling for conscious partnership with Gay Shadow, the motivation to enter and persist in that struggle being fired by the inherent urge to individuate further as that clashes with the almost total vacuum of honoring and nurturing that desire by modern consumer life or current theories or practices of gay



liberation. Under this historic impetus, the success of gay liberation will inevitably break through our inner chains to fathom the depthful realms of gay psyche, and as it does our growing efforts collectively will emerge as nothing less than a veritable anti-fascist liberation front in the midst of the occupying system of murderous false-self control, an expansive revolutionary source which, through a grand historic culmination of modern gay liberation as a social force for True Self, will with other such forces fatally undermine the toxic false-self system and its shame-based values from within.

Perhaps just as Rudy Gemreich, the first person recruited by Harry to the Mattachine Society, said of Harry's efforts with him (according to Harry in his interview), "as far as he was concerned this was the most dangerous thing that anybody had ever talked about and, yes, he was absolutely with me 100 percent," so too an increasing number of gay men will feel the thrilling danger of Gay Self-realization calling from within their own gay hearts and souls. In responding to this Call for psychological self-awareness emanating from archetypal Gay-Centeredness, a man can achieve initiation into a vibrantly new yet ancient, fecund homosexual warriorship and heroism, thereby joining and contributing to a dynamically profound "good fight" that is now brewing against the virulent source of repressive triumphalism, an epic political struggle in the human psyche over the very definition of foundational *meaning* more ruthless and total in a symbolic sense than even that disputed during World War II, a struggle to shift humanity's basic course which goes so far beyond mere "gay rights" that it can only lead to an ineffable exaltation and transfiguration in the coming dawn of humanity's real exit from the darkness of our evolutionary prehistory, the still-dominant era of the collective mind, into the true historical freedom of psychological individuality.

Gay Spirit again conspires to place homosexual fate at the crossroads of pivotal change and transition in humanity's development. Let us learn from this historic moment of our forefather Harry Hay's admission, brothers, and seize the day!



## A NOTE TO LESBIANS

Although I have discussed archetypal Gay-Centeredness from a man's perspective, I firmly believe that a corresponding woman's perspective also exists, that is, archetypal Lesbian-Centeredness, lesbian homosexual libidinal Intelligence, a Lesbian Double, a lesbian parallel to the Uranian complex, and so on. I encourage interested lesbians to pioneer equivalents of gay-centered inner work, and in fact, my feeling is that lesbian contributions to understanding psyche will ultimately provide a crucial edge in the final collapse of that totalitarian collectivism which still oppresses the human mind.





## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Mitch Walker was born in Culver City, California in 1951, and has been exploring both psychology and gayness since he was thirteen years old. He was the first writer to propose a gay-centered Jungian psychology in his 1975 Master's thesis *Gay Depth Psychology* and subsequent 1976 paper, "The Double, an Archetypal Configuration," in the Jungian journal *Spring*. Since then he has continued to explore gay archetypal truths as a homosexual shamanic psychologist in his writings, practice and a growing community of people engaged in gay-centered inner work.

He is the author of *Men Loving Men, A Gay Sex Guide and Consciousness Book* (Gay Sunshine Press, 1977/1993) and *Visionary Love: A Spirit Book of Gay Mythology and Transmutational Faerie* (Treeroots Press, 1980), contributor to Mark Thompson's *Gay Spirit* (St. Martin's Press, 1988) and *Gay Soul* (HarperCollins, 1993), and co-founder with Harry Hay and Don Kilhefner of the Radical Faerie movement in 1979. His most recent manuscript is *The Uranian Soul: Studies in Gay-Centered Jungian Psychology for a New Era of Gay Liberation* (of which a short section has been published as "Jung and Homophobia" in *Spring 1991*).

For further information about gay-centered inner work contact Doug Sadowick at (323) 460-4244 or Chris Kilbourne at (323) 512-7029, or write to 7060 Hollywood Blvd., Suite #307, Los Angeles, CA 90028.



# THREE SHORT ESSAYS ON GAY-CENTEREDNESS IN MEN



*I have written these three short essays to introduce the interested reader to the psychology of archetypal Gay-Centeredness in men and to the place of gay-centered inner work in the unfolding of a new millennium. I hope these meditations on gay liberation and the rise of authentic individuality will inform and inspire you to seek out more.*

—From the Introduction