

---

# Reworking Gender Archetypes

## A Masculist Enquiry

**Peter Hubbard**

### Abstract

In terms of difference, the analysis of gender in cultural and psychological thinking has had the benefits of a feminist input for some decades now. How might 'masculist' input into this debate be framed? One strand of the current masculist debate attaches itself to feminist analyses, another polarises around essentialist/constructivist arguments, yet another seeks to establish its own experiential ground.

This paper proposes a reworking of an established psychological hypothesis concerned with masculine and feminine archetypes. In doing so it recognises the inherent duality of gender. It attempts to do this from a masculist standpoint, and as such, to honour both essentialist and constructivist approaches.

In doing so, this paper hopes to suggest a theoretical frame that can be used in working psychotherapeutically with men and with the relationships that men form. This is not only therapeutic, but also political work.

### Introduction

Intense curiosity about the nature and experience of being human draws me to the practice of psychotherapy. Such practice is underpinned by a variety of theoretical formulations. Whether acknowledged or not, these formulations depend on hypotheses about the gendered experience of being human. Such hypotheses help us focus the lens of our perception not only on intrapsychic and interpersonal processes, but also on political and cultural processes.

Differentiating the nature and experience of being human along gender lines has produced analyses that have challenged some basic constructs about gender. Essentially these analyses have arisen out of a refusal by one gender to have its identity dictated to it by the other. As a movement among some women began to examine and refute the constructs about women from the dominant patriarchal analysis, so there is a movement among some men to examine the constructs about men that come not only from this patriarchal analysis but from the feminist analyses as well. This latter has not always been well understood or received.

## Differentiation

In terms of deriving theoretical formulations towards a more coherent analysis for men, some interesting questions have begun to be asked about the experience of being male.

We hear the expression: The New Man. Does this mean there has been some split in the image of a man - between some older concept of what a man is, and some contemporary concept? Or perhaps this is to be understood as a shift in what has been culturally sanctioned or not sanctioned in men's attitudes and behaviour?

If there is a split, is this a classical psychological result of extreme anxiety? Or perhaps a response to some evolutionary imperative, some future calling, operating at a species level?

And there have been potential red herring questions, such as: Is there a nature versus nurture conflict here? Are we born or are we made? Can the debate be seen simply as the essentialists in the blue corner slugging it out with the constructivists in the red.

And with these questions I keep asking myself. How might all this help me understand what it may mean for me to be a 'good son of the culture'? By which I mean, what it may mean for me to be a man who experiences and expresses himself within the conventions and roles that are available, encouraged and condoned for men in this culture with all its historical roots and antecedents.

When I consider the perennial existential concerns to do with who I am and my place in the larger scheme of things, do these questions help me stay focussed on my male experience?

These are large questions. They open up possibilities concerned with further

differentiating an essential male experience from an essential female experience not just in terms of biological and evolutionary determinants, but also in terms of the archetypal and gendered determinants of masculine and feminine. It is with respect to these archetypal and gendered determinants that I would like to develop a modest proposal to do with masculine and feminine, and to attempt to do this in a late 20th century masculinist sort of way. In doing so, rather than oppose the essentialist and constructivist viewpoints, I would like to keep holding both as complementary lenses.

Not unsurprisingly, when I spoke of this as a possible process or project, there were often lively discussions which sought to convince me of the logical fallacy in this premise. It was impossible, so the argument went, for me to take this particular critical standpoint because I was a man and therefore not able to free myself from the context of the dominant patriarchal paradigm. There was no standing outside it. For masculinist, they asserted, read more-of-the-same.

## Archetype

One such discussion highlighted my theme. I found myself enjoying a leisurely discussion with a couple, a man and a woman who were in a relationship together. We were talking about the way we saw things, and because of my curiosity, I had been asking them how they saw their relating.

In the course of considering this, the guy commented that he was “working on [his] archetypal feminine side within”. My immediate response was an involuntary nod of understanding followed by an extraordinary embarrassment as I was unable to locate if he were being serious, being smug, or being incredibly naff. Whatever, it was certainly interesting. Equally as interesting to me, however, was the response of his partner. She went quite impassive and unreadable to me.

The conversation would return to my thoughts, and I recognised a growing unease in me. I didn't know what this was about. I know we talk about masculine and feminine. And we use the word ‘archetype’, as in ‘masculine and feminine archetype’ when we want our mention of masculine and feminine to sound especially authoritative.

Yet, what is an archetype?

It is actually a little elusive to pin down, because it ‘exists’ in a realm of experiencing beyond that of our upper cognitive faculties, beyond our normal waking consciousness. An archetype has been called ‘a thought in the mind of

God', therefore beyond our ken, as it were.

Beyond the word, beyond the form, beyond the image or the sense - this is a way of understanding the realm of archetype. As soon as we name or picture an archetype, we bring it into form. We step it down from no-form into our conceptual realm, we have an image, we call it something. These images and names are not in themselves archetypes. They represent them.

So when we talk about the archetypes of masculine and of feminine, what we language, name, see around us, imagine, are not the archetypes themselves. They are representations of the archetypes of masculine and feminine stepped down into cognition. And this is the point. As representations, they will have laid on them all the subjective responses, all the biases, all the partial understandings with which, as human beings, we are prone to colour our experiences. In this way they are constructed.

The idea of archetypes themselves is that they are sort of essentially 'neutral'. In practice I'm suggesting they never are. So I suspect the phrase 'feminine archetype' presupposes a list of qualities and traits that we call feminine and which are certainly not neutral. Conversely, and equally if differently biased, there will be a list of masculine qualities and traits.

And if like me you have been trained to be a good son or a good daughter of the culture, you and I have probably been trained to expect the women in our lives to embody and be the Feminine and to expect the men to embody and be the Masculine, and express in the world accordingly.

I can sympathise with the progressive and emancipated protestations to this statement raised from both sides of the gender fence. But I also suspect that this training will have been imprinted developmentally at a basic unconscious level. I may have a range from an instinctual to a cognitive sense of when and how I am being different from what is 'expected', yet this will always be with reference to the inculcated norm.

What are the qualities and traits of feminine, of masculine? I could suggest a reading list that would be sufficiently comprehensive, but I suspect you already know what it would contain:

- anything to do with softness, nurture, emotional intuitive thinking, receptivity, subjectiveness and the ilk is presumed feminine.
- anything to do with assertion, one-pointedness, action, logical

linear thinking, strength, objectivity etcetera is presumed masculine.

And so on. Familiar, and definitely not neutral.

My question is: This division - How come? Who says so?

When the answer comes back that somehow it is genetically, or naturally, or spiritually preordained, we must become very suspicious. It sounds like an adequate response from an essentialist viewpoint, but an answer like that tends to mask political and power agendas.

So in my search to make more meaning out of this and to try and understand my uneasy response to my friend's "I am working on my archetypal feminine side within", I turned to Carl and Emma Jung. They lay out before us a captivating concept to do with feminine and masculine - that of Anima and Animus. At its most simply expressed, Anima is the feminine within a man, Animus is the masculine within a woman: It's very neat.

I am especially interested in a man's experience. So I focus on Anima, the feminine within a man. Jung calls this the Soul Image of a man, and says that for a man this Soul Image is formed:

- of aspects of the Archetypal Feminine
- of experiences of relating with females
- of aspects from his father's Anima - a sort of psychological inheritance from father to son.

Jung suggests that Anima is most often unacknowledged in a man, and is therefore prone to be part of Shadow. Which of course means that it is likely to be projected out and so can be yearned for in another person, or despised in another person. By this process of projection, the personal quickly becomes the political.

Yet when Jung defined Anima and Animus, I found the familiar list of Qualities and Traits about the feminine and the masculine. Where had this list come from? Who had decreed that this should be so?

Jung himself writes: "These distinctions are based on observed empirical evidence, therefore are true facts." This is thunderous prose even allowing for translation, and conveys no sense of historical context.

Yet when my friend says that he is working on his feminine, I know what he means. He is working on owning and accepting for himself, and not projecting

out on to his environment where he can indulge his potential ambivalence, the qualities and traits that are decreed to be feminine.

*And there is, I believe, a trap in here for us.*

The trap for me and for my friend is to do with the naming of these particular qualities and traits as specifically feminine. Why is it that in order to be, for example, nurturing, or receptive, or intuitive, or feelings subjective, we as men have to take on somehow being feminine? We are not feminine. Though we may imagine, we cannot 'know' this experience. We live defined as male - physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually. Any quality, any trait, any behaviour we manifest will be expressed through our essential maleness.

- When I nurture I do so as a man, I am a male nurturing.
- When I am receptive I am open to receive as a man, I am a receptive male.
- When I am subjectively emotional, I experience in my male experience.

So we must avoid the trap.

## Structure

In order to do this I suggest we need to explore what the models, the mythic underpinnings are that structure this division of masculine and feminine. Then we can look at how these may be recreated or retold for the 21st century so that we can avoid some of the excesses enacted in the name of masculine and feminine, as well as avoiding the experience of psychological straitjacketing represented in what I have called the trap.

In terms of exploring models for men and the boundaries of being male, I am in favour of diversity and plurality, as I am in general in this field of psychotherapy. I want to have available many ideas of how things might be whether or not they seem contradictory. The quest for some psychological unified field theory can simply be considered as a largely unacknowledged, underlying extension of heroic myth into the discipline of psychology. Yet myth and story are important. They are means by which the deep culture is retained and by which the long patterns of our cultural life bridge the generations. They are diverse. They invest and shape equally our art and our science, and are particularly apparent in the intensely metaphoric and evanescent expression we call psychotherapy. A myth or story may be particular to a culture. The deep patterns it describes may be common to many cultures.

In terms of masculine and feminine, the deep pattern with which we are very familiar, and which is reiterated in many cultural settings, is of an archetypal duality, a creative polarity of masculine and feminine:

Sky Father

Earth Mother

In this model transcendence (sky), and immanence (earth) are archetypally gendered. This underlying mythic structure is retold here in Aotearoa for example in the story of Rangi and Papa.

The power of a deep mythic structure I suggest is greatest when it is largely unconscious. It is, quite literally, the way things are. Make it conscious, and on one hand there is released the awe and wonder that can accompany the understanding of a deep knowing, and on the other there is opened up the more analytic wondering about the extent, the edges and the provenance of the myth or the model. There is the temptation to devalue or discard it now that it is known. We see only its construction and not its essence. A process of desacralisation can be entered into. It can seem that we dispel a cloud we might rudely name as superstition; we cast out a mote in the eye of logic.

Yet there remains a paradox. Even as an almost transcendent purity seems available, even claimed in such an act, even as some moral high ground is staked out, there is a deeper story. Even as the mythic structure, the comfort of the mythic container is removed and the cool, boundless thrill of engaging the existential dilemmas alone and separate remains, at some deeper turn of the spiral, the heroic myth is again being played out. The familiar characteristics of individual striving for self knowledge and self definition reassert themselves.

So I do not want to discard the mythic quality of this model of masculine and feminine that is located in Earth and Sky, and thereby risk losing its essential spiritual locus. But I want to look at how it might be framed in a way that helps me consider an enlarged and contemporary field of exploration for my enquiry about what it may mean to be a good son of the culture.

## **Reworking The Archetypes**

I suggest we need to rework the archetypes of feminine and masculine, not in order to extrapolate some definitive new model, but as an interim expanded hypothesis to help free up our constructs systems to do with this enquiry. We need to encourage a current recounting of the ongoing myth.

My proposal is that this model, this mythic structure be expanded into a Quaternary - a Fourfold model that involves not just Sky Father and Earth Mother, but also Sky Mother and Earth Father. By doing this, the reality of gendered determinants is retained, but the location of masculine with sky only and of feminine with earth only is no longer restricted.

Sky Father	Sky Mother
Earth Father	Earth Mother

For men this involves the resurrection of the shadow archetype of Earth Father, the archetype which holds for men much of masculine expression of the qualities and traits we had hitherto given over to women. Originally these qualities and traits had been manifested in the mythic personae of the old gods of the forest and the field and of the vine. The horns and cloven feet, and the physical /sexual exuberance have been subject to considerable scrutiny and condemnation by the Sky Father religions. The old gods have been well trashed - into the devil no less, in itself an interesting political construction.

Yet the old gods belong to the old times, when not only social structures were radically different and involved far fewer people, but also when our cognitive faculties, the extent of our consciousness, may have existed at an earlier developmental stage. So also would apprehension of our essential experiences. Both Jaynes in his work on the origins of consciousness, and Wilber on the evolution of consciousness, give strong reminders that we cannot make assumptions about the past based on our current meaning-making context.

So with 'resurrection', care must be taken that old detrimental and inappropriate mythic patterns are not revived wholesale, but are repatriated into this time with discrimination. Reinvoking the mythic antagonism between fathers and sons for example, or the magical sacrifices of the fertility rites is not what I have in mind. Nor is the mythic story of the return of some messiah who will save us from the evils of this age and usher in the kingdom of god on earth. The quasi-feudal structure implied in this is not the vehicle for the depth of personal responsibility and involvement to which we are developmentally and evolutionarily called.

Earth Father can be, as his name suggests, at least earth connected. He can be cycle-oriented and elemental-spiritual. He can be husbander of the land and guardian of the threshold. He can be subjective logos, and sensual receptive.

With the repatriation of Earth Father traits and qualities, and the reconnection



that this implies with earth and an immanent spirituality, where does this leave the notion of the inner feminine for men?

I am suggesting that there is no feminine side in a man. 'Feminine side' is merely a naming, an idea that is no longer useful, because ultimately it does not reflect the gendered reality of Who-I-Am. The historical context in which this idea was appropriate has passed. The present context demands a development of the idea - one where the hero and his celestial father god no longer define the only mythology, and one where, in a world increasingly concerned with unitive power structures as much as with fragmentation and traditional oppositional power structures, culturally condoned narcissism no longer defines the politics of survival.

In its place can be developed this much more evocative, much deeper metaphor - a metaphor that keeps calling us to values and to the exercise of discrimination. It requires us as men to include that our individual expression as male can involve that which we had traditionally been required to eschew in order to fulfil our destiny as good sons of the culture. To include it and to make it our own. Ultimately it calls us not to the habitual upper cognitive, mental egoic polarising of immanence and transcendence, but to finding our way when we keep including both.

If as a man I embrace as it were both Sky Father and Earth Father, if I own and express the qualities and traits represented by the example of both, and I am willing to experience the transcendent as well as the immanent yearnings for connection and meaning, then figuratively speaking I create my masculine soul-making in a way that seems "bigger" and more accepting of diversity than at present. My deep connection with the land and my environment, with my spiritual life, and with family and friends will be profoundly affected. The political and social implications here for such as homophobia on one hand, and for partnership on another are extraordinary. The economic and legal implications for such as resource management and organisational development are similarly far-reaching. This story is only just beginning to be told.

## Conclusion

So why did my woman friend become instantly impassive and unreadable to me? I don't know, but I suspect it was because she also understood from her side the trap. It might be expressed like this:

If her man values the Feminine side in himself, then, ergo, he will value that essential experience of her as a woman. This is a lot better for her

than not being valued. She may therefore have a vested interest in retaining the naming 'feminine'.

But if he develops this feminine in himself, then what becomes her role if she is no longer required to carry it in the relationship, in the spiritual connection to earth? Is there some currently held moral high ground that would have to be relinquished?

And yet, as women are venturing down their road, they have not as far as I am aware been claiming it as an exploration of their 'masculine'. They have been claiming it as an expansion, a creative and logical extension of their 'feminine'.

A man 'getting into his feminine' may also smack somewhat of the politics of gender colonisation to her, and she may much rather he explored his 'masculine'.

However, this may make her very wary, because the experience for women of men going off to be more with themselves has historically had hard consequences for women.

This is undeniable.

It makes sense to me that she should have been unreadable to me. This is difficult territory - put this way, there does not seem to be an easy straight way through it.

I wonder if knowledge and acceptance of this fourfold model - Sky Father, Sky Mother, Earth Father, Earth Mother - because it points to the owning of projections, and to a more complex web of relating possibilities, may help allay this wariness.

The contrasexual concept of the inner feminine or masculine, Anima or Animus has had an honorable and useful short history. However, now may be the time when we can usefully discard the way those descriptions have polarised into a seemingly immutable duality. In looking at how I am expected to be as a man in order to fulfil my training as a 'good son of the culture', I want more for myself and for my sons. I want more than a training in withdrawal, in how to inhibit certain emotional experience, in culturally condoned projections. And at the same time I want to retain the uncluttered beauty of logic, the yearning for a transcendent sublime, and the glorious experience of the exercise of personal will.

Now may be the time, then, to evoke our political, historical and spiritual discrimination, to envision and to call into Being the archetypes of Masculine

and Feminine for this time in their fourfold configuration. And to engender our expression, to tell our story of the potential encoded in the seed.

## References

- Campbell, J. *The Masks of God* 4 Vols. Penguin, 1969.
- French, M. *Beyond Power - Women, Men and Morals* Jonathan Cape, 1985.
- Hillman, J. *Revisioning Psychology* Harper and Row, 1977.
- Hubbard, P. and H Palmer. *The Place of Soul in Therapy or the Place of Therapy in Soul*. In *NZAP Forum* 1996.
- Jaynes, J. *The Origins of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* Houghton Mifflin, 1990.
- Jung, C. *Collected Works* Bollingen Series, Princeton, 1953 - 79.
- Jung, E. *Aninius and Anima* Spring. 1985.
- Kupers, T. *Revisioning Men's Lives - Gender, Intimacy and Power* Guildford Press, 1993.
- Samuels, A. *The Political Psyche* Routledge, 1993.
- Scher, M. et al ed. *Counselling and Psychotherapy with Men* Sage, 1987.
- Wilber, K. *Sex, Ecology and Spirituality* Shambala, 1995.
- Wilber, K. *Up from Eden* Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.