

FOREWORD BY GAIL GODWIN

Knowing the
QUESTIONS
Living the
ANSWERS

A JUNGIAN GUIDE THROUGH THE PARADOXES OF PEACE,
CONFLICT AND LOVE THAT MARK A LIFETIME

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I would like to beg you, dear Sir, as well as I can, to have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and to try to love *the questions themselves* as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. *Live* the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing, live your way into the answer.

– Rainer Maria Rilke

Author's Note

All stories, dialogues, and dreams in this book, except those I specifically designate as being my own, reflect material people have shared with me. To protect the privacy of those people, I have carefully altered anything that might disclose the identity of particular individuals or permit the identification of actual relationships or circumstances. Any similarity between the people and situations I have used for illustration and actual people or situations is unintended and purely coincidental.

AFTERNOON REFLECTIONS

INTRINSIC ESSENCE

Like all initially unconscious material, our masculine and feminine characteristics can only come into consciousness through projections. Initially, as projections, they are external and out of our conscious awareness. As a result of our developing awareness, they are slowly recognized, taken back as our own, and reformulated into our personality. Eros, following its inherent creative patterns over time, is often our connecting energy to these figures. In our lives, it more or less follows an elemental blueprint, one that is adapted to our particular situation by our hidden teacher.

In a general conceptualization of life's progress, we might suppose that our first awareness of being buffeted by eros appears when we initially fall in love. On this particular track, we may end up marrying one of the "others." As life moves on and we approach noontime, we may find the romance has worn thin. In psychological terms, this would mean the projections have worn thin. Then we could either look for a new "other" to project onto, hoping thereby to stir our atrophy, or we could choose a second alternative. We could begin the difficult process of reclaiming our projected contents and love our partner in a deeper, more personal way. That would involve loving our partner for his or her human self, the part he or she has played in our shared lives, and being *loving* rather than *in love*. This pattern, of which I have presented only as an over-simplified version, seems to be considered the normal course by many psychologists for the beginning and maturing of love in relationships. Jung and numerous others have written about these issues and, while they are important, the directions I wish to explore are different. I want to stay more closely attuned to the turning points and the healings with which eros presents us and the desire that weaves our being, inner and outer, into the web of life.

Let us begin by envisioning a young professional woman. Her life has been a long migration from the tangled thicket of childhood. Her father had been one of those in-between men in the military—a warrant officer. Neither a member of the officer corps nor the enlisted ranks, he was a specialist in machines. He was seldom home. When he was home, he was generally drunk or headed in that direction.

One of her earliest memories was of following him around while he worked on the pile of cars in their yard. She was just beyond the toddling stage, her father's helper, fetching the tools he wanted. His communications to her were guttural, and often cursed when

she made the mistake of presenting the wrong tool with her tiny hands.

He never treasured her the way a child should be treasured, nor did he respond to her simple, childlike adoration. She did not give up, however, and faithfully helped him for years. From this early world of her father, men, and machines, she retained a feeling of poignant insignificance; a haunting question had been structured into her psyche like a broken record, *"What about me?"*

Such early questions shade all of our relationships until we resolve them. Our experiences with our parents are the first we have of eros and they imprint their patterns in us as we are formed. These models last a long time, and coming to grips with them requires that substantial energy be directed toward developing conscious awareness. They pattern our relationships with ourselves as well as with others. One can imagine how these early emotional experiences affected her inner development, that they were like placing a stone atop a seedling as it began to grow.

Early in adolescence, as her identity was struggling to develop and find its way around this stone, she met the young man she would later marry. Seeking nourishment and security, she became deeply involved with him and adopted herself into his family. He was the quiet, calm son of a stable, warm, though somewhat remote couple. Sex quickly sealed his attraction to her. They were married in their late teens and helped each other through college, graduate school, and into professions. She had become a Certified Public Accountant in a position that gave her a lot of freedom and money and the ability to move around.

As the morning of her life was running into the afternoon, she found herself in an affair she could not get out of, and this predicament brought her to my office. The affair seemed to have run its course. She could see the man for who he was—fairly good-looking, not too bright, and with little regard for women. He was married, had children, and, she had discovered, was involved with several women besides herself. Unfortunately, even this knowledge did not help her give him up. In his own way, he was a master at the art of ambiguity and of keeping women hooked in a hopeless pursuit of what seemed to be a potential relationship. In a certain way, she even saw him as pitiful and wanted to help him mature or develop the capacity to appreciate life and love. (Over the decades, she had grown to see her father as pitiful as well, but beyond her help.)

Meanwhile, knowing about her affair, her husband maintained his position as a good, stable man. He remained patient, waiting while she went through what he considered a *stage*. As one might guess, he had now become a hard-working, successful executive who was seldom home and had missed over a decade of her camouflaged pleas for attention:

“What about me?” True to his heritage (the heritage that was initially so attractive and important to her), nothing ever rattled him, not even his wife’s needs or her affairs.

One afternoon I was sitting in my office watching the rain and musing about what kind of man (actually men, for I have heard this story more than once) thinks his wife is going through a *stage* when she has an affair, especially when this *stage* seems to continue year after year. While relaxed and ruminating, I heard that feminine voice from deep in my own psyche telling me, “Men are so emotionally retarded. They turn their wives into witches and bitches with their blind behavior and single-minded, pigheaded approach to life.”

“What approach?” I silently asked.

“The one they call rational or sensible!” she retorted. “This poor woman has been trying for years to make her husband realize there are more valuable things in life than what their narrow approach includes and he thinks she’s going through a *stage* for God’s sake! He doesn’t even have the sense to get mad.”

“You’re right about that,” I replied. “I don’t understand it myself. But why don’t women simply say what they want?”

She replied, “First of all, we don’t want you to simply be some kind of compliant, co-dependent android, just trying to keep us happy and placated. We want to be treasured and respected and treated in a way that *shows* it. Furthermore, we don’t want to have to be happy all the time just so you can stay in a good mood. We want to be interacted with in whatever reality we are experiencing.”

“I know,” I thought to myself. I knew that many women want to be able to argue with a man without the argument being oriented toward violence or winning and losing. They want men to show caring and be directed toward grinding out personal and relational clarity and appreciation. Such a process can also be extremely helpful to men if they can ever learn it.

She continued. “On the other hand, we’re scared. People quit so easily these days. It’s hard as hell to love yourself, or anybody, when abandonment seems to always be lurking around the corner. These are scary times for love and values. Women have learned well enough that ‘The best man for the job is a woman!’ Love and romance past the physical level has become pretty terrifying. Everybody’s scared.”

“Hmm,” I replied.

“Don’t forget I’m a part of you,” she finished.

“Scary,” I thought.

As the young woman in my story continued her analytic work, she had the following

dream:

I was alone in my house late at night. I received a phone call telling me there was a prowler in the neighborhood, a very dangerous man. I felt safe. I knew the doors and windows were locked. Then I realized I had left the back door unlocked. I rushed down the stairs and was standing in the living room. Almost at once I realized I was naked from the waist down and he was already in the house.

This dream marked a turning point in her experience and set the stage for her to be able to face her fear of masculine power and the vulnerability she felt due to not having been valued by her father. The image of the intruder in women's dreams often heralds the beginning of a transformation process in their personality that is healing a wound left by their father. The intruder represents primitive masculine energy that needs to be recognized and refined until it supports her authenticity with personal power.

Once this transformation began, she was no longer bound to seeking affirmation from men in her outer life. Her analytic work proceeded and her outer problem was resolved as it transformed into an inner conflict, closer to the habitat of the deeper issue. She was led in this direction by eros, her attraction to men, and by her ability to grasp the lesson offered by her inner teacher. Of course, this turning point was not an end. It was a beginning, and as she continues changing who she is, changing how she is living must follow.

In this example, we can trace the outline that the inner lesson plan was following and the intertwining of eros, growth, and healing. Starting in the outer world of childhood, the masculine essence (or animus) within this woman was imprinted by her father. (A woman's emotional experience of her father is the foundation for the development of her animus and her "masculine" attitudes toward herself.) The wounds she suffered in their encounters sought healing as she entered adolescence and life wished to continue more creatively.

Once she had solidified her identity and began her healing (through her husband and his family), the momentum carried her into adulthood. Then, as her adult life consolidated, a longing for new vitality and further healing erupted again as an outer attraction to a lover. This attraction could not be given up without a psychological regression—until there was both an inner and an outer shift, a transformation in her psyche along the lines I have outlined.

In this situation, we might surmise that she was doubly fortunate. She already had an

inner directedness and the ability to work in analysis, and she and her husband valued each other enough to hold the tension of their relationship and work on it. Thus, as the tension eased in her struggle with the outer men in her life due to her devoted attention to healing, the doorway to her inner work opened with the intruder dream. With this interior event, her analysis became more clearly focused as a process of growth and enrichment, as *individuation*.

An inner healing had taken place and a new kind of masculine energy had penetrated her psychic space. When she cultivates it and relates to it, this new masculine energy will become part of her personality. It will bring in a new sense of the sensual, the physical, and the powerful to support her being “one within herself,” and as she transforms, her relationships—personal and otherwise—will have to change as well. As “steadfast” as her husband has been, he will have to open to a new level of growth and intimacy or face increasing tensions in the marriage again, even though her growth has led her to a deeper understanding of his place in her life and an enhanced appreciation of him as a person.