

Divine Madness: Archetypes of Romantic Love

by John Ryan Haule

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Eleven

Love's Angel: The Creative Third

This book is, from beginning to end, a phenomenology of romantic love, a description of what it feels like to be a lover, and an exploration of dimensions of erotic experience which may not immediately be apparent to the individual in its grip. I have hoped to achieve more than the aesthetic joy of producing a truthful and engaging portrait of love. I hope, as well, to challenge the reader morally and practically by articulating psychological principles which constitute the foundation of an attitude toward and a praxis of romantic love. There have been several indications of this in previous chapters. For example, Chapter V argues that the appearance of the demon lover and the resulting tendency to obsessive behavior is by no means an indication that love has gone wrong -- only that the striving for wholeness has undergone a distortion. The following chapter argues that such a neurotic distortion can be worked through, if the couple can remain faithful to the truth of their union and to their accurate and love-inspired perception of one another. Chapters IX and X reinterpret opposition between the partners as a search for renewal in the relationship. This implies that each couple will have to find its own distinctive mode of battle so that the partners can refine their perceptions of themselves and one another, reexamine their needs, and in effect revise the unwritten contract of their common life. Chapter VIII presents amorous play in a similar light, as an opportunity for the partners to expand and renew their images of and expectations for one another. If such images and their related feelings are truly appreciated, they will change the way we conduct our relationships. In this sense, moral implications have always been very near the surface in this book.

In these last two chapters we take up such practical and moral themes more explicitly. An issue which has been avoided in the previous chapters as "too complicated" to address, is nevertheless central to the everyday decisions and judgments we have to make in the conduct of our relationships. We may find ourselves at sea when it comes to choosing between the potion and the sword or between the incapacitating obsessions inspired by the demon lover and the seeming chimera of resolution through an unholy marriage. In a situation like that of Thomas Wolfe, we may find ourselves torn between the inclination to hang onto an expanding, deepening soul-connection which seems to be the very reason for living and, on the other hand, a need to express, write, and publish, without which living could never transcend itself.

There is no easy way of addressing these issues. There is no single answer to any question. Each issue is specific to a unique couple with a singular set of conditions. Nothing less than a unique solution would be adequate. I can therefore hardly hope to spell out such

solutions in detail and must remain content if I can articulate fundamental principles with sufficient emotional valence and compelling imagery to suggest what it feels like to be on the right track.

Getting "the feel" of a thing, we know in a physical sense if we have ever learned how to ride a bicycle, drive a car, hit a golf ball, or indeed walk. We become so accustomed to these things that we forget there was a time when we had not yet had the experience. Mystics say the same about spiritual experience. We fall silent if a non-rider or non-mystic should ask us to say what it is like. How can we find the words when the context cannot be taken for granted? Jung made such an attempt in *The Psychology of the Transference*, where he tried to describe how the premises of an analytical relationship change as each partner takes the other progressively more seriously. It is not his most accessible book, and he must have known the difficulties he was creating for his readers, because he identifies with the alchemist who wrote, "Only he who knows how to make the philosopher's stone can understand their words about it" (par. 498). Those who know how to make the stone project their own experience into their reading and fill out the author's images with their own blood and breath. Jung filled the alchemists' images with his experience as an analyst who had not been able to avoid involvement in a rather erotic rapport with a few of his patients.

I ask my readers to fill out the images in these next two chapters with some of their most refined and subtle experiences. The argument of the first four chapters can, I hope, be followed by anyone who has ever been in love. In the seventh through tenth chapters, the lover needs to have discovered the unique and changeable otherness of his beloved in order to follow the argument. All lovers do not make this discovery. Some remain in a narcissistic cocoon from which their beloved is never appreciated in her unique otherness. What they see instead is the anima- or animus-mask they project onto her. It proceeds from their wound and glorifies their beloved almost to the status of divinity, thus making possible a very compelling experience of oneness. But it does not tolerate the real human individuality of the beloved. It draws nourishment only from the eternal sphere and fails integration with the everyday world. This very common state of affairs is what has given romantic love a bad name as neurotic, destructive, and unrealistic.

Romantic love which has not emerged from a narcissistic stage may be said to be "unipolar" in the sense that there is no real, effective other. The individual remains shut up in a cocoon of self-reference, contemplating the images of his own unconscious as though they were the real partner and the outer world. We are all capable of remaining stuck at this stage of love, even while we pay lip service to love's bipolarity. Intellectually, we know that love involves two people, two sets of needs and expectations, two sets of fears and neurotic defenses, and two drives toward autonomy. Because this is all self-evident, I have been confident that the argument of the previous four chapters would not present the reader with conceptual difficulties.

Now I need to introduce a much less widely understood concept, the notion that there are not simply two autonomous factors in an interpersonal relationship (the lover and the beloved) but also a Third. Popular culture recognizes a bit of this reality in the imagery of Cupid, whereby a couple will not fall in love unless their hearts are pierced by arrows from the cherub's bow. It implies that the initiative comes from elsewhere, that there is an autonomous but invisible third agent which the two lovers follow. The imagery of the Third

is not infrequently to be found in love poetry. For example, a recent collection of translations of Rumi's verses (1987) bears the title, taken from one of his lines, *We Are Three*. Pablo Neruda describes a vision of threeness in the last verse of his poem, "September 8th":

Between you and me a new door opened
and someone, still faceless,
was waiting for us there (9).

This expresses an awareness probably most lovers have had, that there is something mysterious but definite which encounters the two of us. It is as though our openness to one another lets some Third being into the room.

In a much more abstract and rational manner, Edmund Husserl and his followers in the philosophical school of phenomenology, speak of two individuals sharing a *Mitwelt*, a co-world. It is a joint project of the two related individuals, brought about primarily through their respective unconscious intentions. It cannot exist without the two individuals and cannot be reduced to either of them. Although changeable according to the interaction of the partners who share it, every *Mitwelt* has a givenness, an objectivity, which influences the perceptions and behavior of the individuals who share it. In this sense it acts almost as a third member of the relationship. For example, people who have been married a long time may often feel their *Mitwelt* as confining and limiting. Assumptions and expectations have taken on such a tone of inevitability, that the partners can no longer imagine alternative ways of seeing and behaving. They need a dose of love-play or a bout of worthy opposition to loosen a *Mitwelt* which has come to function almost as a policeman.

A couple newly in love will very likely experience the Third as a marvelous, transformative presence which, perhaps, bathes the whole world in glorious light. Such is the experience of Alfred and Violetta in Verdi's opera, *La Traviata*. Again and again in arias and duets, they sing to a soaring, rapturous melody, "I sense that love is the heartbeat of the whole universe; mysterious, lofty, the pain and delight of the heart." [1] Sometimes, naively, it seems to us that all of this glory is granted through the person of our beloved. Neruda, for example, speaks of countries and rivers being in his beloved's eyes and lighting his world (33). In this imagery, it seems as if two individuals were enough to produce the marvel. But if, as is highly likely, his beloved is experiencing the same thing, we seem to have two recipients and no initiator of the phenomenon. The imagery of the Third arises to account for the creative agent when both lovers feel themselves on the receiving end.

I think we may even take it as a rule, that whenever we feel a blast of energy or light from our lover it is not that she has unloosed a psychological cannon on us; for she feels the same blast we do. We do not blast one another, we find ourselves blasted by a Third. Such was surely the case between the lovers who felt a golden rainbow arching between them and pouring through their chests (Chapter VIII) or another who each experienced an inexhaustible supply of light pouring out of their chests or a third who found themselves enclosed together in a cocoon of whirling red and golden light fibers. This kind of phenomenon occurs also in the analytic hour. Severely narcissistic patients have once or twice accused me of having invaded their bodies by some magical means extending through the several feet of empty space between us. There is a sexual tone to the accusation. Clearly the patient feels violated and believes I have deliberately perpetrated an indignity and that I am able to stop doing it at will. Invariably I am experiencing an identical sensation, an

ecstatic probing in my abdomen. It feels to me as though she is doing this to me, while in actuality neither of us is "doing it." We are both being done to. The agent is the Third.

These experiences make it clear that the Third is closely associated with a mystical participation at the Self-level of the psyche. What sets it apart from other experiences of this type is our conviction that an impersonal agency attends the Third. It never acts for my good or for yours, but in behalf of purposes probably neither of us has guessed. It takes us both by the hand, shoots us both with its arrow, frustrates the whims of both of us.

Another characteristic of the Third is that it is autonomous in the sense that it cannot be deliberately manipulated by either of the partners. It implies mutuality as much as impersonality. It guides the two of us and resists some of our intentions. It seems as much to have its own mind as another person would. True, the archetypes, wherever they are found, have a certain numinous autonomy. But sometimes they can be read or manipulated for one's own purposes. If so, these are phenomena which do not belong to the Third. As an example, we might consider another couple from Isabel Allende's novel *The House of the Spirits*. The landowner Esteban Trueba, who had become rich and powerful by arrogantly taking possession of anything he wished -- including, especially, the peasant women on his land -- fell hopelessly in love with and married Clara, a woman who lived much more in the world of the spirits than on the temporal plane. Although Esteban had hoped to possess and control Clara's psychic powers, he was no match for her.

Esteban had bouts of despair because Clara treated him with the same kindness she displayed toward everybody else. She spoke to him in the same cajoling tones she used to address her cats, and was incapable of telling whether he was tired, sad, euphoric, or eager to make love. However from the color of his rays she knew at a glance whether he was hatching a swindle, and she could defuse one of his tantrums with a few simple and mocking words (111).

Here we see one partner (Esteban) fascinated by the phenomena of archetypal interaction while the other uses them for her own purposes. There is no mutuality between these people. They live in wholly separate worlds, she being as controlling and autocratic in the world of psyche as he in the material world. Her use of imagery from the mythic-image level of the psyche indicates only a bipolar relationship. She is not only not "fused" with her husband in a narcissistic manner, she is hardly connected at all. Thus archetypal phenomena constitute no certain indication of the presence of a Third, although the Third does depend for its existence on a Self-level connection between the partners.

Careful observation, therefore, reveals to lovers a "third" agency in their relationship. It seems to be an impersonal, autonomous, directing intelligence, mutual to the two partners, somehow constituted by their union, and yet not reducible to either of them nor directly manipulable. Philosophers have advanced a similar notion which they have called a *Mitwelt*, not an intelligence but a joint project which takes on a distinct autonomy in relation to the pair of lovers. The notion of the Third is to be found in the writings of the mystics, as well. Meister Eckhart has said, "The eye with which I see God is the same as that with which he sees me" (Happold, 67). Clearly he means that in some sense God and I are not distinct. Although we are two, there is some place, moment, or act, in which the distinction is lost. He says, "There is something in the soul so closely akin to God that it is already one with Him and need never be united to Him" (Dupre, 461). Following this conception, it appears that the joining point in our love-union with God resembles a Third, constituted by the two of us

and yet distinct. It bears no small resemblance to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity: three "persons" in one God. Theologically this has been "explained" as having been brought about by two "processions." The Son proceeds from the Father as a manifestation of divine *truth*, while the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and* the Son as a manifestation of divine *love* (McBrien, 358f). Thus the love between the Father and Son is nothing less than a co-equal, Third divine person.

From the perspective of psychology, theological statements like these are evidence not so much of God in his heaven as of the shape of the human soul. For it is we humans who arrive at such conclusions. What we claim for God, we can only have learned from our own experience. If we see God needing a triune relationship, surely we require it, too.

I find Ibn al-Arabi's doctrine of angels to be the most fascinating treatment of the notion of a Third entity in the relationship between the human individual and God. [2] In his view an angel_ constitutes a metaphysical link between each individual and God. He distinguishes five levels of being, two wholly divine, two wholly human, and an intermediate angelic level. The human pole admits distinction into body (the lowest of the five levels) and soul. As for the divine pole, Ibn al-Arabi distinguishes between the absolute, wholly transcendent Allah and the "lord" whom each of us serves. Each individual's life bears witness to a different lord, a different facet of the inexhaustible and irrepresentable Allah. Between each soul and its lord is a specific angel, the Third for that human-divine love affair.

Ibn al-Arabi's thinking begins with what is probably the most frequently quoted saying (*hadith*) of the prophet Muhammad: "I was a Hidden Treasure and I wanted to be known. So I created the world so that I might be known." The godhead is speaking of itself, here, in the first person, as always in Muhammad's prophetic utterances. The assertion that creation is a divine self-manifestation implies that, if only we know how to see the world as it really is, we will be able to apprehend God. Ibn al-Arabi goes so far as to claim that creation itself is on a kind of continuum with its Creator: the Absolute at one end and matter at the other. Creation proceeds through five stages of emanation or embodiment, bearing no small resemblance to the Gnostic tradition in Christianity or the Jewish Kabbalah's doctrine of redeeming the divine sparks which we discussed in Chapter VII. The Absolute manifests itself first as an indefinite (almost infinite) number of lords, each of which -- like the Quran's ninety-nine Names of God -- reveals one aspect of the infinite Truth about God. Each of these lords, in turn, manifests as an angel, each angel as a soul, and each soul as a bodily individual. Thus, each created being (be it mineral, plant, animal, or human) is so constituted that it cannot help but reveal an aspect of God to anyone who can see through its bodily form to the soul, angel, and lord which it embodies. And each human being has the additional benefit of self-consciousness, whereby we can each come to know the lord we reflect.

In all of this, the angel is pivotal. It is the form according to which the godhead knows itself and reveals itself differently in each one of us. We need the angel in order to be connected with God, and God needs the angel in order to be known. Henry Corbin explicates this doctrine of Ibn al-Arabi's by referring to the Jewish mystic Joseph ben Judah, who says the soul needs to struggle with its angel as Jacob did, in order to be freed from the darkness which would otherwise imprison it. And "the Angel needs the response of a soul if his being

is to become what it has to be"(35). This is a notion very close to that of Eckhart: God and I seeing one another through the same eye. Eckhart's "eye" is like Ibn al-Arabi's "angel," except that the Muslim sage emphasizes God's dependency. He thereby brings the human/divine relationship even closer to our experience of romantic love. In this he resembles the Christian mystic, Angelus Silesius (1624-1677), whose collection of aphorisms, *The Cherubic Wanderer*, contains some surprising observations. For example:

I know that without me the life of God were lost,
Were I destroyed, he must perforce give up the ghost (I,8).

And:

God shelters me as much as I do shelter Him;
His Being I sustain, sustained I am therein (I, 100).

And:

That God shall have no end, I never will admit,
Behold, He seeks my soul, that He may rest in it (I, 277).

Where do mystics get such notions? A Christian would not hesitate to answer that they come from the Holy Spirit, the divine Third, and indwelling source of all inspiration. In Islam, the agency may typically be ascribed to angels. The prophet Muhammad received the very words of the Quran directly from the Angel Gabriel, and Ibn al-Arabi owed his initiation as a sufi sheikh to the angel Khidr. Ibn al-Arabi follows in the tradition of the philosopher Avicenna (980-1037) regarding angels. Angels are the source of prophetic inspiration and visions of God -- "the foundation of an intermediate world of pure Imagination" between terrestrial and celestial spheres (Corbin, 12). By Ibn al-Arabi's birth (1165) the Avicennan theory had already been eclipsed by the criticism of Averroes (1126-98), who had pointed out that a doctrine of personal revelation through angels threatened orthodox authority (Corbin, 62). Thus, half a millennium after the angel-inspired prophet had established Islam, its authorities suppressed the doctrine of angels. It is the same fate suffered by the Holy Spirit in Christianity, and for the same reason.

Ibn al-Arabi, however, did not participate in the suppression. His invisible guide, Khidr, the "Green One," is traditionally believed to be the same angel who became Moses' guide in the Quran's story (Surah XVIII, vv. 61-83). When Moses meets the angel, he asks if he may be allowed to follow him and learn from him. The angel resists, saying that Moses lacks the wherewithal to understand angelic actions, in that they are informed by a knowledge of God which is far beyond Moses' attainments. Finally he agrees to let Moses tag along on condition that he ask no questions. The angel then proceeds to poke a hole in the hull of a ship, kill a boy, and repair without asking remuneration a crumbling wall in a town which had refused hospitality to the two travelers. In each case Moses cannot resist asking for an explanation. On the third occasion the angel forbids Moses to follow any further. Then he explains that by sinking the ship he was saving it for its poor owners from a king who was seizing all sea-worthy vessels; by killing the boy he was saving the faith of the parents; and by repairing the wall he was insuring that a treasure hidden at its base would not be found before the orphan boys who would inherit it had grown big enough to claim it.

Clearly Khidr is the repository of a wisdom which comes directly from God and is superior to orthodox law; for, although Moses is the preeminent law-giver who met God face-to-face on Mount Sinai, he is no match for Khidr. Khidr teaches a mystical truth which springs directly from God. The Quran calls him, "one of Our slaves, unto whom We had given mercy from Us, and had taught him knowledge from Our presence" (v. 66). Here lies the scriptural foundation for Ibn al-Arabi's doctrine of the Third. It is a claim for transcendent sublimity.

But Averroes was not wrong, a doctrine of personal inspiration spells serious trouble for communal orthodoxy. The angel does not destroy the law; he only finds exceptions. But even this is troubling. For although the godhead cannot be at odds with itself, the idea of an inspiring angel possessed of transcendent wisdom can be a dangerous tool in the hands of the naive or the unscrupulous.

Likewise my doctrine of following the Third in a relationship of romantic love admits of misuse. It will be safer and more secure to rely on a community consensus for our guidelines in pursuing our relationships. Furthermore, such a consensus does not arise arbitrarily but generally represents conclusions drawn from long experience. Still, the Quranic Khidr has shown us that there are sometimes very important exceptions that must be made. The couple who elect to follow the guidance of the Third, may end up bearing a significant tension. It may occasionally happen that our guide pulls us in a different direction from that of collective morality. Before addressing these difficulties, however, we will consider one more symbol of the Third.

One of the most widely known and mysterious symbols of western culture in the last thousand years is that of the Holy Grail. Scholars agree only that the origins of the Grail legends are lost somewhere deep in pre-Christian Celtic mythology and that Christianized French compilations appeared late in the twelfth century. In what follows, I have used two main sources, *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, which is an excerpt from a huge French compilation known as the *Prose Lancelot*, and Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, which is a condensation and revision of the Lancelot material, placing King Arthur in the central role and emphasizing the tragic inevitability of Camelot's fall. In Chapter XII of this book we shall consider the quest for the Grail as a model for following the Third in a romantic love relationship. In this eleventh chapter we shall consider the imagery of the Grail itself and what this tells us about the nature of the Third.

The Grail is generally pictured as a plate, bowl, or cup [3] usually it is either the cup Jesus used at the Last Supper in which wine was changed to his blood, or it is a bowl in which Joseph of Arimathea (mentioned in all four canonical gospels as the burier of Jesus) collected blood shed by Jesus while hanging on the cross. Legend relates that the Grail was brought to Britain by Joseph of Arimathea whence it was abstracted into a magic kingdom because the people of Britain proved themselves unworthy of it. This kingdom has become a wasteland because its king (in our version a Sarracen convert to Christianity and champion of the Grail) drew too near the sacred vessel and has been punished. His land has become barren, and King Mordrain himself is wounded (usually in the thigh), blinded, weakened, and suffers great pain and will continue to languish four hundred years until Galahad shall find the Grail.

The holy vessel is the central object in a mass-like liturgy performed daily in the Grail Kingdom by Josephus, son of Joseph of Arimathea and priest of the Grail. Its rare appearances in the world of space and time are generally attended by extraordinary weather phenomena: darkenings, brightenings, thunderclaps, and dramatic changes in the wind. The fact that it is nearly always borne by a maiden, together with the sexual taint implied in the Grail-king's wound, suggests an erotic dimension. Referring to the Eschenbach version of the tale, Emma Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz conclude that the Grail "prescribes" which woman a man should marry. The Grail King, Anfortas in this version, suffers the wound to his thigh for having chosen a woman of whom the Grail disapproved:

As the fate of Anfortas shows, the moment of individual choice is fraught with great danger. The grail nevertheless appears to have acted as a guiding symbol in the midst of entanglements engendered by the anima, in that, as an image of the absolute totality of the individual, it established the process of the latter's development in the service of a higher goal (155).

The authors seem to mean that, whatever pain this experience may have caused Anfortas, he ultimately *gained* by having his attention directed from an unworthy mistress to the worthiest object of all and that this will make him "whole." Emma Jung and von Franz become obscure in the last sentence because they also wish to imply -- without saying so directly -- that this lesson is valid for us all. Whenever life provides us erotic "entanglements," we have an opportunity to find our way to the center, the highest goal, personal wholeness. If we get snagged along the way on some lesser goal, the pain this causes is never too high a price. This is a radical view but hardly shocking when we consider the meaning of Khidr and the dangerousness of the Holy Spirit.

The Grail is not only the center of attention, it always occupies the physical center of a scene: the Round Table, the altar, etc. It emits a heavenly radiance of light and sweet fragrance. When it nourishes, it supplies each communicant with the very food and drink which most completely satisfies, not only the body's appetite but the spirit's as well. The Grail heals illness, wounds, and souls; maintains life; and preserves youth. In the story of Anfortas, we have already seen that it discriminates good from evil -- sometimes in a quite unpredictable and ungentle manner. But it expresses divine will more literally than that, for it sometimes appears covered with writing which is understood to be decrees and commands from God. Its appearance also constitutes a test of faith and moral probity for potential witnesses, as it is invisible to sinners and the unbaptized. The Grail particularly favors virginity in discursive passages of the *Quest* and *Le Morte D'Arthur*, while narrative passages are likely to suggest a different attitude toward sexuality.

In the *Quest*, every adventure is followed by one of the protagonists encountering a holy man or woman who explains the spiritual meaning of the events which have just transpired. One hermit assures Lancelot that the quest of the Grail is a venture for heavenly, not earthly things: "Be assured that your prowess as a knight will avail you nothing in this Quest unless the Holy Ghost first pave your way in all the adventures that you meet with" (134). Other passages suggest that the Grail, itself, is the Holy Spirit. It first appears to Arthur's Round Table on the feast of Pentecost, which celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit to Jesus' disciples who were shut up in the upper room of the Last Supper out of fear of the authorities who had killed Jesus. Likewise, Arthur's knights were in an upper hall of the palace:

When they all were seated and the noise was hushed, there came a clap of thunder so loud and terrible that they thought the palace must fall. Suddenly the hall was lit by a sunbeam which shed a radiance through the palace seven times brighter than had been seen before. In this moment they were all illumined as it might be by the grace of the Holy Ghost, and they began to look at one another, uncertain and perplexed. But not one of those present could utter a word, for all had been struck dumb, without respect of person (43).

In Christianizing the pagan legend of the Grail, the authors make the greatest of claims for the holy vessel. It is also said that a trio of great priests, Christ, Josephus, and Galahad (100), preside over three great fellowships, the table of the Last Supper, the table of the Holy Grail, and the Round Table (97f). All of this suggests that an appearance of the Grail brings with it a foretaste of the Second Coming of Christ, when the faithful will enjoy a sublime oneness and peace, what the New Testament calls the Parousia.

As anima-connected guide, symbol of the Holy Spirit, and foundation of the parousial *Mitwelt*, the Grail is the ultimate image of the Third for the recent millennium of Western Civilization. It remains for us now to see how the Grail works as a guide for the knights who ride in quest of it. We have already seen that they need to be free of sin or "thoroughly shriven" lest the quest bring about their humiliation or even their death. Sin implies an attachment to something less than ultimate. The Ten Commandments, for example, assert God's ultimacy and then list as prohibitions some of the typical ways we get side-tracked. Therefore, to say that he must be free of sin, means that the Grail Knight must eschew all distractions from his meditation on the center, both in intention and in action. As a symbol of the center, the Grail will never be found by those who do not in their own lives know the difference between the center and the periphery. Whether they intend to do evil or not, they are the sinners the hermits and anchoresses which the Quest warns against.

To be free of sin, though, is a negative requirement. The Grail Knight needs some active kind of guidance if he is to find what other Christians, regardless of their holiness, have missed for twelve or thirteen hundred years. It is surely not to be found well-marked on any of the highways of medieval life, nor even on the byways. Indeed, the knights ride separately into the deepest and darkest parts of the forest, avoiding the quotidian paths. They really do not know where they are going or how to get there. On meeting a woman riding a white palfrey who asks where he is going, Lancelot replies: "In truth, young lady, I do not rightly know, save there where fortune takes me. For I have no notion of the whereabouts of what I seek" (*Quest*, 146).

It takes a great deal of humility and trust to throw your life into a quest which is so uncertain and undefined. In romantic love we often try to save ourselves from this uncertainty by clinging to an image of where our relationship is going. For example, our union at the archetypal level always carries with it a sense of eternality. It is natural to take this impression literally and to assume that the fact of our connection means that we should marry and live happily ever after. But this is not always a valid conclusion. Our connection at the level of the Self may be realized in a great variety of forms, and to cling too rigidly to any one image of a goal is to limit the guiding Third. As human beings we are "condemned," as it were, to entertain images for where our lives are headed. We cannot be involved with a partner and not imagine a goal toward which our affair is tending. But it is the function of love play and worthy opposition constantly to challenge these images and to introduce alternatives. If there is anything we can learn from the Knights of the Holy Grail, it is to

entertain images of the goal without becoming attached to them. For only such a detached involvement can allow room for the Third to influence our course.

When we take them literally, images of the goal can cause us to jump ahead to conclusions which the relationship itself does not warrant. We should rather view such images as heuristic symbols, that is as clues to help us in our search for the meaning of our involvement. Even a successful marriage is not relieved of the requirement of following the Third and of examining the images which it provides. When we think we know where we are and where we are going, we should be skeptical. It is too easy to live in an imagined future, contemplating how things are going to be or how they "should" be, rather than to stay in the present moment. More than anything else, relationship requires that we be present to one another, right now. Rumi (1988) makes this requirement definitive, too, of the love of God:

I love the half a coin that I have already in my hand
from yesterday more than the *promise* of a whole one
today, or the promise of a hundred tomorrow.
A Sufi is the child of *this* moment (13).

When lovers are helped to stay in the present moment through their love-play and worthy opposition, each is allowing his own state of mind to be transformed by the needs, fancies, and inspirations of the other. The "not knowing" of which Lancelot speaks is a kind of receptivity. Meister Eckhart calls it *Gelassenheit*, [4] the quiet, contained state of mind in which one maintains a psychic balance between acting and being acted upon. In the *Quest* this attitude is expressed in the knights' search for "adventure." What they mean by *adventure* is the fortuitous, unpremeditated element in life, usually coming in the form of a challenge to their courage, honor, or faith. It might be a fight with lance and sword or the rescue of a damsel in distress. But the *Quest* is always clear that ultimately it is God, the Holy Spirit, which chooses the adventures and matches them with the individual knights.

This is an exact analogy for what I mean by following the lead of the Third. To "follow the relationship," in this sense, means to be aware that we do not know the outcome in advance. Rather our course is revealed to us gradually in every individual moment of our mutual presence with one another. We entertain and take seriously all the images of and feelings about ourselves and one another. We pay attention, too, to the images, feelings, and intuitions which occur to us regarding the relationship itself. Nothing is discarded a priori; everything is taken seriously and playfully. We "hang in there," actively clarifying and receptively awaiting clarification.

In this way we maintain a state of active receptivity, *Gelassenheit*. But how do we know what we are looking for amid all these images and feelings? This is the central question, the task of tasks. A pretty good starting point for addressing this issue is provided by a parable about a lost camel which Rumi tells in his *Mathnawi*. A man who is searching for his lost camel is joined by a second man who *pretends* to have lost a camel so that he can tag along for a while and then lay claim to the first man's beast when it is found. The man who really lost a camel, however, behaves quite differently from the pretender. He recognizes scents the other does not smell and finds clues the other does not see. He knows his camel's smell and habits. Above all, he knows what it is like to be close to finding a lost camel, while the pretender has no inkling.

There is a "stinger" to this tale. Unbeknownst to himself, the pretender has also lost a camel. And as he tags along after the first man in his ignorant greed, suddenly he sees his own camel standing a few feet before him. It is quite a shock and quite a recognition. Now he, too, becomes a seeker (Rumi 1988: 29f).

We can draw at least three conclusions from Rumi's parable. First, staying "on track" when we follow our relationship means recognizing clues which are intimately familiar to us. It means stalking scents we have lived inside of and come to know so well that we forget them the way we forget our ears when we listen to music. The second lesson in Rumi's parable is that if we have not lost our camel, there is no point in searching for it. There will be no clues to recognize. A couple searching for a camel they did not lose would correspond to the knight who goes unshriven to the quest. Even though they think they are searching for the Grail of relationship, they have gotten attached to a less than ultimate goal. They want a camel they have no right to: their false image of the goal. We only get to know the goal which fulfills and expresses the essence of our relationship by getting to know the relationship itself. That is to say, we have to attend to what we are perceiving and feeling right now -- as well as to who our beloved is, what mood she is in, what world she inhabits.

The third lesson in Rumi's parable is that even if we think we have lost no camel -- even if we think we have never owned one --, there is a camel out there which belongs to us. Sometimes we are on the track of our relationship without ever guessing that there are scents to follow. Perhaps we have been living in an unconscious state of oneness which we have been taking for granted. The fact that we have not opened our eyes to see it does not mean there is no divine spark in our union. Rumi probably addressed this parable to his followers who had only the faintest glimmering of what a spiritual life might be. He invites them to follow the Sufis who *know* that they have lost God's presence. When they recite the *dhikr*, perhaps a phrase about God's presence repeated over and over, and begin to whirl in the dervish dance, they might encounter their camel. In Ibn al-Arabi's language, their camel is the angel which connects them with their lord. The camel is another image for the Third person in the relationship. In the same way we -- if we act like real lovers and stay in the moment -- may encounter the Khidr of our union.

When I finally encounter the camel I did not know I had had, I get a "feel" for having a camel. In the same way, we can get a feel for when we are following the relationship. Rumi has found a way to put this, too, into images and words:

When you do things from your soul,
you feel a river moving in you, a joy.

When actions come from another section,
the feeling disappears.

... Don't insist on going where you think you want to go.
Ask the way to the Spring.

Your living pieces will form a harmony (1987: 44).

Rumi points, here, to a principle of harmonious integration, evidently what Jung means by the Self. When we are in harmony with that Self, it is as though a joyful river were flowing through us. But beware; for following that river is not always the same as doing

what our ego thinks it wants to do. The joyful river results from the confluence of our several living pieces.

In Rumi's few lines we have a powerful and moving description of the process which Jung calls individuation, "the model and guiding principle" (1919/48: par. 187) of analytical psychology. It is "a process in the psyche that seeks its goal independently of external factors" (1944/52: par. 4) and which greatly differentiates and combines collective functions and faculties (1928/35: par. 267) so that we become "our innermost, last, and incomparable uniqueness . . . [our] own self" (ibid., par. 266). It is "a course of development arising out of the conflict between two fundamental psychic facts" (1939: par. 523): the ego's conscious decision and the Self's unconscious intentionality.

Individuation is the organic unfolding of one's being in which imaginative phenomena (fantasies) fill out and compensate for the incompleteness of conscious attitudes. As orchestrated by the Self, fantasy is nothing other than one's own existence revealing itself. Every dream, for example, is a compensation, a momentary adjustment of the conscious imbalance. "But with deeper insight and experience, these apparently separate acts of compensation arrange themselves into a kind of plan . . . subordinated to a common goal" (1945/48: par. 550). In this process, the ego experiences itself "as object of an unknown and supraordinate subject" (1928/35: par. 405), called the "transcendent function," "whose power is as great as that of the instincts" (1928/48: par 96) and "leads to the revelation of the essential man" (1917/43: par. 186).

"Following the relationship" is parallel in every detail to "individuation." In relationship, integration and harmony is achieved by a Third, which resembles the transcendent function in its powerful, joyful-flowing-river quality, as it reconciles conscious goals with an unconscious vision of wholeness. The Third, whether we call it Khidr, the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Grail, is the "transcendent function" at work in relationship. Its job is to reconcile and balance the various pairs of opposites: the potion and the sword, the eternal and the temporal, the archetypal and the personal, ego decisiveness and expectant receptivity, unity and individuality, mine and yours.

This describes the principle of the Third, as the guiding spirit in a relationship. It is almost like a third partner, a creative principle which draws its intentionality from the unity I have with my beloved. To follow the Third, we need to keep one foot in the archetypal, eternal dimension of the union and the other in the practical, everyday, personal world of me and you. To find a balance between opposing demands and desires is a ticklish affair for which we need to acquire a "feel." But we will never do so if we do not take a few risks. The Knights of the Grail show us that these risks are not to be pursued recklessly, but only as we find life (the Third) presents us with "adventures." Many of these will seem too humble and demeaning, others of questionable propriety. Each couple's course on the quest will be unique. No path has been carved for it. We have to carve our own.

1. My translation. The Italian is almost intelligible to a reader of English without translation:

Sentia che amore e palpito
Dell' universo intero,
Misterioso, altero,
Pena e delizia al cor.

2. In this argument I am following the language of Henry Corbin. Toshihiko Izutsu's exposition of the same doctrine used the expression "permanent archetype," where Corbin speaks of "angel." Corbin emphasizes the philosophical and mythological context out of which Ibn al-Arabi writes and is particularly concerned to explicate the Sufi writer's initiation into mastership by an invisible guide (angel) named Khidr. For Ibn al-Arabi the angel or archetype is not an abstract principle but a personal experience of the Third.
3. Wolfram von Eschenbach describes it as a stone on which all the names of the knights of the Round Table have been inscribed.
4. So does Heidegger. His *Discourse on Thinking* bears the original title, *Gelassenheit*. My understanding of the term is derived in part from Heidegger.