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Erotic Therapy and the Shape of Eros

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Recently the Boston *Globe* ran a front-page article on sexual misconduct by psychiatrists beginning with an anecdote in which a certain Dr. Mathews struggles to define his feelings for a patient with whom he has been sexually involved for several weeks: "You're not my sister, wife, mother, another friend, daughter. Who are you? My special lover?" The unidentified journalist observes, "He might have tried the truth -- victim." Evidently the writer of the article had not a clue to the psychiatrist's emotional befuddlement, for it was treated as a prime example of a male therapist's mendacious arrogance. Meanwhile he was unable to appreciate the damage he may have done. In emotionally charged matters of this kind, the opposing sides pass one another again and again like two ships in the night, orienting themselves by entirely different sets of coordinates.

The individuality of both parties is lost when we speak in collective generalities. On one side the journalist speaks the language of what Jung calls "collective consciousness" -- what I prefer to call the "persona field," for it conforms itself to what "everybody knows," formulates into codes, and brandishes as self-righteous slogans: "boundary violation," "power differential," "dual relationship," and "acting out." There is a great deal of truth in the persona field, despite the blindness of its nocturnal course. My caring and conscientious colleague Peter Rutter has articulated its wisdom in his book, *Sex in the Forbidden Zone* (Rutter, 1989), although the publisher's blurb on the cover of the paperback edition also points to its great flaw: "Provocative . . . says all the right things." There is much to be learned from Rutter's book about how sexual involvement by therapists, physicians, teachers, and clergymen with their patients, students, and parishioners is based upon the woundedness and unconsciousness of both parties. He intelligently spells out the bad faith strategies on both sides. But the book is oriented entirely by the coordinates of the persona field.

Dr. Mathews, benighted though he may be, pours over a different map and calculates the angles of different stars. From the perspective of what "everyone knows," he is a cynical manipulator, a pitiful neurotic, or both. He stammers out his sister-wife-mother reply to an unreported question, for he is by no means ignorant of the persona field. He has lived most of his life in the world of public consensus, feels the force of its opinions like a great surging river he has little hope of resisting, and therefore has protected his numinous and illicit affair in careful silence. Nevertheless he has generally not felt himself isolated in quirky idiosyncrasy. His naive stumbling prose "says all the right things" from the collective world of the archetypes where primal truths have stood unchallenged for millennia rather than decades. In the collective unconscious, where *his* ego has dissolved, his patient/lover embodies all of womankind and very likely goddesshood as well. On being accused of sexual predation, he is flabbergasted. How could his supremely true and worshipful love be so miscast?

The opposing parties live in complete and absolute worlds, wholly separate, speaking non-cognate languages. From his vantage atop Mt. Olympus, Dr. Mathews hears his accusers as though they are speaking of the habits of monkeys in the Amazonian rainforest. The journalist listens to him as though he were describing life on Venus. Both Venus and the Amazon, however, belong to the full range of human life. Of his near-death experience, for example, Jung tells us he was so enthralled by the "garden of pomegranates" where he witnessed the wedding of the gods, that he could hardly bear to return "to the gray world with its boxes." (Jung, 1961, p. 295). What is common sense for one, is gray boxes for another. Even those who have studied the language of their opponents -- Jungian analysts, for instance -- often seem unable to resist the mesmerizing pull to evaluate the transcendent realities of Venus in monkey terms or to throw out common sense with the empty cartons.

Pamela Donleavy who had been a patient in an erotically charged and successful therapy, chides Rutter for ignoring the collective unconscious in his account of the "forbidden zone." She describes the transformation of the sexual field she shared with her analyst through what she calls (citing Robert Stein) the Pan/Nymph archetype. (Donleavy, 1995).

Donleavy is distressed by Rutter's argument that erotic attraction between client and therapist should be viewed primarily as a danger to be dealt with by flight. She reads Rutter as I do, as recommending that the therapist has an obligation to cordon off the erotic field as counter to the aims of therapy. She argues that her own experience contradicts this. Her therapist did not flee, and she is grateful that he helped her to work through her erotic issues and come to understand herself in terms of the "Pan/Nymph archetype." Rutter, who is a Jungian analyst and therefore trained in the understanding of "archetypal psychology," might be expected to agree with her. But he does not. For Rutter archetypes are nothing but landmines in the persona field. He uses the word *myth* repeatedly in his book, but always to mean dangerous and deceptive untruth.

Individuation, as Jung repeatedly makes clear, involves hewing a course of personal integrity *between* the two collectivities, deeply cognizant of the realities of each but seduced by neither. This is explicitly the theme of Jung's most basic and accessible work, *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology*. (Jung, 1966). It is regrettable to think that individuation may not be relevant to the "forbidden zone." A Jungian analyst who writes about these matters while eschewing all mention of the archetypal field may be suspected of being in flight from Eros. Again we are faced with the specter of ships passing in the night.

As a start toward building a commonality of discourse, I offer some preliminary reflections on the phenomenology of the erotic as we encounter it every day in the hope that they will be sufficiently fundamental to win the acceptance of both sides in the debate. To some degree, whenever we speak of "the erotic," we refer to Eros. But even the Greeks did not name the same psychic force every time they invoked the god. In the earliest texts he is the Son of Chaos and represents the attractive force behind friendships, marriages, and the creation of cities. Later he is the Son of Aphrodite and embodies lust. We, too, refer to a broad spectrum of psychological experience when we speak of Eros.

There's no Eros in this group. These words were spoken to me by an experienced Jungian analyst who had recently moved to New England. She meant to imply that, in comparison to her experience with other groups of analysts, our Boston meeting lacked something. I pretty

well knew what she meant. There was a good deal of the "gray box world" in our meeting. We displayed little joy in our fellowship, what the Germans call *Gemütlichkeit*, a fuzzy geniality, the hearty glow of comrades who have been tramping up mountains and down valleys all day long. There was something guarded and mistrustful about us. We were reluctant to share ourselves. We showed no enthusiasm for our common work or our separate projects. We were "all business." There was no flow, no spilling over, no emotional infection from one colleague to another. We were polite, dour, and contained. No wonder attendance was low. We were a dreadful group, lacking both strife and affection. Apathy reigned.

When Eros is spoken of this way, there is no suggestion of sexual feelings. What is meant is a general interpersonal vitality. Without this kind of Eros, couples and groups are sluggish and dispirited. If we say there is a lack of passion, we imply that our life together as human beings is barely tolerable without it. In the language of the archetypal field, *Eros* is what animates our meetings and gives them soul. But the experiential realities this name evokes are very well known by everyone. Even the persona field is aware that encounters are sometimes lively and sometimes moribund. We speak of interest, affect, and involvement. We mean that we are engaged, moved, drawn in.

In this sense, every psychotherapy looks to Eros, by whatever name. But if we say *therapeutic relationships do not work unless they are erotic*, we run the risk of being misunderstood despite the universality of the truth we mean to express. As the Son of Chaos, Eros brings confusion, and as the Son of Aphrodite lust. With our omnipresent wariness for being mistaken in such an emotionally charged dispute, we are careful about what we say.

A man who was seeing me for supervision introduced his problem with a new patient by saying, *The moment she passed through the door, the room was charged with Eros*. Clearly he did not mean merely that he felt a fellowship with this woman or that he knew they would be able to converse with interest. He meant that he felt Chaos threatening, and with unmistakable sexual overtones. Much to his relief, he found that the sexual feelings diminished substantially in succeeding weeks. But Chaos continued to threaten. He found himself alternately pulled in by a boundless neediness and cast universes away by outbursts of rage.

His account, by reason of its contrasts, made me think of a patient of mine tormented by a need to possess and worship me combined with a terror of intimacy which kept her locked so tightly in a shell I was unable to feel her violent emotions. I had immense compassion, but the channel that might have been empathy was cut off by the casing of her fear. Although she was gray and wrinkled, I saw her as a skinny, naked girl of four or five, crouching, her chin on her knees, arms locked tightly over her shins -- inside a glass cube -- watching me warily out of the corner of her eye.

If Eros was in the room when I sat with that woman, it took a peculiar form. There was so little of fellowship I often thought I might as well be working with an alien that had learned my language, albeit imperfectly. Yet I was bound. Although unable to return her feelings for me in kind, I could not accept an invitation to go out of town without first calculating what effect it would have on her. We might say that her obsession for me had induced a peculiar reciprocity on my side. If it was Eros that brought us together, it was certainly not at all as

lovers -- perhaps as father/mother/god and alien waif. I found myself in a field of fragility. The very air felt frail and brittle. I was a clumsy lout in a storeroom of delicate glasswork, an inept divinity unused to worship.

I loved that woman, though it may seem peculiar to say I loved her erotically. I am even more reluctant, however, to use the other two expressions we have inherited from the Greeks to designate love. *Philia* denotes friendly affection, and *agape* Christian charity. These terms suggest a calm centeredness that denies the chaotic passion we ascribe to *eros*. I felt myself drained, thrown into confusion, and on dangerous ground. I feared my clumsiness in that I could easily "say the wrong thing" and inflict even more pain and turmoil upon her. Indeed I did so, all too often.

My competence as a therapist was called into question, even my competence as a human being to respond to a fellow creature. The very ground of my existence was challenged by this patient, the assumptions on which I based my life, the philosophy that underlay my teaching and writing and that articulated everything I had known about myself. I felt passionately about these things. I was compelled to grapple with them and to find a way to respond to this woman simply and from my heart.

In this we were surely similar, for her passion battered and surged against the inside walls of her glass cage. Her feelings, as she sometimes named them, were even sexual in a naive, childish way. She fantasized marrying me as purely and impossibly as my friend's four-year-old daughter had done some twenty years earlier.

If we have trouble agreeing that *Eros* charged the interpersonal field between me and my severely inhibited patient, it may be the lack of symmetry that gives us pause. When we consider the analysts' meeting that *had no Eros*, surely it was symmetrical passions that we missed. Colleagues vitally engaged in their professions and their lives are expected to be able to share these things, to overflow with psychic energy and infect one another with their kindred enthusiasm. But lack of symmetry does not seem so much a problem when we consider the relationship between me and my friend's daughter. My adult affection and her childish emotionality flowed and bonded us, as she showed me her crayon drawings and somersaulted in and out of my lap while I talked with her father of politics and social justice. That little girl and I felt passionately about one another in a manner that went beyond *philia* and *agape*. Our love was erotic, although innocent of sexuality and lacking symmetry.

Symmetry, too, was evidently lacking between Dr. Mathews and his patient/lover/victim mentioned in the *Globe* article. The report implied she had sued him for sexual impropriety, unassailable evidence that his feelings for her were not reciprocated in kind. Yet this asymmetry does not at all stand in our way of agreeing that their relationship was erotic in the usual sense of the word. We often speak of love relationships being out of balance, particularly when one party does not return the other's love. We have no trouble calling these one-sided bonds erotic. Consequently we must look for some other factor if we have difficulty agreeing that my relationship with my glass-caged patient owed its power and fascination to *Eros*.

Possibly we hesitate on account of the unmistakable *inhibition* that characterized our sessions. Surely inhibitions played a crucial role in keeping *Eros out* of the meeting of

analysts described above. Furthermore, the evidence for erotic energies in Dr. Mathews' dealings with his patient/lover/victim rests very heavily upon his *lack* of restraint -- both in the fact that he allowed their relationship to become physical and in his struggle to name what it was she meant to him. Finally the uninhibited playfulness between me and my friend's little daughter supports our willingness to speak of Eros in describing the relationship.

There seem to be good reasons to build a case for the incompatibility of Eros and inhibition. But we are not consistent on this point. Presumably we would have no difficulty agreeing that Dr. Mathews should have inhibited his sexual response to his patient, regardless of how erotically he was drawn to her. And when my supervisee reported that *the room was filled with Eros*, we are confident from his anxiety that he had been successful in inhibiting his response although he feared he might not be able to maintain his composure.

Clearly therefore, inhibition and erotic energies are not mutually exclusive. In fact we sometimes become alerted to the erotic nature of an interpersonal connection when inhibition emerges as a problem for us. We feel ourselves in danger of being overwhelmed by a need to express, ratify, and further the bonding impulse. Even in our private lives when unfettered by considerations of duty or conflicting commitments, we may very well be afraid of the Chaos this draw toward another may occasion in our orderly world. We hesitate and inhibit with the result that the impulse seems to gain in strength.

In a therapeutic relationship there is no question that our commitments will conflict with the erotic impulse; and in most cases we direct our attention to how, why, when, and to what extent the therapist may be expected to inhibit his response. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that inhibitions -- present or absent -- are almost always a problem when Eros enters the space between us.

But with regard to my glass-caged patient, we remark at the strength of *her* inhibitions. That is where the main problem seems to lie. We might be inclined to say that her passion remained locked inside of her and never overflowed to take possession of the interpersonal field. If so, was Eros barred from the therapeutic interaction? It would be hard to say so. For despite all its frustrations, her passion bound us to one another and awoke a different but equally vital set of emotions in me. This was so much the case that *our relationship itself became the primary issue between us*. Even though her inhibitions were overwhelmingly unconscious (in contrast to the predominantly conscious ones we just considered) and even though these inhibitions cut short her passion before it could flow out of her, they still determined our interaction and kept our attention on *us*.

Perhaps the most general and comprehensive thing we can say of Eros is that when he enters the room our *we-ness* takes center stage, the numinosity of our connection to one another enters our mutual consciousness. In this sense, surely, my work with the glass-caged woman was erotic. The same applies to Dr. Mathews and to my supervisee. In an attenuated way it also applies to the dull professional meeting we have considered. For insofar as we remained in our "gray boxes" that evening, we never experienced ourselves as a *we*.

In summary, it can be said that our meetings must be sufficiently erotic to bring *us* to presence, to engage us, and to make our common work interesting enough to pursue. But at

higher energies the erotic factor forces our *we-ness* to the forefront and makes our relationship itself the central issue. In such situations we have no choice but to address our mutuality directly -- both in terms of the *we*'s seductive power and our fear that it will dissolve our identity as an *I*.

In the foregoing discussion we have discussed Eros entering the room as though unbidden. There are times, however, when we speak in another way. We might say, possibly of a patient, that *he eroticizes all his relationships*. As far as I have been able to observe, it is primarily of *other individuals* that we say such things. This is "interpretation" talk, and we may wish to enquire as to its implications.

Evidently we mean that the alleged eroticizer finds himself in erotic relationships so frequently as to appear an exception to some unspecified norm. We imply that when he separately encounters A, B, and C -- individuals who only infrequently find themselves in relationships where *we-ness* obtrudes as the central issue -- we fully expect two or three of the meetings will be highly charged with erotic energy. We grant that some individuals seem to be immune to his erotic influence. But we observe *we-ness* so frequently coming to presence in his encounters that we hold him personally responsible for this state of affairs. We imply that there is an imbalance of some kind; for Eros, Son of Chaos, God of Lust, seems to enter every room when he passes through the door. We call him an "eroticizer" because his partners generally find him irresistible. *We-ness* really does obtrude chaotically again and again for him.

How does the alleged eroticizer himself experience these meetings? My exposure to such individuals leads me to conclude that generally -- perhaps universally -- they find themselves as much the recipients of erotic attention as do their partners. They do not voluntarily invoke Eros and may even be surprised and baffled by his frequent presence. For them as for us, Eros comes without being called, bringing the *we* inescapably to presence.

When we say *Eros generally comes unbidden* into our meetings, we are speaking of our conscious experience only. The people we call "eroticizers" are for the most part as ignorant as anyone else of how and when Eros enters the room. But the very fact that we have found and labeled such a class of individuals implies something else essential about our view of Eros and the erotic. In claiming that some individuals, whether they know it or not, have a special capacity for generating erotic energies, we imply that Eros *is* called. Not consciously perhaps, but called nevertheless. We imply an unconscious will that calls even while we remain unaware of it.

Possibly it comforts us to think that when the Son of Chaos enters the field between a couple, he may have been called by one and not by the other. Perhaps it minimizes *our* responsibility that our unconscious will has only *welcomed* the erotic confusion into which we fall. Someone else has initiated it. Responsible for its origins or not, however, we find ourselves in a difficult situation that presses for decisive action. When we ask who did it and how did it get started, we may be searching for some sort of orientation in our confusion. But whatever answers we get for these questions, we are left facing the essential issue: what are we going to do about it?

As the answer to this question will always be the individual response of a particular therapist

to a particular patient met in an erotic field unique to that couple, it will not be possible to review all the possibilities. What can be done, however, is to provide a general frame for the question and its decisive response. We need a phenomenological description of the therapeutic field when Eros enters it so disruptively as to take us beyond the stage of "sufficient interest" to the point where our *we-ness* becomes a problem. We need to grasp the *structure of erotic interaction*. We shall begin by considering the nature of the erotic field as it may manifest in *any* human interaction. Thereafter we shall take up the specific peculiarities of the therapeutic situation.

Whenever Eros is felt as a disruptive force, our *we-ness* has come so forcibly to presence that our *I-ness*, our individual identity, is called into question. *I* and *you* as distinct entities are overshadowed by a numinous *we* that would subsume the qualities that define us as independent persons and dissolve us into a unity. It is the distinguishing characteristic of Eros that he lends to this *we* such a compellingly attractive force that we do not simply wonder if we can stand against it. We *want* to dissolve. Generally it seems to us that we have never wanted anything so vitally in all our lives. We view the impending unity of our *we-ness* as momentarily significant. Our familiar sense of our isolated selves seems paltry in comparison. We would gladly shuck the confining limitations of our past and present self-image as a cruel delusion, now happily outgrown.

The *we*, however, does not simply fascinate us as a distant possibility. We find we are already part of it. Although dissolution lies before us as a seductive opportunity, we feel we are even now incomparably more than we were a moment ago. Enlargement, numinous *becoming* is already underway. Paradoxically, we find we have never been so much ourselves as we are at this instant. We are in the hands of a benevolent fate, witness to a glorious revelation, transformed at the root of our being. We stand on new ground, understanding profoundly and for the first time the unity of *all* beings. Our sense of *we-ness* is the window and door upon a new life. Our eyes are opened, the world becomes animate.

The *we* comes to presence, however, only through the unique and irreplaceable *you*. It may even seem to me that you constitute our *we* more essentially even than I. For I have been "just myself" all my life, but you seem to have brought our *we-ness* with you. It was unimaginable without you and distinctively *belongs* to you. Its every precinct is redolent of *your* unique personhood. You dominate the *we* so thoroughly that I may even forget my own participation and believe that it is in *you* that I wish to dissolve. It never occurs to me and cannot be the case that you are a mere occasion for my entering this *we*. You hold my fate as no other individual could ever do. For I have no fate more momentous and compelling than that which is brought to presence in the *we* which you and I comprise.

This is the work the Greeks ascribed to Eros, the Bringer of Union. He infects us to the core of our being, transforming us into a single pole of a dyad that yearns to trade its duality for a luminous oneness in which all meaning and vitality seem to dwell. But in the midst of this immense draw, a dissent rings out. Deep in our conservative and habitual sense of being our own unique selves, we rebel against this union. We view with horror all that we have known of ourselves being lost irreplaceably.

We find ourselves on the brink of disaster, our balance deeply compromised, an instant away from plunging into the death of our individuality. All our instincts for self-preservation are

mobilized and thrown into high gear. We steady ourselves against the rock of our remembered identity and prepare to flee. We shield ourselves with notions of having been deluded and blinded in our longing to dissolve. We rehearse a catalogue of our life-long beliefs and aspirations and hope they are strong enough to hold out against a demonic force that would destroy them. We step back from the precipice, and breathe deeply to calm our beating heart. But we do not turn tail; for the moment we lean away, our *we-ness* calls out to us with even greater urgency; and we prepare again to jump.

As we oscillate thus between the forward urge to dissolve and the panic to retreat, our anxiety becomes overwhelming. This is the work of Eros, Son of Chaos. Temptations to terminate the tension abound. Among the most common forms are rage, lust, and flight.

When I react with rage to the intolerable anxiety our *we-ness* generates, I hold you responsible for the pain of my fragmentation. I hardly recognize myself as the victim of this devastating urge to dissolve and equally powerful need to flee. Your appearance has confronted me with such an insuperable inner division I fear I may never be whole and intact again. I convince myself that you are personally responsible for this state of affairs.

In bringing about the loss of my coherent sense of being a self, which you alone have accomplished, I can hardly avoid the conclusion that you actually wish for my destruction. You embody all the evil forces of seduction, malice, and hatred that would bring me down, humiliate, and annihilate me. In self defense I believe I must either destroy you or erect an impenetrable wall between us. My rage is that murderous and frantic that it distorts and denies your unique personhood, replacing you with a distorted and demonic cipher that is not at all you but the projection of all my fears. In destroying you I destroy as well the *we* that emerges between us. I seek to banish Eros and return to my narrow and isolated sense of *I*, my illusory independence and self-sufficiency.

If rage radically denies erotic mutuality in an attempt to restore the *status quo ante*, lust would seem to be its polar opposite. For lust moves me to approach you as aggressively and one-sidedly as rage drives you away. But it seeks to terminate my anxiety just as resolutely. When I lust for you, I gaze upon you with eyes of desire, seeing in you all that I have failed to be myself. You are the apple of my eye. You are a revelation of numinous otherness, an embodiment of all I might become. I feel I cannot fully exist without you. I am obsessed with the need to leap the distance between us, resolve the tension that separates us and drives me crazy with desire. I need you as I have never needed anyone or anything before in my life.

I believe that if only you will give yourself to me, I will be able to possess both our *we-ness* and myself. I want to join you to myself and end the torment of my indecisive oscillation between the *me* and the *us*. I would avoid the dissolution of my identity in the seductive *we* by adding *you* onto myself as an object that enlarges but does not challenge my habitual sense of who *I* am. In so doing, I reduce your unique otherness and autonomy to a set of qualities that I may employ for my own purposes. Lust, therefore, denies the *you* while hoping to preserve the *we*. But it deludes itself in so doing, for there is no *we* without *you*. Eros, God of Lust, appears as a distortion of the Son of Chaos, a narrow and self-defeating ruler confined to the bad lands of his former domain.

Ultimately, although they move in opposite directions, lust and rage seek the same end. They want to truncate the call of Eros in order to escape Chaos and anxiety. They are modalities of flight. Rage flees the tension between the *I* and the *we* by attacking the *you* that co-constitutes the *we*. Lust flees that same tension by trying to absorb the *you* into the *I* while negating the *we*. In flight we may avoid both lust and rage by turning tail at the first sign of anxiety before we have a chance to discover our capacity for either of those dark emotions.

There is also a fourth possibility. We may take flight from the challenge posed by lust or rage themselves without ever coming to appreciate the pure call of the *we* as a distinct possibility. Finally, we may flee our *we-ness* by alternately embracing both of the other truncating emotions. In such a case our passionate erotic relationship will be characterized by outbursts of rage and lust, amounting to a dramatized and inauthentic mutual attempt to escape the tension that threatens to destroy while restoring the very same tension in its aspect of vitalizer.

The structure of erotic interaction, as it has been observed so far, makes it fairly clear that the call of Eros discernible in our *we-ness* can be heard and responded to only when the two of us can maintain both our own separate integrity and our participation in the unity that comes to presence between us. The urge to abort the tension between the *I* and the *we* may seem more than we can bear. But when I am able to bear this tension, I enable *you* to come to presence in your full and unique otherness.

Instead of attaching myself to a single limited image of you -- as in lust or rage -- I allow you to be yourself in all your manifold otherness. I get to know the many facets of your being and how they express your center, the nucleus of your personhood. A process of revelation takes place, as I get to know you over time and enjoy your becoming. You do the same with respect to me. We reveal ourselves to one another; and as we do so, each of us comes to discover his and her own identity anew.

In this development our *we-ness*, which we never leave, becomes a kind of lens for bringing one another and ourselves into focus. We influence one another and grow in the light of the *we* that challenges us and draws us after itself. Sexuality may be one of the many modes of our relating. But not having the one-sided and possessive character of lust, sexuality follows the call of Eros and resides in the *we-ness* that is brought to presence. If our individuality dissolves, as it surely will repeatedly, it restores itself naturally, changes, and grows.

This *structure of erotic interaction* applies to all human relationships, including those conducted on the field of therapy. Considerations peculiar to therapy -- such as the therapist's responsibility for maintaining boundaries of a particular kind -- will emerge as refinements to this general picture. Specifically, there can hardly be any debate that a therapist is required by the nature of the profession to pay special attention to the patient's well-being and that this may involve a special kind of caution.

The Dr. Mathews, who stumbled through all the possible female relationship roles before settling on "my special lover" to describe his former patient, surely was insufficiently cautious. We may suspect him of fleeing a powerful *we*-centered pull through the tension-releasing mechanism of genital sexuality. We have no doubt that he enjoyed physical intimacies with his patient, and her raging reaction implies she felt he had gotten too close. If

she had wanted their love-making to continue, she would not have sued him. Something had gone wrong between them.

There would appear to be two main possibilities -- not at all mutually exclusive. If the numinous pull of the *we* had frightened her, the rage might have been generated by nothing Dr. Mathews actually did or said. Possibly she avoids all situations of intense intimacy because her sense of self is too precarious to risk obliteration in the promised unity of any *we* at all. Certainly Mathews should have known this or at least investigated the stability of her ego. If he acted in ignorance of or disregard for her uniquely personal set of fears, his behavior failed to respect her individuality. This is the second possibility. He failed to take sufficient care of her *you-ness*. Very likely he wished to possess her lustfully.

But his words do not sound like a man in the grips of Eros, God of Lust. True enough, he does speak possessively of *my* sister, wife, etc.; but he stands in awe before her. We may even detect a tone of adoration in his attitude. It reminds me very much of a passage from Teresa of Avila's *Conceptions of the Love of God*.

But when this most wealthy Spouse desires to enrich and comfort the Bride still more, He draws her so closely to Him that she is like one who swoons from excess of pleasure and joy and seems suspended in those Divine arms and drawn near to that sacred side and to those Divine breasts. Sustained by that Divine milk with which her Spouse continually nourishes her and growing in grace so that she may be enabled to receive His comforts, she can do nothing but rejoice. . . . With what to compare this [the soul] knows not, save to the caress of a mother who so dearly loves her child and feeds and caresses it. (Pike, 1992, p. 75).

The gender and role confusions in this passage, where elements of father, husband, mother, lover, and savior are inextricably mixed, characterize many of the writings of the Christian mystics -- and the documents of other religious traditions, as well. For example, the Sufis often speak of Allah as entangling the mystic in "her" dark tresses. The sephiroth of the Jewish Kaballah designate dimensions of father, mother, son, and female lover within the Godhead. Hinduism names a plethora of divinities of varying genders and roles, all as personifications of the One, *nirguna brahman*, which is beyond all specification.

Universally, the testimony of religious mystics demonstrates how "full" the *we* may become. The fact that human lovers may slide over into mystical language complements the tendency in mystics to draw upon expressions of human sexuality. All of this adumbrates the experience of the *we* when it comes to presence with archetypal numinosity.

To say that Dr. Mathews is lying to us and to himself when he speaks of "sister, wife, mother, another friend, daughter," and "special lover," denies the phenomenological truth of his experience. No wonder he feels we are prattling about the habits of monkeys. He believes that the *we-ness* he has encountered in the presence of his patient/lover/victim has transported both of them to the "garden of pomegranates" where the "gray box" rules of the persona field are irrelevant. Appeals to ethical codes and guidelines will always seem destructive and distorting to him. If we are going to communicate with him, we need a language that does justice to the realities of both the persona field and the archetypal garden.

A phenomenological description of the structure of erotic interaction provides such a commonality of discourse. Here we can grant Dr. Mathews the mystical dimensions of the *we* as he has experienced it without relinquishing our right to speak of the interpersonal

nature of that *we* -- of how it presumes both the *I* and the *you*, of how it arouses a nearly unbearable tension between the tendency to dissolve in sublime unity and the tendency to maintain our coherent and habitual sense of ourselves. We can speak of his patient's rage and inquire into its purposes -- whether her ego was too weak to sustain *any* numinous *we* and whether he had assumed too much about her *you*. Perhaps he will come to see that the real and transcendental experience of *we-ness* that has meant so much to him deserves a cautious respect *on its own terms* and not simply because some gray ethics code says so.