



Genre
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The Psychology of Gay Sex

Mining the Dark Side of Making Love

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Photography by Dart and Jake

"I got dick on my brain."

Those were Johnny's first words when he came to me for therapy. He wanted a psychological lobotomy — or one part of him did. Another part, a secret part, relished his forays in the America Online (AOL) chat rooms. This corporate executive loved those exciting searches for Mr. Muscle; and, if he could, he'd make a full-time career out of his nocturnal escapades. When he relaxed enough in his sessions with me, he seemed to drift into certain revelry. AOL's like a candy store. It's like you log-on and know it's a matter of time before some hot dude will Internet Message (IM) you, and then you're doing it "real time" in no time.

His friends and family knew little of his

hidden life, even though he was "out to everybody." To them, Johnny — a studio V.P. — would always be the best little boy in the world. It was a role he played exquisitely. Unfortunately, it was getting to be unbearably difficult to pretend that he didn't feel utterly wasted, burned-out and despairing.

So what's a screwed-up "A"-list gay boy to do? Go to any number of well-meaning mental health professionals who themselves would confuse an insatiable need for homosexual sex with pathology? Attend self-help groups, which only fan the flames of toxic shame through their stalling of homosexual Eros? Confess to his local priest or rabbi? Where is Johnny going to get a practical understanding of the transformational nature of his gay soul? After all, there is a connection between his sexuality and what is most transcendent ~~and~~ ^{and} transpersonal in him. Why is it that our community is so

deadly deficient in providing a gay-centered psycho-spiritual antidote to the pervasiveness of internalized homophobia?

Johnny faces a dilemma suffered by virtually all gay men. Emotionally damaged from the child abuse of institutional heterosexuality, we suffer silently in constant fear of being attacked by the homophobic atmosphere we breathe. We mistake shameful air for pure oxygen, pumping poison (in the form of too many or too few rules) into ourselves and others in a so-called caring manner. As a therapist, it's torture to hear Johnny inflict more torture on himself. "I'm just a pervert." "I hate gays like me." "All gay men want to do is have sex and die." "Why don't I want to call back after the sex is over?" "Why don't they ever return my phone calls?" "I have to become celibate to control this sexual compulsivity."

But if you pressed Johnny for how he



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might be feeling just at the moment that the long-lost cyber stud would send him the jackpot "GIF" — the naked photo — a mesmerizing moment during which Johnny realized that his "dreams were going to come true tonight," the self-flagellation would stop and an entirely different attitude would emerge. Now infused with feelings of awe, wonder, heat, delight, excitement, reassurance and happiness — not to mention

unadulterated joy — Johnny was animated by the presence of a life-affirming spirit.

It is a tragedy that Johnny's gay spirit has been demonized and relegated to a secret AOL closet. He should have grown up knowing that within his sexual turn-on lived his inner soul companion and masculine brother, his homosexual spirit twin, full of warmth, understanding and vitality, a Jonathan to his David, an Achilles to his Patroclus, an

Enkidu to his Gilgamesh. Rather than killer toxic shame, Johnny should have known that his every lustful yearning for fast and dirty sex with his flesh-and-blood double offered an invitation to come to intimately know the faggot/shaman's imaginary world of psychological adventure, healing growth and unlimited possibility. All of us should know.

A gay-centered, psyche-based approach to gay male erotic love is involved in trying to redeem the homosexual soul to the gay personality. The soul here is no Christian concept. It's a metaphor pointing to an actual, living organism inside the gay mind, an ideal Marky Mark who has the wisdom to initiate us into a new gay world that unites erotic need with the substance of meaning and belonging. Marky's no "gay ego." He lives independently from our day-to-day existence. Because He resides in the unconscious, we never know Him directly but know him only through the sensations and inspirations stimulated in us by the likes of a lover and other beautiful male images.

This archetypal gay soul buddy becomes constellated in early childhood when the little boy projects inborn homosexual yearnings on the father (instead of the mother) and those incestuous wishes are frustrated. The earliest Oedipal romance and frustrations (which all people experience with one parent or another), simply stated, forms inside the homosexual boy's mind a soul-image, his ghost-mate. All our lives we are searching in the outer world for that special someone who can approximate our inner-wraith-guy, Marlboro Man, Angel Bottom Boy, Tom Cruise Sex Toy...

But projection alone can never be liberating. By itself it's a homicidal trap of reenactments of unresolved psychological conflicts from which many gay men suffer. We need a gay-centered myth of recollection returning the soul projection back to its origins, home inside the personality, so it can do its transformational alchemy and then get projected again, so that over time a new gay self can become more fully integrated and powerful. It is possible to see and feel the soul figure residing directly inside the psyche and not exclusively outside of it — on Santa Monica Boulevard, let's say. Short of intentionally developing a relationship with our inner Soul Companion, we can only demonize and cast Him out, leaving us only with a soulless husk, the gap of which we fill with alcoholic feelings and self-hating behaviors.

Transformational recollection is no course in miracles. To develop a relationship with the Inner Lover as a moment-by-moment experience, we must be able to tolerate the counter-

reaction of internalized homophobic feelings, developed in us as children in family environments, that forced us to mistrust our gay hearts and impulses. As counterintuitive as it sounds, gay-centered inner work encourages each gay man to expect and look for the emotional backlash of bad, judgmental feelings every time he approaches or is approached by love, and see those bad feelings not just as something to get rid of, but something containing a transformational mystery worthy of the most lovingly mindful embrace.

But short of a technique that teaches us how to handle overwhelming psychic feeling, we're all lost in the emotional woods of the psyche, civil rights notwithstanding. No wonder Johnny can't tolerate meeting his trick more than a few times. When the projections wear off, when things start getting more real, intolerable-feeling memories become irrepressible. Invisible memories of long-forgotten father-traumas and mother rapes replace the bliss of homosexual union. Then, all of a sudden, that trick's nose isn't so cute, and he doesn't deserve me or he probably hates me because I asked too many questions, and I don't deserve to lick his boots — so fuck him.

Though Johnny didn't consciously remember being in love with his father as a small boy, he could remember devastating jealousy when his father favored his older straight brother. During the course of his therapy, he became increasingly sensitive to how his current emotional situations mirrored childhood trauma patterns. He gained insight into his feeling world, and he began to see and relate to his inner subpersonalities. He saw that every time he sought to connect with the soul figure through sex and love, another inner being — this one bearing the face of a hurt, shamed and enraged child — demanded rapt attention. We began to call this vulnerable child entity — and the violent resistances that had cropped up around opening up to this bashed kid — the "gay shadow self."

Separating this gay soul figure from enmeshment with his gay shadow proved a difficult and painful process that entailed naming and then parenting hard-to-tolerate feelings. The technique of working with and integrating powerful gay feeling was also transformational for Johnny. The process began to calm the chaos of his mind. It liberated him from the mental mush of the dead, heterosexually mass mind, opening his heart to the river of love hidden within each homosexual sexual encounter.

The next stage of gay liberation has to entail a type of psychological mindfulness that ex-

tends past the bourgeois limits of the consulting room, but enters into our daily lives and sexual practices — if we're to survive as well as realize our potential as gays. But psychological mindfulness here doesn't reduce our problems merely to unfinished family business, although early-childhood trauma plays a key role in how we act out. Gay-centered inner work sees our historic problems as gateways into the future, for pathology both covers up as well as draws us into a relationship with homosexual spiritual needs and values. How the homosexual acorn can grow into an oak, and not just an assimilated donkey.

The realization that Johnny carried at least two subpersonalities inside his unconscious psyche did not transform him overnight. Staying "conscious and real" was not always encouraged by tricks. But eventually he managed to sleep with the same man for three months. He stopped using crystal to stay up all night. He cried when a man confessed feelings of love for him. As he opened up, sex became less about soothing the crying infant within with sour milk, and he found himself able to bathe in the elixir of erotic attraction without having to devour the man's body parts ravenously; although he could certainly still feel the vampiristic place in him.

Gay men are at a crossroads now. It seems safe to say that many gay men are unable to love without the shadow of repressed toxic shame invading the relationship through either suicidal acting-out or codependent set-ups that demand certain feelings not be broached. But the reason to begin to look inside isn't only to cure us of our pathologies. We are not sick; we are merely uninitiated. The Myth of the Homosexual as a sexual being has to give way to the myth of the Gay Psychological Being seeking a relationship with his erotic soul figure through dealing fairly and squarely with the repressed toxic reactions provoked by love.

The soul figure in each gay man offers such profound wisdom and pleasure we can't begin to think of how much we could grow and change — and what effect our embrace of the erotic "other" inside the heart could have for society as a whole.

As society spirals toward a dysfunctional corporate mass mind, providing the illusion of individuality while enticing us to log-on, it needs the healing power of the gay shaman warrior now more than ever. Every sexual encounter for men like Johnny becomes not just another sick way to reinforce homophobia, but rather an avenue to relate to the most profound realities inside the energy system we call the gay mind, moving evolution one step further for everyone. **g**

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