



Review of Matthew Fox, *The Hidden Spirituality of Men: Ten Metaphors to Awaken the Sacred Masculine* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008), xv + 340 pp.

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For Matthew Fox, the spirituality of men is hidden largely due to self-preservation. Society expects certain things from men, and anything that does not align with those expectations must be hidden and silenced. Spirituality, so often perceived as feminine, is one such element that men must hide and silence, both from other men and women, and even themselves. *The Hidden Spirituality of Men* seeks to shed light on that hidden spirituality and is divided into two parts: “ten archetypes of authentic masculinity” and “sacred marriages”.

The ten archetypes of authentic masculinity of which Fox writes are: Father Sky; the Green Man; Icarus and Daedalus; Hunter-Gatherers; Spiritual Warriors; Masculine Sexuality, Numinous Sexuality; Cosmic and Animal Bodies; the Blue Man; Earth Father; Grandfather Sky. Father Sky refers to a range of ancient and contemporary “sky Gods” which offer men metaphors for a masculine framing of the spiritual. The Green Man provides a masculine earthly complement to Father Sky (and Mother Earth), connecting men to the earth and providing an ecological consciousness more typical of feminist and women’s spiritualities. Icarus and Daedalus speaks to communication between the generations, either between father and son, or more generally in society which often undervalues the passion of youth while over-valuing the wisdom of elders. Hunter-Gatherers resonates with men’s historical and contemporary desire to engage with this activity, the need for ritual, individual and collective intelligence, and the ability to appropriately address shame and anger. Spiritual Warriors find appropriate ways for men to channel aggression with nobility rather than mindless militarism. Masculine Sexuality, Numinous Sexuality is concerned with bridging the gap between spirituality and sexuality and also between gay and straight men. Cosmic and Animal Bodies refers to a celebration rather than denial of the body within spiritual pursuits. The Blue Man resonates with an expansion of masculine spiritual consciousness, compassion and creativity. The Earth Father calls for a more generative and caring model of paternalism directed towards the whole community as well as our own children. Grandfather Sky is a metaphor for how older men are of value, of how they can both guide and learn from younger people.

The second, shorter, “sacred marriages” part of the book deals largely with the theme of complementarity and the union between masculine and feminine. Fox also expands sacred marriage to include other types of union: between dualism and non-dualism, East and West, humanity and the Divine, ecumenism, lay and monastic practices, indigenous and postmodern ceremonies, left- and right-brain thinking, gay and straight orientations, young and old.

It is evident from this brief outline that Fox takes a notably populist approach to the theme of men and spirituality, rather than academic. As such the book intersects on a number of occasions with themes from the mythopoetic men's movement. Clearly the use of archetypes as a tool locates the book firmly within a neo-Jungian discourse; Fox also makes a significant number of references to Robert Bly. Indeed, the success of this book depends upon the reader's willingness to engage with yet another archetypal vision of masculine spirituality. However, critics of the archetypal worldview will find Fox's employment counters some of its more problematic aspects. For example, while Fox is a fan of Bly, he criticizes Robert Moore's use of archetypes as "bent on defining masculinity in a crazy macho way" (p. x). Furthermore, Fox is keen to point out the dangers of taking archetypes too literally, and connecting the "gender" of the archetype with actual gender. Instead, Fox sees the archetypes as "ten stories, ten images, ten ways that men and boys, women and girls can relate to the masculine inside themselves" (p. xxi) rather than something men should specifically aspire to as a way of manifesting their masculinity. This metaphorical framing of masculine archetypes for both men and women goes some way to mitigating the usage of writers like Moore, but the problem of essentialized models of behavior does not fully disappear. This is a problem Fox seems aware of on a number of occasions and results in curious distinctions such as between "warriors" and "soldiers" (p. 78). The warrior may indeed be mindful and noble compared to the soldier who is violent and militaristic, but one wonders whether it might not be more useful to simply do away with all forms of archetypal combatant in explorations of masculinity. Furthermore, these masculine archetypes may well be applicable to both men and women, but they are still very much metaphors of normative masculinity: Fox draws upon a wide range of sources, but Judith Butler is not among them!

Fox's admiration of Bly and criticism of Moore is one of several odd combinations within the book which stop Fox being pigeon-holed too easily. While it is arguable that Fox is a mythopoet, he makes a number of departures from this position. For example, he makes a welcome call for unity between gay and straight men, whereas mythopoetic literature has a tendency towards homophobia. Mythopoetic literature tends towards depoliticized speech and assigning automatic value to other forms of men's movement, however Fox is critical of the "very strange and right-wing" (p. 96) *Promise Keepers*. His choice of literature can be equally contrary: he praises Rosemary Ruether and Mary Daly on the one hand, and then bases his treatment of masculine sexuality on David Deida's farcical *The Way of the Superior Man*.

The value of *The Hidden Spirituality of Men* depends ultimately on its audience. Academic readers may find a number of problems with Fox's assumption of normative masculinity, and his whirlwind tour of the world's indigenous and mystical traditions. However, the book was not written for an academic audience. Non-academic readers whose understanding of masculine spirituality is derived from neo-Jungian and Christian men's movement literature will find a good deal in this book which challenges their assumptions. In particular, I would recommend this book to young people exploring the spirituality of men for the first time: while the book has its limitations, it opens up more possibilities than alternative popular literature on the subject. And in the end, Fox concludes that the "Great Secret of

Masculinity” is being “capable of compassion” (pp. 295–6); it’s hard to argue with that.

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