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The Feminine Way



THE FEMININE IS THE FORCE OF LIFE

The Feminine force is much more than womanhood. The Feminine is the force of life itself, and you can experience it in many ways.

Your favorite music is playing, and without thinking your body begins to move. Your arms arc through the air, your hips sway, your eyes close. Your body and the music seem to be one, moving gracefully with no separation. The dancing is spontaneous, unrehearsed, as if the music itself were the blood moving through your arms, legs and torso. Such is the dance of the Feminine force, the dance of love with no goal, the bodily celebration of life.

You are sitting at your desk trying to finish a crossword puzzle, thinking hard. The world outside of you seems not to exist as you focus mightily, searching for an answer to the puzzle. Suddenly, a gust of wind through your window carries the fragrance of gardenias from the garden. Your body relaxes and you let go of your concentrated effort as you sit back in the chair, inhaling the sweet smell of flowery

delight, and smiling. Your breath becomes deep, your forehead smoothes and your shoulder muscles soften. The fragrance reminds you of life and unburdens you from your mental efforts, refreshing your smile and gratitude for the earth. Such is the Feminine reminder, the blessing of sensual joy and rejuvenation.

For a moment, allow yourself to feel your breath entering and leaving your lungs. Hold your breath, and notice how the desire to breathe becomes greater and greater, until finally you surrender to the force of breath itself. You will eventually give in to the desire to breathe, the desire to live. This is another aspect of the Feminine force of life, the energy that moves you to breathe.

Feel your heart. If you relax and sit quietly, you will be able to feel your heart pumping. You may also feel blood pulsing through your arms and legs. This constant circulation of life-blood is another aspect of the Feminine force—the energy that moves the blood through your body.

If it is possible from where you are sitting, listen to the wind blow, or watch the trees sway in the breeze. Everything in nature is in motion. If you looked at a handful of soil under a microscope, you would see millions of little organisms moving around. Water is moving up and down the trunks of trees and the stems of bushes. And within every drop of water, there are millions more little creatures constantly swimming. Nothing alive is ever really still and unmoving. Everywhere, life is motion.

Our bodies, our senses and the living earth are all manifestations of the Feminine force. She—the Feminine force—is the force of life. All that is attractive in life, and all that is frightening in life, are but aspects of Her dancing form. Volcanoes, rainbows, nipples, flowers, hurricanes and blood enchant us and repel us. The Feminine is not just manifest as women, as the female gender, but is alive as the entire living world.

When we allow ourselves to relax, to enjoy the living world of sights, sounds, smells and relationships of all kinds, then we allow ourselves to be intimate with the Feminine force. When we allow ourselves to feel—not only our own emotions but the "music" of the world around us—then we allow ourselves to move with the Feminine force.

Sexuality itself is a quintessential expression of the Feminine, a full-bodied relational dance of love, sensuality, feeling and creation. It doesn't matter whether you are a man or a woman; sexuality is an expression of the Feminine force of embodied love. How you relate to sexuality, the degree to which you feel free or restrained, reflects your attitude toward the Feminine force in general.

The energy that moves life is the force of the Feminine. She is unstoppable. She is the source of all life, the mover of blood, the breather of breath, the flow of the river's water. The Feminine *is* life. We can feel Her moving and living in any moment we are open to Her, or *as* Her.

THE CORE OF THE FEMININE IS RADIANCE

Imagine you are sitting on your porch, worrying over your mortgage payments. A hummingbird whizzes by and catches your attention. The bird zig-zags from flower to flower. As you gaze at the beautiful flowers—golden marigolds, red tulips, speckled foxgloves—you forget all about the mortgage. Instead, you smile at the beauty of the flowers, the bird, the sublime vision of natural glory. Your body relaxes and your heart opens. Your life has been graced, for a moment, by the radiant beauty of the Feminine force.

Driving along the freeway, you look up and behold a perfectly formed rainbow, alive with brilliant and subtle hues, ephemeral, glowing in midair. Amidst the speeding cars and concrete, in the middle

of a gray and ordinary day of work, the rainbow is a blessing of splendor—a shining vision of the radiant Feminine mystery.

Radiance is at the core of the Feminine. Whether appearing in the vision of a flower, a rainbow, a man or a woman, there is a certain mysterious quality of grace, shine and beauty that can best be described as "radiance."

As our body ages, it may begin to wither. Our youthful, healthy glow may fade as our skin wrinkles and our hair thins. But if we are truly happy inside, then age brings with it a maturity, a depth and a power that only magnifies our radiance. Regardless of our outer appearance, our inner shine can glow brightly, and it is this radiance that is at the core of the Feminine.

Most of us are very aware of this shine, at least superficially. The cosmetic industry is very aware that radiance is at the core of the Feminine, and very attractive to both men and women. Make-up is advertised to make a woman's skin "glow," to add "luster" to her hair, to "brighten" her eyes and to "gloss" her lips. In a word, make-up is used to enhance Feminine *radiance*, if only superficially. Likewise, jewelry and clothing may enhance the shine of the Feminine's inherent radiance.

But it is the inherent radiance of love itself that is the true Feminine core. It can be enhanced or accentuated through the use of beautiful clothing, jewelry and make-up. It can be supported through maintaining good health and grooming. Yet there is only one way to truly magnify the inherent radiance of the Feminine: Love.

When your heart radiates love, you are radiant. Everyone has witnessed the transformations people go through when they fall in love. They seem to shine. They walk into a room and the room gets brighter. Love itself is a brightness that not only shines through a person's smile and eyes, but actually radiates into his or her surroundings.

How, then, do we magnify our inherent radiance? By relaxing into

our loving heart. We must learn to let go of our resistances, and give love. Each of us will follow a different path of growth, but all true paths are paths of love. They are not paths *to* love; they are paths *of* love. Step by step—whether through therapy, intimacy, service or meditation—we practice opening our hearts and loving. As we do so, our shine becomes brighter and brighter. The core of the Feminine is this brightness of love. And it is this radiance that the Masculine finds most attractive.

The Masculine looks to the Feminine for completion. Thus, the more strongly the Feminine shines, the more such a person will fulfill his or her Masculine partner's desire for completion, even without doing much else. A truly radiant person doesn't seem to have to *do* much to attract a partner, except radiate! And that radiance is very real, tangible and valuable.

THE FEMININE IS THE FORCE OF ATTRACTION AND ENCHANTMENT

Like a star, the moon, a flower or a sunset, the Feminine attracts and enchants us, opening our hearts to beauty and love.

We seek the Feminine when we go on vacation, often choosing places of extraordinary natural beauty in which to bask in Her enchantment. While contemplating the majesty of the Grand Canyon or the endless blue of the ocean, we are drawn out of the knot of our little problems. Even the glimpse of a beautiful man or woman attracts us out of our little world, so that we might feel enchanted for hours or days by his or her attractiveness.

It may be the way a man says something, or the look in a woman's eyes, or the way the clouds drift through the sunset sky, but whatever it is, the Feminine force of attraction makes us sigh, smile and relax. Men and women highly value this enchanting quality of the Feminine,

in other people as well as in nature.

But I am not talking about mere physical attractiveness. I am talking about the inner beauty, the healing radiance, that shines so brightly from a happy heart. Such beauty is native to the Feminine, regardless of the particular physical appearance *through* which it shines. Tulip or rose, orange sunset or red sky, a nubile 17-year-old or a wise and graceful 60-year-old—the enchanting quality of the Feminine can shine just as brightly.

Not everybody is physically beautiful. Not everyone looks like the models who pose in popular magazines. And even those who are gorgeous in their younger years may become wrinkled, saggy and gray in their older years. This process of aging is completely natural, and it has nothing to do with true Feminine attractiveness.

For several months while I was writing this book, I lived on the Indonesian island of Bali. While I was there, I established a friendship with a Balinese family who owned and operated a little restaurant with three bamboo tables, and where I frequently ate. The family consisted of three sisters and their mother. The three sisters, all in their early 20s, were extraordinarily beautiful. Any one of them could have been a magazine cover girl. Two of the sisters were, in fact, professional models. Their bodies, their faces, their hair—everything about their appearance was captivating. I could hardly eat, their beauty was so enchanting.

For the first few weeks, they were the only people I saw at the small restaurant. Then one day, their mother came out from the kitchen into the dining area. I will never forget that moment. The three beautiful sisters were sitting in the dining area, talking. Their mother walked out and began talking with them. I was shocked by what I saw.

The mother was about 60 years old. Her brown skin was wrinkled from the sun, and she was clearly no longer a young woman. But her

beauty was incomparable. From the mother's eyes shone a rare light of love, compassion and humor. Her every move was filled with an "otherworldly grace." She looked at me, and her smile lit up my heart. I couldn't believe it. As beautiful as her young daughters were, this old woman was far more beautiful.

It wasn't her physical appearance but her disposition that so enchanted me. She was so relaxed, so loving, so happy, so wise and so radiant that I felt like bowing in honor of her Feminine fullness. Her daughters were but small buds compared with the fullness of her flowering. Perhaps one day her daughters would achieve the graceful depth of Feminine maturity that their mother had, but for now, they were just good-looking girls. However, their mother—old and wrinkled as she was—inspired awe by the depth and fullness of her Feminine force. My heart widened at the sight of her and continued to do so every time I saw her over the next two months.

The Feminine *is* beautiful. The Feminine *is* radiant. Physical attractiveness could express an aspect of this radiance, but it doesn't last, and even while it does, it's only skin deep. However, the Feminine force in people is always attractive, loving and radiant, if it is rightfully honored and allowed to show itself in its unique fullness. A star need not hide its shine, no matter how "unnoticed" it feels.

WHY THE FEMININE WANTS TO BE NOTICED

In general, the more Feminine a person's sexual essence is, the more he or she will desire to be noticed as attractive. This is a natural sign of a more Feminine sexual essence.

If you have a Feminine sexual essence, then you are particularly sensitive to this quality of attractiveness, both your own and others'.

You are sensitive to whether you feel attractive, like a twinkling star or a glowing sunset—or whether you don't. It's painful to feel unattractive, or even unnoticed. Why? Because attractiveness is one of the native Feminine gifts. And we are only truly happy when we are giving our native gifts.

In our Masculine-dominated culture, this concern with attractiveness is often viewed as self-centered or petty. However, sensitivity to attractiveness is actually a natural recognition of the power, depth and beauty of one of the qualities of the Feminine force.

FEMININE RADIANCE IN MEN

The Feminine force is active in men as well as women. Male rock stars, models and body-builders—in fact, all men who cultivate their attractive radiance—are attempting to enhance their Feminine shine, their power of attraction and enchantment. Thanks to our modern cultural movement toward a 50/50 balance of Masculine and Feminine qualities, modern men are "allowed" to acknowledge their Feminine qualities more than in the past.

The popularity of men's hair styling salons and exercise spas, as well as manicures and cosmetic surgery for men, has increased dramatically over the last 20 years. Thankfully, it is now okay for men to be concerned with their attractiveness, just as it has been okay for women.

It is possible, however, for this trend toward men's reclamation of their Feminine to affect their intimacies. A client, Ann, once told me of her frustration with her boyfriend, Jon.

Jon spent quite a bit of money and time on his fancy wardrobe. When Jon and Ann prepared to go out together, Jon was usually late. He would stand in front of the mirror for what seemed to Ann like forever, making sure his hair was perfect, picking every little piece of lint off his

new jacket and massaging men's moisturizing cream into his face.

Ann didn't feel particularly fulfilled by Jon's over-concern with his own attractiveness. She definitely liked the fact that he cared about his appearance, but she wished that *she* was the recipient of Jon's praise and adoration of Feminine attractiveness, not his own image in the mirror. Without thinking about it, Ann began to feel frustrated, wishing that Jon was more in his own Masculine energy, naturally attracted to *her* Feminine energy, rather than being so preoccupied with his own Feminine radiance.

A liability of some of today's men is that in seeking a healthy balance toward 50/50, they begin to give their own Feminine gifts of attraction and enchantment more appreciation than those of their intimate partner. It is one thing for a man to grow from a macho slob to a clean and attractive gentleman; it is quite another for a man to cherish his own attractiveness more than that of his chosen woman.

FEMININE, MASCULINE AND THE BODY

You've seen her. Maybe on a deserted beach as she happily slips out of her confining bathing suit and dives gracefully into the ocean, luxuriating in the feel of the water against her skin. Or perhaps it was on a dance floor, where she seemed to be the dancing expression of a universe happy to be itself. Or maybe you saw her walking down the street, not moving as purposefully as everyone else, but instead, moving with a Feminine ease and sensual relaxedness.

The Feminine lives in the world of sensation, the world of the body, the world of unseen connection to the flow of elements and natural forces. Any person, man or woman, who is thus connected to the world around him or her has a highly developed Feminine.

You have also seen someone who is animating extreme Masculine

energy. Oftentimes you've watched him heading to his office. Eyes pointed straight ahead, never looking off to one side or the other, he strides purposefully, along the shortest straight-line route from where he is to where he's going. Nothing can distract him. He doesn't even seem to be aware of his body or the world of relations that surround him.

A man (or woman) in his extreme Masculine is likely to merely *use* his body, perhaps with the spare grace of efficiency; but for him the body is either irrelevant or, at best, a tool to help him accomplish whatever his current goal is. In fact, such a person only becomes conscious of his body when he is sick or in pain, when it becomes an obstruction to fulfilling his mission.

But the Feminine is inherently alive in the body. Whether in man or woman, the fully incarnated Feminine *is* loving sensuality, connectedness and full-bodied flow in the realm of sensations and life. People like this are a delight to behold. They remind each of us of the mysterious and unseen forces that exist within and around us that move our bodies and our feelings, but from which most of us are distracted by our preference for our own Masculine relationship to the world: goal-oriented, mental and sharp, as if we were cutting through a world of obstructions rather than dancing in a world of energy and sensation.

RELATIONSHIP IS THE FEMININE PRIORITY

To a woman with a Feminine sexual essence, relationship is a priority. If her relationship is going great, then she is essentially happy at her core, and she can deal with other difficulties that may arise, say, at work. When she is happy in her relationship, when she feels the flow of love, it shows: the Feminine shines. But when she is unhappy, it also shows.

For a woman with a Feminine sexual essence, her intimate relationship is *central* to her emotional being. Her whole emotional disposition is affected by whether her relationship is full of joy or full of pain. The tone of her intimate relationship colors her day, her work and her conversations with her friends. It is as if the color of her intimate relationship, whether light or dark, shines through the rest of her life, through her daily activities and her ability to function.

Not so for the Masculine. When He is out the door, His relationship is behind him. At work He is able to focus and concentrate, regardless of whether or not He and His partner had a fight in the morning.

It is as if the Feminine has a sensitive "relationship meter" in Her heart that is always sensitive to whether or not love is flowing in Her intimate relationship. When love is flowing, Her whole life lights up. When love is not flowing, a shadow is cast on Her day, at Her job, with Her friends and when She is alone. The meter in Her heart is always sensitive to how Her relationship feels to Her.

The heart-meter of the Masculine is tuned to a different frequency. The Masculine meter asks, "Is my quest, my mission, going well?" If a man with a Masculine sexual essence gets stuck for a few days trying to solve a problem he is working on at the office, his whole life might be colored by it. No matter how loving his partner is, he will be self-involved and unable to fully respond to her until his mission is restored. He may not be capable of sexual arousal for months if he perceives that his creative or financial quest is failing. However, once he feels that he is successfully back on track, suddenly his intimate life springs back to life. His whole life is colored by how his mission is going; whereas, for a woman with a Feminine essence, her whole life is colored by how her intimate relationship feels.

Without understanding this fundamental difference between the Masculine and Feminine sexual essence, it is easy to misunderstand our

partner's needs. For instance, when a man with a Masculine essence is heavily depressed, it most likely has nothing to do with his partner. There is very little she can do directly for his mood, except give him support on his quest by empowering his mission with her love.

A woman with a Feminine sexual essence will naturally tend to feel that something is wrong with the relationship when she feels her partner is depressed day after day—after all, an unloving intimacy would be the most likely cause of *her* depression. But Masculine happiness is far more affected by a smooth or difficult life-mission than by a smooth or difficult intimate relationship.

In a similar misunderstanding, when a man with a Masculine sexual essence notices that his partner has been "down" for several days, he is all too likely to ask in a clinical fashion, "What's wrong?" Because his heart-meter is not as sensitive to relationship as the Feminine's, he may genuinely be confused as to the source of her unhappiness. After all, the only thing that would make *him* so depressed would be some kind of failure in his professional or creative life. So he will try to "fix the problem," and ask her all kinds of pointed and impersonal questions, with the good intention of trying to ferret out the cause of her lack of happiness and come up with a "cure"—usually some specific action that he recommends.

Yet, if he truly understood the Feminine heart-meter, he would put aside his questions and problem-solving and embrace his intimate partner with the caring force of love. He would be fully present with her, since her Feminine core will respond most strongly to the flow of love. Then, if there is anything to talk about, they can do so with their hearts already full. Whereas the main concern of the Masculine is direction, the main concern of the Feminine is relationship.

THE FEMININE STAYS TOO LONG, THE MASCULINE LEAVES TOO SOON

In bed, heated by passionate loving, the Feminine opens, vulnerably, willingly, to the Masculine. The Masculine enters more deeply.

But also in bed, stung by impatient and abrupt words, the Feminine closes, unwilling to be open to the Masculine. The Masculine turns away and leaves.

Whereas the Masculine is either going deeper or pulling away, the Feminine is either opening or closing.

At the first sign of difficulty in their relationship, the Masculine and the Feminine both become concerned. The Masculine, in man or woman, questions if He should be in the relationship at all, and wonders whether He should leave before things become too committed. The Feminine in man or woman, instead of questioning whether She should continue in the relationship, contracts and closes Herself off from Her partner. If the Masculine softens and offers His love again, the Feminine gradually opens, though it may take days.

This is the cycle of the abused Feminine: opening when loved and closing when hurt, but rarely changing directions and leaving the relationship altogether. Cycling through good times and bad, opening and closing, the Feminine tends to stay in the relationship—sometimes too long for Her own good.

The Masculine tends to leave a questionable relationship too soon. The Feminine tends to stay in a questionable relationship too long.

Anatomically as well as emotionally, the gesture most native to the Feminine in intimacy is one of opening or closing. The Masculine, however, is either interested in entering more deeply or withdrawing and leaving. This is why it is often so difficult for a woman with an extremely Feminine sexual essence to leave a relationship, even when

her friends tell her that the relationship isn't good for her. The direction away is not easy for her. She may close down when hurt, but then over time, as her partner offers her more love, she opens again. Any person, man or woman, with a Feminine sexual essence is unlikely to break this cycle of opening and closing, and leave an inappropriate relationship for good.

The key for a woman (or man) with an extreme Feminine sexual essence is to cultivate her own Masculine. Then, in addition to her heart's native Feminine ability to open or close, she will develop her Masculine ability to change direction and leave, if that is what is best.

MASCULINE AND FEMININE FORMS OF ADDICTION

Since the Feminine lives in the world of sensation and bodily participation, She tends to become addicted to an increase of sensual experience, perhaps through tasting delicious sweets, purchasing beautiful clothing or experiencing frequent social or sexual sensations. If the Feminine becomes addicted, it is usually to ways of *filling* Her sense of emptiness.

The Masculine, on the other hand, is more at home in "death" than in life, in the mind than in the body. He tends to become addicted to reducing sensation, *emptying* Himself and releasing Himself into void-like "perfection." He gets addicted to drinking to the point of numbness and forgetfulness, to achieving orgasm in order to empty Himself into sleep, or to working so hard to achieve professional perfection that He neglects His relationships and emotional life.

Addictions are always attempts to achieve a substitute version of the feeling of true love or true freedom. The Feminine becomes addicted to filling Her sense of emptiness, to approximations of truly fulfilling

love. The Masculine becomes addicted to releasing His sense of constraint, to approximations of truly liberating freedom. Whether through the substitute love of food-induced fullness or the substitute freedom of drug-induced oblivion, the Feminine and Masculine are only trying to discover the truth of Their disowned core.

MASCULINE, FEMININE AND DEPOLARIZATION

Whereas Feminine support of Masculine direction is received as a great gift, Feminine mistrust of Masculine direction can be a devastating source of depolarization and tension. If you don't believe me, try telling a man with a Masculine sexual essence how to drive a car, or that he should stop and ask for directions because he is lost. Very little is more depolarizing to such a man than for his direction to be criticized or mistrusted by his intimate partner.

The core of the Masculine sexual essence is directionality, just as the core of the Feminine sexual essence is radiance. If you have a Feminine sexual essence, you can feel how instantly depolarizing it would be if your intimate partner were to tell you that you are looking run down, worn out, less than radiant: "Hey, honey, do you think you could put on a little more make-up? You are looking rather dull."

To tell a man with a Masculine sexual essence that he is lost—to question his direction, whether it is his financial, creative or spiritual direction, or even just his ability to find his way in the car—has the same depolarizing effect as telling a woman with a Feminine sexual essence that she is drab, wrinkled or not very radiant. It causes an almost tangible collapse, repulsion or contraction to occur.

Never tell a man with a Masculine sexual essence that he is wrong and never tell a woman with a Feminine sexual essence that she is ugly

if you would like to enjoy, rather than murder, sexual polarity. Instead, invite the Masculine into a new and better direction by inspiring, supporting and attracting him. Evoke the Feminine's radiance by praising, appreciating and cherishing her.

At work, feel free to criticize anyone's direction or appearance; if necessary after all, at work your professional goals are much more important than maintaining sexual polarity between colleagues. The same is true in all other domains of interaction between Masculine and Feminine, be they politics, science, art or finances: Outside of the intimate relationship, those with a Masculine sexual essence must be willing to receive criticism of their direction, and those with a Feminine sexual essence must be willing to receive criticism of their radiance, if such criticism will truly serve the situation at hand.

But within intimate relationship, you must decide whether such criticism is worth the inevitably depolarizing effects. It is often much better, and just as effective, to describe your feelings rather than directly criticize your partner's direction or radiance.

For instance, if you don't agree with the direction in which your Masculine partner is investing money, you could say, "I get nervous when I see where your money is going," instead of, "You are making a bad investment." Likewise, you could say to your Feminine partner, "I really enjoy when your skin glows and your eyes shine," instead of, "Today you look particularly old."

Of course, there are many moments when instant communication is more important than maintaining polarity. In these moments, people should say to each other whatever is effective in order to get the point across. They should know, however, that a price will be paid if they directly criticize their partner's sexual core. Also, a price will be paid if the spirit moves you to speak and you don't.

Since the core of the Masculine sexual essence is directionality,

anything you do to demonstrate trust and support of your Masculine partner's direction will turn Him on, and anything you do that demonstrates criticism or mistrust of your Masculine partner's direction will turn Him off—immediately, and rather extremely. The same holds true for the Feminine partner's radiance or attractiveness.

By understanding this natural dynamic, we can consciously choose how to serve ourselves, our partners and our relationships, rather than being stunned into asking, "What did I say that upset you so much?" or, "Why can't you accept the fact that sometimes you are wrong (ugly)?"

THE MASCULINE SPEAKS WORDS, BUT THE FEMININE HEARS MOOD AND TONE

"Damn it! Why can't you for once just *listen* to what I'm saying. Hear my words. I just told you that I love you!" He is yelling at her, his face red, veins standing out from his neck. She sits on the bed, her arms clasped around her knees, which are folded up against her chest. She's looking down at the floor.

She isn't really listening to what he is saying. All she can hear is the furious tone of his voice, his sharpness, his anger. She sees the rigidity in his body as he points his accusing finger at her. What he says isn't as important to her as how he is saying it.

He is taking great pains to spell things out for her. It is obvious that he is picking his words with great care, making sure that he says exactly what's on his mind. He gets more and more frustrated as his carefully chosen words seem to make no difference at all. In fact, she seems to be closing down more and more. She feels like she is being bombarded with anger and sharpness. She is protecting herself from the pain that

his tone represents to her. She can't even hear his words through the angry energy that he is focusing on her.

What he doesn't understand is that while the Masculine lives in a world of concepts and perspectives, the Feminine lives in a world of bodily communication and energetic sensation. Exactly what he is saying makes much less of an impression on her than what his body and emotional tone are communicating.

It is to this domain, the domain of the body and sensation, that the Feminine invites the Masculine—away from the heady world of good points and articulated examples, and into the feeling world of tangibly transmitted mood and touch.

If he would only realize this and change his mode of expression, she would be much more receptive to him. Instead of trying to tell her how much he loves her, attempting to argue her into believing him, he would just relax and give his love to her directly. If he would only touch her arm with love, rather than point his finger at her, she would feel his loving acceptance. If the tone of his voice carried love rather than anger, she would hear him. If his eyes said love rather than frustration, she would feel his care for her. The Feminine hears, sees and feels through the body. No matter what he thinks he is communicating through his words, what she is receiving is the message of his body and emotional tone.

THE MASCULINE SPEAKS "DO," THE FEMININE SPEAKS "FEEL"

Imagine a woman with a Feminine sexual essence talking with her man, who has a Masculine sexual essence.

She says to him, "I feel lonely."

He responds with, "Well, why don't you cultivate more friendships?"

She says something about her feeling and he responds by suggesting she do something about it. She communicates an emotion and he communicates an action.

He says to her, "Do you want to go visit the Smiths tonight?" He asks her about an action.

She responds with, "I'm feeling anxious about my new job." She shares her feeling with him.

"Yes," he says, "but do you want to go to the Smiths tonight, yes or no?"

The Masculine prefers to communicate in terms of action and analysis, but the Feminine prefers to communicate in terms of feeling. Therefore, a man often wants to know what his partner wants to do; that is, which path she wants to take. But she often answers his questions by describing her current feeling or emotion, rather than by stating the action she wants to take.

In the same way, when she asks him how he is feeling, he often answers by telling her what he wants to do.

She asks him, "Are you angry at Bob?" That is, she asks about his feelings.

He answers, "I want to punch him in the nose." He tells her what he wants to do, what action he wants to take.

At another time, she asks him, "Do you love me?"

And he answers with something like, "How can you ask me that after everything I have done for you?"

To the Masculine, actions are the proof of feelings. So a man often thinks that it should be obvious to his partner that he loves her because of what he *does* for her. For the Feminine, however, actions are secondary to the flow of feelings: No matter what the Masculine does, his woman may not *feel* His love. She is sensitive, moment to moment, to the emotional flow between them. In terms of what She feels in *this*

moment, it is irrelevant to the Feminine essence what He has done for her in the past.

Furthermore, to the Masculine, emotional flow may actually be secondary to physically expressed love, to love in action. That is, a woman may be loving her partner without limits, but if she doesn't do something for her man that expresses love physically, he may not feel her love.

She may say, "Can't you feel how much I love you?"

And he may say, "If you loved me, you would have (or wouldn't have) done such and such."

THE FEMININE FLOWS, THE MASCULINE GOES

The Feminine has a certain way of getting things done. Suppose a woman with a Feminine sexual essence is packing for a camping trip. She goes into the kitchen to fill the water bottle, sees there's some oatmeal on the counter, and puts it into a pot to cook. The phone rings, so she answers it in the other room. As she's talking she sees unpaid bills on her desk. She hangs up, pays them, and notices a note with the phone number of a friend who is leaving town in a few days. She calls her up, and so on. Eventually she makes her way back into the kitchen, sees the water bottle on the counter and remembers that she was packing for her camping trip and making oatmeal.

Suppose a man with a Masculine sexual essence is packing for the same camping trip. He sits down and makes a list of all the things he could possibly need for the trip. He figures out into which backpack pocket each of the things is going to go, and then he moves purposefully through the house collecting all the items. While he is moving from the bedroom to the hall closet he doesn't even *see* the rest of the house that he's walking through. As he probes through the boxes in the

closet searching for the flashlight, he is so focused on his task that he might not even hear the phone ringing.

In my own intimacy, very little "gets in the way" of my actions, so Ophelia can always count on me to carry through with what I say I am going to do. She can trust that I will act with confidence and integrity no matter what may come up, even in the midst of obstructions and turmoil.

I often expect that Ophelia is also able to act and think clearly regardless of her emotions. However, because of the strength of her Feminine essence, her emotions often move her more strongly than her goals. When Ophelia says she is going to do something, I might expect her to carry through with it, no matter how she is feeling, unless I remember that her essence is more Feminine than mine. Then, I realize that Ophelia will give priority to her emotions (or her friend's and family's), rather than her current direction of action.

One day years ago, Ophelia and I were at home, each of us working in our studios. Ophelia was writing an important term paper on sacred dance that was due in several days, for a class that she needed to obtain her bachelor's degree. A friend of Ophelia's called on the phone, crying, in the midst of an emotional situation. As I watched Ophelia flow fully and immediately into the conversation with her friend, forgetting about the term paper completely, I noticed that there was a little tension in me. I realized that what was bothering me was that Ophelia had abandoned her mission; she didn't seem to care that she needed to finish her paper and only had a few days left.

If a friend in crisis calls Ophelia on the phone, crying, Ophelia will give her friend's emotions priority. She is likely to put down whatever she is doing and flow into sympathetic conversation with her friend. But if my friend was to call me in such a moment, I would automatically assess the various courses of possible action: Is it better to talk with him

now or to wait until after I finish with the business at hand? Is there someone else he can call who could serve him better? What can he do about his situation right now?

In my Masculine way, I would translate the emotional situation into possible courses of action, examine each course and then choose what I thought was the best one. For Ophelia, however, there isn't even a decision to make. She automatically flows in empathy with the intensity of her friend's emotions, offering her feeling-support and not really thinking about all the alternative courses of action that are immediately possible.

In a real emotional emergency, my "directionality" could get in the way of my ability to provide needed emotional support for my friend, whereas Ophelia would be right there with no questions asked.

On the other hand, if a friend called just to chat, Ophelia would also be very likely to sit for hours and talk, completely forgetting the task that she was working on when the phone rang. I would be much more likely to explain to my friend that I was working on something important and suggest another time when I would be free to talk with him.

The Feminine in man or woman deals with what's at hand, flowing from one thing to another. Rather than following a predetermined sequence of steps allowing no distractions, the Feminine responds to the events and people that are in front of Her. The Masculine acts to achieve a goal; the Feminine responds to the immediate needs of Herself and others. Obviously, to be both effective and healthy, we must each learn to animate either Masculine or Feminine, in response to the needs of the situation. When we understand both ways, we neither denigrate nor overvalue one way or another.

One Masculine gift is the ability to persist in attunement with the big picture, the overall perspective, the long-term goal—without being

side-tracked by people or "little things." One Feminine gift is the ability to stay connected with immediate reality, with the ever-changing needs of people and of life, rather than getting lost in the big picture and forgetting, for instance, that the body needs daily care or that people are not just machines you can turn on, use and then turn off.

The Masculine tends to be blind to the trees, but is good at always viewing the big picture of the forest. The Feminine tends to forget the forest, but is intimately connected with and aware of each and every tree She touches. Neither Masculine nor Feminine is complete in itself—though in the right moment, each is a perfect gift.

FEMININE FLOW IS PAID LESS THAN MASCULINE GO

The Feminine and Masculine both have their place in the workings of our daily life, and they should be honored, and paid, equally. Unfortunately, our culture still pays much more for Masculine than for Feminine skills and talents.

As a typical modern culture, America pays for analytical and goal-achieving behavior in both men and women. That is, it pays for navigating the boat, not for the flow of the ocean upon which the boat rides. Like the flow of the ocean, the Feminine is often taken for granted.

Though immensely powerful, the Feminine way is like water, flowing into the shapes of its surroundings rather than pushing ahead to have its way. Though not passive at all, the Feminine naturally embraces the dynamic shape of the moment. The Feminine senses and serves someone's real and complex needs, for example, by true healing (underpaid Feminine) rather than by cutting away a single symptom with drugs and surgery (overpaid Masculine).

The Feminine is also superior to the Masculine in any situation that

necessitates flowing among a dozen tasks at once—for example, by swirling with a group of chaotic children, somehow keeping it all together yet also managing to be everywhere at once, and still imparting an atmosphere of love, trust and mutual respect rather than mere obedience to authority. Kindergarten teachers are paid less than college instructors, though I'm not sure which job is more difficult or demanding.

This Feminine dance is undervalued in our culture. Many men and women have had to forsake their more Feminine talents and develop their Masculine skills in order to succeed financially. In succumbing to this lopsided cultural demand, we have all lost. We have lost many gifts of true Feminine genius. And we have continued to tacitly support an anti-Feminine stance, which dishonors all service by women and men that is not rendered in the Masculine mode.

MASCULINE AND FEMININE IN POLITICS

In any field where long-term goals are valued over and above the quality of human relationship, the Feminine is excluded. Therefore, our political arena has tended to be Masculine-oriented, and dominated by men. Even the few exceptional women who have succeeded in gaining a high position in political office have established themselves based on their Masculine abilities. In large part, they have been elected for powers of analysis, vision and determination rather than for powers of cooperation, healing and intuition.

Understandably, a person in high political office should be able to make long-term strategic decisions whenever necessary—even when his or her intimate personal life is temporarily full of pain. So it is easy to understand why the men and women who have been elected to high office have been accorded their positions largely due to their

ability to animate their Masculine. An individual in such a position may need to make an important critical analysis at any moment—even amidst personal or intimate turmoil.

The Masculine ability to switch modes—from intimacy mode to analysis mode—is very useful in political as well as corporate situations. If you are a key figure in such a situation, you are not supposed to let your emotions get in the way of your work. Your daily actions are supposed to be completely dissociated from the emotions of your personal, intimate life. And thus politics as we know it has tended to be a "men's club," populated by Masculine-oriented men and women.

Because our political decisions have been so one-sidedly Masculine, we have championed the quest for freedom at the expense of love's wisdom. We have consistently disregarded human well-being and individual need for the sake of so-called political, ideological and economic freedom.

The answer, of course, is not to downplay the strengths of the Masculine when it comes to long-term planning, clear analysis and vision unfettered by personal turmoil. However, it is now time to reclaim the Feminine way of politics, both globally and within our intimate sphere. Just as our intimate relationships have grown from situations of male dominance toward more balanced 50/50 partnerships, so must our political relationships.

Furthermore, just as our intimacies could eventually grow beyond the 50/50 Relationship to the practice of Intimate Communion, our politics could also, in time, honor the unique gifts of the extreme Masculine *and* Feminine. There *are* times when a decision has to be made that, in the short term, will result in loss of life, but in the "big picture" will yield long-term gifts for all. Decisions of this kind may be involved in policy concerning euthanasia and war, for instance. The Masculine is more at home amidst death than is the Feminine, and

thus should be trusted more in the necessary moments of crisis that do occur in our lives. However, the Feminine, in both women and men, is far more attuned to appropriate action when it comes to the propagation and support of life, human and otherwise.

We must first achieve a 50/50 balance in every political arena, just as there is a necessary stage during which intimate partners should learn to split the responsibilities of their relationship right down the middle. But then we must learn to let go of our hold on "balance" and practice trusting the uniquely Masculine and Feminine gifts. Thus, when it comes to ecological, interpersonal and bodily legislation, the Masculine must learn to relinquish its control and trust Feminine wisdom *more* than its own long-term strategy.

In intimate relationships as well as in global politics, the Masculine and Feminine are *not* equally gifted at every task. Rather, after we balance the pervasive Masculine one-sidedness in intimacy as well as politics, we must let go of the need to hold fast to a 50/50 ideal. Instead, we must learn to trust each other's differences as gifts.

The Masculine must be willing to observe that, in certain situations, Feminine wisdom is superior. And the Feminine must be willing to observe the same about the Masculine. Then, based on the obvious gifts of the Masculine and Feminine, we can begin to develop a politics of trust, in intimacy as well as at a global level.

In certain moments we become blinded by our emotions, and we cling too tightly to that which must die, be it an intimate relationship, an embryo or a hero. In such moments, we must learn to trust the wisdom of the Masculine, which is able to act clearly in spite of emotional feelings.

In certain moments we become blinded by our quest for freedom: political, financial and even spiritual. We dissociate our actions from our heart, and end up with a sterile and rigidly life-suppressive political

regime or intimate partnership. In such moments, we must learn to trust the wisdom of the Feminine, which is the genius inherent in relationship, bodily intuition and the natural force of life.

There are times when the Feminine does allow personal emotion to get in the way of clear thinking and effective actions; but equally, or perhaps more often, the Masculine allows clear thinking to get in the way of love. Without love, our lives are empty. And at this point in our evolution, both intimately and politically, it is time for the Masculine to lay down its analytical sword, temporarily, and allow the Feminine to heal the unnecessary slices and gashes wrought by men and women who would prefer to stand separate and think rather than participate and love.

THE FEMININE IS THE FORCE OF CREATION AND DESTRUCTION

Our culture embraces the fact that the Feminine gives birth and nurtures. After all, we have witnessed many mothers giving birth to and raising their children. But if we extend our view to include all of nature, we see that the "Mother" not only gives birth to the children of the animal and plant kingdom; she also consumes them, digests them and gives birth to more. The Great Birther, Nature Herself, is also the Great Consumer, eventually eating the very children She has generated, destroying life only to create again.

The Feminine is the force of creation *and* destruction. Any man or woman who does not embrace the destructive qualities of the Feminine is denying Her full expression.

A man with a weak Masculine is especially prone to despise and fear these qualities and may attempt to suppress the more destructive elements of the Feminine force in his partner. Such a man withdraws

when his partner begins to get wild, looking as if she might "eat him alive." He acts like he is disgusted at her mood, but she can feel the truth: He is afraid. He is afraid of the destructive aspects of the Feminine force, and therefore he fails to embrace her, including every part of her, light and dark, calm and wild.

Anyone with a strong Feminine sexual essence also has a strongly wild and destructive aspect. This aspect completes the fullness of the Feminine spectrum; without it, for instance, sexuality loses its passion and becomes prissy and genteel. The fullness of the ocean includes its storms and dangerous currents. A swimming pool is safer, but it is also far less than the ocean.

After years of criticism, a woman may come to reject the "dangerous" aspects of her own Feminine sexual essence. In doing so, her sexual essence becomes partially owned and partially disowned. Her sexual core becomes weakened. Her sexual energy is suppressed. Her Feminine radiance is diminished.

Many of today's men and women have opted for the safety of neat little swimming pools of contained Feminine energy. They have done this for so long that they have forgotten the immensity, and the fury, of the uncontained Feminine ocean. But beneath the surface, the well-contained fury of the Feminine can begin to turn back on itself.

When the fury of the Feminine is contained, it becomes self-destructive. When wild Feminine storms are disallowed in relationship, they become self-contained and engulf themselves inwardly. Rather than providing the Feminine with raw power, fullness and immense energy, this furious Feminine aspect implodes upon itself, creating a black hole. Rather than radiating outwardly, it sucks energy inwardly.

A man or woman with an imploded Feminine is likely to be self-destructive, perhaps even to the point of physical disease. The solution is not merely to yell and scream and express rage, fury and unbridled

power, although that might help at times. The solution is to not contain the wild Feminine in the first place.

The Feminine is never conquered; its energy is far too immense to be defeated. In our culture, suppressed Feminine fury is either turned back upon itself in a mood of self-destruction, or propelled outward in a mood of rage. But there is a third option: the wild Feminine can become "husbanded" through love, by both men and women.

For instance, by loving herself, every part of herself, a woman with a Feminine sexual essence "husbands" her own wild energy by wedding it to the energy of steady love. She provides herself with a center of loving stability around which her Feminine energy is absolutely free to move in its full range of expression. She knows that love is stable in her heart before, during and after the emotional storm.

If her partner can learn to grow beyond his fear, he too can provide a stable heart of love for her Feminine fury, neither rejecting nor consoling it, but standing free and strong in the midst of her fury, and loving.

This coupling of Masculine and Feminine power occurs both within individuals and between partners. It provides the ever-present stability (Masculine) and raw energy (Feminine) necessary for a dynamic and growing intimate relationship. Sexual passion and emotional vibrancy peter out when the Feminine is contained or when the Masculine is bent in fear. Both are necessary for the fullness of love.

When, as men and women, we are no longer afraid of drowning, the Feminine swimming pool can be liberated, uncontained and restored to its native self: the immense and glorious ocean. Sometimes it is dangerously wild and sometimes exquisitely calm. But always, the true and free Feminine is full. And so is the woman or man who is unafraid to honor and re-own every aspect of her or his wild Feminine.

THE FEMININE IS NOT ALWAYS APPRECIATED

The Feminine force of life is often too unpredictable for the Masculine mind. She's like a gentle breeze that becomes a hurricane, then suddenly calms again into the warm and quiet embrace of a balmy summer afternoon. The Feminine force of life is often too wise for the Masculine's need to know: The mysterious energy of the evolving cosmos is always superior to our temporary scientific notions about it, which seem to become outdated and revised weekly.

The pure Feminine is the force that moves life, not the abstract logic that stands outside, analyzing and commenting about what it sees. The Feminine is more like the ocean than like a scientist or a TV news commentator. The power of the ocean does not derive from its structured expressions of analysis and logic, but from its immense depth, motion, energy and vastness. As we learn to relax into this powerful depth of living energy, our bodies become radiant with health, our relationships become rejuvenated and our minds become moved by passion, rather than by dry and rigid abstractions.

The Masculine is like a boat on the ocean, navigating the shortest route from point A to point B. But oceanic Femininity doesn't move along a single traceable line from one point to another. It flows in many directions at once—sometimes calmly, but sometimes with such a tremendous force that it could easily submerge any boat in its depths.

The free Feminine force is alive, nurturing, healing, rejuvenating and full of life, like the free-flowing ocean. And like the ocean, it is sometimes wild, unfathomable, dark, untamable and even destructive in its power.

Very few of us trust our immediate connection with nature, or the intuitive intelligence of our body. All too easily, we align ourselves with

the logical world of Masculine intelligence. As a culture, we have become so Masculine that we are much more comfortable with analytical problem-solving than with ecstatic dancing! We would rather paddle around in the safety of a man-made swimming pool than learn how to swim in the immense and glorious power of the ocean. The Masculine often wants to pin the Feminine down and keep Her contained, rather than let Her flow as she will.

A married couple that came to me for counseling, Alice and Richard, personify this difference between the Feminine, which is the force of life itself, and the Masculine, which transcends life, and often seeks to analyze, contain or navigate through life. Alice wants to laugh and splash in the rain; Richard wants to hurry to his destination with an umbrella. Alice wants to spring onto the dance floor and let loose; Richard wants to crinkle his forehead and talk philosophy over brandy. Alice can't help but give affectionate attention to purring cats and frisky dogs; Richard doesn't like to risk exposing himself to fleas.

When Alice tries to express herself, Richard frequently says to her, "What do you *mean* by that? Give me an example. You're not making sense to me." After years of Richard's pointed comments, Alice has begun to feel that she is inarticulate and that Richard will "win" in a verbal argument because she can't analyze and articulate her desires as clearly as Richard. Alice's feelings and emotions flow very strongly—it is Richard who wants her to stand outside of her emotions and try to analyze and control them.

As does our entire Masculine-dominated culture, Richard suppresses the fullness of Alice's Feminine ocean. For instance, he demands that she articulate, in navigable words, every little wave of feeling that arises in her ocean of emotions. He demands a reason for why she did this, for why she did that. Richard is trying to turn Alice's spontaneously flowing ocean into a tidy swimming pool, something he

can handle. And in doing so, he is denying her Feminine sexual essence its immense and innate power.

DISOWNING THE FEMININE CORE

It's Christmas morning. A 10-year-old girl sits amongst the bright wrapping paper and bits and pieces of boxes torn open with the usual abandon. She sits smiling, watching her sister posing in her fancy new clothes and jewelry, listening to her parents praise her sister's beauty, unable to identify the vague feeling of unease that she feels as she looks over the books and educational games she has received as presents.

Her mother turns to her father and says, "Aren't we blessed, dear, to have two daughters so special in their own ways?"

This little girl, whose native sexual essence happens to *actually* lie toward the more Feminine end of the spectrum, is being tacitly "shaped" by her parents' perceptions and expectations. Over time, she will likely accept the "fact" that she is a smart person, but not a particularly radiant one, for example. A girl like this will probably develop other, more Masculine aspects of her personality, her abstract analytical and organizational skills, perhaps, or her competitive edge. Of course, it's very healthy to develop the entire spectrum of qualities, Masculine and Feminine. It's just that a girl like this may overemphasize developing her Masculine energy and thereby deny, for example, her native radiance and attractiveness, as well as all the other natural qualities of her Feminine sexual essence, which remain lingering in her heart.

By denying her natural radiance and power of attraction, for instance, by numbing herself or resigning herself to a "hopeless" situation, she denies a core aspect of the Feminine sexual essence. She disempowers an aspect of her Feminine core.

An adult woman whose Feminine sexual essence has been

disempowered will tend to attract men whose Masculine sexual essence has been likewise disempowered. Such men are relatively ambiguous and lacking in confidence. In other words, if you are a woman who has denied the native radiance—or sensuality, or creative chaos, or wild power—of your Feminine sexual essence, you will probably find yourself in a relationship with a man who is afraid to take a strong stand in your lives together: He is denying the native force of his Masculine sexual essence. Your Feminine sexual essence won't be fulfilled by such a man.

The first step in attracting a partner with a strong Masculine sexual essence, or in evoking more Masculine energy from your present partner, is to cultivate your ability to trust your own Feminine core. By relaxing into your Feminine essence's native and inherent attractiveness, radiance, wildness, spontaneity and intuitive connection with life, you will empower your core, and you will shine. Then you will also automatically attract, or evoke in men, a strong Masculine sexual essence.

WHY SHOULD WE HIDE?

To grow beyond the 50/50 Relationship into the fullness of Intimate Communion, we must understand the differences between our natural sexual essence and the sexual character we may have become. Our sexual blooming has been influenced by the ways we were treated in the past by our parents, friends and lovers. We may have been praised for our Neutral, Masculine or Feminine essences, or we may have been wounded or even abused. It is important for us to discriminate between conscious sexual growth and unconscious sexual hiding.

Elaine is a woman who came to me for counseling with a deeply wounded Feminine sexual essence. When Elaine was a child, her

mother often worked late at night. Sometimes, Elaine's father would come into her room and touch Elaine playfully. These episodes of touching gradually became more and more sexually oriented, and, eventually, Elaine's father was regularly abusing her sexually.

Sexual abuse is a complex and important issue, which is not the focus of this book. (There are many excellent books on the subject for those who want to research the topic further.) However, we will look at one simple consequence of this kind of abusive relationship: Anyone who suffers this kind of circumstance will probably develop a strong resistance to the Masculine force. Her father was her first source of Masculine energy, and so now as an adult, Elaine feels guilty, angry, helpless and full of pain—the same emotions she felt with her father—whenever she feels the extreme energy of the Masculine. She tends to close down whenever extreme Masculine energy is offered to her—it doesn't matter whether this energy is abusive or offered as a loving gift. Her automatic bodily response is mistrust. She doesn't feel safe in her intimacies with men.

In fact, Elaine also distrusts her own Feminine core, since it was "clearly" her femininity that attracted the abuse in the first place, or so it seemed to the little girl Elaine. After all, her brother wasn't abused—she was. She was so pretty and so nice to touch, her father used to say before abusing her. Her body has learned that its mere Feminine radiance attracts violation, and so at some level she has rejected her own Feminine essence. In different women, this kind of sexual self-rejection may take many forms, from vaginal and uterine diseases to feelings of confusion or worthlessness.

As an adult, Elaine is a compassionate, kind, intelligent and loving person, but she resists being entered by the Masculine force. And at the same time, she also suppresses her own incarnation and radiance of the Feminine force. Her sexual essence has become hidden. Her childhood

memory is that Man (the Masculine force) is violent, insensitive, causes pain, crosses boundaries uninvited and is not worthy of trust. And Elaine remembers that Woman (the Feminine force) is confused, hurt and guilty—not to mention someone of whom advantage is taken. Elaine is quite able to love people non-sexually, but she is at war with the polarizing forces of Man and Woman. Deep down, her natural sexual essence is waiting to bloom. But her acquired sexual character is fearful and guarded.

Elaine is afraid that if she relaxes into her extreme Feminine, she will attract Masculine abuse and suffer painfully.

Because Elaine resists Man and Woman, her friends tend to be more Neutral in their expression, people who do not incarnate strong Masculine or Feminine energy. For example, her friend Bob is a family therapist. He is a good listener and is careful not to be too assertive or harsh. He sometimes gets very emotional, but he never gets overtly angry or violent and rarely swears out loud.

Bob did not grow up with a father who was a clear transmitter of strong Masculine integrity. His father was not even around very much. Instead, Bob absorbed the more Feminine style of loving from his mother, and he has come to view the Masculine force as distant and unfeeling, like his father seemed to be. As an adult, too, Bob has experienced that most women don't like a pushy and domineering man, so he has learned to listen and be sensitive. But his intimate partners end up leaving him because they say he is spineless and not confident of his own direction. And because Bob has lost connection with his deep Masculine essence, his sexual expression of love has become compromised, superficial and mechanical. Elaine enjoys Bob's company precisely because his Masculine energy is not particularly strong. Because of her past, Elaine finds strong Masculine energy either threatening or offensive.

Another friend of Elaine's, Maggie, is a successful dance instructor. She has her own studio in town, and many close friends. But Maggie hasn't been very lucky with the men in her life. She broke up with her husband many years ago. It seems that none of her relationships since then have lasted more than a year, and every man she has been with turns out to be undirected and dishonest in some way.

After her husband left, Maggie devoted all her energy and attention to making her career a success. Through a lot of disciplined effort, she created the life that she wanted on her own terms. But now, Maggie is afraid that if she relaxes into her Feminine she will lose her competence and independence. She remains autonomous, self-sufficient and empty in her heart.

Elaine and Maggie agree: Before a relationship can work, each partner must be whole and strong, able to be independent and self-responsible. Both of them have learned that you can't let down your guard and trust your partner. Elaine has been terrified, both consciously and unconsciously, to let a man get close to her sexually, but she has a lot of good friends, both men and women. And Maggie knows that it's better to be independent and free than to depend on some guy who is going to leave anyway.

Many women go through a stage, if not a lifetime, of wanting to feel their freedom and independence—they don't want a man to support them, or don't want to pay the unspoken price that may go along with that support. But Maggie has succeeded in the financial part of her life, and now she would enjoy finding a man who would like to embrace her as a goddess and cherish her as a woman. Yet no such man seems to be attracted into her life. A strong Masculine essence is attracted to a strong Feminine essence, and Maggie's natural Feminine essence is covered over by her highly developed Masculine energy. She has made it in the world, and will not let go of her Masculine energy. And

it shows. So the men she attracts are weaker men, looking to be completed by her highly developed Masculine energy, rather than by her hidden Feminine sexual essence.

Maggie has continued to develop her Masculine side because she hasn't found a man she could trust. Trustworthy men, with a strong enough sense of direction to at least match hers, do not seem to present themselves. Because she has both a Feminine sexual essence and also a strongly projected force of Masculine energy, the energy she radiates seems to be both, half-Feminine and half-Masculine. This naturally attracts a man who is also half-and-half. Maggie continually finds herself in relationships with men who are uncertain and ambiguous in their commitment. And no such half-and-half man is going to sweep her off her feet. A half-and-half man doesn't animate strong enough Masculine passion for her to trust. And from her partners' perspectives, Maggie doesn't seem to *want* to be swept off her feet; she seems so staunchly self-sufficient and directed.

However, deep inside, Maggie's Feminine sexual essence remains unfulfilled. A core desire of the Feminine essence is to be filled with love. Because she has spent so much time developing her Masculine energy, and because men don't feel her desire to be filled with love as much as they feel her desire to be independent, Maggie must fill herself. She fills herself with sweets and social events. She fills her shelves with knickknacks and sentimental objects. Her Feminine sexual essence is yearning to be filled, and Maggie does a good job of trying to fill her own emptiness. But her attempts at self-filling are the results of a love-starved Feminine sexual essence.

Of course, Maggie does not need to let go of her creative or financial success in order to attract a good man. She can be as successful as she wants. However, if she is going to attract a man with a confident and trustable Masculine style of loving, she must be able to shift into her

strong Feminine energy during moments of intimacy—opening and inviting, radiant and rejuvenating, wild and powerful. She will then attract a man with a strong Masculine, full of confidence, presence, humor and direction: a man she can trust.

Maggie will have to let go first. As long as she identifies herself with her assertiveness and her directionality, with her own Masculine, she will not be willing to animate her Feminine radiance, which is as much a part of her as her animated Masculine. If Maggie wants a man with a strong Masculine, a man who is not threatened by her success, a man in whose love she can relax, then she must trust and therefore shine her native Feminine sexual essence in order to reciprocate him. In the same way, men who want to attract a more Feminine partner must trust and strengthen their own Masculine.

Elaine and Maggie are examples of people who are not happy with the sexual character they have become, and therefore are also dissatisfied with the intimate partners they attract. They have unconsciously hidden their natural sexual essences because of pain they experienced in the past. They are suffering in their intimate lives, always repeating the same pattern of unconsciously denying themselves that which would fulfill them most. Neither of them has relaxed into her natural sexual essence.

In fact, very few of us have. To some extent, virtually all of us are hiding some aspects of our true sexual essence. We are afraid to express our true desires. We resist the sexual essences of others who secretly arouse us, or who evoke hidden aspects of our sexuality that we have rejected because of past pain or fear. We have decided that relaxing into our native Masculine or Feminine sexual essence is unsafe. We have decided that it's better to be an equal person than a hurt one. It's better to be in a fair relationship than an abusive one. It's better to be independent and self-sufficient than dependent and vulnerable, subject to loss and betrayal.

And so we seek a 50/50 Relationship that will support our desire for equality, independence and self-sufficiency. And in the process, we end up starving our hearts. We are inadvertently neutralizing the flow of passionate gifts between unguarded hearts in our intimate relationships. We are often working to achieve Neutral and fair "peoplehood" at the expense of fulfilling our deep Masculine or Feminine heart-core.

THE FEMININE CRISIS: SECOND TO THIRD STAGE

Whereas the Masculine, in men and women, is constantly hoping that His mission will satisfy Him, the Feminine, in men and women, is constantly hoping that Her intimate relationship will satisfy Her. "Am I loved? Does my partner *really* love me?" Her deepest desire is to feel loved, and thus stage by stage She lives Her life as an effort to be fulfilled in love.

Let's consider a woman who has a Feminine sexual essence. In a first-stage moment, a woman like this will often give up her own needs and desires in an effort to "get" love from her man. Over time, this does not satisfy her, and she vows to be strong, to establish her independence financially and emotionally. She develops her creative talents and gifts. She also cultivates her own Masculine energy by "buckling down" and directing her life toward career goals. She learns how to say "no" in order to stand free and independent of other people's demands, including her man's and her family's.

Emotionally, she learns to love herself, rather than to always be seeking love and approval from an outside source. Instead of seeing herself through her man's eyes, she learns to see herself for herself. Instead of wondering if she is loved, she learns to give the love she wants to herself. She does this by using her Masculine energy of abstraction and

discipline to "convince" her Feminine that She is loved. For instance, she might practice affirmations over and over, repeating to herself, "I am special. I am beautiful. I am worthy of love."

Thus, in a second-stage moment, a woman uses her internal Masculine to give her Feminine the same praise that her Feminine would otherwise want to get from a man who really did love and honor her. A second-stage woman becomes "whole" and "independent" by learning to give *herself*, once and for all, the love she always hoped to get from her intimate partner in the first stage but never entirely got.

For a woman with a Feminine sexual essence to move from the first to the second stage, she undergoes a crisis: She feels that she just doesn't get the love she wants from her partner or partners. Eventually, she gives up trying, goes through a dark period of emotional suffering and yearning, and, at some point, resolves that she will simply give herself the love that she wants. This is the second-stage resolve: "I may still be in an intimate relationship, but I am essentially my own woman, fulfilling my own needs, no longer dependent on a man to make me feel good about myself. I can learn to love myself and feel good about myself, by myself."

Months or years may go by, and now this woman finds herself doubly in despair. Not only is her Feminine core unsatisfied by the lack of love she receives from her man, she is also unsatisfied by the lack of love she receives from her own Masculine; she still wants a man with whom to share love. Her heart is not overflowing with the bliss of love. Rather, even though there are good times and bad times, her heart is still yearning for more love in her life. Sometimes a man seems to love her, sometimes he doesn't. Sometimes she can love herself, sometimes she can't. Her heart might feel okay, but it doesn't feel overwhelmed by love. Her body might feel okay, but it isn't exploding in the bliss of passionate love. Her mind might feel okay, but it isn't rested in the certain knowledge of love.

The love that would absolutely overwhelm her Feminine core, that would fulfill her deep yearning, is lacking. It always has been. And so the crisis between the second and third stages begins: "I can't get enough love from him. *And* I can't give myself enough love. I am still yearning for more love. It is hopeless."

This Feminine "black hole of need" is equivalent to the Masculine's "mid-life crisis" of emptiness and inauthenticity in His life.

Eventually, a second-stage woman with a Feminine sexual essence becomes absolutely frustrated in her desire for deep and overwhelming love. Sure, there are periods in her life when she might temporarily feel this kind of love, but these periods don't last. There is always the possibility of loss of love. Always there is the fear that maybe he doesn't really love me. Maybe he won't really love me tomorrow. Maybe he'll love someone else more. And maybe I won't be happy by myself, without an intimate partner in love. This doubt of love becomes magnified to the point of heart-yearning despair in the crisis that allows the Feminine to grow from the second to the third stage.

If she can allow herself to relax into her despair without protecting her yearning and wounded Feminine heart, the yearning itself will reveal her divine nature. If she can allow herself to be absolutely open, without trying to fill the "hole" in her heart with food or talk or intimate hopes, this dark hole will eventually widen to the size of the universe. This is not a metaphorical expression, but a literal description of the Feminine Divine nature: the heart widened to infinity, in which absolute love flows with no obstruction.

It is rare for a woman to allow herself this degree of heart-vulnerability, just as it is rare for a man to allow himself the degree of self-death or ego-death necessary for the transition to a life purposed toward worship of consciousness and self-transcending service. Most women keep trying to find the right man, or keep hoping that their

chosen man will give them more love, or keep attempting to love themselves to the point of happiness. But it never happens—not to the point that the Feminine heart is overwhelmed by the bliss of love, unburdened by doubt or fear of loss.

This degree of heart-openness can only be experienced by a heart with no protection, an unguarded heart open in love with no expectation of being given love in return. Such a heart is frequently wounded by the blows of unlove dealt by people and the world, but it never closes in pain. The third-stage Feminine heart may be hurt by others since it is not protected, but it is never closed by the pain it feels. Love and openness are the nature of the third-stage feminine heart, even in the midst of hurt. By always being open in love, the Feminine heart is finally pervaded by the love it always wanted. By surrendering directly to the divine force of love in every present moment, breath by breath, rather than hoping to get love from a mortal man or her own mortal self, the Feminine blooms to fullness, neither dependent on a relationship nor independent from a relationship.

Just as the third-stage Masculine realizes the inherent freedom of consciousness without needing to seek such freedom in relationship or away from relationship, so the third-stage Feminine opens in the inherent love of the Divine, in every present moment, as a practice, either alone or in the midst of relationship.

RECLAIMING THE FEMININE GIFT

All of us are in the process of learning to give love, more and more freely. The Feminine expression of love is the bodily expression of love. To the extent that your body is free to express love in relationship through touch, voice, movement and personal offering, you are free in your expression of this aspect of the Feminine force.

However, as members of a Masculine-dominated culture, most of us are not truly free in our Feminine expression. We are in denial of Her force and beauty. As a culture, we tend to deny the life of the juicy body in favor of the mechanics of the dry mind. We tend to deny the fullness of sexual play in favor of the goal of spasmodic release. And we tend to deny love in favor of work. As a culture, we tend to deny the Feminine in favor of the goal-oriented Masculine. Each of us can feel this denial in the tightness of our solar plexus and the shallowness of our breathing. And each of us can also intuit the Feminine force that waits in our heart, desiring only to be expressed in the fullness of whole-bodied loving.

Whether we are women or men, it is time to reclaim our Feminine. By doing so, we are also able to restore the intuitive, spontaneous and radiant force of the Feminine to our lives and intimacies.

TRUSTING THE FORCE OF LIFE

As we learn to trust the Feminine force of life, it begins to move our lives in ways we would never have been able to plan. How many of our significant relationships began on the basis of "chance" meetings? How would our lives be different if we fully trusted and acted upon our intuitions and feelings? How much happier would we be if we spent more time moving with the force of life, dancing, singing, making love and walking in the woods or the garden—rather than always pushing ourselves along a path that we think is leading to where we want to go?

We owe it to ourselves to acknowledge that our minds are smaller than the Feminine force of life that has given birth to our minds, the Feminine force that sustains our minds, and the Feminine force that will bring an end to our minds when the force of life no longer flows through us.

Remember: We are totally dependent on this Feminine force of livingness. It breathes us, it beats our heart, it moves our bodies and it energizes every living thing on earth, including all of nature, the shifting winds, the flowing waters, the tiny bugs, the weeds and the whales.

Our personal health as well as our intimate relationships depend on our ability to relax into the living force of the Feminine. In this moment, we can learn to relax, to breathe deeply and to feel the flow: the flow of emotions, of sexual energy, of intuitive wisdom. When we are relaxed and open to this flow of living force, it is free to flow not only within our bodies, but also within our intimate relationships.

Love is not logical, as anyone knows who has ever loved. Logic is of course very useful at times, but the logical mind is unable to fully comprehend the Feminine mystery of life in all its forms. However, when we are surrendered to the flow of life, relaxed and open to its movement and subtle intuitions, a different kind of whole-body intelligence is born. This intelligence, this wisdom of love, this genius that is inherent in a radiantly alive, open and sensitive body, is the intelligence necessary for spontaneous and skillful means within our intimate relationships. It is one of the gifts of the Feminine force.