

BOOK REVIEW

Aaron R. Kipnis, PhD (1991). KNIGHTS WITHOUT ARMOR: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR MEN IN QUEST OF MASCULINE SOUL. Forward by Robert Johnson. Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, Inc. 293 pages. Hardcover: \$26.95. Reviewed by David Johnston

During a recent lecture in Victoria by Sam Keen who, along with Robert Blye, is a leading figure in the men's movement that is sweeping North America, it became readily apparent to me that we are witnessing a collective force with some power. Although it is, in part, a direct response to Feminism, it is more deeply an attempt to come to terms with powerful evolutionary changes that have been accumulating in the unconscious of the collective psyche. The fact that men are finally becoming involved is noteworthy, although the eventual outcome of this movement is no so obvious.

One of Carl Jung's most significant insights is the appalling lack of Eros in our collective lives, that is to say awareness of our deep natural relatedness to one another, to all life and to our instincts and spiritual center. The result is a society built on alienated competitive individualists at war with both themselves and others. Given this reality, Kipnis argues that one of the fundamental needs of contemporary men is to learn to relate to other men and to rediscover natural instincts that have been lying dormant in the male psyche for thousands of years. He particularly appeals to pagan sources with rituals and archetypal images, including those of the earth gods, for traditions that can broaden definition of contemporary male psychology.

There is, unquestionably, a need to collectively expand awareness in the direction that the author is pointing, with his stimulating insights. There is, however, a risk involved in doing this of which he does not seem to be aware. We should never forget that Nazi Germany also invoked the pagan gods. An effective relationship with hitherto collectively repressed instincts requires inner work and discipline. Moreover, there is a danger of appropriating archetypal energies for narcissistic purposes and the power principle as did Nazi Germany. This necessitates a wary eye.

Although Kipnis acknowledges the uniqueness of the individual path, he argues that there is a deep need for men to come together in search of the masculine soul. There is, he observes, a grass-roots male support group movement that is not only gathering momentum, but seeking definition. Indeed, his own experience with a men's group that grew out of an A. A. twelve step program serves as the basis for his book.

The book also contains a considerable amount of provocative research on the male condition today. Although, at times, the evidence he produces to support his thinking sounds like the collective whine of the male anima, Kipnis is successful in showing another side to the pejorative picture that has been painted of men by extreme and even moderate Feminists over the past twenty-five years or so. Indeed, rather than being in a favored position, the author notes that men actually come up short when compared to women today.

In addition to the need for men's support groups, Kipnis calls for the development of a male affirming psychology. "Men," too, he says, 'are beautiful!" Men not only need to rediscover their self-esteem, they need to explore new ways of expressing the multifaceted male psyche. This includes responsible attempts to heal the wound between the sexes, as well as between father and son.

Knights without Armor is a serious addition to the slowly growing literature on the men's movement and I recommend it for both men and women alike. It is not only informative but it also serves as a practical guide for men who would like to become involved in a group of their own. Moreover, it makes abundantly clear that men are hurt just as much as women in the post-modern patriarchy, a point to which many men resonate.

The book, however, has several shortcomings. The author's description of the male psyche is less than adequate, particularly as there is little or no mention of the Self beyond the dualities and its significance. Moreover, in addition to addressing the dangers that I mentioned above, Knights without Armor would have profited with an extensive overview on the nature of the evolutionary changes currently taking place, which I suspect Kipnis seriously underestimates. The author also makes little differentiation between a shadow patriarchy, as exemplified by the present system and a potentially positive patriarchy or matriarcy/patriarchy. Furthermore, there is virtually no acknowledgement made of the necessary and positive role women and the feminine play for men's

individuation process *per se* and the role of the Self and spiritual force in that process.

As a matter of fact, as Kipnis describes it, the men's movement appears to be the inevitable fallout from a society that has miserably failed to provide adequate initiation for adolescent men into this changing and troubled world. It does not, however, answer the deeper call for conscious individuation, which eventually leads to detachment from any collective institution, even the men's movement. That requires a second order of initiation, something our pagan ancestors also recognized.