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The Love - Power Split

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The biggest single split in the average person's psyche is the one between love and power. Some small fraction of us grow up in a situation where we see the two integrated, where power is wielded with love and where love is wielded with power. But most of us are not so fortunate. We see power wielded without love to guide it, and we see love wielded without power to strengthen it. We come to see the two as incompatible and even opposing forces, and at some point, believing that we must choose a side in this contest, we identify with one side and reject the other.

If we identify with love, we see ourselves as good and kind and loving, caring and compassionate. We feel connected to others and we value that connection. We may feel dependent on others or we may see them as dependent on us, but we see dependence as okay. We see power as bad and mean and even abusive, even if it does get things done. By contrast, we feel weak and small and helpless, even incompetent. We may long for power, but we don't dare grasp it, lest we turn into one of those abusive bullies that we hate.

On the other hand, if we identify with power, we feel big and strong and capable. We take pride in our independence and self-reliance. We don't have needs. Needs are contemptible. Needs and dependence are for losers. We are winners. We are in charge and in control. We get it done, and we do without love if we have to. We may long for love and connection, but we don't dare open ourselves to it, lest we become vulnerable, like those weak, little wormy people that we scorn.

Most of the time, we stay firmly in one camp or the other. We see ourselves as superior in some way, while devaluing the other camp. Sometimes, in certain situations, we may switch sides for a short while, but it isn't long before we come back to our usual place and self-image.

This conflict between love and power is the theme of most of our great stories. In the Harry Potter series, for instance, Voldemort's back story is that he has never had any family or friends. We first see him as a lonely, unloved orphan in an orphanage, rejected and ridiculed by even the other orphans. He demonizes his own parents and rejects them and all humans and all human love. Instead, he chooses power, which he conceives of as power over others. His only connection to others is inspiring enough fear to be able to rule them against their will. At one point, Harry even names his dilemma, saying, "I pity you. You will never know friendship or love."

Harry's back story, on the other hand, is one of being deeply loved by his parents. When Voldemort attempted to kill him as an infant, he was saved by "the old magic, love." During his childhood with relatives that despise him, Harry comforts himself by idealizing his parents and their love. At Hogwarts, he is able to accept the friendship and love offered to him. And even when in mortal danger, he does not choose power over love. When the Elder Wand comes to him at the end, he breaks it, rather than step into a position of such power.

The Lord of the Rings is another story of Power versus Love. Sauron plots to acquire absolute power over Middle Earth, while hobbits, elves, and men attempt to form enough trust and connection between them to stop him. The theme of the story is always, Will they value their connection enough to unite to defeat Sauron? or will their own distrust keep them separate and defeat them?

Both stories illustrate for us the problem that we all face: how do we heal the split between Love and Power? How do we re-integrate the rejected and split-off parts of ourselves so that we can learn to wield power with love and love with power?

The answer, of course, is the inner Sacred Marriage, the marriage inside of ourselves in which our own inner masculine marries our own inner feminine, our strength marries our beauty, and our mind marries our heart. This inner marriage is no small feat. It has been the goal of many inner practices for many centuries. In our myths and stories, the person who has achieved it appears as the Wise Elder, the Good Parent, and the True King and Queen. Tolkien even gives us this image at the end of *The Lord of the Rings* with the marriage of Aragorn and Arwen.

In this process of integration, however, Love and Power do not survive as equals. As Love and Power mix inside us, our connection dissolves our separateness, and without separateness, we discover that it is our heart that perceives the true nature of situations and things, not our mind. This re-orders our inner landscape. Now our mind serves our heart. Now our power serves our love. And our strength serves our beauty. Now we come to see that our true task is to serve Life, and we step into the clothes of the Wise Elder.