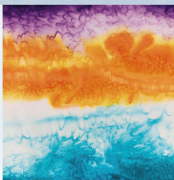


Scott Baum

Womb Envy: A Bioenergetic Perspective

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Womb Envy: A Bioenergetic Perspective

Somatopsychic Reality of Men – Not Women, Not Mothers

Scott Baum

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Abstracts

This article takes up and broadens the concept of ‘womb-envy’ from a bioenergetic perspective. Womb-envy describes a felt, if unconscious, experience in men arising from our incapacity to carry and bear and, in certain ways, nurture children. This paper examines this phenomenon using a somatopsychic lens and illuminates the impact of the feelings arising from this on personality development and on men’s relationships with women.

Keywords: womb-envy, men’s somatopsychic identity, relations between men and women

Inveja do útero: uma perspectiva bioenergética (Portuguese)

A realidade somatopsíquica dos homens – não das mulheres, nem das mães

Este artigo lança e amplia o conceito da “inveja do útero” de uma perspectiva bioenergética. Esse conceito descreve a experiência, nos homens, sentida e inconsciente, que emerge da incapacidade de gestar, parir e, de certo modo, nutrir as crianças. Focaliza esse fenômeno, usando uma lente somato-psíquica e destacando o impacto dos sentimentos que emergem daí no desenvolvimento da personalidade e nos relacionamentos dos homens com as mulheres.

Invidia dell’utero: una prospettiva bioenergetica (Italian)

Realtà somatopsichica degli uomini – non donne, non madri

Questo articolo riprende e amplia il concetto di “invidia dell’utero” da una prospettiva bioenergetica. L’invidia dell’utero descrive un’esperienza sentita, anche se inconscia, dagli uomini derivante dalla nostra incapacità di portare avanti una gravidanza, partorire e, in un certo senso, nutrire i bambini. Questo articolo esamina questo fenomeno utilizzando

una lente somatopsichica e illumina l'impatto dei sentimenti che ne derivano sullo sviluppo della personalità e sui rapporti degli uomini con le donne.

L'envie de l'utérus: une perspective bioénergétique (French)

La réalité somatopsychique des hommes – pas des femmes, pas des mères

Cet article reprend et élargit le concept de “l'envie de l'utérus” d'un point de vue bioénergétique. L'envie de l'utérus désigne une expérience ressentie, bien qu'inconsciente, chez les hommes, découlant de leur incapacité à porter, à enfanter, à allaiter et, d'une certaine manière, prendre soin des enfants. Cet article examine ce phénomène à l'aide d'une lentille somatopsychique et met en lumière l'impact des sentiments qui en découlent sur le développement de la personnalité et sur les relations des hommes avec les femmes.

Gebärmutterneid: Eine bioenergetische Perspektive (German)

Die somatopsychische Realität von Männern – nicht von Frauen, nicht von Müttern
Dieser Artikel greift das Konzept des “Gebärmutterneids” aus bioenergetischer Sicht auf und erweitert es. Gebärmutterneid beschreibt eine gefühlte, wenn auch unbewusste Erfahrung bei Männern, die sich aus unserer Unfähigkeit ergibt, Kinder auszutragen und zu gebären und in gewisser Weise zu nähren. Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht dieses Phänomen aus somatopsychischer Sicht und beleuchtet die Auswirkungen der daraus resultierenden Gefühle auf die Persönlichkeitsentwicklung und auf die Beziehungen von Männern zu Frauen.

Зависть к матке: биоэнергетическая перспектива (Russian)

Соматопсихическая реальность мужчин – не женщин, не матерей (Скотт Баум)

В этой статье рассматривается и расширяется понятие “зависть матки” с биоэнергетической точки зрения. Зависть матки описывает ощущаемое, пусть и бессознательное, переживание мужчин, возникающее из-за нашей неспособности вынашивать и рожать, а также, определенным образом, воспитывать детей. Данная статья рассматривает этот феномен с помощью соматопсихической линзы и освещает влияние возникающих при этом чувств на развитие личности и на отношения мужчин с женщинами.

子宫嫉羨：一个躯体动力分析的视角 (Chinese)

男人的身心现实—不是女性，不是母亲

这篇文章从躯体动力分析视角采用和拓宽了“子宫嫉羨”的概念。子宫嫉羨描述了一种无意识的感觉，是男性经验到的不能生育，不能以某种方式养育孩子的感觉，本文使用躯体心理的视角检视了这个现象，描述了这种感觉对人格发展的影响，以及对男性和女性关系的影响。

Introduction

The idea of womb-envy goes back in psychoanalytic theory nearly as far as Freud's initial positing of penis-envy. The theory Freud built from his observations of women's envy of men's phallus, and all it symbolizes has undergone extensive critique. Alternative ways to understand the psychological and emotional reality Freud was observing have been proposed and elaborated (Bayne, 2011; Kittay, 1984; Mitchell, 1974). At the same time, the omnipresence of men's envy of the womb, as symbol of women's intrinsic capacity for generativity and nurturance, has been observed and its significance emphasized. And yet this significant determinant of personality formation and social phenomena has remained in the shadow of the more prominent theme of men's phallic potency and women's envy of it, at least in the psychoanalytic literature.

This paper intends to extend the understanding of womb-envy as a construct for investigating the basic constitution of personality using the perspective of the theory and practice of bioenergetic analysis. This perspective offers new dimensions to the experience and understanding of the fundamental envy that exists in the interpersonal sphere of relationships between men and women. The question is then investigated in terms of the seemingly ineradicable existence and effects of this envy and its consequences for human relations and the future of the species.

There are many important philosophical issues that underlie this matter of men's envy of women's procreative and nurturing capacities. I will refer to them in the body of this paper, but I will not explore them at length. I will not attempt to lay out all the competing views on those philosophical issues. I will not attempt to make an argument for one position over another. But, where it might make a difference clinically, I will endeavor to illuminate the significance of the difference in psychotherapists' philosophical outlook on the way we approach the manifestations of the dynamics related to envy of women by men. Since we are all subject to intrinsic forces of whatever we consider to be 'human nature', and to extrinsic forces of socialization and indoctrination, and the intersections of those forces – in identifications, in transference reactions, in convictions, and in prejudices – it is critically important that we attend to the influence of those forces on us as clinicians.

This is, of course, especially difficult to do when we ourselves, as therapists, are subject to the powerful influence these intrinsic and extrinsic forces exert on us. How we think about these forces, then, becomes central to the construction of our therapist persona. As with psychotherapy, where one of the main goals of the experience is the raising of consciousness about oneself, the process of thinking

about and encountering one's biases about this subject of men's envy of women requires a willingness to face and consider elements of oneself that may not correspond to how we would like to be. Because I will make the case that the envy here is irreducible, that encounter may become very difficult.

Dreading an idea

Thirty-five years ago, when I first presented the ideas I will speak of here I stimulated a reaction in the group I was presenting these ideas to that shut me up until now. While the reaction was voiced most strongly by one person, I was pretty sure it represented a communal sentiment. My ideas on this dimension of the phenomenon of womb envy – and it is only one dimension – are drawn from my experiences as a man, as a father, and as a psychotherapist to many men. If my conclusions from these experiences are even only partly right, they provide insight into the fragility of men's psyche and emotional being. And if that is true, then it affects all of us in our fragile human condition. Because men run the world.

Indeed, the idea that men carry within our personality make-up a basic envy of women's procreative, generative, and nurturing capacities is not new. It has formed part of basic psychoanalytic theory at least initially proposed by Karen Horney (see Bayne, 1984). There is dispute among scholars about whether she or Melanie Klein first proposed the idea. There is no dispute that it earned Horney expulsion from orthodox psychoanalytic circles.

The initial idea about womb-envy is that like penis-envy it is the force behind compensatory mechanisms of defense. As Freud formulated it, the knowledge that one has less than the endowment of another causes a narcissistic injury for which one must compensate. It is specifically a narcissistic injury because it punctures one's sense of value and worth, and so undermines positive self-regard. Arnold Becker (1973) demonstrates extensively how the experience of being insignificant in this universe is what drives men to strive to make something, someone, of ourselves (he did still write from the then prevailing attitude that men's experience was universal, women's experience secondary).

Joseph Berke (1997) lays out in great detail the long and painful history of the hatred and malicious envy directed at women for their essential womanness, which includes the capacity for pregnancy, childbirth, and basic child-nurturance. A reading of this history is unbearable in its graphic depiction of women's sexual and reproductive and nurturant capacities being vilified, hated, and destroyed through malicious deployment of psychological devices such as projection, de-

monization, and denial. This vilification also occurs through social and political devices of domination, condemnation, expropriation, exploitation, and, ultimately, annihilation. Julia Kristeva (2014) calls this an attack on the maternal force, an attack on the force that creates, preserves, and protects life. In my knowledge of this force, the maternal force, it is not carried exclusively by women. But it is intrinsically a part of the reproductive and nurturant capacities of women.

Avrum Weiss (2021) in a very recent depiction of the destructive force men bring to our relationships with women, focuses on the clinical manifestation of this destructiveness. Here again, envy of what is missing, of the generative capacities, is identified as the causal engine for the stimulation of the hatred and malevolent envy of women we see all around us. Even if we take on Berke's argument that what both men and women feel is not only envy, *per se*, but also admiration and longing for what the other sex has, we are still left with the perplexing question of the origin and durability of the envy, and the accompanying hatred and malice, that is evident in the world, from men to women.

This paper does not set out to prove that these malignancies exist in the world of human beings. It is my experience in the world, and inside me, that these malignancies exist. While I can trace some of my own malevolence to the reality of my relationship with my mother, and the influence on me of my father's relationship to women, there is more to it than that, as there is more to it than the envy caused by deficiency, and the jealousy of that which another has and one does not.

An added perspective

Wilhelm Reich (1970, 1973) propounded a theoretical perspective that expanded on Freud's ideas of the centrality of sexuality in the development and life of the personality. This strain of psychoanalytic thinking spawned a number of theoretical derivatives, including bioenergetic analysis (Lowen, 1958) and elements of Gestalt therapy (Smith, 2011). Of the many tenets proposed as central to this perspective on development of personality and its function, as well as possible technical methods in psychotherapy, is one that I think is particularly relevant to the study of the relations between men and women. And to the particular feelings of envy, hatred, rage, and malevolence directed at women by men.

Reich proposes the existence of pleasure anxiety, which is a state that arises from the intrinsic fear of entering an unbounded state engendered by the somatopsychic experience of orgasm when it is the kind of oceanic feeling Freud also described. There are many ways to understand this phenomenon, but what is relevant to the

thesis here is the existence of altered states of consciousness and experience which are felt to be overwhelming of ego and psychic enclosure. In the history of humanity such states are both feared and sought after. They can be induced by various practices, including ordeals that involve great strain, pain, and, often, the threat of death, and are sometimes facilitated by the use of psychoactive substances.

In the case of women and pregnancy followed by childbirth, the experience of being carried along by forces beyond volitional control, into and through an event which threatens, and historically often enough, brings death, is unavoidable. This means that for women the experience of surrendering to forces that dissolve boundaries, leading to experiences which cannot be volitionally terminated, and require an encounter with death is a part of their evolutionary legacy. This bears further elaboration.

Mortality and childbirth

Let's take it as given that a central challenge of human existence is the consciousness of our own mortality. From nothing we came, and to nothing we return. Our death is the most daunting of the realities we human creatures face. Over the generations of our evolution, we have constructed many attempts at a solution to the problem of the overwhelming terror this fact induces in us (our mortality being among the very few facts about which there is no dispute for the majority of people). Finding personal and collective meaning in our lives has been proposed as a way to balance the terror and grief and aloneness engendered by the fact of mortality. This is a central aspect of the human condition, and I will not enter into a thorough articulation of the philosophical offerings and differences of opinion that arise in the study of this condition, or the suggestions for how to live a good life in the face of it. Even if I could do so, this is not the place for that.

Aside from death, the only inevitably overwhelming experience in human life is childbirth. Once the process of birth is initiated there is no exit except through the completing of the process. The pregnant woman cannot back out, change her mind, choose another time. One way or another the child, having grown in her body will exit her body. And the birth will take place, even under the best, most facilitating circumstances, in a moment in which biological and physiological processes will overtake voluntary and volitional capabilities of the mother. There is no way but forward, through an involuntary, comprehensive, convulsive event which sweeps all self-control before it in a tide of the momentum of spontaneous human movement.

The destiny of women is thus to face death, imminently, unavoidably, predictably, in life, and for most, inevitably. To face it in a moment of agonizing, perhaps ecstatic, organismic engagement. No other human activities I can think of have this imperative unalterably built-in to the experience. Humans are omnivorous creatures; hunting is surely part of our evolutionary legacy. Hunting can be dangerous. Some animals do not go without a fight. Still, it can be made safer, and more importantly for my exposition here, the hunt can be interrupted. At any point the option exists to escape, to leave the field, to withdraw and hunt again at a more opportune time. Death lurks everywhere, but precautions can be taken, avoidance, for one thing. That is not an option once the inevitable course of childbirth is begun. And it begins with pregnancy, so it is a present reality for almost a year before the final event.

Really, there are two issues for our consideration here. The first is of the reality of facing the kind of overwhelming experience in life that brings one, inevitably and unavoidably, to an encounter with forces greater than oneself, including death. The second is the significance and effect of having one half of the population who have had the experience of having another human being inside their bodies, and the other half who have not. It is the same in both phenomena that there is an experience that shapes psyche and personality that cannot be shared equally between the sexes, and as a result influences and affects the relations between members of these two groups – regardless of the related issues of gender identity – in ways we ought to be attuned to and study.

While it is true that in the modern world women can decline the experience of carrying and bearing children, this has not been true for most of human history. Without children social groups could not survive, people could not survive. Perhaps a larger view of the compelling imperative for survival of the species is the correct way to understand the central force driving evolution – that it is the preservation and continuation of our species that drives us most basically to action. This is the Darwinian theory of evolution that has great explanatory power and has stood up over time. But in a more practical way, without children none of us would survive as we became too frail and weakened by age or infirmity to care for ourselves. Most, nearly all, women had to enlist in the cause of group survival by having children. Until very recently, and still now, to a significant extent, it was an activity that risked the life of the mother, also.

The fact that it is challenging to face the importance of both these related issues – perhaps to the point of having ignored them, like the elephant in the room – was brought home to me by an experience I had at a conference of the members of the international bioenergetic institute twenty-five or thirty years

ago. At that conference a colleague and friend, Barbara Middleton, a bioenergetic therapist, social worker, and one of the first American doulas I met, gave a presentation. The presentation contrasted two films, one of a conventional birth in a US Navy hospital, and the other a home birth using the methods developed by Frederick Leboyer, a French obstetrician, based on traditional midwifing philosophy. The contrast was so stark as to be breathtaking. The impression left by the films and her presentation was of the inevitably indelible effect of the process on both mother and child, however it was conducted. My late wife, Elaine, and I were the only conference participants who attended the presentation, which, at the time, surprised and disheartened me. Now I take it as a manifestation of the conflictual feelings aroused by the issues of women and childbirth, some of which relate to the ideas I am presenting here.

Surrendering to life

So many disciplines of living – including that set of beliefs that underlie the theory of bioenergetic analysis – encourage, advise, and exhort each of us to surrender to the forces of life. Of course, such a surrender cannot be done without an acknowledgment of mortality. If the surrender is grounded, then it must also include an encounter with the destructive forces that animate so much of human behavior. The articulation of a philosophical and scientific explanation for the manifestation of the destructive forces present in us is an imperative and taken up by every spiritual and philosophical system that proposes a way of living.

One reason for the impetus to consider surrender to the force of life as a useful part of a successful life is that it will bring a person into contact with the force of goodness, benevolence, that exists side-by-side with the destructive force. The presumption that underlies this thrust is that the experience of benevolence – love, sympathy, compassion, goodness – activated in relation to others through the medium of empathy, will counter, neutralize, even eliminate the forces of negativity, those being hate, jealousy, sadism, rage. Some believe it will happen intrinsically, a utopian view that says that once people are exposed to the benevolence available to them, they will follow it. Others believe it will require cultivation of a benevolent attitude in the face of the persistent upsurge of negativity, within oneself and in others.

An example of this is presented in an unpublished thesis on teaching goodness in the public schools (Baum-Tuccillo, 2009). Reading this analysis, and exhortation, to an ethic of care to replace an ethic of form and perfectionism. In studying

it, I am alerted to my own deep struggle to embrace this way of living as deeply as would be required to embody the author's vision. Undoubtedly, some of this is exclusively my own personal reality and struggle. Equally undoubtedly, some of it is a function of deep intrapsychic and socialized elements in me that emerge from these strains of malicious and pathological envy.

As noted above, there are profound, searing, and searching analyses of the envy, womb envy, that pervade human relationships. But none, as far as I know, take up this, to me fundamental, issue of the feelings and reactions activated in men by the encounter with this basic difference with women, contained in the experiences of pregnancy and childbirth. My experience tells me that this encounter engenders a basic feeling of inferiority in men. That feeling demands and powers reactions that shape the personalities of men, and thus affect us all.

Theories abound of what drives people and shapes our development into to the personalities we become. One strain of psychoanalytic thinking present from the beginning of that theory-making is that we are centrally driven by the need to feel that we matter, that we have standing and substance. The imperative to be a person of significance, to matter, can merge or even fuse with the forceful impulse to dominate the other when feelings of inferiority demand it. Is it basic to human nature to counter feelings of inferiority by dominating that, or those to which we feel inferior? It appears so, to me. To dominate and destroy that and those who highlight one's inferiority constantly, seems a part of the human condition. Any action that alleviates inferiority feelings and restores equivalent standing appears to be acceptable in this cause.

To surrender to life as it is lived, then, is to surrender to mortality, to the forces of life and death that are beyond anyone's control. Among those are the inevitable challenge of pregnancy and childbirth. And the inevitable challenge of the inferiority feelings evoked by the reality that men do not have to face that challenge. Do we then create that challenge, most sensationally by creating conflict with others – war – that creates a condition in which the encounter with death is unavoidable, it is out of our hands? The option to escape or withdraw from it dissolved in both the practical realities of overwhelming moments of conflict and the indoctrination of men that withdrawing will intensify the feeling of inferiority – through the accusation of cowardice – to the point it will be unbearable.

If not to surrender to life force then to dominate it becomes the drive. The drive within men to dominate that force, as Kristeva calls it, the maternal force, has many determinants. The maternal force is not exclusively carried or deployed by women. It is the force that protects and nurtures life. One manifestation of

men's desperation to be somebody, to not be, as Donald Trump has often said 'a loser', presents itself in the malicious envy of women. I am adding here a determinant to that envy and its vicissitude into malicious, twisted, murderous envy, and the consequences of that.

My intention in this paper is to add determinant that emerges from the feelings induced by the recognition of the necessity women face to encounter overwhelming experience and even death as part of their biological destiny. This determinant has been unrecognized, and so, undiscussed, and yet is fundamental to the construction of self and internal reality. And to the reality we see all around. We psychodynamically oriented psychotherapists work on the front lines of people's everyday struggle with the facts of the human condition, and of each person's personal life-experience. Each person's unique suffering, and each of our unique efforts to live out both suffering and possibility authentically and meaningfully. I want to offer an understanding of a dimension that contributes to the difficulty of facing the human condition, and even of resistance to facing it, that arises in the everyday reality of work on ourselves and with others.

Attachment

We have been focused as a field for the last fifty years on questions about the basic elements of relation between people. In pregnancy and childbirth, we have attachment between two people at the most basic level. One is literally inside the other, and the two begin the process sharing blood and tissue as the child slowly grows into a bounded separate being enclosed in its own environment inside the bodily environment of the mother. Reading the paper of a colleague from Israel (Harel, 2002), using a prenatal perspective to shed light on a psychotherapeutic process, I suddenly saw how obvious, and yet overlooked the fact of this early attachment is. Like the title of Avrum Weiss' book about men's fears of women: *Hidden in Plain Sight: How Men's Fears of Women Shape Their Intimate Relationships* (2021), the child within the mother attachment, and its significance for future attachment and dependency, was hiding in plain sight.

Nowadays, there is considerable research, theorizing, and sharing of clinical material and experience on the theme of attachment and relationship processes. The vicissitudes of attachment, and I would add, dependency are at the center of the discourse about what transpires during dynamic psychotherapy. Under the influence of feminist theory an understanding of the necessity for forming a mutual, egalitarian relationship has become part of the set of basic principles that

undergird the formation of a psychotherapeutic environment. This philosophy of treatment relationship posits that all the members of the relationship have equal value. But men face a significant challenge in asserting our value and significance in the face of the facts of pregnancy and childbirth.

A bioenergetic perspective

Before entering into an exploration of the significance of these facts about the difference between men and women in respect to pregnancy, childbirth and nurturance, a word about the perspective used here to examine the issues. The bioenergetic perspective offers a valuable way to examine this dimension of men and our reactions to the reality of difference due to pregnancy and childbirth because of its focus on the anxiety stimulated by the encounter with overwhelming experience, even of pleasure. Wilhelm Reich's insight that even the encounter with pleasure has a deep anxiety attached to it is very useful here. It is the moment in which we are swept away by experience, overcome, overwhelmed, our defenses insufficient to hold back the tide of experience. Even if we are being swept into ecstasy, the loss of self-consciousness will bring us close to the reality of our own mortality, even in the encounter with benevolence the sheer awareness of our own creatureliness will bring with it awe and fear. Again here, I will step back from a broader discussion of the significance of the immersion in overwhelming experience, and the loss of self-consciousness and its possibilities, to focus on a more mundane reality, and its significance to understanding ourselves and each other.

What happens to the man who watches, and witnesses, and bears witness to this process of birthing a child? And what are the ramifications, in terms of psychic development, of social and gender identity of the inevitable and incontrovertible fact that only women are capable of going through this experience, and, in fact, are required to go through it, for all our sakes?

Human aggressivity, in bioenergetic terms – force, assertion, and its often-accompanying violence, are also part of our makeup. Like some other primates it may be part of us to express greed, self-interest, or group interest that way. In our environment of evolutionary adaptiveness, probably organized in small groups, it is unclear how determinative that aggression is. However, whatever the instinctual drive to aggression is, even reaching to violence, we are capable of modulating those forces in us. We can apply characteristics to relations with others – empathy, in order to feel what another person feels – sympathy and compassion – in

order to feel for them and be concerned with their welfare. Understanding why we do not use those capacities to rein in destructiveness and violence is the greatest priority we have if we are to survive as a species and survive each other every day.

In healthy families, of which there are too few, value and meaning can be conferred through the relationships between family members. Faith, and the apprehension of benevolence, and perhaps benevolent mystical forces, can offer the same. But the daily violence toward and exploitation of one human being by another tells us that other forces, destructive forces are at work, must be at work, for the world to look as it does. No destructive force can be ignored. Hence this study of one of those forces.

I participated in the births of both of my children. Participated in the sense that I went to every obstetrical visit (save one) with my wife for both children. I was with my wife during labor, and in the operating room for the first, the birth of my son by Caesarean section; and in the delivery room for the birth of my daughter, by vaginal birth after Caesarean section, nearly three years later. Viewed from a bioenergetic perspective of surrender to overwhelming biological, psychic, emotional, and perhaps spiritual forces there is no comparable experience than that undergone by the mother in these events. That is because the force and momentum of those processes are completely beyond volitional authority. Perhaps this is experienced at the moment of death, I do not know, but in life there is nothing the same as this.

A basic inferiority

In the film, based on the story, *Lost Horizon*, a utopian, egalitarian society is depicted. Isolated from the world in the hidden valley of Shangri-La is a nonviolent society of peace and contentment. Everyone shares equally in the work and the resources. When the stranded outsider asks the elder what happens when one man covets the woman partner of another man – the only significant question that is raised about what might lead to conflict in the community – the elder answers that, of course, the man shares his woman partner with the other man. The underlying dynamics of ownership, domination, and possession are unmistakable – even in paradise.

A good deal of ethological research and theorizing over the last century have been devoted to patterns of reproduction among mammals, including humans. Questions of courtship and patterns of competition for the privilege of mating

have led to theories about the significance to males, including humans, of tracing the genetic endowment of offspring. It is hypothesized that this is to assure that the progeny born of the female are actually the male's offspring. It is obvious to say that the human child's genes are the mother's genes. Not so easily ascertained for the father. Some theorize that the drive seen in men for possession of the women in their lives derives from this interest in knowing that the child born of a woman they have copulated with is actually their child.

From a Darwinian point-of-view, this might reflect the man's drive to assure the reproduction of his genetic material. However, it is not clear that this reflects a drive to reproduce the species. Perhaps it hews more closely to a narcissistic need to reproduce oneself, to show off one's genetic endowment. This view of the evolutionary drive brings us closer to a set of ideas detailed, for example by Arnold Becker. His theses, building on psychoanalytic and philosophical ideas, propose that what drives us is the need to be someone, to matter, to have made something of ourselves in the face of the dreadful reality of mortality, and the absence of any assurance of our meaning and significance in the universe. This, more than sexuality, and its presumed ultimate goal of the perpetuation of the species, is the primary driver of human behavior.

If women carry the mortal burden of childbirth, then in what way do men matter? The necessary contribution of genetic material to preserve genetic diversity is important, that seems clear. But why would it matter, for evolutionary purposes, from whom that material comes? Incidentally – if you think this question is an old-fashioned preoccupation – I have recently received a grandchild who has none of my genetic material. While I am not, thankfully, disturbed by this, it does not mean I have not thought about it. And it does not mean that I do not know that dwelling somewhere in my unacknowledged prejudices is an attitude about it I will have to deal with as time goes on. And certainly, the clinical experience and research data about the complexity of self-development and object-relationships of adoptees underlines the significance of these issues.

The drive to matter, to have significance, to be of importance, all the narcissistic functions that are so critical to positive self-regard and self-esteem are tied up with this basic sense of inferiority. A frequent objection to this line of inquiry into men's nature is that women are also possessive, domineering, etc. Of course. But I am a sixties guy, and I took seriously the exhortation that we should study our own prejudices and destructive tendencies before pronouncing about those of other people. White people of privilege should study ourselves, first-worlders should study ourselves, and men should study ourselves before embarking on extensive theorizing and intervening in the lives of others.

As an aside, the implications of this for the practice of dynamic psychotherapy and bioenergetic analysis are manifold and weighty. How much of ourselves to we have to know to be able to join another in the project of knowing themselves? In this matter of relations between men and women as influenced by the difference due to pregnancy and childbirth, the risks of unexplored countertransference elements are both high and very important to note and respond to.

In this spirit, let's consider the possibility that Freud's, and others', formulations about women might be relevant to men, also. That formulation considers that there is a basic feeling of deficiency when little girls compare themselves to little boys. The deficiency stems from the feeling of absence, the missing appurtenance of a phallus, and all that it represents, psychically, socially, and politically. In a feminist view of psychoanalytic theory, we might think of a little girl's perception of the power differential in the world around her. In human beings environment of evolutionary adaptiveness children would have been exposed to the ordeal and the joys of childbirth very early in life. So, the exposure of boys to this basic difference in biology, and in the challenge of survival, between us men and girls and women would have been evident.

Life challenges us endlessly with defeat. We describe the current confrontation with a deadly virus as a war. Defeat is one of the most difficult challenges of the human experience. Sustaining and coping with and, if even possible, recovering from defeat is among the most complex and daunting necessities of life. How do men do that when we start from this basic position in which the demands of the survival of the species do not require the same level of courage and self-sacrifice inevitably required of women? In an effort to manage deflation and inferiority we create domination and mortal confrontation. The fragility of ego – the fact of not mattering – becomes fuel for our frailty. We men succumb to compensations of asserting superiority and use of force to avoid the basic fragility with which we all live.

An application to the field of psychotherapy

Many years ago, Stanley Keleman referred to the elevation of the human brain to a position of prominence in the explanation of the human condition as a cephalophallic process. Meaning by this, that we elevate the brain, really the neocortex, to a supreme position. The brain, which is a part of very complex system, a matrix, really, of information processing structures, becomes associated with men's dominance, which is seen as due to our biology. We men are driven to solve

our basic feelings of inferiority – which are compounded by a socialization ideology that operates with humiliation as its most potent instructor – by making the world appear to conform to our compensatory grandiose fantasies of ourselves.

In my view this is a recapitulation of the patriarchal hierarchy that serves men in our basic struggle with the inferiority. As professional psychotherapists, healers of devastated narcissism, we can succumb to the lure of potency predicated on a view of human function as explainable by this hierarchical illusion. Using a similar model, to compensate the felt humiliation of insignificance, men elevate the central nervous system to a position of superiority. And then we elevate ourselves above the basic fragility we experience in our work as healers by believing we can manipulate the system and thereby alter life. It is a dangerous intoxicant.

In the core of the principles of the theory of bioenergetic analysis is the conviction that surrender to the life of the body, the elemental power of pleasure, and dissolution of boundaries and contact with benevolence that accompany it, leads to a basic experience of meaning. That meaning is believed to be enough to compensate for the inevitable suffering of human existence. How can that surrender take place without an acknowledgment of the reality of the difference between men and women, and the inevitable fragility of men's egos that this acknowledgment implies?

The defenses used by men to gird ourselves to resist an encounter with feelings elicited by the surrender to the reality of the life forces and experiences required for the survival of the species are dangerous to our survival. The pressure to dominate, to claim opposition to any subjugation, to resist and avoid humiliation at any cost, drive us toward our extinction, no less than the headlong drive to gratify hungers and appetites drives us to global consumption of fuels and the resulting activities that has heated us to the point our survival is threatened.

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