



Man's Androgynous Nature

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Despite the obvious physical and psychological differences between the two sexes, it is now generally recognized that no single individual is entirely and solely male or female. Every man or woman, whether he realizes it or not, is androgynous in his physical and psychic constitution. This is so true that Professor Ombredanne of the French Academy of Medicine stated in a lecture that the sexual functions in themselves do not constitute a sufficient sexual criterion. The only definition of sex that he finds sustainable is that "a subject belongs to the sex which prevails in him."¹

It has been known for a long time that in the early stages of his physical development, man has both male and female organs. In the course of his intrauterine development, one set of these organs atrophies while the other continues to grow and develop.² Traces of this earlier bisexual development remain in the mature person. The most

obvious example of this is the male nipples, which have no functional purpose at all, but which do point to his original bisexuality. Each man also retains physical traces of a womb. Similarly, rudimentary tracings of the male genital organs can be discerned in the external genitalia of woman. Freud was so struck by the androgynous nature of man that he could write: "It is certain that sexuality and the distinction between the sexes did not exist when life began."³ This same affirmation was made centuries earlier by Plato in his famous *Symposium*: "The original human nature was not like the present, but different." Everything about primeval men was double. Eventually Zeus decided to cut these men in two. After the division had been made, "the two parts of man, each desiring his other half, came together, and throwing their arms about one another, entwined in mutual embraces, longing to grow into one."⁴

Modern depth psychology has contributed much to our present knowledge of the androgynous nature of man's psyche. It is impossible here to give a detailed account of these findings which are scattered throughout the works of Freud and Jung, as well as in those of more recent psychoanalysts. Freud's psychoanalytical investigation of the neuroses indicated to him that it is only at puberty that the polarity of sexuality coincides with male and female. Prior to this, "the contrast between *masculine* and *feminine* plays no part as yet."⁵ Elsewhere, Freud says that during the Oedipal phase, the predominant identification will be with the father or with the mother according to the relative strength of the masculine and feminine sexual dispositions in the individual prior to its resolution:

As the Oedipus Complex dissolves, the four trends of which it consists will group themselves in such a way as to produce a father-identification and a mother-identification. . . . The relative intensity of the two identifications in any individual will reflect the preponderance in him of one or other of the two sexual predispositions.⁶

For Freud, there are really four "persons" present in every act of intercourse. In a successful relationship, all four must be satisfied; otherwise, a normally bisexual individual would be ill-matched with a "perfect" monosexual one. Anthony Storr, a well-known contemporary psychotherapist, concludes similarly: "If we are to be consistent in assuming that the irrational quality associated with falling in love is always due to the projection of a subjective element, then we cannot escape the hypothesis that we are all in some sense bisexual."⁷

Jung, in his investigations of the archetypal contents of man's collective unconscious, also had to conclude that man is androgynous. Each individual carries in his unconscious a shadow or "soul-image" of the opposite sex, which in man Jung calls the Anima and in the woman, the Animus. Emotional balance and self-knowledge become possible only when this contra-sexual element is perceived and raised to consciousness. This confrontation with one's own contrasexual aspect is a sure sign of maturity. "The activation of the archetype of the soul-image is therefore an event of fateful importance, for it is the most unmistakable sign that the second half of life has begun."⁸

Jung makes extensive use of his Anima-Animus concept in his explanation of creative activity. According to Jung, artistic creativity is the result of a psychic *coniunctio* between the female and male elements within the individual. One of Jung's disciples expressed this process as follows: "The artist bears the woman within himself with whom he enters into a psychic coitus and from whom, through him, proceeds the child, his art."⁹ In every case, the differentiation of this contrasexual part of the psyche and its integration with one's conscious attitude results in "an extraordinary enrichment of the contents of consciousness and a great broadening of our personality."¹⁰

The Jungian concept of the androgynous nature of man is not a new one; it can be traced as far back as the Fathers of the Church, who spoke of a conscious, enlightened, active principle in man, the *animus* or masculine principle, and an unconscious, passive principle, the *anima* or feminine principle. In addition to these two, the Fathers also spoke of a higher principle in man, the *spiritus*. It is only when these three principles are perfectly ordered in unity, while retaining their own rightful qualities, that man is capable of a perfectly balanced spiritual life, for then man is reconstituted in the image of the Holy Trinity.¹¹

The findings of psychoanalysis on the androgynous nature of man have been admirably summarized by Helene Deutsch:

"Woman" and "Man" have, at one time arisen out of a common origin which is still living on in the bisexual *anlage* in all human beings. They have differentiated in the course of development without ever being completely separated from one another . . . The quantity of contrasexual residuals differs with each person. In the psychic budget of the individual the two components, male and female, must be linked in harmony.¹²

Ancient nonscientific traditions concerning the innate contrasexuality of man have now been confirmed by modern science. Bisexuality is no longer a matter of myth but a scientific fact. We now know that every person harbors his contrasexual *anlage*, and that unless the masculine and feminine elements are well integrated within the individual, trouble will occur. Many people still experience much difficulty in accepting the fact of their androgynous nature. It is as if each had a personal stake in the question under discussion. In a sense, each one does, for the acceptance of any modification of the views held by anyone on this question involves at the same time a change in a very sensitive part of the self-concept, in the jealously guarded inner core of the self. But it is imperative that greater recognition be given to this concept, for it is only through a better understanding of it that a solution for many of the problems besieging man and his interpersonal relationships can be had.

We live in an age in which man has become most anxious about his sexual identity. Current advertising campaigns and the Hugh Hefner playboy philosophy cater to a male populace which is uncertain of its masculinity. Social pressure to accept the prescribed sex role is great, and produces untold conflict and agony in the male who is not (and was never intended to be) thoroughly and exclusively masculine. What is considered "masculine" today is only a caricature of what nature intended. It is common knowledge that the He-man of today must be egoistic; he must give a feeling of superiority and domination over others, with the aid of seemingly "manly" characteristics such as courage, strength, duty, the winning of all manner of victories, especially over women, the acquisition of positions, honors, titles, wealth, etc.; and above all, he must have the desire to harden himself against so-called "feminine" characteristics, and so on. In some sub-cultures, "manliness" degenerates into the well-known expressions of rudeness and brutality.

The ideal man is certainly not the one who stands at the end of the masculinity pole. We have already seen that the contrasexual element in man must be made conscious for a well-integrated spiritual life. Investigators using the M-F Index developed by Terman and Miles in 1936 now insist that "a generous blend of masculine and feminine quotients in *each* partner is the ideal combination for a happy marriage."¹³ The reason for this is simple. Marriage is more than just a meeting of opposites. It is true that there must be a certain amount of complementariness in the marriage partners, but there must also

be something common to both—or else mutual attraction and enrichment will not take place.

A well-rounded personality cannot be one-sided. It is not enough for a man to be coldly calculating and productive, dominating and independent; he must also have a share of those traits usually termed "feminine." He must be capable of "feeling" as well as loving. A man who represses the feminine in him (his unconscious Anima), will inevitably develop a neurotic dread of receiving, a fear of tenderness and of protection. Moreover, the man who rejects the feminine in him will be incapable of a deep and abiding love, which demands not only the giving of self, but the receiving and identifying with others.

One need not reflect long on the lives of the saints to realize that they were people in whom masculine and feminine elements were in perfect harmony with each other. Charles de Foucauld, at one time a dashing officer of the French Army, the man-about-town, did not consider it "sissified" to perform menial tasks in a household of religious women. Joan of Arc never lost her sense of womanliness as she rode at the head of an army. A well-integrated man may do things usually associated with the feminine, and his "maleness" is not the worse for it. He may devote his life to the care of the chronically ill or the aged, in a situation which demands tenderness and patience, without being emasculated. In fact, he is more of a man for it.

NOTES

¹ Dom Peter Flood, O.S.B., ed., *New Problems in Medical Ethics*, No. 3, (Cork, Ireland: The Mercier Press, 1963), p. 15.

² For Plates showing the similarity of the intrauterine development of the male and female sex organs, see Lucius F. Cervantes, S.J., *And God Made Man and Woman* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1959), pp. 52-53.

³ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. by James Strachey (New York: Bantam Books, 1959), p. 75.

⁴ Plato, *Symposium*, in *Dialogues of Plato*, ed. by J. D. Kaplan (Pocket Books, Inc., 1950), pp. 188ff.

⁵ Sigmund Freud, "Development of the Libido and Sexual Organizations," in *A General Introduction to Psycho-Analysis* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1960), p. 336.

⁶ As quoted in Ronald Fletcher, *Instinct in Man* (New York: International Universities Press, 1957), p. 219.

⁷ Anthony Storr, *The Integrity of the Personality* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963), p. 122.

⁸ Jolande Jacobi, *The Psychology of C. G. Jung*, trans. by Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 119.

⁹ Beatrice M. Hinkle, *The Re-Creating of the Individual* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1923), p. 351.

¹⁰ Jacobi, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

¹¹ For a more detailed explanation of the role of *animus* and *anima* in the spirituality of the early Church Fathers, see Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (Norfolk: New Directions Books, 1961), pp. 139f.

¹² As quoted in Karl Stern, *The Flight from Woman* (New York: Farrar, Starus and Giroux, 1965), pp. 38f.

¹³ Cervantes, *op. cit.*, p. 11. For a discussion of M-F Scales, see Solomon Diamond, *Personality and Temperament* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), pp. 309ff.

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