

SPIRITUALITY IS FEMININE, RELIGION IS MASCULINE

This Thinksheet risks making some generalizations & distinctions that some readers may take to be invidious.

The risk is worthwhile, for I need to explore some interconnections of the two polarities you see in the Thinksheet's title. I don't know where I'm going with this, except that I'll fill this page. But I do know why I'm into it: today in our culture both polarities are under high heat, careening wildly like gas molecules in a hot belljar. I'd like a little peace & quiet when it comes to what Geo. Bush might call the wo/man thing & the spirituality/religion thing--or a little progress.

1. Yes, men can be spiritual & women can be religious! Now that that's settled, let's get to the coeval generalization that S(spirituality) & R(religion) are the inner & outer aspects of a single reality, a single dimension of human life, so there can be no question of unequal importance--any more than there can be in the case of the sexes. In both sets, **equality** is a given. It follows that verticality, dominance/submission, is aberrant, pathological.

2. When religion dominates spirituality, quenching the spirit (1Thes.5¹⁹), having the form of godliness but denying its power (2Tim.3⁵), the *numen* breaks out of *religio*. The breakout is sometimes reformatory (the old accomodating the new), sometimes revolutionary (the new sweeping the old away). [The parallel in politics is exact: which is now going on in the Second (communist) World.]

3. Each passing decade, as you'd expect, I'm becoming more partial to reformation & more weaned from revolutionary-rhetorical dreaming (the Lord's Prayer remaining, for me, the one exception: it's about a revolution God gives, not one we make). I'm becoming more alienated from **overcorrective** efforts in the two sets:

...it's an **illusion** that spirituality is sustainable without religion, which is its body: "I (a spiritual being) don't need to go to church (the religious body) to be a good Christian (a spiritual person-in-Jesus'-community)." Bodiless spirituality is even less sustainable than is spiritless religion. Yet alienation from religion is now so pervasive in the West that millions are on go-it-alone tracks--Eastern (hindic, sinic, et al), New Age (mystic, therapeutic, et al), hedonistic (as go-it-alone, narcissistic). This pursuit is feminine: the unconscious model is conception, gestation, birth, nursing.

...it's an **illusion** that a feminine world would be more human, less destructive than the masculine world has been; but the radical feminist argumentation is hard to counter: "Think of what you'd have done with the world if you'd've had it!" can't hope to match "Look what you've done to the world!" Every thoughtful, fairminded person will grant that men & women are equal in potentiality for good/evil, but the fact of historic patriarchy makes it easy for the girls to bully the boys (& deceive themselves into arrogant self-righteousness) simply pointing to the mess the world's in domestically, politically, economically, culturally, religiously.

4. So what egged me into this ponderation? Something I ran across in a favorite psychologist of mine, Karen Horney (p.112, FEMININE PSYCHOLOGY: PREVIOUSLY UNCOLLECTED ESSAYS, W.W.Norton/67): "a man's minute share in creating new life became, for him, an immense incitement to create something new on his part. He has created values of which he might well be proud. State, religion, art, and science are essentially his creations, and our entire culture bears the masculine imprint." Her essay accents, thus, culture as male **compensation*** for (Ashley Montagu) "the natural [palpable] superiority of women" in bringing-nurturing human life. But her context is that male achievements are driven not by raw rivalry but by (my wording) man's numinous experiencing of woman as *mysterium tremendum et fascinosum* (a mystery inspiring almost enough dread to overwhelm the fascination that rivets man's attention on woman): sexuality & spirituality are a continuum inciting male creativity.

5. Among other things, the male creates religion. Eg, the Bible, is masculine in its God, its ethos, its ethics, its language. Foolish to try to change that.

*Here & there, Ernest Becker adds that these heroic male products are driven by the yearning, in the teeth of mortality, to leave something abiding. To the list, he adds philosophy & business. Horney & Becker agree that the female's primary product is people, which men can't equal.