

The Sin of the Father

As we have seen, at the heart of the denigration of men lies the subordination of the objective to the subjective. This recognition enables us to draw a link between feminism, which is arguably a fairly narrow intellectual current and postmodernism, or poststructuralism, which is considerably broader. Associated with the various writings of Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard, Deleuze and Guattari, and others (including Calás and Smircich, of course) postmodernism may be thought of as holding that there is no objective external world. Knowledge is only language and language is only about other language. There are no grounds outside of language for being able to say that one is any “better” than any other. What a society believes is a function of who rules within the society. The rulers make discourse that serves their interest seem the vehicle of “objective” truth and, in so doing, marginalize the languages of others.

The attack upon the father is the point at which feminism and postmodernism come together. Typically called the patriarch, the rule of the father is seen as the most long-lived and pervasive structure of oppression. According to this view, the father has oppressed and marginalized all those who are not like him, fashioning the discourses of “civilization” to support and obscure this oppression. Under cover of this camouflage, he has pursued only his selfish interest, not caring at all for anyone else. More than just controlling, he represents control itself, and were it not for his domination, freedom and self-expression would have reigned. Were it not for him, the different voices that he has silenced would have been able to create their own discourses, making a world full of difference and multifarious beauty. So terrible is this tyrant and the social order he created, that resistance to it can provide a basic direction for an individual’s life.

Now this is a substantial indictment and a skeptic might wonder at its balance. Surely there have been malignant fathers. These fathers have sinned, this skeptic might agree, but have there not been benign and even beneficent ones, as well. If it is fair to say that civilization has represented patriarchal domination, certainly it has also manifested concern for the well being of the groups he has led. How does one account for the unqualified character of this denunciation? To make sense of it, one must assume that the evil he has done has so far outweighed the good that it is not necessary even to measure the latter¹.

But what was this evil? What did the father do, or what was he believed to have done, that was responsible for this absolute condemnation? Surely this cannot have been just the collection of sins that fathers have committed, on the order of the sins that all human beings commit. It cannot have been just the sins of fathers. It must have been more than that. Let us call it the Sin of the Father. What was supposed to have been the Sin of the Father?

Our inquiry has put this question in a different light. It has brought us to the view that the ideas of toxic man, Madonna-and-child, and the sexual holy war, are external representations of inter-psychic phenomena, and that what is under attack is the traditional role of the father. It is easy enough to see the idea of the Sin of the Father as

an aspect of this. But doing so raises its own question. For these intra-psychic phenomena are timeless. They have always existed and will always exist. Why have they arisen in this form in our own time, rather than before?

My contention is that one cannot answer the question of the Sin of the Father without a comprehension of the meaning of the accusation itself. And the meaning of the accusation cannot be understood without an understanding of its context. For the idea of patriarchal evil cannot be understood in isolation. It did not emerge out of no place. Rather, it expressed and represented a social dynamic of the time. Understanding it, then, must require understanding that social dynamic and seeing the place of the idea within it. That will be the purpose of this chapter. I will examine the roots of the belief in the badness of the father, looking at its social origins and its psychodynamics, trying ultimately to reveal its meaning. My course of investigation will require the elucidation of the connection between the father and the corporation man, a figure who is deeply involved in this play of meanings. I will proceed from there to an analysis of his family. In the end, we will be better able to understand the nature of the Sin of the Father.

The Alienated Student

By general agreement, postmodernism, and the associated assault on the father, began in the late 1960s (e.g. Best and Kellner, 1991). But focusing on its representations as they arose in the protests of the time overlooks the possibility that there were broader cultural factors present. It would be the continued influence of these factors that would account for the persistence of the postmodern assault after its immediate cause was eliminated. That is the assumption I will make. I will look at postmodern expression, and the attendant antagonism toward the father, as a broader cultural force that had its origins in the postwar period, and in the 50s especially, to which the protests of the late 60s gave direction, but not birth.

In doing this I will be, in a sense, retracing my own steps. For the critique of the patriarch has had a deep resonance with me, even if it has also, more recently, deeply disturbed me. Trying to understand it, and my reactions to it, I am trying to understand myself. I am also trying to understand my father, and my relationship to him, as a way of finding, and creating, within myself, the capacity to be a father in my own right. My starting point will be a book that has often felt to me, despite differences in detail, like a dissection of my own psyche. This was a study by Kenneth Keniston (1960) of what he called “the uncommitted,” a group of alienated students at Harvard University.

By “alienated,” Keniston meant “the rejection of the roles, values, and institutions [the alienated individual] sees as typical of adult American life” (p.25). As he points out, there is, *a priori*, no reason to suppose that such a rejection would entail an entire outlook on life, but that was, in fact, what Keniston found:

the rejection of the dominant values, roles, and institutions of our society... was almost always a part of a more general alienated ideology, embracing not only attitudes toward the surrounding society, but towards the self, others, groups, even the structure of the universe and the nature of knowledge. (p.56)

Keniston describes this outlook in some detail, stressing especially the “deep and pervasive mistrust of any and all commitments, be they to other people, to groups, to American culture, or even to the self.” (P.56) But for our purposes the most interesting characterizations were those which clearly presage the postmodernism of our time. In order to illustrate this, I will quote passages from Keniston and associate them with postmodern themes.

Alienated Students

Postmodernism

the universe itself is basically empty and meaningless. (61)

Denial of objective reality

In such a pessimistic, anxiety-provoking, and “dead” universe, truth necessarily becomes subjective and even solipsistic. The alienated are true to the logic of their position, and almost to a man accept the subjectivity and even the arbitrariness of their own points of view.(62)

Subjectivism, Relativism

Whatever sense of meaning a man may have must inevitably be his own creation. (62)

Social Constructionism

Above all, they have contempt for those who “blind themselves” to the “realities” of existence by “pious optimism,” shallow consolations, and the easy acceptance of the traditional verities of our society.

Deconstruction

Part of the difficulty in communication comes from the unreliability of appearances. Not only do the alienated generally agree with a statement like “Beneath the smiling face of man lies a bottomless pit of evil,” but they affirm that all appearances are suspect, whether of men or institutions. Thus, nothing can be accepted at face value, every appearance is likely to be deceptive, and every surface conceals opposite potentials beneath it. (63)

The ethical corollary of anger, scorn, and contempt is self-interest, and in the alienated we find a special form of egocentricity(66) which involves the need to use others for one's own purposes—and the converse conviction that the same principle governs the actions of one's fellows, even when these are disguised under some other principle.(67)

Reduction of social process to self-interested politics.

All place primary emphasis on experience and feeling, on the search for awareness and the cultivation of sentience and perceptiveness... and they further emphasize the importance of expression of this experience.

Authenticity

Almost to a man, they emphasize what I will call "aesthetic" goals and values... those goals and values whose primary source is the self, and whose chief aim is the development of sentience, awareness, and feeling. (71)

In such an outlook, reason must play a secondary role to feeling.

Resistance to reason and "logocentrism"

In the struggle for emotion, passion, and feeling, the enemies are two: first, excessive rationality and self-control, and second, social pressures which limit independence. (72)

Resistance to external and internalized social control

The individualism of the alienated is... a solitary and lonely individualism of the outsider, the man who lives physically within his society but remains psychologically divorced from it. (73)

Marginality

The enemy is the entire status quo—not merely pernicious aspects of the social

Generalized rage against society

order which must be changed to permit improvement, but the entire social and cultural ethos. (78)

The result is a diffusion and fragmentation of the sense of identity, an experience of themselves as amorphous, indistinct, and disorganized...Insofar as they have any clear sense of self it is almost entirely defined by what they are against, what they despise, by groups they do not want to belong to and values they consider tawdry. (p.186)

Fragmentation of identity, negative self-definition

...fear and dislike of competition... leading to an almost complete repudiation of the competitive business ethic of American society, to a dislike of and avoidance of social situations with a competitive quality, and to the continuing view that competition and rivalry, though ubiquitous, are destructive to all concerned. (P.176)

Abhorrence of aggressiveness, competition

...a central legacy of childhood for most of these alienated young men was the deep conviction that adult men—as epitomized by their own fathers—were not to be emulated, and the further belief that adulthood in general was disastrous insofar as it meant becoming like their fathers. (P.178)

Repudiation of the father

In [their] fantasies... we find [an] exaggerated dream of the blissfulness of early mother-son relationships, of the capacity of truly maternal women to provide *totally* for men, of the complete absence of distinctions between self and object. (P.189)

Appeal of fusion, apotheosis of the maternal, rejection of the distinction between subject and object.

...for many alienated students, the refusal

Difficulty in developing male

of adulthood extends to a *rejection of adult sexuality*.... These youths find what our society defines as a “normal” sexual relationship between man and woman frightening and difficult. Some of these [difficulties] are common to late adolescents,... but these are heightened by their fundamental aversion for “aggressiveness,” for “initiative,” for “activity”—all qualities culturally defined as part of the male sex role... (p.199)

heterosexual orientation.

An especially crucial aspect of the failure of acculturation among the alienated is... their systematic *undermining of repression and denial*, two of the most common adaptive techniques in our society (and probably in all societies). (P.197)

Fascination with the “dark side” of life and society.

If it may be granted that Keniston’s alienated students represented postmodernism in its embryonic form, the question then turns to where this outlook came from and what were its psychodynamics. This is a subject that Keniston explored primarily by interviewing the students about their family lives, and exploring their psychodynamics through the use of the Thematic Apperception Test. His explanation, whose theoretical framework was heavily influenced by Eric Erikson, moves the subjects’ relations to their fathers from one of the themes of their alienation to its center.

According to Keniston, the theme encountered over and over among these students was a peculiar family constellation in which the father was seen as weak, damaged and emotionally distant, while the mother was seen as vigorous, powerful and vital. There was also a typical family history.

In this history, the parents came from traditional families, characterized by strong fathers whom they idealized. But, products of their times, they sought to go beyond these families, in the sense of creating new roles for themselves that would help them to express themselves more fully. They began their marriage with these high ideals, including beliefs in the possibility of new roles for women, but lost their way. The father gave up his early ideals and settled into a career that would enable him to make as much money as possible. He became, in a word, the corporation man. The mother gave up the ideal of a career that would permit the full expression of her talents and became a housewife.

As time went on, he became increasingly invested in his career, separating himself physically and psychologically from the family. She thought less and less of him. He did

not, in her view, sufficiently support her in the realization of her ideals. Nor was he very much of a man. Certainly he was not the man her father was. She took their son as an emotional substitute for the husband, drawing him very close to her, sharing her disappointment in her marriage and her husband, and assigning to the son the responsibility of fulfilling the ideals that were missing in her life. The problem was that as she drew the son close to her emotionally, and made him responsible for her fulfillment, she simultaneously undercut the father who would ordinarily serve as the son's model of valued achievement. The result was that the son became what Keniston called a "pyrrhic victor in the Oedipal struggle." He was able to maintain the fantasy of a perfect fusion with his mother, but lost the possibility of forming the superego.

In order to get a full idea of what this would mean, it is necessary to return to our discussion of the Oedipus complex. In doing so, I am going to add a bit to Keniston's account, based on the more contemporary understanding of the powerful role of the mother that we developed in Chapter 2. It does not in any significant way conflict with Keniston's own interpretation.

As we saw, the infant's early experience of life is primarily structured by its relationship with its mother, who is experienced as omnipotent and as a source of boundless love. The fantasy of the return to fusion with her structures our lives, but for the boy and the girl this fantasy, the ego ideal, is experienced somewhat differently. The boy, unlike the girl, can project fusion with the mother only at the cost of losing his own identity, and of being swallowed up and engulfed in the process. To deal with this he comes to see the father as one who has earned a place with the mother, who is able to maintain a place with the mother without being destroyed because he is admirable in her eyes; he has done something that she values.

As I have argued in Chapter 2, what the primordial mother is understood as valuing is a sphere in which the expression of her nurturing power could be given its freest expression, a sphere of love in which the desire of her loved ones would be satisfied. The role of the father is that of expanding the sphere of the mother by engaging the external world, and removing the indifferent and alien elements of reality that limit the free and safe expression of the mother's love. To be sure, the father can never do this. Reality remains reality. Still, the conditions of life can be made more congenial, and threatening reality can be made less threatening. These can count as progress toward the ego ideal. Such progress is both energized by this fantasy and helps to keep the fantasy alive. And the maintenance of the fantasy is what is necessary for hope.

Now, a father who can be seen as doing this would be one to emulate. This emulation could be projected to result in a similar relationship for the boy: an adult male who would be valued by an adult and powerful female on the basis of her appreciation of his accomplishments. The internalization of this image of the father, in which the son undertakes the responsibility to participate in the world on a similar basis, is the classical root for the superego.

But the father's emulability assumes that the mother appreciates the father. The devaluation of the father by the mother would tend to cause this edifice to collapse. If the mother does not admire the father, and especially if she engages the son with the fullness of her emotionality into this project of devaluation, the son will not be able to project an

image of himself that would enable him to see himself as equal to the powerful figure of the mother. He will be not be able to order his life with a prospect for independent, valued identity. He will be able to retain the fantasy of fusion with the primordial mother, but not without the experience of that condition as rendering him totally dependent and swallowing him up. Indeed, her bringing him into this devaluation project would tend to reinforce that fantasy of being rendered dependent and engulfed, since that is exactly what has happened.

If, in addition, she holds the father responsible for her lack of fulfillment, and implicitly makes the son responsible for the reinforcement of her grandiose idea of herself, she will have made the son's independence from her into an act of abandonment, an injury to her, the son's only connection and hope. He must, therefore, as the bedrock of whatever identity he can have, follow her lead, not move from her project, never even question her claim that, were it not for the father, her life, and their relationship, would have been perfect. In all of this, he relinquishes any possibility he has of an emotional life as a competent male adult, substituting instead the idea that male adulthood is the root of his problem. No wonder he is alienated.

What we see here are the psychodynamics that underlie the alienated/postmodern worldview. Nothing good can be said about the father or his works, since that would involve a betrayal of the mother. Thus the social forms in which more socialized individuals transact their identities must be seen as artificial. They must be denigrated and "deconstructed."

No capacity to project an image of a valued self into the future means that the metric of one's life can be based only on one's experiences of the moment. These are, of course, volatile. From this would arise the idea that people only deceive themselves to think they have some idea of an objective "truth." Since one's experiences of the moment are the only reality one can acknowledge, any blockage of them, any interference with their free expression, would be seen as an intolerable act of oppression. Resistance to this oppression would be experienced as an identity one could legitimately have; it would be hard to think of any other. Commitment would be impossible since commitment always means an acceptance of limitation. In the absence of any possible goal that would justify the acceptance of limitation, commitment could only be seen as the internalization of oppression. Value in the world would have to consist in the freely given love of one's authentic self, as defined by one's feelings of the moment, a fusion that only the mother's love for the child could approximate. Any limited acceptance by a specific other would be experienced in the context of the fact that the concrete relationships one has had have been devastating. Only the fantasy of relationship, relationship in purity, could be allowed.

The lack of engagement with others in social forms or relationships means that the self is always experienced as isolated, marginal, ephemeral. It cannot connect itself with any others or any thing. This would be believed to be true for others as well as for oneself, even though they deny it. Any connection, therefore, would be seen as only a subjugation brought about by brute force. Those who seem to experience such connection would be seen as covering over that brutality by a fantasy of how wonderful the brute is and how much he deserves to be loved. In this process of covering over, the voices of the dominated and oppressed, the discourses which express why they should be loved, are

suppressed and silenced. Competition, aggressiveness, one would believe, are to be spurned. All they do is establish such dominance. But there is nothing of value that could legitimate the supremacy of any one over anyone else. All that could possibly be of value was what previously was, fusion with the perfect mother who loved one exactly as one was. That was a perfect world, one would suppose. The father would be seen as the one who destroyed it. "And he wants to be loved for that?" the alienated would say. "Screw him, his sex, his discourses, and his ways. Let us reject him and turn to the mother. Undeified by the father, she will give us everything we need and want."

As we have described this matter, the Sin of the Father has been explained away. In this view, there is no great Sin of the Father, but rather the Sin is a construct, primarily of the mother, to explain her lack of fulfillment. The son bought into this because he had to, or face her rage. And he could not face her rage because his connection with her gave him the only identity he could have.

Now obviously this analysis constitutes a very serious accusation. It attacks a whole strain, one might even say the dominant strain, of contemporary thought. One needs more to accept it than what has been given. Specifically, it seems to me, one needs to develop it in three ways. First, one needs to go more fully into the charge itself, to take it more seriously, to look for the truth in it before dismissing it. Second, one needs to look at it from the alternative point of view. What had the mother to say about all of this? The third charge, which in the end I will accept, is that the account here has been excessively reductionistic. Surely postmodernism represents more than the expression of this peculiar family configuration. Surely there is something taking place at a deeper level.

In order to develop my claim, then, I will look first at the substance of the charge: what did the father actually do that might properly have resulted in this denigration? This will involve taking a look at the purported sinner himself: the corporation man. Second, I will look at the matter from the other point of view, from the point of view of the mother. It turns out that she has been very well spoken for in a book which gave rise to contemporary feminism, *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan. What we shall see there is the same landscape I have already described. Finally, I will try to place this family drama in broader perspective, attempting to show how broader social forces are playing themselves out through this configuration.

The Sin Of The Corporation Man

In this section I want to examine the charge against the father. As the alienated student saw it, and here he joins the disdain of the mother, the father's sins were threefold. First, he was a sell-out, a phony, a man not to be admired. Second, he abandoned the family, removing himself physically and psychologically. Third, he was responsible for the limitations imposed on the mother, which were reflected in her terrible unhappiness. About the third charge, I will respond in the section on Friedan. About the first two, my argument will be that, while there is a great deal of truth to these charges, they do not add up to the attack upon the patriarch. The reason is that the corporation

man, the phony, the absent father, was no hypermasculine macho man who suppressed and dominated everyone else. On the contrary, he was a strictly androgynous guy.

As an ideological construct, the hypermasculine macho man, despite Pollack's (1998) claim that he is still the model of masculinity, had long ceased to exist by the time the corporation man sold out. He was the product of social forces that were, not one, but two generations back from the forces that molded the fathers of the alienated students. As Bendix (1956) has argued, Spencerian Social Darwinism, the ideology that within corporate organization corresponded to the macho man model, had given way by the 20s to the model of the Taylorite "scientific manager" who subordinated his individuality and arbitrary authority to impersonal methods. These methods defined his own job as well as it did the jobs of those under him. It is still possible to see patriarchy in this, and certainly the Foucauldian critique of discipline, with its emphasis on the subordination of the self to an internalized system of abstract rules (Foucault, 1979), refers to this form of organization. But it is certainly worth noting that the emphasis Taylor and his followers placed on the common good and on the idea of finding the appropriate job for each individual worker represented positive valuations both of community and diversity that the patriarch is supposed, by the postmodernists, to lack. Again, along with the involvement of the industrial psychologists who were to assist in the alignment of individual workers and jobs came an understanding that workers had attitudes and feelings, betokening a surprising sensitivity on the part of the supposedly heartless patriarch.

But the idea of patriarchy becomes attenuated to the breaking point as management ideology shifts toward the "human relations" model, the model that dominated managerial ideology at the time the fathers of Keniston's alienated students were "selling out" (Bendix, 1956). For the ideal manager in the human relations model was a character who was striking in his androgyny.

The model of the worker that formed the center of the human relations movement was of an individual built out of sentiments, a subject rather than an object. The ideal manager was a person who held "Theory Y," rather than "Theory X"; who believed that work could and should be motivated through those sentiments, rather than through external control (McGregor, 1960).

For Mayo, the central principle of worker motivation was "the desire to stand well with one's fellows, the so-called human instinct of association" (Mayo, cited in Bendix, 1956: 313). The art of management required the engagement of these desires with the organization's tasks:

Mayo's view of the managerial task may be defined as the endeavor to provide an organizational environment in which employees can fulfill their "eager human desire for cooperative activity." The major objective of management is to foster cooperative teamwork among its employees. (Bendix: p. 317)

It thus required sensitivity to sentiment and an understanding of its logic (Roethlisberger, 1943). If we may follow authors like Gilligan (1982) in the presumption that sensitivity, concern for connection, interdependence, belonging, and so on are feminine characteristics, there is no way of denying that the ideal model of the manager in the human relations approach had a highly developed feminine side.

Nor would it be correct to assume that human relations ideology was in any way characteristic only of a fringe movement within a generally patriarchal management caste. On the contrary, it was quite broadly based, as Bendix illustrates with a passage from a 1953 Fortune magazine description of the General Electric training program:

If the task of the manager is not work so much as the managing of other people's work, it follows that getting along with people is far and away the most important skill of all. (P.320)

Indeed, even the broad emphasis in the "scientific" literature of the time on such qualities as "consideration" and "socio-emotional orientation" (e.g. Fleishman, Harris and Burt, 1955) reveal the importance placed at the time on the "feminine" side of the personality. One might add that this literature was so inconclusive (e.g. Korman, 1960) that it is impossible to disregard the claim that it was driven more by ideology than by science.

Ferguson (1982), who observed clearly the feminine aspects of the behavior of subordinates to their bosses, failed to see that, as approved behavior, the display of feminine characteristics was also supported in the other direction. This was exemplified in the classic novel about organizations of the period, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*.

The Man In The Gray Flannel Suit

Tom Rath, the book's protagonist, enters the corporate world after service in the infantry during World War II. In the following scene, he visits the apartment of Ralph Hopkins, head of the United Broadcasting Company, for whom Rath has been hired to write a speech. Note the femininity of Hopkins' display, with its apparent concern to please, its informality, its concern to establish bonding, its apparent deference, its support of the other

The door was opened almost immediately by Hopkins himself. He was smiling and looked more affable than ever: "Come in!" he said. "So nice of you to come!"...

"Won't you sit down? Hopkins said. "What can I get you to drink?"

"Anything. What are you having?"

Hopkins walked over to a table near one of the windows on which stood a small forest of bottles, a trayful of glasses, and an ice bucket. "It looks as though we have quite a collection here," he said, as though that were the first time he had seen it. "I think I'll have Scotch on the rocks. Will that suit you?"

"That'll be fine."

Hopkins took a pair of silver ice tongs in his hand and delicately dropped ice cubes into a glass. After splashing whisky over them, he placed the glass on a small tray, ceremoniously walked over and handed it to Tom. "Thanks," Tom said, figuring he was getting served by the highest-paid bartender in the world. "Is there anything I can do to help?"

“Just sit down and make yourself comfortable. Bill Ogden will be along any minute.”

Tom sat in a small, hard leather chair. Hopkins poured himself a drink and, acting for all the world like an anxious housewife entertaining the rector, fussed about the room, offering Tom first a plate of crackers spread with caviar, and then a porcelain box of cigarettes. (pp. 103-4)

According to Bendix, the human relations approach to management arose from the increasing size and complexity of bureaucratic organizations. These led to the necessity for the widespread exercise of discretionary judgment throughout the corporation. Work, therefore, could not be done strictly on the basis of mechanical performance of strictly physical tasks. It needed to have more meaning than that. It needed to have, in other words, a place within a directly experienced emotional nexus.

The impact of this emotionally sophisticated form of management on the subordinate’s feeling about work is indicated by Rath’s response to Hopkins’ criticism of his speech, which differed sharply from the response of Ogden, his immediate superior:

“Wonderful!” Hopkins suddenly boomed.

Tom turned around.

“*Marvelous*,” Hopkins said, even louder. His whole face was beaming with satisfaction. “You’ve really got the feel for it!”

“I’m glad you like it,” Tom said modestly.

“This really *sings*,” Hopkins said enthusiastically. “It’s remarkable that you could do so well the first time around!”

“It’s a second draft, actually,” Tom said. “Mr. Ogden gave me some suggestions.”

The *heart* of the thing is just right!” Hopkins said. “Now let’s just go over it together. Did you bring a copy?...”

Sentence by sentence Hopkins took the whole speech apart. When he finished, he had asked for changes in almost every paragraph. “Well” he concluded, “You certainly did a grand job! Just fix up the details we’ve worked out and let’s see it again in a few days. Would Wednesday be too early?”

Tom gulped his drink and excused himself.... He was halfway to Grand Central Station before he fully realized that Ogden and Hopkins had simply told him the same thing in two different ways: to rewrite the speech. In spite of this, Hopkins had somehow left him eager to try. Well, he thought admiringly, I always heard he could drive men and make them like it. (Wilson: pp. 114-115)

The important point here is that the traditional differentiation between the roles of the father and mother, based on the separation between engaging indifferent reality on one hand, and emotional expression on the other, could not be maintained in these organizations. The organization had to be reconstituted as a mother, and the manager’s job became this process of reconstitution. For this, he had to develop his feminine side.

Mayo understood, however, that the manager could not simply express his emotions. The manager, as part of his job, had to express emotionality in accordance with what was required within the situation. But there would be no reason in the world to expect that the manager's emotional makeup would accord with the organization's necessities. Thus, while his job was to create a world that others took as warm and caring, his own emotions had to be very tightly controlled. Thus:

Mayo was emphatic in demanding that the elite control its sentiments, develop logical thinking, and hence master the "human-social facts."... Mayo made short shrift of the invidious distinction between the real wants of workers and the ideal qualities of employers.... He saw the individuals in both groups as creatures of sentiment and nonlogical thinking. The difference between them consisted simply in the capacity of an administrative elite to engage in logical thinking, to be independent from social routines, to free themselves from emotional involvement in order to "assess and handle the concrete difficulties of human collaboration." (Bendix: pp. 315-6)

Take these together. The job of the manager is to create an atmosphere of warmth and caring, an atmosphere in which others feel as if others feel warmly toward them and care about them. But this creation is not supposed to reflect the spontaneous feelings of the manager; it is supposed to be part of a drama, a display of feeling that is under conscious control. One could not, returning to the charge of the alienated students, have a better definition of "phony" than that.

Push this a bit farther and one can also see how the center of the manager's emotional life may have shifted from the family to the corporation. Consider, in this respect, that the manager was human, too. He needed connection, caring and warmth as much as any other employee. But the world he lived in was quite the opposite. By virtue of the very fact that he had the function of creating an emotional nexus that did not express his own feelings, he and his feelings were excluded from, forbidden in, the world he created. The richer the world of his creation, the colder his own life. He had to know that he was a phony. Torn in half as he was, how could he live with himself? At the same time, his job was the economic mainstay of his family. He could not simply abandon it.

Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that the person would defend himself through a fantasy in which he would be unified with his feelings within the context of the work organization. Within this fantasy, which is an aspect of the psychodynamics of hierarchy that we discussed in Chapter Two, elevation in the hierarchy would permit the individual to find a place in the organization that would permit him to express his spontaneous feelings. It would correspond to setting one's own agenda, rather than receiving one's cues for the appropriate emotional displays from superiors. To be sure, at any level of the organization, this would not happen. But the fantasy could still be maintained by projecting its realization to a higher level. In this way, the manager could live with the wound in his identity by conceiving it as temporary, to be healed at some time in the future (Schwartz, 1990).

Tom Rath put the matter this way:

The thing to remember is this, he thought: Hopkins would want me to be honest. But when you come right down to it, why does he hire me? To help him

do what he wants to do -- obviously that's why any man hires another. And if he finds that I disagree with everything he wants to do, what good am I to him? I should quit if I don't like what he does, but I want to eat, and so, like a half million other guys in gray flannel suits, I'll always pretend to agree, until I get big enough to be honest without being hurt. That's not being crooked, it's just being smart. (p.183)

Returning to the question of identity, though, notice what this would do to the individual's identity, and to his connections with others. It would result in him abandoning his commitment to who he really was at any given moment, and to the connections with concrete others, replacing them with a commitment to a fantasy identity, and fantasized relationship, which would be realized at a later date. In this way, the center of the individual's life, the meaning of his activity, would shift toward what he had to do to climb up the hierarchy and realize this fantasy, and away from the concrete life he lived in the context of his family. He would have abandoned his family in the way that his wife and his alienated son charged. Thus, Ralph Hopkins, the master of the appropriate emotional gesture, the genius at the display of concern, lived a monastic life apart from his family, whose feelings of abandonment were powerful.

Moreover, to the extent that he would be around, he would not be around in a way that would lead his family to admire him. Rath understood very well the abandonment of himself that this would involve and was given a clear inkling of the loss of admiration that would result. He said to his wife, Betsy:

"There's a standard operating procedure for this sort of thing," he said. "It's a little like reading fortunes. You make a lot of highly qualified contradictory statements and keep your eyes on the man's face to see which one's please him. That way you can feel your way along, and if you're clever, you can always end up by telling him exactly what he wants to hear."

"Is that what they do?" Betsy asked. She didn't laugh....

"I think it's a little sickening," Betsy said bluntly.

"Damn it, have a sense of humor. What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing's the matter with me. I'm just interested in knowing the answers to a few questions. What do you really think of that speech?"

"I think it's terrible," Tom said. "My business education, you see, is not complete. In a few years I'll be able to suspend judgment entirely until I learn what Hopkins thinks, and then I'll really and truly feel the way he does. That way I won't have to be dishonest any more."...

"You're angry with me," he said. "Can't you take a joke?"

"I don't think you were joking."

"Of course I was. I was knocking myself out with humor."

"What are you going to tell Hopkins tomorrow?"

“I don’t know. Why’s that so important all of a sudden?”

She put the kettle on the stove and turned toward him suddenly. “I didn’t like the look of you sitting there in that big chair talking so damn smugly and cynically!” she said. “You looked disgusting! You looked like just the kind of guy you always used to hate. The guy with all the answers. The guy who has no respect for himself or anyone else.”

“What do you want me to do?” he asked quietly. “Do you want me to go in there tomorrow and tell Hopkins I think his speech is a farce?”

“I don’t care what you tell him, but I don’t like the idea of your becoming a cheap cynical yes-man and being so self-satisfied and analytical about it. You never used to be like that.” (pp. 185-6)

In concluding this section, then. It now seems possible to understand the disdain and anger the alienated son and his mother felt toward the corporation man. He was indeed a phony and he had abandoned the family. But we can also understand the development of the facets of his character which the family found objectionable. And we can see that, whatever his sins, there was nothing specifically male about them. The corporation man was a model of androgyny. He was not the patriarch, and his sins were simply not the Sins of the Father.

The Feminine Mystique And The Primordial Mother

If the sins of the corporation man, serious as they were, were not the Sin of the Father, we are left only with the final element of the charge against him -- that he prevented the fulfillment of his wife. The question then becomes, what did this charge mean to his wife, his accuser. What was going on with the suburban housewife of the time that led her to feel unfulfilled and led that feeling to develop into the attack against the patriarch? Staying within the literature of the period, we are fortunate to have the original material that makes that case, the enormously influential book *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan (1962).

Friedan, following a general recognition of the time, observed that the middle class American housewives of the period were experiencing a deep and serious unhappiness and discontent. This unhappiness was in sharp contrast with social expectations, according to which the housewife should have been perfectly fulfilled and ecstatic. Instead, she suffered from what Friedan called “the problem that has no name.”

According to Friedan, the “problem that has no name” was occasioned by the housewife being trapped by the “feminine mystique,” which Friedan defined this way:

The feminine mystique says that the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity. It says that the greatest mistake of Western culture, through most of its history, has been the undervaluation of this femininity. It says this femininity is so mysterious and intuitive and close to the creation and origin of life that man-made science may never be able to understand it. But however special and different, it is in no way

inferior to the nature of man; it may even in certain respects be superior. The mistake, says the mystique, the root of women's troubles in the past is that women envied men, women tried to be like men, instead of accepting their own nature, which can find fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love. (p. 43)

Now this feminine mystique, pushed off on women by such forces as the male editors of women's magazines, psychoanalysis, functionalist sociology, advertising, sex-directed educators, and even turncoats such as Margaret Mead,

...gives to American women ... the old image: "Occupation: housewife." The new mystique makes the housewife-mothers, who never had a chance to be anything else, the model for all women; it presupposes that history has reached a final and glorious end in the here and now, as far as women are concerned. Beneath the sophisticated trappings, it simply makes certain concrete, finite, domestic aspects of feminine existence -- as it was lived by women whose lives were confined, by necessity, to cooking, cleaning, washing, bearing children -- into a religion, a pattern by which all women must now live or deny their femininity. p. 43)

The problem that has no name showed up at this point because these women, educated as well as men, found that the life of the housewife, though perfected in its own terms, sharply curtailed the possibilities for the development of the talents that they had cultivated and the gifts they had to offer. The problem without a name was the feeling of stultification, of an unfulfilled need for growth:

It is my thesis that the core of the problem for women today is not sexual but a problem of identity -- a stunting or evasion of growth that is perpetuated by the feminine mystique... It is my thesis that as Victorian culture did not permit women to accept or gratify their basic sexual needs, our culture does not permit women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfill their potentialities as human beings, a need which is not solely defined by their sexual role. (p. 77)

To begin the analysis of Friedan, it is first necessary to observe that her perspective on the situation of the housewife is in perfect concordance with the theory I have sketched so far. Recall that the sexual division of labor discussed above had the underlying fantasy that the male would engage external reality, pushing it away, so to speak, so that the free play of emotionality, presided over by the female, could have its safe and unrestrained operation in the home.

What we need to understand is that the external conditions that were supposed to represent the realization of this fantasy had been fulfilled. External reality, for the housewife, had indeed been pushed away.

Reality, as I have said, consists in whatever it is that makes it possible to make a mistake. It is what makes constraint necessary. But there was nothing that she had to do in which a mistake could be made, or at least one in which the consequences would be rapidly visible. There was nothing she had to see as a constraint.

Contrast this with previous times. Not long ago, if she had not arisen before dawn to renew the fire, the family would not have been able to get comfortably dressed. If she had

not cooked properly, the family would not have been able to eat. If she had not made clothes, the family would have gone naked. She lived in negative conditions, to be sure, but prevailing against these negative conditions defined a life for her. What would give her a life when all she needed to do was set a thermostat? Or call out for pizza? Or go to Macy's? The problem is that the self, as a construction, is defined by contrast with what is not the self. Take away what is not the self, and the contrast with the not-self is lost. Take away the not-self, therefore, and the self disappears along with it.

This is the condition that Friedan confronts from the other side.

Just what was this problem that has no name? What were the words women used when they tried to express it? Sometimes a woman would say "I feel empty somehow ... incomplete." Or she would say, "I feel as if I don't exist.... (p. 20)

...by choosing femininity over the painful growth to full identity, by never achieving the hard core of self that comes not from fantasy but from mastering reality, these girls are doomed to suffer ultimately that bored, diffuse feeling of purposelessness, non-existence, non-involvement with the world that can be called *anomie*, or lack of identity, or merely felt as the problem that has no name. (p. 181)

This was the situation within which the housewife found herself. It was a condition drained of meaningful activity, of sense, of purpose, filled only with activities that had been created to occupy her time. As Friedan says: "When a woman tries to put the problem into words, she often merely describes the daily life she leads." (p. 30)

Indeed, the problem was even worse than that, for the self, in Freud's terms the ego, is what provides a framework for the organization of our activity. It structures our experience and gives a direction to our desire. Without it, our desire is experienced only as formless excitation. But this is the condition that Freud (1895/ 1962) originally described as the cause of anxiety! What was sought, what it was thought would be created, was a rich and full self which could express its love. This love would structure life at home; all she had to do was be herself. *But she had no self to be.* Her affective experience consisted, not of love, but of anxiety. Her freedom created no structure, but only *anomie*. They thought they were building paradise. It turned out to be hell.

Friedan's solution for the problem, and one that I endorse, was that women's roles needed to be changed, and with them needed to be changed the sexual division of labor. The idea that men would go out and engage reality, leaving women to express emotionality within the home, had led to an unbearably painful stultification. The solution had to be the creation of the possibility, even the necessity, of growth. The separation of women from reality needed to be undone. Women needed careers that would permit them to engage reality at the limits of their capacities and talents.

Returning to our search for the origins of the attack against the father, we can see that parts of its roots are here. The alienated student and his mother were united in their disdain for the father. He saw his role as going out and engaging reality, attenuating its effects within the family so that emotion could reign there. But this meant that she would be excluded from engagement with reality and therefore of the possibility of growth. This left her in exquisite misery. He expected to be appreciated and admired for performing

this role, and that appreciation and admiration were the root of meaning for him. But he was not appreciated and admired, and we can see why. He had left her in an absolutely intolerable position. What was she supposed to appreciate him for? But if her appreciation was the touchstone of the whole program of meaning for them, in the absence of her appreciation, how could she admire him? But if she did not admire him, how could he be emulable? And from this denial of emulability, postmodernism, the uncommitted alienated student, as we have seen, would follow. Thus:

...strange new problems are being reported in the growing generations of children whose mothers were always there, driving them around, helping them with their homework -- an inability to endure pain or discipline or pursue any self-sustained goal of any sort, a devastating boredom with life. Educators are increasingly uneasy about the dependence, the lack of self-reliance, of the boys and girls who are entering college today: "We fight a continual battle to make our students assume manhood," said a Columbia dean. (pp. 29-30)

But, returning more fully to the idea of the Sin of the Father, we can see that there is a problem with this. For even if we assume that the sexual division of labor deprived the wife of her growth, and even if we assume that the father got the better part of the deal here, there is still no basis here for denying the value of his works. It is worthwhile noting that Friedan does not make such a denial. On the contrary, she values his achievements. And, in fact, she could not devalue them without undermining her whole program. For her claim was that women have been denied the opportunity to do something constructive with their talents, a point that she makes by contrasting women with men, who have had the opportunity to do something constructive..

Consider, for example, this argument from Maslow:

Even the need for self-respect, for self-esteem and for the esteem of others -- "the desire for strength, for achievement, for adequacy, for mastery and competence, for confidence in the face of the world, and for independence and freedom" -- is not clearly recognized for women. But certainly the thwarting of the need for self-esteem, which produces feelings of inferiority, of weakness, and of helplessness in man, can have the same effect on woman. *Self-esteem in woman, as well as in man, can only be based on real capacity, competence and achievement; on deserved respect from others rather than unwarranted adulation.* (p. 315, emphasis added)

Thus, deny that men have done something worthwhile and the claim that women have been deprived of the opportunity to do likewise falls apart.

In addition to this problem there is a difficulty that arises within Friedan's analysis itself. It is the apparent passivity of women, their willingness to be swept up by the feminine mystique, to yield to it easily and without resistance. For, as Friedan describes it, it is hard to see the source of its attractiveness.

Thus:

...sexual passivity, male domination ... [the feminine mystique] makes certain concrete, finite, domestic aspects of feminine existence -- as it was lived by women whose lives were confined, by necessity, to cooking, cleaning, washing,

bearing children -- into a religion, a pattern by which all women must now live or deny their femininity. (p. 43, see above)

That doesn't sound so great. How could it appeal to anybody? It is not enough to say that the power of the feminine mystique was overwhelming. Where did it get its power? Advertisers, for example, may have mobilized the full weight of their creativity in constructing it, but advertisers do not generally go against the tide. Nor do university administrators, or magazine editors, or manufacturers. The idea of them throwing their enterprises behind the creation of a product to which no one was attracted is hard to believe. The idea that they would succeed mightily in the process is even more difficult. One could make the claim, of course, that women are, by nature, passive creatures, weak, easily swayed and dominated. But that is not exactly a claim that Friedan, or I, would support.

The solution I will propose provides an answer to both of the problems, disparate as they appear. It is that the image that appealed, both to men and to women, which drew women into the suburban nest, was not an image of weakness and triviality, it was in fact the most powerful image in the psyche. It was an image of the Madonna, a person complete unto herself, of infinite love, infinite goodness, and at the same time omnipotent in the sense that her boundless love could provide for the complete fulfillment of all of our needs. *The appeal of the feminine mystique was the power of the primordial mother.*

The constraints imposed by necessity having been removed, nothing stood in the way of her tendency to identify with that powerful figure, the fantasy that had energized the whole configuration. This was supposed to have permitted the free flow of desire and spontaneity. The problem was, as we have seen, that the freedom she had to be herself did not result in bliss; it resulted in torment. Still, the omnipotence inherent in the image was not something that anyone would turn their back on, especially in the absence of a compelling alternative.

The idea of the castrating mother was a staple of Friedan's time. Typically, she notes, it was projected onto those women who abandoned their "feminine" role and competed with men. But, Friedan argues, it was not the women who sought professional careers who were responsible for a lack of masculinity among their sons, it was the ones who stayed at home, those whose occupation was housewife. This is a point that parallels Keniston's account. Keniston's alienated students' mothers were housewives who had *given up* their careers.

Yet the image their alienated sons had of them of them is far from the image of the weak, passive, dependent creatures that such women were supposed to have become. For these young men, the mother was the dominant person in the household. They were dominant not only over the sons, but especially over the fathers. From what could this strength have been derived?

It can be explained on the grounds of an identification with the primordial mother, whose judgment of worth was the keystone of these men's sense of meaning, and who therefore had the power to render their lives meaningless by withholding that judgment. One cannot imagine a greater power.

Again, Friedan seems perplexed that few of the housewives of her time took the route of professional activity out of their misery. They could engage in amateur activity with no difficulty.

It is the jump from amateur to professional that is often hardest for a woman on her way out of the trap. But even if a woman does not have to work to eat, she can find identity only in work that is of real value to society -- work for which, usually, our society pays. Being paid is, of course, more than a reward -- it implies a definite commitment. *For fear of that commitment, hundreds of able, educated suburban housewives today fool themselves about the writer or actress they might have been, or dabble at art or music in the dilettante's limbo of "self-enrichment,".... These are also ways of evading growth.* (p. 346, emphasis added)

Friedan attributes this fear of commitment to the feminine mystique. The assumption that the feminine mystique was the appeal of the primordial mother leads to perfect agreement on this point, but provides a different slant. Commitment means the acceptance of obligations. It means doing what one ought to do, rather than what one wants to do. It means submission and subordination to an external agenda. It means the acceptance of limitation. It necessarily involves a descent from the fantasy of perfection, omnipotence, and freedom that the primitive mother involves. Refusal of commitment is understandable if one understands the fantasy that it is preserving.

Again, if the feminine mystique is the power of the primordial mother, we can understand the denial of the value of men's works. The fantasy of perfection inherent in the primordial mother would cause the value of men's works, limited as they are, to fare badly by comparison. Whatever the status, the prestige of the father, they would be seen as undeserved. Whatever his accomplishments, they would be seen as insufficient. Did he bring home income for the family? He did not bring home enough. And in what depravity do he have to engage in order to get it?

Under the circumstances, returning to our earlier exploration, we can better understand why he did not spend very much time at home. We find that we are also better able to understand the response of the alienated son. This mother was larger than life, so to speak, and her power to enrich the son's sense of importance was overwhelming. But he could only gain that sense by maintaining and feeding back to his mother that sense of omnipotence. What he was definitively barred from doing was admiring his father, since denying the worth of the father was a part of the very structure of the mother's image of herself and her condition. The postmodern consciousness, as we have seen would follow.

But we are still not at the end of our quest, because there are still two questions we have not answered. First, we have found again the source of the alienation of the son, and hence of the structure of postmodern consciousness. But we cannot, as yet, understand its strength. Thus, the alienated son, while his consciousness reflects postmodernism, was not in a condition to push it. His was, after all, an alienated consciousness: his victory in the Oedipal struggle was pyrrhic, as he well knew. He was filled with longing and loss. Postmodernism, on the other hand, as we may see from the dominance it has attained in so many academic disciplines, has been an aggressively active force. There has been tremendous power behind it. Where has this power come from? The second question is still the original one. What was the Sin of the Father? For, again, the image of the father

here is weak, and not to be admired, but if there is in this very little capacity for great good, there is also very little capacity for great evil. How could this puny creature commit the Sin of the Father?

The Power Of The Daughter

As before, these two questions may be answered on the basis of the same recognition. This recognition brings to focus the one element of this familial stew that we have not touched on at all. This family had not only sons, but daughters. And it was, as I will argue, the daughters who inherited the power of this configuration, and hold it to this day. The daughter in this dysfunctional ménage is the power behind postmodernism, seen as a political force.

The son was weak because he could not develop power through identification with a valued father. Yet his identification with his powerful mother, for the obvious reasons, had to be partial and incomplete. No such strictures applied to the daughter. She did not have to admire the father in order to gain strength. She could identify with the awesome power of the primordial mother. And she could adopt the mother's denigration of the father, not losing strength in the bargain, as the son did, but gaining it because it would give her a way of understanding why her mother was both so powerful and so miserable.

And this finally gives us an answer to our question of the origin of the Sin of the Father. The primordial mother, in addition to being omnipotent, is also the fount of all goodness. She is, essentially, goodness herself -- the original goddess, as some might say (Eisler, 1987). If someone were to identify with her, and yet find limitation and anxiety in her life, an explanation would be required that would do justice to this in moral terms. The imputation of badness would serve very nicely here. And the imputation of badness would have to be commensurate with the magnitude of the goodness it prevailed against. Perfect goodness would draw out, then, an imputation of perfect badness to explain its limitation, and they would be locked in a condition of essential conflict -- the sexual holy war.

What we need to see here is that this imputation of badness is itself a psychological process. Badness is whatever is experienced as posing limitations to the power of her absolute goodness. But what presents such limitations is reality itself -- her own real limitations and the limitations posed by the existence of an external world. As we saw before, the father is the symbolic representative of reality. His Sin is nothing more than a projection onto him of the badness of the reality he represents.

His achievements were bad and his failures were bad. His presence was bad and his absence was bad. What he did was bad and what he didn't do was bad. This makes sense if we understand that it did not matter what he did or did not do. The idea that he had sinned came first, and then everything he did was interpreted to exemplify it. He did not even have to consciously take up the role of representing reality. The very existence of reality, of anything that did not fit into the fantasy nexus of Madonna-and-child, would have been enough. If a suitable personification for this role had not existed, one would have been created.

C.G. Jung maintained that the devil is the unacknowledged fourth element of the Trinity. The idea of evil must be created if the idea of perfect goodness is to be preserved. And it must be attributed to a palpable form so that goodness can be capable of realizing its potential by overcoming it. The Father has become the incarnation of perfect evil, the devil. His new role is to fit into a drama, the morality play of the struggle of good versus evil that we have called the sexual holy war. His role in this presentation is to personify evil.

Within this context, we can see that a good life, indeed a perfect life can be lived in the service of the destruction of his power. If that happens, according to the script, the power of the primordial mother, as represented now by the daughters, can come into its own, creating a perfect world.

What would arise from all of this would be a tremendous feeling of potency on the part of the daughter. Within this configuration we can also see that the daughter would have power over the son, for whom over-dependency on the female was the defining characteristic of the psychological framework. That tells us what we need to know about the power of postmodernism.

Women's Studies And The Feminine Mystique: The Ideology Of The Daughter

There is an element of this analysis that bears further elaboration. I have argued that the feminine mystique was the power of the primordial mother. I have further argued that the daughter of the suburban housewife identified with her mother's primordial power, and took it as her life's meaning and mission to destroy her father's power, substituting the expression of her self. The implication of this, though, is that the daughter identified with the feminine mystique. Yet, clearly enough, being a suburban housewife is the last thing in the world that these daughters wants to do. How do we account for this apparent contradiction?

The contradiction is accounted for by the fact that the daughters brought the feminine mystique with them, and maintain it as the fundament of their feminist ideology and practice. We see this most directly in the areas of theory and practice over which they have the most control: feminist pedagogy and, especially, women's studies programs in the university. Feminism, as women's studies programs understand it, is the feminine mystique, taken out of the family and turned toward the world. Add the attribution that men are the reason the feminine mystique has not yet made the world perfect and you have the whole program, including the elaboration of the toxic man/Madonna-and-child motif with which we began our investigation.

Recall in this connection Friedan's formulation:

The feminine mystique says that the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity. (p. 43)

And compare it to formulations of how the expression of the female, typically understood as nurturant, caring, and non-hierarchical will be inherently superior to the work that is done by men, in a wide range of fields. Thus, in the field of governance,

Catherine MacKinnon (1989), who defines feminism as “the theory of women’s point of view” (p. 120) says:

Its project is to uncover and claim as valid the experience of women...This defines the task of feminism not only because male domination is perhaps the most pervasive and tenacious system of power in history, but because it is metaphysically nearly perfect. Its point of view is the standard for point-of-viewlessness, its particularity the meaning of universality. Its force is exercised as consent, its authority as participation, its supremacy as the paradigm of order, its control as the definition of legitimacy. (pp. 116-7)

Again, in science, we have this from Sandra Harding (1986), approvingly presenting the view of Nancy Hartsock:

A feminist epistemological standpoint is an interested social location (“interested” in the sense of “engaged,” not “biased”), the conditions for which bestow upon its occupants scientific and epistemic advantage. The subjugation of women’s sensuous, concrete, relational activity permits women to grasp aspects of nature and social life that are not accessible to inquiries grounded in men’s characteristic activities. The vision based on men’s activities is both partial and perverse -- “perverse” because it systematically reverses the proper order of things: it substitutes abstract for concrete reality; for example, it makes death-risking rather than the reproduction of our species form of life the paradigmatically human activity. (p. 148)

One could go on from there to many other fields, such as administration (Ferguson, 1984), music (McClary, 1991) and even logic (Nye, 1990). In all of this one can see the idealization of the primordial mother. To be sure, in many of these cases, it is maintained that the feminine attributes, so called, are “socially constructed” rather than “essential.” Nonetheless, it is uniformly assumed that when women gain power the new social arrangements they create will retain the virtues of women, even though an entirely different set of social arrangements would presumably have “socially constructed” gender entirely differently. This suggests that the mythology of the primordial mother goes a great deal deeper than feminist thought about social construction.²

Finally one may point to the characteristics of the feminist classroom itself. Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge, (1994), two disillusioned veterans of the feminist movement, in a devastating critique of Women’s Studies programs, observe:

Many feminist classrooms cultivate an insistence on “feeling,” which, on examination, turns out to be the traditional split between intellect and emotion recycled, with the former still assigned to men and the latter to women. (p. 3)

Compare this with Friedan’s description of the “home economics” classroom of the Fifties, in which the feminine mystique was pushed:

There is a pseudotherapeutic air, as the professor listens patiently to endless self-conscious student speeches about personal feelings (“verbalizing”) in the hopes of sparking a “group insight.” (pp. 169-70)

And it is worthwhile noting that Friedan’s objection to this:

But though the functional course is not group therapy, it is certainly an introduction of opinions and values through manipulation of the students' emotions; and in this manipulative disguise, it is no longer subject to the critical thinking demanded in other academic disciplines. (p. 17)

is paralleled precisely by Patai and Koertge's observation that:

In feminist pedagogy, the new valorization of women's modes of communication and interaction has led to the use of sentiment as a tool of coercion. (p. 3)

In this we can see the core of "political correctness," which is the way in which the primordial mother exerts her power, and toward which we will shortly our attention. For the time being, though, we do well to note that we have some unfinished business.

The Misery Of The Daughter

If this were a detective story, we could stop here. "The daughter did it," we could say, and that would be the end of the matter. But it is not a detective story. It is an attempt to understand human beings and therefore, it seems to me, it should not end until it ends with sympathy.

But how shall we find sympathy for the daughter? More precisely, and bringing this matter as close to home as I can manage, my question is how can *I* find sympathy for her? I find her narcissism, her self-righteousness, and her rage obnoxious. She claims standing as a victim of oppression, but she is a part of the most privileged large group of human beings the world has ever known. She condemns the selfishness of men, but what is there outside of herself that truly concerns her? As Simpson (1994) has argued, her supposed connectedness is not connection to anything real, not to other concrete human beings, but is abstract and empty. She is a fantasy to herself and she connects only to fantasy. Her grandiosity condemns all mortals and their works, but what basis of achievement does she stand on that entitles her to have such contempt for men? What good has she brought? What are the benefits that have come from the increase in her power?

Yet in this distressing picture there is a human being who can be engaged. I can engage with her in her misery, for she is a deeply, desperately unhappy person. I can see this in the very rage that is so repellant to me. For if it is disagreeable to me, I must have an idea how it feels to her. As with all rage, it destroys the inside as it tries to destroy the outside. And if she is deeply unconnected to others, imagine how lonely she is. If the correlate of her grandiosity has to be infinite and uncompromising love, imagine how bitterly she must feel the ineluctible indifference of the world.

Reflecting on this, it seems to me that, of the damaged creatures in the modern family, her wound is the most profound. It is the most profound because she must have the most difficult time healing it. To heal it, she will have to find common ground with mortal, limited, creatures, capable of sin -- creatures like me, for example. Yet she bears from her relationship with her mother the premise of being infinite and divine. If the son

has a hard time separating from this overwhelming mother, think how hard it has to be for her.

Yet she must separate, if her misery is not simply to get worse. She must realistically take the measure of her mother if she is going to come to a realistic appreciation of her father. And unless she can value the father and his work, she will not be able to learn what he has to teach, nor be able to emotionally engage herself in the work that she inherits from him. That work, then, will have to seem empty, sterile, and meaningless. Again, missing its meaning and unable to take her predecessor as a model, she is likely to fail at it, and not understand why she has failed. Her rage is likely only to increase.

I can have compassion for the difficulty of her journey, whether in any individual case she has begun it or not. She is, after all, my sister.

Conclusion

It is time to reiterate that the primordial mother is not a problem because she is a mother, but because she is primordial. She is a product of the psyche at a point before we have gained a firm sense of ourselves, and of the distinction between ourselves and what is not ourselves. Her power is based on our desire to deny the world outside ourselves, and what that world tells us about our own limitations. So it is with postmodernism, which tells us that reality is just one fantasy among others. The fact that they bear the same message is no coincidence.

Again, what we can catch in all of this is an image of larger, deeper forces at work, expressing themselves through this family. The operative force arises from a level of organizational and technological development, largely the result of the work of the organization man, that has rendered us powerful and wealthy beyond anything that our wisdom can direct. We have become so powerful that the very idea of limitation has seemed to lose its meaning; the idea that stupid behavior will have adverse consequences has lost the quality of being obvious³. We have become so wealthy that we seem to be able to buy ourselves out of any misfortune, and if we cannot, we feel justified in becoming indignant. So rich and powerful have we become that we can take our dreams and fantasies as the norms for our lives, seeing the reality that conflicts with these dreams as an offense and an insult.

It is critical to see, however, that this is an illusion. Reality has not disappeared. It is simply that we do not relate to it *mano-a-mano* as previous generations did. But the result is that we cannot take its measure directly. Reality has been displaced to a level where we must deal with it collectively and symbolically, relying on a collective, symbolic definition of our relationship to it.

The suburban housewife was, in an important sense, designated the role of inheriting the godlike wealth and power that this collective effort brought forth. And it was the sense of her omnipotence that went along with this that came increasingly to dominate our collective definition of ourselves and of our relationship to the world. In place of the continual development of a realistic sense of the self that contact with reality made both possible and necessary, a space was opened that could be filled by fantasy. Repudiating the father and his function established this fantasy as the norm.

But this norm was based on an illusion, and as such it constituted a deep psychological regression. This regression is what we see working through the culture in the guise of postmodernism and the primitive form of feminism that concerns us. The attack against the patriarch, then, represents and is driven by the rage that infantile narcissism holds for the existence of anything beyond itself.

We turn now to understand the danger of this regression in more detail, in terms of the ways it affects concrete social institutions. That will be our purpose in the next two chapters. There we will try to gain an understanding of the transformations undergone by two of our most important institutions for engaging external reality as they come under the rule of the primordial mother.

These institutions are our system of higher education, which has the function of engaging external reality by thought, and the military, which engages it by force. We will discuss the former in the context of political correctness, and the latter in terms of the issue of women in combat.

¹ Actually, as we saw in Chapter One, the real father has not sinned all that much. Our skeptic, here, is making a logical case, not an empirical one.

² An aspect of this is revealed by Patai and Koertge (1994), here quoting one of their sources:

It constantly happens in class that students argue for social constructionism on the one hand, but revert to essentialist ideas quite opportunistically. It's as if everything they dislike about "women" gets dismissed as social construction, while all the rest is the Real Thing.

And, by contrast,

As for men, most everything about them is not socially constructed, since that would, in some sense, let them off the hook, so men get heavy doses of essentialist attributes while the students imagine they're espousing a straight constructionist line of analysis. (p. 144)

³ In an interesting book that parallels much of what I have described here, Neil Lyndon (1992) discusses the role of the birth control pill and safe and reliable abortion in the evolution of feminism. His point is that they put women in an undefined situation for which they were unprepared. This accords with the theory of anomie I have employed here and, as an aspect of this, the separation of action from adverse consequences.