

# Self & SOCIETY LETTERS

*Letters for the next issue of S&S should be with the editor by May 21st. Ed.*

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Dear Editor

May I offer an addendum to Werner Kierski's excellent article Men and Fear of the Feminine in S&S 34(5)? I write as a firmly heterosexual male with a strong feminine centre. I experience jealousy of the femininity and sexuality of my female friends and I suspect so do many men, generally unconsciously, even the macho ones, or perhaps especially them. What have men got to be jealous about? Pretty obvious really, that, in general, compared to men:

- Women make deeper and longer lasting relationships, especially with other women. That they do so more spontaneously and quickly, with far less of an agenda than men do with other men, and especially with women.
- Women are more in touch with their feelings.
- They communicate their emotions fully, without the need to immediately fix their own feelings, or the feelings of others.
- Women, because they bleed, have cramps and mood swings, largely beyond their control, are far more in touch with their bodies and moods, and as a result have greater emotional strength and stability. In that, when it's appropriate to cry, or scream, they do so. Periods, and especially childbirth, also enables them to bear physical pain better than men, for whom a cold is flu, and aches require bed, hot soup and/or whisky, care and cuddles. Unless hurting, men are largely unaware that they are embodied; whereas women, for a good half of their lives, are lucky enough to have a monthly reminder. (When I say to my women friends 'never mind penis envy, I have vaginal and period envy' they reply that I must be joking! Even so, awareness of one's embodiment is psychologically healthy.)

All this comes about, I believe, because women have wombs and know they can bear children, even if they are not yet, or haven't been, mothers. For men the creation of another person is a nine second affair, not one of nine months. Plus that woman do or can suckle, giving of their substance, of their own bodies. All men can offer is strength and care of their child. Sadly, this bond is often not strong enough to prevent fathers abandoning their children, and even more sadly, being able to kill another man's son. Does this not largely explain the preponderance of male violence, physical,

emotional, and economic, towards each other, towards women, and towards nature and the environment?

The core of the male/female difference is summed up in this creation myth. After God had created Adam and Eve (at the same time, none of this Adam's rib nonsense), She (God) stood them before her. She told them that their bodies each lacked a final and different part and function. Reaching into her black bag, God said 'The first is the ability to pee standing up'. 'I'll have that! I'll have that!' shouted Adam pushing Eve aside. 'Just listen to the other option', says God. 'No! I'll have it!' shouts Adam. 'Very well says God, reaching forward and screwing Adam's equipment into place. She then reaches into her black bag again, and with a smile towards Eve says 'Well, all that leaves you with, Eve, is full body multiple orgasms.' No wonder that men are jealous of, and angry, towards women!

### **Tony Morris**

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Dear Editor

Tony Morris seems to present a reductionistic view of the complexities of some fundamental processes. I would like to respond to just one of the aspects he raises as in my view his description of the motivation of fathers are unlikely to be echoed by men who love and care for their children.

For example, research by Svend Aage Madsen at Copenhagen University into post-natal depression amongst fathers shows that fathers are as affected by post-natal depression as mothers.

My own research concluded that amongst the specific fears that men experience there is fear about not being able to look after those who depend on him and fear about letting others down.

I do however appreciate his personal views and experiences, because something that is being experienced on a personal level holds value.

Though my research focused on the male fear of the feminine I am aware that there are other similar phenomena that require investigation so that we can understand better the reality of gender identity without needing to resort to polarized beliefs.

This research will have to investigate the male fear of the masculine. It will also have to look into the female fear of the feminine and the female fear of the feminine. Results from these investigations should help us to understand, without prejudice, both the constraints and opportunities of gender roles.

### **Werner Kierski**