

PATRIARCHY IN THE CONSTELLATION FIELD

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Bert Hellinger once described what he did as “joining what has been separated.” While healing in the constellation field is one of joining disconnected parts, such as fractured relationships, victim-perpetrator dynamics, and ancestral entanglements, the constellation field is embedded in a world-wide patriarchal culture that constantly separates, operating on a binary of either-or that dismisses a spectrum of differences.

Patriarchy, a systemic dominance structure in most cultures in the world now, is based on division, employing hierarchical dualities such as mind-body, logic-emotions, reason-feeling, matter-spirit, science-art, science-religion, work-play, win-lose, reward-punishment, perpetrator-victim, white-black, modern-primitive, expert-layman, developed-undeveloped, to name a few. In each duality one is judged as better than the other.

The first, and most fundamental, division is that of sex, which operates in two ways: as a caste system where men are more privileged than women, and as a division of human traits into typically masculine (e.g. dominant, aggressive, hard, logical, rational, independent, insensitive, invulnerable, competitive) and feminine (e. g. submissive, passive, soft, emotional, intuitive, dependent, sensitive, vulnerable, cooperative) and where boys and men are conditioned to express and identify with the ‘masculine’ traits, and girls and women the ‘feminine’ ones. Furthermore, boys and men are conditioned into a negative identity of not being ‘feminine’, i.e. not being girls and women, and in opposition to girls and women. Marion Woodman, a Jungian psychologist, describes this as “the psychological rape of the feminine in boys.” This enforcement of ‘feminine’ qualities in women and ‘masculine’ qualities in men is maintained through shaming, or misogyny when applied to women. Notably, there is no equivalent ‘misandry’ to describe the shaming of men to keep them in their place. Shaming, humiliating, ridiculing, are some of the most powerful ways patriarchy maintains its dominance and excludes those who are ‘different.’

Bert himself revealed a patriarchal image in his oft-repeated statement, “The woman follows the man; the man serves the feminine.” In the matrilineal, non-patriarchal Minangkabau society in West Sumatra described by Peggy Reeves Sanday, it is the groom who follows his bride to her family home. It was in that society that Peggy, a U.S. citizen, felt safe for the first time in her life to walk by herself at night without the fear of being raped.

While Bert was diligent in honouring women and mothers, he liked to quote the Ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus as saying “War is the father of all.” Where is mother in creation? The history of patriarchy over the past five millennia or more is one of excluding the female principle. Mid-Eastern creation stories, which include the biblical Garden of Eden, from approximately five thousand years ago, spread from Mesopotamia and influenced Greek, Roman, Christian, and Norse mythologies, revealing the loss of the female role in creation, often signified as the Goddess, and the loss of collaboration of male and female energies in creation and society.

Creation myths indicate the structure of a culture. An example is the 'unisex' Balinese society with undifferentiated sex roles. The Balinese legend of the creation of human beings includes an original couple that produced a boy and a girl, and another couple that also produced a girl and a boy. The boy from the first couple married the girl from the second; the girl from the first couple married the boy from the second. Their descendants did the same to create the population of Bali.

Thomas King, a First Nations author, describes an Indigenous creation story in a Massey Lecture series entitled "The Truth About Stories" broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation in 2003. In this creation story the animals of the earth cooperate to create Turtle Island, also known as North America. Humans are not placed above the rest of creation. There is no dominance structure.

While many people, particularly women, are aware of the dominance structure of patriarchy, most men and women are unaware of how they unconsciously perpetuate patriarchal structures in family and organizational systems, unaware of the 'inner patriarch' supporting dominance dynamics. While patriarchy privileges men over women in so many areas of social and institutional lives, women can be as loyal to patriarchy as men and even be, to quote bell hooks, the cultural critic and feminist theorist, "patriarchal men in drag."

While the feminist movements over the past more than one hundred years have been very conscious of patriarchal dominance structures, one criticism of the more recent men's movements that encourage men to be more vulnerable and in touch with their emotions, is that they do not critique patriarchy nor hierarchical dualisms.

Many men are now conscious of the need to have a more egalitarian society, with women and men valued equally. Yet, a conscious intent does not necessarily eliminate patriarchal dominance attitudes that operate unconsciously.

I offer two examples of this unconscious contradiction from *The Ultimate Men's Summit*, an online gathering in 2011 of presenters seeking to support feminism in men, which revealed some of the unconscious rejections of that intent:

Terry Patten, while promoting the need of men to be vulnerable, more in touch with their emotions, and to become more collaborative like women, said, "We need to be able to go 'toe-to-toe' with the old, the guys who embody the old narcissistic egocentric modality. And we need to have just as much testosterone flowing through us, to have just the same level of balls, in fact, more. We need to be smarter and less wedded to our own impulses and therefore able to out-compete the old model." The old model being 'out-competing.' He then continues to reassert the old model: "Cooperation needs to out-compete competitiveness."

Lion Goodman, critiquing male stereotypes of the rugged, individualist, macho guy, corporate drone as being self-limiting and dangerous identities, told men joining his 'Ultimate Man' program that, though "you may not know it, you're a member of a new breed of human being: *Homo Novus*, or new man." While critiquing the danger of rigid identities, he immediately places men into a new box and, typically of a patriarchal stance, tells them who they are. *Ultimate Man* is

again a rigid dominance identity denying a spectrum of states and seduces followers with the prospect of some future utopian state, a fantasy frequently envisioned in dominance cultures that was criticized by John Mohawk in his book *Utopian Legacies*.

As facilitators, women, men, non-binaries, BIPOCs and whites, in the constellation field that promotes individual, family, and systemic healing, of “joining what has been separated,” in what way do we unconsciously perpetuate patriarchal dominance dynamics including sexism, racism, elitism, authoritarianism?

Jonathan Hooton, PhD, SEP I am the father of three daughters on a transgender journey embodying a feminine expression. These experiences, together with being raised as a child in the British colonies and indoctrinated violently into patriarchal attitudes in British boarding schools, have energized my exploration of the impact of patriarchy on enforcing gender stereotypes and the illusion of female inferiority that still pervades ‘developed’ western cultures despite women now having more financial independence, career opportunities, public self-expression, and control of their bodies and sexual expression than previously. I have long been interested in the origins and effects of patriarchy on relationships, social and institutional structures, imperial and colonizing dynamics, and the formation of caste systems including slavery, apartheid, and the Nazi genocide of Jews, to name a few.

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