

Horney, K. (1926). The Flight from Womanhood: The Masculinity-Complex in Women, as Viewed by Men and by Women. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 7:324-339

**The Flight from Womanhood: The Masculinity-Complex in Women, as Viewed by
Men and by Women**

Karen Horney¹

In some of his latest works Freud has drawn attention with increasing urgency to a certain one-sidedness in our analytical researches. I refer to the fact that till quite recently the mind of boys and men only was taken as the object of investigation.

The reason of this is obvious. Psycho-analysis is the creation of a male genius, and almost all those who have developed his ideas have been men. It is only right and reasonable that they should evolve more easily a masculine psychology and understand more of the development of men than of women.

A momentous step towards the understanding of the specifically feminine was made by Freud himself in discovering the existence of penis-envy, and soon after the work of van Ophuijsen and Abraham shewed how large a part this factor plays in the development of women and in the formation of their neuroses. The significance of penis envy has been extended quite recently by the hypothesis of the 'phallic phase'. By this we mean that in the infantile genital organization in both sexes only one genital organ, namely the male, plays any part, and that it is just this which distinguishes the infantile organization from the final genital organization of the adult.[1] According to this theory, the clitoris is conceived of as a phallus, and we assume that little girls as well as boys attach to the clitoris in the first instance exactly the same value as to the penis. [2]

The effect of this phase is partly to inhibit and partly to promote the subsequent development. Helene Deutsch has demonstrated principally the inhibiting effects. She is of opinion that, at the beginning of every new sexual function (e.g. at the beginning of puberty, of sexual intercourse, of pregnancy and child-birth), this phase is re-activated and has to be overcome every time before a

1 Freud: 'The Infantile Genital Organization of the Libido'. *Collected Papers*, Vol. II, No. XX.

2 H. Deutsch: *Psychoanalyse der weiblichen Sexualfunktionen*, 1925.

feminine attitude can be attained. Freud has elaborated her exposition on the positive side, for he believes that it is only penis-envy and the overcoming of it which gives rise to the desire for a child and thus forms the love-bond to the father. [3]

The question now arises whether these hypotheses have helped to make our insight into feminine development (insight which Freud himself has stated to be unsatisfactory and incomplete) more satisfactory and clearer.

Science has often found it fruitful to look at long familiar facts from a fresh point of view. Otherwise there is a danger that we shall involuntarily continue to classify all new observations amongst the same clearly defined groups of ideas.

The new point of view of which I wish to speak came to me by way of philosophy, in some essays by Georg Simmel.[4] The point which Simmel makes there and which has been in many ways elaborated since, especially from the feminine side, [5] is this: Our whole civilization is a masculine civilization. The State, the laws, morality, religion and the sciences are the creation of men. Simmel by no means deduces from these facts, as is commonly done by other writers, an inferiority in women, but he first of all gives considerable breadth and depth to this conception of a masculine civilization: 'The requirements of art, patriotism, morality in general and social ideas in particular, correctness in practical judgement and objectivity in theoretical knowledge, the energy and the profundity of life—all these are categories which belong as it were in their form and their claims to humanity in general, but in their actual historical configuration they are masculine throughout. Supposing that we describe these things, viewed as absolute ideas, by the single word "objective", we then find that in the history of our race the equation objective = masculine is a valid one.'

Now Simmel thinks that the reason why it is so difficult to recognize these historical facts is that the very standards by which mankind has estimated the values of male and female nature are 'not neutral, arising out of the difference of the sexes, but in themselves essentially

3 Freud: 'Einige psychische Folgen der anatomischen Geschlechtsunterschiede'. *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*, Bd. XI, 1925.

4 Georg Simmel: *Philosophische Kultur*.

5 Cf. in particular Vaerting: *Männliche Eigenart im Frauenstaat und Weibliche Eigenart im Männerstaat*.

masculine.' 'We do not believe in a purely "human" civilization, into which the question of sex does not enter, for the very reason that prevents any such civilization from in fact existing, namely, the (so to speak) naïve identification of the concept "human being" [6] and the concept "man", [7] which in many languages even causes the same word to be used for the two concepts. For the moment I will leave it undetermined whether this masculine character of the fundamentals of our civilization has its origin in the essential nature of the sexes or only in a certain preponderance of force in men, which is not really bound up with the question of civilization. In any case this is the reason why in the most varying fields inadequate achievements are contemptuously called "feminine", while distinguished achievements on the part of women are called "masculine" as an expression of praise.'

Like all sciences and all valuations, the psychology of women has hitherto been considered only from the point of view of men. It is inevitable that the man's position of advantage should cause objective validity to be attributed to his subjective, affective relations to the woman, and according to Delius [8] the psychology of women hitherto does actually represent a deposit of the desires and disappointments of men.

An additional and very important factor in the situation is that women have adapted themselves to the wishes of men and felt as if their adaptation were their true nature. That is, they see or saw themselves in the way that their men's wishes demanded of them; unconsciously they yielded to the suggestion of masculine thought.

If we are clear about the extent to which all our being, thinking and doing conform to these masculine standards, we can see how difficult it is for the individual man and also for the individual woman really to shake off this mode of thought.

The question then is how far analytical psychology also, when its researches have women for their object, is under the spell of this way of thinking, in so far as it has not yet wholly left behind the stage in which frankly and as a matter of course masculine development only was considered. In other words, how far has the evolution of women, as depicted to us to-day by analysis, been measured by masculine

6 German *Mensch*.

7 German *Mann*.

8 Delius: *Vom Erwachen der Frau*.

standards and how far therefore does this picture not fail to present quite accurately the real nature of women.

If we look at the matter from this point of view our first impression is a surprising one. The present analytical picture of feminine development (whether that picture be correct or not) differs in no case by a hair's breadth from the typical ideas which the boy has of the girl.

We are familiar with the ideas which the boy entertains. I will therefore only sketch them in a few succinct phrases, and for the sake of comparison will place in a parallel column our ideas of the development of women.

The Boy's Ideas:

Naïve assumption that girls as well as boys possess a penis.

Our Ideas of Feminine Development:

For both sexes it is only the male genital which plays any part.

The Boy's Ideas:

Realization of the absence of the penis.

Our Ideas of Feminine Development:

Sad discovery of the absence of the penis.

The Boy's Ideas:

Idea that the girl is a castrated, mutilated boy.

Our Ideas of Feminine Development:

Belief of the girl that she once possessed a penis and lost it by castration.

The Boy's Ideas:

Belief that the girl has suffered punishment which also threatens him.

Our Ideas of Feminine Development:

Castration is conceived of as the infliction of punishment.

The Boy's Ideas:

The girl is regarded as inferior.

Our Ideas of Feminine Development:

The girl regards herself as inferior. Penis-envy.

The Boy's Ideas:

The boy is unable to imagine how the girl can ever get over this loss or envy.

Our Ideas of Feminine Development:

The girl never gets over the sense of deficiency and inferiority and has constantly to master afresh her desire to be a man.

The Boy's Ideas:

The boy dreads her envy.

Our Ideas of Feminine Development:

The girl desires throughout life to avenge herself on the man for possessing something which she lacks.

The existence of this over-exact agreement is certainly no criterion of its objective correctness. It is quite possible that the infantile genital organization of the little girl might bear as striking a resemblance to that of the boy as has up till now been assumed. But it is surely calculated to make us think and take other possibilities into consideration. For instance, we might follow Georg

Simmel's train of thought and reflect whether it is likely that female adaptation to the male structure should take place at so early a period and in so high a degree that the specific nature of a little girl is overwhelmed by it. Later I will return for a moment to the point that it does actually seem to me probable that this infection with a masculine point of view occurs in childhood. But it does not seem to me clear off-hand how everything bestowed by nature could be thus absorbed into it and leave no trace. And so we must return to the question I have already raised: whether the remarkable parallelism which I have indicated may not perhaps be the expression of a one-sidedness in our observations, due to their being made from the man's point of view.

Such a suggestion immediately encounters an inner protest, for we remind ourselves of the sure ground of experience upon which analytical research has always been founded. But at the same time our theoretical scientific knowledge tells us that this ground is not altogether trustworthy, but that all experience by its very nature contains a subjective factor. Thus, even our analytical experience is derived from direct observation of the material which our patients bring to analysis in free associations, dreams and symptoms and from the interpretations which we make or the conclusions which we draw from this material. Therefore, even when the technique is correctly applied, there is in theory the possibility of variations in this experience.

Now, if we try to free our minds from this masculine mode of thought, nearly all the problems of feminine psychology take on a different appearance.

The first thing that strikes us is that it is always, or principally, the genital difference between the sexes which has been made the cardinal point in the analytical conception and that we have left out of consideration the other great biological difference, namely, the different parts played by men and by women in the function of reproduction.

The influence of the man's point of view in the conception of motherhood is most clearly revealed in Ferenczi's extremely brilliant genital theory [9] His view is that the real incitement to coitus, its true, ultimate meaning for both sexes, is to be sought in the desire to return to the mother's womb. During a period of contest man acquired the privilege of really penetrating once more, by means of his genital organ, into a uterus. The woman, who was formerly in the subordinate

9 Ferenczi, *Versuch einer Genitaltheorie*, 1924.

position, was obliged to adapt her organization to this organic situation and was provided with certain compensations. She had to 'content herself' with substitutes of the nature of phantasy and above all with harbouring the child, whose bliss she shares. At the most, it is only in the act of birth that she perhaps has potentialities of pleasure which are denied to the man. [10]

According to this view the psychic situation of a woman would certainly not be a very pleasurable one. She lacks any real primal impulse to coitus, or at least she is debarred from all direct—even if only partial—fulfilment. If this is so, the impulse towards coitus and pleasure in it must undoubtedly be less for her than for the man. For it is only indirectly, by circuitous ways, that she attains to a certain fulfilment of the primal longing—i.e. partly by the roundabout way of masochistic conversion and partly by identification with the child which she may conceive. These, however, are merely 'compensatory devices'. The only thing in which she ultimately has the advantage over the man is the, surely very questionable, pleasure in the act of birth.

At this point I, as a woman, ask in amazement, and what about motherhood? And the blissful consciousness of bearing a new life within oneself? And the ineffable happiness of the increasing expectation of the appearance of this new being? And the joy when it finally makes its appearance and one holds it for the first time in one's arms? And the deep pleasurable feeling of satisfaction in suckling it and the happiness of the whole period when the infant needs her care?

Ferenczi has expressed the opinion in conversation that in that primal period of conflict which ended so grievously for the female, the male as victor imposed upon her the burden of motherhood and all that it involves.

Certainly, regarded from the standpoint of the social struggle, motherhood *may* be a handicap. It is certainly so at the present time, but it is much less certain that it was so in times when human beings were closer to nature.

Moreover, we explain penis-envy itself by its biological relations and not by social factors; on the contrary, we are accustomed without more ado to construe the woman's sense of being at a disadvantage socially as the rationalization of her penis-envy.

10 Cf. also Helene Deutsch, *Psychoanalyse der Weiblichen Sexualfunktionem*, and Groddeck, *Das Buch vom Es*.

But from the biological point of view woman has in motherhood, or in the capacity for motherhood, a quite indisputable and by no means negligible physiological superiority. This is most clearly reflected in the unconscious of the male psyche in the boy's intense envy of motherhood. We are familiar with this envy as such, but it has hardly received due consideration as a dynamic factor. When one begins, as I did, to analyse men only after a fairly long experience of analysing women, one receives a most surprising impression of the intensity of this envy of pregnancy, child-birth and motherhood, as well as of the breasts and of the act of suckling.

In the light of this impression derived from analysis one must naturally enquire whether an unconscious masculine tendency to depreciation is not expressing itself intellectually in the abovementioned view of motherhood? This depreciation would run as follows: In reality women do simply desire the penis; when all is said and done motherhood is only a burden which makes the struggle for existence harder, and men may be glad that they have not to bear it.

When Helene Deutsch writes that the masculinity-complex in women plays a much greater part than the femininity-complex in man, she would seem to overlook the fact that the masculine envy is clearly capable of more successful sublimation than the penis-envy of the girl, and that it certainly serves as one, if not as the essential, driving force in the setting-up of cultural values.

Language itself points to this origin of cultural productivity. In the historic times which are known to us this productivity has undoubtedly been incomparably greater in men than in women. Is not the tremendous strength in men of the impulse to creative work in every field precisely due to their feeling of playing a relatively small part in the creation of living beings, which constantly impels them to an over-compensation in achievement?

If we are right in making this connection we are confronted with the problem why no corresponding impulse to compensate herself for her penis-envy is found in woman? There are two possibilities; either the envy of the woman is absolutely less than that of the man or it is less successfully worked off in some other way. We could bring forward facts in support of either supposition.

In favour of the greater intensity of the man's envy we might point out that an actual anatomical disadvantage on the side of the woman exists only from the point of view of the pregenital levels of organization. [11] From

11 S. Horney, 'On the Genesis of the Castration-complex in Women', INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PSYCHO-ANALYSIS, Vol. V, 1924.

that of the genital organization of adult women there is no disadvantage, for obviously the capacity of women for coitus is not less but simply other than that of men. On the other hand, the part of the man in reproduction is ultimately less than that of the woman. Further, we observe that men are evidently under a greater necessity to depreciate women than conversely. The realization that the dogma of the inferiority of women had its origin in an unconscious male tendency could only dawn upon us after a doubt had arisen whether in fact this view were justified in reality. But if there actually are in men tendencies to depreciate women behind this conviction of feminine inferiority, we must infer that this unconscious impulse to depreciation is a very powerful one.

Further, there is much to be said in favour of the view that women work off their penis-envy less successfully than men from a cultural point of view. We know that in the most favourable case this envy is transmuted into the desire for a husband and child, and probably by this very transmutation it forfeits the greater part of its power as an incentive to sublimation. In unfavourable cases, however, as I shall presently shew in greater detail, it is burdened with a sense of guilt instead of being able to be employed fruitfully, whilst the man's incapacity for motherhood is probably felt simply as an inferiority and can develop its full driving power without inhibition.

In this discussion I have already touched on a problem which Freud has recently brought into the foreground of interest: [12] namely, the question of the origin and operation of the desire for a child. In the course of the last decade our attitude towards this problem has changed. I may therefore be permitted to describe briefly the beginning and the end of this historical evolution.

The original hypothesis [13] was that penis-envy gave a libidinal reinforcement both to the wish for a child and the wish for the man, but that the latter wish arose independently of the former. Subsequently the accent became more and more displaced on to the penis-envy, till in his most recent work on this problem Freud expressed the

12 Freud: 'ber einige psychische Folgen der anatomischen Geschlechtsunterschiede'.

13 Freud: 'On the Transformation of Instincts with special reference to Anal Erotism'. *Collected Papers*, Vol. II, No. XVI.

conjecture that the wish for the child arose only through penis-envy and the disappointment over the lack of the penis in general, and that the tender attachment to the father came into existence only by this circuitous route—by way of the desire for the penis and the desire for the child.

This latter hypothesis obviously originated in the need to explain psychologically the biological principle of heterosexual attraction. This corresponds to the problem formulated by Groddeck, who says that it is natural that the boy should retain the mother as a love-object, 'but how is it that the little girl becomes attached to the opposite sex?' [14]

In order to approach this problem we must first of all realize that our empirical material with regard to the masculinity-complex in women is derived from two sources of very different importance. The first is the direct observation of children, in which the subjective factor plays a relatively insignificant part. Every little girl who has not been intimidated displays penis-envy frankly and without embarrassment. We see that the presence of this envy is typical and understand quite well why this is so; we understand how the narcissistic mortification of possessing less than the boy is reinforced by a series of disadvantages arising out of the different pregenital cathexes: the manifest privileges of the boy in connection with urethral erotism, the scopophilic instinct, and onanism.[15]

I should like to suggest that we should apply the term *primary* to the little girl's penis-envy which is obviously based simply on the anatomical difference.

The second source upon which our experience draws is to be found in the analytical material produced by adult women. Naturally it is more difficult to form a judgement on this, and there is therefore more scope for the subjective element. We see here in the first instance that penis-envy operates as a factor of enormous dynamic power. We see patients rejecting their female functions, their unconscious motive in so doing being the desire to be male. We meet with phantasies of which the content is: 'I once had a penis; I am a man who has been castrated and mutilated', from which proceed feelings of inferiority and which have for after-effect all manner of obstinate hypochondriacal

14 Groddeck: *Das Buch vom Es*.

15 I have dealt with this subject in greater detail in my paper 'On the Genesis of the Castration-complex in Women'.

ideas. We see a marked attitude of hostility towards men, sometimes taking the form of depreciation and sometimes of a desire to castrate or maim them, and we see how the whole destinies of certain women are determined by this factor.

It was natural to conclude—and especially natural because of the male orientation of our thinking—that we could link these impressions on to the primary penis-envy and to reason *a posteriori* that this envy must possess an enormous intensity, an enormous dynamic power, seeing that it evidently gave rise to such effects. Here we overlooked the fact, more in our general estimation of the situation than in details, that this desire to be a man, so familiar to us from the analyses of adult women, had only very little to do with that early, infantile, primary penis-envy, but that it is a secondary formation embodying all that has miscarried in the development towards womanhood.

From beginning to end my experience has proved to me with unchanging clearness that the Oedipus complex in women leads (not only in extreme cases where the subject has come to grief, but *regularly*) to a regression to penis-envy, naturally in every possible degree and shade. The difference between the outcome of the male and the female Oedipus complexes seems to me in average cases to be as follows. In boys the mother as a sexual object is renounced owing to the fear of castration, but the male rôle itself is not only affirmed in further development but is actually over-emphasized in the reaction to the fear of castration. We see this clearly in the latency and prepubertal period in boys and generally in later life as well. Girls, on the other hand, not only renounce the father as a sexual object but simultaneously recoil from the feminine rôle altogether. In order to understand this flight from womanhood we must consider the facts relating to early infantile onanism, which is the physical expression of the excitations due to the Oedipus complex.

Here again the situation is much clearer in boys, or perhaps we simply know more about it. Are these facts so mysterious to us in girls only because we have always looked at them through the eyes of men? It seems rather like it when we do not even concede to little girls a specific form of onanism but without more ado describe their autoerotic activities as male; and when we conceive of the difference, which surely must exist, as being that of a negative to a positive, i.e. in the case of anxiety about onanism, that the difference is that between a castration threatened and castration that has actually taken place! My analytical experience makes it most decidedly

possible that little girls have a specific feminine form of onanism (which incidentally differs in technique from that of boys), even if we assume that the little girl practises exclusively clitoral masturbation, an assumption which seems to me by no means certain. And I do not see why, in spite of its past evolution, it should not be conceded that the clitoris legitimately belongs to and forms an integral part of the female genital apparatus.

Whether in the early phase of the girl's genital development she has organic vaginal sensations is a matter remarkably difficult to determine from the analytical material produced by adult women. In a whole series of cases I have been inclined to conclude that this is so and later I shall quote the material upon which I base this conclusion. That such sensations should occur seems to me theoretically very probable for the following reasons. Undoubtedly the familiar phantasies that an excessively large penis is effecting forcible penetration, producing pain and hæmorrhage and threatening to destroy something, go to shew that the little girl bases her Oedipus phantasies most realistically (in accordance with the plastic concrete thinking of childhood) on the disproportion in size between father and child. I think too that both the Oedipus phantasies and also the logically ensuing dread of an internal, i.e. vaginal injury go to show that the vagina as well as the clitoris must be assumed to play a part in the early infantile genital organization of women.[16] One might even infer from the later phenomena of frigidity that the vaginal zone has actually a stronger cathexis (arising out of anxiety and attempts at defence) than the clitoris, and this because the incestuous wishes are referred to the vagina with the unerring accuracy of the unconscious. From this point of view frigidity must be regarded as an attempt to ward off the phantasies so full of danger to the ego. And this would also throw a new light on the unconscious pleasurable feelings which, as various authors have maintained, occur at parturition or, alternatively, on the dread of childbirth. For (just because of the disproportion between the vagina and the baby and because of the pain to which this gives rise) parturition would be calculated to a far greater extent than subsequent sexual intercourse to stand to the unconscious for a realization

16 Since the possibility of such a connection occurred to me I have learnt to construe in this sense, i.e. as representing the dread of vaginal injury, many phenomena which I was previously content to interpret as castration-phantasies in the male sense.

of those early incest-phantasies, a realization to which no guilt is attached. The female genital anxiety, like the castration-dread of boys, invariably bears the impress of feelings of guilt and it is to them that it owes its lasting influence.

A further factor in the situation, and one which works in the same direction, is a certain consequence of the anatomical difference between the sexes. I mean that the boy can inspect his genital to see whether the dreaded consequences of onanism are taking place; the girl, on the other hand, is literally in the dark on this point and remains in complete uncertainty. Naturally this possibility of a reality-test does not weight with boys in cases where the castration-anxiety is acute, but in the slighter cases of fear, which are practically more important because they are more frequent, I think that this difference is very important. At any rate the analytical material which has come to light in women whom I have analysed has led me to conclude that this factor plays a considerable part in feminine mental life and that it contributes to the peculiar inner uncertainty so often met with in women.

Under the pressure of this anxiety the girl now takes refuge in a fictitious male rôle. What is the economic gain of this flight? Here I would refer to an experience which probably all analysts have had: they find that the desire to be a man is generally admitted comparatively willingly and that, when once it is accepted, it is clung to tenaciously, the reason being the desire to avoid the realization of libidinal wishes and phantasies in connection with the father. Thus the wish to be a man subserves the repression of these feminine wishes or the resistance against their being brought to light. This constantly recurring, typical experience compels us, if we are true to analytical principles, to conclude that the phantasies of being a man were at an earlier period devised for the very purpose of securing the subject against libidinal wishes in connection with the father. The fiction of maleness enabled the girl to escape from the female rôle now burdened with guilt and anxiety. It is true that this attempt to deviate from her own line to that of the male inevitably brings about a sense of inferiority, for the girl begins to measure herself by pretensions and values which are foreign to her specific biological nature and confronted with which she cannot but feel herself inadequate.

Although this sense of inferiority is very tormenting, analytical experience emphatically shews us that the ego can tolerate it more

easily than the sense of guilt associated with the feminine attitude, and hence it is undoubtedly a gain for the ego when the girl flees from the Scylla of the sense of guilt to the Charybdis of the sense of inferiority.

For the sake of completeness I will add a reference to the other gain which, as we know, accrues to women from the process of identification with the father which takes place at the same time. I know of nothing with reference to the importance of this process itself to add to what I have already said in my earlier work.

We know that this very process of identification with the father is one answer to the question why the flight from feminine wishes in regard to the father always leads to the adoption of a masculine attitude. Some reflections connected with what has already been said reveals another point of view which throws some light on this question.

We know that, whenever the libido encounters a barrier in its development, an earlier phase of organization is regressively activated. Now according to Freud's latest work penis-envy forms the preliminary stage to the true object-love for the father. And so this train of thought suggested by Freud helps us to some comprehension of the inner necessity by which the libido flows back precisely to this preliminary stage whenever and in so far as it is driven back by the incest-barrier.

I agree in principle with Freud's notion that the girl develops towards object-love by way of penis-envy, but I think that the nature of this evolution might also be pictured differently.

For when we see how large a part of its strength accrues to primary penis-envy only by retrogression from the Oedipus complex, we must resist the temptation to interpret in the light of penis-envy the manifestations of so elementary a principle of nature as that of the mutual attraction of the sexes.

Whereupon, being confronted with the question how we should conceive psychologically of this primal, biological principle, we should again have to confess ignorance. Indeed, in this respect the conjecture forces itself more and more strongly upon me that perhaps the causal connection may be the exact converse and that it is just the attraction to the opposite sex, operating from a very early period, which draws the libidinal interest of the little girl to the penis. This interest, in accordance with the level of development reached, acts at first in an auto-erotic and narcissistic manner, as I have described before. If we view these relations thus, fresh problems would logically present

themselves with regard to the origin of the male Oedipus complex, but I wish to postpone these for a later paper. But, if penis-envy were the first expression of that mysterious attraction of the sexes, there would be nothing to wonder at either when analysis discloses its existence in a yet deeper layer than that in which the desire for a child and the tender attachment to the father occur. The way to this tender attitude towards the father would be prepared not simply by disappointment in regard to the penis but in another way as well. We should then instead have to conceive of the libidinal interest in the penis as a kind of 'partial love', to use Abraham's term. [17] Such love, he says, always forms a preliminary stage to true object-love. We might explain the process too by an analogy from later life: I refer to the fact that admiring envy is specially calculated to lead to an attitude of love.

With regard to the extraordinary ease with which this regression takes place I must mention the analytical discovery [18] that in the associations of female patients the narcissistic desire to possess the penis and the object-libidinal longing for it are often so interwoven that one hesitates as to the sense in which the words 'desire for it' [19] are meant.

One word more about the castration-phantasies proper, which have given their name to the whole complex because they are the most striking part of it. According to my theory of feminine development I am obliged to regard these phantasies also as a secondary formation. I picture their origin as follows: when the woman takes refuge in the fictitious male rôle her feminine genital anxiety is to some extent translated into male terms—the fear of vaginal injury becomes a phantasy of castration. The girl gains by this conversion, for she exchanges the uncertainty of her expectation of punishment (an uncertainty conditioned by her anatomical formation) for a concrete idea. Moreover, the castration-phantasy too is under the shadow of the old sense of guilt—and the penis is desired as a proof of guiltlessness.

Now these typical motives for flight into the male rôle—motives whose origin is the Oedipus complex—are reinforced and supported by the actual disadvantage under which women labour in social life. Of

17 Abraham: *Versuch einer Entwicklungsgeschichte der Libido*, 1924.

18 Freud referred to this in *The Taboo of Virginity*.

19 German: *Haben-Wollen*.

course we must recognize that the desire to be a man, when it springs from this last source, is a peculiarly suitable form of rationalization of those unconscious motives. But we must not forget that this disadvantage is actually a piece of reality and that it is immensely greater than most women are aware of.

Georg Simmel says in this connection that 'the greater importance attaching to the male sociologically is probably due to his position of superior strength', and that historically the relation of the sexes may be crudely described as that of master and slave. Here, as always, it is 'one of the privileges of the master that he has not constantly to think that he is master, whilst the position of the slave is such that he can never forget it'.

Here we probably have the explanation also of the under-estimation of this factor in analytical literature. In actual fact a girl is exposed from birth onwards to the suggestion—inevitable, whether conveyed brutally or delicately—of her inferiority, an experience which must constantly stimulate her masculinity complex.

There is one further consideration. Owing to the hitherto purely masculine character of our civilization it has been much harder for women to achieve any sublimation which should really satisfy their nature, for all the ordinary professions have been filled by men. This again must have exercised an influence upon women's feelings of inferiority, for naturally they could not accomplish the same as men in these masculine professions and so it appeared that there was a basis in fact for their inferiority. It seems to me impossible to judge to how great a degree the unconscious motives for the flight from womanhood are reinforced by the actual social subordination of women. One might conceive of the connection as an interaction of psychic and social factors. But I can only indicate these problems here, for they are so grave and so important that they require a separate investigation.

The same factors must have quite a different effect on the man's development. On the one hand they lead to a much stronger repression of his feminine wishes, in that these bear the stigma of inferiority; on the other hand it is far easier for him successfully to sublimate them.

In the foregoing discussion I have put a construction upon certain problems of feminine psychology which in many points differs from the views hitherto current. It is possible and even probable that the picture I have drawn is one-sided from the opposite point of view. But my primary intention in this paper was to indicate a possible source of error arising out of the sex of the observer, and by so doing

to make a step forward towards the goal which we are all striving to reach: to get beyond the subjectivity of the masculine or the feminine standpoint and to obtain a picture of the mental development of woman which shall be truer to the facts of her nature—with its specific qualities and its differences from that of man—than any we have hitherto achieved.

ⁱ (1926). *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, IJP, 7:324-339