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The Origins of Fatherhood: An Ancient Family Process.

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Despite appearances to the contrary (fostered by anthropocentric nursery stories), a distinct role for male parents does not exist in nature. Fatherhood was invented by humans during the agricultural revolution about six thousand years ago. Symbolized by the new god-king, it incorporated the mother's originally superior role in primate families—the control or ownership of children. The male deity could even make his own offspring without female help. This inflated political figure was designed to compensate for the male's modest role in procreation, once the facts of life were known. Patriarchy was born out of an envious attack on mothers.

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Before there were humans, there were no fathers. This statement may cause surprise, as it seems quite obvious to the casual observer of animals that some of them organize their lives in a familiar way, with two parents and a number of offspring. From childhood stories such as the three bears, we have taken for granted the family of father, mother, and baby, related to each other just as humans are (61). Study of the present-day apes, from whose ancestors we are also descended, suggests that this is little more than a romantic fantasy. Male apes do not rule families. Human fathers, in contrast, have claimed superior authority over their offspring, putting mothers in second place. Fatherhood is a human social invention and patriarchy, the rule of the father, is a fundamental condition of history and of our ideas of power, authority, and of civilization itself. Drawing on the work of a variety of scholars, this essay traces a likely tale of the evolution of the father as the dominant parent. Anthropologists are nowadays wary of such reconstructions (42), but therapists, ancient or modern, cannot do without stories. To start with, the apes.

The Performing Male and His Protection Racket

In some species the males are not involved with their offspring at all. Jane Goodall's (23) direct observations of chimpanzees, our closest relatives, are well known:

> A Chimpanzee family consists of only a mother and her children. After the mating, the father has no further part in the child's development. Indeed, neither we [the observers] nor the chimpanzees normally have any idea who the father is. This is one of the major differences between human and chimpanzee societies. [p. 76]

Goodall noted that the males were only interested in females when they were in heat, while the rest of the time they traveled around, feeding and grooming, with other males. Even when coitus is possible, male chimpanzees and gorillas are remarkably casual about it, and do not compete with others for sex. They are much more interested in each other, and are rivalrous for status, particularly as defenders[1] of the band, with noisy theatrical performances—"Charging, throwing objects, and pounding the ground (or, among gorillas, the chest)" (52, p. 167).

A more distantly related species are the gibbons, who live a rather exclusive family life in the trees. The male and female form a pair and jointly look after their offspring. The gibbon organization is similar to some species of birds, where both parents work together. If one can distinguish the male from the female it is tempting to say, "Look there's the father, and there's the mother!" But this is an anthropocentric error because their roles in relation to the infant are not at all distinct. What they are doing is parenting, and the major share of this task is usually performed by the female. A unique exception to this among primates are the marmosets, who usually have twins. In this tiny monkey, the male parent takes, on the average, more than half of the share of infant care except during feeding, and in captivity has been observed to be the preferred parent when the infant is frightened (70).

Now this is a male taking over a maternal or, more properly, a *primary parental* function, but is it fatherhood? That is to say, is it a different kind of parenting? Animals that join together as mates for long periods of their lives, such as most birds and some primates, may appear to share parental tasks but do not distinguish a *separate* paternal one. There is a great deal of evidence to show that, among many primate species, male parents, especially those who are monogamous, behave with their offspring in ways that are remarkably similar to the females (60, 68).

In spite of that, some biologists say that this is neither mothering nor fathering, that it does not count as parenting behavior at all since *it is not necessary for the infant's survival.* Observers of gorillas and baboons, for example, have noted how males get attached to their own offspring, and will carry them around on occasions. But it turns out that, when carrying a little infant, an adult male is less likely to be attacked by other adult males. This is known as buffering (72, p.

352). The adult is protecting himself, not the infant. Further observation suggests that these primate males will also use their attachment to an infant to keep tabs on its female parent. Again, what seems to the casual observer like parenting is actually something else. Males thus attached to infants are also much less likely to kill them. While the infant may benefit, the male's contact with it is often for his own use: "Physical contact with an infant is a way for a male to change his own emotional state" (66, p. 168).

Even if he does not have an obvious biological role after conception, the male parent may play a part in the social development of adolescents in some primates. Whether or not they are parents, the more subtle influence of males on the young probably becomes more important in higher species such as gorilla (72), chimpanzee (8), and human (1). This is where the biological and the social overlap, and suggests a possible "natural" role for fathers. But outside the human species, the role of father as the dominant parent is virtually unknown.

Lizards and Honey

In primate family life, then, the male has a less important role than the female. The powerful male can lord it over his female, or over other males (15), but, while the parenting task is often shared, he does not take a position *in relation to the offspring* that is superior to the female's. This is also true in typical human hunter-gathering societies (31, 39). Indeed, many modern scholars (3, 52, 65, 67, 73) suggest that the first human females, who lived in nomadic bands, could probably manage to get all they needed without male help, even when carrying a child within them or in their arms. In the beginning, the life of humans was little different from that of the apes. These people lived mainly on food that they could pick up easily, such as fruits, roots, fungi, small reptiles, eggs, honey, and insects, and they did not depend on a diet of meat, nor on males to catch it. The presence of an adult male, preferably friendly (67), could be an advantage, but it was not absolutely necessary for the survival of females and infants. Also, as in the apes, it was up to the female with child to choose a male partner, if she had one at all, regardless of the infant's actual paternity (73, p. 65). The familiar picture of the hairy hunting man returning exhausted with a dead animal to feed his hungry family will have occurred often enough, but his provisions were a bonus, not a necessity. It is quite possible that he would in any case have shared these with his mother and siblings and not with his sexual partner (65, p. 45). "Man the hunter" has for centuries been the unquestioned starting point of human evolution, but an interesting reinterpretation of some cave paintings depicting hunting scenes suggests they are nothing of the sort. What appear to be badly drawn, or badly aimed, spears are more likely to be plants (69)!

Biological Changes

Like the apes, the first humans spaced their offspring further apart (4 to 5 years), by prolonged breast feeding, so the burden of care was not as great as nowadays, and older children would learn from an early age to share parental tasks (45). But there were changes, bringing men closer to their mates. When the female ape is not in estrus she infrequently accepts males interested in sex. Women do not have this rhythm, and can get pregnant at almost any time. This is one of the biological conditions for the development of kinship and for the human being's increasing interest in sex (73, p. 56), and is also the source of much learned speculation (see 13, Chapter 3). The evolutionary advantage of abandoning estrus is not clear. The ethological view is that, without estrus, the female is attractive to all males all the time: "If a male cannot tell when a female ovulates, he must tend her more or less continuously to be sure he sires her offspring" (32, p. 250). This restricts but does not rule out mating with other females. Males can produce more offspring than females if given the chance, and, as Noske (55) bluntly puts it, "evolution...favoured those males who desert their mates for others" (p. 108). The evolutionary compromise is the one we are familiar with today, in which both fidelity and infidelity are expected. But the bond thus created is not analogous with the pairings between many species of birds and mammals, which so inspire our children's stories. Unlike the isolated bird or ape couples, these human pairs are maintained in relatively crowded groups, where infidelity is easy, and there is more tension in the relationship.

There were other biological changes. Human mothers were more handicapped than their simian predecessors. With less hair to hold onto, the little one had to be held in one arm, whereas apes with infants can have both hands free. The larger head of the human baby required a wider pelvis to deliver it, and this change in anatomy limits the speed at which females can run. Finally, in the male, the human penis is larger and more visible than that of other primates, a sensitive dimension in the history of mankind.

Paleolithic Moods

For perhaps a hundred thousand years, human evolution proceeded slowly and, at its most developed, the gathering-hunting band was an extremely stable and sophisticated system with population, power, and resources all finely balanced and in tune with the world around it. Life was communal, open, and magical. Nobody owned anything: "labor, talent, skill, and artistic sense were the main human possessions that people had" (74, p. 82). Anthropologists continue to argue the point, but there is support for the view that such societies were more egalitarian than their successors (46) despite

a tendency, far from complete, to divide tasks between men (the hunters) and women (the gatherers). Hunting, especially after big game, tends to be a risky and uneconomical activity—a gamble,[2] while gathering is more conservative and productive, with higher survival value (47). (Compare also the relative chances of fertilization of spermatozoon and ovum.) Men would have had exciting tales of the chase to tell; but being a mother in prehistoric society was the most powerful, and mysterious, role available. Besides their being able to give birth, women's familiarity with plants extended beyond what was good to eat (and to save for later) to include what would heal or harm. "Woman in precivilized society must have been man's equal and may well have felt herself to be his superior" (48, p. 43).

What was life like in those days? Drawing on relatively recent anthropological observations, Eleanor Leacock (46) emphasizes the bond of friendship in the propertyless hunter-gatherer society: "Though people may be scattered over wide areas, they know how to reach each other for help, and a virtually starving family will share with another in worse straits as unquestioningly as we would share a pack of chewing gum" (p. 109). The trust and support between such people was based on a need to be together, as if one would be incomplete when alone. Without a strong sense of individual identity (37, p. 134), people shared what they had without reflection, and had little reason to mistrust or be jealous of one another. But this rather idealistic account cannot be the whole story. Friendly society is not without fear. In a remarkable chapter entitled "The Fetal Origins of History," de Mause (9) portrays paleolithic existence as a bloody, persecutory, cannibalistic, and infanticidal affair. An adult's life would be "full of paranoid fantasies which require continuous undoing rituals to ward off omnipresent persecutory anxiety" (p. 274). The sources of terror and awe would not be located in any one person but in forces and spirits. Most feared, says de Mause, were the qualities of the woman and her contents: blood, babies, and placentae. For all its integrity and stability, prehistoric life was, in his view, also brutal and primitive.

Moves Toward Domestication

Even with today's gigantic population, it is important to remember that over 90% of the people who have ever lived were prehistoric foragers (16, p. 50). Between the apelike people and the first farmers there will have been great changes in the experiences of men, women, and children. History is the tip of an iceberg. Many animals use simple tools, improvised from readily available materials and quickly discarded; but, as time passed, humans became more artistic and their products were designed to last. With one limb occupied by an infant, women fashioned containers to improve the carrying capacity of the other. These were first made of animal skin and later of clay. Pointed tools, for all sorts of uses, were devised by both men and women. Gathering and hunting became more organized activities.

Population may have increased over the years, and migration was inevitable in any case. Moving away from trees to the savannah grasslands encouraged people to find secure places near water, and to stay there (16, p. 48). Even before the discovery of gardening and farming, people had begun to organize their lives in more complex ways (59). There is some evidence that social stratification occurred, though without so much of the economic inequality that goes with it in historical times. People used ritual and art to make sense of life, probably because it was becoming more stressful, through crowding and social conflict (30). Settlement of previously nomadic people was therefore not necessarily an improvement in the quality of life. It did, however, permit processing and storage of food such as wheat, almonds, and pistachio nuts. Complex hunter-gatherer society was ripe for economic change.

Even though it was intended merely to perpetuate a complex hunting-gathering system, the development of horticulture was nonetheless revolutionary (30). It is quite possible that this took place rather casually. In places frequented by nomads, discarded and excreted seeds would take root and spread around the area, thus making an unplanned garden to be harvested the next time people passed by (29). If they had not already done so, people would later build dwellings in these fertile places. Living in a space defined by hand-built walls, rather than by pre-existing horizon and sky, altered forever the ways in which human beings thought about the world, and spurred the process by which things, qualities, and processes were *named*, and later owned (74). The naming of people in particular made it possible for them to have a new kind of "personality," and to be remembered and revered after they were dead (37, p. 136). It gave continuity and even immortality to otherwise ephemeral beings, a continuity previously available only to women and their daughters, through childbirth (57).

Besides changing ways of thought, living in houses also brought novel forms of feeling. Wilson (74) suggests that, in contrast to the generalized anxiety of nomadic folk, domestication and privacy ("private property") "provides a new and major source of contention and wariness *between people*" (p. 146; italics added), one of the consequence of which is envy between individuals, especially between intimates and neighbors.

THE ORIGINS OF PATRIARCHY

Because of their expertise with plants, it was almost certainly women who discovered the virtues of planting seed rather than eating it at once. Early methods of cultivation (horticulture) required light tools, such as the hoe, which did not put women at a disadvantage; and if they kept animals at all, it was only on a small farmyard scale, close to home. Because gardening is more labor-intensive than gathering, women horticulturalists had less free time than their nomadic

predecessors, giving men relatively greater leisure (see 48, Chapter 1). With this spare time came the opportunity to play, to take risks, to dream, and to think (4). Now they could begin to wonder what life was all about and what, indeed, was the man's place in it.

Horticulture began around the seventh millenium B.C. in what is now called the near East. Before that time, in the area known as the Levant, there is evidence of matrilocal organization of hunting-gathering people, who were already using stone slabs and pestles and mortars for grinding cereal (30). The next innovations in agriculture were probably developed by men. As domesticated animals were gathered in larger numbers and grazed over a wider area, the herd was too far from home for women to supervise. Men took over herding and, according to Fisher (19), also discovered how to breed them. Taking control of animal reproduction meant for the first time identifying which male animals were the best studs, and castrating the rest. This sort of mutilation is quite different from the killing of animals for food and other products. It is, in effect, genetic engineering, and promotes the stud bull and his testes to superior reproductive status, a model for the patriarch to come. The earliest surviving portrayal of human testicles is on a potsherd discovered in Choga Mami (close to the what is now the Iran/Iraq border), and dated about 5,000 B.C. Before that time, males were shown with a penis, sometimes erect (as in cave drawings), but without the appendages necessary for procreation (19).

Like eunuchs, castrated animals had their uses. Oxen could pull ploughs, which appeared for the first time in the third millenium B.C. Being stronger, men could manage heavier equipment than women and could build and use even bigger ploughs when they had trained animals to pull them. Both the control of cattle and ploughing the land were crafts in which men became specialists. Later, ploughs would be made of iron, the production of which, for this and for military purposes, has always been largely confined to men. Mothers continued to care for children and provide food as they had always done, but they now had even more to do: making food from milk and materials from skins and wool. Even as specialists themselves, women were confined by their occupations toward less risky crafts such as pottery (which had been developed before agriculture) where quite small errors can lead to a useless product (20). (A similarly cautious vigilance is also needed in the care of children.)

Agriculture had become a bigger and more intensive business, requiring more labor, and consequently more children. Women were therefore more in demand for producing babies, but no longer central to the production of raw materials for food. Men were now in control, and for the first time there was the opportunity to amass *personal property* in the form of large agricultural surpluses, livestock, and, of course, women and their offspring. Horticulture was mainly a subsistence activity, agriculture a trading one. The resulting wealth was a temptation to those who did not have it, and raiding cattle and women[3] became a substitute for hunting and possibly the origin of warfare (28, 58, p. 76). Later, according to the ancient Greek historian and poet Hesiod, there were multiple invasions from the North into the near East by warrior pastoralists who came on horseback, with their herds—like cowboys. They brought with them a technology of weaponry, a love of heroism, and of horses (17). These were patriarchal people who had mastered the art of animal breeding (and may have done so prior to any knowledge of horticulture).

The Means and the Meaning

The narrative so far summarizes a century of speculation about the origins of patriarchy. Friedrich Engels (18)[4] was one of the first to describe a takeover by men of the means of production, leading to a primitive form of capitalism. Although his anthropological evidence was shaky, his conclusion has become a standard of Marxist thought. He was preoccupied with women's leadership roles in early societies, which is factually questionable. It is more important that women were at least equal to men, and that they were virtually the sole parents, and therefore more powerful in the eyes of their young.

The economic view of the beginnings of history, summarized above, describes the origins of the powerful father but does not explain the rapacious energy with which men set about it. The story now becomes a psychological and spiritual one, revealing more clearly the passions and prejudices behind this change. These two themes, public and personal, represent rival accounts of human life that are not sufficient on their own. Like (public) men and (personal) women themselves, both are necessary for the full picture. In modern thought, the opposing positions are best represented by Marx and Freud, neither of whose theories can be explained in terms of the other's. Politics, the art of power and control, and psychology, the study of experience and behavior, are an irreducible pair, even though, like the human couple, they need each other and have much in common. Marx-inspired accounts of sexual politics are very similar in form to a structural/systemic view of family life, in which interaction takes precedence over experience. What I am trying to show is that neither the interactive nor the experiential view, neither the means nor the meaning, is sufficient fully to account for social phenomena." Humans are materialists and symbolists simultaneously" (7, p. 305). The development of fatherhood as a powerful role clearly required the economic changes first outlined by Engels, but these were not accidental or random. Prehistoric men and women also had their own personal experiences, which would together have influenced the kinds of actions they took and the kinds of choices they made. Because we have no record of past mental states does not mean that they did not occur. I want to redress the balance and consider what might have been happening to men as they became husbands and fathers in the first civilizations. Indirect evidence comes from changes in religious beliefs.

Divine Right

Hunter-gatherer bands had not required permanent leaders. As Leacock (46) describes it, sharing was the rule, and many decisions would in any case have been made without discussion. When someone was required to represent the group, or when an internal dispute could not be resolved, an individual would emerge to do the task, but would not stay in that role longer than needed; and the person exercising it could be a man or a woman. Agricultural and herding society, by contrast, produced wealthy men who could hold onto leadership even when there was no immediate call for it, and chiefs became a part of the civil apparatus. A political ruling class was born, and with it a new problem—how to hold onto power. Despite the common belief that political power could be maintained only by threat of force, Service (64) argues that keeping the peace was a far more successful strategy. This required leadership to be legitimized by connecting it with the supernatural, including authority derived from dead ancestors (see 74, Chapter 5). Men with charisma and sufficient riches to gain influence through majestic hospitality (74, Chapter 4), and not the physically powerful, would have been "naturals" for such posts, but they needed the backing of appropriate gods (50). The evolution of myths and religions in which male gods are the creators shows a change in human perceptions of mothers and fathers.

Originally, the important deities were either impersonal elements of nature, animals, or females (17, 38). According to Robert Graves (24), males came to the fore when the facts of conception were understood. Before then, "Fatherhood was not honoured, conception being attributed to the wind, the eating of beans, or the accidental swallowing of an insect" (p. 28). "Once the relevance of coition to child bearing had been officially admitted[,] ... man's religious status gradually improved, and winds or rivers were no longer given credit for impregnating women" (p. 14). But the male deity took over only slowly (6, 48). At first he was a mere youth who was a sexual plaything for the queen. Later he becomes a young king, but is kept in his place by his short reign, which ended each year with his ritual sacrifice. Finally there appears a wholly new type of powerful male, the father-king who creates the world and all the living things in it, giving them names in the process. This promotion records a similar shift in the status of men in early civilizations.

Preceding the legends of classical Greece, the chief deity of the Aegeans was the Great Goddess, the Universal Mother (25, 38, 48, 54), who was sometimes called Rhea (27). But she is later upstaged by her son Zeus, after which she significantly becomes just one of his many wives. Zeus was the god of the sky and the most powerful god, who saw everything and knew everything, not unlike the God of the Bible and the Qur'an. There are many other examples of father-creators. From ancient China comes the August Personage of Jade. "He was the first god ... and he created human beings ... by modelling them in clay. He is usually referred to as Father-Heaven" (27, p. 381). And from India—"Brahma, a masculine term, is the first person of the Hindu Trinity. He is essentially a creative god, the father of gods and of men" (p. 344). The pagan Slavs had a sky god Svarog, who was the father of all the other gods (p. 284). In Teutonic mythology, the giant Ymir, the first of all living beings (27, p. 248), gave birth to the first male-and-female couple from his sweaty armpit (71, p. 1097). Lacking a vagina, many gods gave birth from their mouths (71, p. 106). Walker (71, p. 107) notes that other methods included a lethal form of Caesarian section (China), hatching from a male-incubated egg (Ancient Greece) or through the penis (Heliopolis). Zeus, having swallowed his wife Metis, gave birth to Athene from his head. Within the space of about a thousand years, man had, decisively and impressively, created god in his own image.

The Meaning of Reproduction

How did father-creators come to occupy such a prominent place in so many religions? If you did not know how infants were conceived, you would not worship a man, because he does not have babies—he does not make people. You would say that, in the beginning, the first human came out of a female, which is of course the truth. Yet by the time and in the places that these myths were established, the truth had been abandoned. Even in the first civilizations, such as Sumer, the city where writing (and therefore history) began, men had already established themselves as superior to women, and by the third millenium B.C., male creator gods were being worshipped there (19). When man realized the facts of life, he could not face them, so he changed them.[5] He wanted to be necessary to the infant's existence for longer than a few seconds. The discovery of the link between childbirth and a short moment of excitement 280 days earlier must have been a letdown. It exposed the fallacy in procedures such as the couvade, which implied, sometimes absurdly, that the man had an equally strenuous part to play in the process.[6] After all, it was now clear that he could even die before the baby came along, and it would not make that much difference. A nineteenth century account of the couvade, cited by Bettelheim (2), shows to what lengths men could go to involve themselves in the birth, in what seems to us now a ridiculous and infantile performance:

> The woman works as usual up to a few hours before birth; she goes to the forest with some women, and there the birth takes place. In a few hours she is up and at work.... As soon as the child is born, the father takes to his hammock, and abstains from work, from meat, and all food but weak gruel of cassava meal, from smoking, from washing himself, and above all, from touching weapons of any sort, and is nursed and cared for by all the women of the place.... This goes on for days, sometimes weeks. [p. 209]

Modern ethnographic evidence shows that couvade rituals are more common in societies in which mothers sleep with their young children, away from the men (58, p. 36). In this arrangement, which may well have been the prevailing prehistoric one, the child grows up with a dominant mother and a peripheral father. Engels' mistake had been to assume that powerful women had to have political influence. It is far more likely that, before men ruled, there were no rulers at all, but that mothers held the primary power in the lives of all children. Fathers who inspire fear in their young ("Just wait till your father comes home") came later.

While males were losing their imagined role in human procreation, they were at the same time gaining control of the production of food and of the reproduction of animals, and these developments are connected. Clearly, it was one of the conditions for the agricultural revolution that people knew the connection between seed and produce—how to breed plants, animals, and people (36). The domestication of cereal seed might have felt like progress at the time,[7] but "the domestication of human semen," at least for the male half of the population, possibly did not. Once the truth was out, a reaction on the part of males was inevitable, sooner or later. "The discovery of physiological paternity is the discovery *at the same time* of men's inclusion in and exclusion from natural reproductive process" (57, p. 52). If they could not have their own babies, the cowboy herdsmen could at least identify with the special males that sired their herds, a preference reflected in their worship of bulls and rams (26).[8]

Competitive Rivalry and Destructive Envy

In parallel with anthropological efforts, psychoanalysts have also tried to interpret ethnography and prehistory. Freud, apparently unaware of Engel's work, did not doubt that men had ruled from the beginning. He suggested that the original state of human life was the "primal horde," dominated by a jealous father (21). Eventually the sons banded together and killed him, the first Oedipal act. Most later psychoanalytical approaches to anthropology follow Freud and focus on the rivalry between a man and his father, while ignoring or minimizing his competitiveness with the mother. Bettelheim's (2) study of puberty rites in traditional societies, which involve the mutilation of boys' penises, is an exception. These procedures involve, besides circumcision in some cases, making deep and lasting cuts along the length of the penis (58, p. 11). Bettelheim argued that men are envious of women's capacity to procreate—the evidence for which, before the baby actually appears, is menstrual bleeding. Cutting the penis is then an attempt to simulate menstruation. Opposing this interpretation, Whiting (cited in 58, Chapter 1) showed that brutal initiation rites occur mainly in societies in which men are dominant. The purpose of the ritual, which is seen as a symbolic castration, is to take boys away from the mother's apron strings and submit them to male authority. Thus, both fear of fathers and envy of mothers has been put forward to account for male genital mutilation. But if these boys have been brought up mainly by their mothers, then surely both are consistent. Although they would not admit to the symbolic meaning of this assault on their boys, the men responsible for these rites must have a great need to prove they are more powerful than the mothers.

Ritual hostility between the sexes is common in preindustrial societies, whether or not genital mutilation is practiced. The commonest method is simple segregation, remnants of which are quite familiar in the Western world. The likeliest time for this is during menstruation, but it can be extended indefinitely:

> Many ethnographic accounts describe how men spend much of their daily lives in their communal houses or sweathouses, gossiping about the evils of women, purifying themselves from female pollution, and guarding sacred objects that they believe their wives are trying to steal from them.... The Mundurucu believe that the sex that controls the sacred musical intruments also controls the society and that originally women controlled the instruments. Although men eventually wrested control from women, women are constantly attempting to retrieve it and resume their once dominant social position. The instruments, then, are strictly guarded from women, who are permitted neither to see them nor to hear them played. Mundurucu husbands say that if a woman were to see the instruments she would be dragged into the bush and forced to submit to gang-rape. [58, p. 212]

Clearly, the idea that there used to be powerful women in the dim distant past is not confined to the mainstreams of European and Asian mythology.

As soon as they had the knowledge and the equipment to do so, men became more powerful because they were afraid of women's power. If the phrase had been current at the time, men would have reversed it to say, "If we can't join 'em, let's beat 'em." I wonder particularly if the revelation that they had such a fleeting part in the making of babies was the source of men's ambition to do and to own great works. A fine pair of male biceps is no match for the fully contracted uterus. The only way to improve performance is to build a bigger engine, and this is what great men set out to do, by employing the muscle power of large numbers of men to make monumental structures. "Great buildings confirm the supernatural ability, if not the divinity, of the sponsor" (74, p. 130). The same ambition, and the same process, underlies the creation of great nations, built and maintained by massed armies of men under royal command. The language of the Hebrew Bible (at least in the English version) seems even to suggest that this was comparable to giving birth: "I will make of thee a great nation,

and I will bless thee, and make thy name great.... I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, *and kings shall come out of thee* (Genesis 12,1:17,6; italics added) (Our youngest son surprised me some time ago—he was 4 years old—by announcing that "God is a baby.")

Yet such varieties of rivalry with women's productivity would not account for the fact that in almost all agricultural and herding societies they became second-class citizens. Fear of the polluting effects of menstrual blood (the clearest evidence of fertility) is, for example, "the norm in world societies" (58, p. 211). The degree of contempt that is institutionalized in most patriarchal systems needs explaining. The demotion of the goddesses is a clue. What began as an awesome respect for woman and her mysterious insides was turned into an attack.

It is important to speculate on the origins of destructive envy, even if there is little chance of ever establishing the facts. Envy is far more complex than rivalry, though it may evolve from it. In the fully developed hunting-gathering band there were few possessions, and all of them had to be portable. Inevitably some of these would be particularly excellent, and Glantz and Pearce (22) suggest that "the possessors of coveted objects are often relieved to be rid of them, for the envy of others makes them uncomfortable" (p. 17). This irksome effect of having what others want is a hint of the power of destructive envy.

From her psychoanalytic work with children, Melanie Klein (40) developed the view that the infant is envious of the mother's good qualities precisely because they are, or seem, so good (33). The little child cannot bear this and wants to spoil it. Envy of another, in contrast to rivalry, is then not so much the desire to have the desired good quality, as *the urge to deprive the other of it,* if necessary by belittling or destroying it. Referring to their early psychological development, Klein (40) said that little boys feel inferior to their mothers because they cannot have babies. To make up for this disappointment, they become contemptuous, sadistic, and superior, and think they know better than females: "a man's rivalry with a woman will be far more asocial than his rivalry with his fellow men" (p. 191). This may reflect a similar process in the prehistory of our species. I think it unlikely that an animal ("the dog in the manger") could ever experience such a compulsive and complex emotion. How then would it originate during human evolution? Clearly, owning objects that can be coveted is one condition, and the irritating effects of domestic life on people's mood described by Wilson (74) could be another.

I suggest that the discovery of the facts of conception was a further important factor in the evolution of destructive envy. The fact, as we now have it, that each parent contributes about equal amounts of genetic material, would not be known for many centuries. The only information available at the time was that a small dose of semen is all that is required. The rest, in ritual or imagination, was exposed as fantasy. Given this insult, men became both rivalrous with, and contemptuous of, women. The Biblical story of "the fall of man" takes a new turn. His limitations now exposed, man was driven to further levels of consciousness, creativity, and destructiveness. The institution of fatherhood was born out of *an envious attack on mothers.*

Fatherhood as Status

Male supremacy came about not through greater skill at hunting[9] but, rather, when men had consolidated their economic advantage in herding and agricultural societies by inventing creators in their own image, which also effectively made up for their perceived reproductive disadvantage. The institutions of Gods, kings, fathers, and forefathers were the result, each signified by its public architecture—temple, palace, city, and tomb (74, p. 152), and by corresponding cultural procedures. In the case of fatherhood, these included rituals of marriage, adoption, and so forth (71, pp. 303-305). Modeled on both political and divine leadership, fatherhood then became a necessary condition of manhood and social power. There are many examples from traditional societies of its importance, particularly the bridewealth, which is a fee paid by the man's family to the woman's, and can be returned if she does not produce a baby. It establishes the man's paternity rights over any children that are born, even if his wife then has children by another man (56). In classical Rome, fatherhood was not defined by biological paternity at all, but by legal adoption (12). If a man wanted to prove his paternity, he adopted the child whether it was his offspring or not. In many societies, the mother's brother takes the father role and, in some, this "social fatherhood" is even available to women (58, p. 171)! Paternity on this basis is really about status and ownership, rather than origins, and does not necessarily entail any affection or even duty toward the child. The child would of course take the adoptive father's name. Like male apes, traditional fathers could use children for their own purposes.

Meanwhile the experience of child and mother may well have continued much as it was before, but the father became a figurehead who was meant to impress women and children. As is well known, however, it is lonely at the top. A political leader is not required to have an intimate relationship with his subjects, even while they imagine they have one with him. "The paradox of patriarchy ... is that, while a father may be "head" of his family, simultaneously he is constrained from being a central character within it" (51).

That fatherhood is, quite literally, manmade is not a new observation (11, 53),[10] but it is often assumed that motherhood is, in contrast, a natural function that predates civilization. Because female mammals behave in such remarkably similar ways with their infants (see 5), it is tempting, as well as convenient, to describe non-human roles in the same

anthropocentric terms ("the chimpanzee mother"), an error committed by many distinguished writers on primate behavior. In spite of these undoubted similarities, the relationship of the human parental couple, once they were organized around ownership and control, was entirely different from that of their predecessors (61).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Although this is a story about parenthood, it has inevitably been an account of one parent's dealings with the other. I have emphasized that fathers became conscious of their role more with an eye on mothers than on the child, who remained intimate primarily with mother. In this essay, I have followed a trail that begins with modern primate behavior, assuming it to be a model of our ancestors of long ago. The earliest model is the gibbon. Here, up in the trees, the parental partnership of male and female is not very competitive, and is similar to many species of birds. On the ground, however, the more advanced apes tend not to live in such exclusive monogamous pairs. They are more promiscuous, and often gregarious. Then comes the prehistoric human model, for which the evidence is also indirect, primarily archeological and anthropological. The relationship of early human parents became far more complex because they came to live both in pairs and in groups, at the same time. Humans showed both kinds of primate organization, that is, they had it both ways. The result was a parental relationship containing an ineradicable tension between fidelity and infidelity, but with females still firmly in charge of reproduction and its consequences. The male parent was at best a helpful consort.

Though evolution was presumably continuous, I suggest that this was the prevailing prehistoric pattern. Our story is then punctuated by a change that forever altered human economics—the agricultural revolution. Like other revolutions, it was not good for everybody; but once started, it could not be stopped. I have identified several qualities associated with men that were conditions for the emergence of male domination at around that time—performance, possessiveness, risk-taking, charisma, compulsive ingenuity (including the leisure in which to exercise it), and envy. These pre-existing ingredients of patriarchal culture came to the boil when crowding and biological knowledge reached critical points. From then on, within the space of a few thousand years, the ideal of a male parent became the divine leader who could do his own creating by inventing things and controlling people.

The study of the father is now a major industry in the social and clinical sciences (see 43, 44), but his role is not usually seen in its historical or prehistoric context. Those writers who have taken the trouble to trace the story back to its ancient roots are often neglected in the mainstream literature. I am indebted to numerous scholars, many of them women, whose works have helped me in preparing this essay. Many of these books are little known or out of print. Without such a perspective, it really is not possible to appreciate the overwhelming weight of patriarchy, its dominance (*dominus* = lord) in almost every area of our thinking, speaking, and writing.[11] Our ideas of what a father is for—what fatherhood means—are not simply distorted by history; they are created by it. It therefore needs enormous mental discipline (similar to the effort of thinking "systemically") to view political and paternal power without assuming the definitions established at the beginning of written history, so many thousands of years ago.

I am proposing that men were provoked by early scientific discoveries into a destructive competition with women. I do not mean that there was an organized conspiracy to defraud women of political rights. Gerda Lerner (48) argues that women could well have been supportive of men's early innovative efforts, without desiring the resulting subjugation of their sex. And as we know from marital and family therapy, there is usually some hidden benefit for the oppressed, whatever the imbalance of power between the sexes. In *The Underside of History*, Elise Boulding (4) details the subtle influence of women in male-dominated societies, the "interstitial or in-between roles that lie outside dominance structures ... that play a special part in social bonding, conflict resolution and crisis management between social groups ... at all levels, from interfamilial to international" (p. 53). Many couples will recognize in these words a hint of the unstated rules of the parental and marital game (see 35, 63). We can only know how these rules were first made through exploration of the distant past.

In modern Europe and North America, it is fashionable to identify a new kind of father who is nurturant and involved with his children. In a subsequent paper (41), tracing the story from the eighteenth century to the present day, I argue that this welcome trend has had little significant impact on domestic, political, or religious institutions of the modern world. Men as fathers are handicapped as long as they remain in thrall to the inflated god-king, who inspires in the ordinary mortal a hollow performance of parenthood, stripped of its maternal qualities. Whether disguised as idealization or revealed as contempt, fear and envy of the woman continue to be prevailing forces.

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[1]The tendency of most primate males to defend the area of land that they inhabit is not necessarily a parental activity (though it may be an ingredient in the evolution of patriarchy). Male territories are organized primarily for males in competition with each other, and not for the care of offspring (15). When the band is threatened, females tend to withdraw with their infants, while the males perform. This is a significant defensive role but it is not exclusively for the benefit of the male's immediate offspring. It is for the band as a whole, which will include many of his relatives (John Bowlby, personal communication).

[2]"Hunting .... is often highly uneconomical, requiring more calories in the chase than are returned in the capture" (9, p. 280).

[3]Lerner (48) maintains that the ownership of women *preceded* the agricultural revolution: "the enslavement of women, combining both racism and sexism, preceded the formation of classes and of class oppression. Class differences were, at their very beginnings, expressed and constituted in terms of patriarchal relations. Class is not a separate construct from gender; rather, class is expressed in genderic terms" (p. 213). Lerner also notes that captive *men* were not enslaved but killed (p. 52). Women, however, were more useful alive.

[4]In *The Invention of Primitive Society*, Kuper (42) observes how nineteenth century scholars speculated about the origins of society with their own political preoccupations in mind, and came up with organizations that were mirror images of their own. Kuper's intention is to remove speculation about primitive society from anthropology altogether: "the history of the theory of the primitive society is the history of an illusion" (p. 8). But as Lévi-Strauss (49, p. 230) makes clear, science is a continuation of one of the primary human tasks, which is myth-making. This essay is meant to be that kind of science.

[5]"The mother is not the parent of the child / Which is called hers. She is the nurse who tends the growth / Of young seed planted by its true parent, the male" (Aeschylus, *Oresteia* trilogy, quoted by Lerner (48, p. 205).

[6]The practice of the couvade ritual does not necessarily imply ignorance of the facts of life. Douglas (14) showed how it is used to establish paternity in societies in which there is an absence of other impressive evidence, such as bridewealth or a strong marital tie. It is the content of the couvade ritual that is so revealing.

[7]At best, the agricultural revolution was a mixed blessing. Paleopathologists can show that the average heights of male and female hunter-gatherers in the region that is now Greece and Turkey were 5 feet 10 inches and 5 feet 6 inches respectively. By 4,000 B.C., the averages were 5 feet 3 inches and 5 feet 1 inch. The most likely explanation for this is the relatively poorer diet of early agricultural people (13, p. 168).

[8]In a meticulous analysis of tribal societies Sanday (62) shows a significant association between sexual segregation, creation stories featuring male gods, and big-game hunting, on the one hand, and sexual integration, female gods, and greater dependence on plants, on the other. In sexually integrated societies, fathers are much more involved in the care of their infants (see 31).

[9]I do not mean to minimize the importance of catching large animals, but to put it in context. The provisions of hunting would not come in regularly, and may therefore have been more important as a prize rather than a meal, something to be given by the hunter (48, p. 29). This elevates the status of the giver: "Men display their kills ... with the same pride that women hold up the newly born" (62, p. 5).

[10]What *is* new, however, is the realization that the ownership of children (as of wives) gave men sexual rights over their possessions almost as a matter of routine (10).

[11]In some places, the patriarchal role is even encoded in the word. "Etymologically, the Chinese character for father (*fu*) evolved from a primitive character representing the hand holding a cane, which is symbolic of authority. The character for mother (*mu*) evolved from one representing a woman with the breast made prominent, which is symbolic of nurture; the character for woman (*nu*) evolved from one representing a person in the kneeling or humble position, which is symbolic of submission" (34).