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Androgyny

Somewhere, Just Somewhere In-Between

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Article appeared in Polare magazine: May 1995 Last Update: October 2013 Last Reviewed: September 2015



Carl Jung mentions 'Anima' and 'Animus', where every person needs to receive and give energies from and to the opposite gender "the essential bisexuality of all persons".

I imagine when I was small that I had similar feelings to other female-to-male transsexuals. Feelings about being different from girls, yet expected to behave in a similar way, while all the time I seemed to naturally identify with boys, wishing I could go to school with them. The feelings continued through puberty.

I don't like being identified with the gender who dominates our society and the world in general, in thought, action and structure

Early in my life I became a compulsive washer, feeling that my female body was unclean and imagining that I could wash it away and develop a penis. I have had this obsessive compulsive disorder on and off through my life. It can affect everything including work. Also, because of my fear of germs and dirt, and insecurity about my gender and sexuality, I find it difficult to get physically close to people. This has made me accept a celibate lifestyle, and any ideas of marriage and sex are irrelevant, although I can have platonic relationships with both genders.

Through my childhood I couldn't express my feelings to my parents who thought I was a tomboy like my sister. As my breasts developed and periods began, my washing became worse and I became depressed and moody. By that time my family realised I wasn't happy, but everyone said that I would just have to accept the fact that I was a woman.

While in my late-teens and early-twenties I began asking for my breasts and womb to be removed. This was in the early 1960s when I had never heard of another female-to-male

transsexual. The psychiatrist I saw wouldn't take my requests seriously. In fact I didn't have the hysterectomy done until I was twenty-five and the mastectomy ten years later. Also, one psychiatrist suggested that I try having boyfriends. I followed his advice and had a couple of 'friends', but I found kissing an unpleasant experience. I was treated as a woman by these chauvinist men, while I myself wanted the male role.

At times in my life when I felt segregated from men I had to fantasize that I was the only male. As, for instance, during the four years I was at a girls' boarding school, and the three years in the W.R.N.S.

Eventually, in my mid-thirties, I began living as a man and started hormone therapy. To gain confidence and to be accepted in my new life, sometimes I rather overdid the masculine image. I felt that I had to be 'macho'. But I gradually realised that I wasn't that type of person. I respected women, and having lived as one for thirty years I could empathize with some of their needs. I also realised that I couldn't wipe out the early part of my life. Much of it would be ingrained in my 'self' for all my days.

My feelings of being a boy and young man subtly changed to feeling more androgynous. At first any feminine traits that I may have developed I wanted to ignore, I considered myself male, even if I was just over the male/female gender border. Then because of conforming and being treated as a female, and feeling that I might never be able to live as a man, I began to think of myself in some strange 'middle sex' kind of way. I knew I wasn't a hermaphrodite. I knew eunuchs existed in the *Bible* and history books, and that there are cultures scattered around the world where a "third gender" is accepted. But here in Britain, before the terms "intersex" and "androgyny" were coined, it seemed too 'off-beat' to mention except to a selected few. The fact that androgyny was accepted as the 'norm' thousands of years ago seemed irrelevant.

But society was changing. Feminists had broken down some of the sexist barriers and were becoming more assertive and demanding equality. Therefore much of the traditional way men behaved towards women had altered. As I had hated conforming to a passive role myself, how could I now treat women in a similar manner because of my gender reassignment.

In 1976 I slowly began living the male role. It was difficult, living in a fairly isolated part of the country with neighbours beginning to talk. I wanted to get through the androgynous state as quickly as possible. I enthusiastically shaved every day, listened for changes in my voice and hated when I was occasionally taken for a woman. I had changed my name to Nicky by deed-poll three years before. Now I became known as 'Nick' or 'Nicholas'. I started to meet other transsexuals, first male-to-females, then I got to know three or four female-to-males. I noticed how they seemed keen to have sexual relationships with women. They also wanted to behave in stereotypical male

manner.

I began to feel different again. Was I transsexual or what? Well whatever I was, I was happier now with no breasts and no periods.

The years have gone by. Now I have been living as 'Nick' for nearly twenty years, and feel almost too masculine. The shadow on my chin soon after I've shaved is an embarrassment and I don't want to become too muscular. I don't like being identified with the gender who dominates our society and the world in general, in thought, action and structure - who can cause wars, violence and rape, who frequently belittle women and hinder their equality. Neither do I like the radical feminists view of turning the tables and women ruling, or getting rid of men altogether. Somehow men and women, in other words, we humans have to balance our needs so that there is no discrimination.

I know there are physical differences between men and women and also in brain structure. Men are generally said to think more logically and have more spatial ability. Women are said to be better at language and more intuitive. However, I know hormones, genes and social conditioning influence us too.

I feel that every human is so unique anyway that it is wrong and restrictive to associate different thought and behavioural patterns to one or other of the genders.

I now believe in the Buddhists' idea of the flow of masculine and feminine energies within each human, which, if balanced, create a whole person. And the 'Anima' and 'Animus' which Carl Jung mentions with every person needing to receive and give energies from and to the opposite gender, and "the essential bisexuality of all persons".

I would like to see gender roles and sexist behaviour which society has imposed, abolished. To get away from, and beyond, stereotypes so that there are no female or male roles. That masculine and feminine behaviour should overlap rather than be allotted to one or the other.

It seems a sad state of affairs when one gender seems so scared of the other. They become great mystical beings, especially men's view of women. Because of this, false conceptions arise, and men will say they don't understand women, and vice versa. In fact, if allowed, the similarities would outweigh the differences. We all experience human feelings of joy, pain, love and hate.

I know I am guilty myself of reinforcing attitudes which deep down I feel are wrong. Our western cultures and the expected 'norms' restrain my desire to change my behaviour and treat others differently too. Why do I still have to determine whether I'm speaking to a woman or a man in order to relate to a person? Why on official documents when I would rather put 'androgynous' or 'transsexual' against 'sex' did I once put 'female' and now put 'male'? And why do I go on writing or saying 'she' and 'he' when I would rather use some different pronoun? Is the fact that I've now shaved off my moustache and started asking people to call me 'Nicky' again, a step in the right direction, or am I deluding myself while really I shall always remain a sexist hypocrite? Time will tell.

Polare Magazine is published quarterly in Australia by The Gender Centre Inc., which is funded by the Department of Family & Community Services under the S.A.A.P. program and supported by the N.S.W. Health Department through the AIDS and Infectious Diseases Branch. Polare provides a forum for discussion and debate on gender issues. Unsolicited contributions are welcome, the editor reserves the right to edit such contributions without notification. Any submission which appears in Polare may be published on our internet site. Opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Editor, The Gender Centre Inc., the Department of Family & Community Services or the N.S.W. Department of Health.

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