

Healing the masculine principle?

Interactive IFIS Online Colloquium with Barbara von Meibom (*Communio Institute for the Art of Leadership*), February 27, 2019, 20-22h

Report (by Iris Kunze, *facilitator*)

One minute before eight o'clock only women had shown up to the virtual colloquium space, which caused a liberating laughter. Into the laughter suddenly four men appeared punctually at 8 o'clock.

Barbara started by asking what is our main thrilling issue with the topic of healing the masculine. Participants mentioned that there is a massive change over the centuries. Today, men are longing for new images of masculinity, and for an evolutionary step, it needs to deeper understand and maybe shift our understanding of the masculine and the feminine. Furthermore, it was asked how it implies our cultures and that it is crucial to achieve a harmonizing balance between feminine and masculine. A participant told about her little relative who said that the 'female is giving life, the male is protecting life'.

During various constellations at the Integral conferences in Hungary (2016 & 2018) and Germany (2017), the abuse of men and the role of a healthy instead of a destructive masculine principle became apparent to Barbara. A follow-up constellation in her own institute brought this to full light: the person who represented the man (gender) was lying on the ground, and the misuse of power was sitting on his back. It took a long time until the man (gender) was able to get up and to act more freely, amongst others helped by the representatives of a constructive masculine principle, the feminine and the woman (gender).

Furthermore, in both constellations in Hungary and Germany, there was a symbiosis between the representatives of men (gender) and war, violence, perpetration. There again, help was needed and transformation had a chance among others, when a positive male principle unfolded and supported the representative of the man. This sheds a light on the fact, that the destructive male principle has to come more to our awareness and that we need its transformation into a healthy and constructive male principle. It was the destructive side of the masculine principle, which led to the wording of a woman observing the constellation in 2017 that she would never honor men, because of what they have done to this world.

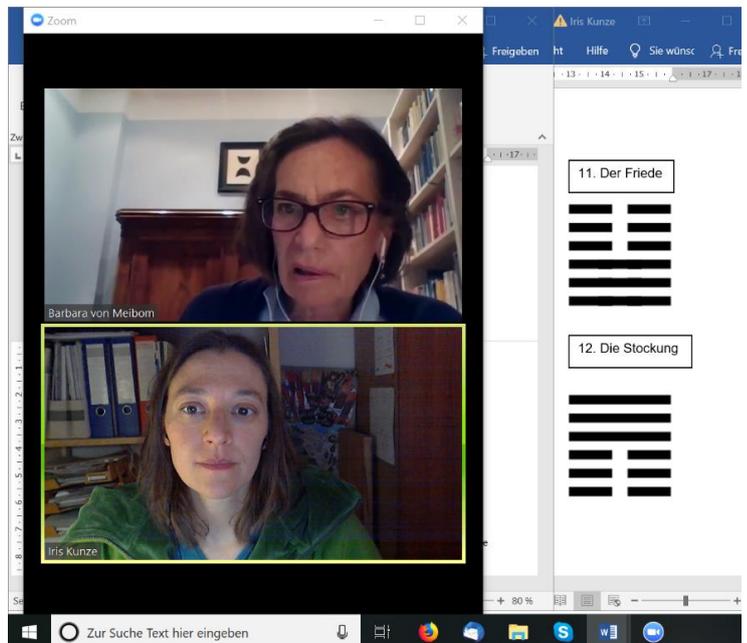
Thus, Barbara emphasized that we have to differentiate between gender issues on one level and the feminine and masculine *principles* on another level. She introduced the anima & animus archetypes of C.G. Jung and the Asian Yin & Yang aspects and mentioned that – according to the natural cycle of the hormones during the life span – women start with Yin and change towards yang, while for men it is vice versa. This shows that without hormone therapeutic approaches, we as human beings of both sexes are destined towards an integration of both principles.

Concerning the mutual interplay of the two principles, she presented two traditional I Ging charts (No. 11+12). In chart 11, the feminine takes the lead and is called Peace, while in chart 12 the masculine takes the lead and is called stagnation/deadlock. This shows clearly that the feminine (Wisdom, not

knowledge) has to take the lead. The psychoanalyst Horst-Eberhard Richter gives one explanation why men in Western societies are alienated from a healthy masculine principle, as the tradition requires that men don't suffer, which disconnects them from their feelings. Also, the brain scientist Gerald Hüther emphasizes that male infants, due to their testosterone are more outward oriented and therefore need more bonding. First, this has to come from their parents. If this bonding is not given to them then, in their lack of rootedness, they are more seducible by peers, authorities, persons in a dominant position or all sorts of extremisms such as religious fanaticism, to criminals, drug abuse and drinking, or any group which promises the feeling of being connected.

Then Barbara asked how we could find an agenda for healing the masculine. Her recommendation was first of all, to respect the need of the male child and of men in general of connectedness and grounding.

However, in our cultural context, is not easy to create it. According to Gerald Hüther, the biggest problem for men is to not be accepted by their woman. Also, we have to find meaningful purposes for the male 'doing principle' which is so dominant in men. Computer games are not an answer to this. We need a different education which allows children, in particularly boys to pursue a meaningful task in everyday life. For instance, the ESZB Berlin school which, under the former head Margret Rasfeld, started three respective obligatory projects: the responsibility projects, the challenge project and the international internship project. Another helpful frame would be rituals for becoming a man, as we know them from the Jewish or many indigenous cultures. These rituals need to be developed by men, not by women. We need to respect the difference of man and woman and we need good male examples who are carriers of a healthy masculine principles. We need "warriors of the heart".



After this input, participants shared their perceptions and feelings. A male participant experienced that the subject of responsibility seems important to root men. He himself was often avoiding responsibility because of the feeling of being tied up. Now he enjoys taking care of his mother, and being responsible for her. A female participant reflected that contradictory principles can co-create new life and underlined this by the fact, that parents expecting a child undergo a hormone change, which 'softens' the testosterone and the estrogen and opens them up for a new being. Another female participant discovered in her life the importance of the clear task for woman to go inside and find her way without disappearing as a woman. In this way she could already sometimes serve by helping to ground and connect men. Referring to Barbara mentioning the metaphor of Theseus and the thread of Ariadne which helped him to dive into and return from the maze of the Minotaur demon, a male participant shared: Receiving the red thread by the women creates a new feeling of safety in his body, not being

only himself responsible for where to go. Another participant framed the whole discussion within how consciousness development can lead us beyond gender.

A young woman from Morocco reflected on the difference of gender relations in different cultures. In her context, she felt it was difficult to accept that one has aspects of the other gender inside oneself. To be like a woman in her society is a disgrace for men. And to have male features for a woman is not accepted. Allowing of being both – male and female - and imaging having energies of the other sex as well is therefore a big issue – maybe also a big chance to heal many problems in these societies. A woman from Germany argued, that in our European cultures, we are in a process to allow both principles to unfold. For instance, in terms of governance and leadership, we are in a shift to another kind of leading, which can have female and male principles both combined. Then someone questioned how to better connect the two principles. Therefore, this person is doing a lot of shadow work as service of strengthening the connection. A man emphasized his experience of gender fluidity in his partnership and that he felt calm and strong at the same time. He also experiences being grounded by his female partner. Another man told about his life path, that one relationship was not giving him enough roots, but that he had not been aware of it. He used to live in spiritual communities. A female participant became aware, that she deeply knew inside her that she also has the masculine principle, but she had never thought about it. Today, she can better defend herself. Another woman shared her experience in working with women, that ground feeling in life, for women has to be more anchored in the womb where strength is coming from. Finally, we discovered that the access to spirituality, the inward path, needs the feminine principle. As Goethe said “Das ewig Weibliche zieht uns hinan.”

In sum, the challenge is to develop a good balance of both principles inside us. We not only need a respect for the two principles and a knowledge of their respective dark and destructive side, but we need a deep respect for the difference in men and women as well. If we look at the ‘Spiral Dynamics’ of Don Beck, the different memes vary from male to female, each one refusing the preceding principle; it is not before the second tier that we can acknowledge a synthesis of both. But – as one of the male participants hinted to – most descriptions of integral theory and the second tier consciousness are by men. Female perceptions are missing which limits the potential of the theoretical frame as an inspiration so far.

As we came to a conclusion, I could feel that we had explored the complementary principles of masculine and feminine in a differentiated and attentive way, and that spiritual development has a lot to do with the integration of both principles inside each of us. Therefore, we also need new approaches to development. If the being (feminine) has the lead, it is not a question of gender, but of how we are integrated in ourselves and how we can use the potential of these two principles in a constructive way to create a more peaceful world – inside us and in the outer world of politics, business and our (global) culture.

Barbara v. Meibom’s reflective statement about the IFIS Online Colloquium, along with some references for further reading can be found in our [Blog](#).