Feminist Psychotherapies: Integration of Therapeutic and Feminist Systems

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CHAPTER 3

Feminine Development Through the Life Cycle

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INTRODUCTION

Feminist psychotherapy developed in response to the oppression of women perpetrated by traditional therapeutic approaches. Traditional therapy models are grounded in psychological theories based on the experiences of men (Brickman, 1984; Sturdivant, 1980), and only tangentially related to those of women. Reaction against inappropriate values, methods, and therapeutic goals for women has given rise to guidelines and principles for conducting nonsexist therapy (American Psychological Association . . . , 1978) but has not yet produced a comprehensive theoretical basis for the therapeutic process. Feminist therapists have had to incorporate feminist values and approaches into existing frameworks, and this volume demonstrates the scope of possible applications.

What is still lacking is a comprehensive theory of women's development to inform and direct therapeutic practice. Steps in this direction are beginning to be taken, most notably in the work of Gilligan (1979, 1982) and the Stone Center (Kaplan & Surrey, 1984). The tapestry of women's developmental process is complex and intricate, and it will require the combined insights of many women to construct the entire design. In this chapter, we will briefly critique existing developmental theories, outline a cycle of developmental phases that are unique to women, and describe how an understanding of these phases can guide the practice of feminist therapy. This effort represents another section of the tapestry that is gradually being woven.
The developmental phases as we envision them are:

- Phase 1: Bonding
- Phase 2: Orientation toward others
- Phase 3: Cultural adaptation
- Phase 4: Awakening and separation
- Phase 5: The development of the feminine
- Phase 6: Empowerment
- Phase 7: Spiritual development
- Phase 8: Integration

The phases are listed in the order in which they are first experienced. We initially thought of them as “stages” of development, then realized that stages imply a linear progression. In contrast, we find that women re-experience these phases at deeper and deeper levels throughout their lives. At this point, we see the eight phases comprising a cycle of development, with each repetition of the cycle bringing women to a new level of awareness, capability, and integration. Our discussion of these phases will incorporate concepts from existing theories, pertinent research, metaphor, and clinical experience.

Throughout this chapter, we will emphasize the development of the gifted woman, since her experience amplifies the phenomena we are attempting to describe. Although giftedness is an asset in males, it is often a liability in females, isolating them from peers and drawing derision from society rather than support.

Most gifted women are unaware of their giftedness; they are only aware of their pain—the pain of being different from the way women are supposed to be. They try in vain to see the emperor’s new clothes, but fail to ingest the collective image. They never feel as though they fit in. Striving to understand what separates them from others, they often become involved in therapy, either as clients or as therapists or both. Feminist therapy is particularly attractive to them, since they have a natural tendency to question the roles that society has fashioned for them, and to envision other potentials for themselves. Therefore, unrecognized gifted women comprise a substantial portion of the clients and therapists exploring feminist therapy today.

DEVELOPMENTAL THEORIES AND FEMINIST THERAPY

The original purpose of psychotherapy was to cure mental illness; therefore, all internal conflicts were perceived as evidence of “dis-ease,” rather than as natural concomitants of growth. Even when these conflicts were the result of obvious external factors, such as assault, rape, loss of a loved one, or war, the person’s pain was described as “emotional disturbance” or “mental imbalance.” The medical model of viewing psychological processes is still very much alive today, as is readily observed by perusing the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 1980).

A developmental perspective, with its emphasis on stages and cycles, seems more consonant with women’s experience. However, early developmental theories only addressed the development of children. The study of adult development is still in its infancy; only recently have we begun to acknowledge that women’s development is different from men’s (Gilligan, 1982). The stage is now set for a comprehensive theory of the development of women throughout the life cycle.

A developmental view fits well with the tenets of feminist therapy. Feminist nature is seen as essentially healthy; evolving toward higher levels of actualization of potential. Internal conflicts are portrayed as desirable propellants toward higher levels of development (Dabrowski, 1964). These concepts undergird the therapist’s affirmation of the client’s feelings and potential for growth and change. Since the therapist is involved in her own growth process, she acts as more of a guide and facilitator of her client’s developmental process, rather than as a remedial client of the client’s deficiencies. This equalizes the relationship between therapist and client (Rawlings & Carter, 1977).

Although a developmental framework has the potential to be highly relevant for women, the major developmental theories have been oriented toward males, and prove unenlightening when applied to females. Developmental theorists have sought to construct a set of “universal principles” of development that would apply to the entire species. When females fail to conform to these universal principles, their development is seen as aberrant (Gilligan, 1982). To acknowledge that women might develop along different paths has been unthinkable, since it would suggest that the basic premise of universality is flawed.

A CRITIQUE OF THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT

A review of traditional theories of development reveals the extent to which women’s experiences have been either ignored or misinterpreted. The first theory of development in recorded history was given to us by Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), who described three epochs of childhood, each of 7 years duration: infancy, boyhood, and young manhood (Mussen, 1975). It is unclear whether females were thought by Aristotle to develop
along similar lines, or whether their development was simply deemed unworthy of consideration.

The foundation for modern theories of development was laid by Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), who described four stages of development in his famous book Emile (Rousseau, 1780/1911). In Rousseau’s theory, children progress from the “animal stage” of infancy (ages 4–5), through the “savage stage” (5–12), through the age of reason (12–15), and eventually to adolescence (15–20), at which time they transform selfishness into social consideration. It comes as no great shock that Rousseau confined his observations to male children. The progression from concern for self to concern for others becomes a common theme in later developmental theories.

Although Charles Darwin (1809–1882) never proposed a stage theory, his theory of biological evolution (Darwin, 1859) exerted a profound influence on developmental theories. His declaration that we evolved from lower animals, and his doctrine of the survival of the fittest, supported the “natural order” of male dominance as an elevated form of development. From his research, Darwin concluded that the male members of all species were more advanced on the evolutionary scale than the females, due to greater variability of secondary sex characteristics. It was clear to him that women were inferior to men intellectually since so few women had attained eminence.

The chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shown by man’s attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than can woman—whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands. (Darwin, 1871, p. 564)

The work of Rousseau and Darwin captured the imaginations of theorists early in this century. G. Stanley Hall (1916), echoing both of his predecessors, formulated a psychological theory of recapitulation, which presumed that the developmental stages of childhood retraced the evolutionary stages of “mankind.” Children were thought to progress from the somewhat primitiveness of a period of savagery, eventually becoming civilized. For example, ages 4 to 8 were supposed to correspond to the cave period, when hunting and fishing were the main activities of “man.” This was thought to explain why children of these ages were found to build caves, play hide-and-seek and cowboys and Indians, and use toy weapons. Again, these examples illustrate that the children observed were male.

Freud (1925) also proposed a recapitulation theory of development, maintaining that the stages of psychosexual development are a re-enactment of earlier experiences of the race. The stages in Freud’s theory—oral, anal, phallic, latent, and genital—re-create an ancient drama revolving around incest taboos, in which the male child falls in love with his mother, learns to repress these feelings through rituals which enable him to identify with his father, and eventually finds a more suitable love object. These stages were thought to be genetically determined. The Oedipal conflict—rivalry between the father and the son for the mother’s love—is rooted in the survival of the fittest. For the “Oedipal complex” to be perceived as a universal phase of development, it was necessary for Freud to construct corollary experiences for women, such as “penis envy.” In such ways, the male developmental process was superimposed upon female development. Much more could be said of Freud, but ample critiques can be found elsewhere (Firestone, 1970; Friedan, 1963; Greenspan, 1983; Millet, 1970; Sturdivant, 1980).

Piaget (1937, 1950), strongly influenced by Rousseau and Darwin, proposed a universal stage theory of cognitive development. In Piaget’s theory, children progress through an invariant sequence of discontinuous stages—sensorimotor, intuitive, preoperational, concrete operational, and formal operational—culminating their development somewhere around the age of 12. In the first three stages, the child’s thinking is considered egocentric. Formal operational thought, the pinnacle of development, is marked by the capacity to think logically, deductively, and rationally. These higher abilities are demonstrated through the mastery of Piagetian tasks, such as solving problems involving proportions, isolating variables in a chemical experiment, and applying principles of physics. Needless to say, males do appreciably better on such tasks than females (Dulit, 1972).

Piaget (1932) theorized that moral development grows out of an ever-expanding conception of rules that children learn through playing games. He noted that girls seem less concerned with rules and more willing to make exceptions to the rules; he surmised that this impeded them in developing a legal sense.

Kohlberg (1964), elaborating upon Piaget’s theory of moral development, developed a six-stage hierarchy of ethical judgment. The stages, each of which is qualitatively different from and more advanced than the previous stage, progress from self-centeredness to an impartial concern for the rights of others. At Stage 1, individuals are motivated by fear of punishment; at Stage 2, by self-aggrandizement; at Stage 3, by desire for approval; at Stage 4, by a reverence for maintaining law and order; at Stage 5, by a democratic concern for the protection of individual rights; and at Stage 6, by universal principles of justice.

While Piaget (1972) thought all members of the species eventually progress through all of the stages, Kohlberg thought individuals could terminate their development at any stage in the hierarchy. He found
more women apparently operating at Stage 3, while more men appeared to be functioning at Stage 4 (Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969).

Gilligan (1979) challenged Kohlberg's findings, asserting that the values of mercy and attachment reflected in Stage 3 development had been relegated to an inferior position within Kohlberg's masculine framework: In her book, In a Different Voice (1982), Gilligan described her own theory of women's moral development, based on an ethic of responsibility and caring. In Gilligan's theory, women progress from a lack of responsibility for self and others, through a stage of selfless responsibility for others, and eventually to a stage in which they can care for both themselves and others. This effort represents a promising step toward the creation of a comprehensive theory of women's development.

Gilligan (1982) points out how most of the major developmental theories were based upon the study of male samples and then extrapolated to women. Erikson's (1968) "stages of man" is another case in point. Building on Freud's psychosocial theory, Erikson focuses more on social forces, and embraces the entire life cycle rather than birth through adolescence. Erikson's first five stages correspond to Freud's, each stage presenting a developmental task that must be resolved. The stages are as follows: (1) trust vs. mistrust; (2) autonomy vs. shame and doubt; (3) initiative vs. guilt; (4) industry vs. inferiority; (5) identity vs. identity confusion; (6) intimacy vs. isolation; (7) generativity vs. stagnation; and, finally, (8) integrity vs. despair. Identity precedes intimacy in this hierarchy, and the focus is on separateness. Erikson (1968) acknowledges that the sequence is somewhat different for women, but his theory remains unchanged.

Gilligan was not the only theorist who thought that adults continue to develop. Although Jung (1923) did not formulate a comprehensive stage theory, he did describe principles of adult development, some of which are particularly applicable to women. He recognized that male and female development are different and he constructed concepts and terms to describe these differences. He believed that actualization of one's potential ("individuation") could only occur through the development of the "contrasexual"—the masculine aspect of women ("animus") and feminine aspect of men ("anima"). The attributes of the masculine and feminine are archetypal, meaning they are psychic imprints, inborn patterns of experiencing. The feminine principle has to do with relatedness, the interior, feeling, intuition, cooperation, nurturing. The masculine principle is associated with aggression, cognition, rationality, focusing, structure, competition, and hierarchy.

Jung provided a starting point for an understanding of women, but he did not go far enough. Ulanov (1971) explains:

If we seek from Jung a precise definition of the feminine, we will seek in vain. His presentation is limited in quantity and uneven in quality. Jung glances over profound truths, repeats the obvious ones, loses threads of arguments, and is often inaccurate in his observations. At the same time, however, a mere passing comment will reveal a new depth; a chance remark will inspire a whole field of research, and for all his disjointed, unsystematic method, Jung fundamentally pays serious attention to the feminine as an original psychic mode of being rather than as a deficient masculinity. The positive result is not so much what Jung accomplishes as what he has inspired others to do. (p. 154)

Another theorist concerned with adult development, whose work is not well known in America, is Kazimierz Dabrowski. Dabrowski (1964) offered a "theory of positive disintegration," which stressed the importance of inner conflict and crises in the developmental process. The theory postulates five distinct levels of development, from total egocentrism to complete altruism. According to Dabrowski, emotional sensitivity is essential to higher level development: Those at lower levels have very restricted emotional responses.

At the first level, the individual experiences no internal conflict, no self-evaluation, and no empathy. One uses others to help gain what one wants in the world, which is usually power. Dabrowski thought most world leaders function at this level. At Level 2, the person begins to experience a great deal of anxiety, due to the pushes and pulls of the environment. This level is marked by personal insecurity, confusion, and extreme vulnerability to social forces.

At Level 3, the individual becomes aware of a higher set of values, and begins to strive toward a life imbued with those values. The initial attempts are not usually successful, so this period is marked by intense inner conflict, feelings of shame and doubt, and often lack of adjustment in the world. There is also a deepening of one's own convictions and of one's relationships with others.

Level 4 is similar to Maslow's (1962) level of self-actualization. It is at this level that the person feels capable of contributing and living a life of integrity. But beyond this, there is a fifth level, one in which the individual has compassion for all. Mother Teresa of Calcutta is an example of one who has attained this highest level of human functioning.

Dabrowski's theory has many feminine aspects, particularly its emphasis on emotional development. But it too suffers from a masculine hierarchization from egocentrism to autonomy and eventually to compassion. The reverberation of this theme throughout the theories reflects the masculine pattern of development; there is serious question as to whether the pattern applies equally well to feminine development. While
males move from a separated, egocentric state to a level of greater intimacy and social concern in adult life, females develop social responsibility much earlier in the developmental sequence, and need more assistance in achieving autonomy.

Some of the concepts outlined in the above theories can be applied to a fuller understanding of women's development, but the structure must be different. In the following section, we will describe the sequence of women's development as we currently understand it, synthesizing some basic principles of development with our own clinical experiences. We will discuss the eight phases of women's development in order, from early childhood to maturity. These eight phases are: bonding, orientation to others, cultural adaptation, awakening and separation, the development of the feminine, empowerment, spiritual development, and integration.

**BONDING**

In the normal separation sequence as described by object relations theory (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975), during the period from 0 to 3 months, the child is at one with the mother, feels as the mother does, and does not differentiate from the mother. During the symbiotic stage, from 3 to 18 months, there is an interdependent relationship, in which the combined energies of both partners is necessary for the existence of each. Apart from each other, each member appears to perish. The mother mediates every perception, every action, every insight, and every bit of knowledge. She functions as an auxiliary ego for the child, controls frustration tolerances, sets limits, protects, perceives reality, and is a buffer against inner and outer stimuli. She gradually organizes these stimuli for the infant and directs him or her to the inner vs. the outer world in boundary formation and sensory perception.

From 18 to 36 months, the child enters the separation/individuation stage, which parallels the physical ability to move away from the mother. The child's sense of individual identity develops. An intrapsychic separation begins when the child perceives his or her own image as being entirely separate from the mother. This is the period in which abandonment feelings of separation are established.

Object relations theory, based upon male norms, stresses separation and individuation as primary goals of children's identity formation (Mahler et al., 1975). Until recently, it was assumed that all infants go through these stages of the separation process in the same manner and at the same time in their development. However, Chodorow (1978) called attention to the differences in maternal relationships with sons and daughters. Since then, other feminist writers have recognized the uniqueness of the mother—daughter relationship and the role this plays in feminine development (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983; Kaplan & Surrency, 1984; Rubin, 1983).

While separation and individuation are fundamental goals in the psychological development of all individuals, there are marked differences perceived in these processes for males and females. Males appear to begin the separation process in early infancy, but females usually do not begin the major part of this process until midlife, and the manner in which it occurs is barely recognizable.

Differences in the separation processes of boys and girls appear to account for many of the differences found in the behavior of adult males and females. A boy child is different from a girl child. He is "the other," and from early on, the mother knows that he is the other. The girl child is not perceived as "the other"; she is perceived as being the same as the mother. Manifesting more of the archetypal feminine characteristics than the boy, the girl is more certainly identified with the mother; both mother and daughter operate with more open emotional connection and boundary flexibility. The sense of being the same as mother necessitates her taking on the feelings of mother. If mother is angry, she is angry; if mother is guilty, she is guilty. Without the basic preliminary separation, the intrapsychic bond between mother and daughter becomes stronger and stronger.

This emotional sensitivity develops into cognitive and affective interactions that we later identify as empathy. The connectedness and the capacity for identification is the basis for the later feeling that to understand and to be understood are crucial for self acceptance and are fundamental to the feeling of existing as a part of a unit or a network larger than the individual. (Kaplan & Surrency, 1984, p. 86)

Bright children in particular have high degrees of emotional sensitivity, and are likely to show compassion for others even as toddlers (Silverman, 1983). According to Alice Miller (1979), gifted children have an amazing ability to perceive and respond intuitively to the mother's needs. This ability is then extended and perfected until they become responsible for their siblings, and mothers to their own mothers.

The special sensitivity they develop to the unconscious signals of the needs of others often leads them to become psychotherapists. "Who else, without this previous history, would muster sufficient interest to spend the whole day trying to discover what is happening in the other person's unconscious?" (p. 9). However, although the deep level of
attachment and empathy of gifted girls is a positive developmental sign, there is also a danger of the child's ego being absorbed by the mother's.

The depth of the bonding process for females must be taken into account in the therapeutic process. Traditional theories, which stress the importance of separation and individuation, may lead to inappropriate therapeutic goals for women. Separation and individuation processes take place at a later point in women's developmental cycle than in men's, and for entirely different reasons. Within traditional therapies, feminine attachment is seen as pathological dependence—something to be fixed (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983). It is important for the therapist to realize that bonding, empathy, and attachment are the basis of feminine development. This understanding will guide her in supporting these healthy aspects of her clients' development.

ORIENTATION TO OTHERS

The developmental cycle of women must be viewed with the awareness that women's primary striving is for relatedness and connection. Since women's ego development is influenced by this relational concept, a different theory of ego formation is needed for males and females. "The basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world; the basic masculine sense of self is separate" (Chodorow, 1978, p. 169).

Ego formation is different for a male because he is more aware of his boundaries. The boundaries of the feminine ego are very thin. After experiencing herself as an extension of the mother, it is hard for the girl child to know where she stops and the other begins. As the girl child continues her strong intrapsychic connection with the mother, she is not as readily able to discern what she wants for herself from what the mother's ego wants from her or for her. This is a critical point. Without establishing a strong sense of her own ego, the girl may transfer her own ego attachment from the mother to her friends, and eventually to her lover, husband, or someone else in the world. Even as an adult, a woman may have very keen perceptions of everyone else's feelings, needs, and desires, but very little awareness of her own. A girl child's sincere desire to please, to nurture, to be needed, and to be part of someone else are all reinforced in the world. These are endearing traits in daughters: They are highly valued by others and by the daughter herself, because they enable her to be empathic toward the needs and wants of others. But by sacrificing her own wants and serving others, she develops an unconscious expectation that she will be loved and cared for in the same manner she cares for others. In fact, she usually does not receive this reward, or, if she does, she finds she may indeed have to be who others want her to be.

The senses of separateness of the male and connectedness of the female present the basis for relationship problems between men and women. The boy child, being cut off from the mother's feelings to a greater extent, experiences his own wants and needs and seeks his own independence as he continues to expect and receive nurturance from the mother. This expectation becomes prototypical of his desires as an adult male. While women are naturally attuned to others' people's needs and socially conditioned to meet them, men expect to pursue their own goals while being nurtured by women.

A man's fear of experiencing the preexpression symbiotic engulfment of mother results in a fear of closeness or intimacy; at the same time, the feminine partner is seeking the continued bonding, understanding, and connection so familiar to her (Rubin, 1983). She does not realize that males do not share her other-orientation, her ability to be attuned to the wants, feelings, and needs of others. If she keeps seeking this in men, she is continually frustrated and disappointed (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1982). Relationships with women, whether friends or lovers, can be rewarding in that they allow her to experience another who shares these qualities, but they may also present boundary identification and merger difficulties (Burch, 1985).

The gifted female usually excels at taking care of others. Her antennae may be so attuned to the needs of others that people come to expect more and more from her. She will have a tendency to overextend her energies as she has less awareness of her own needs and little appreciation of her limitations. It is deeply satisfying to feel needed, and it may take a long time before a woman realizes that her relationships are unbalanced. She does all the giving, while the others in her world are doing all the receiving. Therapy could involve examining the extent to which she might be fostering unnecessary dependency in others, helping her develop mutually satisfying relationships, and teaching her to take care for herself—how to be self-nurturing.

There are many positive aspects of the feminine orientation to others. A woman's intensified awareness of others and her deep sense of connectedness enhance the quality of life for everyone. Giving comes easily. It is this trait that supports relationships, creates new life, and nourishes the lives of everyone around her. The major markers in a woman's life are most often the birth and death of relationships. The psychic reality of "self-in-relation" is the fundamental factor in woman's core sense of self (Kaplan & Surre, 1984). Her whole sense of purpose is tied to this capacity to care (Gilligan, 1982). Recognition of the value of this orientation is essential to the therapeutic process.
The feminist therapist must be aware that this sense of orientation to others is appropriate, not symptomatic of inadequate ego development. One of the basic precepts of feminist therapy is that the therapist acknowledges and validates the client's reality. It is easier for a female therapist, who shares this other-orientation, to value sincerely the central role of relationships in the client's life. The client may very easily transfer her attachment to the therapist, which is actually helpful during early parts of the therapy. However, the therapist must be cautious to reinforce the client's own sense of self, and help her to develop more equal, mutual relationships.

CULTURAL ADAPTATION

It is not enough to become a woman in our society; in addition, a woman has to become a pseudo-man. Men usually write the television scripts and the textbooks; they hire and fire; they decide what will be published. From the time girls enter school, they learn that there is another reality beyond their own, one that is more acceptable, and they adapt. If they are clever, they learn new ways of thinking, talking, and writing, and develop another layer to their personalities.

The other-orientation in females leads to a form of hyperadaptability. After they learn to adapt to the feminine role at home, they are thrust into a coeducational school environment that supposedly sets up similar expectations for them and for boys. Their entrance into the male world is gradual. In preschool, their teachers are women, the main goal is social awareness, and the emphasis is on process, not product. Elementary school is more achievement-oriented, but, again, the main role models are women, and the mastery of factual information comes easily. Girls excel at the school game.

Then junior high school begins, and these confident, young girls seem to "plateau," while their less successful male counterparts suddenly experience a "growth spurt" which thrusts them into the lead in academic achievements. And this lead is maintained throughout the rest of their school years and in their achievements in adult life. Girls, even very bright girls, lose something in junior high school that is never quite regained: their confidence in their abilities (Silverman, 1986).

The difference in achievement of adult males and females was once thought to constitute absolute "proof" that females are inferior to males in intelligence (Darwin, 1871; Galton, 1869; Thorndike, 1910). Today, such claims would not be made publicly in educated circles, but they remain an ingrained prejudice in the majority of the population. Ironically, from the time the first IQ test for children was developed in this country, researchers found that girls' IQ scores were slightly higher than boys' scores from the ages of 2½ to 14 (Terman, 1916). What happens to girls when they reach junior high school age? Why do they suddenly lose their edge? Gilligan (in Van Gelder, 1984) observes that an 11-year-old will hold out for her point of view, whereas a 15-year-old will yield. She surmises that the problem is rooted in the shift from factual knowledge to interpretive knowledge in the junior high school curriculum. Girls do not trust their interpretive powers, because their own interpretations differ widely from the masculine perspectives presented in the textbooks. Gilligan contends that the interpretive level of any discipline is oriented toward a masculine viewpoint, one that excludes the experiences of females. As girls see their own experience disappear from supposedly authoritative representations of human experience, their confidence in their own perceptions becomes eroded, leaving them feeling that their only chance at success is through imitation of males.

The imitation process intensifies as girls proceed through higher levels of education. At each level in the educational hierarchy, females face more male teachers, more masculine models of reality, and more requirements to reason, write, and perform like men. Most contemporary successful women have attained a masculine-oriented education, learned to operate in a male system, adopted male values, and lived by male norms. These women begin to feel an alienation from their own selves. Something is missing. Through the process of cultural accommodation, they have subtly absorbed the male value of denigrating and devaluing feminine knowledge and feminine ways of performing. Intuition and feeling are repressed, empathy is less rewarded than competition, and personal experience is denied in favor of deference to authority.

By the time they complete graduate school, women have learned how to put three references after every idea of their own in order to be believed. In their work experience, they have learned how to "dress for success," adhere to rigid rules and regulations, adopt an obsessive work ethic, be a good team player (which means not questioning the boss), and hide their personal lives, feelings, and experiences.

Robbed of their intuitive, feeling, experiential world, women become alienated from themselves in a masculine environment. They feel like imposters (Clance, 1985) when they try to be imitated men, and are continuously plagued with self-doubt. Although men also suffer from the imposter phenomenon, Clance (1985) found far more women who experience these feelings. If their behavior stems from imitation
rather than a grounding in their own feminine knowledge, such feelings would be anticipated.

Gifted women are especially good candidates for imposter experiences. Bright females receive so many mixed messages about their abilities from early childhood that they do not feel safe demonstrating their talents. The following letter written by the mother of a kindergarten-aged child is illustrative:

I have a daughter who is in public school in kindergarten. . . . At the first parent/teacher conference I was informed that she was working at or below grade level. She was in a low pre-reading group and a low math group. She has been reading since three years old and has done basic addition and math since four.

I urged them to please look more closely. At another conference at semester end the teacher informed me of something strange which she had discovered. When my daughter worked with her best friend she worked below grade level (as did her friend—she is below grade level). In fact their work was almost identical. With more advanced children she worked at their level. The quality of her work seemed to depend almost entirely on her association.

When asked about this, she thought about it for awhile and then told me she wanted the other kids to like her. I am unable to convince her that she doesn’t have to do this to be liked. To her, being friends is to be just like each other. She is extremely adaptable.

The school is becoming aware, but is not willing to help very much. At least they admit now she can read. They gave her a Silerral Reading Test two weeks ago and she reads fourth grade level. They are unprepared to do anything. She continues in a pre-reading group. (Perry, personal communication, February 7, 1986)

It is no wonder that through the cultural adaptation process, gifted girls learn how not to be gifted, and eventually lose all recognition of their own abilities. Even after these abilities have been demonstrated, the school refuses to acknowledge them or nurture them. Differential treatment of bright boys and girls by their teachers has been well documented (Cherry, 1975; Dweck & Bush, 1976; Dweck, Davidson, Nelson, & Enna, 1978; Frey, 1979; Sears & Feldman, 1966). Giftedness in childhood is correlated with “success” in adult life—for males; no such correlation exists for females (Terman & Oden, 1959). Some gifted girls do become productive adults, but they often have to sacrifice friendships to get there.

Achieving women very often attempt to be “superwomen”; that is, they try to become excellent males and excellent females simultaneously.

These two roles combined are physically and mentally exhausting. When these women are pulled in too many directions, stress mounts—sometimes to the breaking point. They often try to fulfill their various responsibilities at the expense of sleep, which eventually erodes their health.

When “superwomen” seek therapy, the therapist can help them to reorganize their priorities, learn to delegate, and make a commitment to take time for themselves before they fall apart. Most important, the therapist can acknowledge these women’s talents, and help them to see that they don’t have to work twice as hard to prove themselves in a man’s world. There are other options; together they can find them.

Unfortunately, more often than not “superwomen” do not seek therapy. They are too busy. Instead they drive themselves into physical illness, and the illness provides the opportunity to stop, get off the merry-go-round, and really examine their lives (Taube, in preparation). At this point, they begin the deeper journey into self. If physical illness does not provide an escape, symptoms of high anxiety often begin to appear, heralding the next phase in women’s developmental cycle. These symptoms are also prevalent in women who have devoted their lives to homemaking, for even in the home the masculine reality has led them to deny their feminine knowledge. Their emotional sensitivity is seen as “irrational,” their intuitive judgment is ridiculed, and their value as human beings is questioned, since they have no achievements in the world to demonstrate their worth.

AWAKENING AND SEPARATION

The other-oriented, selfless, culturally adapted woman who fits the stereotypical pattern of a patriarchal society has been an endangered species for some time. Recognition of this fact has been slow. Previously, women were forced into a conspiracy of silence for survival. The women who spoke or wrote about the evolutionary process of women faced severe societal rebuke, even from other women. Kate Chopin’s attempt is a case in point.

In her novel, The Awakening, Chopin (1899/1972) tells of a woman who is waking up and discovering her own self. Edna is married to a benevolent autocrat. She is encouraged to be a child with her children. Her husband is kind, well adjusted for his era, and provides well for his family. Edna becomes infatuated with a young man during a summer vacation, and begins to experience herself as more than wife and mother. In the succeeding months, she discovers her own artistic talents, and decides that she wants to paint and earn some of her own money.
This idiosyncratic behavior is tolerated by her permissive husband until she decides to move out of the family home into a carriage house of her own.

Soon Edna starts to look at child rearing differently; she decides not to be the kind of wife or mother society prescribes. She makes the statement that she would die for her children, but that she would not give up her life for them. The story centers on Edna’s turmoil, her bouts with depression, and her growing courage to be her own person. But her desire for autonomy is perceived as mental illness.

It sometimes entered Mr. Pontellier’s mind to wonder if his wife were not growing a little unbalanced mentally. He could see plainly that she was not herself. That is, he could not see that she was becoming herself and daily casting aside that fictitious self which we assume like a garment with which we appear to the world. (Chopin, 1899, p. 96)

In the end, realizing that she would always be “owned” by someone—her father, her husband, her lover, or her children—Edna chooses the only form of freedom available to her, she takes her life. The heroine in the book necessarily had to die, even if it was only to conform with moral values of the day.

The author chose to focus on Edna’s inner struggle to attain freedom, rather than on the wrath and rejection she might have incurred from her husband and friends, but Edna’s behavior did not go unpunished. Edna’s death was not enough to appease Chopin’s critics; they were morally offended that Edna had “lived” at all and chastised the author severely for creating her. Chopin, by then a famous author, was refused membership in the St. Louis Fine Arts Club because of the novel, and her book was banned in St. Louis. The critics pined her with their literary commentary, and she died 4 years after this important work (Culley, 1976). Society was not ready to accept woman forming individual identities.

Although this book was written almost a hundred years ago, it profoundly relates to lives of women today. Edna’s despair in trying to own her own life mirrors the feelings of contemporary women who embark on the emotionally painful journey toward autonomy. Chopin’s novel describes what we call women’s separation process. However, in many psychiatric circles, Edna’s journey into self is often regarded as a classic case study of “borderline syndrome.”

Borderline syndrome, so aptly described by Masterson (1976) and Kernberg (1975), is an excellent example of how women’s development is perceived in traditional masculine-oriented psychotherapy. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM—III; 1980), the practical authority on the subject, describes the Borderline Personality Disorder:

The essential feature is a Personality Disorder in which there is instability in a variety of areas, including interpersonal behavior, mood, and self-image. No single feature is invariably present. Interpersonal relations are often intense and unstable, with marked shifts of attitude over time. Frequently there is impulsive and unpredictable behavior that is potentially physically self-damaging. Mood is often unstable, with marked shifts from a normal mood to a dysphoric mood or with inappropriate; intense anger or lack of control of anger. A profound identity disturbance may be manifested by uncertainty about several issues related to identity, such as self-image, gender identity, or long-term goals or values. There may be problems tolerating being alone, and chronic feelings of emptiness or boredom. (p. 321)

The etiology of the borderline syndrome varies according to the clinician describing his particular bias. In New Perspectives of Psychotherapy of the Borderline Adult, Masterson (1978) theorized separation-individuation failure; Kernberg (1978) stressed developmental arrest or ego fixation; Searles (1978) depicted the situation as one where the patient’s sense of inner and outer reality is flawed; externalization as a defense mechanism was elaborated by Giovacchini (1978).

Edna may be said to have manifested most, if not all, of the behaviors characteristic of the borderline personality. Yet, these characteristics are typical for a woman going through a separation-individuation process. “Many women diagnosed as borderline may actually be functioning in a normal way for a woman, even though their behavior may make male-identified therapists anxious” (Walker, 1984, p. 15).

The borderline syndrome is a relatively new disease entity coinciding with the changes in contemporary women’s lives. The definition and clinical picture is as “complex and shifting” (Masterson, 1976, p. 8) as are the changes in women’s consciousness. Previously, women did not separate and become autonomous. They were their mother’s daughters, their husband’s wife, or their children’s mother. This is, of course, changing. Women are now developing their own ego and identities, and as more women begin the separation process, the more this process will be recognized as a normal phase of women’s development.

The pain of this developmental period is intensified if a woman seeks traditional therapy and is perceived by the therapist to be psychologically ill. A woman experiencing separation does exhibit many of the characteristics of the so-called “borderline syndrome” (as does a man with a strongly developed feminine side); however, the fact that
she is considered sick and ostracized by society severely complicates this process.

Another example of the way in which women's normal emotional development and behavior are classified as pathological is in the current propositions that "premenstrual dysphoric disorder" (premenstrual syndrome) and "self-defeating personality"—characterized by masochistic and self-destructive behavior (e.g., being beaten by one's spouse) be added as categories of "personality disorder" in the 1987 revision of the DSM-III (Holden, 1986).

At the present time, it is still not acceptable for a woman to think of her own self or personal wants and goals before the needs of others—loved ones, children, or friends. The unconscious mandate is to be unselfish and to put the others they love. To many women, to be selfless is the highest order of love. However, when individuals continually do what others want them to do at the expense of their own desires, they become resentful. This resentment turns into unconscious manipulation of others, as in the caricature of the "Jewish mother," but even such consciously values selflessness.

It is no wonder that a woman striving to develop a sense of her "self" in the individuation process exhibits symptoms of separation anxiety: depression, anger and rage, fear of abandonment, guilt, passivity, helplessness, and emptiness. She is in a severe triple bind. She wants to be there for others; her culture demands that she be there for others, and at the same time she wants to be there for herself. No matter what action she takes at this point she is betraying some internal or external mandate. If she does not do what she wants to do she betrays herself. If she does put herself first, she betrays the internal lifelong mandate to be unselfish as well as the expectations of all the people around her who are accustomed to her putting their needs above her own.

Because she deeply values connectedness, a woman fears that her self-development will sever her most precious ties with others. These fears are usually justified. Her selfless attention to the needs of others has become a given to her loved ones. When she begins to be aware of her own needs and to act on her awareness, those intimately involved with her feel she is taking something away from them. They feel cheated and become angry with her, often going away, just as she feared. The culture punishes her for not playing her role.

The mood swings, self-disparagement, and problems in interpersonal relations which typify this phase of development are viewed as positive indications of higher-level development, rather than as symptoms of illness, in Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration (1964). According to the theory, these behaviors signal the dissolution of a rudimentary level of development, which is necessary before a more conscious, evolved psychic milieu can be formed.

Symptoms of Dabrowski's third level of development include guilt, shame, dissatisfaction with oneself, "positive maladjustment," and the beginning of an inner hierarchy of values. Individuals in this third level are often seen as "maladjusted," but Dabrowski calls this "positive maladjustment" since their development is progressing beyond the weaker, external values of the peer group into deeper, inner-directed values. People in this stage are often seen as a threat to society since they are less tractable than less-evolved individuals. It is interesting to note that current research on the theory has found more women than men entering this level of development (Lysy & Piechowski, 1983; Silverman & Ellsworth, 1980).

Dabrowski's theory has its most significant application in the development of gifted and creative individuals (Piechowski, 1975). The gifted are more likely to question the values of their peer group and to strive for deeper levels of integrity. Gifted women are sensitive to the discrepancies between illusion and reality, and may reach the breaking point—the break with societal values—earlier in their developmental cycle. Not all women have a period of "awakening"; some remain in an unconscious state of development throughout life. But the gifted woman is more likely to find herself in a developmental crisis that precipitates the deeper phases of her growth and development. For the woman who is experiencing separation anxiety, support for her own reality is of utmost importance. She is probably alone and in conflict with herself and those around her. Her world and all her illusions are changing. She may have been treated by a male-identified therapist who indeed has seen her as sick. She may even have been given tranquilizing drugs to allay her anxiety, which is actually her body's alarm system letting her know she must pay attention to her own feelings.

The impact of this transition in a woman's life is shattering. Individual therapy is indicated, as well as group therapy—particularly if she does not have a support group. She needs other women to identify with so that she knows she is not alone in her view of the world. She needs women's support to be able to tolerate the pain and punishment that result from seeing and speaking her truth. She cannot grasp why others do not understand and support her growth and change the way she would support theirs. Since relationship is so important to her, her relationship with her therapist becomes central to her life during this phase of development.
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEMININE

There are no clear guidelines to illuminate the journey into self. The deeper phases of women's development are better suited to symbolic representation than to objective description. Women need subjective realities with which to identify; an abstract theory or an idea is not sufficiently real to assist them in gaining insight and bringing about change. One way of teaching women about the deeper layers of the feminine is through myth or metaphor, laden with imagery.

Christine Downing (1981), in The Goddess, states:

We need images and myths through which we can see who we are and what we might become. As our dreams make evident, the psyche's own language is that of image, and not idea. The psyche needs images to nurture its own growth; for images provide a knowledge that we can interiorize rather than "apply". Can take to that place in ourselves where there is water and where seeds and grasses grow. Irene Claremont de Castilejo speaks of discovering the inadequacy of all theories about the female psyche, including the Jungian framework into which she had for so long tried to fit her own experience and that of her female patients. For now, she suggests, we need simply to attend lovingly and precisely to the images spontaneously brought forward in our dreams and fantasies.

(p. 2)

Women have been asleep for a long time. The journey toward consciousness involves re-examining the self; trusting one's intuitive knowledge to sort through the myriad of demands and determine what is really important to oneself; mobilizing the will to implement the necessary changes; developing spiritual awareness; and integrating these aspects of self. Through Jung's theory, these various tasks can be seen as having masculine and feminine components.

Particularly applicable to the woman seeking to integrate her inner feminine and masculine sides is the tale of Psyche and Eros (von Franz, 1980). There are similar tales from all cultures. Essentially, the story deals with a woman who loses her masculine partner, Eros, through disobedience and must perform a series of tasks to regain him. Here, Eros represents both the outer man and the inner masculine of a woman. In our interpretation of the myth, the integration of Psyche's inner masculine with her inner feminine brings her deeper feminine truths into consciousness.

We will begin in the middle of the story, and examine the tasks Psyche must perform. The first task that the goddess Venus has assigned Psyche is to sort out a huge pile of seeds—corn, beans, etc. This must be done by morning or she will die. She becomes overwhelmed and collapses. As she sits and waits, ants come to sort out the seeds, and the job is done by morning.

Contemporary women are presented with a myriad of overwhelming choices (seeds). They must attend to their families, community, household tasks, daily maintenance, career, education, spiritual and intellectual development, as well as the bombardment of everyone else's needs and expectations. They feel a responsibility to everything and everyone.

They even apologize if it rains at a picnic. How will they organize? What do they want? Which must they choose first?

The sitting and waiting Psyche must do, waiting for the ants (symbolic of her instincts), is analogous to women getting in touch with their own feelings and intuition. For women who have externalized their lives it may take a long time to know what they want, to know their own path, and take the action to realize it.

The following dream of a gifted, young, woman physician illustrates this waiting process.

There is a wooden sailing vessel floating in a vast expanse of turbulent sea. I am steering the boat; there are ten crew members. We approach a dark, threatening storm which tosses the boat about. We are afraid. I call the crew together for a meeting and announce to everyone that we are in danger and need to figure out what to do. I suggest that each of us offer ideas on what to do. My idea is that we get out all our maps and compasses and figure out a route to follow to land. The second crew member suggests we take cyanide tablets. The third suggests we take a rope down the sail. The other crew members in turn offer their suggestions. Just as we are ready to make our final decision, a large figure emerges from below deck. He is a handsome captain. He approaches the huddled crew and says, "We won't act on any of your plans. WE WILL DO NOTHING."
Only by bringing their repressed, ignored feelings up to consciousness can women know who they are and what they want for themselves. When they do this, they may be surprised to learn that they want something different from what their parents or the culture convinced them they wanted. They will also find that they are uniquely different from the cultural role model: They may not be the "good girls" they were supposed to be and thought themselves to be.

The sorting process is not an act of will; it is an internal, instinctual, feeling process. Every living organism has a drive to be whole. It is this striving toward wholeness that we call "instinctual." The feminine process is a teleological movement toward wholeness.

EMPOWERMENT

Psyche’s second task is to get the golden fleece from wild aggressive solar rams. Again she is overwhelmed and despairing, ready to throw herself into the river. This depression takes her into a descent to the unconscious, virtually a pit. As she comes up the other side she brings with her a piece of knowledge that will enable her to take the next step. This time Psyche is helped by whispering reeds that tell her the rams are unapproachable at midday and that she must wait until evening when their ferocious temperament calms. If she approaches them too early, they will tear her to bits.

This task represents woman exerting her will in a male-dominated world which is threatening and dangerous. If she meets the rams head on, with only masculine aggressiveness, she will be attacked and overpowered. The reeds (her intuition) teach Psyche to utilize more indirect methods of dealing with the male world. Her own feminine ways are more circular and cunning, rather than linear and confrontational. If she uses a male attitude it will drown out the activity of the intuitive, feeling part of herself. She must follow the advice of the reeds, and gather pieces of fleece from the brambles in the evening, when the rams are unaware—to wait for the right moment to move.

This is the phase of empowerment. Women have been taught to emulate the external power of men. Masculine power is power over others. It is such a strong, motivating force in the masculine world that it often rules men’s lives. Women usually do not strive to have power over other individuals; their motivation for empowerment derives from a desire to have control over their own lives—to keep from being disempowered by others.

When women are left to their own methods they will use their power for cooperation, consensus, and mediation. Their skills have been devalued by negative connotations, such as “women’s wiles” and “manipulation.” Women, too, have been taught to be ashamed of their indirect, influencing abilities by this constant derision. But the ability to exert one’s will gently, without the need for credit or glory, comes from a place of strength, not weakness. It is the subtle, yielding power heralded in Aikido and some of the other Oriental arts.

At the present time, women are not acknowledged for having their own ways of dealing with masculine tasks. For example, whereas men often work on a singular task, undistracted until they reach completion, women find it easier to work in cycles, rotating their energies among several tasks, in a natural, feminine manner. Rarely having had the luxury of experiencing uninterrupted time of their own, women have learned to work around distractions. These breaks serve a creative function; they provide frequent opportunities for incubation and reorganization, and allow women to tap deeper layers of their intuitive knowledge. Unfortunately, this work style is viewed as “scattered” and “unfocused,” even by the very women who work best in this way.

Therapists can support women to trust their intuitive judgment and help them go into the masculine world and implement their goals in their own way. By integrating their feminine knowing with their masculine assertiveness and goal-orientation, women are able to develop their own kind of power, a power that is unique to them and not an imitation of the male model.

In the next phase, women face a form of their own death and experience spiritual rebirth. Preparation is needed for this intense task. Women need to develop in their own ways such masculine strengths as courage, goal-direction, determination, and ego. Ego, as Jung (1964/1982) describes it, is knowing what one wants and how to get it. It is necessary to have developed a strong sense of self and ego before embarking on the phase of spiritual development.

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

Psyche’s third task is even more terrifying. She must go to the very center of the waterfall of the river Styx, which is physically inaccessible and guarded by monsters. Styx is the goddess of everything—the giver of death and rebirth. At this river, Psyche must fill a crystal goblet. An eagle, a symbol of spiritual intuition, appears and helps her. He dives into the depths of the waterfall (representing the unconscious), procuring the water for her.

This is a process of disintegration and rebirth. Women begin to experience themselves as dying during this stage, and, indeed, an old
part of them is dying. They are letting go of an old way of life; they have stopped externalizing and begin to experience their own internal life. They can now value the unique feminine. When this process is over, even though it seems interminable at the time, they actually experience themselves as someone different. Through this phase of development, women gain the ability to go directly to the heart of an issue and return with astonishing wisdom. This is also the phase in which they develop the healing or spiritual abilities of the feminine.

Some degree of integration of the two phases of development—acknowledgment of the feminine with integration of the masculine—must be achieved before a woman can approach this extremely introverted, intuitive process. Without enough development of the self and the will, entering this stage can be destructive. Women must first be grounded in their feelings and have their feminine powers integrated with their masculine reasoning abilities before they descend into this innermost place.

Power issues, both external interpersonal power and personal power, are being dealt with at this time. This type of power frightens people. Women must conquer their fear of being criticized or abandoned, since men are especially threatened by this deeper spiritual awareness.

Yet a word that jumps out . . . is missing in . . . every article I’ve read on the subject. The word is FEAR. Is it possible our own unique strength has been held down by the superior physical strength in men over the ages, because men have been afraid?

Afraid not that we will become more masculine—as the anti-feminist jargon goes—but that we will “become more feminine”? Is the archetypal woman subjugated to the archetypal man, not because she is weak, but because she is potentially so strong? (Lam, 1984)

Ideally, feminist therapists will have experienced their own spiritual transformation before guiding other women through this phase of development. Therapists cannot take anyone where they have not themselves (Jung, 1954). Evaluation of clients’ ego strength is necessary before encouraging them into the spiritual phase.

This is a time of mourning for the younger, more naive self that can never be again. The wisdom gained with awareness brings with it a deep sense of sadness for oneself, one’s loved ones and the world. The therapist can comfort her client by understanding her need to mourn and be with her in the process. If the client has not already done body work, this would be an appropriate time to begin. Body work facilitates grounding and connection with sexual and spiritual energies, and releases painful memories stored in the body. With this grounding she can learn to speak from her own feminine reality while at the same time being aware of the masculine perspective (Woodman, 1985).

INTEGRATION

The fourth task Venus requires of Psyche is to go to the Underworld and obtain a cask of ointments. She is ready to throw herself from a tower, when the tower speaks to her. The tower (a symbol of the Great Mother) gives Psyche specific instructions for going to and from the Underworld. She must carry two coins in her mouth for Charon, the ferryman, who is to transport her across the river, Styx. She must also carry a loaf of bread in each hand to distract the two-headed dog Cerberus, who guards the entrance to Hades.

With the coins in her mouth, and the bread in her hands, Psyche begins her journey. She meets a beggar in need. This is the first test. She must not help him. She must keep her feminine generosity for her own self. This is the creative no. When she encounters the women weavers of fate, she cannot stop to talk, plan, and help others achieve their life plans.

The ferryman takes the coin from her mouth and ferries her across the Styx. A dying man reaches his arm out of the water to be saved. She cannot support an old, dying way of life or she will be stuck in her journey. She diverts Cerberus with the bread, and successfully obtains the cask of ointments.

It is important to understand the significance of the ointments. In the original myth, the purpose of the ointments was somewhat ambiguous. In the masculinized versions that began with Apuleius (second century, A.D.), this cask was said to contain “beauty” ointments (von Franz, 1980). Yet, no woman would spend years in self-exploration, in pain and suffering to retrieve a box of beauty ointments. The fourth task of Psyche makes more sense from a feminine perspective if the cask is understood to contain healing ointments.

It is the task of the feminine to heal the wounds of a world disfigured by man’s lack of awareness of the sacredness of nature. Psyche’s integration of feminine and masculine energies in this last task is a symbol of their integration in the world. It is the magnitude of her responsibility that gives Psyche the courage to face this last set of dangers.

The goals of feminine development are for women to become healers and teachers. When they are absorbed in the lives of those closest to them, they do not have the time or energy to devote to larger purposes.
Through their evolution, the scope of their caring broadens until it embraces everyone and everything. This greater awareness cannot be denied; there is no way to not know what one knows. And the knowledge brings with it a responsibility to a greater cause—to the plight of humanity itself.

Psychic had to abandon her feminine generosity, and inclination to nurture and care for the ill and needy, because something more important was at stake. There could be no hesitation; had she hesitated, her mission would have failed. She had to have the resources to pay the ferryman, and the fortitude to stay out of the lives of others, and let them make their own mistakes.

Not many women are capable of, or willing to, encounter this last developmental task. It requires that a woman allow her family and loved ones to experience and manage their own lives. This is very difficult for the people she loves as well as for herself. However, this task is necessary in order for her to follow her own path in life. Fortunately, once this task has been accomplished, and she has learned to nurture herself as well as others (Gilligan, 1982), she will be more discriminating in the use of her natural generosity. She will also have the energy to contribute her wisdom to the culture. This is a marvelous resource which has previously gone untapped.

This developmental phase is reserved for middle or later life—an important opportunity for older women. They have acquired the wisdom that age brings to women. They know that if they begin to follow their own paths there is no turning back. We may look to actualized, older women for role models of those who have acknowledged their feminine truths, integrated them with their masculine skills, become autonomous and individuated, yet remained connected to others in a mystically feminine way.

Few women have actualized their potential, but studying the lives of those who have, such as Eleanor Roosevelt (Pleckowski & Tyska, 1982), gives us some indication of the requisites. Eleanor had courage, depth, and commitment, as well as high intelligence. A lonely gifted girl, from early childhood, she exerted her will to conquer numerous fears, physical awkwardness, fatigue, depression, and loss of love (Pleckowski, 1986). In the latter part of her life, she dedicated herself to furthering human rights and peace. She experienced severe losses and went through many periods of personal transformation. She rose above the ridicule and the prejudice of a culture that had no room for women’s wisdom. It is such gifted women who give us the prophecy of the future. They pave the way for the evolution of society as a whole.

CONCLUSION

These developmental phases comprise a complete cycle of women’s development; however, the phases need not be completed in a linear fashion. The process is cyclical, continually spiraling to deeper and deeper levels of awareness as a lifelong process. Each time a woman faces a crisis, she may revisit earlier phases in her development, gaining new insights. The evolving woman brings new wisdom to consciousness and contributes to the evolution of the entire culture.

In The Sane Alternative, James Roberts (1978) discusses the evolutionary leap our culture is experiencing. He is a proponent of the SHE future: Sane, Humane, Ecological.

When an individual or group first provides a synthesis able to attract most of the next generation, the older schools gradually disappear. In general, the paradigm shifts associated with the transition to the SHE future will reflect a shift of emphasis away from the overdeveloped, structured, exterior aspects of life towards the underdeveloped, unstructured, interior aspects. (p. 80)

What we see as the emerging consciousness of the developmental processes of women is being reflected in society as a macrocosm. “The woman of today is faced with a tremendous cultural task—perhaps it will be the dawn of a new era” (Jung, 1964/1982, p. 75). Tomorrow we will not lose the Ednas of the world.

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