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Comments on "Women's Voices in Psychohistory and Psychoanalysis"

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Abstract: This commentary on Inna Rozentsvit's symposium article, "Women's Voices in Psychoanalysis: Erased or Forgotten," focuses on the current importance of integrating caring (feminine) with justice/ power-oriented (masculine) approaches. It tries to show how even apparently "objective" reasoning is still subtly influenced by socially accepted cultural values to build on the scholarly achievements of the article.

Keywords: economics, gender discrimination, Inna Rozentsvit, power, psychoanalysis, psychohistory, values, vulnerability, women's issues

This article touches upon aspects of anthropology, sociology, biology, and psychoanalysis, all of which play a part in our developing understandings of "Women's Voices in Psychohistory and Psychoanalysis." Dr. Inna Rozentsvit deserves much credit for raising an underrepresented subject that affects our field and society. It is one of the issues we must resolve to optimize to solve our impending survival challenges. However, despite the well-documented discussions, the article has two underrepresented areas: One, the history of discrimination against women is not described comprehensively, and two, despite including "Psychohistory" in the title, it only discusses psychoanalysts. I don't know how psychohistory rates on this issue and don't have the means to find out, but it is an important question: Have we

made progress, and what is it? What might have turned the tide?

Discrimination against women has endured for ages. The first stratification appears with agriculture, which created a food surplus that allowed specialization, most notably, a warrior class that could control the surplus (Rowthorn et al., 2008). This seems to have been a value rather than a gender issue: Ironically, the food producers, arguably the most essential workers in a society, have low status. The article hints at that pattern (justice vs. care orientation) but attributes it to gender instead of power differences. Farmers and women share vulnerabilities: Crops must be tended like children and make the parent/farmer vulnerable to attack and exploitation, which translates into lower status for men and women in any possessive power-oriented culture. Women and children legally ended up as second-class citizens.

The legal suppression of women started to change when psychoanalysis was being developed. Interestingly, the Nordic countries took the lead in this regard and are still famous for their better social safety net—evidence for the persistence of cultural value systems. If you are dealing with someone who has no or little power, you likely won't take what they say seriously. In that context, the early success of Anna Freud, Melanie Klein, and Karen Horney warrants extra study. (It is interesting that, apparently, Melanie Klein used Sabina Spielrein's material without crediting her contribution, acting no better than a man.)

Freud's whole theory of women being dominated by penis envy is an expression of (defensive) bias, and Horney's and Hilferding's protests/corrections deserved more detailed discussion. Similarly, the valuable discussion of Rossiter and the "Mathilda Effect," which illustrates the valuation bias, should have been expanded: The Mathilda Effect indicates how important support groups are for success. The struggles women had/have to be properly appreciated parallel those of any other marginalized group (by virtue of being marginalized, the group is smaller and less powerful than the in-group, which maintains the status quo). Robert Sapolsky (2017) elaborates on our prevalent tendency to favor "in-groups" and project our problems onto "the other," which may be related to fear. Also, as Solomon, Greenberg, and Pyszczynski (2015) proposed in their *The Worm at the Core: On the Role of Death in Life*, we become more selfish when afraid.

The embedded social values that play themselves out in our

unconscious biases are heavily conditioned over generations and can appear "natural," which impedes change. Gilligan's theory that women tend to identify themselves via relationships while men do it more individualistically is stated as gender difference. However, Sapolsky (2017, p. 274ff) describes it as the behavior of members of collectivist societies independent of gender. In our society, the "anti-relational bias" persists. I recall one of my patients being appropriately very angry for having been denied a promotion because she had focused too much on her teamwork for her interviewers' taste. (She was a gifted researcher and an excellent team player, which made her group very effective.)

A power or economic motive for the bias is hinted at in Ross et al.'s (2022) study: Women have a more moderate impediment in getting academic credit as authors (13%) but face a much more significant one (58%) regarding being included in patents, which stand to deliver more power and economic potential. If women just "talked past" men, the barriers should be even in both cases. Similar patterns have also been observed during colonization. Usually, initial contacts appreciated the achievements of a new culture, but as the exploitative potential became apparent with longer contact, the equality and intellectual achievements of the targets were denied to rationalize and justify the exploitation and theft (Loewen, 2018).

How pervasive and persistent these unconsciously conditioned attitudes and values concerning power and privilege are is demonstrated by Kuhn's (1962) classic *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, which showed that social (group) processes influence even the most abstract and refined thinking processes, such as theories of physics. Sapolsky (2017) provides another example, citing differences in attitudes based on (communal) rice or (individualist) wheat cultivation in China: Our everyday practices, especially concerning making a living, shape our consciousness—a validation of Marx's ideas (p. 278). Similar processes have also been observed in social animals where the specialization into different methods to acquire food gradually stops socialization and finally leads to subspeciation (Safina, 2020). Without extensive trans-cultural research, the boundaries between permanent biological differences and deep conditioning are fluid and difficult to determine. The work of Michael Levin about the self-organization of early organisms and tissues also hints at alternative mechanisms of transferring information intergenerationally besides our known genetics and

epigenetics, which may play a role in these ambiguous situations.

While the facts about the statistical physiological gender-related differences are observable, their interpretation is complex, and care has to be taken to avoid inadvertently becoming an apologist for the status quo. Research (Sahakian et al., 2021) has shown that psychological androgyny (when a person has a cognitive style that includes patterns usually found predominantly in one sex, so they think both like a man and a woman in varying proportions) is common and provides better cognition and resiliency, which is a good reason for both genders to keep working on having an open mind. The last paragraph of the *Clio's Psyche* Call for Papers, which reviews the great participation of women in psychology, provides reason for optimism. The importance of the integration of male and female traits has been hinted at over and over by the paradigm of the hero's quest. Even the greatest, strongest hero (the extreme of masculinity) has to deal with the limits of his power in the end (Achilles's heel shows up in multiple variations; vulnerability/ caring as the female paradigm) and has to learn to manage her/ himself. Power is addictive, and it takes lifelong practice to learn not to succumb to it.

In conclusion, the symposium article addresses themes of extreme importance in modern times. Our history of exploitation, which fits the Greek idea of *Hybris* (grandiose conceit that gets punished by the gods), has brought us to the brink of social suicide. If we do not find a way to make the functional majorities of our societies appreciate caring and regeneration (the "feminine" perspective), we are likely to eventually kill ourselves.

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Reflections on Sabina Spielrein's Life and Intellectual Legacy Reexamined

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Abstract: This article examines Sabina Spielrein's pioneering contributions to psychoanalysis, including her work on child development, language acquisition, and drive theory. Despite introducing innovative concepts that influenced the field, Spielrein's ideas remained largely fragmented and underdeveloped. The article reviews recent biographical works, particularly John Launer's reassessment of Spielrein's life and intellectual legacy, while exploring how her groundbreaking work was marginalized in male-dominated psychoanalytic circles before being gradually rediscovered.

Keywords: Carl Jung, child psychology, history of psychoanalysis, Inna Rozentsvit, Jean Piaget, John Launer, psychobiography, psychohistory, Sabina Spielrein, Sigmund Freud, women psychoanalysts

Inspired by Inna Rozentsvit's essay, I returned to the life and work of the Russian-Jewish pioneer of psychoanalysis, Sabina Spielrein (originally Shpilrain, 1885–1942). I added some reflections on her biography and intellectual history. Spielrein has been the subject of two fictional films, a documentary, novels, and plays. However, it was not until 2014 that the first English-language biography appeared, attempting to reassess Spielrein's place in the history of psychoanalysis and to correct the myths surrounding her. John Launer, a London-based family therapist, educator, honorary lifetime consultant physician at the Tavistock Clinic, and prolific medical columnist has written a multifaceted biography of Spielrein, *Sex Versus Survival: The Life and Ideas of Sabina Spielrein* (2014), as well as the article "Sabina Spielrein: Her life, erasure, rediscovery and recognition as a key psychoanalytic thinker" (in