Misandry and Emptiness

Masculine Identity in a
Toxic Cultural Environment

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Masculine identity has become increasingly problematic due to technological and cultural changes over the past ten thousand years, beginning with the horticultural and agricultural revolutions but gaining momentum with the industrial, military and reproductive revolutions. Egalitarian feminists have unwittingly exacerbated the problem by equating sexual equality with sexual sameness, leaving men unable to make even one contribution to society, as men, which is distinctive, necessary and can therefore be publicly valued—that is, unable to establish a healthy collective identity specifically as men. The result of this emptiness is a growing tendency to give up either by dropping out of school and or by committing suicide. Ideological feminists have thrown down the gauntlet, on the other hand, by ascribing to men a highly negative collective identity. The result of this misandry is an increasing number of men who believe that even a negative collective identity is better than no collective identity at all. No solution will be possible without challenging pervasive assumptions about both boys and men.

The academic world is changing, albeit at a glacial pace, when it comes to the study of boys and men. The assumption of feminist academics since the 1980s has been that all received knowledge—that is, earlier research by male scholars—was actually about men, not women. Therefore, it made sense to focus attention instead on the latter. Those who have done so, with the aid not only of huge investments by both private and public funding agencies but also the establishment of new university departments and academic societies, have achieved a great deal. We have much more information on women than ever before. Interpreting that information is another matter, especially in a heavily politicized context, one that seldom acknowledges a clear distinction between women's studies and feminist activism. Moreover, the resulting theories about women almost invariably result in theories about men. Scholars must continue to examine all research for political and ideological biases, at any rate, because they cannot claim that any field is immune to empirical verification or at least to reasoned scrutiny without turning scholarship into the equivalent of orthodoxy or ideology—about which more in due course.

In any case, the initial premise about earlier research (that it was all about men) is inaccurate. It was often *de facto* about men, to be sure, but seldom *de jure* about men. In some cases, this was due to the fact that anthropologists had greater access to male subjects than to female ones. In still other cases, it was due to the fact that historians found more written records by men than by women. In still other cases, though, it was due to the noble but naïve assumption that men and women were very similar in most ways; this meant that it was unnecessary to dwell on the differences. The point here is that not much of this pre-feminist scholarship was the result of any specific interest in *men,* let alone bias in favor of them. And much of the scholarship that was specifically about men was actually about *elite* men, "alpha males," not ordinary men. In short, we still need research on men. We need it now than ever before, in fact, because of the fallout from research that, despite continuing respectability in academic circles, is profoundly biased against boys and men.

This brings up an additional problem on the academic scene. Not all of this bias comes directly from women. Some of it comes indirectly from women. That is, it comes from male feminists (of a branch that we will discuss in a moment). Adopting the feminist notion of "engaged scholarship," they established the field of "men's studies" at least partly in the hope of *changing* (other) men by converting them to feminism instead of merely studying them. And one problem with this approach, among many others, is that it requires scholars to see men *through the eyes of women*, just as earlier scholars, ironically, had seen women through the eyes of men. This is the immediate reason for efforts to establish a parallel, or new, men's studies or male studies.

Although the new male studies must foster modern academic standards, not postmodern political ones, it need not rely on the straw man of perfect objectivity (which, as everyone has always known, finite beings can never attain). The new male studies can rely on historically or scientifically verifiable evidence, in other words, but still take boys and men seriously on their own terms. Otherwise, the subjects become nothing more than tokens of some political theory that "we" know but "they" do not. The model here would be what phenomenologists and cultural anthropologists once called

epoché: trying sincerely and systematically to bracket out either personal attitudes toward the subjects or cultural assumptions about them and cultivating at least preliminary empathy for them.

Our purpose in this essay, though, is to discuss only a few closely related problems, out of many, that American boys and men face at the moment. We have selected these problems partly because of their centrality in the research that we have done over the past twenty-five years but also because of their marginality in the research that others have been doing. Many or possibly most academics in traditional men's studies work in the social sciences, at any rate, whereas we work in the humanities and arts. We see these problems primarily as *cultural* ones, albeit ones that entail both emotional and social problems.

With all this in mind, we will discuss masculinity in connection with (1) identity and (2) feminism.

IDENTITY

We began our research on men with the following hypothesis, which we invite social scientists to verify or falsify on empirical grounds: that *no person or group can have a healthy identity without being able to make at least one contribution to the larger society, one that is distinctive, necessary and publicly valued.* The underlying problem that men face in our time, especially young men, is how to create a healthy collective identity specifically as men—that is, a healthy form of masculine identity. This raises at least one obvious question: Why not be satisfied merely with a healthy *personal* identity? We can think of several reasons.

First, the obvious and undeniable fact is that humans are *social beings*. We require families, friends, allies and communities or nations. Although we are always different in some ways from other people, we are always like them in other ways. This means that we can always identify ourselves at least to some extent with them. How else could anyone expect support when in need or peril? There is no such thing as a personal identity, either healthy or unhealthy, without the larger context of a collective identity.

Second, personal identity for men can now emerge only at the *expense* of collective identity. Any man can feel good about himself as an individual even now, after all, by adopting one of two strategies that prevent him from feeling good about himself as a man. The first requires *dissociation from other men* as a male feminist and thus becoming an honorary woman. This amounts to self-hatred, a phenomenon with which Jews and other minority groups have long been familiar. And self-hatred is surely, by definition, profoundly neurotic. Worse, this strategy has a specifically moral consequence: abandoning or even targeting men who, misandry and emptiness notwithstanding, still feel a compelling need for some positive identification with their male bodies. The other strategy, as anyone who watches the news knows by now, requires *dissociation from society* and thus becoming an antisocial threat to it. We will return to that strategy.

Third, the fact that women have created a healthy collective identity for themselves—

and also, directly or indirectly and intentionally or unintentionally, an unhealthy one for men—means that men *must* choose between accepting what women think about manhood and thinking for themselves about manhood. In other words, they *must* establish a collective identity. But this presents a big problem. The legitimate sources of collective identity for women have expanded immeasurably over the past few decades. We refer not merely to new career possibilities but also to the more subtle and more general sense that all things are possible for women (or even, in some cases, that women are innately superior to men). During the same decades, however, the legitimate sources of collective identity for men have contracted or even disappeared.

FEMINISM

Feminism has emerged over the past few years. Masculine identity, on the other hand, has been a problem for the past few *thousand* years. Nonetheless, feminism has *exacerbated* that problem. Feminism can be defined in many ways. Some feminists focus their attention on the relation between gender and class, others on the relation between gender and sex, gender and religion, and so forth. This is one reason, among several, why feminists insist on their diversity, inclusiveness or multivocality.[1] From the specific perspective of *men*, however, there are only two kinds of feminism. They differ according to what each says about men and therefore what effects each has on men. In this section, we discuss (a) misandry, the intentional result of ideological feminism (which has exacerbated the problem by assigning men a profoundly negative identity) and (b) emptiness, the unintentional result of egalitarian feminism (which has exacerbated the problem inadvertently by denying men any positive identity).

MISANDRY

By now, the word "misandry" is in common use. It was not so in the early 1990s, when we began our research on misandry (although the word "misogyny," of course, had long been in common use). Misandry is hatred toward men. We refer here not to anger but to *hatred*. Anger is an emotion and transient; hatred is neither. Hatred is a *culturally propagated way of thinking.* Although hatred entails psychological and other problems, it is truly a *cultural* problem and therefore a *moral* problem as well.

Many people now acknowledge that misandry is a characteristic feature of popular culture in our time.[2] But not all of these people, let alone those who refuse to acknowledge the existence of misandry, agree on where this phenomenon originated or whether it has any significance. Is the prevalence of misandry due to commercial opportunism, which, in the contexts of both entertainment and advertising, relies heavily on both positive and negative stereotypes? Or is it due to political correctness, which prohibits the negative stereotypes of some groups, but not others?

Either way, some people—both men and women, though for different reasons—openly condone the misandric status quo. Women have no power, they claim, and therefore require protection from misogynistic stereotypes. Men have such godlike power, on the other hand, that even the most hostile stereotypes cannot actually harm

them; these stereotypes are inconsequential, they say, and therefore (from one point of view) insignificant. At the very least, we suggest, public disapproval of misogyny but not of misandry reveals a deeply embedded double standard and therefore corrodes the very notion of equality, a fundamental feature of democracy.

But, we argue, misandry is due primarily to something much more sinister and much more destructive than even a double standard, whether in the context of commerce or etiquette. Underlying the attitude of those who condone misandry—they often hide behind the anonymity that pseudonyms confer on bloggers—is a perverted notion of justice, which makes it synonymous with *revenge*. Men have used misogynistic stereotypes to serve the economic and political interests of men, according to many people (once again, both men and women, though for different reasons), so that women may now use misandric ones to serve their own economic and political interests.

Obviously, this conclusion cannot rely on the Judeo-Christian "Golden Rule" (expressed either as "do not treat others as you would not have them treat you" or as "treat others as you would have them treat you"). But this moral principle, which underlies the prophetic worldview, did not go unchallenged even in late biblical times. Opposing it directly or indirectly was a very different worldview, one that encouraged a reinterpretation of scripture. This worldview emerged as a religion in ancient Persia but eventually spread, without the particular theological superstructure of Zoroastrianism, throughout the Mediterranean world. This requires us to pause here for an explanation.

In 597 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar II conquered the Jewish Kingdom of Judah and later deported much of the population to his capital city of Babylon.[3] The captives considered this exile an unprecedented calamity, because it seemed to refute their belief in God's providence and even their belief in God's existence. In other words, traditional explanations for innocent suffering were no longer convincing. Persia soon conquered Babylon and allowed the return of these captives to Jerusalem. By that time, however, they had begun to absorb some features of the Persian worldview. As monotheists, to be sure, most Jews rejected the Zoroastrian religion as such: two competing gods, one good and the other evil. Nonetheless, some Jews found in its underlying premise a satisfying explanation for innocent suffering: two competing but vaguely defined cosmic principles, one good and the other evil. God was inherently and eternally good, Jews continued to believe, and could therefore not be the source of evil. But neither, they believed, could any other god be the source of evil. One solution was a *quasi*-divine figure: an angel who, by rebelling against God, introduced evil and continued to foster evil among "his" followers. And Jews were by no means the only ones to find this metaphysical premise useful. By the Hellenistic period, what we now call "dualism" had become a generalized mentality. In other words, it had become part of many competing religious traditions and philosophical systems. St. Augustine found it not only among contemporary Christians, for instance, but also among the Manicheans, a group that he had joined before turning to Christianity.

Of importance here is that from this metaphysical premise, moral and political ones followed. These amounted, collectively, to a titanic and enduring struggle between those who were faithful to God ("us") and those who were not ("them"), a struggle that

would end only at the end of history with the final victory of God and his faithful fol-lowers over their enemies—which is to say, any or all outsiders. This dualistic mentality co-existed uneasily with other biblical ones.[4] Not surprisingly, both Jews and Chris-tians have sometimes ignored the Golden Rule and its corollaries—love your neighbor as yourself or even, among Christians, love your enemies—and identified *specific groups of people* not merely with theological ignorance or competing political interests but with an *ontological evil* that matched the metaphysical evil of their gods.

Of even greater importance here, though, is the fact that this dualistic mentality, like other religious phenomena, has taken *secular* forms in *political ideologies* on both the right and the left. These ideologies, like some earlier religious ones, have not one but several characteristic features (most of which, though not necessarily all of which, they have in common).[5] In addition to dualism (believing that "they" are inherently evil) are the following closely-linked characteristic features of ideology: essentialism (believing that "we" are inherently good); hierarchy (that "we" are inherently superior to "them"); collectivism (that the politically defined group is more important than ei-ther the individual or the larger society); utopianism (that a new and better world order will supersede the current one); selective cynicism (that the intentions of all people, except our own, are sinister); revolutionism (that merely tinkering with re-forms of the current world order, instead of replacing it with a radically different one, will not do the trick); consequentialism (that the end, no matter how unpalatable in ordinary circumstances, can justify the means); and quasi-religiosity (that the political worldview, like older religious ones, confers ultimate meaning, purpose, community, identity and so forth).

Ideological feminists are not in the majority, but they are also not all on the lunatic fringe. On the contrary, they produce exceedingly sophisticated theories (such as the conspiracy theory of history)[6] and adopt equally sophisticated strategies (such as work-ing within the established law schools and government bureaucracies instead of riot-ing in the streets, to achieve a social revolution that most people still find hard even to imagine). They develop these theories at respectable universities, moreover, and disseminate them through respectable publishers.[7] Eventually, these theories enter the popular culture of movies, sit-coms and talk shows. What was once truly radical, in other words, becomes conventional wisdom (until ideologues up the ante once more). In short, ideological feminists are at least as influential as egalitarian feminists in the journalistic, the academic and especially the legal circles that produce policies and laws. Although they often use the egalitarian rhetoric that is de rigueur in a liberal democracy—one that permits only gender-neutral language, for instance, in legisla-tion—closer examination of both their statements and the results of their campaigns reveals a worldview that is anything but egalitarian and often relies on double stan-dards.[8] For ideological feminists, men are not merely deluded. They are the ultimate, eternal or even ontological enemies of women. Either they or their remote ancestors (or both) are responsible for all suffering and injustice. Most ideological feminists do acknowledge exceptions for men who convert to the new worldview, but these male feminists function as honorary women. They are acceptable not because of their male-ness but *despite* it.

Some ideological feminists, moreover, refer to history in overtly theological—that is, to use the more precise word that these feminists prefer, "the*a*logical"—terms. From this point of view, primeval men instigated a titanic conspiracy not merely to usurp power from women but also to replace the female principle of a great goddess with the male principle of their own gods. Either way, men have oppressed women ever after and will do so until the advent of a feminist utopia. It does not take much imagination to see this ideological story as an upside-down version of earlier Western stories about human origin and destiny. The biblical story blames Adam and Eve equally for sin (what Christians eventually called Original Sin). Some post-biblical interpretations, however, assign most of the blame to Eve and her female descendants. The new, ideological version simply reverses that post-biblical interpretation by blaming primeval men and their male descendants.[9]

This *conspiracy theory of history*, we argue, is the ultimate premise of ideological feminism, though usually in secular form, and thus of misandry. Dualism itself originated long before feminism of any kind and long ago became deeply rooted in Western thought, to be sure, but ideological feminists have exploited it in modern times. The point here—the point that we make throughout our series on misandry—is that misandry must not remain some dirty little secret. It is pervasive, even prevalent, not only at the seemingly innocuous level of popular culture (in entertainment, say, and advertising) but also at the institutional level of elite culture (in research, teaching, legal codes and law enforcement). And it relies firmly on feminist ideology.

Misandry originates as a cultural problem, to be sure, and therefore entails moral problems. In addition, though, it entails emotional and other problems. Though not social scientists, we find it very hard to imagine how any boy can become a healthy young man in such a contaminated cultural environment, just as we find it hard to imagine the analogy for young girls, blacks, gays or those who belong to any other target group. It would be folly, therefore, to ignore feminist ideology, let alone misandry itself, in the interest of political expediency.

And yet, the problems that boys and men currently face did *not begin* with the emergence of misandry, let alone the rise of feminism. This brings us to another major problem.

EMPTINESS

We make a clear distinction between ideological feminism and egalitarian feminism.[10] Unlike ideological feminists, egalitarian feminists have no general theory about the ultimate origin of conflict between men and women. From their point of view, only one thing matters: Women have found it harder than men to enter public life—that is, to build careers outside the home. Some attribute this problem to the greed or ignorance or prejudice of men. Others attribute it to the fact that motherhood places special demands on women. Still others attribute the problem to both factors. All, however, believe that sexual equality is the solution (although some define that as equality of opportunity and others as equality of *result*,[11] each of which entails specific legal consequences).[12] From the perspective of men, however, this approach is some-

what naïve. Equality is a noble ideal, to be sure, but egalitarian feminists have tended to overlook its *unintended consequences* for men (and therefore, indirectly, for women as well).

Our point here is that these unintended consequences are about to complete a disturbing process that began not a few years ago but a few *thousand* years ago. Human history is the history of successive cultural revolutions, most of which have been technological and all of which have led to the gradual obsolescence of men and by now left men *without a distinctive and necessary function as men, without the possibility of being publicly valued as men and therefore without the basis for any healthy identity specifically as men.* Here, now, is a summary of our "revolutionary" theory.[13]

It took one or two million years for primates to become humans. As Luigi Zoja[14] says, this involved several developments. Humans used their hands to carry things, for instance, not to walk. They could have sex at any time, moreover, not merely during "estrus." And their brains expanded not only in complexity but also in size. This meant that birth had to occur while human newborns were still smaller—and therefore less developed—than those of other primate species. And this, in turn, meant that human infants needed parental care for much longer than other primate infants did—a project that required the cooperation of fathers and was the context in which "pair bonding" evolved. All of these developments are natural, which means that they involve genetic factors, but some are cultural as well. Pair bonding,[15] for instance, relies heavily on cultural support systems such as the social arrangements that reward men for being active and enduring participants in family life.

Early humans lived in wandering bands that probably relied at first on scavenging. During the long Paleolithic period, they continued to live in wandering bands but relied increasingly on hunting and gathering. We have no reason to believe that these early communities oppressed either women or men. People did whatever they had to do in the interest of communal survival. Features of both the female body and the male body made it advantageous to assign at least a few tasks either to women or to men. Whatever else they did, for instance, women perpetuated the community by giving birth to infants and nursing them. Whatever else they did, men protected the community from predators and usually provided it with food and other products from big animals. Both women and men faced mortal danger. Women often died in childbirth, and men often died from wounds. The point here is that maleness—innate features of the male body—conferred a healthy collective identity on men just as femaleness did on women. In other words, maleness was the foundation for various forms of masculinity that, by serving communities, commanded public respect.

The problem, for men, began not in the very remote past but in the relatively recent past. We refer to the Neolithic Revolution. Approximately twelve thousand years ago, humans began to rely at least partly on gardening (or, in some cases, on pastoralism). This required them to live in settled communities that provided fertile land and access to water. For the first time, it became practical to store food and other resources. Also for the first time, though, it became desirable to raid the stored food and resources of other communities. This state of affairs sometimes led to the emergence of militaristic societies and therefore to military leaders or chiefs, who accumulated excessive prop-

erty and power.

Closely following the Neolithic Revolution was the Agricultural Revolution, which introduced the iron plough and irrigation. Among the results were much more food and much higher populations. It was in this context that the early civilizations emerged. Characteristic of these were urbanization, occupational specialization, social and political hierarchies, often literacy and eventually "world religions." These religions, apart from anything else, created moral and philosophical principles to curb the rampant injustices perpetrated by early chiefs and kings.

At this point, the male body's distinctive characteristics—its size, strength and speed[16]—still conferred masculine identity on most men: elite warriors (who wielded weapons) and the masses of serfs or peasants (who used iron ploughs to till their fields). But an ever-increasing number of men—artisans, scribes, priests, merchants, traders, bakers, administrators and so on—no longer relied for their identity on their naturally endowed male bodies. They relied instead on culturally established attributes, such as literacy, that society ascribed more-or-less arbitrarily to men but not women.

Fast-forward now to the late eighteenth century. Most men by far were still peasants. A few, either aristocrats or those who worked for them, were soldiers. Men of both classes, therefore, still required brute strength. The Industrial Revolution, however, changed all that by greatly increasing the number of middle-class men—which is to say, those men who did not need brute strength for tilling fields or wielding weapons. A few of these men were entrepreneurs (the industrialists who established mills and mines) or financiers. Others acquired enough education to enter the formerly elite ranks of professional lawyers and physicians. Still others—most men, by far—became proletarians. They worked along with women and even children at the new mills and mines, until reform movements demanded protection for women and children (which meant keeping them at home). Men with the lowest status were those who relied on their muscles; men with the *highest* status, on the other hand, were precisely those who did *not*.

The Military Revolution marked another profound change in the history of men. In one sense, this was just another technological development. Military hardware became increasingly complex. At the same time, it became decreasingly reliant on brute strength. Instead, it became increasingly reliant on literacy and eventually on higher education. This trend became clear to everyone during World War I. Those who planned and organized campaigns had the highest status; those who followed their orders in the trenches had the lowest status, that of "cannon fodder." But the Military Revolution refers primarily not to technological change but to cultural change. Historians usually discuss this as an offshoot of the French Revolution, but its impact spread far beyond the French Republic or even the West. We refer here to "universal" military conscription. Every citizen was now a soldier (or potential soldier) by virtue of merely being a citizen. This calls for an explanation.

According to the new social contract, military service was now the price of citizenship. Being "willing" to fight and possibly die for the State was the hallmark of every *citizen*. Because the State protected women from military service, however, it refrained

from granting them full citizenship. Being a full *citizen* ("willing" to fight and possibly die for the State) was therefore simultaneously the hallmark of being a *man* (as distinct from being a woman). Citizens demonstrated their masculinity primarily and ultimately in battle (or scenarios in everyday life that became metaphorical battles), and the State appropriated the bodies of citizens by virtue of their maleness alone (because the law made no distinction between men who *wanted* to risk their lives in battle and those who did *not*). Even though conscription laws confer masculine identity on those who have male bodies, thus reaffirming the ancient link between maleness and masculinity, it does so at a very high cost to men (and to any society that encourages men to believe that their ultimate value is as fighters). For one thing, conscripts have very low status within armies. Moreover, they often end up dead or mutilated on battlefields.

Women in some countries are now demanding the abrogation of this social contract by allowing (though not forcing) women into combat. However, after more than two hundred years and many social changes, men find it hard to establish a collective identity that relies on something else. Women can already provide for themselves and protect themselves (with help from the State, in both cases, if necessary).

The Reproductive Revolution has undermined the only remaining source of masculine identity for men: fatherhood. Many factors have contributed to this problem: new movements that trivialize fatherhood (single mothers by choice, for instance, and same-sex marriage); new movements that demonize fathers (ideological forms of feminism); new industries that reduce fatherhood to routine medical procedures (sperm banks and surrogacy); new technologies that would eliminate fatherhood or even maleness (avant-garde procedures such as cloning or parthenogenesis); new legislation that undermines even the remnants of fatherhood (joint custody, say, or abortion on demand as a private matter "between a woman and her doctor")—and so on. Many social scientists now believe that fatherhood has no inherent links with either masculinity or maleness. Others believe that fatherhood has no distinctive or necessary function within family life. The implication is that fathers are assistant mothers at best and potential molesters at worst. Is it any wonder, then, that popular entertainment routinely presents fathers as buffoons or worse?

Back now to egalitarian feminism and the inability of men to establish a healthy form of identity, as men, in our time—that is, to the emptiness that men experience as a result. Herein is a great irony. When it comes to the historic (though culturally variable) relation between maleness and masculinity, it is egalitarian feminism, not ideological feminism, that undermines the most direct link between early and modern men. Even if we were to eliminate the toxic misandry of ideological feminism, we would still be left with the paralyzing emptiness that comes (to men) from egalitarian feminists. Even journalists sometimes recognize what academics fail to see. In his review of *Warrior*, A.O. Scott discusses why boys and young men in some environments turn to extreme versions of masculinity, ones that focus on whatever remains of certain traditional symbols of masculinity—notably those that refer to combat. "They fight, he says, "*because every other way of being a man has been compromised, undermined or taken away*. Patriarchal authority, as represented by Paddy, is cruel and unbending

until it turns sentimental and pathetic. The roads to an honorable life promised by work and military service are mined and muddied by the greed and mendacity of the institutions—government, schools, banks—that are supposed to uphold integrity."[17]

We use the word "emptiness" for lack of a better word. In a way, after all, the problem for men has been human history itself, a process that has gradually deprived men of any legitimate sense of fulfillment specifically as male humans. But "human history" fails to convey the experience of that lack in daily life. The word "emptiness" conveys precisely that. Emptiness is the residue of a life without identity and therefore without meaning or purpose—or without meaning and purpose and therefore without identity. To some extent, of course, modernity leaves almost everyone spiritually empty and therefore without a healthy identity. Despite its many advantages, after all, modernity often involves a profound rupture with tradition and meaning, with community and home, and especially with the sacred. This is precisely the void that political ideologies on both the left and the right have tried (with catastrophic results) to fill since the late nineteenth century. They have allowed people who lose one source of collective identity to replace it with another. Instead of establishing it in connection with family or religion, say, they do so in connection with class, race, language or sex. But because these ideologies rely so heavily on dualism, pitting "us" against "them," the price is very high. They solve one problem by creating another. Or, to put it in a slightly different way, they solve problems for some people by creating problems for other people. At the moment, this applies to women and men.

CONCLUSION

Boys and young men now have, at least in theory, only two general ways of responding to the emptiness of their lives. Very few are intellectually and emotionally able to confront emptiness directly, of course, so many do so indirectly by (1) trying to ignore the misandry that underlies and exacerbates emptiness or (2) internalizing it.

Some try deliberately to *ignore* misandry along with all other potential sources of pain by resorting to unbridled hedonism and therefore succumbing to raw narcissism. But hiding from pain by seeking personal pleasure as an end in itself has become characteristic of our society in general—not only in the licentious fantasies of popular entertainment but also in the sordid facts of daily life—and therefore says little about any segment of society in particular.

Others, however, unwittingly *internalize* misandry. And this is something that very few social scientists, if any, have acknowledged so far. The one social problem that they inexplicably fail to see should be self-evident to everyone: the toxic fallout—the pervasive ridicule, contempt, punitive attitude and even hatred—of a society that has no room for its male population per se. One way of internalizing all this misandry is clearly destructive (but also, ultimately, self-destructive). In this category are those who *act up*, attacking a hostile society. Even a negative identity, after all, might be better than no identity at all. The other way of internalizing misandry is clearly self-destructive (but also destructive in other ways). In this category are those who *give up*, succumbing to the apparent emptiness of manhood and thus abandoning an indif-

ferent society. This almost certainly provides at least a partial explanation for the high rates among male people of both dropping out of school and committing suicide.

Sociologists and psychologists have long noted these pathological patterns in young men—Michael Kimmel, for instance, has popularized the idea that American "guys" are pathological almost by definition[18]—but have generally refrained from attributing them to the direct or indirect fallout from feminism and the resulting collapse of masculine identity. By that, once again, we mean the impossibility of establishing a healthy collective identity specifically as men, one that relies on a healthy notion of masculinity. In short, for whatever reason, social scientists tend to ignore the proverbial elephant standing silently in its corner. Instead, they usually attribute pathological patterns to more familiar (and somewhat less politically risky) causes such as poverty, racism, testosterone, evolution, popular culture and the like. Some social scientists have indeed linked the social and psychological pathologies of these boys and young men with father absence, for instance, but few if any have followed the logic of this insight by linking father absence in turn with *identity absence*—that is, with emptiness.

Kimmel describes masculinity in our time as "guyland." Whatever else critics say about Kimmel's feminist theory—and we say a great deal about it[19]—no one can deny that he has described a noteworthy phenomenon. It amounts to notion of manhood that repudiates not only the innocence of boyhood but also the maturity of manhood, which is both *cross-culturally and historically unprecedented.* Kimmel argues that being a "guy" originates in the unearned sense of "entitlement" to masculine privilege (and hostility toward women for denying it). We argue that it originates in the natural sense of entitlement to a healthy masculine identity of any kind. It is easy to argue about the prevalence of "guys" or even about precisely what makes them tick, but it is surely not by chance that the appearance of this psychological twilight zone has coincided with two profoundly significant facts of life for boys and men in our time: the rise of feminism (which either unwittingly denies the possibility of a distinctive masculine identity or deliberately acknowledges only a sinister one) and the absence of anything even remotely like coming of age. Fewer and fewer boys want to become men because fewer and fewer men can convince them that doing so would mean demonstrating their ability to contribute something distinctive and necessary to society. No one has yet come up with a solution to the problem of toxic masculinity in a toxic cultural environment, but no one ever will without first identifying it correctly.

Notes

[1] Another reason is to maintain their own legitimacy as liberal feminists despite the "radical" approaches of a few other feminists. From this point of view, tolerance means never having to say that you are "sorry" for (much less to challenge) those who say ugly things in your name.

[2] In *Spreading Misandry: The Teaching of Contempt for Men in Popular Culture* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), the first of five volumes on misandry, we discuss the negative portrayals of men in popular culture during the 1980s and 1990s. By "popular culture,"

we refer to a wide range of media: movies, sit-coms, talk shows, news shows, magazines and so on. The negative imagery of men ranges in severity from ridicule to dehumanization and even demonization. To summarize our findings: The men these productions portray negatively are either inadequate, evil or both; the few men these productions portray positively are honorary women—either feminists or minority men. Gay men, in particular, often get free passes in gender politics. Our point is not so much that these negative stereotypes harm boys and men (although they do), but that they are symptoms of a much deeper cultural problem (which we explore in later volumes).

[3] Judah was the southern Jewish kingdom. Assyria had already conquered the northern kingdom, Israel, in 722. Its population, deported and assimilated, became the "ten lost tribes."

[4] Those who turned to dualism identified evil not only with enemy communities, whose evil took on eschatological proportions, but also with closely linked cosmic principles. Just as they polarized "us" and "them," for instance, they polarized "spirit" and "flesh" (a metaphysical distinction and conflict that was particularly important to Christians such as St. Paul). Some theologians identified the former, in turn, with maleness and the latter with femaleness. To do that, they had to reinterpret non-dualistic texts accordingly.

[5] Nathanson and Young, *Spreading Misandry*, 199-218.

[6] See note 9.

[7] Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young, *Legalizing Misandry: From Public Shame to Systemic Discrimination against Men* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006) 269-308. This volume, the second of five on misandry, is about the institutionalization of ideological feminism by legislators, lawyers, judges, bureaucrats and the like, all of whom rely, in turn, on the institutionalization of ideological feminism by academics who produce and interpret statistics. We begin this volume by continuing the discussion of popular culture in *Spreading Misandry*, but with our focus on journalism instead of entertainment. To be more precise, we focus on the journalistic feeding frenzies that so often accompany high-profile legal or quasi-legal cases about conflicts between men and women and lead to legislative change. Examples include the Senate confirmation hearing for Clarence Thomas (which provoked a "national dialogue" on sexual harassment) and the avalanche of court battles over "recovered memories" of sexual molestation or even "satanic ritual abuse" (which provoked the modern equivalents of witch hunts). Most of the volume is directly about legislative change due to the influence of ideological feminism in connection with every point of contact between men and women. Neither the laws that govern these contacts (such as conflicts over sexual harassment, divorce, custody, affirmative action) nor the rules that govern their interpretation, implementation and enforcement rely any longer on philosophical notions such as equality of opportunity and legal principles such as the presumption of innocence.

[8] For one example, see Nathanson and Young, *Legalizing Misandry*, 471-477.

[9] See Katherine K. Young and Paul Nathanson, *Sanctifying Misandry: Goddess Ideology and the Fall of Man* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010). This volume, the third of five on misandry, is about the ways in which feminist ideologues have used religion to bolster their claim to female superiority and simultaneously support their conspiracy theory of history, that evil originated in an ancient revolution during which men overturned an egalitarian society, established patriarchy, and began the oppression of women. More specifically, it is about various attempts to reverse a familiar paradigm of profound importance. According to the Bible,

Adam and Eve live in paradise under the aegis of God; Adam and Eve succumb to sin, which leads God to expel them from paradise and into the world of chaos and conflict as we know these in everyday life; the remote descendants of Adam and Eve return to paradise of one kind or another at the end of history. The new version is slightly different: men and women live in paradise under the aegis of a Goddess; men succumb to sin by installing their gods, which leads to the creation of patriarchy; women return to paradise, possibly with some male converts to feminism, at the end of patriarchy. But feminist extremists and separatists are not the only supporters of this revised myth. It has deeply influenced even some liberal forms of Christianity and Judaism.

[10] People classify forms of feminism in many ways according to need. From the specific perspective of *men*, only these two forms are significant.

[11] For political reasons, some people refer to equality of result as "substantive equality" and to equality of opportunity as (mere) "formal equality."

[12] Equality of opportunity entails, among other things, universal *access* to higher education. Equality of result entails, among other things, affirmative action in order to ensure the *equal representation* of all groups in universities (although advocates seldom build in mechanisms that would ensure the end of affirmative action once they have reached their goal, which is why they do not promote affirmative action for men despite the majority of women in universities).

[13] For a detailed discussion of these revolutions, see Paul Nathanson and Katherine K. Young, *Replacing Misandry: From Primeval Man to Postmodern Man* (forthcoming). This is the fourth of five volumes on misandry. The fifth and final volume is *Transcending Misandry: From Ideological Feminism to Intersexual Dialogue* (forthcoming). There, we move beyond misandry per se. Our focus is on the present and future, therefore, more than the past. The word "dialogue" usually refers to a way of discussing conflicts and resolving them in connection with common ideals—justice, say, or compassion—instead of resorting to intimidation or violence. Among the most familiar forms of dialogue has been interreligious dialogue. This originated in the 1960s as an offshoot of ecumenism, the Christian movement that sought greater understanding among the churches (and sometimes institutional union). It did not take long for many people to realize that interreligious dialogue could include not only Christian denominations but also non-Christian communities. Under Pope John XXIII and his successors, for instance, Catholics sought not to convert Jews and other non-Catholics but to foster forgiveness and reconciliation. Religious communities responded to this idea in many ways. Some feared it on historical grounds as a disguise for proselytism and ignored it. Others welcomed it on practical grounds in the interest of combining forces to solve social problems such as poverty, political problems such as tyranny, or even religious problems such as the rise of secularism. Still others welcomed it on intellectual grounds to the extent that they could reaffirm their own distinctive identities by learning about those of other communities. Nowadays, "dialogue" refers to a possibility for any groups in conflict: religious, racial, ethnic, linguistic—and sexual. But overuse and misuse has almost drained this word of meaning.

[14] Luigi Zoja, *The Father: Historical, Psychological and Cultural Perspectives*, trans. Henry Martin (Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis, 2001), 29-45.

[15] See David Schneider, "Primeval Kinship: How Pair Bonding Gave Birth to Human Society," *Evolutionary Psychology* 6.4 (2008): 557-562.

[16] Most men are slightly bigger, stronger and faster than most women are. Although sexual dimorphism (differences between the males and females within a species) is a feature of our species, its degree is very minor compared to those between the males and females of many other primate species. Scientists have found correlations between low degrees of sexual dimorphism and the participation of fathers in family life, and between high levels and the absence of fathers from family life.

[17] A.O. Scott, "A Tale of Jacob, Esau and Muscles," review of *Warrior, New York Times,* 8 November 2011, C-4.

[18] Michael Kimmel, *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men* (New York: Harper, 2008).

[19] See chapter 1 in Nathanson and Young, *Transcending Misandry* (forthcoming).

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