

Looking beyond the sexes



A woman gets pregnant, and her boyfriend leaves her. In Karen Horney's *The Distrust Between the Sexes*, she explains how a person's psychological history causes him/her to distrust people of the opposite sex because of certain expectations they might have. Longings for happiness, childhood reflections, and childhood conflicts are all things that invent these expectations. First off, people are longing for happiness, while setting their expectations at high.

Horney states, All of our unconscious wishes, contradictory in their nature and expanding boundlessly on all sides, are waiting here for their fulfillment (341). Children are raised to believe that relationships with the opposite sex are their doorway to happiness. Horney says, The partner is supposed to be strong, and at the same time helpless, to dominate us and be dominated by us, to be ascetic and to be sensuous (341). People expect their partners to be too many things, which will lead them to disappointment.

Horney states, We take the magnitude of such overvaluation for the measure of our love, while in reality it merely expresses the magnitude of our expectations (341). Society's longing for happiness has so many expectations of what love should be that, in the end, all one has is one's expectations.

Next, childhood reflections cause a certain number of expectations that are handed down by generations. Horney states, Thus far, our reflections certainly have been neither new nor specifically analytical and have often been better formulated in the past(341).

Reflections that people have from their childhood carve the person into what they are as an adult. Horney explains, The paradise of childhood is most

often an illusion with which adults like to deceive themselves(341). Adults remember their childhood as a fantasy and try to live their lives around that fantasy. Horney says, We need only recall the capacity that children possess even in their very early years, for passionate and instinctive sexual desires similar to those of adults and yet different from them(342).

Children and adults are very different, but if a person finds the similarity, it will help them throughout their lives. Last, childhood conflicts give a person certain expectations of how the opposite sex will treat a person. Horney states, Let us further assume that the latter wish was repressed due to anxiety from a guilty conscience; then we have here the fundamental constellation for the formation of certain type of woman who is unable to relate to the male because she fears that every male will suspect her of wanting something from him(343).

Children have many conflicts, which affect part of their adult lives. Horney explains, Or by completely projecting onto him her repressed wishes, she will imagine that every male merely intends to exploit her, that he wants from her only sexual satisfaction, after which he will discard her(343). If a person's opposite sex hurts them in any way, then that person will believe that the opposite sex will always hurt them.

Horney states, Or let us assume that a reaction formation of excessive modesty will mask the repressed drive for power(343). Children develop at different ages; therefore, modesty levels are different for the opposite sex. Distrust between the opposite sexes is the effect from psychological history because of certain standards and expectations people set for themselves

and others. Expectations that contribute to the distrust between the sexes are caused by longings for happiness, childhood reflections, and childhood conflicts.