

# It's All Connected

by Bill Herbst

*Version 1.5 (posted on 13 October 2017)  
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A spate of scandals involving allegations of sexual abuses against women by powerful men (most of them white) have become headline news over recent years. I need not name the entire list of men involved in these disgraces — they are all famous but aging media figures — except to state that the target of the current scandal, Harvey Weinstein, a (former) kingmaker in Hollywood, is damn near legendary in the entertainment business, where his behavior was widely known, so much so that it was an “open secret” throughout the industry. His name was used repeatedly and publicly as a running gag for sexual predation. For decades, smirking references to Harvey Weinstein were the living embodiment of “the casting couch.”

These scandals have emerged — slowly and with much doubt at first, but with increasing frequency and fury — one after another after another in what is now apparently an unceasing parade of smarmy revelations. I don't know what's in the private hearts of the men involved, but no obvious evidence of conscience or remorse about their behavior has emerged. Most of them continue to vehemently deny the allegations.

These scandals are not isolated incidents. And by that, I don't mean only that a systematic pattern of sexual misbehavior, largely perpetrated by men, exists in the world. Of course it does. It always has. Some men who achieve positions of social status, public acclaim, and personal power have been doing this since civilization began, and probably long before that. Should we presume that all men in positions of power and high authority engage in sexual predation? No, but the percentages may be higher than we assume.

If we culled from history the much smaller number of women who achieved rulership or great influence, would we find abuses of power? I'm pretty sure we would, although they might not take the form of sexual misconduct. The recurring theme of the problems — whatever their form — is not caused as much by the biology of the powerful person, but by the seductions of power itself. Power says, “*You can do whatever you want. What do you want?*” Among what many men typically want — besides money — is the fulfillment of their sexual drives and fantasies. If that's what a particular powerful man wants, power says, “*Take it.*”

What I mean by asserting that these headline-grabbing affairs are not isolated incidents is that sexual misconduct is right in line alongside most of the other ailments that slither (or leap) out of the dark side of human nature and cause so much unnecessary suffering in the world. Racism, militarism, authoritarianism, greed, hatred, insensitivity and lack of empathy for others or for the world, and the gender conflicts that the parade of sexual scandals highlight are all connected, all part of the corruption of social and spiritual ideals that occurs routinely throughout civilization. Human beings can be noble and loving. We can also be cruel and monstrous.

Basically, this is about testosterone as a driving force in young and immature psyches.

In astrology, testosterone is linked to the planetary symbol Mars. Martian symbolism represents the masculine urge in all its various manifestations — desire (including sexual desire, but also craving in any form), competition, assertion or aggression, and conquest. Mars is the God of War, which includes both fighting and the will to win. Mars is like an arrow, a bullet, a missile, or (forgive my obviousness here) a big, stiff dick. An erect male member engorged with blood is often referred to as “angry,” and that’s not a misnomer, since it bluntly reflects the Martian connection to masculine sexuality.

Like all planetary symbols, Mars doesn’t operate alone, in a vacuum. At least it shouldn’t operate alone. Planets represent archetypical motivations or urges, and they work most naturally in dyadic pairs — two symbols that taken together form a balanced or complementary whole. For Mars, the natural complement and partner is Venus, symbolizing the pure masculine and the pure feminine. Mars is the first planet in orbit beyond the earth, further from the Sun; Venus is the first planet in orbit inward from the earth, closer to the Sun. So, in an earth-centered astrology, Mars symbolizes the push outward into the external environment, while Venus represents the pull inward into the interior environment. Both are powerful urges, and each is necessary to the whole.

As a dyadic pair, Mars and Venus do NOT correspond to active and passive. Mars and Venus are both active in their natural and healthy expression. Either can be passive within the psyche of a given person, but only when blocked or denied. Mars is active and potent in a centrifugal (outward-directed) manner and most often expressed physically through kinetic action. Venus is active and broadly affecting in a centripetal (inward-directed) manner and may be expressed physically, but also psychologically, emotionally, spiritually, and artistically.

Venus is about what one values in personal love, aesthetics, and pleasure. Venus is the queen, while Mars is her soldier. Venus says, *“This is what I’d love,”* and Mars salutes and says, *“Yes, my Queen, I’ll go out and get it for you.”* When both symbols are expressed in a mature way, the results are harmonious and balanced. The love, aesthetics, and pleasures of Venus are grounded and made

more real by Mars, and the hard sharpness of Mars is softened by Venus' appreciation for what is valuable. When the pair is expressed in an immature way, however, Venus becomes petulant or selfish in her wishes, and Mars becomes willing to steal or act violently to obtain whatever the queen decrees.

To return to sexuality, Mars penetrates while Venus enfolds. Tomes have been written about masculine versus feminine power and the myriad ways that those contrasting potencies are equivalent or complementary. In the natural world, men as a biological gender have a clear advantage in physical size and raw strength over women, but those advantages are reversed in many other ways. Women live longer, they carry the babies that perpetuate the species, and their sexuality is both more potent (wave-like and extended multiple orgasms for women are not only possible but natural) and more diverse (women are not as fixated as men on the physical attributes of their partners) than their male counterparts.

Add to all this the fact that every human who ever lived was born of woman, and we have a serious conundrum for masculinity. How can men ever achieve equality? To the extent that men identify only with their masculinity, they can't. Maleness is clearly not at the sacred heart of the world, but rather on the periphery, almost as if men were intended to be worker drones. So, since men face so much insecurity, what they've done over the ages is to settle for domination. They have constrained, belittled, humiliated, and abused women as "punishment" for their own masculine feelings of inferiority and helplessness. Women may be exalted and placed on pedestals by men, but mainly as idealized objects to be possessed.

Sadly, women have allowed this, too often succumbing to the false narratives of masculine superiority and worldly dominion, and also by feeling powerless against the overwhelming pressure of economic power, social norms, and the edifice of institutional authority, which are almost entirely masculine in structure and content and controlled by men. Sure, corporations and governments pay fake homage to the feminine by saying "*We care,*" but that's mostly illusion, mere window-dressing and public relations. Actually, most institutions are scared as hell about being found out in their divide-and-conquer masculine approach. Notice that the immediate response of nearly every company or social institution to allegations by women of sexual abuse committed by powerful men within their ranks tend to be bipolar: either denied and dismissed outright or wrapped in falsely naïve outrage. In the latter response, organizations are "*shocked, Shocked!*" to learn of such abuses. Yeah, sure, as if they were unaware.

What concerns me even more than the hypocritical posturing of corporations and institutions is the widespread cynicism about sexual politics among the public. When the infamous 2005 "Access Hollywood Bus" video containing Donald Trump's comments about women was released during the Presidential campaign in October 2016, many people felt that Trump's chances of winning were surely

finished. Nope. What tens of millions of Trump supporters felt (and many said) in the aftermath was, *"This is how men are. It's what powerful men do. So what?"* As if such attitudes and behavior were inevitable and therefore OK. Well, they're neither inevitable nor OK. They are, however, so commonplace as to be banal, and so deeply entrenched after thousands of years that their roots are damn near impenetrable.

We live in a society that is defined too much by superficiality. The fullness of things is recognized and celebrated much less frequently than the surface appearance of things. Beauty is a primary attribute of this superficiality. For all its exaltation of freedom and individuality, our culture places more value on the youthful beauty of the face and body, especially for women. Women are encouraged to maximize their physical allure in all sorts of artificial ways — through dress, make-up, and other adornments, which include surgical alteration these days. Women tend to see this as increasing their social currency; too many men see it as women's advertising themselves as attractive, available sexual objects, basically as living mannequins. In planetary archetypes, Venus appreciates beauty as an expression of harmony and aesthetic perfection. For Mars, however, beauty is an inflammatory stimulus toward passion. For Venus, perfection is love. For Mars, perfection is sex.

I worry that our culture is moving even further into shallow imagery, which doesn't bode well for our evolution in a direction I'd prefer. I'd like to see men take the lead in changing the perception of women-as-objects, but my expectation is that women will have to do much of the heavy lifting themselves. I understand all too well how difficult that burden has been and will be for the women who take it on by no longer making themselves up as pretty dolls.

Do we need more laws on the books concerning appropriate sexual behavior? No, we have enough of those already. Do we need social memes and mores to change? Yes, but that evolution is gradual, in fits and starts. Laws and even an evolving social consensus will never be sufficient on their own to balance the masculine and feminine in ways that let us move forward with greater respect, equality, and appreciation for both genders.

One reason that changing social attitudes can have only limited impact is that an entire structure of underlings, almost a subculture of minions, exists to protect those in positions of high authority. As we see time and time again, powerful men and their organizations use all their considerable resources — legal, financial, and human — to defend their reputations by opposing allegations of corruption or hushing up evidence of malfeasance. Legions of highly paid lawyers and other henchman are happy to offer their services to threaten legal actions (and far worse fates) against accusers to keep wrongdoing from becoming public record. Whistleblowers routinely face nightmarish intimidation designed to keep them cowed, fearful, and silent.

In the current scandal, the number of women — mainly actresses in Hollywood — coming out of the woodwork to confirm or add their own experience to the allegations is increasing rapidly because the floodgates of that particular situation have been thrown wide open. That's an encouraging sign for the future, in that critical mass may have been reached finally on the dicey and previously taboo subject of sexual improprieties, but whether that's truly a serious crack in the way society regards gender weirdness or just another scandal that will soon fade from the headlines remains to be seen.

Gender balance and harmony require something from each of us, namely, that we recognize and affirm the presence of both archetypes — masculine and feminine — within ourselves and others, as well as in the world around us. Experienced from the perspective of only one archetype of the pair — either Mars or Venus exclusively — the other is diminished, and both end up perverted. The single-minded limitations of passion based solely on desire are improved — made sacred and meaningful — by the inclusive wholeness of love and beauty. In much the same way, fantasies of romance and beauty are grounded in real life by the no-nonsense tangibility of desire. At any given moment, we may feel one archetype more strongly than the other, which is fine and natural, but becoming fixated on either masculinity or femininity leads to serious trouble for us and for the world.

Real and meaningful change in gender attitudes requires many interlocking components, including changes in collective beliefs and social attitudes. Another necessary element, though, one that is critical if any changes are to be lasting, is more widespread personal maturity. Some people are there already. Too many of us aren't. Personal maturity means not only evolutionary refinement for each of us concerning orientations and beliefs held about men, women, power, and sex, but also greater individual awareness, compassion, and especially conscience. It's one thing to abuse others because one is afflicted with madness. It's quite another thing to do that without remorse.

Until a significantly larger percentage of human beings outgrows the adolescent fixations and superficial understanding of life that have held sway in civilization for thousands of years, we will remain shackled to the problems that beset us. We may not have much time left to grow up.

I don't expect instant enlightenment from any of us, but opening the door even a little to let in the warming sunlight of conscience would be a good start.