

The Intuition Of The Primordial Woman

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This painting is rooted in the intuition of women and how they have been ripped and distanced from their primordial roots. The idea of the ancient woman, and the beginning of female intuition, makes it clear that instinct and intuition serve a specific purpose. It causes darkness to incite fear; it is why we look for love, and it is why a mother can hear the cry of a child before anyone else. I returned to the themes of our biologic insight, the viscera, and the relation of learning and curiosity surrounding life before and after birth. Christianity and other religions obscure the strength of women and force us to become alienated from our visceral intuition, despite the fact that women have been the backbone of creation throughout history. I used religious imagery to call attention to this persecution and oppression. The woman is crucified with her stomach cut open, representing the sacrifice a mother makes to her child. I connected the story of the Virgin Mary and how the sacrifice she made for her son is similar to the sacrifice Jesus made for humanity. The lambs represent the blood of Christ and further illustrate the idea of sacrifice. To create cohesiveness within the piece, I used gold leaf for the summarizing text and a gold leaf halo symbolizing a holiness and purity associated with women.

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Although the female body is a form of strength and brawn, throughout history women have been pushed down, and pulled away from their roots. The primitive woman has been snuffed out like an ember, and the natural cycles of women were pushed into unnatural rhythms. The mental and physical sacrifice a woman makes during pregnancy is when she taps into this ancient and primordial nature. Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estés states in her book, *Women Who Run With the Wolves*, that, “With her as her ally, as leader, model, teacher, we see, not through two eyes, but through the eyes of intuition which is many-eyed. When we assert intuition, we are therefore like the starry night: we gaze at the world through a thousand eyes.” In this quote, “Her” refers to the ancient women, the same DNA that all women share with the first women to walked the earth, and from the earth herself.

All women have a call to the primitive “wild women” in their soul. The call to creation from the voice within that tells them to keep pushing, to keep fighting. Are we born with this voice? How can a mother hear the cry of an infant before anyone else? Why does darkness insight fear? And, why does love compel us to find family? Dr. Estés defines this as the “taste of the wild,” the wise or knowing nature of women, our visceral instincts that help us survive.

Instinct, the thing we are all born with, to fight or to flee, is the knowledge instilled in us by our species fight for survival. When my aunt Gretchen was young she worked as a cook in a restaurant. One night an intense sense of danger overcame her and she just knew she could never work another night there. After quitting her job that night she was told she would never be able to get hired anywhere else after giving her boss no notice. It was later that she found out that the night after she quit the restaurant was robbed and the cook was brutally raped. My aunt Gretchen uses her intuition to guide her through every decision in her life, she relies on it.

The bond that a mother shares with her child is a bond fabricated from the strength and protection a mother needs to have during pregnancy. A woman becomes completely vulnerable, she gives her body to her child. When my mom was pregnant with my brother, Alex, a month before her due date she felt that he was transverse in her stomach and that something was really wrong. She told my dad that she was in labor and she needed to go to the hospital as soon as possible. My mother was having contractions every five minutes and my dad still questioned why she was bringing her overnight bag to the hospital. When my mom got to the hospital the doctors had to perform a cesarean section right away. A mother's intuition is very strong and good doctors know the true value of a mother's instinct. My mom can just look at me and know if something is wrong and I believe it's the connection and intuition that makes this possible. “For some women, this vitalizing “taste of the wild” comes during pregnancy, during nourishing their young, during the miracle of change in oneself as one raises a child.” This quote begs the question, why has the instinctive nature of women been put down and hidden by religion? I return to these themes of our biologic insight, the viscera, and the relation of learning and curiosity to life before and after birth, to the instincts of humans. Christianity covers up the strength of women and forces us to become alienated from our visceral intuition, even though women have been the backbone of creation throughout history.

When did religion build barriers to hide natural instinct? The burning of the Library of Alexandria was the destruction of human knowledge and of a pinnacle of enlightenment. When the knowledge stored in Alexandria was lost to the world, Christianity brought about an era where religion was consumed by corruption and power that oppressed the vulnerable. “Faith, indeed, has up to the present not been able to move real mountains, although I do not know who

assumed that it could. But it can put mountains where there are none.”¹ Friedrich Nietzsche explains the flaws of religion and its inability to raise a group of people higher. Rather than do this, Nietzsche implies religions’ ability to oppress..

Religion and myth speak to the unknown; humans seek to understand what they cannot fathom. The philosophy of religion explains the origins and looks into how religion interprets life and death. “A philosophical exploration of these topics involves fundamental questions about our place in the cosmos and about our relationship to what may transcend the cosmos. Such philosophical work requires an investigation into the nature and limit of human thought.”² Using religion as an organizational tool, women were branded as inferior by the church and alienated from their origins. In the Old Testament, Mary is referred to as a young married women and it isn’t until later that Mary became the Virgin Mary because the anatomy and cycles of the women were too impure in the eyes of the church.³ Only few names of women in religion are widely known; Mary as the mother of Jesus Christ, and Mary Magdalene Jesus’ disciple and first witness to his resurrection.⁴ In the story of Adam and Eve, Eve is tempted by the snake to bite into the forbidden fruit causing both Adam and Eve to be banished from the Garden of Eden. Eve, the first woman, is blamed for the removal of Adam, the first man, from the garden, showing that the female identity is associated with evil. This isn’t the only time we witness women’s oppression in religion. Despite the importance of Mary, she is not remembered as a heroic savior, but only as the virgin mother of Jesus Christ. Mary’s body was the physical vessel for the prophecy of Jesus to be carried out. The story of Jesus is most commonly connected to the story of his crucifixion for all our sins, it is a story of sacrifice and devotion, but is Mary’s devotion of her physical body not an even greater and more significant sacrifice?

In Chetan Bhatt’s TED Talk, *Dare to Refuse the Origin Myths That Claim Who You Are*, he states that, “A radically different idea of humanity that exposes how origin myths mystify, disguise global power, rapacious exploitation, poverty, the worldwide oppression of women and girls, and of course massive, accelerating inequalities.”⁵ He explains how religion is responsible for degrading not just women, but the identity of femininity. But it is in my femininity where I find my strength and courage, to dare to push the limits set by religion. I want to understand my own anatomy, the human physique both the physical wonders of our bodies, and the psyche. To understand why the pain a woman experiences means something, to know there is a reason for menstruation, childbirth, and the emotional burdens that come with them.

I look to the viscera, the internal organs of the human body, those organs such as the heart and lungs within the chest and the digestive organs in the abdomen, but also the phenomenon of the visceral gut feeling. Both our inner anatomy and our instincts work together

¹ Human, All-Too-Human : Miscellaneous Maxims and Opinions, 225. FAITH MAKES HOLY AND CONDEMNS, Friedrich Nietzsche

² Taliaferro, Charles. “Philosophy of Religion.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Stanford University, 12 Mar. 2007, plato.stanford.edu/entries/philosophy-religion/.

³“Mary in the Old Testament.” *Mary in the Old Testament - Home of the Mother*, www.homeofthemothor.org/resources/virgin-mary/2106-old-testament.

⁴“Women In Ancient Christianity: The New Discoveries.” *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service, www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/women.html.

⁵ Bhatt, Chetan. “Dare to Refuse the Origin Myths That Claim Who You Are.” *Chetan Bhatt: Dare to Refuse the Origin Myths That Claim Who You Are | TED Talk*, www.ted.com/talks/chetan_bhatt_dare_to_refuse_the_origin_myths_that_claim_who_you_are.

to keep us alive, to survive, and understand the environment around us. Instincts originate in the womb during pregnancy, and pregnancy's viscerality comes from the physical connection a fetus shares with its mother as a host and life source. During gestation, the marrow of a mother and her child becomes intertwined and inseparable. Life relies on the bond between mother and child, and the cues a fetus takes from the intrauterine environment. Expanding the intellect begins in the womb when the voice of the mother reverberates through her body reaching the fetus, the fetus familiarizes itself with the voice of its mother and when the child is born it recognizes and prefers the voice of its mother over anyone else's. During gestation, and with every trimester, a fetus prepares their inner physiology for the world that awaits them. The relationship and connection between a mother and child is what life relies on to survive the unforgiving world we are all born into. After studying behavioral changes in new mothers, scientists prove that the way a woman behaves is linked to the changes in her prefrontal cortex, midbrain, and parietal lobes. The gray matter becomes more condensed and there is a raise of activity in the areas that control empathy, anxiety, and social interaction. The changes a woman experiences is caused by a release of hormones, especially oxytocin during pregnancy and in postpartum. The maternal oxytocin level is responsible for maternal-infant bonding in mammalian species. The biologic changes attract a new mother to her child, these feelings of protectiveness and overwhelming love start in the brain. Brain researcher Pilyoung Kim stated, "In new moms, there are changes in many of the brain areas, growth in brain regions involved in emotion regulation, empathy-related regions, but also what we call maternal motivation—and I think this region could be largely related to obsessive-compulsive behaviors. In animals and humans during the postpartum period, there's an enormous desire to take care of their own child."⁶ Interestingly, the amygdala - the part of the brain that corresponds emotional reactions and helps process memories - grows during and after pregnancy. When the amygdala is heightened, mothers are more responsive to a child's needs. Mothers that suffer from amygdala dysfunction have weak bonds with their baby and are less responsive to emotional and social cues from their child.

"I live by intuition every day. What I learned was not to ignore it. When I was in high school I worked at a restaurant called Tacos Ole. I was the cook and one night I sensed danger. It was so strong and I intuitively knew that I could not come back there, so I told my boss I had to quit."

My aunt Gretchen and my mother are two of the strongest women I know. Their opinions and views are backed by strong voices, when they enter a room their presence is known. The respect and affection I have for these strong women is the reason I am so enthralled by the concept of a strong women. Mothers are built to fall in love with their children. Love is wild and animal, it is a core emotion and it is what drives our species to continue. It's like motherhood is its own part of the brain, waiting to be taped into. The intuition of a woman is an enigmatic phenomenon seen and felt by every women. There is a pull that is seemingly inexplicable but it's the reason why a mother would do anything for her child, why she would face the world head on to protect a life, why a women's maternal instinct is uncontrollable like a raging fire that can't be

⁶www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2015/01/what-happens-to-a-womans-brain-when-she-becomes-a-mother/384179/.

put out. Women experience the awakening of the ancient woman buried and oppressed by religion in times when the strength of motherhood is revealed; when the gut feeling to protect those we love overcomes our physical beings. We have instincts to survive and live to old age, they are biologically passed down from mother to child in a cycle, a lineage that connects and strengthens us all.

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