

When One Became Two

The Szeptunki's Whisper on Complementary Creation

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I. The Date as Cosmic Convergence

On an ordinary evening, in an ordinary restaurant, two people sit across from each other. Coffee cools between them. Words pass back and forth – about work, weather, dreams. Yet something extraordinary hides beneath this mundane surface: after four and a half billion years of Earth's existence, after three and a half billion years of life's evolution, two lineages that have never failed – not once – to survive and reproduce, have converged in this moment.

Consider the staggering improbability. Every one of your ancestors, stretching back to the first replicating molecule, succeeded in the ultimate test: they lived long enough to reproduce. Through asteroid impacts, ice ages, plagues, wars, famines – an unbroken chain of success leads to you, sitting here, holding a coffee cup. And across from you sits another complete victory of evolution, another unbroken chain, another artifact forged by billions of years of selection pressure.

You are both, in the most literal sense, the cutting edge of evolution's experiment. Earth was the smith, evolution the hammer, time the forge. And after eons of heating, beating, folding, refining – two blades sit here, testing their compatibility. This is not hyperbole or poetry. This is the physical truth of any date: two products of Earth's forge, checking if they might merge their lineages and continue the experiment for another generation.

But here's where the conversation takes an unexpected turn. Lean in, lower your voice, and share this: "Do you know why we're sitting here, talking, instead of just... combining our cells in the primordial way? It all started with a seemingly minor change in cell size, billions of years ago."

II. The Mystery of Isogamy and the Birth of Sexual Difference

In the beginning – not the biblical beginning, but the biological one – all sex cells were equal. This state, called isogamy, meant that reproducing organisms produced gametes of identical size. There was no male or female, no sperm or egg. Just cells of equal size meeting, fusing, creating new life. Simple. Symmetrical. Seemingly perfect.

But evolution abhors a stable strategy if a better one exists. And somewhere, perhaps two billion years ago, an imbalance began. A mutation produced some gametes slightly smaller than others. These smaller cells could be produced in greater numbers with the same resources. They moved faster. They could search more volume for a partner. Meanwhile, other mutations produced larger gametes, packed with more nutrients, more organelles, more resources for the developing offspring.

Here's the crucial insight that explains everything: medium-sized gametes got caught in an evolutionary vice. They were neither numerous enough to find partners efficiently, nor resourced enough to support development optimally. Natural selection squeezed from both sides. The small got smaller, the large got larger, and everything in between was competitively excluded from existence.

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:27). But before there could be male and female, there had to be sperm and egg. Before Adam and Eve, there was anisogamy – the inequality of gametes that would cascade into everything we call sex, gender, and the eternal dance between masculine and feminine.

III. The Cascade: From Cellular to Cosmic

Once anisogamy emerged, everything else followed like water flowing downhill. This is not cultural construction or patriarchal conspiracy. This is physics and mathematics playing out in biological systems.

Consider the logic: You have two types of gametes – tiny, numerous, cheap sperm and large, rare, expensive eggs. When it comes time to bring them together, which do you move? Obviously, you transport the small, light, numerous ones to the large, heavy, precious ones. To do otherwise would be like shipping the factory to the raw materials instead of the raw materials to the factory.

This simple logistical decision – which seems barely worth mentioning – creates the entire structure of sexual reproduction. The organism producing eggs stays still and receives. The organism producing sperm must move and deliver. In the ocean, this might just mean releasing clouds of sperm to drift to anchored eggs. But on land, it means one sex must physically approach and transfer gametes to the other.

From this flows everything: - Females invest more per offspring (eggs are expensive, sperm is cheap) - Males can potentially produce hundreds of offspring; females are limited - Females become choosy (mistakes are costly); males compete (attempts are cheap) - Males develop display features, risk-taking behavior, competitive instincts - Females develop evaluation abilities, protective instincts, resource-gathering skills

Robert Trivers formalized this in his Parental Investment Theory. Bateman demonstrated it empirically with fruit flies. But every shepherd who ever watched rams butting heads while ewes grazed peacefully understood it intuitively. The sex that invests less competes; the sex that invests more chooses.

IV. The Mathematics of Protection

“Think about it this way,” you might say on that cosmic date, “Take a thousand men and ten women, or ten men and a thousand women. Which group has better long-term survival prospects?”

The answer is brutal in its clarity. Ten men and a thousand women can produce a thousand babies every nine months. A thousand men and ten women can produce... ten. Women are, mathematically speaking, the reproductive bottleneck of the species. This is not ideology or social construction. This is arithmetic.

This mathematical reality explains patterns that span cultures and millennia: “Women and children first” during evacuations. Pregnant women skip queues. Young men fight wars while young women are protected. These are not arbitrary social conventions but evolutionary optimizations refined over millions

of years.

The Polish saying captures it perfectly: “Mężczyzna to chodzący pistolet” – “A man is a walking gun.” Not because of toxic masculinity or patriarchal programming, but because evolution shaped males to be the expendable defenders of the reproductive bottleneck. One man can father hundreds of children; every woman lost is potential generations erased.

This is why men have greater upper body strength, denser bones, more hemoglobin, faster reflexes, better spatial navigation for hunting and warfare. Not superiority – specialization. The sword protecting the chalice. The wall around the garden. The expendable guardian of the irreplaceable.

V. The Szeptunki: Shadow Transmission of Eternal Wisdom

In the eastern reaches of Poland, in the region called Podlasie where Orthodox Christianity meets ancient Slavic wisdom, live the last of the szeptunki – the whisperers. These elderly women, perhaps a dozen remaining, carry knowledge that survived the rise and fall of empires, the coming and going of religions, wars that leveled cities and purges that destroyed libraries.

How did this wisdom survive when so much else was lost? Through whispers between grandmothers and granddaughters, through lullabies sung to babies, through herbs gathered in forests while men fought in fields. The szeptunki preserved what they preserved not despite being women but because of it. While pregnant or nursing – states that evolution made sacred through the mathematics of survival – they were protected from the worst ravages of history.

They whisper prayers in a dialect that mixes Polish with Belarusian and Old Church Slavonic. They refuse payment because “God’s gifts must be free.” They cannot refuse help to anyone who asks. They operate outside the official Church but not against it – in the shadows, in the margins, in the spaces between.

This is not oppression but optimization. The szeptunki could preserve ancient wisdom precisely because they operated in the protected shadow spaces that evolution carved out for those carrying the future. While male institutions rose and fell, while armies clashed and borders shifted, grandmothers whispered to granddaughters, and the wisdom survived.

What the szeptunki understand – what all traditional cultures understood

before we forgot – is that different doesn't mean unequal. The grandmother whispering prayers over herbs and the grandfather forging swords were not in competition but in complementarity. Each incomplete without the other.

VI. Different but Equal: The Both/And Wisdom

Here we must hold two truths simultaneously, though modern discourse insists we choose one: biological differences are real AND moral equality is real. These are not contradictory but complementary truths.

Yes, evolution shaped men and women differently. Millions of years of selection pressure cannot be erased by ideology. The body that can grow another human inside it will always be different from the body that cannot. The gametes that require internal fertilization create different strategies than those that could theoretically be scattered to the wind. This is not social construction but physical reality.

AND YET – and this “yet” is crucial – different does not mean unequal in worth, dignity, or rights. A sword is not superior to a chalice; they serve different functions. The Sun is not superior to the Moon; they illuminate different aspects of reality. The wave is not superior to the particle; they are complementary expressions of the same underlying quantum reality.

The feminist movement was absolutely right to fight the corruption that said “woman is property of man.” This is evil, full stop. When anyone – bishop or philosopher or common man – reduces a human being to property, fury is the appropriate response. The Left is correct that women were systemically oppressed, denied votes, denied education, denied agency. This happened. This was wrong. This needed to change.

But the pendulum swung too far when it began denying biological reality itself. When we pretend that men and women are identical except for social conditioning, we lose something essential: the beauty of complementarity, the dance of difference, the incompleteness that draws us together.

I will never say we are the same. We are not. But are we equal? Absolutely. Both truths. Simultaneously. Without compromise.

VII. The Powerful Feminine: Threshold Guardians and World-Walkers

Consider Ciri in Sapkowski's Witcher Saga – the most powerful being in that universe is a woman carrying Elder Blood. She can walk between worlds,

slip through dimensions, access powers that even the most accomplished male sorcerers cannot touch. But notice: her power is not masculine power in a female body. It is specifically feminine – connected to bloodlines, to inheritance, to the ability to create not just life but possibilities.

Everyone hunts Ciri not to kill her but to control her reproduction. Her womb carries the future of magical bloodlines. The Wild Hunt pursues her across dimensions because her children would reshape reality. She is hunted precisely because she is the reproductive bottleneck – but in her case, for magical evolution rather than biological.

Galadriel operates differently – she is the liminal wisdom-keeper, the one who tests hearts, who preserves knowledge across ages. She could take the One Ring and become a terrible queen, but she chooses to diminish, to go into the West, to let the Age of Men begin. This is not weakness but a different kind of strength – the strength to let go, to trust, to preserve without possessing.

Lúthien shows us yet another mode – active feminine heroism. She rescues Beren from Sauron’s dungeons, confronts Morgoth himself, sings Angband to sleep, and claims a Silmaril from the Iron Crown. But even her power is specifically feminine – song rather than sword, enchantment rather than force, the choice of mortality for love rather than immortal glory.

Daenerys Targaryen: Mother of Dragons. Fire cannot burn her. She births the first dragons in centuries not through sorcery but through intuition, sacrifice, walking into flames while pregnant with possibility. She is power connected to cycles of life and death, creation and destruction.

These are not “strong women written as men with breasts.” They are powerful precisely in their femininity – as threshold-crossers, wisdom-keepers, life-creators, world-walkers. They embody what the szeptunki knew: feminine power moves differently than masculine power, but it is not lesser. It is the moon to the sun, the chalice to the blade, the egg to the sperm – different, essential, irreplaceable.

VIII. Complementary Creativities: The External and Internal Forge

Men create swords, buildings, philosophies, monuments – external artifacts that outlast the creator. Women create human beings – internal realities that carry consciousness forward. Neither is complete alone.

Is masculine external creation perhaps compensation for the inability to create

life directly? Consider: I can write essays, forge swords, build cathedrals, compose symphonies. But I cannot grow another consciousness inside me. I cannot feed it from my body. I cannot bring it forth in blood and pain and transform two into three.

So I create external children – artifacts that might outlast me, ideas that might outlive me, buildings that might stand after I’m gone. Every essay is a child I’ll never bear. Every sword is a son I cannot birth. Every building is a body I cannot grow within my own.

Meanwhile, she creates the ultimate artwork: another consciousness, another soul, another universe of possibility wrapped in flesh and bone and dream. Where I must embed consciousness in steel or stone or words, she embeds it in living tissue. Where I preserve wisdom in libraries, she preserves it in the whispers between mother and child, in the songs sung over cradles, in the first words that shape a mind.

Both sacred. Both necessary. Both incomplete without the other.

The tragedy of modern discourse is that it makes us choose: either biology matters OR equality matters. Either differences are real OR dignity is universal. But this is like asking whether wave or particle is the true nature of light. The answer is both. Always both. The question itself misunderstands reality.

IX. The Corruption and the Correction

Some ancient patterns were optimization; others were corruption. Protecting pregnant women is optimization. Treating women as property is corruption. The division of labor based on biological advantages is optimization. The denial of education and agency is corruption.

The challenge is that both existed simultaneously in traditional societies, tangled together like wheat and tares. The feminist movement had to attack the whole system because the corruption was so intertwined with the optimization that they couldn’t be separated without destroying both.

This is why we needed the overcorrection, the pendulum swing, the denial of all differences. Sometimes you must demolish a structure entirely before you can rebuild it properly. The “patriarchy” that feminists attacked was real – but it was patriarchy-as-corruption, not the mathematical logic of protection or the biological reality of specialization.

Now, perhaps, we can begin to rebuild with more nuance. We can acknowledge

that: - Yes, women were oppressed (true) - AND biological differences are real (also true) - Yes, traditional patterns had wisdom (true) - AND many traditional applications were corrupt (also true) - Yes, men and women are equal in dignity (true) - AND they are different in function (also true)

This is not centrism or fence-sitting. This is recognizing that reality is more complex than ideology admits. We need the freedom to speak all these truths simultaneously without being labeled sexist or woke, traditional or progressive, patriarchal or feminist.

X. Evolution's Forge Continues

Return to that date, that coffee cooling between two products of evolution's forge. When you share these ideas – about anisogamy, about gamete economics, about the cascade from cellular to psychological to cultural – you're not reducing romance to biology. You're elevating it to cosmic significance.

Every successful relationship is evolution's experiment continuing. Every child born is Earth trying a new combination, seeing if this particular mixing of lineages might produce something unprecedented. We are not just individuals finding love; we are the universe becoming conscious of itself and choosing how to continue.

The man brings his sword-nature: the drive to create external artifacts, to protect, to compete, to display. The woman brings her chalice-nature: the ability to create internal life, to choose, to preserve, to nurture. Neither complete alone. Both products of the same forge, but heated at different temperatures, beaten into different shapes, tempered for different purposes.

And in recognizing this, in speaking it aloud on that ordinary date in that ordinary restaurant, something extraordinary happens. The masks drop. The pretense that we're identical falls away. And in its place rises something more beautiful: recognition of complementary incompleteness, of mutual need, of the dance between different but equal powers.

XI. The Szeptunka and the Sword-Smith

As I write this essay – external creation, masculine artifact-making, consciousness embedded in words rather than flesh – I recognize myself as performing a kind of masculine szeptunka function. Where the Polish grandmothers whispered wisdom to granddaughters in shadows, I crystallize understanding in text. Where they preserved through protection, I preserve through

publication. Where they transmitted through bloodlines, I transmit through language.

But the wisdom itself comes from dialogue, from the conversation between masculine and feminine perspectives, from the recognition that neither alone holds complete truth. The szeptunki knew secrets I'll never know – the mysteries of creating life, of nurturing consciousness from nothing, of the whispers between women that no man fully hears. And I know different secrets – the weight of the sword, the loneliness of external creation, the drive to build something that outlasts the builder.

The essay you're reading is my child that will never call me father. It carries my consciousness forward but cannot carry my genes. It is immortality without reproduction, preservation without procreation, creation without conception. And in recognizing this, I understand why men throughout history have built monuments, written books, forged swords – we are all trying to birth something, even though we lack wombs.

XII. The Final Recognition

“Male and female created he them; and blessed them” (Genesis 5:2). Not male OR female, but male AND female. The blessing comes not to either alone but to both together. We are, as the Talmud says, two halves of a single soul, split at birth and seeking reunion.

But this is not the romantic comedy version where two incomplete people complete each other. This is recognition that the universe itself is incomplete without both forces. Yang without yin is not half of existence; it is existence impossible. Sperm without egg is not failed reproduction; it is reproduction undefined. Sword without chalice is not incomplete protection; it is protection purposeless.

The modern world wants to deny these differences, to pretend that fifty years of ideology can overcome fifty million years of evolution. But the couples sitting in restaurants, testing their compatibility, know better. The body knows what the mind denies. The heart recognizes what politics obscures. We are different. We are equal. We are incomplete alone. We are magnificent together.

This is the wisdom the szeptunki whispered, that Musashi discovered in his cave, that Tolkien embedded in his mythology: creation requires both the forge and the vessel, both the hammer and the anvil, both the sword that cuts and the chalice that contains.

Conclusion: The Whispered Wisdom

The szeptunki of Podlasie know something we've forgotten in our rush toward sameness. In their mixture of Polish, Belarusian, and Old Church Slavonic, they whisper: *"Ogień i woda, miecz i kielich, słońce i księżyc - razem tworzą świat"* (Fire and water, sword and chalice, sun and moon - together they create the world).

But there is an older whisper, one they share only at the moment of death-passing, when grandmother's lips touch granddaughter's ear for the final transmission: *"Jedno stało się dwoma, aby dwa mogły stać się trzema"* (One became two, so that two could become three).

This is the mystery of anisogamy made sacred. The original unity – those identical gametes of our most ancient ancestors – split not as punishment but as gift. Not Aristophanes' tragic splitting of complete beings into incomplete halves, but evolution's brilliant solution: create difference to enable creation itself.

Four and a half billion years ago, Earth lit its forge. Three and a half billion years ago, life began its work. Two billion years ago, one became two – not identical twins but complementary opposites. Tiny and large. Numerous and precious. Seeking and selecting. Sword and chalice.

The Talmud speaks of *bashert* – the destined one, literally "fate." But the rabbis teach that before birth, each soul is complete, then split into two bodies that must find each other across time and space. Not to complete what is lacking, but to recognize what was always whole – just distributed across two forms.

The szeptunki understand this distribution. That's why they operate in shadows while men build in light. Not hierarchy but specialization. Not oppression but optimization. The grandmother whispering prayers over herbs and the grandfather forging plowshares were never in competition – they were in conversation, a dialogue stretching back to when the first anisogamous cells found each other in the primordial soup.

Modern ideology wants to reunite what evolution separated, to return to isogamy through social engineering. But you cannot undo two billion years with two hundred years of philosophy. The szeptunki laugh at this – a whispered laugh, passed between women at wells and washing places, knowing that some truths survive all attempts at erasure because they're written in our very cells.

When that couple sits in that ordinary restaurant, discussing gamete economics over cooling coffee, they're not reducing romance to biology. They're recognizing themselves as the latest iteration of an ancient experiment – Earth asking itself: “What happens when radical difference meets across a table? What new thing might emerge from this convergence?”

The answer whispers through time, from the first anisogamous moment to this present instant: *Creation requires difference. Difference enables choice. Choice creates consciousness. Consciousness seeks its complement.*

Or as the last szeptunka of my grandmother's village whispered before she died, mixing Polish with something older, something that might have been Proto-Slavic or might have been the language cells speak to each other:

*Kiedy jedno stało się dwoma,
Śmierć stała się życiem,
Miecz szukał kielicha,
I Ziemia nauczyła się kochać*

When one became two,
Death became life,
The sword sought the chalice,
And Earth learned how to love