

# A critical analysis of the multi-planetary hypothesis for the origin of sexual dimorphism: "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus"

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## 1. Introduction

John Gray wrote his seminal book, *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*, in 1996. And ever since people have been rushing out in droves to buy it, presumably in the belief that understanding the motivations and planetary origins of their other half will lead them to a more fulfilling and ultimately successful relationship. It must have something to do with that old mainstay of self-help books: the irresistible blend of evolutionary psychology pseudo-science and touchy-feely emotional deconstruction mumbo jumbo. In addition to the original publication, Gray has since released an unbelievable six further follow-up titles. One can only assume that Gray's prolific writing reflects his altruistic drive to help those in romantic and emotional need, with the money made from selling a series of largely derivative books a happy coincidence.

The main supposition of Gray's treatise is that men and women have fundamentally different psyches, which determines the manner with which they communicate, interact with others, and respond to various situations. The key to a successful (presumably heterosexual) relationship is for both parties to appreciate these differences and attempt to accommodate them. Having read only the title, we take it that Gray's main assumption is that the two sexes of our species in fact followed largely independent evolutionary paths on Earth's planetary neighbours, Mars and Venus, before migrating to their current terrestrial territory and coming into mutual contact for the first time. The theory has come to be known (well, by us at any rate) as the multi-planetary hypothesis for the origin of sexual dimorphism. This resettlement was very recent on an evolutionary timescale, so that neither males nor females have had sufficient time to re-adapt to the new conditions, and so retain many behavioural and morphological phenotypic traits that were adaptations to the original environments of their ancestral homes. Crazy if you ask us.

## 2. Method

The essence of the scientific method is not simply to dismiss a theory one does not personally subscribe to, but to test objectively its predictions in an attempt to either falsify or corroborate it. For this reason the authors have critically analysed the claim that each gender's ancestral home predetermines attributes of their personality. That, and the fact that the Spring season is cheerfully upon us once again; it isn't all about humping like rabbits and doing as the birds and the bees do, it's also about understanding what makes your partner tick. After all, the more you understand, the easier it is to exploit. Who said romance was dead?

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Astronomical Symbol



Shown here with Mars to the left and Venus to the right. No surprises here then. The traditional representational symbols for Mars and Venus are Male and Female, respectively. The Greek anthropomorphic names for the planets also seem pretty appropriate. The god of War, and the goddess of Love and Beauty; seems to fit the personalities in our families close enough anyway.

#### 3.2 Apparent magnitude (geek speak for brightness)

Mars: -2.8, Venus: -4.4. Trust astronomers to find a way to make brightness a complicated term. The bottom line here is that women are seemingly 32 times brighter than men. But the less said about that the better we feel. Although, the fact that Venus is the brightest planet in the heavens and is visible as both the *evening* and *morning star* meant that for millennia it was believed to be two separate bodies. Hinting at the possibility of Venus being behind the bipolar nature of women's mood swings?

#### 3.3 Orbital distance (Earth=1.0 Astronomical Unit)

Mars: 1.52 AU, Venus: 0.72 AU. Every good GCSE student knows that Venus is the second planet out from the Sun, with Mars orbiting beyond Earth. Venus is positioned within Earth's orbit, which explains why it shows phases (in the same way the Moon waxes and wanes) whereas Mars is always fully illuminated from our viewpoint. This inside orbit means that, to use the correct terminology, Venus is an inferior planet. But it's probably safest to keep schtum about any sexual inequalities this might indicate. Also, Venus always going through different phases... Nope, don't think there's any comparison to be made with women there either.

#### 3.4 Eccentricity of orbit

Venus: 0.0068, Mars: 0.0934. Eccentricity is a measure of how close to a perfect circle the planet's orbit actually is. Venus's orbit is the most circular of all the planets. A psychoanalyst might point towards a resonance with the feminine traits of attention to detail and neatness. If you're going to do something, you might as well do it properly, hadn't you? Like orbit in a proper damn circle. Whereas Mars is a bit more badboy rebel, defying the Sun with a much more elliptical path. This eccentricity results in wild temperature swings, explaining in a single stroke men's infuriating habit of always blowing hot and cold at you.

#### 3.5 Inclination of axis to orbit

Mars: 25°, Venus: 3°. This means that Venus is like a well-balanced spinning top pointing almost directly upwards, whereas Mars tilts at a vicious angle. Venus' lack of inclination may hint at some deep evolutionary psychological explanation behind the characteristic female indecisiveness and complete lethargy on a Sunday morning. Venus also refuses to conform with anyone else in the solar system and spins in the opposite direction, just to be difficult.

### **3.6 Atmosphere**

Venus: 90 bar CO<sub>2</sub>, Mars: 7 mbar CO<sub>2</sub>. Not only is Venus under immense pressure (over 10,000 times more than the stress-free Mars), but it rains concentrated sulphuric acid and the surface boils with a furnace-like heat. Don't mess with a temper like that, lads. These scorching conditions were apparently created by a run-away Greenhouse effect, which could explain why women start on something and don't let it drop until everyone's hot under the collar? Bloody typical. On the flip side, Mars is positively vacuous in comparison, and also freezing. So not unlike a bloke's response to being rebuked and cold-shouldering in a refusal to behave maturely, then.

### **3.7 Methane abundance**

The levels of methane gas in the Martian atmosphere are far from chemical equilibrium. This is significant because it is regarded as a key indication that life remains on Mars today, long since men migrated away. However, a more significant implication of this could be evidence to suggest that men do indeed suffer from flatulence to a greater extent than women. A crude observation perhaps, but it does at least exonerate men from the guilt of occasionally unleashing a silent dose under the duvet. "Sorry pet, it's only my Martian roots expressing itself". Try it. At the very least you'll get a priceless glare for your troubles.

### **3.8 Orbital periods**

The orbital period of Mars is 687 days compared to 225 days for Venus. This indicates that one year on Venus is a much shorter period of time than on Mars. Consequently, Venusians have many more birthdays than their Martian counterparts. In order to compensate, women may often translate their age into Martian years for us, and helpfully round down by a few. However, this is a highly contentious topic and one which any man worth his Martian-salt should stay well clear of. Though it is, of course, equally possible that this demonstrates why women do indeed grow-up faster than men, who remain immature well into their 20s, 30s, 40s... and still try to find scientific justifications for their socially unacceptable flatulence. Ho hum.

## **4. Discussion**

Hmmm. The predictions made from the multi-planetary hypothesis do seem to bear a faithful representation of the observed reality. Perhaps there is a deeper truth behind this book. It has been used for years as a tool against the unsuspecting man by his more informed better half. But on the evidence of this report it would seem that the book is not so damning of the male species as we have assumed.

<sup>1</sup> Statement of conflicting interests: Neither of the authors have actually read the book.