

CURRENT THEOLOGY

TOWARD A RENEWED ANTHROPOLOGY

As indicated by the range of topics included in this issue of *TS*, the new feminism, popularly known as the women's liberation movement,¹ presents a serious challenge to the areas of language, interpersonal relationships, work in the world, and ministry in the Church. Beneath all these topics, however, lies a crucial issue for theology as a whole: an adequate understanding of what it is to be human. As the Dutch phenomenologist F. J. Buytendijk has correctly noted, "it is of the essence of human being always to be either man or woman."² This differentiation of the human race into two sexes, which most feminists take to be a primal and paradigmatic differentiation,³ demands an adequate understanding of the distinct dimensions of female as well as male existence. Moreover, it demands that the perspective of each sex, with all the experience, history, insight, and imagination which is its own, contribute to the description of human being and of God which grounds a theological anthropology.

It is the contention of feminists that the prevailing ideas about what it means to be human have been male-oriented and male-shaped. This is what is meant by "sexism." Theology, no less than any other discipline, is being called to an examination of consciousness; for this reason, everyone engaged in the work of theology needs to listen to the rising chorus of feminist authors. To facilitate this encounter, we intend to survey here books and articles of the past ten years that have pushed forward the frontiers of consciousness about the mystery of humanity, male and female. My survey will deal with publications that do not have a consciously religious framework; Anne Patrick will concentrate on specifically religious publications, works which address more directly the question of an inclusive theological anthropology through interpretations of Scripture, tradition, and church practice.

Feminism itself is an elusive and much-disputed term.⁴ Here it is used

¹ For an excellent overview of the movement, see Donald McDonald, "The Liberation of Woman," *Center Magazine* 5 (May-June 1972) 25-42. For a very different approach, see also Jo Freeman, "The Origins of the Women's Liberation Movement," in *Changing Women in a Changing Society*, ed. Joan Huber (Chicago, 1973) pp. 30-49.

² *Woman, A Contemporary View*, tr. Denis J. Barrett (New York, 1968) p. 34.

³ See Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, tr. H. M. Parshley (New York, 1952), and Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectics of Sex* (New York, 1971).

⁴ Beverly Harrison has recently developed a distinction between "hard" feminists (those who reject the two-human-natures theory) and "soft" feminists (those who recognize a special nature in women and want to "feminize" the public world). See "The New Consciousness of Women: A Socio-Political Resource," *Cross-Currents* 24, 4 (Winter 1975) 445-62.

in the broad sense articulated by Henrietta Rodman in 1915: "Feminism is the attempt of women to grow up, to accept the responsibilities of life, to outgrow those characteristics of childhood—selfishness and cowardliness—that we require our boys to outgrow, but that we permit and by our social system encourage our girls to retain."⁵

The work of feminist thinkers, then, is threefold: (1) to identify those specific traits of sexism that pervade the society within which we live and by which we are shaped; (2) to offer theories about the causes of sexism, in order (3) to formulate strategies for change. These attempts must be met with a critical response, so that we can see what is at stake in each formulation and what questions are posed to theology and theologians.

THE FEMINIST CRITIQUE

Ever since Betty Friedan debunked the "feminine mystique" in 1963,⁶ feminist authors have been determined to lay bare the awesome gap between the rhetoric about women and the reality of attitudes embedded in societal structures. Marily Webb sums up her insight into how women are commonly viewed in her article "Woman as Secretary, Sexpot, Spender, Sow, Civic Actor, Sickie."⁷ One of the best anthologies to date, *Woman in a Sexist Society*,⁸ expands on this initial insight by offering articles which cut through the cult of beauty, the image of women in advertising, textbooks, and American fiction, the results of voluntarism, and the ways in which women are socialized into a sexist society through the psychotherapeutic relationship.⁹

Nothing has angered women more than the realization that the socialization processes have been based on a thoroughgoing double standard that has succeeded in keeping women from the centers of power, making of them perpetual outsiders.¹⁰ Judith M. Bardwick and Elizabeth Douvan have carefully analyzed the patterns of child rearing that eventuate in preparing young boys for a life in the world while reinforcing in young girls those tendencies which are best suited for the private, interpersonal world.¹¹ Caroline Bird and Cynthia Fuchs Epstein

⁵ June Sochen, ed., *The New Feminism in Twentieth-Century America* (Lexington, Mass., 1971) p. 50.

⁶ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York, 1963).

⁷ *Motive* 24, 6-7 (March-April 1969) 48-59.

⁸ Ed. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New York, 1971).

⁹ Una Stannard, "The Mask of Beauty," pp. 187-206; Lucy Komisar, "The Image of Woman in Advertising," pp. 304-17; Marjorie B. U'Ren, "The Image of Woman in Textbooks," pp. 318-28; Wendy Martin, "Seduced and Abandoned in the New World: The Image of Woman in American Fiction," pp. 329-46; Doris B. Gold, "Women and Voluntarism," pp. 533-54; Phyllis Chesler, "Patient and Patriarch: Women in the Psychotherapeutic Relationship," pp. 362-92.

¹⁰ Vivian Gornick, "Woman as Outsider," in *Woman in Sexist Society*, pp. 126-44.

¹¹ Judith Bardwick and E. Douvan, "Ambivalence: The Socialization of Women," *ibid.*, pp. 225-41.

deepen this analysis in two works which concentrate on the debilitating effects of being born female and prepared for woman's place for anyone who aspires to a professional career and economic independence.¹²

The women's liberation movement, however, is interested in more than exposing the distorted images of women; it is committed to challenging and changing them. This cannot be done without facing the charge that it is "unnatural" for women to seek to be different. In one of the most widely quoted articles of the last eight years.¹³ Naomi Weisstein has met the chief perpetrator of the "two natures" theory¹⁴ on its own grounds. Weisstein argues that psychology has been a major force in limiting the potential of women, yet in truth it can tell us nothing about what women are really like, because (1) it has looked for inner traits when it should have taken into account the social context¹⁵ and (2) it has operated out of theories that do not stand up when put to the test of empirical evidence. On this second point, she recounts an incident from her experience as a graduate student at Harvard.

. . . I was a member of a seminar which was asked to identify which of two piles of clinical tests, the TAT, had been written by males and which by females. Only four students out of twenty identified the piles correctly, and this was after one and a half months of intensively studying the differences between men and women. Since this result is below chance. . . we may conclude that there *is* finally a consistency here; students are judging knowledgeably within the context of psychological teaching about the differences between men and women; the teachings themselves are simply erroneous.¹⁶

It is not enough, however, to challenge the categories which keep women from developing those capacities which are encouraged and rewarded in men. An equally important aspect of the new feminism is the determination to call into question the very standards by which excellence and success in the public world are judged. An unusual and highly readable example of this is Nora Scott Kinzer's article on "Sexist Sociology."¹⁷ It is basically a reflection on failure.¹⁸ With the clarity of hindsight, the author confesses that her doctoral research on "Role

¹² Caroline Bird, *Born Female: The High Cost of Keeping Women Down* (New York, 1969); Cynthia F. Epstein, *Woman's Place* (Berkeley, 1971).

¹³ Naomi Weisstein, "Psychology Constructs the Female," in *Woman in Sexist Society*, pp. 207-24.

¹⁴ Weisstein is concerned chiefly with Erikson, Bettelheim, and Freud.

¹⁵ See esp. R. Rosenthal and L. Jacobson, *Pygmalion in the Classroom: Teacher Expectation and Pupil's Intellectual Development* (New York, 1968).

¹⁶ Weisstein, *art. cit.*, p. 185.

¹⁷ *Center Magazine* 7, 3 (May-June 1974) 48-59. On the same theme, see Betty Richardson, *Sexism in Higher Education* (New York, 1974).

¹⁸ It is interesting to note that when Kinzer outlined the paper to a male colleague, he cautioned her not to make such an admission.

Conflict of Professional Women in Buenos Aires" was more an imposition of North American role-theory on Latin American experience than an attempt to study the culture itself. She now sees that her acceptance of the ideals of objectivity and value-free research blinded her to reality because it prevented the operation of sympathy for the other. Kinzer questions the hegemony of these ideals:

. . . women social scientists seem doomed to follow the same false gods. Why must we make the same mistakes and do the same dreary research in the same pedantic way? . . . Caring, loving, being sympathetic to another person's feeling and respecting another nation's culture are eminently worth-while traits. If these are "feminine" traits, then the feminine eye is a humane perspective.¹⁹

Beverly Wildung Harrison has written a very important piece which touches the same theme. Arguing that the new consciousness of women is a valuable sociopolitical resource, Harrison gives clear expression to the tension experienced by contemporary feminists: that they must "stand and fight the hokum of the ideology of pedestalism, with its double-standard" in a public world which is alien to the values that women hold dear. The tragedy, she maintains, is that these values have lost their relevance to the public world, and she calls upon women to "translate their meaning in a direction which overcomes their privatism and personalistic overtones—in short, in a way which gives rise to community."²⁰

Increasingly, then, women want more out of life than to be programmed for one particular role; but some also want to be true to an ancient feminine skill: listening to experience, particularly their own. Elizabeth Janeway has noted that "for the first time in history, perhaps, it is women's experience which is changing faster and more radically than that of men. In itself, that bears witness to the profundity of the changes and it might alert men to the value of taking a look at them."²¹ Jane Howard's *A Different Woman*²² is an excellent place to begin. After the death of her mother, with whom she had never talked about the experience of being a woman, Howard decided to tour the country interviewing women from as many walks of life as possible. This is a work which transcribes living voices—a mountain artisan of West Virginia, a fisherwoman of the west coast, women in communes, women in the deep

¹⁹ Kinzer, *art. cit.*, p. 59. See also Jessie Bernard, "My Four Revolutions: An Autobiographical History of the ASA," in Huber, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-29.

²⁰ Harrison, *art. cit.* This drive toward community is also noted in Bernard's discussion of the "agentic" and "communal" modes of sociological and psychological research; cf. *art. cit.*, pp. 22-23.

²¹ Elizabeth Janeway, "The Weak Are the Second Sex," *Atlantic*, December 1973, p. 104.

²² New York, 1973.

South—and does much to counter a monolithic approach to feminine experience.²³

A significant effect of the rising consciousness is that women are beginning to write about sex. In *Free and Female: The Sex Life of the Contemporary Female*²⁴ Barbara Seaman rejects the notion that women are less capable of enjoying sex and less interested in it than men. Instead, she argues, it is the female who has been endowed by nature with the greater capacity, and civilization has had to devise ways to rein her in for the good of the family and ultimately of the race.

The research done by Masters and Johnson has sparked a debate among women writers about Freudian sexual theories. In a widely reprinted article, Anne Koedt maintains that the definition of frigidity as the inability to attain a vaginal orgasm has been very destructive. Women who are perfectly healthy are thus taught that they are not, so that, in addition to being sexually deprived, they are told to blame themselves.²⁵

It is impossible to report adequately on the growing body of literature about the sexist character of society in such a short survey. What we have given is but an indication of important areas of concern. Before leaving this topic, however, it should be noted that there is another way to try to subvert the sexism which permeates contemporary culture: in addition to argument, documentation, and persuasion, there is humor. No one has surpassed Dorothy Sayers' exercise in role reversal, originally written in 1947 but reprinted in recent years to the delight of feminists everywhere:

Probably no man has ever troubled to imagine how strange his life would appear to himself if it were unrelentingly assessed in terms of his maleness. If he were vexed by continual advice how to add a rough male touch to his typing, how to be learned without losing his masculine appeal, how to combine chemical research with seduction, how to play bridge without incurring the suspicion of impotence. If, after a few centuries of this kind of treatment, the male was a little self-conscious, a little on the defensive, and a little bewildered about what was required of him, I should not blame him. It would be more surprising if he retained any rag of sanity and self-respect.²⁶

²³ See also *Woman an Issue*, ed. Lee R. Edwards, Mary Heath, and Lisa Baskin (Boston, 1972), and *Growing Up Female in America: Ten Lives*, ed. Eve Merriam (New York, 1971).

²⁴ New York, 1972. See also Mary Jane Sherfey, *The Nature and Evolution of Female Sexuality* (New York, 1972).

²⁵ Anne Koedt, "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm," in *Radical Feminism*, ed. Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone (New York, 1973) pp. 198–207. Germaine Greer differs from Koedt in *The Female Eunuch* (New York, 1970) pp. 304–5. See also Anselma dell'Olio, "The Sexual Revolution Wasn't Our War," *Ms* Spring 1972, pp. 104–10; Susan Lydon, "The Politics of Orgasm," in *Sisterhood is Powerful*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York, 1970) pp. 197–205; Boston Women's Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Our Selves* (New York, 1971).

²⁶ Dorothy Sayers, *Are Women Human?* (Grand Rapids, 1971) pp. 39–42.

The logic of the human imagination is such that one cannot come to such an awareness of the many ways in which women have been sold short, kept down, convinced of their inferiority without seeking the cause of such a state of affairs. Since men are the ones who seem to be "on top," it should not be surprising that a great deal of feminist venom has been directed at men.²⁷ *The Redstockings Manifesto* of 1969 clearly identified the agents of oppression. Male supremacy is seen as the oldest, most basic form of domination, with all other forms of exploitation as extensions of it. "All men receive economic, sexual, and psychological benefits from male supremacy. All men have oppressed women."²⁸ Not all feminists of this persuasion conclude with Robin Morgan that the solution is to "kill your fathers, not your mothers,"²⁹ but a violent rhetoric is very much part of the tactics adopted by these authors. At a minimum, they have in common the determination to change men, being convinced that none of the blame for the current situation can be put on women themselves. For some radical feminists, this leads to a call for separatism, an exhortation that women refuse to sleep with the oppressor—or share his life in other ways. Lesbianism and celibacy, then, are seen by this group as political tactics.³⁰

An interesting and very different version of the "men are to blame" face of feminism is proposed by Elaine Morgan in her book *The Descent of Woman*. She postulates that all the hostility between women and men can be traced back to that point in the evolutionary process when copulation changed from the dorsal position to the ventral. "For the first time in history," Morgan says, "the sex act had been accomplished by force in an atmosphere of hostility and fear and violence. The first tenuous mental connections had begun to be laid down between sex and ruthlessness on one side, and sex and suffering on the other." In Morgan's estimation, then, this was the event that led down the road to the sex war, to sadomasochism, and to the whole "contemporary snarl-up" of prostitu-

²⁷ See Susi Kaplow, "Getting Angry," and Pamela Kearon, "Man-Hating," in *Radical Feminism*, pp 36–41 and 78–80

²⁸ "The Redstockings Manifesto," in *Masculine/Feminine*, ed Betty Roszak and Theodore Roszak (New York, 1969) p 273 See also Valerie Solanas, "The SCUM Manifesto" *Masculine/Feminine*, pp 262–68

²⁹ Robin Morgan, "Goodbye to All That," *ibid* , p 245

³⁰ See Judith Brown, "Towards a Female Liberation Movement," in *Voices from Women's Liberation*, ed Leslie B Tanner (New York, 1970) p 363, Radicalesbians, "The Woman Identified Woman," in *Radical Feminism*, pp 240–45, Anne Koedt, "Lesbianism and Feminism," *ibid* , pp 246–58, Sidney Abbott and Barbara Love, "Is Women's Liberation a Lesbian Plot?" in *Woman in Sexist Society*, pp 601–21, Simone de Beauvoir's discussion of lesbianism as a response to the pressures of a male-dominated society in *The Second Sex*, pp 379–99

tion, prudery, Casanova, white slavery, women's liberation, *Playboy* magazine, *crimes passionels*, censorship, strip clubs, alimony, pornography, and a "dozen different brands of mania."³¹ It is difficult to tell how seriously she intends her proposal to be taken, but, as women are beginning to learn, mythical thinking is a very powerful force in overcoming myths.³²

A second approach is to place the blame for women's sense of inferiority and powerlessness on women themselves. Though by most standards hardly a feminist, Midge Decter does want women to grow up. In her important work *The New Chastity and Other Arguments against Women's Liberation*, Decter levels a stinging critique of the movement and of women—a critique which deserves serious attention. Decter examines the four areas of work (in the home and outside it), sex, marriage, and child-rearing from a single point of view. It is not opportunity for fulfilment that is lacking to American women, she argues; it is the willingness to accept responsibility for the individual decisions which rapid social change has forced on her. No longer can women depend on society's expectations to tell her what role in life to play, when to go to bed with a man, whether or not to take the risk of personal commitment to another, whether or not to have children and how to raise those that come. No single quotation can capture the complexity of this book's response to the women's movement, but a portion from the last chapter may give an indication of Decter's force as a writer and thinker:

. . . finally, for women to announce that their very womanliness results only from a bad and meretricious culture is the expression of a deep hatred for themselves. Such an expression of self-hatred is, indeed, exactly the primary emotion that informs Women's Liberation's diatribes against the impositions of motherhood. Neither society nor the current organization of the family but the womb itself—that "infirmity in the abdomen"—is ultimately the object of this movement's will to correct, to alter, to extirpate. There is no more radical nor desperately nihilistic statement to issue forth from the lips of humans than that there are no necessary differences between the sexes. For such differences do in themselves constitute the most fundamental principle of the continuation of life on earth.³³

³¹ Elaine Morgan, *The Descent of Woman* (New York, 1972).

³² See Elizabeth Janeway, *Man's World, Woman's Place* (New York, 1971), for a detailed analysis of the way in which myths function in society.

³³ Midge Decter, *The New Chastity and Other Arguments against Women's Liberation* (New York, 1972) p. 180. For a much harsher (and less responsible) indictment of women, see Esther Vilar, *The Manipulated Man* (New York, 1972). For two responses by men, see Andy Hawley, "A Man's View," *Motive*, March-April 1969, pp. 145-50, and Warren Farrell, *The Liberated Man* (New York, 1974).

It must be noted, however, that Decter's views are frankly individualistic. Any woman can make her way if she will just shape up to the demands of the adult world. But Decter herself sees no need to call these demands into question. Despite vast differences in style and popular image, there is a strange similarity between Midge Decter and her nemesis, Germaine Greer. Greer's major work, *The Female Eunuch*,³⁴ is an exposé of the various ways in which women have been deprived of the rich possibilities of their bodily experiences (thus the title). More than any other writer to date, she has explored the particularities of women's experience, and has done so in a very personal way. Yet, for Greer too, everything comes down in the end to "a failure of nerves." Women, in her estimation, have not dared to win for themselves the spurs of freedom (primarily sexual freedom) because they are afraid. She, no less than Decter, fails to question the value of that liberty which men, it seems, have enjoyed.

The third face of feminism turns a critical eye toward the kind of society we have created. In one of the most balanced and objective works to date,³⁵ Elizabeth Janeway searches out the mythological roots of the ancient saying "It's a man's world—woman's place is in the home," in order to show the effects of this division on the structure of society. Myths, Janeway says, are psychic truths expressed symbolically. They are bound up with emotion, desires, wishes; and they try, by means of a description, to bring about what they declare to exist. Fundamental to the age-old division of the world are two myths about women: the myth of female weakness and the myth of female power. The first, which is older (and connected psychically to the shadow of the all-powerful mother), holds the second at bay. If we realize that myths help us to maintain order in the world, we will understand that the pressure on women to stay in their own sphere is based on a deep fear that failure to do so will overthrow the tenuous world order we have succeeded in establishing.

The social role that the society assigns to women, Janeway demonstrates, grows out of the twofold myth about women. Yet the idea that, for one sex, there is *a* role, *a* place—predetermined and fixed—puts women at odds with the whole long trend of Western civilization toward individual freedom and individual responsibility. This is especially critical for American women. Women's traditional role in itself is opposed to a deeply significant aspect of their culture and involves them

³⁴ Greer, *op. cit.* For very interesting reviews of the work from the point of view of radical feminists, see Arlyn Diamond, "Elizabeth Janeway and Germaine Greer," in *Woman an Issue*, pp. 275–79, and Claudia Dreifus, "The Selling of a Feminist," in *Radical Feminism*, pp. 358–67.

³⁵ *Man's World, Woman's Place* (n. 32 above).

in "the kind of conflict with their surroundings that no decision and no action open to them can be trusted to resolve."³⁶

In a series of chapters, Janeway argues that it is isolation from the ideals of the society in which she lives, from the objective standard by which to measure herself and her actions, that has produced the being which we call "feminine." The drastic changes in what women now want to do are based on a profound longing to be different kinds of persons.

Women want to get out of a place that has become isolated from the mainstream of life and too narrow for them to use their abilities—that's very clear. . . . It seems to me quite remarkably hopeful; for in a time of disruption and uncertainty, women are refusing to sit passively by in their old protected place. Man's world is in trouble, and in spite of this, women are hell-bent to get out into it and go to work on its problems! One can, of course, see this as simply silly, as a badly timed and slightly hysterical decision to join the rat race. Or one can see it, more encouragingly, as a hardheaded refusal to put up any longer with vicarious living, a determination to find out what's going on out in the world even if the experience is not all rewarding.³⁷

Shulamith Firestone, leading spokeswoman of the radical feminists, thinks the task cuts more deeply into the societal web than anything Janeway has envisioned. Not only must women question the kind of society we have created; they must challenge the created order that has been given to us: "Feminists have to question, not just all of *Western* culture, but the organization of culture itself, and further, even the very organization of nature."³⁸ Taking her cue from Simone de Beauvoir and her analysis of woman's status as "Other," Firestone argues that the deepest division in society is the distinction between the sexes and that all class distinction is based on that primal reality. There can be no good life for all, she maintains, until the fundamental biological inequality between men and women has been overcome. Thus she proposes that all the power of technology be used to offset the limitations imposed on woman by her body. This basic demand for artificial reproduction will result in the liberation of childhood, the destruction of the nuclear family, and economic independence and self-determination for all. If Janeway's vision is of one world where women and men co-operate in building the future, Firestone envisions a future in which there will be no women or men—or at least, in which "genital differences between human beings would no longer matter culturally."³⁹

Although not all feminists in this last category go as far as Firestone, they are united in the effort to change the structures of society which oppress everyone, so that women as well as men may have more options

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

³⁸ Firestone, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

open to them in the future. Women have begun to dream that things might be different. Alice Rossi has written one version of such a dream⁴⁰ and the fact that it has been included in so many recent anthologies is a tribute to the fact that it has touched the imaginations of many.

The imagination, powerful as it is, breaks no real bonds. If changes are to be effected, someone must design social policies that will embody the vision of enlarged opportunity for all. Constantina Safilios-Rothschild has written the most comprehensive work on the strategies for such social change.⁴¹ There she offers specific proposals on how to liberate women, men, marriage, the institution of the family and family life, and tactics to free society itself from the sexism inherent in language, counseling, law, politics, and religion.

THREE VISIONS OF HUMANITY

Out of this cacophony of voices there emerge three basic ways of understanding the division of humanity into female and male. The first and more traditional position sees a polarity in which each sex embodies different possibilities of human being—possibilities which are denied the other.⁴² The difficulties with this approach cannot be overlooked. (1) It entails an extrapolation of meanings from the male and female bodies (activity-passivity, reason-intuition, emotion-will, etc.) which runs counter to experience and desire, especially the desires of women themselves.⁴³ (2) It limits the scope of human activity available to each of the sexes severely. (3) It involves an acceptance in some measure of the “anatomy is destiny” theory and results in a denial or diminishment of the specifically human capacity to exercise control over nature—even

⁴⁰ Alice S. Rossi, “Equality between the Sexes: An Immodest Proposal,” in *The Woman in America*, ed. Robert Jay Lifton (Boston, 1967) pp. 98–143. It is increasingly clear that we need to pay more attention to the whole area of the imagination. For an excellent study of the way in which the female imagination has dealt with social problems, see Patricia Meyer Spacks, *The Female Imagination* (New York, 1975); Diana Trilling, “The Image of Women in Contemporary Literature,” in *The Woman in America*, pp. 52–71. For examples of imaginative works by women with a new consciousness, see *Psyche*, ed. Barbara Segnitz and Carol Rainey (New York, 1973); *Rising Tides*, ed. Laura Chester and Sharon Barbra (New York, 1973); Barbara A. Wasserman, ed., *The Bold New Women* (Greenwich, Conn., 1970).

⁴¹ Constantina Safilios-Rothschild, *Women and Social Policy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1974).

⁴² The classic work is Gertrude von le Fort, *The Eternal Woman*, tr. Maria Cecilia Buehrle (Milwaukee, 1962). See also Karl Stern, *The Flight From Woman* (New York, 1965); Marie Robinson, *The Power of Sexual Surrender* (New York, 1962); Alan Watts, *Nature, Man and Woman* (New York, 1970).

⁴³ Buytendijk, *op. cit.*, attempts such an interpretation of meaning. I have been told that when his wife finally read the book she said: “So long a time we have lived together and you know so little about women!”

human nature—with a view to increasing the free exercise of judgment and decision. (4) It ignores the effects of cultural conditioning and social expectation on human behavior. (5) Neither sex can embody the fulness of humanity, nor can a person of one sex serve as a model for the other. The emphasis of this first position falls on difference and complementarity.

Though this way of understanding humanity has been seriously questioned by feminists (de Beauvoir, Rossi, Janeway, Firestone), there seems to be a curious rebirth of it in the insistence of some contemporary feminists that there is a female culture, long ignored or positively suppressed which must be rescued (Fourth World Manifesto), in the move toward separatism (Radical Feminists), and in the call for "sisterhood" and the proliferation of consciousness-raising sessions designed to heighten awareness of the specifically female experience.⁴⁴

A second position sees the goal of human life as androgynous existence (Rossi, Janeway, Sayers, de Beauvoir, Safilios-Rothschild). While these thinkers admit that there are sexual differences, they will maintain that such differences are "purely biological" and affect only the reproductive functions of human beings. Otherwise women and men should be free to adopt a style of being which comprises the best of traditional masculine and feminine values and roles. The more one approximates this in one's life, the more human one becomes. According to this view, life increasingly requires that individuals know how to take the initiative and to be receptive, to be aggressive and sensitive, to nurture and discipline, to be strong and gentle, etc. Thinkers who hold androgynous existence as the ideal tend to emphasize the similarities between women and men much more than the differences. Indeed, the image of human existence is the same for both sexes. This position is also not without difficulties. At a time when philosophers (particularly of the phenomenological tradition) are discovering and defending the importance of embodiment to human existence,⁴⁵ it is difficult to accept or understand the assertion that the male or female body has "purely biological significance." Moreover, some research indicates that quite the opposite is true.⁴⁶ A second problem is that such an ideal of androgyny runs the risk of reducing the differ-

⁴⁴ See Barbara Burris, "The Fourth World Manifesto," in *Radical Feminism*, pp. 322-57; *Sisterhood is Powerful*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York, 1970); "Consciousness Raising," in *Radical Feminism*, pp. 280-81.

⁴⁵ See Alphonse de Walhaens, "Phenomenology of Body," in *Readings in Existential Phenomenology*, ed. Nathaniel Lawrence and Daniel O'Connor (Englewood Cliffs, 1967), and *Existence et signification* (Louvain, 1958).

⁴⁶ See Tom Alexander, "There Are Sex Differences in the Mind, Too," *Fortune*, February, 1971, pp. 76-134. One should keep in mind the criticisms of Weisstein and others about scientific investigation of sex differences.

ences which contribute to the "spice of life."⁴⁷ "Vive la différence," says the Frenchman, and many think he has a point. Though present experience indicates that there is still a difference between a woman who has learned to take up into her way of being some of the qualities which are admirable in men and vice versa, the specter of genetic manipulation can make one chary of adopting one ideal, even if it be a middle ground.⁴⁸

The final way to approach the question is to adopt a unisex goal. Theoretically, it would be possible to envision a world in which that sex were female, but the most dramatic presentation of the unisex vision (Firestone) seeks to free women from the tyranny of the female body. Thus the sex is, to all intents and purposes, male. This is the ultimate denial of the goodness of sexual differentiation and the supreme victory of the "male" way of being—yet it has been espoused by a radical feminist. If the androgynous view seems to alter the spice of life, the unisex one robs it of all flavor save one. Yet this approach is extremely important because of its implications. Does it not mean that we have reached a stage where "male" characteristics are so highly valued and rewarded that (some) women are seriously considering a psychological and physiological alteration of the self in order to have a chance at the good life? It is a frightening prospect; yet this offbeat note in the feminist symphony may just be the desperate move needed to awaken people of reason to the realization that one cannot remain marginal forever.⁴⁹

In a variety of ways, then, the new feminism presents challenges to any theological anthropology. What is the vision of the good life in the Christian revelation? Is it the same for men and women? Is it a sin to prefer one way of being in the world over another? If so, how does the salvation that Christians believe to have been begun in Christ Jesus touch concretely the age-old dominance of the male perspective? What does it offer—NOW—to women who feel defined out of the divine-human experience? Finally, what role does human desire play in the apprehension of God's will for us?

Loyola College, Baltimore

MARY AQUIN O'NEILL, R.S.M.

⁴⁷ See Simone de Beauvoir's rejection of such criticism in *The Second Sex*, p. 686.

⁴⁸ "Indeed, innate differences need not stand in the way even of the most homogenized androgyny that some radical feminists call for. If that were what society really wanted, it might one day be possible to use hormone pills to make males and females think and behave very much alike" (Alexander, *art. cit.*, p. 134).

⁴⁹ See Phyllis Chesler, *Women and Madness* (New York, 1972), for a description of the many ways in which women have protested this feeling of being marginal in the world.