

The androgynous vision

NANCY TOPPING BAZIN and ALMA FREEMAN

Rutgers University

THOSE WHO advocate radical change must have in mind and provide for others a vision of the new human being and the new society. Those who work for the elimination of sex roles and the overthrow of the current male structures and values will eventually effect a change in the economic and power structure of our society as well as in the tiny details of our daily lives at home and at work. The vision of androgyny is essential for guiding us through this process of change; to define the vision is to influence the daily decisions we make as part of a world-wide feminist movement.

The androgynous vision has its roots in the past, and its long history can help us understand its meaning and its importance. However, our concept of androgyny must be new; it must not be limited by what A. J. L. Busst or Samuel Coleridge or Virginia Woolf or even Simone de Beauvoir seemed to mean by it. We must expand it, alter it, and, above all, render it more concrete by defining it in terms of our own historical situation. We use a term that has its roots in the past because we too have been shaped by the past, but just as we must go beyond our own past, we must go beyond past definitions of androgyny. Indeed, historical developments (including recent liberation movements, advances in birth control, and ecological problems) now permit us to have a much more comprehensive understanding of the androgynous ideal.

In its most basic sense, the experience of androgyny is the experience of wholeness. "Androgyny" is derived from the Greek words *andros*

and *gyne* meaning male and female. Androgyny unites the Masculine and Feminine principles.¹ Traditionally, the Masculine principle has been assigned to males and the Feminine principle to females. This assignment, based upon our cultural and economic heritage, should not, in fact, be made to male and female respectively. Rather the androgynous ideal which combines the two seeks to offer the full spectrum of experiences and feelings covered by both principles to every human being regardless of sex. In an androgynous society when a child is born, no longer will its genitals determine what his or her parents expect in terms of personality, behavior, and work. Furthermore, in an androgynous society, because economic, racial, and sexual inequalities would have been eliminated, the child will be able to develop freely and fully. The barriers of class, race, and sex having been eliminated, everyone would have a new sense of wholeness both socially and psychically. The psychic unity that, as we see through myths and literature, has been dreamed of through the ages becomes possible only when we have social unity wherein work and wealth and power are equitably distributed.

What would happen sexually once social and psychic unity exists cannot be predicted. Bisexuality and homosexuality may or may not increase; but certainly more natural, less fearful sexual relationships (of whichever kind) could be expected. Becoming an androgynous human being and living in an androgynous society would definitely influence the way we relate sexually, but in developing the new concept of androgyny we are definitely using it in a cultural rather than in a physical sense.

Directly or by implication, the term androgynous has also been identified historically with the mystical moment or a sense of oneness with God, the moment of vision or revelation, orgasm, manic ecstasy, and the aesthetic experience. These are moments of psychic wholeness, moments in which individuals feel they have been in touch with timelessness, God, the Eternal, the underlying Reality, the Perfect, the Round. The names for "It" are many. Whether these ecstatic experiences originate in religious, sexual, or aesthetic activity, they are psychologically real and similar in nature. They are associated with androgyny because they imply a momentary reunion with the original androgynous Feminine from which the masculine and feminine were

born. The reunion is achieved via the evanescent, via time, via consciousness, via the multiplicity of life which are traditionally identified with the Masculine. These join with the eternal, the timeless, the unconscious, the oneness of life traditionally identified with the Feminine. The quest is towards experiencing the Feminine oneness which exists within the Masculine many. These epiphanies (to use Joyce's term) are inklings of the experience of oneness only to be found again, people used to say after death, but we say after we become androgynous people living in an androgynous society.

The pattern is the same in each of these experiences of psychic wholeness. In Christian terms it moves from the oneness of the Garden of Eden to the Fall to the more knowledgeable Oneness to be attained by reuniting oneself with God and ultimately Heaven. In psychological terms one leaves the Womb, longs for it thereafter, finding unity only momentarily through sex, art, and mystical experiences, until one returns to the Womb via the Tomb. In aesthetic terms one seeks the nonrepresentational reality via the representational reality, the unity via the multiplicity, form or essence via subject matter. In terms of the pattern of human life, there is the fall from Innocence and the reconstruction through experience of a new sense of wholeness. In terms of mythology, there is the Creation, the Destruction, and the Rebirth. The return is always to the Great Mother, the original One who bore the two sexes, or to the Androgynous God who created both Male and Female. The movement is from passivity to activity to passivity, unconsciousness to consciousness to unconsciousness, simplicity to complexity to simplicity, timelessness to time to timelessness.

Because of the division of labor and the sex roles which are based upon that, passive, intuitive, receptive, subjective, eternal, instinctive, innocent, emotional, and nurturing are words identified with the Feminine. Women have been passive, intuitive, receptive, subjective, and innocent because their lives have heretofore been determined by their reproductive role, because they have been confined for the most part to the home. Women who work for their husbands function within the economy but their labor goes unrecognized; it remains "invisible" and unpaid. In fact, women serve the economy by nurturing the future workers, by freeing their husbands from the daily chores of cleaning and cooking so they have time and energy to labor outside of the home.

and by spending time consuming for their families what the men produce.² This division of labor not only keeps women enslaved but also determines their personality, their attitudes, and their behavior. The kind of life each of us lives determines what qualities and habits we develop. Women are thought to be more loving, men to be more aggressive because the nature of their lives encourages those respective qualities. Moreover, via socialization for the respective sex roles (for instance, via sexually discriminating toys, books, media, parents, teachers, vocational counsellors, and psychiatrists) men and women still too often are encouraged to develop distinctly different personalities and attitudes.

Thus, behind the definitions of the Masculine and Feminine principles lies the biological, cultural, and economic heritage which enslaves us. The dichotomy represented by the two principles must, however, be fully understood if we are to free ourselves from that heritage. Until we are free of sex roles, both as individuals and as a society, the use of the Masculine and Feminine principles and the particular way in which they are embodied into the androgynous ideal cannot be ignored. It is through understanding the past which has shaped us that we shall be free to struggle towards an androgynous future. Once the androgynous vision has become a reality, the term may still be necessary, simply as a warning against any movement away from the ideal. For where there is life, there is struggle and change and that change may be for good or ill.

In "Apropos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*," D. H. Lawrence observes that human beings have two ways of knowing: "knowing in terms of apartness, which is mental, rational, scientific, and knowing in terms of togetherness, which is religious and poetic."³ Here, Lawrence describes the two opposite approaches to reality; the former is associated with the Masculine, the latter with the Feminine. One tends toward division and separation, the other toward unity and integration. This dichotomy and its traditional association with the two sexes reflects, in fact, not innate qualities but rather the difference in how boys and girls are educated. This association also derives from the function of the reproductive organs of the sexes and ultimately from the reproductive process itself. Thrusting itself outward, the male element—fast, penetrating, and aggressive—belongs to the outer conscious world. The

female element—hidden, inert, and receptive—evokes darkness and inward repose, the unconscious world. Through a magical and disquieting, but sheltering and connective activity, it furnishes a stable, nourishing environment for the continuity of the new life created by the union of both elements.

Linda Thurston writes in her article "On Male and Female Principle": "Male processes are those which, like an ejaculation, come from a single powerful source and move in multiple directions. . . . Female processes are those which, like the womb, provide a nourishing environment for growth."⁴ In *The Dialectic of Sex*, Shulamith Firestone makes a similar analogy. She discusses two "cultural responses" which she terms "Aesthetic" and "Technological." She asserts that "the correspondence of these two different cultural modes with the two sexes respectively is unmistakable":

The aesthetic response corresponds with "female" behavior. The same terminology can be applied to either: subjective, intuitive, introverted, wishful, dreamy or fantastic, concerned with the subconscious (the *id*), emotional, even temperamental (hysterical). Correspondingly, the technological response is the masculine response: objective, logical, extroverted, realistic, concerned with the conscious mind (the *ego*), rational, mechanical, pragmatic and down-to-earth. (p. 194)

According to Firestone, the Renaissance was the "golden age" of the Aesthetic response and also the beginning of its end. As scientific knowledge increased, the Technological climbed to new heights and the Aesthetic receded into the background.⁵

Hence, life contains both the Masculine and the Feminine aspects of nature. Traits associated with aggression, penetration, and change typify the Masculine and those related to passivity, receptiveness, and stability typify the Feminine. The Masculine principle—objective, scientific, logical—concerns the *ego* and the conscious mind. It dissects, analyzes, and disintegrates experience into categories, and sees "in terms of apartness." The Feminine—subjective, intuitive, spontaneous, contemplative, egoless, unconscious—integrates experience and perceives orders and relationships that may escape reason and rationality. It thus synthesizes and sees "in terms of togetherness."⁶ These two principles are subject to constant conflict and opposition. But, just as the male and female elements cooperate and play equal roles in the creation of human life, so too the Masculine and the Feminine

responses to reality must be balanced and harmonized within individuals and within our society if we are to regain wholeness and health.

As we have indicated, Masculine and Feminine as traditional symbolic concepts must not be taken to mean man and woman. Although these terms are reflections of our culture—of social roles and of traditional ideas about male and female, men are not the embodiment of the Masculine principle and women are not the embodiment of the Feminine principle. According to Erich Neumann, the “integrity of the personality is violated when it is identified with either the masculine or feminine side of the symbolic principle of opposites.”⁷ Each human being derives from male and female elements; thus the true human personality is androgynous, that is, it contains both male and female or Masculine and Feminine traits. Both man and woman, then, are potentially capable of both the Masculine and the Feminine responses to life.

Perhaps the oldest and clearest expression of the harmonious relationship that should exist between the Masculine and Feminine principles can be found in Taoism, the system of beliefs by which the ancient Chinese sought to explain the world.⁸ In Taoist philosophy, Yang, the male principle, and Yin, the female principle, signify the two archetypal poles of nature. The Tao—the middle way, the undivided unity which lies behind all earthly phenomena—gives rise to the Yin and the Yang. Yin represents death, darkness, secretiveness, evil, demons, earth, and the invisible world. Yang represents life, light, righteousness, gods, heaven, and the visible world. The two principles, although they appear to be conflicting opposites, define their existence through a creative relationship with each other. For Yang contains the seed of Yin, and Yin that of Yang. Through a cyclic movement within the Tao, each transforms itself into the other and thereby achieves identification :

The Supreme Pole moves and produces the *yang*. When the movement has reached its limit, rest [ensues]. Resting, the Supreme Pole produces the *yin*. When the rest has reached its limit, there is a return to motion. Motion and rest alternate, each being the root of the other. The *yin* and the *yang* take up their appointed functions, and so the Two Forces are established.⁹

Thus, as opposite poles of a single process, death defines life, and life, death; light gives rise to darkness, and darkness to light. Founded upon

this indescribable unity, Yin and Yang brought "the myriad things into being." Harmoniously working together, Heaven (Yang) and Earth (Yin) became the parents of all living things. Of these, human beings were the most nobly endowed. Their spiritual part came from Heaven and their body from Earth. Thus made in the image of heaven and earth, they embodied both the Yin and Yang principles.

According to Chinese thought, the complementary interaction of Yin (female) and Yang (male) in the universe and in humanity brings prosperity to the world, for the underlying harmony of the two principles resolves all the conflicts of nature. Only when we completely perceive the implicit interdependence of the two principles within ourselves and in the universe, when we transcend the duality and opposition and perceive the underlying unity of the two—only then can we find wholeness and peace. Having thus transcended the opposites, we also transcend the sexual duality, for the whole or complete human being is androgynous; he or she is at once male and female.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge recognized this bisexuality of the individual more than a century ago when he said that "a great mind must be androgynous." In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf explains what she felt Coleridge meant :

In each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man's brain, the man predominates over the woman, and in the woman's brain, the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually cooperating. If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. . . . It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilised and uses all its faculties."

Psychologists like Carl Jung and his followers also support the theory that the human psyche is androgynous; and, like Virginia Woolf, they assert that only when individuals integrate and achieve a harmonious balance between their male and female natures can they be truly creative, only then can they achieve wholeness and peace.

As Taoism exemplifies, the earliest mythmakers conceived the human being's original and ideal state as androgynous. In *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, Erich Neumann has shown that at the dawn of human history, primitive people projected their preconscious state

in mythic images of the Uroborus or the Great Round—the circular symbol of the One or the All, of the Self contained. The Round unites all the opposites in a state of paradisaal perfection. This state of being is perfect because of its self-sufficiency and contentment. While it reflects absolute rest, a static unchanging situation, at the same time it embraces the principle of creativity. “It is man and woman, begetting and conceiving, devouring and giving birth, active and passive, above and below, at once.” From this androgynous One, the primal creative elements, male and female, are born.¹¹

Hence, the majority of myths explaining the origin of human beings and of the world begin, like the Tao, with an androgynous or a bisexual One which gives birth to the male and the female. Not only do these myths reveal a separation of the One into two, but they also disclose how the two thereafter strive unceasingly to reunite, to restore the original state of wholeness. In Hindu mythology, for example, both the Upanishads and the Puranas contain accounts of the separation of the Supreme Self, originally bisexual, into male and female.¹² Christianity also presents the concept of an androgynous godhead. In Genesis (1:27), God created man in his own image, “male and female,” before Eve was taken out of Adam’s body. Clearly, this indicates that God is androgynous.

The origin of the sexes is also recounted in Plato’s *Symposium*. There were three beings—man, woman, and man-woman—and because they were getting a bit uppity, Zeus decided to humble them by cutting each one in two. Thus, when cut, the man became the homosexuals, the woman the lesbians, and the man-woman the heterosexuals. The three beings were round on all sides; each was cut in two “like a sorb apple which is halved for pickling.” The halves were extremely unhappy at their loss of wholeness. They strove in vain to become One “when Zeus in pity invented a new plan: he turned the parts of generation round in front, for this was not always their position, and they sowed the seed . . . in one another.”¹³ However, sexual union is relatively brief and only sometimes highly satisfactory; thus, it is not an adequate substitute for what in our dreams we can imagine to be an enduring sense of wholeness. There remains a sense of loss, a sense of something to be regained. Men and Women have had to live and still live with a sense of a Paradise lost.

Neumann asserts that the symbols with which human beings "have sought to grasp the beginning in mythological terms are as alive today as they ever were." So long as we shall exist, he says, "the Primal Deity who is sufficient unto himself, and the self who has gone beyond the opposites, will reappear in the image of the round, the mandala." For in addition to symbolizing the perfect beginning in which "the opposites have not yet flown apart," the Round also represents the perfect end because in it "the opposites have come together again in a synthesis."¹⁴ And, in "The Special Phenomenology of the Child Archetype," Carl Jung explains why the image of the hermaphrodite continues to assert itself even today. The original idea of the hermaphroditic or androgynous being, Jung asserts, has become "a unifying symbol," "a symbol of the creative union of opposites" that points "forward to a goal not yet reached." As such, it "has gradually turned into a subduer of conflicts and a bringer of healing":

As civilization develops, the bisexual "primary being" turns into a symbol of the unity of personality, a symbol of the *self* where the war of opposites finds peace. In this way the primary being becomes the distant *goal* of man's self-development, having been from the very beginning a projection of unconscious wholeness.¹⁵

The eternal human quest, then, is to discover and identify with the true self, to embrace the polar opposites and find again the primal wholeness which has been lost. Wholeness, says Jung, consists in the union of the conscious and the unconscious, the masculine and the feminine aspects of the personality.¹⁶ Thus, the quest for the self represents, in Jungian terms, a search for a point of balance that unites the opposites, stabilizes the personality, and brings the sense of wholeness that characterizes the androgynous being. The person who arrives at this point of equilibrium develops a mode of consciousness that is a total way of seeing, feeling, and experiencing. As we read in the *Tao Te Ching*:

He who knows the masculine and yet keeps to the feminine
Will become a channel drawing all the world towards it:
Being a channel for the world, he will not be severed from the
eternal virtue.
And then he can return again to the state of infancy.¹⁷

That is, individuals may achieve a sensation of oneness within themselves and with the external world. They may experience what Alan

Watts calls the "poetic, mythical, or mystical" vision: the way we saw things in our infancy, with "a sense of omnipotent oneness" with all that is seen and felt.¹⁸ Or they may discover what Jung calls the "self"—the "point midway between the conscious and the unconscious" where a reconciliation of opposites occurs.¹⁹

Hence, only the androgynous person, the individual who has developed both the male and female aspects of his or her personality, perceives and balances the Masculine and the Feminine responses to reality. Having arrived at a sense of wholeness, this person can see through the distinctions, the conflicts, the oppositions, and the multiplicities of daily life and apprehend the unchanging unity, the oneness, in D. H. Lawrence's words, "the togetherness of the universe."

The mystic has sought and regained this way of seeing through the most arduous disciplines. Indeed, the concepts of a quest for the unified personality and of the sense of oneness with all things are, as noted earlier, also found in mysticism. Here, however, what is most significant for our purposes is the sense of egolessness and the receptive frame of mind of the mystic. For the fusion between the male and the female aspects of the personality cannot take place as long as the mind is governed exclusively by the ego, by that principle which separates, distinguishes, and categorizes human personality and human experience. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud notes that "ego-feeling" is merely a shrunk vestige of a far more inclusive, all-embracing feeling which expresses an inseparable bond between the ego and the world about it.²⁰ The ego, then, is not the total personality. Rather, it is merely that principle which makes us aware of our separateness, and further, according to Alan Watts, it is that part of the personality which identifies with social conventions "foisted upon human consciousness by conditioning."²¹ Thus, individuals who withdraw into their own egos adopt social roles and become the roles they pretend to be. Consequently, they no longer know themselves, that is, the feelings and sensations which establish their connection with the rest of the world. They thus feel isolated from others. They become subjects who face a world of alien objects which they fear, hence which they seek to order and control. This attitude is especially disastrous where human relationships are concerned. For, thus isolated, ego-centered persons are insecure. They therefore seek to fortify themselves



M. Bazin

FIGURE 1 This patriarchal vision must be replaced by the Androgynous Vision.

against the world. The easiest way for them to generate confidence and security is to feel innately superior and to think of all others as inferior. In this way the "others" serve as mirrors to enhance and enlarge their egos. Hence, ego-centered individuals must strive continuously to reaffirm their superiority—to control, create, invent, discover, conquer, to raise themselves above others—so that the ego-building mirrors remain intact. The struggle for power, which gives rise to anxiety, tension, frustration, and human oppression, becomes endless. Thus, the full realization of androgyny requires a relaxing of the ego and a letting go of oneself. It requires spontaneity and openness to experience. It requires an openness to cooperative, communal structures and relationships. Only through this kind of receptiveness can one learn to respect rather than fear and seek to control the other, to recognize the other as just as sacred and worthwhile as oneself rather than to exploit and consider the other inferior.

Unfortunately, we live in a patriarchal, capitalistic society instead of an androgynous, socialistic one. The androgynous vision is largely absent in our culture, for the Feminine is, for the most part, suppressed. Although Karl Stern in his book *The Flight from Woman* mistakenly believes in two different but complementary sexes rather than in androgynous human beings, he presents a perceptive analysis of the absence of the Feminine and of the consequences of this in our culture. He describes a personality popular in modern life: the "hustler and go-getter," the man who is obsessed with a "frenzied activism" and an "air of restlessness," who overemphasizes the technical and rational, adopts a cold intellectual attitude, and rejects warmth and sensitivity; the man who tends to believe in the mechanics and manageability of human relationships and acts as though he were on guard against his own heart. This kind of person, commonly associated with "organization men," "managerial" and "executive types," is usually successful in life, that is, in terms of material or economic advancement. "Hard-working" and "spartan" in his habits, however, this type of individual shies away from tenderness, denies feeling, dreads receiving, and fears dependence, protection, and love; for giving in to these, he believes, means a loss of control. Moreover, he seems to think that loving and being loved are appropriate only to animals, children, and women. Yet, deep within him, there persists

"an extraordinary need to be mothered," to be loved, to open up in a childlike manner of receptiveness. When psychiatrists have occasion to observe this kind of person as a patient, Stern asserts, they find a "maternal conflict and a rejection of the feminine"; they perceive an "antithesis" between the "intellect" and the "heart," and in this antithesis, the heart is linked with woman.²²

Stern's description clearly depicts a familiar contemporary—the man who suffers from an over-valuation of masculine achievement and a debasement of those values commonly associated with woman. This "character neurosis," as Stern calls it, is by no means typical of men alone. Many women betray, in their attitudes and values, this same devaluation of the Feminine. Some unconsciously adapt themselves to the images men have of them and feel that this adaptation reflects their true nature. These women strive to remain comfortably outside of the active, competitive, male world and seek to be as tender, loving and submissive as possible. Other women feel the need to compete with men according to male standards and are thus labeled "masculine," "unnatural," or "unwomanly." In any event, most women, like most men, applaud masculine accomplishment, conform to masculine standards, and thereby comply with the derogation of those values traditionally linked with woman. Stern terms this common attitude of our day "a flight from the feminine."

Our society also reflects this "flight from the feminine." It exalts the Masculine objective, analytical, scientific mind over the more intuitive and instinctual wisdom of the Feminine. The so-called "male" values in our society are actually capitalistic ones. The male, like the capitalist, must be competitive, aggressive, domineering, independent, powerful, impressive. Status and financial success are the rewards for these characteristics. However, to emphasize and cultivate those values traditionally designated as Feminine will yield no economic gains in a culture guided by the profit motive. Such an attitude clearly exposes one of the most crippling effects of technological capitalism in Western society. Indeed, even a cursory observation discloses the imbalance between the Masculine and the Feminine and the dreadful consequences of such one-sidedness in our culture.

Ours indeed is a world of bustling activity and endless drive, of perpetual competition and constant anxiety at the expense of silent

contemplation and inward reflection. To a great degree, because of a capitalistic orientation, our society has established as its gods work, money, success, and power; and it is characterized by greed and over-consumption. Hence, egoism pervades the scene and narrow self-interest immensely outweighs concern for others. We thus exploit nature and conquer ever more frontiers with little regard for violations against the human and natural environments. Consciously striving to control the physical, to create an external world through science and technology, we have developed an intellectualism largely divorced from instinct and common sense. In the name of progress, we have lost touch with those emotional and personal elements—warmth, affection, sensitivity—which make us human. Rarely, therefore, do we seek repose in order to receive the world subjectively, to perceive the relationship of the world, of our work, and of other lives to our own life. Indeed, rarely do we consider the use and value of science and technology for more long-term, humane purposes rather than for the immediate power and profits of a few people. Often, only a catastrophe—a Nagasaki or a Vietnam, the misuse of a scientific discovery or a perilous ecology problem—alerts us to the vital connection that exists between ourselves, other people, and nature, and then perhaps only temporarily. Alan Watts sums up the situation in this manner :

When human beings acquired the powers of conscious attention and rational thought they became so fascinated with these new tools that they forgot all else, like chickens hypnotized with their beaks to a chalk line. Our total sensitivity became identified with these partial functions so that we lost the ability to feel nature from the inside, and, more, to feel the seamless unity of ourselves and the world.²³

This overwhelming one-sidedness threatens to make us victims of our own science and technology, to sweep us to our own destruction. For we have created a society where individuals have become statistics and human relationships more and more programmed, where respect for persons as human beings has all but vanished, thus oppression and exploitation prevail; a society in which nuclear attack is always imminent and pollution constantly endangers all life; a society that breeds violence—war, gangsterism, crime, mass murder, assassination—and gives birth to uncertainty, discontentment, and isolation, to nihilism, depression, and suicide; a society in which experimentation

with mind-expanding drugs often spells disaster for those seeking escape from the emptiness and barrenness of their own existence. Clearly, then, the lack of the Feminine has far-reaching consequences in Western capitalist culture. As Erich Neumann comments in *The Great Mother*: "Western mankind must arrive at a synthesis that includes the feminine world—which is also one-sided in its isolation. Only then will the individual human being be able to develop the psychic wholeness that is urgently needed if Western man is to face the dangers that threaten his existence from within and without."²⁴

As Carolyn Heilbrun says in her article "The Masculine Wilderness of the American Novel," androgyny would "free men from the compulsion to violence."²⁵ The link between polarized sex roles and violence has barely begun to be studied. There are hints of the connection in Theodore Roszak's essay "The Hard and the Soft"²⁶ and in Kurt Vonnegut's play *Happy Birthday Wanda June*. For instance, Vonnegut's hero kills in war and in hunting in the same spirit that he carries his struggling wife off to bed. Considering the widespread association of the gun with the penis, it is not surprising to read in Roszak's essay that the term used today for global annihilation is "wargasm." Indeed, masses of men spend their time assuring themselves and others that they are not "gay" by talking of war, sports, and women. To prove themselves manly, they feel a need to compete, to conquer, to dominate, to win. Moreover, the lengths to which they will go to prove they are not effeminate endanger us all. In fact, we live in a culture which admires what is thought to be masculine and looks down upon what is thought to be feminine.

As Elizabeth Davis points out in *The First Sex*, man's constant need to disparage woman, to humble her, to deny her equal rights, and to belittle her achievements all are expressions of his innate fear of her.²⁷ But oppression not only suppresses the human potential of the oppressed group; it also impoverishes the lives of the oppressors. Thus, as woman's oppressor, man himself suffers; for he has only certain forms of behavior open to him. To live up to the masculine ideal, he must assume, as we have noted, a posture of rigidity and toughness; he must control his feelings and deny any impulses that cannot be expressed through the masculine image. He thus suppresses everything

in his nature that is symbolically feminine and yielding. Hence, the development of such qualities as intuition, sympathy, and warm emotion is seen by most to be deplorable in men. For, as Adrienne Rich observes in her article "The Anti-Feminist Woman," this is supposed to make men "unfit for the struggle that awaits them in a masculine world." As a result, "the 'masculinity' of that world is perpetuated" at the expense of those Feminine qualities which are confined to women and kept in the home.²⁸ This process of numbing and isolating certain human qualities is indeed dangerous to humanity.

The source of the social subordination of women and of the cultural devaluation of the Feminine rests, therefore, in the female biology and in her function in the reproductive process which gave rise to man's fear of woman, hence of all things Feminine. Throughout human history, woman's biology—strange, alien to man, and different from his—has overwhelmed man with a sense of mystery and inspired in him feelings of awe and wonder. Seemingly embodying the dark, the fantastic, and the uncontrollable aspects of life, woman appeared to man to be synonymous with Nature from whom he received life and to whom he succumbed in death, on whom he depended, and before whom he consequently experienced perplexity, ambivalence, and, certainly, fear. Gradually, man invented tools and machines through which he sought to harness the powers of Nature. He began to develop the sciences and technology. He thereby escaped, somewhat, the clutches of Nature. Woman, on the contrary, bound and incapacitated by her biology, remained enslaved by Nature's processes. Man thus came to look upon her more and more as a being different from himself, yet as one on whom he depended; for to do certain work, to satisfy his desires, and to perpetuate the race, woman was indispensable. But he could not accept her as his equal; she was "other" than he. She belonged to Nature and its mysterious realm of creation which he could not rationally apprehend, hence which he feared and shied away from in terror or sought to conquer and control. Thus, as Wolfgang Lederer points out in *The Fear of Women*, man's fear of woman "pertains to the other-ness of woman, the particular mystery by which she manages to bleed, and to transform blood into babies, and food into milk, and to be apparently so self-sufficient and unapproachable in all of it."²⁹ Therefore, as man learned to conquer

and control Nature, woman, like Nature itself whose disturbing mysteries she incarnated, was fated to be exploited and subjugated to man's will.

The biological difference between male and female, then, is a major factor in the origin of sex roles. Before the advent of birth control and tampons, woman was at the continual mercy of her biology and of her role in the perpetuation of the species. Man, on the other hand, was never enslaved by the generative function. Menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, infant care—these reduced woman's capacity for work, for participation in the shaping of the world, and made her dependent on man for protection and survival. Because of his biological advantage, man deemed himself woman's natural superior. To establish his own unflinching confidence in his innate superiority and to, at the same time, assuage his fear of woman, he sought to bring her under his control. He thus turned her biology against her, making it the source of her weakness and using it to label her inferior and thereby to circumscribe and restrict her social, political, and occupational endeavors.

For instance, menstruation made her unclean, impure, tainted. In primitive and even in some later rural communities, a menstruating woman was believed to kill one of two men she walked between; she ruined crops, destroyed gardens, killed insects, dimmed mirrors, soured milk, turned wine to vinegar, and curdled mayonnaise.³⁰ As late as the nineteenth century one author wrote, "To regard women during menstruation as unclean is certainly very useful";³¹ and in 1878 the *British Medical Journal* declared that "it is an undoubted fact that meat spoils when touched by menstruating women."³² In primitive societies, menstruating women were, and still are, placed in seclusion: "they were thrust out into the wilderness and forbidden to look upon any man, not to be seen, on pain of death; they were hidden in dark huts, or locked in suspended cages; they were fumigated and roasted; and they must on no account touch anything belonging to a man, nor to a man's work; lest they destroy his abilities as a warrior or hunter or his performance in any male way whatever."³³ In short, as Lederer says, the attitude of man, and not only primitive man, toward menstruating women, can be seen in the following rhyme by an English poet: "Oh, menstruating woman, thou'rt a fiend/From whom all nature should be closely screened."³⁴

This attitude toward menstruation also extends to pregnancy. In the Old Testament, for example, Leviticus details elaborate regulations for women who have just given birth. If a woman bears a male child, "she shall be unclean seven days" (12:2):

And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying three and thirty days; she shall touch no hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purifying be fulfilled.

But if she bear a maid child, then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her separation: and she shall continue in the blood of her purifying threescore and six days. (12:4-5)

Clearly, this seems to indicate that a female child is more defiling than a male child.

But women were to be avoided not only because they were unclean, but also because they were powerful. From the dark and hidden depths of the vagina issued all sorts of evil and magical powers. Not only could the vagina magically induce a disease of the male genital, but also it was seen to sap man's strength. When the male ejaculated, he often interpreted this as a surrender of his vital strength. The subsiding of erection after intercourse was evidence to him of having been weakened by the woman. Thus, although man felt himself drawn to woman, although he longed for her, he feared that through her he might lose his virility and vitality. This fear, however, extended beyond a loss of physical strength to a loss of will, a loss of control, and a loss of self. Woman thus became synonymous with the unconscious and the non-ego, hence with darkness, nothingness, and the void. For this reason, in primitive cultures in particular, men were prohibited from any kind of association with a woman before undertaking important male enterprises. A man about to go to war, or to engage in athletic events, or to conduct some important business could not touch a woman, for he would surely encounter disaster and misfortune.³⁵ Odysseus, for example, refused to yield to Circe's advances on the grounds that his vigor would be impaired. And the stories of Samson and Hercules warn of the danger in store for the strong, heroic male who allows himself to succumb to female charm. Many folktales, myths, and legends detail the dangers of the female vagina and express the idea that the very sight and thought of a woman can render a man weak. By extension, even touching a woman or anything

considered feminine, or acting like a woman, conveyed a weakness in men. Consequently, careful distinctions have been established between what is proper for men and women in mannerisms, dress, and patterns of behavior.

Woman's body, considered dirty, diseased, and dangerous, came to represent the essence of evil, decay, and death. This was even more true as she was deemed desirable. For centuries various religions have described man as being torn between the spirit and the flesh. And religions of various cultures link woman with the flesh, with its desires and its dangers. The temptations of the flesh have constantly occupied religious minds striving for salvation. The devout Christian, for example, in an effort to repress the physical side of his nature, projected his guilty feelings onto woman. The Christian religion thus split the image of woman in two, divorced lust and sexuality from motherhood, and insisted on female subjection. Eve, the original temptress, caused man's fall from grace. Just as Pandora unleashed all evil and wickedness upon mankind, Eve introduced sex into the world and was made responsible for man's mortality and for all of his sins. And the Virgin Mother, the flesh purified, became the source of man's redemption. Hence, the Christian respects and reveres the Virgin and the chaste, obedient wife and mother, safe under male domination. At the same time, he proclaims his hatred and disgust for the seductive flesh, the temptress or prostitute who lures man from the path of righteousness. Whether of lust or of chastity, then, woman became a sexual object, a creature with whom ignoble passion and denied sexuality—all that is evil and all that is "ideal"—are associated. And whether condemned or honored, woman existed only as man's subordinate, and her sole mission on earth was to serve man. Thus, as Elizabeth Davis indicates in *The First Sex*, the Christian Church carried forward a bitter campaign to debase and enslave women. It turned the subconscious fear and dread that men harbored of women into active hatred and contempt which led to the overt and enforced subjection of women by either direct physical control or rigidly enforced taboos, and, finally, by civil law.³⁶

While the female's biology induced fear and a consequent hatred which led men to view women as frail, debased, and inferior, the female's function in reproduction served to determine women's

economic and social position in the world. Thus, a woman's role came to be defined not only by female sexuality, but also by the economic structure of society. Indeed, the first division of labor grew out of the biological difference between the sexes. Because domestic labors were reconcilable with the cares of maternity, man saw woman's natural state as confined to the home, to children, and to all chores associated with them.

Therefore, in primitive societies, while men hunted, fished, went to war, provided the raw materials for food, and made the necessary tools for these activities, women maintained the home and cared for children, cultivated gardens and prepared food, made clothing, pottery, and the implements necessary for work in and around the house. In such societies, the basic problem of the entire community was survival; and the tasks performed by both male and female played an important part in accomplishing this end. Consequently, while men may have exerted a certain amount of control over women through sexual taboos or even physical means, the women's labor was productive and quite essential to the economic life of the clan. Thus, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Frederick Engels maintains that in such a stage of human development, divisions of labor between the sexes existed largely on an equal basis: "Each was master in his or her own field of activity; the men in the forest, the women in the house. Each owned the tools he or she made and used: the men, the weapons and the hunting and fishing tackle, the women, the household goods and utensils. The household was communistic, comprising several, and often many, families. Whatever was produced and used in common was common property."³⁷ Later, however, the gradual accumulation of objects of wealth brought a profound revolution in this family organization. The men were responsible for procuring the raw material necessary for the sustenance of the group; they produced and owned the means of gaining a livelihood. Hence, increased production and regular exchange of materials between tribes gradually accorded men a more important status in the family than women. Thus, Engels asserts that "the woman's housework lost its significance compared with the man's work in obtaining a livelihood; the latter was everything, the former an insignificant contribution."³⁸ Finally, with the transition to private property, women were largely excluded from

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socially productive work and restricted mainly to housework, which is private. Here we see a growing division between the public and private spheres. Simultaneously, the patriarchal, monogamous family, created so that men could bequeath their accumulated wealth to their own children, emerged. And, "in order to guarantee the fidelity of the wife, that is, the paternity of the children, the woman [was] placed in the man's absolute power."³⁹

Yet, not until the rise of industrialization and capitalism, were women almost totally resigned to a passive, servile existence, and sharp distinctions made between home and work, and roles for men and women clearly and specifically defined. The growth of capitalism, writes Eva Figes in *Patriarchal Attitudes*, is the "root cause of the modern social and economic discrimination against women," which reached a peak in the nineteenth century.⁴⁰ For despite religious beliefs and taboos associated with woman's being a dangerous influence during most of the Christian centuries, and despite the harsh, derogatory, and sometimes brutal treatment that women received throughout the Middle Ages and up to and including the early eighteenth century, women had retained certain privileges and had made significant contributions to a developing economy. For instance, because the household was a working, productive unit, the labor of the Medieval and Renaissance woman was essential to the family business. These women worked alongside of their husbands, held important positions in the guilds, and inherited and continued to manage the business if their husbands died. Women were also licensed to practice law and medicine. Even in the seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century, women experienced some autonomy. They often acted as moneylenders, participated in trade, and managed small shops and even larger businesses of their own. The process of industrialization, however, led to the gradual abolishment of such female enterprises; for it gave men full economic control over wealth, made them the sole or principal breadwinner, and forced women into a state of economic dependence on their fathers and husbands.⁴¹ Thus, by the nineteenth century women had become, in Elizabeth Davis' words, "a special kind of property, not quite like houses or beasts of burden, yet not quite people. They could not be party to lawsuits, could not offer legal testimony, could not make contracts, could not own property, and could not buy or sell goods or land."⁴²

Along with the development of capitalism during the seventeenth century, a prosperous middle class began to emerge. By the nineteenth century, this bourgeoisie, worshipping wealth, security, and respectability, had impressed its self-centered, materialistic, and competitive spirit on society. Meanwhile, the exploited laborers struggled to keep alive under such a highly competitive system. It was primarily in the middle class that the problems of the dependent woman were most acutely felt during the nineteenth century. While the middle-class woman lived a life of idle domestication, to the great prestige and self-esteem of her husband, the working-class woman became the cheapest and most expedient form of labor on the market.⁴³

Although women were no longer considered so dangerous or vicious, they were viewed, more than ever before, as the weaker sex. The monthly cycle, for example, was used to label women physically and intellectually inferior to men; in 1869, for example, James MacGrigor Allan articulated this view in a speech to the Anthropological Society of London :

It will be within the mark to state that women are unwell, from this cause, on the average two days in the month, or say one month in the year. At such times, women are unfit for any great mental or physical labour. They suffer under a languor and depression which disqualify them for thought or action, and render it extremely doubtful how far they can be considered responsible beings while the crisis lasts. Much of the inconsequent conduct of women, their petulance, caprice, and irritability, may be traced directly to this cause. It is not improbable that instances of feminine cruelty (which startle us as so inconsistent with the normal gentleness of the sex) are attributable to mental excitement caused by this periodical illness. . . . Michelet defines woman as an invalid. Such she emphatically is, as compared with man. . . . In intellectual labour, man has surpassed, does now, and always will surpass woman, for the obvious reason that nature does not periodically interrupt his thought and application.⁴⁴

Moreover, it was commonly believed that intellectual activity by women would atrophy their reproductive organs.⁴⁵ Yet, the ideal woman, though weak and irresponsible, was the noblest and most virtuous of beings. Delicate and altruistic, obedient and self-sacrificing, the respectable woman devoted her life to ministering to men, to elevating their sentiments, and inspiring their higher impulses. By nature she was incapable of looking after herself; all of her actions were motivated by wifely submission and a love of motherhood;

therefore, any attempts she made toward autonomy and independence were foredoomed to failure. As a result, she had to be protected. Thus, she had to resign herself to a dependent, hence subordinate role.

Such was the image of ideal womanhood that came to flower during the nineteenth century. And a woman's chief goal in life was marriage. From infancy, the little girl was trained for the honorable state of wifehood, for continuous subservience to the man who would choose her. In fact, by marrying, she was exchanging sex and service for room, board, and spending money. Indeed, she had no viable alternatives. If she had to work, it was for starvation wages; many women found they could earn better livings as prostitutes. Also, working women were regarded with contempt. Even single talented women who sought freedom and autonomy through work as governesses or teachers for more affluent families were frowned upon and accorded a low social status because of their attempts at independence. Old maids were rebuked and considered ridiculous. Prostitutes were considered odious. In contrast to the married woman, however, the single woman at least had rights over her own body. The married woman, on the other hand, had no rights at all. Under the law, she belonged completely to her husband. Indeed, by the nineteenth century, legal codes had placed a woman's person and property under rigorous marital control. A wife had no rights under the law over her children. She had no say in the management or disposal of her inheritance. If she worked, she could not even own the money she earned.¹⁶

Laws like these moved John Stuart Mill, in 1861, to proclaim the legal subordination of one sex to the other as wrong and as one of the chief hindrances to human improvement. In his essay *On the Subjection of Women*, published in 1869, Mill detailed the injustices inherent in the practices used by the masculine establishment of his time to enslave women's minds and to inculcate attitudes of superiority in men. He showed the relationship between man and woman to be a power relationship—one of authority and subordination—best exemplified in the institution of bourgeois marriage, and he exposed the crippling effects of such a relationship in society at large:

All the selfish propensities, the self-worship, the unjust self-preference, which exist among mankind, have their source and root in, and derive their principal

nourishment from the present constitution of the relation between men and women. Think what it is to a boy, to grow up to manhood in the belief that without any merit or exertion of his own . . . by the mere fact of being born male he is by right the superior of all and every one of an entire half of the human race . . . how early the notion of his inherent superiority to a girl arises in his mind; how it grows with his growth and strengthens with his strength; how it is inoculated by one schoolboy upon another; how early the youth thinks himself superior to his mother, owing her perhaps forbearance, but no real respect; and how sublime and sultan-like a sense of superiority he feels, above all, over the woman whom he honours by admitting her to a partnership of his life. Is it imagined that all this does not pervert the whole manner of existence of the man, both as an individual and as a social being?"

Appealing for a principle of complete equality between the sexes, Mill wrote :

I believe that equality of rights would abate the exaggerated self-abnegation which is the present artificial ideal of feminine character, and that a good woman would not be more self-sacrificing than the best man: but on the other hand, men would be much more unselfish and self-sacrificing than at present, because they would no longer be taught to worship their own will as such a grand thing that it is actually the law for another rational being.¹⁸

Mill's essay, however, met with violent abuse from the men of the period because the ideas that he espoused posed a threat to man's power over woman. For a woman was the only pledge of a man's future existence. Through her, he could father children who would inherit his wealth and perpetuate his being. To insure that the children would be his own, he had to suppress and control the female in order to keep her virtuous and in order to maintain his sense of power in the world.

Hence, in a society where men had come to focus their primary interests on accumulating wealth and sustaining their power in the world, women became a form of property; and marriage was used to protect this property and to insure the proper inheritance of wealth. Thus, woman's capacity for productive labor outside of the home was severely restricted; and marriage became the chief vehicle for the subordination and oppression of women, and of consequently divorcing all things Feminine from the outer, masculine world.

Children raised in patriarchal families are, in fact, socialized to accept oppression and discrimination. Within their own family the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and work (childcare and house-

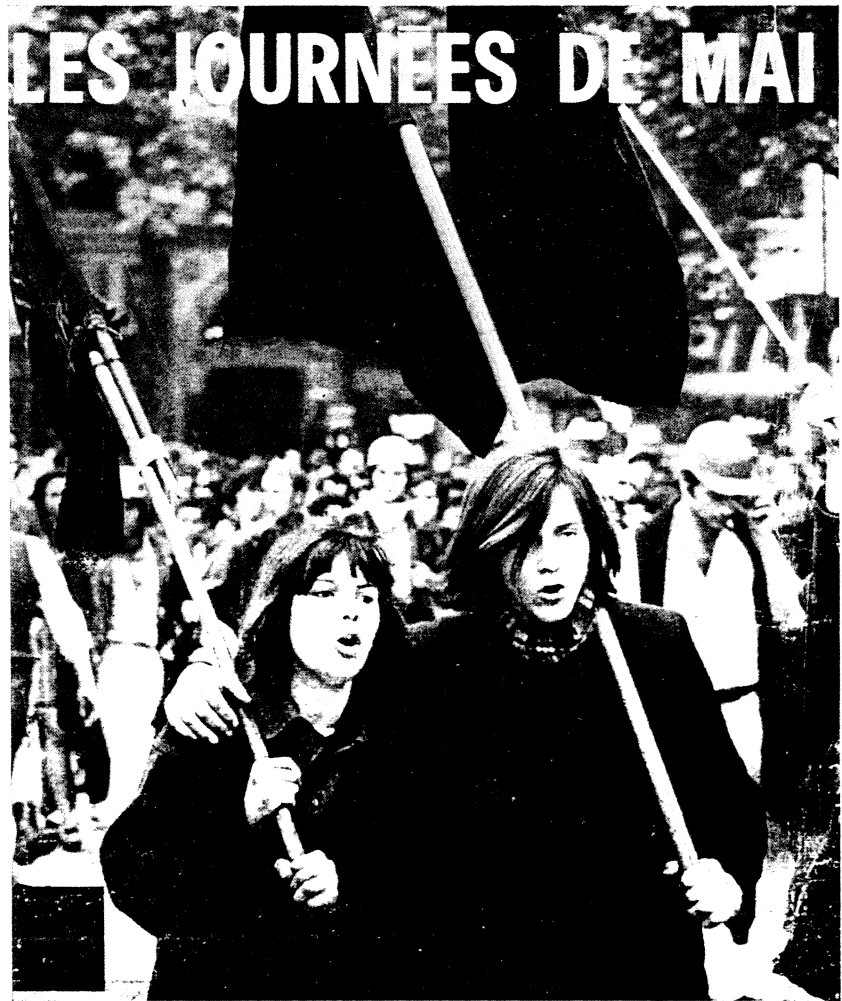


FIGURE 2 Representatives of the current struggle for an androgynous world.

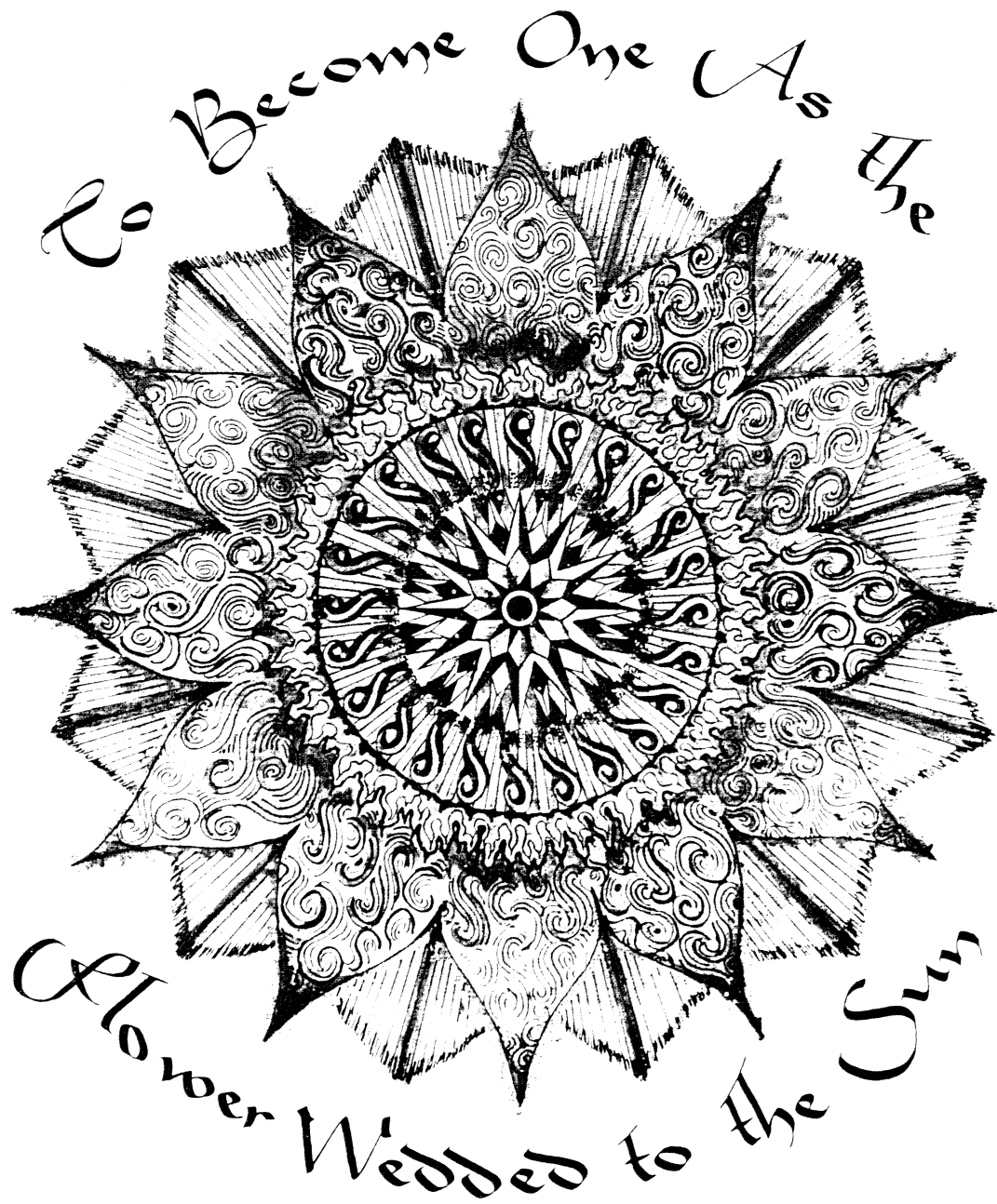


FIGURE 3 An example of a mandala, symbol of the androgynous whole.

work should be shared) is condoned, accepted as the rule of life. Is it any wonder that these same children grow up to oppress others, that automatically, when possible, they leave the unpleasant work for others to do? Is it any wonder that they resist the suggestion that equality—economic, racial, and sexual—is a desirable goal? The males in the family tend to imitate the oppressor role they observe in the father; the females tend to accept their devalued, oppressed position. Like all unconscious, oppressed peoples, the females tend to identify with and admire their own oppressors. Thus, they instill in their children the attitudes which will perpetuate the masculine, capitalist system. Moreover, given the chance, too many women would simply choose to be oppressors too. They too are tempted by power and privilege.

Thus, the androgynous ideal must involve radical change—the injection of cooperative, non-hierarchical, non-elitist structures into our society. As Linda Thurston points out: “Male processes are those which are dissective (divisive, analytic), characterized by parts. Female processes are those which are connective, characterized by the whole. The divisions in Yang systems (of caste, class, or between individuals) produce systems of competition and alienation. Collective systems are based on Yin in the larger framework, but are kept functioning by Male principle (directed action).”⁴⁹ In that sense, collective systems are androgynous. The Male system is authoritarian. She explains that “male social processes are characterized by a one-way flow (of power, knowledge, whatever) from a single source (an individual or elite group) to people who are isolated and divided from each other.”⁵⁰ However, in an androgynous structure,

No one has more or less power than anyone else. Each is connected with all others. Each can both act and receive. By being able to act, each unit has some control over what it receives. . . . [The participants] are not always “equal” in the sense that they are not always acting and receiving in equal proportions. At different times each can lead and each can follow depending on each one’s interest in participating in any particular thing. They are equal in that all are equally connected to each other and share equal power and resources. This is the ideal democratic system. In economic terms it is the ideal socialist system.⁵¹

In “The Third World of Women” Susan Sontag also indicates how radically different an androgynous society would be. As she says, the undoing of patriarchal oppression “will modify the most deeply rooted

habits of friendship and love, the conceptions of work, the ability to wage war (which is profoundly nourished by sexist anxieties), and the mechanisms of power. The very nature of power in organized societies is founded on sexist models of conduct. Power is defined in terms of, and feeds on, machismo,⁵²

The running battle between those who want to get themselves "together" first and those who want to get society "together" first is a needless one. It should be obvious that the personal and the political are interdependent, that the Androgynous Vision requires a radical change in both the individual and the society. The battle between black women and white women on the issue of women's liberation is also a diversion. Black and white must work together for the elimination of sexism and racism for they are rooted in the same sickness, in the need to suppress the "Other." The battle between the marxists and feminists is likewise unnecessary for we must work simultaneously for economic and sexual equality. Both the working class and women must engage themselves in a struggle for power. Indeed, the working class, blacks, Third World peoples, and women have been seen in very similar ways by the ruling class. That class has feared their sexuality, their solidarity, their potential power. For their power has a Dionysian quality about it that makes the Establishment fearful. Moreover, their social and psychic wholeness can be achieved only through the destruction of patriarchy and the creation of androgyny. This can be achieved only through the feminization of society. That means we must democratize, re-humanize, and re-organize the political, economic, and cultural life of the people. We must adopt a new (but traditionally Feminine) attitude which acknowledges the sacredness of all life—human, plant, and animal. In short, the Masculine and the Feminine must unite for the Rebirth of the new human being and the new society. This, in its widest possible sense, is the Androgynous Vision.

References and Notes

1. The selection of the terms "Masculine" and "Feminine" places the emphasis on culture rather than biology. In contrast, Linda Thurston emphasizes biology by choosing to use the terms "Male" and "Female." See her

- excellent article "On male and female principle" in *The Second Wave*, 1, 2 (Summer 1971), 38-42.
2. For an excellent discussion of women's role in the economy, see Isabel Largaia and John Dumoulin, "Towards a science of women's liberation," *NACLA's Latin America and Empire Report*, 6, 10 (December 1972), 3-20.
 3. D. H. Lawrence, "Apropos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*," *Phoenix II: Uncollected, Unpublished, and Other Prose Works*, ed. Warren Roberts and Harry T. Moore (New York: Viking Press, 1968), 512.
 4. Thurston, 39.
 5. Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1970), 194-200.
 6. Erich Neumann explains the Masculine and Feminine principles as representing the conscious and the unconscious. He writes, "It is consistent with the conscious-unconscious structure of the opposites that the unconscious should be regarded as predominantly feminine, and consciousness as predominantly masculine. This correlation is self-evident, because the unconscious, alike in its capacity to bring to birth and to destroy through absorption, has feminine affinities. The feminine is conceived mythologically under the aspect of this archetype . . . the system of ego consciousness, is masculine. With it are associated the qualities of volition, decision, and activity as contrasted with the determinism and blind 'drives' of the preconscious, egoless state." *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, Bollingen Series XLII (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 125.
 7. According to Neumann, the symbolism of Masculine and Feminine is archetypal, thus transpersonal, that is, beyond personal identification. The terms are "dictated by myth not by caprice" and are used to express "the symbolic principle of opposites." This symbolism must not be "erroneously projected upon persons as though they carried its qualities." *Origins*, xxii.
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 11. Neumann, *Origins*, 9, 10.
 12. Watts, *The Two Hands of God*, 75, 80.
 13. From Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium*. Quoted in Watts, *The Two Hands of God*, 177-180.
 14. Neumann, *Origins*, 8, 11.
 15. Carl Jung, "The special phenomenology of the child archetype," *Psyche and Symbol: A Selection from the Writings of C. G. Jung*, ed. Violet de Laszlo (New York: Doubleday, 1958), 139-141.

16. Ibid., 141.
17. Ch'u Ta-Kao, *Tao Te Ching* (London: The Buddhist Society, 1937), 38 (xxviii). Quoted in Alan Watts, *Nature, Man, and Woman* (New York: Pantheon, 1958), 113.
18. Watts, *The Two Hands of God*, 8, 14.
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20. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1961), 15.
21. Watts, *Nature, Man, and Woman*, 96.
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29. Wolfgang Lederer, *The Fear of Women* (New York: Grune & Stratton, 1968), 33-34.
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31. John Elliotson, *Human Physiology*, 5th ed. (London, 1840), 770-771.
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34. Quoted in Lederer, 28 and in de Beauvoir, 149.
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36. Davis, 229-241.
37. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1891), (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), 149.
38. Engels, 152.
39. Engels, 69.
40. Figs, 67.
41. See Figs, 68-73 and Davis, 303.
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43. Figs, 67, 73.
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50. Ibid., 39.
51. Ibid., 40–41.
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