

THE NATURAL INEQUALITY OF THE SEXES:

WOMEN ARE MORE PRACTICAL, AND WHY -----ELLIOTT #1831

Yes, it's a splendid idea to read, regularly, material you think you're going to disagree with (for stimulus and growth), as well as material you think you're going to agree with (for confirmation and peace). A third important category: Material you're uncertain of your reaction to. For me, novels fall into category #3 and get the least of my reading attention; indeed, I'm more apt to light down into them, by some means, than to read through them. And this last is the case with this from Jn. Fowles, recently re-famous because of the film on his *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN* (*THE MAGUS*, chap.52): This is the great distinction between the sexes. Men see objects, women see the relationship between objects. Whether the objects need each other, love each other, match each other. It is an extra dimension of feeling we men are without and one that makes war abhorrent to all real women--and absurd. (Underlining, mine.)

1. That quote is astoundingly in my "confirmation-and-peace" category --as much as anything I've read in months. Paradoxically, "the sexual revolution" and "the women's movement" (better, "the feminist movement" --because it, roughly, includes men like me) have proved both freeing and stifling--so much so that cries are rising for freedom from "liberation," esp. that aspect of "liberation" which may be termed liberation from responsibility (esp., men feeling far less responsible for women and children than before "liberation"). Both revolutions or movements were seriously flawed by their assumption of male/female egalitarianism, which the Jn. Fowles quote deflates.

2. Yes of course: Some men are superior to most women in relationship-perceiving; but most women are superior, here, to most men. At age 66, trained and hardened/softened as a human being and people-helper, I have no doubt of that. I may as well get personal: Almost daily, something hilarious happens between Loree and me on this front. I am "seeing" (a thing or idea or person or custom or institution), speak to her of my seeing, and am surprised see "sees" the same + connections/relationships--as she's surprised I don't so see. The root of the hilarity is the mutual surprise, and there's no anger because we agree that "That's the way men/women are"--and there is joy, because our laughter celebrates what Jn. Fowles here calls "the great distinction between the sexes." Because we are practicing biblical theists, this celebration is (consciously) a form of worship.

3. If we're going to make progress toward true female/male liberation, men are going to have to concede their inferiority in this department. Men remain stubborn asses as long as they concentrate on their superiorities over women; and women, rightly, aren't going to concede these male superiorities till men concede men's inferiorities. "You go first" is the formula for continued impasse. Yes, there are calyx women, so hard from breaking through the soil of patriarchy that they're unwilling to concede any male superiority and are outraged at the very idea. They, as much as those stubborn males, are holding up the revolution. A pox on both! Better, may both mature from calyx to flower.

4. The mutual ignorance of the sexes on this matter of differential perceiving is responsible for much anguished misunderstanding and mutual accusations. Women, with their wide-angle soul-eyes, accuse men of "not wanting to see," "not loving enough to understand" (read, "make connections and see relations as women do"). Men, with their narrow-angle, long-lens soul-eyes, accuse women of "tying us down" and "demanding attention for themselves and their interests" instead of "letting a man get a man's work done" (read, "think discretely, like a

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"man"). Woman: "If you really loved me...." Man: "Why can't you let me alone? You're always at me!" Mutual oppression.

5. Given the difference this thinksheet is about, women and men can be equally good pastors--but women are more natural at it, because pastoring is 60% SEEING relationships and only 40% MAKING connections (and women are better at the former, though probably men are better at the latter).

6. The flipside of male relation-perceiving inferiority is the probable male superiority in connection-making. "Probable": till we're farther down the line with women's freedom in this and other societies, we can't know whether it's nature or nurture that gives the boys, over against the girls, the overwhelming list of credits for creativity in almost every sphere of human endeavor. A severe problem here is that "creativity" has become almost a password into human maturity (along with Erikson's "generativity"): to say the boys have a higher creativity potential than the girls would seem to condemn the girls to a lower level of achievement and maturation. I think the trouble is with the relative force or connotation of "creative." That force is itself, I think, sexist. If we were to upplay "commitment" or "intimacy" (so that these words were the open sesame to maturity and truly human achievement), and downplay "creativity," we would have reverse sexism. Better still, "creativity" could be spread over both sexes and no longer*used for linear-penile achievements such as the development of nukes (a clear instance of creativity's being contra-human, evil; God-help the world to become less phallic-"creative"!). But the boys control language, the girls only react to it (as we can see by the current "inclusive language" ruckus); but the emergence of the androgynous psyche (anima/animus in humble and joyful partnership, as woman and man in a good marriage) harbingeres a more human language (which won't come by direct operation on language itself, especially not through tampering with the text of holybooks). (*exclusively)

7. To enrich the discussion, a history-of-religions note: Women see "visions" (new constellations of relations/connections), men dream "dreams" (image-configurations trending straightline toward eventualities). Not to put too fine an edge on it, "God" is a vision and "the Rule of God" is a dream. See the male/female roles-distribution in religious leadership among primitive, intermediate, and modern peoples (e.g., Joachim Wach's taxonomy). An example I often allude to: All the post-WWII religions of Japan were started by priestesses (or prophetesses) and then developed and led by men: the women saw relationships, the men made connections. Fascinating how these two functions collude in present Japanese business! It's like early Western opera, the women's parts being sung by males in falsetto. An androgynous church naturally/supernaturally combines both these virtues (unlike a medieval choir, fossils of which exist to this day: the female parts are sung by prepubescent males; and unlike the present clergy, most of whom are strongly feminized males with the strengths and weaknesses pertaining to women). (One important side-benefit from the ordination of women: it helps free male clergy to be men.)

8. So why are women more practical? Because they are, in their very souls, closer to the life-sustaining disciplines of dailiness, including covenant-faithfulness (which is the basic virtue of biblical morality--which means that biblical morality is fundamentally feminine, though of course biblical society was patriarchal). My cross-diagram (with "heavenly"/"earthy" on the vertical) has, on the transept, "habitual-responsible" (feminine) on one end and "romantic-adventurous" (masculine) on the other. The two dimensions and four powers cry out for androgynous integration.