

The current [Jan/77] issue of PSYCHOLOGY TODAY features "Masculinity" and comes to conclusions I'll not bother to recite or even remember, but it prompts some musings on the abstraction "-inity" in either form, viz. "mascul-" or "femin-".

1. It's increasingly clear that "characteristics" can be clustered only awkwardly around the sexual poles: human beings are too complex and protean to be lumped categorically in relation to the shape of their skinbags, male and female. Psychobiology is gradually liberating the world from life-denying and life-constricting myths. We humans are strung along a psychosexual spectrum that's braided and knotted, with strand ends sticking out here and there, with "the individual" seen increasingly as worthy of "individual" treatment, free from prescientific role-assignments.

2. In all this disconcerting maze, I believe God has given each creature its own individual "nature," to be individually developed for triple joy--its own, its fellow-creatures, and the Creator. "Ministry" is, individually, the abetting of this development, the midwifery [maieusis] of this unique birth process--in parenting, teaching, counseling, preaching, governing, all necessary legitimate kinds of leading and healing, including space-making and the removing of antilife restrictions and constrictions. That reminds me [this last of the list]: I must remove the guywire on the oak Mark planted as a sproutling 14 years ago: it held the tree straight, but--because the trunk has thickened--would kill the tree within two years or at most three: old helps, some of them, become new constrictions; old friends, enemies; old life-supports, life-destroyers. One woman who's nature [in my technical sense of the term, in this paragraph] does not fit a traditional convention is all I need to condemn that convention as applicable to "women." To blow an ancient rule of female silence in church, all I need is to hear one woman making more sense, at the moment, than the men are making--or even only as much sense. I by my own doctrine must be a partisan of any one whose developing nature is being constricted by convention. I'm not evading collective action, but I am pointing to the primacy of partisan action for the one sufferer here-and-now. Here-and-now in such a situation, the judgment of God on me is whether I am friend or enemy of the Three Joys.

3. For this Christian mission, a gardening analogy: One should fight garden pests with herbi-fungi-insecti-cides only if one fails in the fight to give a plant the life-support sufficient to win its own battles. The primary fight is not against death but for life, and there is no dimension of life--plant, animal, human; body, psyche, mind, spirit--to which this rule does not apply, including the social dimension: majorities/minorities, families, churches, nations. A woman whose primary self-definition is in relation to a man or men is not only demeaning herself but also her sex, and insulting her Creator. I help plant and woman to fight for its/her "nature" from within, and also by helping create external conditions favorable to flowering, "nature"-fulfillment. As the gifts God gives "liberally" [Jas.1.5] are irrespective of skin shape [sex] and color ["race"], the very thought of excluding anyone from a social role [e.g., ordination] on the basis of any such criteria is, whether conscious or not, blasphemy. Our klieglights here are the gospel, the humane tradition West and East, and psychobiology (which provides individual exceptions to all role-assignments and sex-characteristics categorizations, without denying the secondary usefulness of the latter).

4. Women WERE and men DID (creating language-culture-civilization, and keeping women down a million years). Now, everybody needs to BE more than DO. "X" is decision; "xx'" and "xx'" are, respectively, the traditional female/male assignments; and "xx'x'" is the balance we should pray and strive for.

