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Is the Modern woman free and for what?, 1953.



IS THE MODERN WOMAN FREE, AND FOR WHAT?

May 17, 1953

I was recently intrigued by the title of a book written by Professor Ashley Montagu, professor of anthropology at Rutgers University. The book is called "The Natural Superiority of Women". I am rather interested in everything that Professor Montagu writes. Some years ago I read with a great deal of pleasure his book called, "On Being Human" in which he propounded the thesis that cooperation is <sup>as</sup> an important factor in evolution as competition. It is not true that evolution is due entirely to a struggle for existence and that nature "is red in tooth and claw", as it were, but that progress is due as much to people getting together and doing things for the common good as it is due to competition among men; and that the law, "love thy neighbor as thyself", is not only sound ethics but sound biology.

Professor Montagu seems to have a fresh approach and is not afraid to face up to stuffy scientific dogmatism. In this book, "The Natural Superiority of Women", the professor lays about him on all sides very vigorously, in demolishing many a pseudo-scientific myth about woman. I personally do not know why, at this very late date, the professor chose to write this book on "The Natural Superiority of Women". Certainly, in these United States no male in possession of his senses would care to write a book upon the natural superiority of man. I think man would be content and would regard himself as fortunate and being let off equal if he is acknowledged as an equal and treated as an equal. In the eyes of the Europeans, America is the very "Paradise of Women". Nowhere are women so exalted, their social power so great, their resources of affluence and luxury and leisure so extensive. The American man of the prosperous classes delights in lavishing money on his wife and his daughters. They are idealized and amply provided for.

But lest there be any vestige left of the old theories about womankind and of the historic subjection of women, Professor Montagu proceeds to demonstrate scientifically first, that women are naturally superior to men - that is, biologically superior. Nature



has bestowed upon woman greater survival benefits. Woman has greater resistance to disease. Her life span is longer. Man has, of course, greater muscular power, but woman has greater stamina. Women endure all sorts of devitalizing conditions better than men: starvation, exposure, fatigue, shock, illness and the like. Women recover from illnesses much more frequently than men do, and death from almost all causes is more frequent than in women.

The fact that the weight of the female brain is on the average a few ounces less than man's - that may be a source of consolation to some of us - but not after you get through with Professor Montagu. The fact that the weight of the female brain is a few ounces less than man's is no proof that the male is more intelligent than the female. There is no relationship whatsoever between brain size and intelligence. "The biggest human brain on record was that of an idiot."

Why is it that there have been no great musicians among women, no great logicians, no great philosophers and poets? Why are there so few painters and scientists and inventors of first rank among women? The professor gives the explanation. In the first place, for the greater part of their history, most fields of human achievement have been closed to women. It is only in the last one hundred years that they have really opened up. In the second place, in the fields in which women were admitted, they were not permitted to enter on an equal footing with men, or having been admitted, they were not encouraged to excel; in fact, they were actively discouraged or were not noticed at all; in short, women never had the same opportunities for the development and the expression of their native talents and abilities. And the brilliant and outstanding achievement of some women today in each of the fields of art and literature, even science, indicates their potential capacities.

The professor then addresses himself to the problem, are women more emotional than men? And his answer is a very interesting one. Women exhibit their feelings more readily. Men have been trained to believe that it is unmanly to display their emotions.



They, therefore, repress them or suppress them. That is why women remain much healthier than men. The so-called "nervous little woman" puts it all over the strong, silent man. They are far more men than women in our mental institutions, and men commit suicide far more often than women. That you can interpret in many ways, of course. Men break more easily under emotional strain than women.

And women can do and are now doing almost any work than man can do. They are twenty million gainfully employed women in the United States alone - manual labor, factory workers, clerical work, professional work, including engineering and medicine, finance, government. The two world wars made extraordinary demands upon womankind. They were called upon to man - that's an interesting term - they were called upon to man many posts which were vacated by the men who were called into service, and women met the challenge in an amazing way, in an amazingly successful and competent way.

Women today are members of boards of directors of corporations, are members of Congress, some have even attained Cabinet rank; are representatives of governments of the world in the United Nations; are ministers to foreign countries; they operate department stores, chains of hotels and restaurants, railroad and public utilities.

The swooning type of the female, the feeble type, is a thing of the past. Professor Montagu seems to think it was a hoax even in the past.

A recent survey shows that American women handle the finances in about half of the families of the nation. Women own almost half of all privately owned stock in large corporations in our country. 65% of the accounts held in mutual savings banks are held by women. 40% of the titles of the thirty million homes in this country are held by women. 80% of the spending of the national income is directly controlled by women - some men think it's 100% - it's only 80%. And an interesting side-line on all this is that "a recent financial survey revealed the fact that 75% of women said that they understood the annual reports of companies in which they own stock." They actually read them and understood them, "and only 56% of the men who were interviewed said they knew what such reports were all about."



Women have greater sensitivity than men. They are more intuitive than men; that is, they are able to identify themselves with other persons more effectively than men, and they are able to do so because of their more profound feeling for people." And of course, in these United States they may be said to be the cultural torch-bearers in every one of our communities. Without them, our cultural activities, our musical activities, our artistic undertakings, our forums and lectures would languish. The American man seems to have relegated that entire field of culture to women.

Now, why does this professor take the pains to point all this out. Not, of course, to incense the male of the species or to humiliate him, but as he puts it, to enhance the appreciation of the sexes for each other and that there may be more mutual love and understanding and complete social equality among them. He feels that women are just beginning to emerge from their long and unjustified period of subjection.

This may be true as far as some other parts of the world are concerned. There are many parts of the world in which women have not yet begun to emerge from her old status of subjection. As far as the United States is concerned, woman is far advanced along the road to complete freedom and equality. Her status as a full partner, politically, economically and socially is assured, even though here and there some unreconciled male individual may resent or challenge the fact.

What is not touched on in this book and what to me would have made a much more helpful and stimulating book is how this new status has affected womanhood, for it is clear that this new status is not without its major and unresolved problems. You take, for example - I believe that everyone will agree that the primary role of a woman in the scheme of any society, however advanced, in the scheme of any civilization, is that of a home-maker. While it is true that man has been much concerned in the building of a home, it has also been true throughout the ages that it is the woman who has been primarily responsible for the maintenance of the home and for the quality of the home, the spirit of the home. In the Book of Proverbs there is that very interesting phrase,



"It is the wisdom, the intelligence of the woman which fills the home." And yet, it is sad to report that with the growing emancipation of womankind, the home has begun to disintegrate in the United States. One out of every three marriages in our country ends in the divorce court, and the percentage is increasing. I believe that in our own county, here in Cuyahoga County, the incident of divorce is actually larger than the incident of marriage. What does that mean? What does that forbode? Is it true that the price of freedom for womankind is the broken home and the undermined family? It is difficult to answer the problem. Surely, woman is not the only one responsible for the broken home. Surely, man is equally as responsible.

If the thesis is a correct one that it is primarily the opportunity and the challenge and the necessity, the social necessity, of woman to hold together the home, then it is disconcerting to observe that with the increased freedom that woman has acquired, and has rightly acquired, the home is suffering tragic derangement, appalling disorganization on the American scene. And the corollary, of course, to this is that a broken home makes for broken lives of children, with some few exceptions, of course. A broken home is not the normal environment in which children should grow up. Now, here is an unresolved problem, a serious one.

And what of that large group of women, members of our prosperous classes, who are neither home-makers nor wage-earners nor otherwise socially productive? What do they do with their new-found freedom? What do they do with their leisure? Are they content in their new status? Are they an asset to their community? Are they happier. It is very difficult to answer these questions. There are no statistics. Do these women find an outlet for their energies in community enterprises, in social service, in church activities, in the tasks of citizenship, in the cultivation of their minds and their skills? Many of them do - I know many of them. They do not waste their lives and their opportunities and their freedom and fritter them away. They use them for personal, mental, spiritual improvement and advancement, and for doing good in their



community within the sphere of their influence, of their circle.

But on the other hand, what of the others - the many others, who spend their time in endless card-playing, in cocktail parties, and rounds of social entertainments, in hectic pleasure-seeking and self-indulgence? I say there are no statistics on the subject, but there is clearly much unhappiness in the American home, or they would not be breaking up at such an appalling rate. There is the second unresolved problem which the new status has brought to the modern woman. They are not insoluble, and the thoughtful and the wise among them are endeavoring to solve them, and for themselves in many, many instances they have solved them wisely and helpfully.

Professor Montagu makes an interesting appeal to womankind, to the modern woman. I don't know whether you can call it an appeal, but this is how he conceives of her function in society today, a unique opportunity for service to mankind. He writes:

Almost everyone will agree that there have been more geniuses for being human among women than there have been among men. The true genius of women is the genius for being human. In our materialistic age, because we have placed far less value upon the qualities for being human than we have upon those for accomplishment in the arts, sciences, and technologies, our values have become confused, and we have almost forgotten what the true ones are. Surely the most valuable quality in any human being is his capacity for being loving and cooperative. We have been placing our emphases on the wrong values, and it is time we recognized what every man and every woman, at the very least subconsciously knows - the value of being loving, and the value of those who can teach this better than anyone else.

I hope I shall not be taken for an anti-intellectual when I say that intellect without humanity, without love, is not good enough, and that what the world is suffering from at the present time is not so much an over-abundance of intellect as an insufficiency of humanity. Consider men like Karl Marx, Lenin, Stalin, and Hitler, as well as a number of others, at the moment quite respectable, whom I must forbear to mention. They are the extreme cases. What these men have lacked is quite obviously the capacity to love. What they have possessed in so eminent a degree has been the capacity to hate. It is not for nothing that the Bolsheviks attempted to abolish the family and masculinize women, while the Nazis made informers of children against their parents, and put the State so much before the family that it became a behemoth that well-nigh destroyed everyone who was victimized by it.



What the world stands so much in need of at the present time, and what it will continue to need if it is to endure and increase in happiness, is more of the maternal spirit and less of the masculine. We need more givers of life, and fewer takers of it. We need more persons who will love and less who will hate. . . .

The world is in a mess. Men, without any assistance from women, have created the mess, not because they have been failed by women, but because men have never really given women a chance to serve them as they are best equipped to do - by teaching men how to love their fellow men. . . .

Though men have had a long tenure in mismanaging the affairs of the world, it is time that women realized that men will continue to run the world for some time yet, and that they can best assist them to run it more intelligently and more humanely by teaching them, when young, what humanity means. Thus men will not feel that they are being demoted, but rather that their potentialities for good are greatly increased. What is more important, instead of feeling hostile toward women, they will for the first time learn to appreciate them at their proper worth. An old Spanish proverb says that a good wife is the workmanship of a good husband. Perhaps. But of one thing we can be certain: A good husband is the workmanship of a good mother. The best of all ways in which men can help themselves is to help women realize themselves. In that way both sexes will come for the first time fully into their own, and mankind may then look forward to happier era than it has thus far enjoyed.

Here, certainly, is a challenge to womanhood, a challenge to teach the world humanity, to help stop wars. Women have not stopped wars in the past. Women have not been particularly aggressive in peace movements, or effective. The influence of women on politics has not been predominantly on the side of peace. They follow along with the rest of mankind. In the olden days, women had no vote and no voice. They could not influence government. Today, in the United States women have a vote and have a voice, and properly used that voice, that vote may determine governmental policies which have to do with peace and the pacification of the world. I don't think that woman as yet has found the technique of making her natural love of peace, the deep concern for the wellbeing of her offspring - she has not yet found the vehicle for making that great earnest desire for peace effective. Here lies a great opportunity for American womanhood.



It is a blessed thing that modern woman has found freedom and is progressively gaining the status of absolute equality. This is as it should be. The world never profited from the cribbing or confining or restricting the capacities of women to express themselves in all fields of human endeavor. But freedom carried with it grave problems, grave responsibilities. Men have discovered that a long time ago. Men have not learned how to use their freedom. Men have used their freedom for exploitation, for competition, for war. If women do the same thing, there has been no benefit to mankind accruing from the emancipation of womankind. According to our professor, it need not be so - it need not be so. I pray that it will not be so.





1). Intrigued - "The Natural Superiority of Women". Ashley  
Montagu - Prof. of Anthropology - at Rutgers.

① Very much interested - some years ago - "On Being Human"  
"cooperation - competition" - Evolution comes about by  
a struggle for existence - "Nature red in tooth and claw"  
xxxi - law of survival - make progress bc. people  
get together and do things for common good.

② A first ~~as~~ approach - stuffy re. dogmatism

③ In this book - I found him laying about him <sup>on all sides</sup> vigorously  
and denouncing many ~~another~~ <sup>a</sup> ps. scot. with about  
Woman..

2). I do not know why at this late date -  
certainly in U.S. - no <sup>in human by nature</sup> male could deny the superiority  
of man. He is not just that higher than  
acknowledged an equal - and treated as an equal!

In the U.S., the European - America is the "Paradise Paradise"

"Paradise of women" - ~~have~~ Women are women "so  
exalted & their social power so great - their re-  
sources of affluence, luxury and honor so extensive.  
The American man of the prosperous classes delights  
in lavishing money on his wife and daughters. They  
are idealized and amplified provided for."



3/ But lest there be any vestige left of the old theories about womanhood, and the historic subjection of women, Prof. Montagu proceeds to demonstrate scientifically that

① That women are naturally superior to men. i.e. biologically superior. Nature has bestowed upon her greater survival benefits. <sup>Woman</sup> She has greater resistance to disease. Her life span is longer. Man has greater muscular power but woman has greater stamina. - "Women endure all sorts of de-vitalizing conditions better than men: Starvation, exposure, fatigue, short illnesses, and the like. <sup>Few males recover from illnesses and are more frequent in males in all ages</sup> Death from almost all causes <sup>is more frequent in males in all ages</sup> is less frequent than males do. ~~Death from almost all causes is more frequent in males in all ages~~

② The fact that the weight of the female brain is <sup>WRHS</sup> the average a few ounces less than man's, is no proof that the male was more intelligent than the female. There is no relation whatever between brain size and intelligence. "The biggest human brain on record was that of an idiot"

③ "Why is it that there have been no great musicians among women, no great logicians, philosophers and poets? Why so few painters, sculptors, inventors of first rank?"

① For the greater part of their history most fields of achievement have been closed to them. ② In the fields in which women were admitted they were not permitted to enter on an equal footing with men. ③ Or, having been admitted, they were not encouraged to excel, were actively discouraged, or were not noticed at all. - In short, women never



had the same opportunities for the development & expression (3)  
of their talents. The brilliant achievement of some women  
in each of these fields - in recent years - indicates  
their potential capacities -

(4) Are women more emotional than men? Not at all!  
They only exhibit their feelings more readily. Men have  
been trained to believe that it is unmanly to display  
their emotions. They suppress them; that is why women  
remain much healthier than men. The so called  
nervous "little woman" puts it all the wrong way, select  
man. There are far more men than women in our  
mental institutions and men commit suicide far more  
often than women! Men break more easily under  
emotional strain than women.

(5) Women can do and have been doing almost any work  
that man can do. There are 20% fully employed  
women in the U.S. - <sup>factory, office,</sup> managerial, labor, clerical, professional, <sup>and</sup> service  
finances, and just - The 2nd world war - made extraordinary  
demand on women to "man" jobs vacated by men called  
into service - and met challenge -

women as members of boards, directors of corporations,  
members of Congress, some even attained to cabinet rank -  
Representatives of Govt in U.N. - Ministers to foreign countries  
Operating dept stores - chains, hotels and restaurants, railroads  
and public utilities -



⑥ A recent survey shows that Am. women handle the finances (4) in about half, the families, the nation.

Women own almost half of all privately owned stock in large corporations.

65% of the accounts held in mutual savings banks are held by women.

40% of the titles, the 30 M. homes in this country are held by women.

80% of the spending, the national income is directly controlled by women.

And an interesting side-line: "A recent financial survey revealed that 75 per cent of women said they understood annual reports of companies in which they own stock and only 56% of the men interviewed said they knew what such reports were all about."

⑦ Women have greater sensitivity than men - and greater intuition than man - "They are able to identify themselves with other persons more effectively than men, and they are able to do so because they have profound feeling for people."


⑧ Cultural Torch between sexes

3/. Why does Prof. Kuntz in take the pains to point all this out? - us to increase the male, the species! But ~~that~~ to enhance the appreciation, the sexes for each other and that there be more mutual love and understanding and



complete social equality. He feels that women that are just beginning to emerge from this long and unjustified period of subjection.

(a) This may be true as far as some other parts, the world are concerned. As far as U.S. - far advanced along road to full freedom and equality. Her status is a full partner politically, economically & socially is assured. - even tho here and there some individuals resent a challenge to it.

(b) But her new status - not without its major problems - still unresolved. The primary role of women in the scheme of any civilized society - however advanced - is that of home-maker - while it is as much the concern of man as of woman -  -

For every 3 marriages in U.S. and in divorce court - because increasing. For as country actually has more divorces than marriages.

What does that mean? What does that portend? - Is the price of freedom - the broken home - and the scattered & undermined family?

4%. And what of the large group, women - members of all professions & clerics - who are neither home-makers nor wage-earners nor otherwise socially productive?



What do they do with their freedom? Their leisure? Are they content in their new status? Are they an asset to their community? Are they happier?

Do they find an outlet for their energies in community enterprises, in social service, in church activities, in tasks, citizenship, in the cultivation of their mind or skills - or in card-playing, cock-tail parties, rounds of parties, in bebe. pleasure-seeking and self-indulgence?

There are no statistics on the subject - but there is much unhappiness in the American homes - as they stand up to breaking up at such appalling rates. And of course, man's share to such a debacle - is not less than woman's

J. Prof. Montagu makes an interesting appeal to Womanhood

(Just p. 146)

6) Certainly a challenge - Women have not started wars!

- Not particularly prominent in peace movements -

- Influences in politics not on side of peace,

- Follow along - with rest of mankind -

= Aristophanes - say Comedy - denying themselves love

Althman women had no vote two votes in fact

Modern woman has will she use her freedom to such peace & better race -