
Book Reviews

The Male Machine. *Marc Feigen Fasteau.* New York, McGraw-Hill, 1974, xv + 225 pp. \$7.95.

The Liberated Man. *Warren Farrell.* New York, Random House, 1974, xxxii + 380 pp. \$10.00.

Men and Masculinity. *Joseph H. Pleck and Jack Sawyer (Eds.).* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974, viii + 184 pp. \$2.95 paper.

The Male Dilemma. *Anne Steinmann and David J. Fox.* New York, Jacob Aronson, 1974, xv + 324 pp. \$12.50.

A decade ago, socially conscious, "liberal," educated, middle-class persons were actively involved in a number of causes aimed toward the amelioration of social injustice, both in the United States and abroad. This liberal outlook of the Kennedy years was based on the assumption that the social organization that had provided so well for the American middle class was capable of extending its benefits to those who heretofore had been excluded. Responsibility thus devolved on the privileged to assist in the economic (The Peace Corps, Vista) and political (voter registration, civil rights) development of the "underprivileged." The result was a sort of intellectual colonialism — a well-motivated attempt to help which nevertheless involved implicit domination and control of the helped by the helper.

The capacity of the social system to absorb the impact of these reform and protest movements without fundamental change, along with the emerging resolve of the "disadvantaged" to determine their own destiny to the maximum extent possible, resulted in a collapse of the easy optimism of the 1960s.

With this liberal ethos under attack, some persons retreated into a privatization of experience and asserted an intention to "get their heads together," regardless of what was happening in the world around. Others sharpened their political and social critique with a greater determination to bring about basic social and political change. These positions have frequently been posed as mutually exclusive alternatives — the cultural versus the political revolution.

During this same decade, there has been a resurgence of feminism in the form of the Woman's Liberation movement. As the conscious awareness of woman's condition was heightened by participation in the movement for the abolition of slavery in the 19th century, so have contemporary women been

affected by participation in the civil rights and peace movements. More recently, and largely dependent upon the pioneering work of the Woman's Movement for its social analysis, a Gay Liberation movement and, subsequently, a more generally based men's movement has emerged.

In the face of the enormity of the political, economic, ethnic, and racial injustice that abounds, some social activists have criticized these movements for personal liberation as examples of the reactive privatization to which I have referred. It has been argued that women have the benefits of the society to which they belong and that the route to improvement of the condition of women is through the improvement of the lot of their society. Similarly, it has been argued that white males have nothing to be liberated from since they are socially, economically, and politically dominant.

I take strong exception to the view that personal and social change can be polarized as competing alternatives. On the contrary, they must be seen as inextricably related. Increasing personal awareness provides a basis for greater sensitivity in the analysis of social questions; reciprocally, the humanization of social structures provides the necessary conditions for the development of individual awareness.

Insofar as men play a socially, politically, and economically dominant role in society, it is essential that they gain greater awareness of the consequences of this role for themselves and others. Some men may be motivated to do so out of their commitment to personal fulfillment or egalitarian social values, others may be driven to do so by the unrest they experience as a result of the social change taking place around them.

Within the last several years, several books have appeared which address these issues from the male perspective, including the four discussed in this review. Of these four, three seem to make a significant contribution to a reassessment of the male role in a direction which supports the wider and deeper struggle for human liberation.

The exception is the book by Steinmann and Fox. *The Male Dilemma* cannot be quickly dismissed here, however, because it is the only one of the four which presents itself as based on psychological research. Its claim to "incontrovertible evidence" demands examination in detail, the more so because of the authors' assumptions about the nature of the dilemma they identify. In their view, the achievement by women of an equal share of freedom, opportunity, and responsibility would involve a corresponding loss of male power and prestige. This assumed dilemma is complicated, as their research indicates, by the erroneous views held by men and women of the attitudes of the other sex. Though Steinmann and Fox do not themselves use their thesis in a politically retrogressive way, their thesis, as stated, admits to such use, because they set men's interests against women's interests. Since the entire thesis rests on highly problematic re-

search in the first place, the best means to prevent political misuse is to refute a special claim to the evidential status of their point of view.

While the other three books differ from one another in many ways, they share several important characteristics in contrast to *The Male Dilemma*. The authors and editors of these books are committed to the reassessment of the male role. They do not assume that woman's gain is man's loss, but rather consider the possibility that a reassessment of traditional sex roles could have a humanizing effect for both men and women. While occasionally utilizing research data from a variety of disciplines, their arguments and analyses are presented as resulting from experience, and no evidential status is claimed for their more general conclusions. While the specific differences between these books cannot be elaborated in detail, the general theses, intentions, contributions, and limitations need to be noted.

Warren Farrell, a political scientist, has been a participant over a number of years in the Women's Liberation movement. From that early experience came research aimed at determining whether Women's Movement literature can change men's attitudes about sex roles. In addition, Farrell pioneered work in men's consciousness-raising and developed guidelines for men's consciousness-raising groups.

It is out of this work and research that *The Liberated Male* emerged. Following a moving personal statement and an excursus on sexism in language, the book is divided into three main parts. In the first, the author makes his case for men's liberation and going "beyond masculinity" by describing restrictive aspects of the traditional male role. In the second part, he describes his research and reports positive results indicating that Women's Movement literature is effective in changing male attitudes. In the third part, he describes experiences from men's and joint consciousness-raising groups.

Obviously the book is ambitious in scope. Many of its strengths as well as its weaknesses follow from this fact. Since so many issues are touched on generally, the book will be a useful introduction to those who have not yet attempted to deepen their awareness of the way sex roles restrict experience. Farrell is most effective when he reports what has happened in his own life as a result of his experience. Strangely, the book is least satisfactory in the description of consciousness-raising groups. While the reader will be able to extrapolate useful practical guidelines for organizing and conducting such groups, Farrell's descriptions too frequently imply the premature emergence of an "orthodox" consensus about the roles of liberated men and women. This is probably a consequence of the pioneering nature of his innovative work, which must now be viewed from the perspective of developments derivative from his early work.

Though clear on his commitment to greater sex-role flexibility and the elimination of repressive attitudes, Farrell does not set forth any particular view

of the relation of sex roles to optimum human development. The lack of a theoretical framework leads to problems in that the implicit theoretical assumptions often seem inconsistent.

For example, Farrell consistently urges greater acceptance of homosexual experience as a potentially viable expression of mature adult intimacy. However, Farrell also argues for greater parental role flexibility, and notes that some authorities have suggested that polarization of parental roles may create conditions which lead to homosexuality, thus involving an apparent implicit criticism of homosexuality.

Farrell has made a strong case for the importance of dealing with sexism in language. His proposed solutions are not comprehensive and not convincing. He introduces the term *Ataché* to refer to a person with whom one has a deep emotional attachment and the terms *Living Friend* to refer to those with whom one shares a home without deep emotional or sexual commitment. The former term may fill a needed place in the language to refer to intimate relationships between persons who do not choose a traditional marriage relationship. However, it is difficult to know what the term *Living Friend* conveys apart from roommate or housemate, and it is vulnerable to ambiguity of meaning. He also proposes the pronouns *te* (he or she), *tes* (his or her), and *tir* (him or her) as substitutes for the masculine pronoun when the sex of the person referred to is unknown. The result of Farrell's usage is indeed, to increase awareness of the sexism in language. However, the terms adopted do not have any organic relationship to the English language and, because of their artifice, I was not persuaded that the proposed terms are superior to the admittedly awkward *he* or *she*. Furthermore, after reading the book, I am still never sure which pronoun is which, unless I consult the section of the book in which they are introduced. No doubt, however, it is out of such efforts and experiments that more felicitous nonsexist phraseology will emerge, and for this reason such experiments are to be commended.

Marc Fasteau's *The Male Machine*, while considering some of the same issues (such as work, sports, politics), is less ambitious than Farrell's book and consequently has a sharper and clearer focus. Fasteau, a lawyer, describes the evolution of his own consciousness about the repressive and restrictive characteristics of sex roles. His odyssey in this direction resulted from his perception of the consequences of sexism in legal education at Harvard through the eyes of a woman student whom he later married. He moves from this personal narrative to issue-oriented discussion of social morés which govern the relationship between men and men, men and women, men and work, marriage, fatherhood, sports, and several other areas. Perhaps his most important chapters are those in which he discusses the relationship between the capacity for violence and the acceptance of traditional assumptions about the nature of masculinity in our culture. Using this analysis as a basis, he proceeds to discuss Vietnam and Watergate and

convincingly demonstrates the relationship of these two national atrocities to the restrictive assumptions about masculinity in our culture. Fasteau does not claim that traditional sex roles caused Vietnam or Watergate. Rather he plausibly argues that assumptions about appropriate ways of expressing masculinity are intrinsically related to the political style which places the demonstration of power over concern for human values.

In the concluding chapter, Fasteau proposes that persons of both sexes be encouraged to develop their potentiality in response to specific circumstances, by the expression of the total range of human characteristics, rather than limiting themselves to that narrower range of behavior prescribed by traditional roles. While I concur with Fasteau's proposal, I have some reservation about his use of the concept of androgyny to articulate his positive proposals. Those of us who are concerned about constructive change in this area are constrained in our efforts to conceptualize alternatives by language which itself carries past sex-role presuppositions. The term *androgyny* is not free of this difficulty insofar as it implies the amalgamation of traits, behaviors, or characteristics traditionally identified as the "male" or "female" role. It does not adequately support the envisagement of plural and creatively individualized expression of humanness appropriate to persons regardless of their sex. In one sense, this is a minor quibble, for androgyny may be a necessary transitional concept. Nevertheless, in using it, caution is in order, lest we unintentionally perpetuate the dualistic rigidity which is the problem, rather than encourage the transformation of past role expectations into more humanized ways of being.

In sum, the combination of personal experience and analysis of issues makes this book a fine starting point for those who wish to examine the destructive consequences of traditional male sex-role expectations.

Joseph Pleck and Jack Sawyer, the editors of *Men and Masculinity*, have done an immense service in selecting a range of articles, written by men and a few women, which sharply and movingly probe numerous aspects of the negative consequences of the male role. Pleck and Sawyer have provided a general introduction and an introduction to each of the topical sections. The first section, "Growing up Male," contains essays which are deeply personal and which frequently stun the reader by their candor. The later sections open up briefly a variety of dimensions of male experience, specifically the relationship of men to women, to children, to other men, to work, to society, and to men's liberation. The personal honesty, readability, and the distinctive concern for such issues as men's sexual expression and relationship to children give the book a range and impact belied by its small size. The book taken as a whole provides a strong case for broadening the experiential base from which conceptualization of sex-role research emerges.

The brief, suggestive introductory essays and the principle of selection which guided Pleck and Sawyer make one wish they had provided more

analysis of their own. Nevertheless, the book as it stands is an important contribution, and can be seen as complementary to Farrell's and Fasteau's.

In view of the critical importance of these issues, it would be unlikely that any one of these books, or all three taken together, could provide a complete analysis of all the dimensions of the question. Rather these three books represent the first contribution to the men's liberation debate. As such, they provide a basis for subsequent and necessary developments. The excellent bibliographies in Farrell's and Pleck and Sawyer's books will be useful to those who wish to explore further.

Steinmann and Fox's book is derived from a line of research which they began approximately 20 years ago. Initially, they were concerned about women's views of their role. They used a 34-item scale, *Inventory of Feminine Values*, which was designed to tap the extent to which women were "home"- or "self"-oriented. The subjects were asked to answer the questionnaire in three ways. First, they were asked for a self-report, second, they were asked to describe the ideal woman, and third, they were asked to describe man's ideal woman. The inventory was administered to large samples of educated women from a variety of cultures.

To the authors' surprise, there was little difference in women's response regardless of their culture. Most women described their orientation as balanced between home and self, and their ideal woman, while maintaining a balance of interests, was slightly higher in self-orientation. In contrast, women perceived men as desiring women to be more home- and family-oriented. Subsequently they administered the inventory to samples of men, who described their ideal woman as expressing a balance of characteristics, thus confirming what women wanted for themselves, not what women thought men wanted.

Subsequently, the authors constructed an *Inventory of Masculine Values*, and described the data which emerged as almost a mirror image to the responses on the women's inventory. Men wanted a balance between home and outside activities, with their ideal man as somewhat more oriented outside the home. Men expected women to want them to be more home-oriented. When women responded to the men's inventory, however, they described their ideal man as even more outside-oriented than men described themselves.

Steinmann and Fox interpret their findings as demonstrating that both men and women present a "... picture of confusion, sensitivity, vulnerability, and hypocrisy . . .," emphasizing the failure of communication between men and women. In an attempt to move beyond attitudinal research, they devised a *Decision-Making and Behavioral Survey*. They report that both men and women believed that decision-making should be shared by both men and women, but both perceived women as making more decisions.

The remainder, and larger portion, of their lengthy book constitutes an attempt to make sense of their data. Their discussion is generally presented as derived from their research and clinical experience; however, it is an amalgam of conventional wisdom. They urge some adjustment in traditional sex roles toward greater opportunity for women, but are careful to guard the traditional values of heterosexual monogamy and the sanctity of the family. They are at pains to assure readers that this adjustment need not endanger traditional "masculine" or "feminine" values, for which they have coined yet another new set of polarized terms, respectively, *external concentration*, and *internal diffusion*.

It appears that Steinmann and Fox have been bamboozled by the quantity of their research. The validity of their instruments is extremely dubious. They report split-half reliability quotients and confirmation of the face validity of their items. They provide no evidence, however, for the construct validity of their instruments. Consequently there is no way for us to know that the scales measure what they claim to measure. The value inventories measure balance between home and outside-home interests. Since all healthy people have both home and social interests, it is hardly surprising that both men and women fall somewhere near the middle on these scales. Nor do the authors consider the possibility that the educational level of their subjects may account for the lack of cross-cultural variability. The inventory which they designate as a behavioral index is in fact a self-report measure, and as such has questionable validity as a measure of behavior. The problems of these scales leave open to doubt whether Steinmann and Fox's findings are anything more than artifacts of the idiosyncrasies of their instruments.

There are two strands of psychological and sociological research which deal with the issues of sex roles. One is research utilizing MF scales which were designed to measure a presumed continuum of behavior in each of the sexes. The second is research on sex-role stereotyping. While there are intrinsic problems in both these lines of research, it is startling that Steinmann and Fox show no familiarity with any of this work. Were they familiar with it, they might have used another of the available scales as a means of establishing concurrent validity for their own instruments. Furthermore they might have found the stereotype research heuristically valuable in interpreting their own findings. Specifically, a common finding in stereotype research is that persons perceive themselves as less conforming to sex-role stereotypes than they perceive others to be. Thus, their major finding might have been interpreted as a consequence of the functioning of the stereotype, rather than a major discrepancy between the values of men and women. So interpreted, there is ground for questioning the existence of Steinmann and Fox's dilemma. In sum, their research may be much ado about nothing — or at most, nothing that hasn't been well demonstrated previously.

Furthermore, they show no awareness of the growing body of research and reconceptualization related to sex roles which has emerged in the last decade. Their introduction of the terms *external concentration* and *internal diffusion* thus represents an attempt to rehabilitate the stereotype, rather than a constructive way of reconceptualizing the problem.

Whatever the limitations of the other three books which I have discussed, they do demonstrate awareness of the more recent developments in psychological research and theory. Consequently, it is ironic that the one book which presents itself as based on psychological research is, in fact, the one which is least informed about the issues in question. Since the book is based on a line of research which initially set out to investigate women's attitudes, and might with equal appropriateness have been called "The Female Dilemma," I conclude that it represents an attempt to capitalize on a current emerging issue.

By way of recapitulation, the current interest in the reassessment of sex roles is an issue with ramifications for critical social issues and with serious political and economic dimensions. Such an important issue will require reflection and investigation by many persons over time. It is therefore inappropriate to expect the conclusive work to emerge in the present or in the immediate future. Steinmann and Fox will be minimally helpful, if somewhat misleading, but only to those who are totally uninformed. Fasteau's and Farrell's books provide useful introductions to the issues involved in the men's liberation movement; Pleck and Sawyer's anthology, with its emphasis on personal experience, is complementary to both of the introductory books.

James Harrison, Ph.D.
Staff Psychologist
Bronx Psychiatric Center