

Angela Hamblin

Ultimate Goals

Both sexes have lost touch with their inner selves, replacing them with roles. To achieve a society of 'whole' people, our ultimate goal, it is essential that these lost selves be found and realized.

Neither the male culture nor the female culture is a model for a human society.

It is true that women have no recourse other than to rise up in a strong feminist movement to end male domination. We must have our own independent women's movement free from male interference and domination. But we should not lose sight of our ultimate goals. There is a danger that the women's movement will help destroy its own ends if the split between the female and male is made into a new feminist orthodoxy. The women's movement has to be free enough to explore and change the entire range of human relationships and it must be open enough to heal the split between the female and male and draw out the total human potential of every person. If we want to be free as female human beings, we must really be willing to end the split of the human personality that has cut men off from a part of themselves and which has caused untold suffering to women.

This is the closing paragraph of the postscript to the Fourth World Manifesto and it is this 'healing of the split between the female and male' that I want to explore in this paper. It seems to me that if we want to heal the split between women and men we must first heal the split between the woman and man within ourselves. Potentially we are all whole human beings, the split into masculine and feminine is artificially created. Therefore we all have within us a woman and a man. The biological female has suppressed the man in her just as the biological male has suppressed the woman in him. We need to liberate these men and women within ourselves.

How did we become to split? At some point in our history the early communistic matriarchies were overthrown, women were reduced to chattel status and male supremacy was born. When a hierarchy is created certain characteristics, attitudes and behaviour are clearly attached to the positions of high or low status within it. It is essential if the hierarchy is to function smoothly that these high and low status characteristics are quite clearly understood and accepted by those who fill the requisite positions. Stability and continuity of the ruling group is even more enhanced if these characteristics are internalised by the occupants of the positions and therefore appear 'natural'. In order then for male supremacy to assert itself it was imperative that women accept their low status and degraded position within society as 'natural' and not as imposed upon them by men. The way of achieving this was to create a specific 'female' personality *experienced* by the woman as coming from within herself and not imposed upon her from the outside. The price that was paid in human-terms

for this was a deep schism in the human psyche. All characteristics were divided up, those which patriarchy considered of little value were labelled 'female', those it considered of greater value were labelled 'male'. And so the artificial construct of a separate and identifiable male and female personality was created for the sole purpose of maintaining a male supremacist society. This, in turn, provided the basis for the ruthless suppression of 'female' characteristics both in the male and in society by the oppression of females. But the male has had to pay a price for his supremacy, (albeit not as high as the female), in terms of never being able to achieve wholeness or become fully human. In this system no-one escapes damage, no-one is allowed to become whole. We will all remain fragmented beings, betraying the reality of our human potential while these artificially created sex-roles govern our lives.

In our alienated society, to have lost touch with one's inner being and to efficiently enact the dictates of one's social role, is to be normal. But a normal personality is by no means a healthy personality.

To be neurotic means that the integration of a strong self has not been achieved successfully. To be normal certainly does not mean that it has. It means for the majority of well-adapted individuals that they have lost their own self at an early age and replaced it completely by a social self (role) offered to them by society. They have no neurotic conflicts because they themselves, and therefore, the discrepancy between their selves and the outside world has disappeared. (Fromm)

It is impossible in our 'split' society for anyone to be whole or really themselves, because society's sanctions will constantly batter those who try. As a consequence we spend most of our lives concealing our true identity. Jourard says that 'throughout history we have chosen to conceal our authentic being behind various masks . . . indeed, self concealment is regarded as the most natural state for grown men.' He also sees self concealment as the cause of 'illness in its myriad forms', and the key to healthy authentic being as 'self disclosure'. By this he means honest disclosure of the 'real self', not merely disclosure of role behaviour or the false constructs of self which most of us use in our daily interactions. To disclose one's real self one must first discover one's real self. It seems to me that the first step along the road to self-realization is the acceptance that there is a real self which in most people is carefully hidden, and which needs to be discovered and expressed in order for it to grow. The discovery and disclosure of self is a dialectical process; as we disclose more of our 'self' so we discover more of our 'self'. ' . . . It is not until I am my real self and I act my real self that my real self is in a position to grow. One's self grows from the *consequence of being.*' (Jourard) We can only be at various stages of attempting to know our selves and struggling to disclose our selves authentically in a world which would rather we did not. People will be at various stages, from those whose every living moment is a struggle towards authenticity to those who are so alienated that they feel there is nothing to struggle with. They have so totally lost touch with themselves they experience no struggle, no conflict, they imagine themselves to be totally disclosed and 'authentic' already. These people do not accept

the basic premise that unless a person has worked consciously and often painfully at exploring and discovering their real self, they will automatically be alienated and shut off from their innermost core of being. In other words, to be alienated is to have developed normally. To be non-alienated means a conscious interference with 'normal' development.

To act out our social roles successfully we must repudiate our real selves and become impersonal, both in our relation to our selves and other people. We function on a role basis, we have role relationships. A person can live out their entire life in this way, never being deeply involved at a personal level with another person, only experiencing himself and the other in terms of their roles. ' . . . A husband can be married to his wife for fifteen years and never come to know her. He knows her as 'the wife'.'
(Jourard)

When we accept our role and lose touch with the vital core of ourselves we are sick. We are not in our bodies, we are not in our actions. We have dead eyes. We live out our lives performing the tasks associated with our role. There is nothing else, nothing new, nothing spontaneous, nothing meaningful. It is a sickness that doesn't show, it doesn't noticeably affect our bodies, it doesn't impair our capacity to function. It doesn't prevent us from acting out our role. We are just dead inside. ' . . . For an analyst it is a source of never-ending astonishment how comparatively well a person can function with the core of himself not participating.' (Horney) We just carry on with what we have to do. And most of the time it seems like normality. It is the striving for health, the groping towards self-realization that seems unnatural, unreal somehow.

'The loss of self is despair.' But it is a despair that is silent. People go on living as if they were still in immediate contact with this alive center. Any other loss - that of a job, say, or a leg - arouses far more concern. (Horney)

When people have lost the sense of their own being, when they have lost touch with their 'inner core' which gives life meaning, they do not know what it is they have lost. They know that something is terribly wrong, yet they seem to be normal adjusted people so they cannot locate what it is. They flock to analysts. 'Patients coming for consultation complain about headaches, sexual disturbances, inhibitions in work, or other symptoms . . . they do not complain about having lost touch with the core of their psychic existence.' (Horney) This is because in our sick role-playing society this inner core of self is never accorded recognition or legitimized. It is never acknowledged that such a thing exists so how can it be lost? 'Self alienation is a sickness which is so widely shared that no-one recognizes it. Everywhere we see people who have sold their soul, or their real self . . . in order to be a psychologist, a businessman, a nurse, a physician, a this or a that.' (Jourard)

In fact the greater the acceptance of the role the greater the alienation from the self. Someone who has invested everything in successfully playing out their social role will experience any attempt to locate their 'real self' as a threat which must be countered and defeated. This is the particular threat that the women's movement poses both to women and to men. Women however, have always come off worse in the role-playing system because the role assigned to them has always been inferior and oppressed. Most

men however experience the threat of tearing away the masculine role as the threat of total annihilation of themselves. The degree to which the man is alienated from himself will be the degree to which the women's movement is experienced as a threat. Karen Horney gives an example of this successful role-playing which I'm sure many women will recognize' . . . the ambition-ridden person (male role) can display an astounding energy in order to attain eminence, power, and glamour, yet on the other hand have no time, interest, or energy for his personal life and his development as a human being. Actually it is not only a question of 'having no energies left' for his personal life and its growth. Even if he had energies left he would unconsciously *refuse* to use them on behalf of his real self. To do so would run contrary to the intent of his self-hate, which is to keep his real self down.' We act out our role and we protect ourselves from the pain of living in an alienated world. The price we pay is that our lives become merely a slow form of death.

'(The unreal system) in a methodical way . . . is literally killing the person off . . . In the meantime, it usually does its job well. It keeps the Pain away, wrapping such a shield around the feeling self that nothing can be felt. Life is just a process of going through the motions until death - all with the feeling of gnawing desperation that time is running out and one has not yet begun to live.' (Janov)

It is the task of our society to make us sick, that is to make us conform to a 'normal role' in a sick society. A number of theorists have written on this 'sickness' of self alienation but few of them have explicitly seen the causes in terms of the playing-out social roles. This means they have continued to see the problem as a personal one, and not one specifically created by a male society to ensure that power should remain at all times in male hands. Even though the sickness of alienation strikes inevitably at men also, it is seen as preferable to sharing any of that power with women. The function of roles in society is to make people's behaviour predictable and therefore easily socially controllable. It puts all society's rules *inside* the person and it forces people into this internalized prison long before they ever have a chance to taste freedom or even imagine the possibility of it. 'Social systems require their members to play certain roles. *Unless the roles are adequately played, the social systems will not produce the results for which they have been organized.*' (Jourard, my emphasis) Our patriarchal society has been organized on the basis of a hierarchical division between the sexes. The political class of men oppress and exploit the political class of women. *Within* the political class of men a few dominate and oppress the rest. It is for the benefit of these few that the patriarchal role-system is maintained, although *all* men derive direct or indirect political benefit from it. At no time is this system of benefit to women. This is why it is women who will bring it down. This is the political threat of the women's movement in questioning the basis of sex roles in our culture. Our refusal to go on playing social roles and a preparedness to expose the whole nature of social role playing is a political act. It threatens the very basis of our society. It exposes the aims of patriarchy. Our task is to build a whole new system. We have to dismantle the hierarchical power structure built up and maintained through social role-playing. And we have to start with ourselves. We have to put ourselves together again. We must become real. *When we are real, then we are a real threat.* A real threat to the status quo, because its structures and methods of control will no longer be able

to contain us. We will have grown too big. When we have become our 'selves' we will demand to *be* our selves and we will create a society in which this is possible. We will no longer tolerate being forced into predetermined moulds. This will be the point of explosive conflict with those who will try to stop us. This will be the war between the old and the new. This is the Feminist Revolution - the revolution of consciousness.

To revolutionize our consciousness and free ourselves from alienation it is important to consider how society deforms us, robs us of our selves and forces us into its predetermined moulds. The most crucial of the social roles imposed upon us are the sex-roles because they provide the original schism in the human psyche, the original split upon which all later alienation is built. It is when we have internalized our sex-role that we become predictable and stereotyped; it is then that we have our patriarchal society's rules and values inside of us. There is no need then for external coercion, we coerce ourselves and we experience it as 'natural' behaviour. Sex labelling begins the moment we are born when we are wrapped in a pink or blue blanket. From then onwards society will hammer home to us with ever-increasing force *its* definition of us and the behaviour it expects and demands from that definition. In fact, sex labelling is so strong that by the age of two years most children have learnt their own label. (Mussen) It may be that sex-role behaviour seems somehow 'natural' to most people (i.e. unlearned) because it is learnt so early on in life. If sexual identification is already established by the age of two years this would put it beyond memory, that is no one could ever remember a time when they were not aware of being either a girl or a boy. But sex-role behaviour is not 'natural', it is learnt through heavy social conditioning. Its purpose is to ensure that individuals can be easily controlled by society by placing society's rules *inside* them and in consequence an independent, questioning sense of self is never allowed to develop. No-one is ever allowed to define themselves, therefore no-one in this society can be self determining. The right to define oneself must be a basic premise of any really human society, and it is this right which is at the core of feminism.

Evidence to show roles to be the artificial *social* constructs they really are, with little or nothing to do with the inherent potential self of the individual, comes from studies of children whose gender was in doubt. It has been shown that girls who were mistakenly thought to be boys and therefore brought up as boys showed all the characteristics and behaviour associated with boys long after their correct gender had been diagnosed and even after they had undergone 'surgical readjustment'. The same holds true for biologically male children who have been brought up as girls. A seventeen-year-old individual who had always regarded himself and been regarded by others as female was discovered to have 'undescended testes and predominantly male secondary sex characters' and an 'absence of uterus, tubes, ovaries, vagina or mammary tissues.' However, he had from early childhood 'assumed the feminine role'. "His' earliest memory concerned an episode representing himself in this role at the age of four in doll play. During adolescence, like normal girls, 'he' became interested in boys and dances, and later, in sewing, cooking and housework. Moreover, 'he' experienced typical feminine phantasies of being married and having a family.' (Seward)

Another striking illustration of the way biological and anatomical differences between the sexes bear little relation to innate potential can be seen in the case of Frankie, who

entered hospital as a five-year-old boy who was diagnosed as 'a genuine female whose clitoris had been previously mistaken for a small penis.' After the diagnosis had been made the nurses in the hospital were instructed to treat Frankie as a girl.

This didn't sound too difficult - until we tried it. Frankie simply didn't give the right cues. It is amazing how much your response to a child depends on the child's behaviour towards you. It was extremely difficult to keep from responding to Frankie's typically little boy behaviour in the same way that I responded to other boys in the ward. And to treat Frankie as a girl was jarringly out of key . . . Frankie became increasingly aware of the change in our attitude toward her. She seemed to realize that behaviour which had always before brought forth approval was no longer approved . . . Her reaction was strong and violent. She became extremely belligerent and even less willing to accept crayons, color books, and games which she simply called 'sissy' and threw on the floor. She talked constantly of the wagon she had been promised at Christmas . . . (On her discharge) her mother had brought a dress and Frankie took one look and set up a howl . . . (Finally she) went home in a pair of hospital coveralls. (Lindesmith & Strauss, my emphasis.)

Frankie put up a fight. She is fighting the fight that every woman in Women's Liberation is fighting - hers is not a special case: it is just more dramatic. She wasn't going to gracefully accept that half her personality must be annihilated. She was the same person who had entered that hospital. *She* had not changed - it was her *sex label* that had changed. This is a classic example of the way in which society forces and moulds people's personalities into a deformed caricature of what they might have been. People who fight against this bludgeoning of their psyche are called 'sick'. But,

If the neurotic becomes well, he does not become normal in the sense of the conforming social self (role). He succeeds in realizing his self, which never had been completely lost and for the preservation of which he was struggling by his neurotic symptoms. (Fromm)

Women who for years have fought against the oppressed female role have been 'treated' by psychiatrists to overcome their resistances and 'accept their femininity' i.e. oppression. But the resistance was the healthiest thing about them. They were being 'treated' to eliminate their health not their sickness. When this is the aim of psychotherapy, according to Fromm, it is merely helping the individual to 'give up the fight for his self and conform to the cultural pattern peacefully and without the noise of a neurosis.'

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