

• DISCUSSION •

EQUALITY OF THE SEXES

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TO ONE who has a concern for what might be called "full humanhood" for women, the most striking message from Hayakawa's wide-ranging "Semantics and Sexuality" is not so much his conclusion as to the human appropriateness of a long term pair-bond; rather it is the biological-social reasons he puts forward as to why humans have evolved stable love relationships.

When women read much of the discussion on free love vs. monogamy we have a tantalizing feeling of its incompleteness. We see that an all-important aspect has been neglected. There has been little or no consideration of the effect of these sex patterns on the status of women as human beings.

Feeling this lack, when I was asked last year to speak on the woman's view of Free Love, I felt constrained to give a review of woman's biological-social experience: female mammals are under the natural handicap of being both the weaker sex and the one to whom is given the heaviest responsibilities regarding the young. Males are the natural leaders. They are stronger and have free time. Thus primitive man fought, hunted, supervised, and developed religious activities. Primitive woman was usually expected to plug away at the daily tasks of maintenance while she reared the young.

As societies became more complex women were assigned specialties. As a Greek of the "Golden Age" wrote, "We have wives to care for our households and bear our children, slaves for sexual needs, and hetaera for companions." (Little wonder homosexuality flourished. Love involves some degree

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of mutuality.) In the centuries since, man, the poet, priest, and law-giver has happily outlined the various roles women could play in relation to his needs. Throughout these years women have been auxiliaries rather than full members of the human race. I concluded my talk by asking, "With this age-old background in their collective unconscious as it were, cannot women be forgiven for looking on Free Love with some suspicion? Is this just another happy use of us by the dominant half of humanity? Does Free Love mean real love between two equally free people?"

NOW HAYAKAWA'S ARTICLE on the permanent pair-bond brings to mind related questions as regards monogamy. This institution has certainly not assured full human status to women. Centuries of loving married couples, of fulfilled pair-bonds, have not brought equality of the sexes. In 1968 this is most glaringly true in certain countries. One could say that deep imprinting of love between a man and woman is not enough, most precious as it is. One could say that the capacity for such personalized, long term, pair-bonds marks both the man and woman as humans, but often the *level* of full human freedom and opportunity for creativity is different between members of the pair. Perhaps love between man and woman is not enough in itself to bring equality because it is rooted in the differences between them.

The charming letter Hayakawa cites by the lady from Oakland illuminates the matter beautifully. Her loving husband tells her that she is "too pretty to be friends with" and that she cannot expect women to "be people" to men, for "it is the male nature to be interested in the femaleness of the female rather than any other aspect of her."

The husband spoke for only certain men, but it is a point of view that is natural and comfortable for perhaps the majority of men and of many who love their wives deeply and faithfully. This simple fact of male psychology is discouraging and frustrating to many of womankind. We feel "put down," reduced to beings who are not ends in ourselves but objects for the use of others.

Hayakawa sees in the long term, successful pair-bond those many aspects which members of the pair have in common and thus share in as equals. These are there, also. He emphasizes the crucial role of communication. "In the human pair-bond the erotic is inextricably bound up with the semantic." He evokes a picture of two equals who respect each other, neither "using" the other. Particularly interesting is his statement that as areas in which the man and wife can communicate with one another increase, so can their relationship become deeper. This all rings true.

HOWEVER, CENTRAL AND PRE-EMINENT as love between individual men and individual women must be in human bookkeeping, if there is to be real sex equality we need a complementary, supplementary feeling of comradeship between men and women in general, comradeship based on the common humanity which both sexes share equally. Separate but equal has not worked for women any better than it has for other minorities. In Hayakawa's fascinating rationale for human long term pair-bonds, a rationale drawn from biology and anthropology, one can see hope for the development of this comradeship.

Is not twentieth century birth control the most recent example of the relationship between ability to learn about the environment and reduction in number of offspring? Couldn't one also say that the current information explosion leads to increased need for thought from intelligent participating parents in the training of their young?

In an America that will become overcrowded and where intelligent know-how will become of increasing importance in children's rearing, scientific knowledge will enable women to live longer while reducing housework time.

All in all, specialization in bearing children and caring for the physical needs of small children takes less of a woman's total life, and the social setting has been given for women to cease to be auxiliaries in our common human race. The barriers of sex can be broken down as can the barriers of race. We can all equally be people.