



FALLEN IDOLS

At a meeting which grouped a number of university women interested in modern social problems, a question was raised regarding the nature and evolution of family relations. One of the group mentioned a study recently made by Dr. Munir Chamoun, a well-known Lebanese sociologist, who concluded that the women of this country «are asexual individuals whose lives revolve around motherhood, a function which absorbs their whole being. They are prepared for it from childhood, they concentrate their whole activity on it. If deprived of it, their personality is distorted, their whole life is shattered».

To this statement one of those present responded by saying that such behavior on the part of women was only natural. Though it may be at times exaggerated, it is, on the whole, instinctive and plausible.

The theory presented by the respondent is one of many stereotyped opinions that are popularly approved, but scientifically refuted.

According to most recent studies, family relations are not inherited nor derived from instinct. Like most traits which constitute our personality, they are acquired patterns of conduct dictated by society. A lecture given on this topic by Dr. Zuhair Hatab, professor of sociology at the Lebanese University, made this point clear in the Women's Studies course at BUC when he referred to eminent anthropologists like James Frazer, Margaret Mead and others. We are not «born» with a certain personality but we are shaped by our environment unless, at an early or late period of our life, we have been trained or induced to think and act independently, to choose our own path and to fix our own reason for existence. That is indeed the ultimate aim of the Women's Liberation movement, to create the woman who believes in her capacity for freedom and personal completeness, who has freed herself from the common belief in fate and predetermined behavior. Even if certain traits, good or bad, were «born» or natural, it should be possible for one with a strong will to modify those traits and use them for one's benefit or to the contrary.

The same idea applies to disabled individuals, whether their disability was inborn or acquired. It is faith in the possibility of improving that lies behind the proclamation of the International Year for Disabled Persons.

All men and women handicapped by negative beliefs, tortured by tyrannical public opinion, are called to shake off their burdens and relieve themselves of traditional sources of worry and depression.

Despotic stereotypes are at the root of human misery. Only in the feeling that man is master of his destiny, is the source of true and permanent happiness.

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