



perspectives.(2)

In this phase of the debate, the perceived differences between the sexes was judged to be the chief source of female oppression. An analysis of sex roles led to the argument that the polarisation between masculinity and femininity may be replaced if Bahá'ís adopt a "hybrid" model through "the co-operation and sharing for both men and women in reducing the dichotomy of power, roles and behavioural styles."(3)

Transformation of society may then be achieved by "feminising" the male-dominated social structure, on an individual scale and by affording women the opportunity to enter into all spheres of the public.(4)

It was a strong assertion that anatomy was not destiny, and that spiritual equality was guaranteed to women in all religious scriptures.(5)

This paper does not attempt to test the Bahá'í Faith fully against the criteria of patriarchy(6)—to discuss this would take considerably more space. Instead, it is a small attempt to evaluate critically our understanding of the terminology of gender used in the Bahá'í Writings. If it is accepted that the Bahá'í Writings "contain important propositional truths and not just moral injunctions,"(7) then it is essential to highlight theoretical inconsistencies inherent in arguments and discourse which focus on what "feels" right and is plausible as opposed to what is logical. The danger of ignoring rationality (of which logic is a part) is to leap to unfounded conclusions which in practical terms do more "harm" than "good" despite springing from good Bahá'í motives. Gender relations are complicated because both men and women exhibit an astonishing range of human behaviours which have evolved under the umbrella of patrilineality and patriarchy over centuries. The intention of this paper is, therefore, to assess some of the present interpretations of Bahá'í Writings on the equality of the sexes so that we can move into the future with some degree of clarity.

### Masculinity and Femininity

When asked if women are different from men, most of us would answer "yes", and if asked to describe the difference, we would list characteristics related to personality and behaviour which in our minds differentiate the sexes. Researchers into the psychology of sex and gender argue that biological sex and social gender are separate concepts from a developmental point of view. Sex implies the biological sex of a child; that is, is a person an anatomically male or female member of the human species? Gender is the culturally and socially shaped group of expectations, attributes, and behaviours

assigned to that category of human being by the society into which the child is born. So children acquire a sense of their own sexual identity as male or female early on in life as a response to social expectations, manifested in the environment of the family, and in the interaction of

parent and child. These expectations determine what behavioural traits a boy or girl should have in order to be identified as a boy or girl. These traits are commonly referred to as masculine and feminine characteristics. Masculine characteristics are those usually associated with human males and feminine characteristics are those more commonly found in human females.

Social psychologists have for years constructed a catalogue of gender characteristics or behaviours.(8) They suggest that men have instrumental traits: they are tenacious, aggressive, dominant, curious, ambitious, responsible, analytical, competitive, self-reliant. Women, on the other hand, have expressive traits: they are affectionate, obedient, responsive to sympathy, gentle, loyal, sensitive, yielding, gullible, irrational, cheerful, childlike. A commonly held interpretation is that each trait is attributed to all or none of the members of one sex with the conclusion that all women are different from all men.

From a number of divergent viewpoints, there are several difficulties in the perspective that one gender trait is attributed to all or none of the members of one sex with the conclusion that psychologically all women differ from all men. Empirical studies indicate that gender differences in male and female ability are neither as extreme nor as numerous as commonly believed. Statistical generalisations allow for considerable overlap of shared characteristics between the sexes.(9)

The socio-psychological viewpoint argues that many of the observed differences between male and female personality and behaviour are rooted in polarised and stereotyped cultural expectations of men and women. The theory is that many of these differences are "learnt" rather than genetically determined.(10) Thus, if gender qualities can be learnt, they can also be "un-learnt" or modified to fit a new social pattern that accepts both masculine and feminine attributes in both men and women. In other words, "androgyny" is the norm, (from "andro" meaning male and "gynae" meaning female).

From a Bahá'í viewpoint, the concept of androgyny appears reasonable and, more importantly, attainable. It is, therefore, promoted as a blueprint for social change because androgyny in the Bahá'í context "represent[s] a balancing of male and female qualities within each person, providing for individual and gender differences."(11) 'Abdu'l-Bahá is frequently quoted as confirming the validity of this viewpoint:

Hence, the new age will be an age less masculine, and more permeated with feminine ideals, or to speak more exactly, will be an age in which the masculine and feminine elements of civilisation will be more evenly balanced.(12)

Two questions follow. Does 'Abdu'l-Bahá insist that we become andro-gynous beings, and can this in itself be effective for the transformation of society? It appears reasonable to assume that moving toward a "third gender" between the male and female would mean that gender would no longer be the primary

source of identity and social position. It follows that people would simply treat each other as individuals with both masculine and feminine characteristics.

Neither patriarchy or matriarchy would rule and people would be free of the restraints of sexual stereotypes and the stigmas of deviance.

It is interesting to note that transsexuals, men who feel trapped in the body of the opposite sex, take on the behaviour and appearance of women. They do not, however, attempt to be sexless entities but boldly manifest "feminine" qualities and undergo surgery in order to be wholly "female". The possibility for transsexual men to be female and feminine by assuming external cues of female beauty and reshaping male sexual organs supports the view that the possession and expression of characteristics, behaviours, values, etc. (both "masculine" and "feminine") is unrelated to biological sex. Therefore, we can reverse the effects of sex-typing; for instance, men can learn to be more nurturing and women to be more assertive.

The concept of androgyny is, however, confusing because striving to become androgynous beings forces us to interpret so-called male and female characteristics as permanent attributes of individuals. Thus, qualities labelled as feminine or masculine do not compose one's identity, but define it. Androgyny, then, becomes a meaningless ideal which cannot transcend the dichotomy it seeks to invalidate. So a woman is feminine as opposed to female and her femininity appeals to masculinity as opposed to maleness.

A further crucial point is that, quite apart from disagreements people may have about what may be considered male or female characteristics, there are two different lists at issue. One is the supposed inherent differences between men and women and includes many of the negatively held attributes (such as "gullible," "yielding," "illogical") which in turn justify the social position of women as inferior to men. The other list of feminine traits concentrates on the virtues thought of being "proper" for women, such as "tender," "shy," "sensitive," and so on. The danger of this kind of monopoly on sexuality has led to the concept of femininity as the preferred expression of femaleness rather than the real thing. Thus "woman" denotes a particular identity as a separate type of being recognised as the "other."<sup>(13)</sup>

There is then something against "nature" if women exhibit characteristics usually reserved for men, such as aggression or self-reliance.

'Abdu'l-Bahá categorically states that "the world of humanity consists of two parts or members: one is woman; the other man"<sup>(14)</sup> and makes the term "man" and "woman" synonymous with "male" and "female" respectively. In doing so, 'Abdu'l-Bahá does not, as generally believed, relate feminine qualities solely to women, or masculine qualities solely to men. On the contrary, 'Abdu'l-Bahá makes a very important point when he describes these feminine "qualities" as "ideals," as quoted above. He reiterates this assertion several times: "In some respects woman is superior to man. She is more tender-hearted, more receptive, her intuition

is more intense." And again in addressing women, he states: "and as regards tenderness of heart and abundance of mercy and sympathy ye are superior." In this way, 'Abdu'l-Bahá directs our attention to human qualities and virtues rather than specific qualities possessed or expressed solely by one sex or the other. He also informs us that "women and men alike are the revealers of His [God's] names and attributes, and from the spiritual viewpoint there is no difference between them."(15)

The spiritual nature of women and men is of paramount importance in the Bahá'í Writings. Bahá'u'lláh states that:

"the servants of God and His handmaidens are regarded on the same plane."(16)

This propositional truth is affirmed throughout the Bahá'í texts. As Hatcher puts it:

humans are not just the product of some combination of hereditary and environmental influences. Rather, there is a third aspect to individual character which derives from an objectively existing, nonmaterial entity called the soul or spirit. The soul is the locus or seat of the individual's personality and self, and is endowed with certain intrinsic or inherent capacities, which constitute one's spiritual capacities.(17)

Spiritual capacities for understanding, love, volition, justice and so on, cannot be actualised by women if they are oppressed by men. 'Abdu'l-Bahá also points out the unreasonableness of believing that women are lesser beings: "the assumption of superiority by man will continue to be depressing to the ambition of woman, as if her attainment to equality was creationally impossible."(18)

In a society where the whole system is organised on the basis of male superiority (that is, patriarchy), oppression comes in many forms, some of it in disguise. On a physical plane, women are oppressed by the greater physical force of men, the extremes of which result in aggression and violence. There is economic oppression where women are dependent on men for survival. This does not necessarily mean material deprivation but because of the inequalities of the job market and inadequacies of child provision, men wield greater monetary power and decide who will be the "haves" and the "have-nots".

The worst type of oppression of women is spiritual oppression because this goes to core of one's being. It is oppression which says to women that they are inferior beings, worthless and valueless. Even though we might dismiss the validity of sex stereotypes as analytically meaningless, (that is, they are socially constructed) their immutable presence in our thoughts, culture and language indicate loudly that they are not meaningless in their influence. A belief in femininity and its correlate, masculinity, sets in motion a prescriptive process with defining parameters within which concepts of "normal" behaviour are contained. Thus, the notion of normality introduces the male as the frame of reference against which women's behaviour is measured. The female is, therefore, the deviant from the norm.

"Living with the enemy," women have internalised subordination and accepted a system where, in relation to men, they are less strong, less creative, less rational and less worthwhile in every way. By being "inferior" to men, women are regarded as well-adjusted human beings. It is interesting to note that in a study of sex stereotypes, it was discovered that the concepts of a healthy male were indistinguishable from those of a healthy adult, but concepts of a healthy female were inconsistent with ideas of adult mental health.(19) Additionally, we are told in the Bahá'í Writings that if woman's aspiration toward advancement is checked by man's superiority then "she will gradually become hopeless."(20) The impact of long-term oppression is "learned helplessness" a psychological condition that renders anyone, and in particular women, submissive and self-sacrificing, eventually leading to self-denial and a lack of self-worth and self-confidence. As such, gender relations can be "characterised by the helplessness of one member and the helpfulness of the other."(21) It is, therefore, argued that women as helpless individuals have less intrinsic worth because of their so called defective ways, such as being over-emotional and unreasonable.

Women who show potential for, or attempt to develop other characteristics "normally" associated with men, such as initiative, intelligence, assertiveness and so on, are dismissed as exceptional or unusual, if not "abnormal", but certainly "un-feminine". The precise pattern of human behaviour is then governed by certain rules. The general rule for women is that in order to be respected and taken seriously, they have to behave in prescribed "feminine" ways according to a complex network of psychological and socio-cultural expectations. This is a truism despite the remarkable changes in the lives of women in the past few decades. The reason is that women, weary of the battle of working towards active participation in the public sphere and fighting for support on the domestic front with home-making and child rearing, are inclined to a situation described as "faute de mieux," a French expression whose English translation roughly means "for the want of something better". Unable to change men or to influence and/or control their actions, women find that they have no choice but to accept their lot.

Many women today accept the traditional division of labour because they believe that to some extent it is "the way of the world," acknowledging that men and women are "different" in the ways they "think" and "feel." Men have different perceptions about important things such as work or children. A majority of women describe themselves as "lucky" because their partners "help" with the children, "contribute" to house-work, cook, and "assist" women in other things traditionally regarded as the domain of women. It is regarded as natural for men to pursue careers single-mindedly as long as they put in a minimum but acceptable input into domestic affairs. "Such a compromise is not doomed to fail, in fact it produces comfortable relationships."(22)

So what is so wrong? The supreme irony is that nothing has changed, and the same problem persists. Both male and female sex stereotypes remain and are actively (although largely unconsciously) sustained by women. Men's inability to emotionally express themselves to women, their fear of intimacy, their single-minded approach to work at the expense of domestic responsibilities

is considered to be "normal". Men still feel ashamed of their own sensitivity to suffering and love because they are taught to regard these as feminine and weak/negative qualities. As long as one's male partner shows some decent human qualities, women are "grateful" and "thankful" that their partners do not go around behaving like baboons. Material success in terms of income and career are man's reward for being kind and taking an interest in the family. Women still view men as the stronger sex: "he takes the children out and comes home full of energy. I simply flop down with exhaustion" and "he is able to manage so many things all at once, he remembers to pay the bills, knows when the children have their dental appointments," "I am useless at these things." (23) These things are a truism: men know how to direct and delegate but women's caring skills remain invisible.

### Separate spheres

The significant universal difference between the sexes is that only the female has the ability to carry, give birth, and nurse the offspring; an ability with no counterpart in the male. Can we correlate natural biological functions with so-called "feminine" attributes? One may not presume that there cannot be any inherent feminine characteristics, if by this is meant non-sexual differences which tend to accompany the sexual ones. It is also equally true that women may have been "conditioned" or socialised in such a way that allows them to be more nurturing, maternally inclined. At present, the extent to which our knowledge and understanding of the significance of biological deterministic ideas which relate specifically to gender is impoverished by an insistence on reductionist explanations. It is, therefore, difficult to answer the above question.

If gender, however, is constructed as the "key" to an individual's "true" nature or "inner being", then it begs the question: what is the true nature of women and, in particular, to what extent do women differ, or do not differ from men? If we are not convinced that "pure masculinity and femininity remain theoretical constructions of uncertain content," (24)

then we imply that there is a genetic or instinctual basis for certain differences between men and women. If men and women are different then we may be justified for having different expectations of them. This leads us to a philosophical point that Janet Radcliffe Richards has examined: Men and women should have different functions in society, and that each sex should avoid the character and activity which is the proper reserve of the other. The conclusion is that men and women should occupy "separate spheres" and be treated in ways suited to their natures.

The separate spheres argument, at first sight, appears to lend support to the thorny issue of the diversity of functions assigned to women and men in the Bahá'í Writings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá categorically states that "it is the mother who rears, nurtures and guides the growth of the child. This is not the function of the father."(25)

The validity of the separate spheres argument provokes two significant considerations. But before we look into these, we need to separate the activity of mothering into two aspects: the first is the experience of mothering and the second, the institution of motherhood.

The experience of biological pregnancy and the subsequent attachment process with a child has within it great potential for creativity and joy. It is not woman's ability to procreate that is the basis of their enslavement, but the integration of this enslavement into a system of political and economic power over women. Thus, it is in the cultural meaning of motherhood (by virtue of laws, culture, medicine and so on) that effectively dictates the constraint upon women. Pregnancy is still, on average, treated as an illness which can be "cured" by technological intervention; there is still a chronic lack of good child-care provision for working mothers; career breaks jeopardise the return to work when the children are more independent. Mothering is a largely invisible undertaking because it does not have a monetary value in the way that work does in the public arena. In addition, the activity of mothering is closely allied to home-making, an invisible work-place.

The first consideration with the separate spheres line of thinking is that the problem of inequality of the sexes does not lie with the existence of these spheres but the nature of them. The Bahá'í claim is that mothering is an activity which is under-valued rather than mis-described.

Mothering is to be valued. The education of girls takes precedence over the education of boys because women are the first educators of children. The Bahá'í writings indicate that women as mothers are entitled to different treatment than men, such as the ordinance that men must provide financial support to mothers, the fact that nursing mothers do not need to fast, and so on. Sexual division of labour, however, may not (theoretically) result in sexual inequality since women are actively encouraged to participate in all public affairs, and, in the education of children, girls and boys must follow the same curriculum.

The Bahá'í writings do not prescribe motherhood as an obligatory function (although procreation in the remembrance of God is encouraged). Once a woman chooses to have children, mothering is her "primary" but not her only responsibility. Furthermore, she is not expected to shoulder the enormous responsibility of raising a child on her own but may expect to have emotional and economic support from her husband and the community. Fathering, too, is a serious function but different to that of "mothering", and fathers have the responsibility to provide economic support and educational

opportunities for their children. Fathers may make good "mothers" and, although this is not their primary responsibility, it is essential in the formation of a happy family unit.

The second consideration is an apparent maternal revivalism that is often present in our discussions of mothering and motherhood in Bahá'í communities. The attempt to fight the coercive ideology that motherhood is of little value (and hence, women have nothing of value to contribute to society), has been accompanied by an attempt to celebrate the creative and rewarding aspects of the institution and the experience. Unfortunately, this attempt has tended toward an exaggerated focus on women's so-called "feminine" qualities which make her a good mother. Such "feminine" qualities as sensitivity, understanding and empathy are necessary for successful mothering but undue emphasis on such qualities in women further stereotypes the role of women solely as nurturers and men only as providers. Thus, women have no more than "compensatory glory", a word, coined by Mary Daly,(26) a feminist theologian, who suggests that a unilateral focus on the function of women as mothers limits their options of potential growth in other areas.

### The Privilege of Power

According to Lynda Birke, a biologist, "part of the stereotypes of femininity and masculinity in our culture is the dichotomy between passivity and aggression."(27) The dichotomy lies in viewing women as the "helped" and men as "helpers." Defined in this way, men are stronger than women since general convention dictates that the strong help the weak.

The consequence of a relationship based on unequal strength is dealt with in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's writings where he warns us that until and unless men and women "are equal in strength, the oneness of humanity cannot be established, and the happiness and felicity of mankind will not be a reality."(28)

By making us aware of the necessity of equalising strength between women and men, 'Abdu'l-Bahá makes the connection between strength and power. Is strength, however, synonymous with the term "power?" "Power," as is currently understood, is the ability to do what one chooses; the more power one has, the more options are available. Power is equated with the freedom to choose. However, more often than not, freedom is defined with respect to the individual rather than in collective terms. In this context, power is a sign of personal success for those who have it, and a personal failing for those who haven't got it. Therefore, to raise the question of power is to threaten the freedom of those who have it. Yet this is not the type of power that 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke about because no threat is directed at either men or women. We all have power—the capacity to influence, alter, affect the lives of those around us. Such a transforming power is affirmed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as being latent in women, and contrary to the more populist definition of the power of dominance and

force used by men, he further redeems the power of love and service as a means of non-controlling well-being, which brings about "empowerment" of both women and men.

### Complementarity

In discussing the nature of the relationship between men and women, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states:

The world of humanity consists of two parts; Male and Female. Each is a complement of the other. Therefore, if one is defective, the other will necessarily be incomplete and perfection cannot be attained.(29)

The current usage of the word "complementarity" involves an unequal relationship:

one consisting of one person giving and the other receiving. This is similar to the inequality of power between women and men, as discussed above. The concept appears to be radically different in the Bahá'í writings where the use of the term "complementary" denotes a symmetrical relationship between a man and a woman, whereby mankind and womankind are "parts of composite humanity" "for each is the complement and helpmate of the other."(30) It is, therefore, not for men to "give" equality or for women to seek to "gain" it from men. More importantly, complementarity is neither similar nor synonymous with the notion of differing functions.

The concept of complementarity appears to extend beyond men and women to encompass the universal system of creation: "When we look upon creation, we find the male and female principle apparent in all phenomena of existence."(31)

This is similar to the Yin/Yang principle present in Chinese culture which does not, contrary to popular Western belief, associate the masculine/feminine

with moral values. What is good is neither yin nor yang, but a dynamic balance between the two. What is bad is imbalance.(32)

Again endorsement of this perspective comes from the writings: "The world of humanity has two wings - one is woman and the other man. Not until both wings are equally developed can the bird fly. Should one wing remain weak, flight is impossible."(33) The bird is unbalanced when flying with one wing, be it female or male and, interestingly, 'Abdu'l-Bahá does not label the female as the weak wing. In his talks in the West, he challenged the nineteenth century paradigm of femininity that women were weak and dependent, but emphasizing that female subjugation was not "due to nature, but to education."(34)

### Conclusion

In her poetic discourse *Response*, Bahiyyih Nakhjavani touches on a personal truth:

It is an act of supreme vulnerability to be able to extend

our arms outward in response, in spite of doubt. It is a gesture at once trusting and entirely free of expectation. It is the first step toward self-sacrifice, for we may assume that in the process we are losing something of our own identities.(35)

It is a truth that seems difficult to grasp despite the knowledge that the system which oppresses the planet oppresses women. This is why planetary peace is directly linked with the full and unconditional emancipation of women. Responding to the threat that the system poses by becoming vulnerable to internal and external change means freeing ourselves from its oppression.

Solzhenitsyn speaking through his character Roitman in the darkness of "The First Circle" contemplates how the world can be put to rights—do you begin with yourself or others? Shakespeare's Hamlet gave part of the answer: "This above all: to thine own self be true"(36) thus confirming Bahá'u'lláh's advocacy: "man should know his own self and recognise that which leadeth unto loftiness or lowliness, glory or abasement."(37)

This is the starting point. Change must be self-initiated. Many wise Bahá'ís have listed ways and means of achieving this change in practical ways. These ideas need recognition (especially the education and care of children) and practical support. Yet the secret to success remains with the individual—the personal is political. The French Writer, Emmanuel Reynaud puts it eloquently in "La Sainte Virilite":

When a man finds himself stifled by the meaninglessness of his life and makes an effort to put a final end to his patriarchal power, he will not have far to go to find the enemy. The struggle has to start, above all in himself. To get rid of the 'man' embedded in himself is the first step for any man getting on the path towards getting rid of power altogether.(38)

Personal change requires a shift in attitude and a catastrophic shift in perception, or "seeing with the eye of God," a wholly possible thing since human beings are so malleable. Some may argue that the answer lies in conceptualising a world in such a way that it leaves the "feminine" and "masculine" behind. We cannot escape from our material identity and more importantly, the principles of feminine and masculine is an inescapable facet of God's creation. Masculine and feminine imagery weaves its way through the writings, in particular throughout Bahá'u'lláh's revelation, from the use of nature as a dominant motif for analogy and metaphor (for example, the symbolism of a tree, branches and leaves is used to describe the Holy families of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh) to other feminine elements such as Bahá'u'lláh's statement about the Word of God, whose physical manifestation is the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the Bahá'í temple, referred to as the "Mother Temple."

The idea of actualising the feminine and masculine elements of civilisation has little to do with gender politics which dictates that present social structures treat women as the "other", a non-being and at a disadvantage to men. Rather, the Bahá'í writings reiterate that the emancipation of both women and men has largely to do with the unfolding of God—a process which involves the creation of a new era in which women are free to become who they are, real and significant. 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that "Divine justice demands that the right of both sexes should be equally respected since neither is superior to the other in the eyes of Heaven."(39)

He, however, directs humanity to address the question: "what, then, constitutes the inequality between man and woman?"(40)

The answer, he said, lies in the denial of human virtues and privileges, of education, of opportunity, of success and prosperity, to women.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

gives us both a dire warning of uni-dimensional thinking and a certain promise to men if only they lose the fear of challenging the present coercive ideology: "As long as women are prevented from attaining their highest possibilities, so long will men be unable to achieve the greatness that might be theirs."(41)

Change can be a risky and dangerous undertaking, or it can be liberating. It is a choice that has been overlooked by many with stunning nonchalance. But rather than become victims of self-lobotomy, we could give some thought to the most pervasive and enduring reference to the feminine by a Manifestation of God. Bahá'u'lláh addresses the Revelation which He has created :

Step out of Thy holy chamber, O Maid of Heaven, and inmate of the Exalted Paradise! Drape thyself in whatever manner pleaseth Thee, in the silken Vesture of Immortality, and put on, in the name of the All-Glorious, the brodered Robe of Light. Hear, then, the Sweet the wondrous accent of the Voice that cometh from the Throne of Thy Lord, the Inaccessible, the Most High. Unveil Thy face and manifest the beauty of the black-eyed Damsel, and suffer not the servants of God to be deprived of the light of Thy shining countenance.(42)

Divinity is "feminine" in some of its attributes and she is magnificent. By bearing this in mind we may be able to explore the textures of human nature and emotion which are conducive to spiritual communion between individuals.

Otherwise, gender stereotypes and sex roles will dictate the nature of our political reality, and impose political constraints by determining what, within that reality, is to be held sacred.

End Notes

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978) 246, 278.

See Peggy Caton (ed.), *Equal Circles: Women and Men in Bahá'í Communities* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1987).

Caton, *Equal Circles* 143.

The Universal House of Justice cited in *Women: A Compilation*, (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1986) 11-12.

Lata Ta'eed, "Beyond God the Father," (Transcript of lecture delivered at Conference on Men and Women, Landegg Academy, July 1988) 10.

Patriarchy is defined as "the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men—by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law and language, customs, etiquette, and in the division of labour, determine what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male" (Adriene Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* [N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 1976] 57-58).

William Hatcher, "Scholarship: A Bahá'í Perspective," *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* 1.2 (1988): 35-46.

See S.L. Bem, "The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny", *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 42 (1974): 156-62.

Indeed, there is an on-going argument in scientific circles regarding what is called the "under-reporting of similarities" of shared male and female characteristics in academic publications. See Anne Walker's unpublished paper entitled "The Equality of Men and Women," (Switzerland: Landegg Academy, July 1988) 37.

The definition of learning to be male or female is inappropriate because it is not similar to acquiring competence (e.g. learning language skills to express ourselves more fully), or acquiring the habit of behaving in one way rather than another in certain situations. It is learning to "prefer" to behave "like a girl" rather than "like a boy". It is also worth noting that although there are slight variations in feminine stereotypes in different cultures and sub-cultures, there is a consistent system of categorisation of male and female characteristics under the universal label of femininity and masculinity.

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#### METADATA

Views26047 views since posted 1998; last edit 2012;

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URLs changed in 2010, see [archive.org.../bahai-library.org](http://archive.org.../bahai-library.org)

Language

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Permission

publisher

History

Formatted 1998 by Chris Manvell.

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