Book Reviews

Mankind Excluding Woman

Men in Groups. LIONEL TIGER. Random House, New York, 1969. xxii + 258 pp. $6.95.

It was merely a matter of time until some kind of male counterattack appeared in response to *nouvelle vague* feminism, represented in early and milder stages by such works as Ashley Montagu's *The Natural Superiority of Women* and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and more recently and virulently by such organizations as WITCH, the Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell. Those who are seeking a leader of neo-antifeminist stripe may well group around the standard so defiantly raised by Lionel Tiger in *Men in Groups*. Subscribing in general to a theory of female physical weakness and inadequacy, Tiger goes further to find the widespread and continuous deficiencies in the status of women attributable to their inability to form viable associations among themselves, or to maintain a high standard when combining, nonsexually, with men. Although it is a somewhat long one to be inscribed upon a banner, the antifeminists might appropriate a slogan from Tiger:

> It may constitute a revolutionary and perhaps hazardous social change with numerous latent consequences should women ever enter politics in great numbers [p. 205].

Tiger, a Canadian who went from McGill to take his doctorate at the London School of Economics and is now associate professor of anthropology at Rutgers, presents an argument that is simple enough, although repetitiously dragged through eight chapters and sometimes lost in querulous, rambling asides. Perhaps the most important determinant of the character of human society is something Tiger calls "male bonding," which he sees "as the spinal column of a community" (p. 60). Male bonding is probably a human biogenetic inheritance from primate forebears. Women, on the other hand, are firmly declared not to form bonds (p. 216). Male bonding is defined "as a particular relationship between two or more males such that they react differently to members of their bonding unit as compared to individuals outside of it" (pp. 19–20). Closely tied to the phenomenon of dominance and the creation of social hierarchies, bonding is distinguished from "male aggregation," which is a simple gathering together of all males in a society or social unit, without any further selectivity. Tiger stresses what he believes to be the exceptionally important adaptive evolutionary value of bonding in conjunction with such strategic tasks as maintenance of food supply, particularly through hunting, and of defense, which he makes a virtual masculine monopoly. Correlatively, he extends the functions and significance of male bonding into a variety of other activities, as in his chapter on "Work and play."

Approximately equal weight is given another theme: Tiger assumes the role of St. George and fearlessly attacks the dragon of sociological neglect of biological forces. Visualizing himself as the pioneer who will link "the microhistory of social sciences to the macrohistory of species biology" (p. 41), he excoriates a considerable number of sociologists, although expressing a kinder view of, not to say dependence upon, anthropologists. In fairness let it be noted that some sociologists attract Tiger's praise, Simmel being an outstanding example. Such exceptions do not, however, detract from his generally low opinion of sociology as antireductionist and parochial.

Titillating as *Men in Groups* may be —and it is clearly calculated at certain junctures to drive a reader to wrathful remonstration—I think it will be generally judged a failure in terms of its intellectual content. Although it is more serious in its scholarly pretensions than such a work as Desmond Morris's *The Naked Ape,* there are more than fleeting resemblances. In any case, it seems to me that Tiger's work falls far short of his aims and may do more harm than good to the reductionism he so avidly favors and the disciplinary ecumenicism he champions. Giving a major role to anecdotal illustrations and carefully selecting evidence to fit his case, he may well convince those whom he attacks that they were absolutely right, at the present stage of development of the art, to avoid premature reductionism.

On the biogenetic background to human male bonding, a most important portion of the argument, the book is quite disappointing. Tiger's treatment is limited to two apparently good cases, baboon and rhesus, and one chosen deliberately (and admirably) because it shows bonding in a "very reduced social role" among the langurs. Gorillas and chimpanzees are in a footnote; there seems to be no clear evidence of bonding among them. It is on this paucity of evidence that Tiger builds much of his case, thereby simultaneously placing it in the greatest jeopardy. Realizing this, he warns us that the scarcity of data favorable to his thesis may stem from the failure of primate ethologists to respond to evidences of bonding among the populations they have studied (p. 23). Similar special pleading in the face of hostile evidence occurs when Tiger suggests that some contemporary primates may have lost the trait of bonding as a result of more recent adaptive pressures, while still others may never have developed a latent preadaptive tendency toward bonding because of ecological pressures (pp. 35–36). I think such reasoning will make biologists very unhappy.

Related to this matter and introducing a serious note of confusion is Tiger's inconsistency in drawing running conclusions from his materials. Precisely such a case is provided by his oscillation on the critical question of exactly how many primate species are known through direct observation to display the phenomenon of bonding. At one juncture the author tells us candidly that he began the study thinking bonding more common than in fact he found it to be (p. 23), yet further on, despite a very incomplete tour of the literature, he assures us that male bonds exist between dominants in all but two species of primates, hamadryas and lemur (p. 46). The point is important because,

apart from informing us about the quality of the author's work, the absence of bonding among those primates that are phylogenetically closest to man would strike a sharp blow against Tiger's thesis.

Returning to bonding itself, we see that when he has to go beyond the definition already quoted Tiger comes to grief. Thus, in the discussion of baboons, bonding becomes a tendency or propensity for linkage displayed by individual animals, some possessing the quality more strongly, or displaying it to a greater degree, than others (p. 37). A denouement of sorts is reached when Tiger is forced to confess that "it is difficult to specify the central constituent of the bonding process. This is, of course, the critical gap in the argument" (p. 152). Male bonding, it would seem, is some kind of behavioral phlogiston.

Unfortunately for Tiger, the uncertain nature of bonding is not the only thing that provides a critical gap in his argument. Moving to his use of ethnology, we find serious flaws of method and theory, not to say fact, the latter primarily resulting from a welter of controvertible assertions based upon too limited or too narrowly selected data.

Tiger's statement, central to his thesis, that "when a community deals with its most vital problems . . . females do not participate. The public forum is a male forum" (p. 57), is absurd and provides evidence of a far-reaching miscomprehension of the political process. This faulty view is carried through in his largely implicit but pervading assumption that manifest political statuses are in close, perhaps one to one, correlation with the structure of political action. Such inadequacies in Tiger's comprehension of theory are complicated by what seems to be contempt, sometimes ambivalently expressed, for empirical data. I have already given a few examples of his running roughshod over and through the primate data. Now we find him declaring (p. 59) that since this is an exploratory study it would be premature for him to engage in a study of his own or other cultures. Furthermore, he does not think the data in the Human Relations Area Files particularly useful for his project, because they were selected and arranged in terms of categories erected for other purposes. Despite these avowals, Tiger declares his approach a "mélange" which includes some aspects of the denigrated methods, plus "perusal of ethnographic monographs." To this reader, however, the use of comparative ethnographic material seems extremely limited.

Tiger passes off the important question of ethnographic evidence of female bonding, accomplishing this partly by referring (p. 71) to Robert Lowie's dictum "that a genuine matriarchate is nowhere to be found." It is of some consequence to note that Tiger presents this statement in the context of a longer quotation from Lowie's *Primitive Society*. Tiger cites the English edition; the edition I have (Liveright, New York, 1920), which seems to be the original one, shows a passage which differs from Tiger's in no semantic respect, but does vary in three minor details of orthography, in addition to lacking a brief explanatory parenthesis I would guess was added by Tiger, although it is not so marked. More objectionable is Tiger's exceptionally tight selection of just the words he wishes to best make his case. The reader will probably not know that the quoted phrases are immediately followed by a qualification: "though in a few places feminine prerogatives have evolved to a marked degree in certain directions" (p. 191). It is worth pursuing the matter one step further. It would seem to throw some light on Tiger's method that he evinces no curiosity about Lowie's adherence in his later work to the quoted view. In fact, that view became somewhat less severe. In *Social Organization* (Rinehart, New York, 1948) Lowie, after noting, by way of example, that some women in China "seem to have exerted a tremendous influence even on public life," concluded, "It appears then that the question of correlation is not at all a simple one. Certainly it is false to accept either rule of descent as a token of unqualified dominance by the ostensibly favored sex" (p. 264).

Tempted as a reviewer may be to complement criticism by presenting a counter-case, space forbids. Let me conclude, therefore, with apologies for brusqueness, by noting that Tiger has deliberately undertaken to write provocatively, essentially in hypothetical and speculative terms, about a thesis for which no Q.E.D. ending is possible, as he himself states (p. 194). Yet the questions he raises are not quite like those, superficially similar in form, that have been posed by a myriad of others. The difference is that Tiger is touching upon issues which affect the quality of human life at large and which often play out in deadly serious conflict, waste, and tragedy. The author's awareness of this distinction is particularly evident in his last chapter, which actually offers suggestions for social engineering based on his findings. That chapter, the entire book, shows basically more resemblance to a partisan political tract than to a work of objective social science.

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Papers of an Astronomer

Herschel at the Cape. Diaries and Correspondence of Sir John Herschel, 1834–1838. Edited with an introduction by DAVID S. EVANS, TERENCE J. DEEMING, BETTY HALL EVANS, and STEPHEN GOLDFARB. University of Texas Press, Austin, 1969. xxxviii + 398 pp. + plates. $10. History of Science Series, No. 1.

Sir William Herschel, sweeper of the skies, discoverer of Uranus and of visual binaries, has been rightly called the father of stellar astronomy. He was also the father of Sir John Herschel, who was a most distinguished scientist in his own right, but whose work has been somewhat overshadowed by his father's. Father William started his career in poverty, his first employment being as an oboist in the Hanoverian Guards. He became one of the most famous scientists of his time and amassed a large fortune through the sale, for a total of some £16,000, of telescopes of his own making. John was an only son and had every advantage in training, education, and freedom from financial worry. Perhaps he would have been accorded his rightful place in astronomical history if he had made the discovery of the planet Neptune that he so narrowly missed.

This book deals with the years 1834–1838, Sir John's four years spent at the Cape (of Good Hope), as recounted in his diaries and his letters home. He erected an observatory at Feldhausen, near the base of Devil's Peak, a few miles south of Cape Town. His telescope was a meager 18-inch reflector, crudely mounted. Nevertheless, he completed his father's deep sky survey and catalogued 1700 clusters and nebulae and 2100 double stars. Today such sky surveys are best done with large