

LANGUAGE AND UNITY

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The first question we hear asked about a new baby is, “Is it a girl or a boy?” If you stop to think about it, what difference does it make?

We are just beginning to examine the male/female imagery and language that has become second nature in English-speaking countries and which reflects a basic assumption of duality so engrained that we hardly recognize it.

We use “he” or “man” repeatedly to refer to persons in general, as well as to God (“God the Father,” “all His Sons”). When we are specifically including women, we often self-consciously indicate this by special terms (“poetess,” “lady judge,” “usherette”).

But is the sex of the person doing the work of any importance? Let’s examine terms like “husband (wife)” or “maternal (paternal)” – why not use “spouse” or “parent”? Again, does the sex really matter?

Think about when you call adult males “boys” and when you call them “men.” Then think carefully about when you call adult females “girls” and when you call them “women.” And while we’re at it, what about the phrases like “fights like a girl,” “thinks like a man,” “feminine instinct,” “man’s better half”....

Margaret Mead, in *Sex and Temperament*, helps us see that there is nothing innately masculine or feminine. We are all persons who learn dualistic roles in our society, and those roles are different in different societies. In *Left Hand of Darkness*, Ursula LeGuin describes a culture in which all persons are hermaphroditic and in which being limited to only male or female experience is considered perverted. A real eye-opener! Then there’s a new book, *The Cook and the Carpenter*, in which the author uses “na” and “nan” as non-sex-specific pronouns. It is truly mind-blowing to read a book and not know the sex of the person referred to.

For any of you who are skeptical about the impact of language upon your thinking, here’s an experiment you can try. For the next month, whenever you think of God, think of Mother God and use “she.” Keep track of your feelings, and see if you get any new insights into the nature of God and yourself by using all-female imagery. Or make an agreement with yourself to use either both female and male references (“she or he,” “women and men”) or neutral references (“persons,” “one,” “God the Source”) and see how you feel at the end of the month.

Religious Science teaches us the power of the mind and the importance of our thoughts. Our language reflects our attitudes and shapes our reality. One way we can re-examine our habits and change our attitudes is by changing the words we use – even if it seems awkward at first.

By creating a special category for women, we emphasize the illusion of duality in our experience. We are all One Spirit, and we are all wholly and uniquely ourselves. No categories apply.

Let us live our unity!