



# WHO NEEDS FEMINISM?

ANDREW KHAVAN

I am an anti-feminist.

Feminism is a mean-spirited, small-minded and oppressive philosophy that can poison relations between the sexes—relations which, for most of us, provide some of life’s deepest pleasures and consolations.

Feminism has attempted to bully us all into accepting an obvious lie: the lie that men and women have the same powers, talents, proclivities and desires and that, consequently, any discrepancy in their professional paths is due to bigotry and must be corrected by force of culture and law. By shoving that lie down our throats, feminism has made both men and women less happy and less free.

Now, I’m going to have to speak in generalities, and I understand there are all kinds of exceptions to what I’m about to say. But the generalities remain generally valid.

Feminism denigrates masculinity in men by relentlessly calling us “toxic” for our flaws rather than appreciating our natural qualities of energy, risk-taking and leadership. But it also denigrates femininity in women, working to replace most women’s commitment to relationship and child-rearing with male obsessions such as career status and strength.

What’s the result? Take a look at the quintessential feminist icon, Rosie the Riveter, flexing her muscle. The truth is: Any man of the same size and fitness can make a bigger, stronger, muscle than Rosie can. By herding women away from their feminine natures, feminism seeks to transform them from first-rate women into second-rate men.

Now, perhaps you’ll protest: Isn’t feminism simply the idea that women have the same human rights as men? No, it isn’t. *That* philosophy is called “classical liberalism,” which holds that we are all equally endowed by God with the inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

But, wait—doesn’t the Declaration of Independence say that all *men* are created equal? Yes. Classical liberalism was an idea conceived by, and largely for, Christian white men. But, like all ideas—good and bad—classical liberalism has evolved over time according to its internal logic, so it now includes all races and both sexes. Good job, Christian white men! Thanks for the great idea!

As its excuse for the damage it does to our lives, feminism has developed the historical mythology that men have oppressed women and now must be suppressed in their turn to

even things out.

Let me propose a different narrative that has the advantage of possibly being true. Insofar as men and women are physical creations, their central purpose is the production of more human beings. Women are therefore fashioned in body and mind to make and nurture children, and men to protect and support those children during their relatively long maturation period.

All societies shaped themselves around these necessities. They created structures that formalized gender roles and attempted to insure the paternity of children so that men would care for their own. In many societies, these structures became increasingly ritualistic and oppressive for women. But the opposite happened in the Christian West.

Why?

Take a look at your Bible, Proverbs 31. The Biblical ideal of a good woman is not only strong, kind and wise, she's also a creative and economic dynamo. Christianity sanctified motherhood in the person of Mary, and celebrated women's fortitude and virtue in the female saints.

The church created a version of marriage intended to protect women, and designed the philosophy of chivalry, which instructed men to use their superior strength *for* women, not against them. Individuals can be incredibly abusive to one another—men and women, both.

But over time, Christendom tended to elevate, protect and ultimately include women as women in the great enterprise of Western civilization.

Now, the developments of modernity *have* created special challenges for women. Industry removed clothing and food production from the home to the factory and thus deprived homemakers of their traditional businesses. Children lost their monetary value to parents by leaving home to fend for themselves. So, while motherhood and homemaking remain the most important spiritual activities of humankind, modernity has stripped those enterprises of their former economic power.

But—in a Western civilization dedicated to equal rights, these challenges come along with fresh opportunities. New technologies and effective birth control allow individual women to tailor gender roles to their personal liking—or abandon them altogether.

None of this is a reason to attack men. In fact, these new opportunities are largely the result of men's inventions and their ideas. And none of it requires women to abandon the femininity which is one of the graces of our world. It's just change and progress—that's all.

With honest thought and good will, we can adapt over time without the angry, bitter and dishonest attacks on our human nature by feminists.

I'm Andrew Klavan for Prager University.