

A New Age Perspective on Masculine Potential

Book Review:

The Quest For Maleness,

by Theun Mares

(Lionhart Publishing/South Africa, 1999)

Reviewed by Thomas Phillips, M.B.A.

*The reviewer is a "reparative-therapy graduate" who found *The Quest for Maleness* to be relevant in his own transition out of a gay lifestyle. He is a former financial and marketing consultant for IBM who now works as a real-estate investor in Sonoma County, California.*

The author of this book, Theun Mares, is a New Age teacher whose philosophy evolved from the Toltec (native Mexican) perspective. Other Toltecs teachers include Carlos Castaneda, Don Miguel Ruiz, and Victor Sanchez. New Age Toltecs have adapted ideas from old Native Mexican tradition and updated them to offer guidance in today's world.

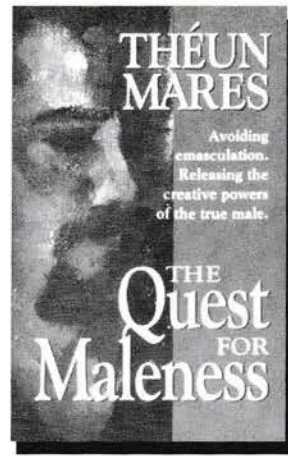
Mares' philosophy offers the model for male consciousness which I have found most relevant in my own life and transition out of homosexuality. Other prominent models of male consciousness include the Judeo-Christian, Mythic/Poetic (from Robert Bly, author of *Iron John: A Book About Men*), and the Gay-Affirmative/Feminist. Different models, of course, speak to different individuals.

The Quest for Maleness is an explanation of Mares' theory of masculinity. He investigates myths such as "Men Don't Cry...Men are Aggressive... Men are Strong ... Men Must Be Successful... Men are Sexual Studs," and develops a theory around his understanding of men's innate drives and also their potentialities. The goal of life for a man is to reach his true potential.

The author's philosophy of gender is that men are naturally active, while women, from the time they leave the womb, are inherently more passive. The male strives toward a greater awareness, while the female tends toward preservation. The male strives to grow toward his full potential, while the female already *is*. The two polarities of male and female create a whole.

Mares states that the male is the leader, in search of his full potential, and thus points the way to others, even to women. However the male must be constantly open to guidance from the female, whose natural ways of knowing make her more grounded.

The author believes that a natural aspect of maleness is to seek enjoyment and to be prone to succumb to excesses. Men indulge themselves in activities of every kind—alcohol, drugs, food, exercise, the radical pursuit of fitness. A



majority of men, he believes, have same-sex erotic experiences as they grow up even though most of them know they are heterosexual. But some men, he says, out of their sexual insecurity, succumb to homosexuality because "they abandon themselves to the experience," just as other men abandon themselves to sensual diversions and excesses of other kinds.

A small portion of the book—ten pages out of 228—deals with homosexuality. Mares sees homosexuality as contrary to "Male Truth," because men who do not include women will live unbalanced lives by elevating the masculine above the feminine. "This is a far cry from remaining true to our gender" (of union with the female), because "unless we remain true to our gender" (and unite with the female), "we cannot possibly unfold our true potential," he says.

Gay couples cannot evolve to their fullest potential because one male takes the female role, and the "femme"—who invariably feels the most inadequate about his masculinity—looks to another man to take the lead so he can be "fertilized." He'll always be "empty," however, no matter how much sex he has, because he cannot "conceive." He seeks out additional men, longing for fulfillment, "not realizing it is his own masculine potential he longs for."

Neither can the "top" find fulfillment, because although he's more masculine than the bottom, he knows his partner will never produce new life, and their relationship lacks the creative potential it would have if it had been endowed with natural male-female polarity.

Mares states that "I personally do not sit in judgment of homosexuality," and he admits that he himself has had homosexual experiences.

Are some men born homosexual? No, he says; "All men are born with a masculine potential which it is their duty to unfold."

His perspective reflects that of many native peoples from the developing world who believe that homosexual relationships can lay the groundwork for a boy's eventual manhood and marriage to a woman. But "the problem with most people [homosexuals] is that they like to indulge in the experience, rather than treating it as a learning curve which brings not only a gift of knowledge, but also the keys to liberation from that challenge." Then Mares strays to the New Age Left when he implies a belief in reincarnation, saying that some men consider themselves homosexual "because of many lifetimes of imbalance."

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Most men receive male modeling from their fathers, but it is commonly observed that gay men typically introject less male modeling from their fathers than do straight men. A model or mentor is essential for men coming out of homosexuality, providing guidance and direction during a confusing time when a struggler is changing lifestyles, beliefs, friends, sexual expression, and relationships. Growth outward toward women requires masculine strength and new relationship skills, and a mentor speaks to each man's dream of bonding with a woman. A

mentor not only evokes a powerful heterosexual masculinity, but also is capable of offering an intelligent explanation of why the homosexual path is deviant.

Rather than being based on biblical revelation—to which only a particular faith community will be receptive—the mentor's advice can be based in an experiential point-of-view which calls on an intuitive awareness of nature and is grounded in the Force that created each one of us. For this purpose, Mares' book offers helpful guidance. ■



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