

**Women's Socio-Political Difference and Discrimination**

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**Abstract**

The shapers of European thought (the ancient Greeks) declared that from a biological viewpoint the woman's body constitution is inferior to the man's, and therefore she must subordinate herself. From this point until the appearance of feminism which conceptualized the discrimination of women and demanded its elimination, millennia have passed during which power has strengthened as a privilege of masculinity. In order to emphasize discrimination, I started from the hypothesis of the sexist nature of the social-political environment. As any system of thought, patriarchy also has models which make it secure, and which stand at the basis of its undesired authority. While the equality of Spartan women revolted Aristotle, saying that thus even slaves could ask for equal rights, the evolution of society forced this aberration and stain on the face of humanity to be eliminated, and the perspectives of social-political equality of chances between women and men surpass the stage of requirement. However, women's social-political discrimination is a reality, despite the anti-discrimination legislation in the whole world.

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**1. "Gender" – the concept at the basis of difference and discrimination**

In order to arrive at the concept of gender, Aristotle classifies substance into "primary substances" and "secondary substances", further dividing the latter into species and genders. Gender in case of humans is divided into man and woman; the difference between the two genders is ontological, therefore not hierarchical, exactly because they are equal regarding the species to which they pertain. Man and woman are defined by specific features which distinguish them from the other gender, however, without being subordinated to each other. Therefore one cannot

speak of an ontological superiority of man, only of an artificial, historically and ideologically shaped one. The discrimination which results from patriarchal formulations on female existence is therefore an arbitrary construction.

Beyond philosophical formulations, there are much more confused linguistic formulations in connection with genders. The Romanian term “gen” (‘gender’) was taken over from the Latin *genus* (deriving in turn from Greek, although with a slightly different meaning, which has also created in time a certain unclearness in meaning), as well as from the old French *gendre*, meaning ‘kind’, ‘mode’. The concept is problematic insofar as it is neither universal, nor invariable. There are languages in which grammatical gender is central and omnipresent (Japanese), and others in which grammatical gender is inexistent (Hungarian, Finnish); in yet others, there are three grammatical genders, masculine/feminine/neuter (Romanian). Analyzing over 200 languages and dialects, Corbett has shown that there can be 3, 4, and even as many as 20 genders, which demonstrates that gender may have nothing to do whatsoever with sex. In some languages there is a feminine/masculine/neuter or epicene differentiation. In others, there is a grammatical distinction between animals and things, human and non-human beings, rational and non-rational beings. In Romanian, we speak of “femeiesc” ‘womanly’ for sex, and “feminin” ‘feminine’ for gender. This kind of distinction reduces the pejorative sense of the noun “femelă” ‘female’ as it appears in French or English.<sup>1</sup>

The distinction between sex and social gender, used especially in feminist theories, can be perceived and exposed as follows: sex represents the natural (biological) characteristics included, for instance, in identity documents (male/female), while social gender is defined by culturally determined roles and practices, attached to men or women. For instance, traditionally a woman’s role is considered to be childrearing and looking after the family, while a man’s role is to earn a living – thus, there are practices of feminine gender and practices of masculine gender. Distinctly from sex (with which we are born), the roles determined by social gender are not immutable, they can be questioned and re-evaluated, if starting from the premise that they are discriminating

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<sup>1</sup> Laura Grunberg, *(R)evoluții în sociologia feministă. Repere teoretice, contexte românești* ((R)evolutions in feminist sociology. Theoretical approaches, Romanian contexts), Iași: Polirom, 2002, p. 25.

(usually to the disadvantage of women).<sup>1</sup> As a constitutive element of social relations, gender is founded on the difference between the sexes, and it is an essential means in marking power relations. Employed in academic discourse mostly as a substitute for woman, gender is also used in order to suggest that any information about women must be supported by information about men, that the study of the one also implies the study of the other.<sup>2</sup> Hawkesworth has identified at least 25 uses of the term gender. In time, it has been employed as an attribute of individuals, as a feature of interpersonal relationships, as a form of social organization, and even as a society's symbol or ideology. The term has also been interpreted as an effect of language, as a structural characteristic of power, and as a matter connected to behavioural conformity. The many alternative meanings that have been attributed to the term gender throughout the last decade stand as additional evidence for the complexity of the concept, and indicate the growing interest of researchers of various fields in gender perceived as an *analytical concept*. As a result of his analysis, Hawkesworth compiled a lexicon which comprises certain important terminological and conceptual distinctions, considering the term gender as: *Sex*, in a biological sense; *Sexuality*, as the totality of sexual practices and erotic behaviour; *Sexual identity*, implying categories such as heterosexual, homosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans-sexual, or a-sexual; *Gender identity*, from the point of view of perceiving oneself as a woman or a man; *Gender role* as a set of culturally determined prescriptive expectations with regard to a man's or a woman's adequate behaviour; *Gender role identity*, defined as the degree to which a person accepts and shares the culturally specific feelings and behaviours considered adequate to his/her gender.

It has been assumed in the course of time that the individual's biological sex may justify all the aspects of "normal" masculinity or femininity. In those times the term *gender identity* was exclusively used in medical literature, with reference to the significance of a person's pertinence to masculine or feminine gender, in a context in which the definition of biological markers was inconsistent. Today, although psychological and biological sexes are supposedly distinct, the gender

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Banton, *Discriminare* (Discrimination), Bucharest: Editura D.U. Style, 1998, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Alin Ciupală, *Femeia în societatea românească a secolului al XIX-lea. Între public și privat*, (The woman in 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanian society), Bucharest: Meridiane, 2003, p. 9.

identity expression has exceeded the limits of medicine, and it is largely used for the definition of the individual's fundamental sense of pertaining to masculinity or femininity. This, with small exceptions, increases the degree of awareness and acceptance of biological sex.

Gender is acquired and assimilated at the same time: see the case of the Jewish twins, one of whom, when circumcised at 7 months of age, had his penis accidentally burnt. At 17 months he underwent a sex changing operation, he was given a different name and different clothes, and at 21 months he went through genital reconstruction and therapy. Genetically, his sex remained unchanged, but the child, closely studied, accommodated well to his new identity. On research level, this case argues for the idea that biological sex does not necessarily determine gender identity.<sup>1</sup> The concept of gender also underlines the social construction of masculinity and femininity, rather than the biological definition of the sexes. Linda Gordon defines gender as a series of socially constructed meaningful systems, such as the case of sexual differences in the context of systematic male dominants. Thus, gender refers to hierarchically regulated social relations networks, ordered according to a line of social divisions placing women and men on different sides. The notion of gender regime is used here as a designation of institutionalized practices and forms of domination, in accordance with gendered systems which are constructed as principles of social organization in every society.

In ancient Greece for instance the biological constitution of women was considered inferior to that of men, because women's bodies were seen as cold and moist, as compared to the male ideal of hot and dry. Menstruation was seen as a physical evidence of this inferiority, as the woman's necessary function to excrete her superfluous fluids. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century women were still believed to possess only a limited amount of energy which should not be wasted for academic studies or physical exercises so that it might not affect their reproductive function.

It was not until the second feminist wave (the beginning of the 1970s) that traditional sexual roles were suggested to limit personal development and impede the exploration of women's full potential. It was this liberal feminist philosophy that determined Sandra Bem to promote the idea that any individual may have both male and female characteristics, regardless of their biological sex. This led to the popularization of the term *androgyny*, a category attributed to any person

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<sup>1</sup> Grunberg, *(R)evoluții...*, p. 27.

who scores high on both masculine and feminine identification on her Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Thus, Bem's work contests the traditional idea that only men can be masculine, and only women can be feminine.

*Gender equality* is a later formulated concept, claiming that all human beings are free to develop their abilities and make personal choices not limited exclusively to (traditional) gender roles converging towards defining the equality of sexes, the valorisation of differences, and elimination of discrimination. Starting from this concept, the expression *gender regime* was coined, designating the practices and institutionalized forms of domination according to certain gendered systems, constituted as social ordering principles in all societies.

Carol Gilligan repeats the idea that there are major differences between men and women, but adds that these differences must not be seen in androcentric terms, that is, they must not be considered as female defects, as it usually happens. In Gilligan's view a woman's way to knowledge can be positively compared to a man's. For example, while girls look at themselves as growing up in relations with others, boys look at themselves as separated from others. Janet Spence reveals that, although masculinity and femininity were important personal factors for the subject researched, middle-aged men and women had difficulties in specifying what they considered masculine or feminine within themselves, as well as in others. This paradox made Spence claim that gender identity must be seen as a "primitive concept, unarticulated about itself, established in a mainly preverbalized development stage, maintained at a non-verbalized level".<sup>1</sup>

## **2. A criticism of the concepts of socio-political difference and discrimination from a feminist perspective**

The *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) signed by Romania as well on September 4, 1980, and ratified by Decree 342/1981, starts with the definition of the concept of *discrimination* against women. It includes "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental

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<sup>1</sup> Alina Preda, *Developing Awareness of Gender Identification – Selfhood and Beyond. A Reader*. Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 22.

freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.”<sup>1</sup> Some of the main stipulations of the CEDAW are contained in Articles 5 through 9, by which states parties commit themselves: “Art. 5: (a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women; (...) Art. 6: States Parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women; Art. 7: (a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government; (...) Art. 8: States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men and without any discrimination, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations; Art. 9: 1. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men to acquire, change or retain their nationality. They shall ensure in particular that neither marriage to an alien nor change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall automatically change the nationality of the wife, render her stateless or force upon her the nationality of the husband. 2. States Parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children.”<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of feminist philosophical criticism lies in the discovery and reinforcement of social and political factors responsible for marking distinctions as power structures propagated under the form of discrimination. Feminine identity is only affirmed by emphasizing the *difference*, as long as identity cannot be separated from *difference*. It is only by identifying a being with itself that it is differentiated from others. The issue of this debate is exactly the emphasis of a feminine **existential difference** from a qualitative perspective as a representative model of a social-political field, as well as the highlighting of women’s positive and negative *discrimination*, both private and public.

The concepts of *discrimination* and *non-discrimination* are inscribed into the typology of correlative concepts used in feminist

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#intro>

<sup>2</sup> Full text of the CEDAW at:  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm>

philosophy (together with equality–inequality, identity–difference, femininity–masculinity, and dependence–independence).

Discrimination in its totality brings to the elimination or harming of the rights of individuals in society, therefore the solution of non-discrimination, albeit presumptive and hypothetical, can only be theoretically conceived at a universal level, as long as there are power regimes and strategies in any society. Feminist philosophical criticism is centred on the diminution of these practices, and the establishment of egalitarian policies which guarantee undifferentiated access to political life. Although having a unitary character, discrimination is divided into sub-concepts which treat the issue in a more differentiated way, in order to emphasize the complexity of the expression. The eleven types of discrimination are extremely relevant for the textual emphasis of the meanings of discrimination, just as much as for its applied, practical side. The primary clarification of the concept makes it necessary to enumerate these types:

- *Subjective discrimination* refers to the power relations between a person and the society, a relation turning into a repressive one, which the woman perceives when trying to raise her child by herself. The maternal single-parent family affects the woman's professional development, and also destabilizes the system of power relations on the level of her community, by being placed into a relation of inferiority on account of her situation as a single mother. Although institutions are non-discriminative about one's pertinence to a particular sex, in cases such as this the woman is seen as inferior not in relation to the services she has access to, but on a microgroup level. These items of discrimination have a nomothetic character.
- *Objective discrimination* refers to the objectivity of public institutions. These seem to be neutral in relation to gender, in accordance with the common expectation that, since the laws equally apply to men and women, there is certain objectivity in institution–citizen relationships.<sup>1</sup> However, objective discrimination is sexist, as it operates with the dichotomies of feminine–masculine, weak–strong, dependent–independent, protected–protective, in order to visualize the power differences between the sexes.

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<sup>1</sup> Oana Băluță (ed.), *Gen și putere. Partea leului în politica românească* (Gender and power. The lion's share in Romanian politics), Iași: Polirom, 2006, p. 27.

- *Institutional gender discrimination* is achieved as a result of social arrangements, practices, procedures, laws, public policies, apparently neutral as regards gender, but which lead to unfavourable treatments with discriminative effects over women because they are women, or over men because they are men.<sup>1</sup> This type of discrimination is mostly felt in powerful companies which have internal policies such as imposing that women must not become pregnant or only hiring women with children over 2 years of age.
- *Absolute discrimination* means a low accessibility level, approaching zero, for women (or men) to one or several social systems.<sup>2</sup> This case may refer to the hindered access of women from rural areas to education, medical assistance, or institutions which may facilitate their access to viable alternatives of life. Women's semi-illiteracy and traditional worldview is often due to the perception that man is superior, and the role of the woman is to be obedient to the one who possesses physical, intellectual, and educational power.
- *Relative discrimination* is a result of the comparison of various cultures, societies, and institutions, which are expected to work as similar systems and institutions which known male/female proportions.<sup>3</sup> The parliamentary representation of women in Romania is clearly inferior to the 52 % of female population of the country.
- *Direct discrimination* happens when a person is, was, or could be treated less favourably than another person because of his/her sex, sexual orientation, racial or ethnic origin. The more favourable approach to women in the context of globalization and mixed populations approximates the European feminist approach. However, in the context of feminism in general, there is a quite extensive spreading of "womanism", a tendency to open up to the visualization of women's racial and ethnic identity. Coloured women, Asian women, or women from particular ethnic groups are discriminated as compared to the image and attitude of the society towards white European women. The former group must endure a double burden: to be coloured, and to be women. In Romania, the problem of direct

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

discrimination is primarily felt by Roma women whose situation of identity recognition is highly problematic. It is not only about stating their social identity which presumes the possession and use of documents which invest on their holder the right to be citizens of a country, and endow them with civil and political rights and obligations, but also about the recognition of their own individuality. This context implies the problem of the confirmation and acceptance of one's being, since this category is often associated with pseudo-identity, non-identity, a socially and culturally negligible entity, closer to animality, the Gypsy camp being correlated rather to a pack than a complete group of population. Direct discrimination does not only refer to exclusion on an ethnic or racial basis; it is connected to the privilege of an entire circuit of discrimination, of which the most important in post-modern culture is connected to sex. Consumerism, the culture which glorifies strongly exposed stimuli "whose God is their stomach",<sup>1</sup> exposes women who do not fit into market required standards (young, thin, available) to frontal discrimination. The consumerist job announcement only calls for a fairy tale-like woman, not a real one: "individuals over 50 years of age are not applicable". Experience loses its value, and women often apply complementary "preservation" strategies (such as aesthetic surgery, implants, liposuctions) in order to extend their "flourishing" periods. Identity is exceedingly treated as an attribute of corporeality, and the objectification of women sometimes reaches an overwhelming degree.

- *Indirect discrimination* happens when an apparently neutral regulation, criterion, or practice places individuals of a certain race, origin, sex, or sexual orientation at a disadvantage compared to other individuals, with the exception of cases when those regulations, criteria, or practices are objectively justified by a legitimate purpose, and the methods to attain that purpose are adequate and necessary.<sup>2</sup> This is a subtle form of discrimination which is considered to be justified by an allegedly legitimate criterion. For example, an important public

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Moștenirea creștină a Europei* (Europe's Christian heritage), Iași: Trinitas, 2002, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. [http://www.intercultural.ro/discriminare/directiva\\_43.rtf](http://www.intercultural.ro/discriminare/directiva_43.rtf)

institution announces job vacancies for 120 jobs for men, and 30 jobs for women. Women's access is allowed, but it is limited by stipulations or the internal regulations of the institution, which impede anyway the undifferentiated access to various functions. This case is typical for the traditional pattern regarding women's access to powerful institutions. Imposing a requirement which neglects or discriminatively distributes a status or a function is an aberration which also takes on the subtle form of indirect discrimination.

- *Harassment* is considered discrimination when an undesired behaviour connected to sex leads to the violation of personal dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, or offensive environment.<sup>1</sup> Anita Hill, a respectable lawyer was stigmatized by society when she refused to accept the position of a man's object of pleasure. The party accused was Clarence Thomas, U.S. Supreme Court nominee. The television accounts of the hearings clearly demonstrated to the audience that the American legislative system did not take sexual harassment seriously. Ms Hill refused to become an object of sexual harassment, and accordingly she was labelled a liar as well as an unfeminine woman.<sup>2</sup>
- *Instigation to discrimination* of individuals on the basis of their sex is also considered discrimination, but it cannot be applied in practice, because the criterion of instigation is hard to prove, and even considered hilarious, therefore hard to sanction.
- *Positive discrimination* is a covered-up form of discrimination, ethically accepted by society as a legislative form for protecting the interests of certain disadvantaged or discriminated categories of citizens without higher level interventions. Women's social protection system is based on this conceptualization of positive discrimination; however, before third wave feminism, women's victimization was emphasized to a greater degree than their consideration as individuals with equal rights and duties.
- *Negative discrimination* is perceived as an extended form of conceptual representation, being most widely represented in the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Preda, *Developing Awareness*, p. 66.

field of social and political inequalities between men and women.

Beyond discrimination, the problem of difference comes into being when one's self-consciousness perceives the other as at least equally important than one's own being, and, recognizing the other's right of being different, they become equal in rights and obligations.

Feminism and its requirements to practically, and not only theoretically grant the right of first citizen to women dates back to Voltaire's humanist pleading for tolerance, valid until today, in the words programmatic for the contemporary approach to the matter; as Evelyn Beatrice Hall under the pseudonym of S. G. Tallentyre summarized Voltaire's attitude on tolerance in her 1906 biographical book *The Friends of Voltaire*, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."<sup>1</sup> Women did not have the right to speak their mind, and even if at first attracting patriarchal blame, contemporary society would be overwhelmed by this situation, it is disregarded the problem of the affirmation of the "anonymous half". The right for difference is essentially profound; the right for identity: "Excluded as soon as it is affirmed, difference comes back in the form of differentiation of types of identity"<sup>2</sup>; and the understanding of difference, beginning with the perception of personal identity – as a unity between the individual and the self – is determined by consciousness. However, consciousness carries us right away into the core of what we call human plurality. A passage from personal identity to a state of equality takes place, in which people mutually recognize each other as distinct identities with a right to having an identity.

Humanity has more to win if leaving everybody live as they consider best, than forcing everybody as others consider being best for them. The paradigm of sexual difference reinterprets the objectives and means of feminism, being convinced however that, as long as the false masculine universe is not demystified, and the system that favours masculine values is not criticised, women's chances to detach themselves from their subordinated condition are utterly unconceivable.

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<sup>1</sup> Voltaire is incorrectly credited with writing this sentence, which is in fact Evelyn Beatrice Hall's own first-person interpretation of Voltaire's attitude on tolerance.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Eseuri de hermeneutică*. Vol. 1 *Conflictul interpretărilor*, (Hermeneutics, The Conflict of Interpretations). Cluj-Napoca: Echinoc, 1999, p.128.

Both female and male existence is formulated within difference, as this is the state in which one may speak of *determination*. Men and women are distinct forms, and not distinct degrees, of human nature. It may be stated that the essence lies on the surface, but it continues to be the essence nonetheless. Therefore *difference* is in most cases associated with obscurity and negative axiology. *Difference* is this state of determination as a unilateral distinction. Feminine difference must be stated at the level of the being and its subjectivity in order to contest the value judgment of the feminine, considered vicious and incomplete. There have always been attempts to dissolve the essence of the feminine and overemphasize form. Therefore there is a complicity in representation even between generic and specific differences.

As a result, the ontological entity of the feminine seen as existential difference must be recognized in the totality of its existential sequences, not in a separated or unilateral way, but as a process-like, global reality, as a truly upright *human being* with specific rights and obligations. Perhaps the most ridiculous and paradoxical definition ever given to feminism was the one that claimed feminism to be the trend which shows that *women are also humans*. They are humans who display an existential difference in all their attributes, relations, and determinations.

Difference is a state of determination as unilateral distinction. The being is caught up in its matter, being affected by bodily, empirical, and extrinsic modifications as contradictions. The feminine is the difference, not the alterity, nor the distinction, but the contradiction in the twofold system of the being.

Feminine difference responds thus to the requirements of a harmonious concept: it designates individuality; it is intrinsic (it operates in the essence – femininity); it is qualitative – it designates the essence, dividing the gender; it operates with syntheses, and the nature of the difference is specific (it *is*). The existence of feminine reason and identity is easily refutable when one can only rely on treatises, writings, or notes written by men, at a time when women's access to literacy was extremely limited. Feminine individuality is in need of an educational system in order to be able to formulate its own systems of thinking and consequently of its social and political identity. In the middle of cooking pans, the cognitive qualities of women, as could be expected, did not create philosophical systems by which they could have emphasized their ability of reasoning, to rediscover and theorize their consciousness and to establish the normative models for themselves. Contemporary examples

(few, as they are, but very convincing) prove the return of feminine difference from indifference and insufficiency to subjectivity, as an opening in which specificity has a primary role. Women are competitive; their social and political actions can be evaluated qualitatively and quantitatively on the same scale as men's efficiency. The woman's social and political identity can and must be stated by her confrontation with herself, but this implies a participating character which is applied in the social and political system of Western European, and especially Scandinavian states with a stable political and economical system and the highest level of welfare in the world. Consequently, feminine identity has imposed herself via herself, founding the previously contested argument of consciousness and rationality.

Difference is imposed by its very self because of a degenerative social-political defect of a system incapable of imposing two distinct, yet competitive identities, and imposing only one instead, which is able to make conscious, to affirm and theorize individuality. The other side considered (and this is where misogyny intervenes), unquestioned and uneducated to impose itself, is included into a paternalist system of ideas and attitudes, wilfully debilitating and discriminative.

The recognition and imposing of feminine identity as a programme of feminism aims at the initiation of feminine *palingenesis* (as a period of flourishing and perfection) which follows the patriarchy as a system that has eliminated the rational and subjective character of femininity, making use of femininity by traffic, rendering inferior the ontological entity of the feminine in all its existential sequences.

*Difference* is essentially an object of imposing oneself, and imposing oneself is essentially difference.

*Difference* is not the same as the diverse, and the problem of feminine subordination is well defined especially in philosophical language. The discrepancy in perceiving the role of women in society can be observed in the analysis of feminist philosophy and philosophy in general. Patriarchy has formulated a discriminative language developed in the most important of its discourses, succeeding in influencing both masculine (A, of a primary, identity being) and feminine attitudes (non-A, alterity), considered negative. Masculine identity imposes itself in contradiction with feminine identity, which is negation itself, the gap to be filled, considered as *absence*.

Traditional philosophical thinking operates with dichotomies following the A – non-A model. The most frequent dichotomies to be found in philosophy are: the sacred–the profane; invariable–variable;

creation–procreation; transcendence–immanence; culture–nature; mind–body; intellect–sensitivity; reason–instinct; truth–error; autonomous–dependent; good–evil; strong–weak; public–private. The woman is usually considered inferior on account of her non-masculinity, as her distinct being is not analyzed in a conceptual and critical way.

*Difference* is not formulated only as an affirmation and negation, and it also presupposes an antithetical approach. However, it does not presuppose opposition, but on the contrary, opposition presupposes *difference*, and, far from being able to solve it, that is, to lead it back to its foundations, opposition betrays and distorts *difference*. The opposition of the concepts of *femininity* and *masculinity* taken over as models with the statute of value judgments transform the correlativity of the two items in the natural struggle of oppositions. However, the problem is when the values of masculinity are perceived as positive and constructive, while feminine values are considered negative and, consequently, destructive.

*Difference* in general is distinguished from *diversity* and *alterity*; because two terms differ from each other in that they are different in something, and not in themselves. Consequently, the greatest of these differences is opposition. As long as we consider the concrete being caught up in its matter, the contradictions which affect it are bodily modifications, which only offer us the accidental empirical concept of a still extrinsic difference. Gender difference understood as an independent marking of the being, leads to an opposition which is equally extrinsic and intrinsic. Femininity represents alterity because it was investigated one-sidedly from the perspective of masculinity. Masculinity investigated one-sidedly from the perspective of femininity would reiterate alterity. The conceptual opposition is visible and always responsible in matters of gender discrimination. Femininity, the feminine, and the womanly must be exhaustively studied, arriving at conceptualization and enunciation only *by itself*, by the sphere of its own consciousness and rationality. The analysis *in itself* has rendered negatively mythical the triad which defines the woman. *Difference* itself is an original structure in an unusual sense, as a perspective of the being which is no longer marked by plenitude, but by fracture and absence.

The woman is for the man his double to be known, because he embodies the knowing identity. Thus, the double knower alienates the reflected face and projects it to an extreme opposite space, condemning her to *alterity* and *difference*. In order to consolidate its *difference* considered superior (that is, as domination), the patriarchy restricts

femininity and forces it to develop independently, as utterly different, in a restricted and opposing space in which it could construct and feed its own *difference* as domination. The punitive action of the feminine double is a replica to the primary aggression of the schismatic double, who initiated “the war” by imposing false alterity and dissonance of the artificial distance between the faces of *identity*. As doubles primarily dissociated from the non-differential unity of the Being, the woman and the man are in a relationship of interior alterity and are interior doubles to one another, because the whole is reflected in all its parts.

A characteristic of cosmic feminism is what the Greeks called heterocentrism, that is, *relating to the other*. While it is natural for the masculine to hold in itself its own principle, for the feminine it is natural to hold its own principle in somebody else.<sup>1</sup> This value judgment is justified by the incomprehension and inconsideration of feminine existence, which, far from finding itself as a principle in masculinity, contests it, delimiting itself from it as from an old and useless ideological vestment, tailored for a man, but meant to be worn by a woman. The relating to the other was not properly made, because the feminine has never related itself to the masculine, but on the contrary, it was defectively and negatively related to the masculine as non-I. The feminine was not allowed to relate to itself, and thus discrimination took the form of alterity, and transformed feminine existence into an incomplete character. This maintained tension of alterity must be remarked, despite the new tendencies which replace and redefine, from its own positions, the essential element – the feminine. Heterocentrism is progressively replaced by gynocentrism, a movement considered radical, and which has been most beneficial for feminism.

In order to be able to most faithfully conceptualize the issue, the concept of *equality* must also be treated in parallel. This lies in the identical right of all human beings to be treated as purposes in themselves, but this idea may be contested, as the application of the theoretical ideal is controversial, or, as regards the feminine side, it can be extremely flawed, or sometimes even absent, the woman being treated as an instrument in itself. Women’s discrimination lies consequently in ignoring, depreciation, and stereotypization, as the masculine discourse is mostly misogynistic, therefore negative, while the concept of misandry is almost unknown. Arguably the most culpable act of language level

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<sup>1</sup> Julius Evola, *Metafizica sexului* (The metaphysics of sex), Bucharest: Humanitas, 2001, p. 267.

discrimination, on account of not having a modern terminological correspondence, is the transposition of the term hierodules, adepts of the goddess Ishtar in her temple, whose cult was described in a historical-religious discourse as “sacred prostitution”. The hierodules celebrated the mystery of bodily love not as a formalist and symbolic, but as an operative and magic rite, in order to fuel the tendency of psychism serving as a background for the presence of the goddess, and to transmit to those mating with them, as in an efficient sacrament, the presence of the goddess. The same young women were also referred to as “virgins”, “pure”, or “sacred”; they were supposed to be the embodiments of the goddess, whose name they bore in their generic function (they were called Ishtaritu). The sexual intercourse fulfilled thus on the one hand the general function of sacrifices evoking or reanimating certain divine creatures, and on the other hand they had a function structurally identical with that of the Eucharist: it was the instrument for the participation of man to the sacred, carried and administered in this case by women.<sup>1</sup> The woman was not treated equally even in the past, but was denigrated for acts which were then considered sacred, and Christian culture, in lack of an adequate term of comparison, chose a depreciative one, especially for marking the difference between a patriarchal system of sacred rituals (still existing) and a depraved one (matriarchy).

Equality can only be understood if it is considered in a unitary, structural way. It cannot be partial or fragmentary, as it enforces the discrimination of all other member relations, and consequently it is merely a textual equality, which is present in contemporary legislation, and is not sufficient for eliminating the discrepancies in behaviour and attitude regarding women and their role in society. It may also be observed that the terminological treatment is nothing more equal. This kind of discrimination is wilfully reflected in propaganda materials with not only an informative, but also formative character. The image of a double inferior is created, a shadow which is incapable of matching the principles of complete equality, due to its negative character of principles. Equality however cannot be understood unless it is considered in a unitary, structural way. Equality cannot be partial or fragmentary. Disregarding complete equality in one field or other of social life negatively affects relations of equality in other fields. The equality of Spartan women with men revolted Aristotle, saying that this situation presents a true social danger, because this way slaves could also ask for

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<sup>1</sup> Julius Evola, *Metafizica sexului*, p. 307.

such equal rights. Slavery disappeared, but women's discrimination still persists; true, not in its earlier forms, but on a different level nonetheless.

The disintegration of patriarchal *unity* is necessary as a solution for emancipation. According to feminism the woman derives from the category of the *henides*, a term which Weininger understands as a confusing mixture of thinking and emotion, because of which women lack logical thinking and self-reflection as essential abilities of a leader. In order to liberate itself for difference, femininity must assume any dream of "reconciliation" (in the sense of return to patriarchal norms), because difference remains at the surface, eliminating from thinking the viewpoint of the philosophy of the ultra-human understood as a man, as this remains only a residual masculine metaphysical nostalgia. Referring to the being's mode of existence which would not be tormented by the separation between essence and existence, between event and meaning, and to a mode of existence of the man which would no longer be marked by the oedipal conflict, this doctrine seems to be the opposite of repetition or the *mise-en-scène* of *difference* as a remembrance of a fracture which can never be surpassed because it is the very arche-structure which founds and opens up history itself.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, difference cannot be interpreted only from a unilateral point of view, historically motivated to print certain values considered irrefutable, as absolute standards of corporeality and thinking. One-sidedness is the essential epistemological criterion which creates discrimination and diffuses it as a weapon of manipulation.

Denigrating approaches appear as explicitly patriarchal formulations. The concept of patriarchy is a key notion for feminist criticism, as well as for feminist political thinking. Its meaning is at the same time descriptive (it reveals the prevalent organization of public and private relationships between women and men according to the religiously and secularly widespread paradigm: the man is the master of the woman), and normative (it indicates the way in which these relations must be configured – the man **must** be the master of the woman). Patriarchy is the ideology which supports this kind of norm and social organization. In the centre of this ideology lies the "rule of the symbolic father", whose word counts and creates. Although in the case of men the ideology of patriarchy has evolved towards paternalism or even contractualism under the conditions of "fraternity", in the case of women

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<sup>1</sup> Gianni Vattimo, *Aventurile diferenței* (The adventures of difference), Constanța: Pontica, 1996, p. 88.

this ideology is very difficult to dislocate.<sup>1</sup> “Sisternity”, or rather the coalition of women in the perspective of emancipation is not as evident as that of men. The man is *par excellence* the political *man*, concentrating his activity to the public space he governs and of which he pretends to be its unique master.

The deficiency of women in approaching the political scene lies mostly in the fact that they are most often grouped in *protopolitical associations* (they fight against death penalty, starvation, arming, or they support ecological principles, etc.), and not in *political associations* (such as parties debating the priorities and principles which should govern social life; or the power’s modalities of control). The matriarchy of political power is far from being achieved, especially because of noetic prejudices, but also ontological ones connected to the complementarity and compatibility of the woman with the political space and the power generating social space.

This theoretical perspective of the socialization of gender raises the well-deserved attention of sociologists, who have undertaken many studies on the degree to which gender differences are the results of social influences. Studies on mother-child relationships show the difference in how boys and girls are treated, even if the parents consider that their reactions are indiscriminating.

In a classic experiment, five young mothers were studied as they interacted with a six months old baby called Beth. They were seen to present the tendency to often smile at her, and offer her dolls as toys. The reaction of a second group of mothers towards a boy of the same age, called Adam, was visibly different. The baby was usually given a toy train, or some other “boyish” toy. Beth and Adam was in fact the same child, dressed in different clothes.<sup>2</sup>

The above example is highly relevant for emphasizing discriminative pedagogical, parental and social practice by which the human subject is shaped according to pure traditional criteria. Masculine education always applies and imposes an intellectual approach, responsible, and exterior as compared to a private sphere, while girls are presented with a simple situation, focusing on the duty to sacrifice themselves in the private space, to dedicate themselves to taking care of others. There is no emphasis on the noetic abilities of girls; therefore the

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Bucur, *Patriarhat și emancipare în istoria gândirii politice românești* (Patriarchy and emancipation in the history of Romanian political thinking), Iași: Polirom, 2002, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Sociologie* (Sociology), [s.l.]: ALL, [s.a.], p. 696.

shaping of new approaches to this situation needs a new approach to the educational and behavioural system regarding girls. The prejudice connected to feminine weakness has a religious substitute, as one cannot speak about the lack of feminine identity unless one anchors one's thinking into patriarchal traditions and customs existing for over two thousand years... and just as valid today. If, for instance (absurdly, or because of a wish to escape the past!) Paul the Apostle wrote his letters today, he would definitely be punished for discrimination and the violation of human rights, but merely because his writings are old and are part of tradition and social customs and norms, they are considered as righteous and irrefutable teachings. The question asked here is whether stereotypes and tradition can be considered as valid and authoritative examples for the formation of new generations, and whether the importance of these writings of a sacred, yet evidently discriminative character is correctly evaluated.

The very problem of feminine being is discussed as a secondary subject in ontological economy. The frustrating character of the relationship of the feminine with itself is thus connected to a norm with a deliberately negative character imposed by education and defined by social practice. The role of social leader seems almost improper to the "weaker sex", as the native abilities of girls are ignored and left in a latent stage, only because they are born women. This is the first and seemingly most important evaluation in the construction of a leader's personality, disregarding the evolution of the human subject and the progressive evaluation of attitudes. Even the most enlightened male minds of their age go along with the chorus: we want democracy, but not for women, and we accept women to be our second-rate partners in public space, or even to vote for us, but not to represent us.

As for any system of thought, I consider that for the discriminative patriarchal system as well one must have in mind the models which make it viable, and on the basis of which it manages to preserve its unwanted authority. The ten models below present, in a repeated and unitary way, obvious attitudes of misogyny to defend its own values in a fight which not long ago was still one-sided. The order does not mean a hierarchy, as these models are systemic and interdependent, a kind of *Ten Commandments of patriarchy*.

**A. The egoistic model** is the misogynous attitude resulted from egoism and egocentrism, negatively manifested in the field of interpersonal relations by the exaggeration of one's own values and the excessive cultivation of one's own interests. One may speak indeed of a one-sided

cultivation of the specificity of masculinity and its standardization, not only as a standard of self-adoration, but also by the forced imposition, as a unique moral and social solution, of the “adoration” of an ideal which monopolizes power. From the creation of universal patriarchal religions to the most elevated debates on consciousness, morality, intelligence, and human evolution itself, all texts exclusively refer to the man as the unique creator of civilization, responsible for the spiritual evolution of humankind; nevertheless, it is not told that half of the competitors were deprived even of their status as humans for over two millennia, if we are only referring to the Christian age.

**B. The quietist model** recommends and even imposes the gaining of spiritual “quietude”, the keeping of feminine tenderness, and implicitly the non-involvement with organizational, political, and decisional disputes for the preservation of that state of social apathy which is supposed to be the ideal to which every woman strives. The reservation towards the acceptance of social-political responsibilities is in fact an educated one, implemented by traditional norms, the truth value of which nobody questions, for this is how existential customs are. This quietude is only the silence before the storm, which must lead by all means to the elimination of this deficient attitude which removes any responsibility from the female population, making it a second-rate pawn. The social-political plan still has to accumulate enough ideas which would make a woman a true citizen, not only on paper, but in practice as well. Feminine social lethargy is a necessity for the unilateral recognition of masculine leadership values and the negation of feminine ones by blaming exactly their non-implication in decision making. The leader woman in a misogynist construction is only a subject of utopian-comic-satirical debate.

**C. The mistrustful model** of social-political discrimination is formulated by unjustified suspicion, by the anxious expectation of something evil, by the continuous fear of not having to endure a damaged image or status. All these fears of men are conditioned by women’s possible access to important functions of decision, and women’s increasing role in the social-political field. These prejudices are socially shaped, and are always fuelled by the fear that the present order of things might change for an apocalyptical one. The excessive cultivation of the image of patriarchal society is seen as a unique shaper and defender of values, although many of these values can be questioned. The change of social order by equally promoting all individuals who form this society does not necessarily mean the instauration of institutional chaos or value

crisis. Authentic values may prevail in time, just as it is the case of women's affirmation. Naturally, women's qualities, their reason, their will and intelligence did not appear two or three hundred years ago, or after the Second World War. These qualities have always existed, partly latently, while partly their existence was even denied. The fear of a social-political evil is not justified by the blaming of one single category of population, especially because this fear is not supported by objective reality.

**D. The misoneist model** (Gr. *miseo* = to hate; *neos* = new) is characterized by a hostile attitude towards the new, and is fuelled by the traditionalism of patriarchal thinking and order as a model of stability for all areas of society. The new is regarded as implicitly corrupt and inappropriate for development, representing a consistent regression. The misoneist always relates to the past, it is a cult of the ancestors and traditional values which would be altered or even annihilated by the new, not being replaced by something equally good or durable, as the change is not seen as evolution, and consequently it is contested. The present leap and the changes by which a woman may have, or fights to have, access to social-political power and self-determination are seen as damaging and inadequate. The contestations are "arguments" which either stimulate or hurt masculine pride: "Where shall we end up with this depravation if we've come to be led by women?" The new is not accepted, and the contestation of women's emancipation movements must most often face this ideological barrier.

**E. The masculine megalomania model** is constructed on the over-appreciation of masculine qualities as the unique moving forces of social progress, and the depreciation of feminine qualities considered anti-progressive or as social, cultural, and moral barriers of evolution. Patriarchal megalomania has governed human thinking for centuries on end, being transposed into traditions and customs, texts and works of art which exaggerated the positive role of the man, compromising the status of the woman and annulling the feminine self.

**F. The model of noetic discrimination** is that which created the woman's social-political discrepancy as a rational entity, operating with physical pretexts able to discredit women's intellectual abilities. She has come to be objectified and treated as non-human, only recently (and even so, mostly theoretically) acquiring the right of full citizenship. She has come to be ridiculed, as having only obscure and naïve inclinations, proving to be incapable even of real faith. Nietzsche problematizes this debility and asks himself on this: "What is it that all religious women

like, whether old or young? Answer: A saint with nice legs, still young and idiot..."<sup>1</sup> Women's attitude was always connected to credulity rather than faith, exactly by contesting her rationality and intellectual capacity characterized by a critical spirit capable of separating the true from the false, value from non-value, and the ability to oppose them. By one-sidedly formulating the norms of good and evil, masculinity has only proposed an imitative model, which formed critically unexamined automatisms, and consequently has not accorded the woman the possibility of confronting that which is established as being indeed true and valuable. Critical spirit is an attitude which tends to the rigorous evaluation of facts, without tolerating that which is not justified by value. Therefore, the feminine critical spirit has remained in a latent stage, which does not mean however that it was eliminated or annulled. It demonstrates its existence only in certain areas of modern society, although even now "religious" communities constantly display a feminine presence at religious services, which is still conducted only by men, disregarding this discrimination.

**G. The model of the significant other** represents the group or category of individuals to whom one directs one's attention and in relation to which one compares oneself. Starting from this model, it is easy to understand why a similar group in which the woman might affirm her social and political identity is inexistent. Her group of reference has always been the patriarchal family and the institutions for which she only had a pawn's role with an almost inexistent human value (Church, administrative power). Her relations have always happened on an inferior scale: the inferior character and her exclusively inferior group compared to the group of men with the same social status. Today, feminism attempts at emphasizing a feminine reference group as a provider of intellectual and moral models which would produce a major social change and would alter the woman's irreparable victim status.

**H. The model of the generalized other** is created from the harmonic attitudes of the community or group as a whole towards an individual, as the subject perceives it in its relation to the social environment. The individual adopts attitudes towards itself, similar to the ones emitted by the *generalized other* towards itself. The problem lies in the statement of the majority group's attitude towards a subversive element, such as for example a woman's access to an important and responsible function with a special status. Powerful women often consider that they gained their

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<sup>1</sup> Gianni Vattimo, *Aventurile diferenței*, p. 116.

power because of a Maecenas, and not because of their own qualities and sacrifices, as the society, which otherwise cultivates a critical and self-critical spirit, formulates false ideas about the woman-individual who breaks away from the traditional social-political context.

**I. The paternalist model**, protective as it is, has some ideological consequences which may debilitate feminine identity, considered unable to lead itself. The idea was formulated that the woman needs a master (the man) to look after her, to protect her from the fervent disputes of intellectuality for fear these might take away her naivety and tenderness... and that all these measures of substraction (forced, as it is) are in fact to her benefit. The paternalist model is also the creator of a system of positive discrimination of the type of civilized, mannered norms or behaviour, bestowing on the woman the status of a fragile person who is always in need of attention. This model also demonstrates discrimination and the sinful desire to establish a one-sided order accessible to a single sexual model which comes first in affirming its own identity, while disregarding the other because of its weakness, even suggesting the idea that the woman is not fully capable or adequate for a more significant role with social or political responsibility. By eliminating woman's power to protect herself, the patriarchal system did not have the strength to protect the woman even in her household environment, as this is the one in which the incidence of violent acts is greater than in public space. This system has forgotten to emphasize not so much the fact that the decisional-political space is insecure, but that practically the sheep was given to be watched by the wolf ... The woman must be protected from the patriarchal system which has set rule over her, and from which she now attempts to well-deservedly escape.

**J. The model of masculine identity crisis** determined by new social tendencies of interpenetration of mentalities as well as behaviours and attitudes brings about the destabilization of the patriarchal system in which the one-sided plurality of values and customs is taken over by unspecific values and behaviours. The ethics of care, tolerance, and the recognition of existential difference have appeared and proliferated, as has metrosexuality as a product of consumer society which objectifies the man's body, and the individual feels violated by the acceleration of the rhythm of propulsion of feminine difference, considered only as alterity, and not as a subjectivity capable of self-determination or as a being which is complete in itself. It is in fact the crisis of masculine subjectivity to not to be able to master the alternatives.

### **3. Political gynomorphism**

Contemporary feminism is positively oriented towards *gynomorphism*, the spiritual modelling from the perspective of the human half which has not yet had the opportunity to be transformed into *arché*. In this sense this political concept has as its purpose the elimination of the oppression of women by political means (the transformation of legal structures and social institutions), which would emphasize the modes in which we should perceive women's specific identity in relation to universal concepts of human nature: reason, morality, rights, and citizen's status.<sup>1</sup> One may speak about a reconstruction according to the model of feminine existence of the social-political structure to which it pertains textually with complete rights, but actually having to face discriminative mentality. Patriarchal mentality can only be modelled by a coercive method, capable of radically modifying the social construction by presenting alternative and different existential patterns as parallel value-creating forms.

In his article "On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship", July 1790, Condorcet claimed: "Either no individual in mankind has true rights, or all have the same ones".<sup>2</sup> As a member of the French National Assembly, he wished to determine his revolutionary fellows to adopt a more "enlightened" attitude towards women. The argumentation was part of his radical conception about a relational political order based on full equality among sexes, regarding their political rights just as much as their access to education. There was a need then, just as it is now, for a most humane and modern approach to the problem of women. The stereotype laws and the attitude attached to them are social diseases, and not innovating attitudes, as they are about the knowledge of a one-sided reality – patriarchy. In these conditions, if a standard of perfection is established by an exclusive reference to a Renaissance painting, nobody will ever see an abstract painting otherwise than an aberrant deviation from an ideal, a manifestation of disorder and pure ugliness. Thus, it is easy to understand why almost any ideology based on an A – non A dichotomy manages to resist transformations. For those who understand society through such ideologies it is very difficult to conceive the possibility of alternative

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<sup>1</sup> Mihaela Miroiu, *Jumătatea anonimă. Anthologie de filosofie feministă* (The anonymous half. An anthology of feminist philosophy), Bucharest: Casa de Editură și Presă "Șansa" S. R. L., 1995, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> Translated by Lynn Hunt, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/292/>

social orders. Within such kind of thinking, the only alternative to a unique order is disorder.

Ever since classical Antiquity, the possibility of feminine political leadership has been regarded as a grotesque idea, suitable for a comedy, as Aristophanes wrote it in his *Assemblywomen* (also known as *The Ecclesiazusae*) using real arguments in a mutilated perspective, in which a woman (Praxagora) disguised in man's clothes, demands that women take over the power in the Castle by an extremely well constructed pleading, covering all areas of social attributions:

They are worth more than you are, as I shall prove. First of all they wash all their wool in warm water, according to the ancient practice; you will never see them changing their method. Ah! if Athens only acted thus, if it did not take delight in ceaseless innovations, would not its happiness be assured? Then the women sit down to cook, just as they always did; they carry things on their head just as they always did; they keep the Thesmophoria, just as they always did; they knead their cakes just as they always did; they make their husbands angry just as they always did; they receive their lovers in their houses just as they always did; they buy dainties just as they always did; they love unmixed wine just as they always did; they delight in being loved just as they always did. Let us therefore hand Athens over to them without endless discussions, without bothering ourselves about what they will do; let us simply hand them over the power, remembering that they are mothers and will therefore spare the blood of our soldiers; besides, who will know better than a mother how to forward provisions to the front? Woman is adept at getting money for herself and will not easily let herself be deceived; she understands deceit too well herself. I omit a thousand other advantages. Take my advice and you will live in perfect happiness.<sup>1</sup>

However, the real situation in which a woman appears in the agora in order to demand her rights is a modern one, as long as the private space may be necessary and important for human existence, and human freedom is only fully achieved in the public arena, where differentiated identity and individuality is emphasized and recognized in

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<sup>1</sup> Prose translation, from: <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristophanes/eccles.html>

the middle of the community. Equality can only be understood by affirmation, but with patterns which generate mentalities freed from prejudices and opened towards this display of feminine difference.

Political gynomorphism as an innovating attitude opposed to the idea of patriarchal power is formed in the public space, but reaching a consensus will not always be the main purpose of its actions, much rather the recognition and appreciation of the difference in the context of confrontations with the power. The understanding of the dichotomy of power as a motivated, rational, and bilateral part of exercising it can only be formed in the context of deviation from traditional norms which have ideologically radiated in the well-known form of manipulative political andromorphism.

#### **4. The womanly and the identity of feminine corporeality**

The element of discrimination that stood at the basis of a whole set of social deformities was undoubtedly the woman's inferior physical strength as compared to the man's. This so-called "anomaly" resulted in time in the conception that the masculine organism is the standard, the model to be followed, while the woman's body is only a truncated, castrated form which may only claim an ontological pseudo-authority for itself, while the "organic" gap must be filled by the man. This perception was also accepted in Christianity, a religion considered egalitarian. Even here, the woman is regarded not as an autonomous system, on the contrary: she is said to need a master to rule over her, as she lacks this ability. This negativity is in fact a limitation, an animal-like insufficiency which is antagonistic with the masculine patriarchal self-sufficiency which takes on the form of the autarchic Father. The creation of the woman in Hesiod's conception is an eloquent example thereof:

So said the father of men and gods, and laughed  
aloud. And he bade famous Hephaestus make haste and mix earth  
with water and to put in it the voice and strength of human kind,  
and fashion a sweet, lovely maiden-shape, like to the immortal  
goddesses in face; and Athene to teach her needlework and the  
weaving of the varied web; and golden Aphrodite to shed grace  
upon her head and cruel longing and cares that weary the limbs.  
And he charged Hermes the guide, the Slayer of Argus, to put in  
her a shameless mind and a deceitful nature.

So he ordered. And they obeyed the lord Zeus the son

of Cronos. Forthwith the famous Lame God moulded clay in the likeness of a modest maid, as the son of Cronos purposed. And the goddess bright-eyed Athene girded and clothed her, and the divine Graces and queenly Persuasion put necklaces of gold upon her, and the rich-haired Hours crowned her head with spring flowers. And Pallas Athene bedecked her form with all manners of finery. Also the Guide, the Slayer of Argus, contrived within her lies and crafty words and a deceitful nature at the will of loud thundering Zeus, and the Herald of the gods put speech in her. And he called this woman Pandora (2), because all they who dwelt on Olympus gave each a gift, a plague to men who eat bread.<sup>1</sup>

This is merely the pattern-text. The rest of history looks as if made according to this standard. The characteristics of women, as negative personal and social values, have proliferated until they culminated in clerical texts which identified the feminine Being with a demonic creature.

Although luring and fascinating, not all women are considered patterns for beauty, as there are in this respect also standards of eligibility. Jacob Negruzzi in his short story *Stărostii* (The suitors) enlists 10 categories of beauty, as a true handbook for his contemporaries: Beautiful; Nice; Neat; Sings pretty well the piano; Hm-hm; She's funny; She's not deformed; There, a stumpy...; Quite ugly; Hideous. It must be added that when you ask about a girl whether she is pretty and you are answered "plays pretty well the piano", you must "keep your distance in due time", and if she is in the next category, then "take your hat and run where you can".<sup>2</sup>

Beauty standards are also imposed by men, the choices made according to a woman's good looks and body are arbitrary and definitely to the disadvantage of the last category.

##### **5. Public space and private space: elements of submission and imposition**

Men persuade women that the messy politics of various interest groups are not worth the time and the effort. The violence committed by certain men against women offers to the others the justification for

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<sup>1</sup> Hesiod, *Works and Days*, lines 60-82. <http://omacl.org/Hesiod/works.html>

<sup>2</sup> Alin Ciupală, *Femeia în societatea românească*, p. 106.

assuming a protective role and make women wonder how politics could help them if violence creeps into their most intimate relationships.

Egalitarian elements can be found in Plato's *The Republic* as well, where this ancient utopia writer tried to sketch the premises of an ideal state, making a fundamental distinction between public and private interests. Plato, interested in eliminating all sources of discordance within the state, pleads for the equality of the spouses in order to create a solid cohesion in the public space, and not necessarily because of some civic spirit regarding women's rights. Could perhaps this concept of social cohesion be applied today as well? The role attributed to women in political philosophies is overwhelmingly determined by the concept of family. Those who understood family as a natural and necessary institution defined women by their sexual, procreative, and childrearing functions. The result was the prescription of a moral code and a women's rights concept radically different from those of men.<sup>1</sup> Depriving women of that what offered them a home and psycho-sexual and social identity automatically leads to losing their identity, and transforming them into household animals, training rather than educating or emancipating them, as would befit a perfect human being. The masculine social-political autarchy may be interpreted as a tyrannical regime, although this issue is not recognized and even less debated and commented upon as a true social problem. In a non-historical and non-linguistic field, the historically defined and language-using self, not creating linguistic and social forms and norms, does not find its place. Political philosophy is only applied to the public space of equality and civil duties, while the relations among the unequals, although ensuring the necessary conditions for the political, are not subjects worthy of the attention of political analysis. All moral standards applied for women are determined by their function as protectors of the home, their reason and virtue are considered deficient, and therefore they are not qualified for being introduced into the public, political space. Politics deals with the relations between individuals who are equal within an artificially constructed public space, while the relations of unequal individuals manifested in the private space are considered "natural" and therefore irrelevant for politics. Still, women offer the necessary conditions for men to enjoy their full rights as citizens, as consumers of pleasure, as public and private authorities, without previously manifesting their right of being, of *arché*, as the

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<sup>1</sup> Olivia Todorean, *Itinerarii contestatare. Studii de teorie politică feminină* (Contesting itineraries. Studies in feminist political theory), Bucharest: Politeia-SNSPA, 2002, p. 15.

creator of political discourses and social and political norms beneficial for the other half, ignored or even denied. In all fields of social life there are subjects more adequate than others in fulfilling the discursive role of public participation, and thus the presumptive incapacity of women to participate and involve themselves in public debates cannot be overgeneralized, because it is their interest to express their grievances regarding the deficiencies of the patriarchal political system, which are not observed by those who formulated them. These social, and also implicitly moral, handicaps do not take into account the real organization of life in contemporary society. As life is organized according to an implicit “social contract”, its two main elements – gender contract and labour contract – define the distribution of roles in the family and on the labour market. On the basis of the gender contract, women are those who take on the greatest part of family duties, while men are responsible for ensuring the welfare of the family. The labour contract enforces the division of labour, standardizing the situation of a family with one single financially supporting member, who is employed in full working time all throughout his life.<sup>1</sup> Power is exercised thus not only in the public space, but also in the private space, because money – as the creator and enforcer of power – makes the woman be only protected and supported by a system in which she has little chance to lead, only to be led. Masculine domination appears as a condition of a harmonious marriage. Women cannot measure themselves by old political principles such as that of Machiavelli, who said that women belonged to a gender category incapable of keeping a secret but possessing an inborn capacity to betrayal, and therefore they are/should be marginalized in political life. This philosopher considered however, that women are endowed with “mysterious powers” which maintain the order and stability of the state. These “mysterious powers” cannot be others than women’s capacity of coordination and conceptualization, identical with that of men.

Most times, the subordination of women was considered the source of human society, as it was supposed to be the subordination of passion to reason. This opposition between body and soul, reason and passion has been transformed in time in the anthropological explanation of civil disorder inherent to feminine power, which must be neutralized by the power of marriage and kept within the confines of the home. Power has been considered to rightfully belong to men, as it were the

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<sup>1</sup> Rita Mae Kelly, *Gen, globalizare si democratizare* (Gender, globalization, and democratization), Iași: Polirom, 2004, p. 220.

fathers who founded the states, and not the mothers. Nevertheless, the question logically rises: then why would women subordinate themselves to such a state?

Although men's sovereignty is nothing else than the usurpation of the equality of ranks that nature established between the sexes, the inferior status of the woman is largely due to masculine violence. Considered until even recently an animal of higher evolution, the woman was forced to a household life. Her beauty, attributed to femininity, the gentleness of her character, her fragility and exaggerated sensitivity which are called "femininity" contain nothing natural: these are nothing else than artificial constructions meant to veil unequal and unjust human relationships both at a micro-social and a macro-social level.

## **6. Social-political misogyny**

Man's inability to relate to anything or anybody makes his life meaningless and aimless (the ultimate masculine revelation is that life is absurd), therefore he invented philosophy... Most men cowardly project their weaknesses onto women, label them as women's weaknesses, and consider that they hold powers which are in fact womanly; most philosophers, less cowardly, accept that these weaknesses only belong to men. Thus, they label the masculine condition as **the** human condition; postulate the problem of non-existence which horrifies them as a philosophical dilemma, they bombastically label non-existence as an "identity problem" and continue to pompously babble about "the crisis of the individual", the "essence of Being", the "Essence which precedes existence"...<sup>1</sup> Women's relationship to their own existence is not this perverse, they fully and intuitively understand it. Philosophy and theory, according to this approach, represents a masculine initiative, deriving from the inherent inadequacy of the male sex.

The contestation of the current of feminism and the woman's losing her traditional consecrated role is mainly connected to her so-called loss of femininity excessively sweetened and unmotivatedly protected from the danger of a vicious social and especially political life. According to certain "well-meaning" masculine voices, the feminine self can only be found in the domestic field, far from the aggression and bustling of politics. Behind this visible false protectionism there is in fact the fretting of the masculine Ego, confused by the perspective of

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<sup>1</sup> Moira Gatens, *Feminism și filosofie. Perspective asupra diferenței și egalității* (Feminism and philosophy. Perspectives on difference and equality), Iași: Polirom, 2001, p. 130.

undermining paternalism so beneficial for increasing and maintaining his self-esteem. Giles Lipovetsky has very rigidly and objectively pointed out the crisis of masculine identity as a difficult and strongly alarming step which appeared together with the emancipation of the feminine Ego as an active partaker in decisional, elective, and self-determinative power: "The more feminism questions the being of the feminine, the more it dissolves and loses itself in uncertainty; the more the woman determines the disappearance of certain sides of her traditional status, and the more virility itself loses its identity".<sup>1</sup> Therefore the Being discovers in Non-Existence a dislocating factor, contesting, on the basis of the argument of one's "true fate", its holistic existential right. However, the existence of social and political beings is accepted involuntarily, forced by reality. Dichotomies coexist, but transcendence confirms or re-confirms immanence, while the autonomous only recognizes the existence of the dependent gender. Behind the masculine chauvinism displayed by Weininger one may clearly read the affirmation of feminine power, the fear from the strong sex, the first sex, but only by displaying the transparency of the warrior sex's crisis. Weininger hates the woman (femininity) for no other reason than because he is afraid of her or because of his suppressed nostalgia for her. He preaches the laws of patriarchy because it seems to him that he is assisting the instauration of a new, triumphant matriarchy. He celebrates the pomp and solemnity of the masculine in order to excuse the decadence of modern virility. He clings to the ideal of the masculine genius because he sees the germs of the feminine genius, hidden and contested for so long.

In his *The Sexual Life of Our Time*, Berlin sexologist Iwan Bloch inserted a chapter entitled *Giving up women*, in order to study a phenomenon which he considered distinct from homosexuality. This new current of contemporary sexual life was, in his conception, advanced by Schopenhauer, and had its references at Strindberg and Weininger: "The enemies of the woman form today a sort of *fourth sex*, to which it is fashionable to belong". And still, there could be ample debates on the issue of the fourth sex, as Bloch very well called it. The misogynous man only seeks to affirm the qualities of his own sex and corporeality, because of an ontological frustration of not being able to give life, only take life. Universal patriarchal religions were created making use of this premise of the ability or inability to give life. Thus the woman was

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<sup>1</sup> Jacques Le Rider, *Modernitatea vineză și crizele identității*. (Modernity and Crises of Identity). Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2003, p.152.

described as an incubator, while the baptism of the child, recognized by its father, as a second, spiritual birth, as the essential and truly important one.

Nevertheless, men's effeminacy, initially blamed, then accepted, has become an extremely controversial subject of traditional gender role changes. A *Playboy* article dedicated to metrosexuality starts with the motto: "When the world had enough of muscled, hairy, and badly smelling men, from behind the skyscrapers of New York they appeared, the metrosexuals. Pretty, sexy, trendy people, who anticipate the imminent collapse of a male dominated world".

Metrosexuality does not refer to some kind of deviant or special sexuality. A metrosexual cultivates his feminine side, spending time and money on embellishment and lifestyle. The basic idea is that, for decorating himself, the metrosexual uses *feminine methods*: hairstyling gel and body lotion, makeup, transparent nail enamel, face creams, or exfoliating face masks. These cosmetic methods are considered too profane, and the fact that they are used by the "weak sex", who dedicates a great amount of her life to such practices, would lead to "the imminent collapse of a male dominated world". The conclusion is that there should still be a differentiation of the "basic" activities of the two sexes, while the mixing of habits would only lead to the alteration of ancestral positive values. Is this perhaps a dissolution of identities considered "pure", or is it merely a frustrating reaction of men? A healthy identity is that in which the individual reflects and finds its own self, as do all those with whom it connects. Could the "borrowing" of habits considered specific to one of the sexes lead to the changing of a strong character, or the loss of identity? Androgyny is only a myth of perfection, just as plausible as the myth of the Fall or the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Evolution urged the individual to qualitative gathering and miming which ensured its cultural and social progress. The deep roots of a sex in particular preoccupations and fields do not mean a special leap, also proved by the long isolation of the woman from the public space, and its consequences on her individuality which at a certain time has come to be just as inexistent as her rights. It is exactly the accumulation and permissiveness of human capital which makes evolution. I am not saying that more decorated politicians or an epilated skin and a fancy haircut would make elements of political progress; I only wish to emphasize the reality of the woman's generalized trapping into a cosmetic Amphitryonic position, debilitated exactly by the habit of "typically feminine" practices. It is only corporeality which is seen in her. Her

social-political identity is mistaken for her cosmetic practices, and that is that. Masculine corporeality, freed from cosmetic needs by being the electing identity (the woman is the *chosen*), transcendence itself, is (textually) offended by metrosexuality, for metatextually it undertakes this presumptive identity: 56 % of women find metrosexuality sexy, while 71 % of men want to be metrosexual models promoted in the media.

The fear of identification with feminine corporeality (*deficient difference*) can be emphasized here, especially because this is the beginning of giving up the taboo of patriarchal power. It seems that this corporeality may suggest and even induce the shock of a new approach. Reason, if supported by a great body, has greater chances to impose itself in this world, in which identity is sold and bought empirically and irrevocably, and in which the woman gains territory more rapidly than in the most optimistic projects of emancipation. The masculine fear of metrosexuality and the attack against feminine corporeality as the mirror-pattern of the metrosexual individual induce the model of mental eugenics: the impure parts must be eliminated, because the species can only be preserved by pure individuals. Only men fear this. Women are not afraid that by their access to education, culture, extreme sports, or power they would lose their identity. On the contrary, women who have access to all these consider themselves more complete, without affecting their femininity.

Metrosexuality is only a trend which has attracted attention on the feminine side of men. Some traditionalist women (the 44 %) might consider that metrosexuality takes away some of their “typically feminine” characteristics (the primacy of corporeality and fragility emphasized by repeated cosmetic procedures), without offering them anything in return; a man powerful in politics, and equally so at the hairdresser’s or at shopping? Women would lose thus the great privilege of their existence: the “secret” of being a dependent doll with exclusive access to the secrets of embellishment, that is, the passing appearance.

Feminism wishes to fight for exactly the elimination of this mental flaw by undifferentiated education. From a rational point of view social and political identification must not and cannot take into account physical characteristics. The woman does not only identify herself with makeup, but with reason as well. It is exactly this latter quality which is meant to be ignored, and even eliminated, from all the characteristics of women. At the latest elections, men considered that women belong to the malls, hairdressers, or the frying pan, and not to the parliament or other

institutions with great decisional power, while those few women who were present nevertheless were supposed to get there only because of some external help or merely because of their looks. The fear of masculine debility on account of the adoption of certain “feminine habits” is evident, yet rationally irrelevant for women’s access to power.

## **7. Gonochorism**

The complete separation of the sexes in fully independent individuals can be most efficiently used by feminism. By only taking into account the uniqueness and, first of all, also the values specific to the sexes, one may reach the viable alternative of the recognition of feminine identity. The specific structure and the existential difference of the woman find their place also in the public space, as manifestations of the same normal identity, not particular or deficient, and not as manifestations of an inferior alterity.

Social gonochorism is nonetheless deficient, meaning that masculine individualities are clearly visible, while feminine identity is closed within mass individuality. *Femininity*, *the womanly*, and *the feminine* are all considered deficient attributes, neatly inferior to the masculine/male standards. The womanly, as compared to the manly, is unstable, strictly procreative, and weak; femininity is dependent, sensitive, defined by analytical intelligence, a preoccupation for beauty, lasting feelings, intuition, and educational skills, attributes which are declassified by the analogous features of masculinity, which is a personality profile also constructed on the premise of sex, but it is basically culturally determined, and implies force, resistance, courage, rationality, and an ability for self-accomplishment. Even grammatically, the feminine is subordinated to the masculine, which covers a wider terminological area.

It can be noticed thus that, although we deal with concepts which allow the theoretical differentiation of genders, the practical differentiation continues to be a feminist utopia undermined by man’s eagerness to self-esteem.

The woman as a distinct psychological, social, and political entity needs the holistic recognition of her own existence. Feminine individuality is that what must be particularized in a social-political way. Although feminism is addressed to all women, not all women accept it,

and, what is more, it is also greatly contested. Feminism should fight especially for the affirmation of particularly strong feminine characters. Gonochorism as the highlighting of specifically differentiated identities may set or reset the consciousness of the power of feminine individuality. Thus, I think that feminism should be oriented towards emphasizing feminine existence and individual particularities, and only afterwards, following the model of constructing representative examples, should it proceed to the massive application of feminist principles. It is only by the power of the example that the woman will wish to surpass the ideal that she now embraces. We shall see more girls who wish to become *intellectuals, presidents, lawyers, diplomats, or prime-ministers* and not soccer players' wives or simply household wives.

The practical application of true social and political gonochorism is an act of urgent necessity which would lead to the emphasis of individual, and not collective-unilateral, elites promoted by the patriarchal system. It is only by this model that the *generalized other* will have been safely involved in the social-political field.

It is in this perspective, in which all subjectivity is absolutely separated, unique, and tending towards infinity that the rupture from patriarchy may be achieved. Feminine subjectivity and its statement does not necessarily mean an absolute solitude, as it already connected to the other man by relation of ethical necessities in which it is not the knowledge of the other that comes first, but the recognition of its absolute difference by respect and responsibility, taken as far as the state of everlasting equality.

## **8. Democracy and political representation**

Even the most erudite men of their age who claim democracy, do not include women into this claim; or, if they accept women as second-rate partners in public space – to vote them, perhaps, but not represent them as well – then they reject them as partners in private life. No man is hindered to have access to or exercise his rights because of his belonging to that sex; women, however, are. They are treated like this (as marginal or inferior) on account of their being women.<sup>1</sup>

The very definition of democracy – (Gr. “demos” = people, “kratos” = power) as a form of government which proclaims the principle that power belongs to the people – may turn our eyes to a government which unconditionally reflects the will, needs, and aspiration of the entire

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Bucur, *Patriarhat și emancipare*, p. 14.

population. The representation of women in decisional fields is very low, and therefore the representational bases of democracy itself can be contested on account of the absence of feminine representation in leadership. True democracy means *self-determination*, but the contemporary forms of the world's great democracies do not seem to reflect this principle, as long as half of the population is not represented in leading domains. Politicians may say that they are elected by men and women alike, and that they equally represent both sides without discrimination. The problem is not on the level of a purportedly "egalitarian" discourse, but in the subtext with a wilfully protectionist touch. The problem lies in the fact that the woman is regarded as a second-rate citizen, protected by special laws together with children, the elderly, and the disabled. The difference and implicitly the differentiation appears at this level of public representation in which "the anonymous half" needs a master to lead her, as she is integrated into the category of "special needs".

The feminine self cannot be imposed only by her self, and this is something that men have decided; therefore the present type of democracy is *patriarchal democracy*, a formulation which is contradictory in itself, as society does not need a separate legislation for the powerful and a different one for the marginalized, textually disadvantaged in their physiological/genetic and social structure. The basic principle of democracy as an act of self-determination must be mirrored in the society. Women's self-determination can be constructed in a social-political way starting from the contesting of discriminative items which have as yet favoured the proliferation of patriarchy:

- the woman cannot be regarded merely as a human being in general, but as a category capable of leading and self-leading;
- the woman's rationality is a givenness in itself, her relation to ideas is similar to that of the man;
- women's consciousness, so much contested in patriarchal writings, which considered that only men have access to the highest form of psychic reflection of human reality understood as a man's reality is a proven fact, but the prejudice persists nevertheless;
- self-consciousness as the reflection of one's own physical, psychic, and social existence in the consciousness of the human being is also an attribute of the feminine being who knows herself within the framework of social relations and defines herself as a personality in her relations with other people;

- women's corporeality should not be regarded merely as an inferior step as compared to the masculine standard. Women's corporeality is not an undetermined, general structure packed only with vices and diseases, and it must not be considered inferior only because it has been described in time as a counter-example of force, virility, and the heroism of the masculine body;
- feminine intelligence, ridiculed and eliminated much too long, seems now to be sharper than masculine intelligence, the IQ of the female population exceeding the IQ of male population. The argument of this difference is the deficiencies of intelligence tests, which are not infallible, however, as they rely too much on the linguistic side of the personality, on communication, assimilation, reproduction, and logical-mathematical applicative operations, those fields, that is, in which only men excelled until recently, praising the gift of intelligence as exclusively belonging to them.

Social and political self-determination must be a real instrument of women's emancipation; in other words, women's emancipation cannot happen without social and political self-determination. The emergence from pseudo-democracy and anonymity is a great request of feminism. The protectionist mask must be thrown away, as there is insufficient evidence and ontological arguments that would support the woman's political neutrality, as democracy cannot be attained in a society of irresponsible people.

Difference as a mark in which the feminine side differs from the concept of masculinity can be analyzed on the level of belonging as a category to representative discrimination. The fundamental difference or façade of these categories were structured in four main points, reflecting differentiation as an immediate and necessary structure of focalization:

- a) Difference of sex. The proportion of the country's female population and its representatives in leadership is relevant for stating the parity of discrimination;
- b) The difference in opinion as a result of educational and cultural policy in which the opinion belongs to the man who forms the opinion at the same time, as a favoured target for the sources of opinion, and as the individual who exposes opinion and makes it credible, willingly neutralizing the opinion in the shadow (woman's opinion);

- c) Difference of perspective. If the problem of existence is only one-sidedly explored, the worldview becomes deformed, overgeneralized and overconceptualized as true, and unquestionably universally compatible;
- d) Difference in interests. As men do not welcome women as their associates in leadership, and evidently will not give up their power for women, the interest in eliminating the competitive “half”, becoming indeed more and more competitive, is obvious.

The lack of political opinion as a result of pseudo-information may be regarded as a social deficiency when the majority population is in an elective leeway, when non-values gain the meaning of plus-values. The inexistence of positive feminine political models (the Elena Ceaușescu syndrome still persists, but there is no Nicolae Ceaușescu syndrome for lack of competence) and the failures of politics as the engine for social welfare produces a general indolence which generates nothing else than an even greater crisis of political identity. It is thought that if the well informed models, experienced in leadership, keep proving their insufficiency, then feminine alterity would be indeed the top of incompetence in political power.

However, the chaos of power is very well designed, and apolitizing is a secure weapon of electoral control: today's promise remaining unapplied in tomorrow's practice creates a “herd” of undecided men and especially women who exercise their freedom of choice in the most extreme ignorance of the matter. The mass of indifferent conformist women generates a human capital for the development of models with an ability for imagination: “The indifferent are not so useless in politics – if they are rewarded for their *services* or they are placed under pressure”.<sup>1</sup> Pressure is the most usual form of manipulation of women. In the society, the services and domains dominated by women (education is the best example for this case) are neglected as being socially and politically inoffensive. Their protests, although existent, do not result in blockages too relevant for the economy of political capital; they do not block railways, roads, do not vandalize a capital city, thus their demands can easily be done with.

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<sup>1</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Cunoaștere și comunicare* (Cognition and communication), Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1983, p. 69.

The increase of the number of women in politics in top positions has an important symbolic impact, since neither women nor men would consider politics a “masculine territory” any longer.

Having an ungrateful and hesitating status in political discourse, the private space is the place where discrimination is indeed at home. The different (the woman) finds her place in the woman’s quarters, governing over pots, dishcloths, children, and silence, violated always by he who is apparently “meant” to offer protection to her. The unsanctioned, dictatorial masculine difference with veto over any decision finds itself in the status of a *leader*. The legislation against forms of discrimination cannot be implemented in the absence of political will, while the forms of discrimination are spreading everywhere.

The cooperation of beings seems impossible. Social and political identities are only found in leaders’ positions.

The problem of equal representation is posed in the West as a reflection of the militant feminist trend. The evident social-political discrimination is seen sometimes as a compulsion of identity which tends towards a certain narcissism of minorities (feminist movements included). However, there are situations in which we must still take on a number of political responsibilities which impose solidarity with those who fight against gender discrimination and in order to determine the recognition of a threatened identity, marginal, minority, and illegitimate. Demands must be undertaken where discrimination appears.

A law of equality which would eliminate an already extensively existing and intolerable fact – the under-representation of women in politics – is a first-hand necessity. It cannot be merely theoretical and speculative, but it must concrete and effective. However, the law of equality could also be a form of positive discrimination, as the women’s fight for power cannot be assisted in its progress only by imposing certain shares of participation, undeserved, and sanctioned by the moral court of law of a people.

Politics is a value, it is a well defined system of norms and traditions, but certain sociologists and statistics professionals always make reference to the argument of credibility in approaching a subject as delicate as the possibility of women’s massive representation in politics: the feminization of a profession would be the sign of its depreciation. It is attempted thus to extend patriarchal practices and gradually introduce feminine identities in politics most often for fear of not producing a political shock by the woman’s real representation. The communist

regime applied this system of shares, but there was no real decisional power there, so numeric representation was only for surface, and not effectively.

## **9. Social homeorhesis**

As a law of development referring to progressive balancing and re-balancing, social-political *homeorhesis* is a necessity of the emancipation of feminine difference. Although it may appear as a forced image of the social and political, this approach is in fact the reflection of the identity crisis which has overcome both social competitors.

### **The androgynous social-political pattern**

The basic model of society is the one which has been claimed since classical Antiquity to be the culmination of the *leading being*. The powerful, and at the same time artistically sensitive man, combining the useful with the pleasant and his need for freedom, created the exhaustive pattern of human existence. Human perfection is understood as a harmonious, qualitative, and at the same time quantitative veiling of the principles of the two sexes. Naturally, it can be observed in the terminology that the masculine, leading, forceful and rational side is the superior element of this ideal being, and the feminine side, albeit organic, is an adjacent, secondary part. This is what outlines the *ideal existence* as an eloquent example of pseudo-duality. However, the pattern was functional, and, what is more, it also constructed for itself a system of convening norms: the development of a scheme of an ideal complexion as a pattern, of a self-declaring and self-containing reason, generally recognized and accepted as a universal standard... This form of life had to be completed with something else, passionate and irrational perhaps, and somewhat sensitive, so that the possible failures may find their rational explanation in the small part of weakness taken from *the other human half*.

The man with certain feminine looks (and not the perfect man, as the texts seem to suggest) has always represented the model which applied difference and discrimination, because, as an old ethical principle claims, "Who is not with us, is against us". What was differentiated, and implicitly different, was the adversary, the obscurity and the inferior part of this inseparable human dichotomy. This confusing, egoist being was declared a HUMAN. The woman, maybe only half human, as a two-legged, speaking being, deprived of reason, which is an exclusive characteristic of the masculine side (!) was ranked as a second-rate partner, only useful as an incubator for the descendents of the man.

This is a portrait, a perspective of the masculine being and its characteristics as it has been viewed until now; and the unique responsible and critical being, surviving any hardships and in any environment. This is the character who dominated human civilization, constructed a culture which hails his qualities, and lately sees himself threatened by the *difference* which contests his authority and the singularity of true existence.

**The gynandrous social-political pattern**

There have always been leader women who were generally called “manly women”, because of the prejudice that only the masculine self is capable to create imposing models. Today, when this fact of feminine emancipation appears more and more often, the expression of the masculinization of woman is also used more often, as if power would only be the privilege of men. The attempt to increase men’s self-esteem is apparent, although already evidently megalomaniac as it is. A parallel power pattern is being constructed now, just as viable, but obviously respecting the original pattern: the properly masculine qualities as borrowed elements of a new physical, psychic, moral and behavioural form which, although ignored, blamed, and inferior, still seems to exist. The androgynous power pattern, already obsolete, no longer finds its place in an ever more matriarchal, feminized society. The new pattern seems ever easier to use, especially because it is not too “trendy” nowadays not to join women’s fight for self-determination. Certain social genes are implanted thus, considered competitive, normal, and normative, which coagulate this fresh and unpredictable mixture. Always the same essence transplanted into different forms. The correction can only be made on mentality level in order to eliminate the masculine model from social practice and common thinking as a standard of existence and moral perfection. The existence of certain particular structures of being, of the particularity of existence as a differentiated structure, is obvious and undoubted.

Gynandrisms has a special individuality. It detaches itself from the average woman as she was known during history by the attachment of specifically masculine characteristics. As in the construction of the androgynous model, the organic adherence of certain personality elements is used, which would replace or complete women’s inefficiency and weakness. While initially in the construction of the human being certain qualities and defects were taken over arbitrarily attributed to the feminine nature, also now, just as arbitrarily, elements are used for the

construction of the new human being which are considered characteristic for a certain gender.

The gynandrous and the androgynous are placed within a new social-political competitive environment, in which each side fights for the primary place. Therefore the fight can be somewhat controlled now. In the past the androgynous individual controlled all the branches of society by itself, without caring for external competition.

However, the gynandrous woman is being seen as a particular gender, socially visible and politically able, but still a “manly woman”.

As we have seen earlier, the human being is understood as a mixture of characters specific for one or the other of the genders. Their alteration and alternation is only textual and apparent, because, if this difference exists, it is only visible and specific in its representative unity. The beings create the diversity, but the being has a pure character, without borrowed forms and image collages. What has been debated for so long as representing qualities or defects of one of the sexes are now seen as eliminated and transgressed by a new existential dimension: that of their clear separation into independent individuals, with an identical ontological status. The qualitative discrimination of reason, morality, or feminine corporeality cannot find its place in the present formulas of existential debates except as clear forms of the incomprehension of existential problems.

### **Conclusions**

Difference and discrimination, as discussed in private, as well as public space, are inscribed into a real discourse of power. Women's corporeality and reason are usually treated disjunctively; as the “strong sex” is connected to creation, it was presupposed that procreation would be the main characteristic of the “weak sex”. Thus difference dictates discrimination, and the private space is the social nucleus of the manifestations of discriminative actions, while the public space fully absorbs the manifestations of power relations in the family. The woman's social status is primarily influenced by her purportedly minor role in the family. The distortion of values causes the subordination of the life-giving entity, as she is only perceived as an incubator ensuring the perpetuation of society. Until not very long ago she had no power to choose; in couple relationships she was the chosen or promised one, being depreciated as an individual, who passed from under her father's tutelage to under her husband's or some other tutor's. The title of “queen

of the home” was not mirrored in reality, as the woman “ruled” among pots, pans, children, and household work.

As an ample problem of approach, women’s social and political discrimination has attained an alarming degree, but the copying of the feminine model of body perception by men is also prefigured, who see this as an extremely harmful example for the male sex. Women’s problems appear visible and truly important only if looked at from different perspectives. Nevertheless, anti-feminism is seen as the saving of society (a society which does not need notable changes), because emancipated women are perceived as the destabilizers of a healthy structure, well represented by those who only wish the best for women. Feminine identity wants to be discovered and put to good use on a social and political level in order to be able to pass on to a woman’s culture in which the woman may express herself, completing the field of debate of postmodern feminist culture which deconstruct patriarchy as a unique carrier of power and truth.

The equal representation during communism only raises repulsion now; naturally, it was an artificial system of representing the proportion of the members of society. In post-communism those hypocrite structures for marking power were eliminated, but they still persist in collective mentality in the Elena Ceaușescu syndrome. The Nicolae Ceaușescu syndrome exists neither among the electors, nor among those elected. However, women’s participation to political life is now also falsely encouraged by the stipulations of the European Union, decreeing the compulsory presence of women in organizational and leading structures. Although artificial constructs, the laws seem to oblige and even form in time healthier mentalities which allow not only the theoretical, but also practical equality and representation of women in public life and in the private space.

Translated by Emese G. Czintos