

# Helena Hrehová

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## The Role of Women in the Development of Human Rights

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**Helena Hrehová**

University of Trnava, Slovak Republic

# The Role of Women in the Development of Human Rights

**Abstract:** This paper reflects upon the task of women in the context of the development of human rights. Human rights are depicted as something that is recognized personally. Since women have felt injustice for centuries, they constantly sought to solve this ethical problem by referring to the biblical, anthropological, philosophical, historical, and legal context. Even in our times the inequality is still evident in the field of human rights; however, not so *de iure* as in practice. Equality and human rights are for all. Inequality is embarrassing. Contemporary phase in the development of human rights, which includes massive gender ideology, rights of LGBT people, and practices of juvenile justice, becomes dangerous not only for women and men, but for children and families as well. Wide-spread construction of gender theories comes shoulder to shoulder with an ambivalent effect, which includes dismemberment of society, losing personal identity, disintegration of families, incomprehension of the institute of marriage and thus leads to the dominance of minorities. European society loses rationality, which is substituted by manipulation.

**Keywords:** woman, woman identity, human rights, history, development, gender theory

## Introduction

The completeness of humanity consists of two halves: one of the woman, the other of the man. A contemplation dedicated to the role that women had in the development of human rights, in a historical context, is not possible without answering the following questions: Who is man? What is man's condition in this world? What are the natural human rights?

A right, from the point of view of philosophy, ethics, and theology, is a given person's prerogative to realize his or her authentic mission. This right is

believed to be good, which in turn, creates an obligation to respect it. Sometimes it is the reason that necessitates the synergy of the good and the right. All people have an inherent right to life and, at the same time, the right to the basic necessities related to their existence. One can learn about this right from the two following levels of human contemplation, that is, the biblical and the philosophical-anthropological. The first level is creationist; it considers man to be created a rational being called into life by creative energy—activity of the Creator, the substance of which is inventive love (*amor ingeniosus*). The Bible holds the keys to the book of the world (*Liber Mundi*), from which we learn that the man is the one created in God's image (*imago Dei*). This image is materialized in the human body, which St. John Paul II characterized by means of the following words: "The body, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine."<sup>1</sup> The creative act, that is, the phrase "God created" is reiterated in the Book of Genesis and crowned with the following phrase: "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27). This biblical information is of paramount importance for people, since it accentuates the human dignity of a man and a woman. A French orthodox theologian and publicist Olivier Clément (1921–2009) in his essays on the reality of creation emphasized the fact that "for Israel the God's word is a source of every reality, not only the existential and historical, but also the cosmic one."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, it is impossible to find in the Book of Genesis detailed information concerning the character of the God-Creator. We, the people, know him only through his manifestations of loyalty, carefulness, responsibility, and love. The God's mystery is gradually revealed through personal experience.

The latter philosophical-anthropological level aims to grasp a man rationally, as a person interwoven in an existential horizon of history. People of all times are forever seeking the sense of proper existence in the world, and thus they develop personal knowledge and keep systematizing it. Besides, they never cease from asking about the origin of things and they would like to know who is he that surpasses them and also who they really are for themselves. The historical context convinces us that people were endowed with intellect and free will. Intellect enables the human to think, to value, and to define, whereas the free will opens a variability of possibilities. From the biblical-philosophical reflections it follows that these gifts should enhance gratefulness and responsibility.

In the plurality of possibilities, as the human intellect and will are not perfect, the following, inadequate wish and pretension is likely to appear: "to be like God," "to be more than others." It is always the inadequateness of human

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<sup>1</sup> John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body*, 49, accessed 30.09.2015, [http://www.catholicprimer.org/papal/theology\\_of\\_the\\_body.pdf](http://www.catholicprimer.org/papal/theology_of_the_body.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Olivier Clément, *Il senso della terra. Il creato nella visione cristiana* (Roma: Edizioni Lipa, 2007), 10.

wishes and pretensions which allows a predominance of ones over the others. God, at the dawn of history, purposefully expressed his fear: “The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and live, and eat forever” (Gen 3:22). And yet it happened. He took advantage of his own liberty and did what he deemed to be proper. The result of this willfulness was disillusionment and a sense of guilt. Adam, who admired his wife Eve before (cf. Gen 2:23), accused her of disobedience, and thus broke their reciprocal act of confidence. On the other hand, Eve tried to pin the blame on the serpent and thus she broke the harmony with nature. Eventually, the chain of accuses culminated in the act of fratricide of Cain (cf. Gen 4:3–9). Based on of the above-mentioned facts and human experience, one can presume that every rebellion against God triggers disorder, also in the relations between human beings. At first, an evil idea is born. If it is not expelled from our minds, it will take root in our heart and manifest itself in our external acts. The imperfect human intellect, as well as will and freedom need to have order, which can be stabilized by means of norms, laws, and rights, which, in turn, are capable of coordinating human relations in both the horizontal (man–man) and the vertical level (man–God). These efforts have been manifested since the ancient times (taboo, myths, epics, antique philosophy, and the oldest codes of law). It is true that all people are born free and equal, but in the past this fact was unknown to a great many of them.

They allowed other people to humiliate them and treat them as slaves, serfs, and servants. Such a situation allowed those, who proclaimed to have power over the others, to do injustice. This superiority shows that people are fragile, and that pride combined with power and force produces evil. Here lie the roots of the senseless superiority of men over women, the outcome of their corporal prestige and political power. Nevertheless, it is not possible to value negatively the human body, gender differences, senses, nature, the Earth, and even the efforts put into achieving social order. I purposefully refer to these, because they were often indicated as the causes of temptations. St. Paul in his Letter to the Galatians writes: “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently [...]. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load” (Gal 6:1–5). People have a responsibility towards one another. It should not be imposed by the Law, but inspired by a responsible love. According to the patriarchal model of ancient law codices, as well as the Greek philosophy, women had barely any rights. According to Plato, there was a distinction between the nature of man and woman: “‘And isn’t there a very great difference in nature between man and woman?’ Yes, surely. ‘Does not that natural difference imply

a corresponding difference in the work to be given to each?”<sup>3</sup> “Natural gifts are to be found here and there in both creatures alike; and every occupation is open to both, so far as their natures are concerned, though woman is for all purposes weaker.”<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the political-societal power in the Greek polis was a space entrusted to men and for that reason all structures were adapted to give men power over the justice system.

## Natural Rights and Position of Women in the History

The Book of Genesis (Gen 1:27) confirms that a woman is an equal being to a man. She has the same personal rights; however, in the past those had been neglected for a long time. Therefore a question arises: what and who justified the decision to make woman a subordinate person? What kind of authority allowed men to do so? Peccant structures and the power that reflected a lack of understanding of the God’s designs constitute the only reasonable explanation. For that reason, the gender inequality between men and women in the human culture remains a scandalous reality.

It is considered to be gender discrimination, therefore, a negative phenomenon, which causes a serious ethic problem. Sex (gender) in this sense is “[...] a social construction, to which the attributed and expected social tasks, behavior, prejudices, stereotypes, estimations, and self-estimations are related [...]”<sup>5</sup>

Ancient civilizations, cultures, and the Old Testament demonstrate, through documentation, that these trends have been present almost from the very beginning and were transmitted to the New Testament. However, based on Jesus’s behavior it is not possible to deduce whether he made differences between men and women. On the contrary, Jesus defended women a number of times, as the gospels say, for example, Jesus and the adulteress (cf. John 1–10), healing of Peter’s mother-in-law (cf. Mt 8:14–15; Mk 1:30), a woman suffering from hemorrhage (cf. Mt 9:20–22, Mk 5:25–34), resurrection of Jairus’s daughter (cf. Mt 9:25; Mk 5, 41), appreciation of the woman’s faith (cf. Mt 15:28), the widow of Naim (cf. Lk 7:13), Jesus, asked by the Pharisees whether it is lawful to put away a wife answers, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning” (cf. Mt 19:8). Among Jesus’s friends were not only the Apostles and Lazarus, but also Mary, Martha

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *The Republic of Plato*, trans. with introduction and notes by Francis MacDonald Cornford (Oxford: OUP, 1945), 150, 453b.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 153; 455b.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. J. Cviková, J. Debrecéniová, and L. Kobová, *Rodová rovnosť* (Bratislava: Občan a demokracia, 2007), 6.

of Betany, and Mary Magdalene (cf. Lk 10:38–42; Jn 12:1–8; Jn 19:25–26; Jn 20:11–18). The first people Jesus shows himself to, after his Resurrection, are Mary Magdalene (cf. Mk 16,9; Lk 24:1–10; Jn 20, 1; Jn 20:11 18) and the devoted women (cf. Mt 28:9–10). The choice of the apostolic vocation (cf. Mt 8:18–22), made by Jesus, was probably based on the arduousness of the future mission of the twelve (cf. Lk 6:12–16). Sending them all over the world was confirmed by means of the following words: “Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (cf. Mt 8:20). The difficulties and, first and foremost, the uncertain conditions could be very dangerous for women.

Jesus lived in a Judaic background, he knew the patriarchal mentality; nevertheless, his delicate comportment towards women was more than evident. He did not underestimate women, he received their service. The difference between Jesus and other men, who went down in history, is that Jesus thoroughly respected the God’s Law and the Law identified with the truth: “I am the way and the truth and the life” (cf. Jn 14:6). The reason why men do not behave in accordance with the truth, law, and justice, stems from the unjust structures and their desire for power and supremacy. These allusions are also evident in St. Paul’s words concerning the order during the liturgical assemblies: “But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3). In another part he writes: “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church” (1 Cor 14:34–35).

The ancient mentality only recognized the rights of a woman–mother. This status results from the fact that in the political, social, and religious context, throughout centuries, the men’s word carried more weight, which was also manifested in the formation of laws and norms. In accordance with this trend, regarding women, it was assumed that they should not be well-educated, particularly in the field of philosophy, law, theology, and medicine. Women-philosophers appeared as late as in the 20th century, similarly as women-lawyers and women-doctors, who appeared a little earlier. The right to study theology was given to women only after the Second Vatican Council. The first Doctors of the Church (St. Therese of Avila and St. Catherine of Siena) were also proclaimed by Pope Paul VI only after the Second Vatican Council.

Nowadays, such discrimination *de iure* is prohibited, but in practice it is permanently present. It manifests itself in the discrimination connected with unequal salaries for the same work, in domestic violence, in underestimating women in scientific activities and also in efforts undertaken with a view to fossilizing the so-called traditional roles.

## Participation of Women in the Development of Human Rights

Right are moral principles that are recognized personally. It becomes more evident when applied in a broader context. Where there are no rights, the truth is absent as well, and the problem eventually shows itself in the right light. However, hard and fast rules with rigid sanctions are not sufficient. Rights can be defined with regards to people's awareness of what is considered as proper and worthy of respect. Due to the fact that women in history did not have equal rights the situation made them overcome countless obstacles, which has certainly strengthened their character as well. In consequence, women are believed to be more persistent, more patient, and more hardworking; they are said to be able to withstand more pain.

The prototype of woman's dignity in the *New Testament* is Mary, the Mother of God, a woman full of grace (*gratia plena*). In the entire human history there were also saint women and mothers who did not pursue (likewise Mary) social appreciation. Among those was the heroic figure of antiquity—Antigone, who acted according to her conscience; women of the first centuries, who died the death of a martyr out of their love to Christ (St. Agnes, St. Cecilia, St. Agatha, St. Lucia), or the Roman empress St. Helen (225–330); the wife of Emperor Constantius Chlorus (250–306), and the mother of Constantine the Great (275–357). The latter one, owing to her real power wedded with sanctity and ambitions, contributed to the spreading of Christianity.<sup>6</sup> Hence the bishop of Milan St. Ambrose (340–397) spoke about her with great respect and praised her behavior. St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, deserves recognition for her faith and exemplary care. Pope Gregory the Great (540–604), during his pontificate looked at women with great clemency based on the respect toward Mary, the Mother of God. Several centuries later, St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) expressed his belief that both Adam and Eve were equally responsible for the fall of man. In this context, Troung's opinion is very interesting: "If God would like to superordinate the woman, he would create her of Adam's head, and if He would like to make her as the lower creature, he would create her of man's feet. Yet he created her from the middle part of his body in order to outline that they are equal."<sup>7</sup>

There is abundant medieval literature that informs us about activities undertaken by women. However, such literature includes information mostly about women of higher societal order (monarchic and aristocratic), owing to chronicles and personal correspondence. Examples of this are St. Agnes of Prague (1211–

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Legenda Aurea of Giacobe Varagine* (13th century).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. J. G. N. Troung, *Tělo ve středověké kultúře*, 1. vyd. (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2006), 13.

1282), St. Elizabeth of Ugrian (1207–1231), St. Hedwig Polish (1373/1374–1399), or women of devoted religious life: St. Clare of Assisi (1194–1253), St. Catherine of Siena (1347–1380), in the period of Renaissance St. Teresa the Great (1515–1582), St. Giacinta Marescotti (1585–1640).

Nevertheless, the sin and subordination of women had been stressed for many centuries. Also the responsibility for infertile matrimones rested exclusively with women, whereas adultery on the part of men was always tolerated. Medieval law even acknowledged legitimacy of illegitimate children; illegitimate origin of candidates for priesthood was not an obstacle, though the right to inherit was denied to widows. Man had the right to educate his wife and he could resort to physical punishment.

Even at the end of the 15th century Christian courts rejected applications for matrimonial separation put down to torment and whipping. As we can see, the medieval criminal law provided women with a limited possibility of defending their honor. A position of a woman depended on the opinion of her father or husband. Simultaneously, we cannot say that there were not any happy marriages; however, such was the case only when a husband gave freedom to his wife.

Monasteries were guarantees of certain legal freedoms in medieval and also in modern times. Candidates for religious life were provided with basic spiritual education, possibility of self-realization in charitable activities by taking care of the sick, and also in education (orphanages). This was practically the only way to avoid subordination to men, though sometimes women were forced to lead monastic life with a view to avoiding the partition of property.

In the 15th century an educated Italian woman (married in France) expressed her opinion on the traditional view of women with a certain degree of courage. Since she was a widow she earned her living from transcription of texts and writing, she could respond to the satiric work entitled *Novel about the Rose*, which described the relation between men and women. Women were presented there in a bad light. As an opponent of the traditional view, she wrote a book entitled *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405), in which she reached three important conclusions:

1. Woman's soul is of equal value to man's soul.
2. Female body is equally perfect to the male body.
3. Women are also capable of governing.

In the times of the Hussite expansion in Bohemia, Ján Hus (1369–1415) also agreed that the status of man and woman before God is coequal, since women have also understood the words of the Scripture. In the 16th century great discussions were held, which focused on the connection women had with witchery. Men tried to prove that women, since they are the weaker gender, are to a larger extent than men prone to yield to devil.

The polemics concerning women was intensified owing to the naturalistic theory of Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), who promoted the idea, which



assumed that “the attractions of home life present the best antidote to bad morals.”<sup>8</sup> However, the philosopher argued that according to the natural order all people are mutually equal to one another and their common calling is to be a human being. Before a profession is instilled into anyone by their parents, he or she is called to the human life by the nature. The differences between people are exclusively historical.<sup>9</sup> As it was mentioned by Paul Johnson “In particular he wanted smiles of society women.”<sup>10</sup> He depreciated his mistress, who stayed with him till his death, he made jokes at her expense in society, though he misused her care, primarily he was a self-centered man and “did not even note the dates of the births of his five children and never took any interest in what happened to them, except once in 1761, when he believed Thérèse was dying and made a perfunctory attempt, soon discontinued, to use the cypher to discover the whereabouts of the first child.”<sup>11</sup>

Attempts made by women to become involved in the development of human rights were more intensively visible after the French Revolution, which—owing to its program slogan: *Freedom, Equality, and Fraternity*—woke up in women the desire to participate in the public life more actively. Article 1 of the *Human Rights Declaration* from 1789 states that: “People in all their born days are free and in their rights equal to each other. Social differences are eligible just in case of common good.” Seeing the huge injustice in the society, October 5 the French women left the Paris Suburb of San Antoine for Versailles to ask the king to give them bread and grain for their families. Thousands of men joined them and they together plundered the king’s granaries. Olympe de Gouges used the revolutionary situation and together with other women submitted their List of Requests to Constituent Assembly. Moreover, they founded two societies: the Sisterly Society and the Society of Revolutionary Women. Among their requests there was one which concerned the legal system, namely, women’s right to be a party to legal proceedings, as well as the right to an attorney. Naturally, the male revolutionists, who did not show a great tolerance towards women, considered their requests irrelevant. The Procurator of the Commune of Paris Pierre Gaspard Chaumette (1763–1794) proclaimed that women are a “shame of nature.” Chaumette supported terror, showed strict anti-Catholicism, and since 1792 he was to blame for all the executions. Finally, the long arm of the law reached also him, which led to his execution in March 1794.

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emil alebo o výchove*, 2 vyd. (Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ, 2002), 18. *Émile—Or, Concerning Education*. A Project Gutenberg book, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/30433/30433-h/30433-h.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Paul Johnson, “Jean-Jacques Rousseau: ‘An Interesting Madman,’” in *Intellectuals* (HarperCollins e-books), 11, [www.thedivineconspiracy.org/Z5260P.pdf](http://www.thedivineconspiracy.org/Z5260P.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

Even in the 19th century the French philosopher and sociologist August Comte (1798–1857) considered women unable of undertaking such intellectual activity as men. Despite this the patriarchal perception began to gradually diminish. The English defender of freedom and supporter of liberalism John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) contributed to this trend. In his essay entitled “The Subjection of Women,” he made an attempt to argue that the principle of a legal subordination of one gender to another is in itself bad. He considered it to be the obstacle to human development, which should be replaced with the principle of the true equality. Mill further argued that the principle of justice required that in all spheres of the social and political life women should have the same rights as men. According to Mill there are two opinions to support it:

In the first place, the opinion in favour of the present system, which entirely subordinates the weaker sex to the stronger, rests upon theory only; for there never has been trial made of any other: so that experience, in the sense in which it is vulgarly opposed to theory, cannot be pretended to have pronounced any verdict. And in the second place, the adoption of this system of inequality never was the result of deliberation, or forethought, or any social ideas, or any notion whatever of what conduced to the benefit of humanity or the good order of society. It arose simply from the fact that from the very earliest twilight of human society, every woman owing to the value attached to her by men, combined with her inferiority in muscular strength, was found in a state of bondage to some man.<sup>12</sup>

Deeper in the book we find an even harder reproach: “Men do not want solely the obedience of women, they want their sentiments. All men, except the most brutish, desire to have, in the woman most nearly connected with them, not a forced slave but a willing one, not a slave merely, but a favourite. They have therefore put everything in practice to enslave their minds.”<sup>13</sup> Mill also provided examples from history: “But it is quite certain that a woman can be a Queen Elizabeth, or a Deborah, or a Joan of Arc, since this is not inference, but fact. Now it is a curious consideration that the only things which the existing law excludes women from doing, are the things which they have proved that they are able to do.”<sup>14</sup> According to the philosopher, women in the 19th century proved to have influenced “most marked features of the modern European life—its aversion to war and its addiction to philanthropy.”<sup>15</sup>

The German environment of the 19th century saw the birth of very unfavorable attitudes towards women, opposite to the positively tuned English law. The

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women*, <http://www.constitution.org/jsm/women.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

radical German philosopher, critic of everything that was Christian, nihilist, antifeminist, and a promoter of the will to power, Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), considered feminism to be the “nastiest progress” in the European history. In the morals of men, which he presented in his work entitled *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), there was no place for a physically weaker gender.

Another extreme belief was presented by one of the founders of the German Social-Democratic Party and the Second International, August Bebel (1840–1913), who wanted to replace the undignified position of women in family with a free relationship. This opinion, which bore a tone of Marxism, was hardly thinkable, since the independence of women is one case and the responsibility of fathers another.

Since the mid-19th century women have developed their initiatives in central Europe chiefly by means of founding women’s singsong groups, acting and tutorial classes. The process of dividing the so-called natural traditional roles continually weakened along with the development of industry. Together with the working activities of women, their legal claims for higher education have increased. The First World War expunged the remnants of the last objections raised against the working activities undertaken by women. They proved that, due to the deficiency of labor force connected with the military operations, they are able—if necessary—to carry out also men’s work. Therefore, after the First World War social democrats included four important points in their political program: emancipation of women, better access of women to education, membership of women in trade unions, electoral law for women.

This progress has increased the legal awareness of women. They started to enroll at universities for almost all fields of study. Famous in this context is Madame Marie Curie-Skłodowska (1867–1934), the first woman who not only accomplished the study of physics and chemistry at the Sorbonne University in Paris, but also was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics and chemistry in 1911. Edith Stein (1891–1942), the first female philosopher and Carmelite, who participated in the development of phenomenology and eventually died in a gas-chamber of the concentration camp in Auschwitz, constitutes yet another good example. Today Edith Stein is a canonized saint. Among the important women of the 20th century is also the blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910–1997), the founder of the Missionaries of Charity and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, awarded for her lifelong humanitarian activity and love towards the poorest of the poor.

## The Need of Fair Equality of Rights and the Mentality of Gender Ideology

In present times there are many institutions, associations, organizations, as well as laws, whose role is to make sure gender discrimination does not exist. However, parallel to these external laws there are also internal laws, the so-called unwritten laws that allow for differences, for instance, in remuneration for the same work, in the division of housework, in education, as well as in traditional prejudices. Today we also encounter opinions, which assume that men are more courageous, and thus they can take more risks, they are more mobile and there is no danger that they will take maternity leave, therefore men are given priority in job interviews. The equality of men and women is constantly discussed, but the discrimination is still visible and probably unsolvable.

Our summary shows the need of increased empathy in the contemporary society. However, there is a pressing need to apply precise methodology, a specific program, or a long-term project, which could eliminate the contradictions that polarize relationships and the negative extremity, not only by means of words and legal theories, but also in practice.

For many centuries only two genders and two sexes, men and women, had been a topic of debates. Since 1995, a discourse, which promoted a bigger number of genders (man, woman, and today also neuter), has become more and more popular in the European Union. Gender neuter ensures that people can decide freely who they want to be in their lives (gays, lesbians, heterosexuals, transsexuals, transvestites, cross dressings, etc.). Efforts are undertaken to spread this social variability without paying attention to the fact that the gender diversity is not a social or cultural reality, but rather a natural one. Sex and gender have nothing to do with possibilities, but they are connected with the givens. The above-mentioned gender identities and their reliance on the law are rightly confusing and cause many problems (many of these people are renounced by their own families; others lose their jobs, friends, etc.).

The European Parliament gives green light to gender pluralism and aims at making the observance of such pluralism obligatory. In some countries gay marriages, laws regarding the inheritance of common property, the adoption of children by homosexual couples are part of everyday life. However, we too rarely emphasize the fact that mother, father, and family are irreplaceable by anyone or anything. Regarding the artificially forced laws—parent one and parent two—we already have the first victims. On May 22, 2013, a famous French historian and essayist Dominique Venner (1935–2013) shot himself in Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris in protest at homosexual marriages.

A wide range of gender brings an ambivalent effect: the loss of identity and the birth of a new, very dangerous ideology. Consequently, the laws gov-

erning family and the institution of marriage itself—as a bond of a man and a woman—are weakened. For a reasonable person the conclusion seems obvious. Owing to the gender ideology the developed part of the world begins its process of decomposition.

The fact that the society is divided constitutes a significant problem. This division permits: dominance of a minority view, a massive absolutism of the requests of minorities and their progressive implementation into the legislation of the European Union member states. The problem is that contemporary people adopt new legislation without thinking what it will bring in the future. They live in some sort of spiritual lethargy and they forget that the investment into faith, trust, love, and relationships is worth, no matter how much patience it requires. Reasonableness spontaneously disappears from the European tradition and it is replaced with manipulation. This fact is worrisome, especially when we take into consideration the following two questions: Will at least one culture that appreciates family survive? Who and what will guarantee that the European women do not lose their legal achievements for which they have fought for centuries? What should be done in practice to create a more righteous structure, which would take into consideration not only the relational gender equality between men and women, but also normativeness, which would respect the dignity of every person? First of all, we need the courage to move from a personal act to a moral act going through stages, which will more widely resemble love, fraternity, solidarity, regardless of whether it is a male or a female, a relative, a neighbor, or a totally unknown person.

There is not only a very important program, which contains meaningful values, but also thematic openness and objectivity about what we really want. This program assumes that the real aims should dominate, which would not exclude anyone from the human community and, at the same time, would be good for everyone. If we do not begin from this program, we will miss the goal of all theories, which will finally turn out to be useless. The contemporary world does not need any new theories and documents, these are already in abundance. The world today needs methodology, which would tell it how to live the real fraternity and community in practice, as well as regain the dignity.

All people are entitled to equality and justice, but not all are capable of accepting this fundamental principle. Some men perceive the equality between men and women indifferently, some are bothered; others are open-minded towards the pluralistic gender variability, which dissolves the person's identity. To make sure that we realize our own freedom, we need to respect the freedom of others. Naturally, this is not the triumph of one over the other. It is the elimination of a sinful structure and a distribution, owing to an incorrect human ambition for power and control over others, as well as arrogance and vaunt, which is the fruit of an unhealthy policy and an unhealthy society. Both axle and change depend on the upbringing and education, aided by catechesis and

homilies. Homilies which people finally understand and during which by listening and thinking about what the Lord said and did are capable of noticing the beauty and wounds, the pleasure and sadness.

In order to realize our own freedom we need to respect the freedom of other people. Naturally, it is not about the triumph over one another, but about the elimination of sinful structures and divisions, which occur due to incorrect human ambitions for power and control over other people, as well as arrogance and vaunt, which are the fruit of an unhealthy policy and an unhealthy society. Improvement and change depends on the education in families and schools, courtesy of catechesis and homilies. The purpose is to help people finally understand what it means to obey the Lord, reflect upon what He said and what He did, and simultaneously look at his beauty and wounds, joy and sadness.

## Conclusion

José Ortega y Gasset purposefully remarked in his book entitled *The Revolt of the Masses* (original title *La rebelión de las masas*): “The function of commanding and obeying is the decisive one in every society. As long as there is any doubt as to who commands and who obeys, all the rest will be imperfect and ineffective. Even the very consciences of men—apart from special exceptions—will be disturbed and falsified.”<sup>16</sup>

In Europe, where we have lived immersed in the Christian tradition for two thousand years, we currently strive to achieve human and social rights that will be good for everyone. Last year we celebrated two significant events in the field of the human rights:

The seventeen hundred years ago the Edict of Milan (313), which touched upon toleration and included the right of Christians to freely practice their faith, was promulgated. Due to this act Constantine the Great spread Christianity into the center of Roman Empire and thus allowed the Church to expand. We also commemorated the 25th anniversary of the publication of St. John Paul II’s Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* [On the Dignity and Vocation of Women], in which the Supreme Pontiff deeply underlined the dignity of woman—mother in family and in marriage, virginity (*virginitas*), and the spiritual maternity of women, who chose this status for the kingdom of God. In both ways “the personality of a woman” can be realized in harmony with the demands of Gospel (comp. *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 20–21).

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses*, [http://archive.org/stream/Revolt\\_201304/revolt\\_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/Revolt_201304/revolt_djvu.txt).

In the area of equality within the relationship man–woman, much has changed over the centuries; however, absolute justice is clearly still not there. Still many people are unaware that this inequality brings shame on the humanity as a whole. This ignorance leads to incomprehension, which in turn means not respecting the intentions of God. It is a weakness, humiliation of the human face in its presence, disregarding the recommended mercy towards the weaker.

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Helena Hrehová

## Rôle des femmes dans le développement des droits de l'homme

### Résumé

L'objectif principal de l'article est d'analyser la contribution des femmes à la promotion des droits de l'homme. Les droits de l'homme étaient perçus depuis toujours comme quelque chose dont on fait la connaissance personnellement. Ayant éprouvé durant bien des siècles différentes formes d'injustices, les femmes ont pris le défi de définir convenablement leur place dans la société en se référant à l'argumentation biblique, anthropologico-philosophique et historico-juridique. Malheureusement, en ce qui concerne le respect des droits de l'homme, différentes formes d'inégalités sont aussi présentes dans les sociétés contemporaines. À l'étape actuelle du développement des droits essentiels apparaît une autre nouvelle idéologie qui devient dangereuse non seulement pour les hommes et les femmes, mais aussi pour la famille et les enfants. À ces éléments principaux appartiennent la théorie de genre, les droits des personnes LGBTI et le système de justices pour mineurs (juvenile justice system). Une nouvelle interprétation des droits de l'homme conduit entre autres aux divisions dans la société, à la perte de l'identité, aux troubles de l'institution du mariage et à la domination des minorités. Dans le différend d'aujourd'hui sur les soi-disant nouveaux droits de l'homme, différentes formes de manipulations remplacent de plus en plus souvent une argumentation rationnelle dans beaucoup de sociétés européennes.

Mots clés: femme, identité féminine, droits de l'homme, histoire, développement, théorie de genre

Helena Hrehová

## Il ruolo della donna nello sviluppo dei diritti umani

### Sommario

L'obiettivo principale di questo articolo è quello di analizzare la partecipazione della donna alla promozione dei diritti umani. Da sempre i diritti umani sono stati visti come qualcosa che conosciamo personalmente. Dopo aver subito diverse forme di ingiustizia per molti secoli, le donne hanno intrapreso la sfida di determinare propriamente il loro posto nella società, riferendosi ad argomentazioni di carattere biblico, antropologico-filosofico e storico-giuridico. Purtroppo, anche nelle società contemporanee, sono presenti diverse forme di disuguaglianza quando si tratta di diritti umani. In seno allo stadio attuale di sviluppo dei diritti fondamentali nasce un'altra nuova ideologia che diventa pericolosa non solo per donne e uomini, ma anche per famiglie e bambini. Fra i suoi elementi principali ci sono la teoria gender, i diritti delle persone LGBTI e il sistema di giustizia minorile (juvenile justice system). La nuova interpretazione dei diritti umani porta tra l'altro a divisioni nella società, alla perdita di identità, alla distruzione dell'istituzione del matrimonio e al dominio delle minoranze. Nell'odierna controversia sulla cosiddetta nuova legge dell'uomo, in molte società europee diverse forme di manipolazione sostituiscono sempre più spesso un'argomentazione razionale.

Parole chiave: donna, identità femminile, diritti dell'uomo, storia, sviluppo, teoria gender