

The feminine question as social inequality: a historical overview

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Abstract

In this work, I refer to many sources because this theme is complex, and it is useful to follow tracks already well used by other authors who ventured with these themes.

The gender report is a report on equality. No company will ever be expected to be right if it does not foresee inclusive actions rather than exclusionary.

The social constructions of the same company will have to contend with a reality of reference that embraces all the universes and respects the personal values. Everything, therefore, aimed at the growth of society as a non-arithmetic group of people who, with their history and their characteristics, increase the collective share capital.

Keywords: Person/Persons, gender equality, female issue, violences.[†]

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1. The feminine question as social inequality

First of all, it is necessary to mention a theme that underlies the same “female question”: social inequality. The difference in treatment represents it, today we would say a difference of opportunity, present in society on a social basis and with characteristics of injustice. For example, age, ethnicity, race, religious group, geographic area or gender. Social arenas are built around them socially. They are, therefore, social constructions as the result of sociocultural processes, artificially constructed, that put the individuals of a given category in a condition of inferiority, marginalisation and exclusion. To be given by the Industrial Revolution onwards, a vision of the social world more inclusive and awareness, by the excluded, more significant, has come. In Fact, the feminine consciousness, concerning itself and of the other sex, has made a historical path that equates to some conceptual firm points: subordination, parity, distinction, reciprocity.

At the first stage, that of subordination corresponds alleged inferiority of the woman on a social basis. The Protestant theologian Karl Barth wrote that throughout the Greek-Christian civilization, with regard to the relationship between man and woman, one has always witnessed a secular subordination of the functional type of woman, i.e. concerning the social roles of the two sexes.

A key to reading can mean that the best thought of the West has always recognised the substantive equality of men and women but has never given life to similar behavioural styles. Moreover, the conceptual equality man-woman was based on the Greek principle of the common rationality of all the men as aristotelically rational animals and the Christian principle of the anthropological triangulation spirit-mind-body. This, of course, does not exclude massive prejudices against the woman who make think more of a conception of the inferiority of principle than of true functional subordination.

Things do not change in the Christian era if it is true that women are recognized both the spirit and rationality while remaining strong prejudices of inferiority and the examples would be many as Tertullian and St. Thomas, just to name a few. Therefore, the woman to achieve certain legal equality had to first conquer a conceptual parity, that is, an equal anthropological identity in absolute with the man. This effort has been achieved through scientific knowledge that has gone to dispel the prejudices inherent in the classical age.

Indeed, it was believed that to generate was only the man and that the woman was the container; Science has shown the complementarity between man and woman. Also, paradoxically, it was believed that the woman was a man missed. The exact opposite is true: The man is a woman lacking because the biological *plafond* of the species is all feminine: all the embryos begin to develop as females, and only at the sixth week of gestation the fetuses begin their differentiation.

The feminine question as social inequality: a historical overview

The second phase, that of parity, bursts between the Nineteenth and the early Twentieth century, where the first feminism fights for an abstract and legal parity, risking to lose sight of the specific feminine identity. The fight for the Equality of civil rights (vote, treatment at work, childcare services...) saw its fruits in the West only after a century of struggles and at the end of the Second World War.

Already in the German ideology of the years '40 of the Nineteenth century peeps the demand for the emancipation of women working in industrial factories. Marx and Engels take a stand in favour of the workers who fight for the recognition of their rights. They support the thesis that the first division of labour is the one that exists between man and woman in the procreation of children. *"The main thoroughgoing for the liberalisation of women would be to support the struggles for the labour movement, aimed at overcoming the capitalist concept of private property, including the masculine concept of the woman's property. It is clear that the emancipation of women and their equal to man are and remain impossible until the woman is excluded from social and productive work and will remain confined to the scope of private domestic work. The emancipation will be possible only when the woman can participate in the productive work and the domestic one the commitments only in part"*.

During the Industrial Revolution and the formation of the Nation States, the English women, forced to carry out exhausting shifts of work in the industrial establishments (cotton mills, spinning mills, weaving laboratories and knitwear of cities like London, Bristol, Cardiff, Liverpool), begin to organize to reclaim their rights.

In the second half of the Nineteenth century, John Stuard Mill (a British philosopher and economist, a supporter of the theories of liberalism and utilitarianism) was sensitised by his wife Harriet Taylor to the issue of defending women's rights. Between 1865 and 1868 he was at the same time university lecturer in Scotland and deputy in the Parliament of London. As a member of the House of Commons, he posed the question of the need to regulate with specific laws the rights of women: the right to vote, a reasonable working time, protection in family law, protection of mother workers. In 1869 he published a book: *The Subjection of women = The Servanthood of females*, in which he claimed equality of the sexes in family law and universal suffrage for all citizens, males and females. In the essay, he argues that the subjection of the woman does not arise from natural inferiority but from an act of strength of the male human race that turns her physical weakness into servitude. The resulting condition, endorsed by law, spread by tradition and prejudice, is contrary to the equality of rights that governs liberal civilisation: there can be no freedom if half of mankind is excluded from it. What people generally experience is not the true nature of

women, but femininity which has been manifested in the condition of sexual subordination. The first means of enslavement is the family. Emancipation enriches the whole species: gender equality, the ability to coexist between free and equal beings, peer education and equal opportunities will increase the intellectual and moral qualities of the entire human race. To achieve equality, it is necessary to give women, not only the right to vote, but also a new sort of family law, centred on the legal equality of the two spouses, the separation of goods and the Institute of divorce. The liberation of women will also improve the men who, once and for all, stop feeling superior only because they are males. This will end the last remaining legal slavery after the abolitionism of “negro slavery” in the United States of America.

In the third phase, that of the distinction, the feminists go in search of their specific identity, that is, of a feminine way of being person, distinct from the masculine one.

The need to “measure” the extent of emancipation and the affirmation of their identity could also be included in this area. It comes to the aid the concept of “rights of citizenship”, of the English sociologist Thomas Marshall (1950) by which one measures that set of civil, political and social rights which are incumbent on the individuals as citizens assuming that, even Within the same political system, citizens do not enjoy equal rights.

The last phase, that of reciprocity, is actuating through functional correlation, whereby the human person is realized through the overcoming of the phase of complementarity.

Ultimately, the factors capable of freeing women from a condition of subordination are implied in assumptions about the origins of inequality, and, to a reasonable extent, are already present in the descriptions of the phenomenon. We can try, however, to summarise them. On the one hand, we have the cultural matrices, on the other the material roots. The construction of roles can be perceived as compulsion (Zincone, 1978) as it is possible to grasp the non-natural and unique character of social relations, values and beliefs. The rooting of disciplines such as cultural anthropology, psychology or psychoanalysis-apart from the conformism of individual studies in the field of gender-has offered an essential tool for self-reflection on social roles and identities. Liberal ideologies, trusting in the individual capacities, and the democratic ones, based on the principle of equality, have provided-beyond their specific strengthening of gender discrimination-significant goals to women's movements. Olympe de Gouges, author of the *Déclaration des Droits des femmes et des citoyennes*, is a victim but also a daughter of the French Revolution. Similarly, the book of Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the rights of Woman*, published in 1792, ranks, albeit in polemical form, within Democratic thought. Feminism can nourish itself of the liberal and Democratic incoherencies, and then of those socialistic ones.

The feminine question as social inequality: a historical overview

Always subject to cultural factors, the processes of secularisation reduce the weight of the social doctrine of the Church, long imbued with a traditional vision of feminine nature and gender roles. More Generally, modernisation processes are supportive of women's empowerment. And Here we move to the material roots of emancipation. Although not immediately, industrial production allows the woman to perceive an income and brings her out of the family environment. The same role of women in industrial family business management creates a contradiction between assumed responsibilities and rights absent (Tilly, 1992).

Another vital element of liberation is knowledge of contraceptive techniques. This will not only reduce the number of pregnancies but will restrict the reproduction period. These factors, which we can define as exogenous to the political systems, are accompanied By important endogenous factors: favourable public policies and feminist movements. Naturally, the exogenous and endogenous factors are strongly connected, just as the link between pro-women public policies and the presence of feminist organisations and movements is tight. For example, free and compulsory education also for women and the opening of all grades and types of higher education qualify the female workforce and make it more convenient for women to get out of the family, offer themselves on the market, become Economically autonomous (Del Boca, 1988). They also make available women, potential frameworks for feminist organisations and politics in general. Public policies can, therefore, be observed both as the outcome and as the thrust of change.

Anthropology has tried to trace the origins of female subordination. The history of the family and the work questioned itself on the capacity of the industrialisation to break the family-work unit and to release, therefore, the women as individuals. The history of political thought and the institutions discussed critically how theories and legal experiences, both liberal and democratic, treated women. Philosophy and psychology have thought about the fundamentals, risks and promises of feminine identity. Sociology, economics and Politology have tried to understand the shapes and reasons for the vertical and horizontal segmentation of female activity. More or less nourished by these reflections, public policies have moved and continue to operate.

2. Gender issues: a first approach

According to estimates by the World Health Organization, on the planet over one-third of women have undergone or is undergoing physical or sexual violence, mostly by the partner. The survey conducted on a sample

of 42,000 female subjects showed that one in three women, 33% of the total, in a period between 15 and sixty years of age underwent physical or sexual violence. In Italy, the data are aligned with the European ones. 31.5% of women claimed to have suffered some form of male or female sexual violence, about 6,788,000 women; 16.1% underwent stalking, about 3,466,000 women. 10% of women interviewed claim to have personally known sexual assault before 16 years of age. The partners, current or former, commit the most severe acts of violence: the rapes in 62.7% of the cases. The data of the female massacre are not exaggerated: only in 2014 in Italy were killed 152 women; of these 117 have been killed in the family environment.

In the first nine months of 2018, the number of women killed has only fallen by three units (from 97 cases of the same period of 2017 to 94), but explains the police-only in 32 cases you can properly talk about femicide, cases in which a woman is killed because of the pro The first kind. In all, in 2016, 149 women were killed in 2017 the number stopped at 123

In the period January-August 2018, there were 8,414 cases of stalking, compared with 9,905 in the same period of 2017 (with a decrease of 15.05%). The reports of alleged perpetrators of this offence have increased, with a + 4.49% (9,351 total) compared to the same period last year (8,949). Besides, the subjects for stalking increased by 23%, passing from 672 to 827 individuals. Of these, only 19% committed the same crime again after being warned.

A theme, polysyllabic, which already from the seventies begins to become a subject debated in the first human sciences... At least in the West... As a result of the clamours that came from the other side of the ocean. The concept is proposed during the seventies and in recent decades has not ceased to be the subject of debates and controversies. We must, however, assume that, the cultural climate within which the concept is formed, is strongly marked by the movements of the beginning of the sixties, by their request for discussion of the economic and political system, by the fight against social inequalities, the racial-sexual discriminations that have as objective that of reaching a subversion of the dominant economic and social paradigms.

If we retrace the history of everything that has been analyzed around this theme, we can only refer to some scholars, Ann Oakley (an English sociologist) and Joan Scott (American historian), as well as the American anthropologist Gayle Rubin, (though To be honest we must also include the scholar Robert Stoller – who had published in 1968 an essay entitled *Sex and Gender...*-and who worked with Harold Garfinkel (one of the key characters of the school of Ethnomethodology and American sociology in general).... it distinguished the gender identity, understood as a profound psychological expression of the person, from the biological sex).

In 1972, Oakley refers, in some of its works, to a new society, highlighting the possible overcoming of the differences between the sexes: in its optics,

The feminine question as social inequality: a historical overview

these differences express the social conditioning that, depending on the contexts, build the male and female gender roles, giving female roles a reproductive function. It is easy to see here that there is no explicit reference to the strategic question of the power relations underlying the gender-gender binomial.

And we also refer to the American anthropologist Rubin, who makes an analysis of the structure of kinship in patriarchal contexts; through this analysis, she laid the foundations for an understanding of the relationship of power based on sex, somehow overcoming the approach linked to those who are sexual roles. In fact, through the concept of sex-gender system, Rubin's work offers a reflection on the forms of domination of men on women capable of going beyond the approaches in the key of patriarchy, because as an expression of male power, it ends with to propose an identification between what is biological-natural and what is cultural, at the end justing the regime of social inequality between men and women.

It is proposed, therefore, to put at the centre of its speculations a broader reflection on the dynamics of the social life linked to sexuality. And the same anthropologist makes explicit references to Marx, Freud, Levi-Strauss, and insists that the concept of sex/gender system, although built in reference to archaic social contexts, is primarily designed to shed light on practices through which sexuality and human reproduction become a founding moment, in the sense social, modern contexts. The consequence, however, would be that the oppression of women is not considered inevitable, as it happens in the perspective founded on patriarchy (patriarchy that, aggravating the biological differences between the sexes, comes in this way To create the genre), but a simple (by way of saying) historical datum.

Therefore it is possible in principle to abolish the system of social inequalities that is based on it, in summary the concept of gender, proposed by this scholar, refers to a system that is a social, economic and psychological whole through which is going to substantiate the male power over the bodies and existences of women.

To highlight precisely this explicit reference, that link that binds gender and system of power, it will be the task of Joan Scott that at the end of the the 80s will give a further impulse to this debate, widening the perspective of the gender studies which were to incorporate institutions such as the labour market, education political system, to get to look at and analyze the power relationships that are the basis of the definition of sexual difference, without making the opposition between men and women the core of gender analysis; in fact, he writes, man and woman are at the same time empty and superabundant categories. Empty because they have no definitive meaning;

Roberto Veraldi

Superabundant because they continue to contain alternative, negated or suppressed definitions internally.

Ultimately, gender is a primary factor in the manifestation of power relations; inside or through which power is drawn up. Through this way new forms of culture, social and institutional are built, and through this way the relationships of subordinate force between masculine gender and feminine gender are opened that our [Western] cultures, coming to a sort of elaboration of the cognitive process of gender and gender and its forms of power within this scheme, try now to overcome. Firstly, stating that gender is gender are social and cultural constructions, our culture seeks not to consider them as equivalent. On the contrary, the awareness of their historically produced character makes it possible to question the dichotomic approach (on the one hand sex, from another part of the genus) as well as to emphasise how biology and society jointly combine to model and influencing human actions and relationships.

Then it becomes essential to reason on the differences-inequalities dichotomy, within this phenomenon, in terms of the order of kind. Therefore, as Cesarean says, consider the genus as a social configuration that governs not only the relationships but also the daily practices, indissolubly linked to the dynamics of producing power as much of differences as of inequalities, it makes it possible to call into question those perspectives that reason on gender mainly in terms of opposing sexual roles.

Following the social transformations, the sudden changes in structuring and restructuring of society operated by globalization phenomena, to try to counter the idea of an organization of social relations that is based on gender inequality, we have to oppose the consideration that these inequalities are not the inevitable social and political result of gender differences. On the contrary, (Cfr. V. Cesareo, in R. Cipriani, edited by, 2019), it is the gender differences, which constitute the product of these inequalities, since the sexual categorizations (like social constructions), which vary according to the times of the places, and the differences which are recall, are in fact used to offer forms of justification to the existing inequalities. So an argument about the relationship between gender and forms of power is once again as indispensable.

We could give the first vision talking about the power of men as collective on women as a collective; but also of some of some men on other men, and some women on other women: these forms of power that mingle with class differences, ethnic differences, age-generation differences, differences in sexual orientation via saying, They build a network of inequalities that become palpable in everyday life. Then gender inequalities, which are closely intertwined with everyday life, become legitimated, and this does not mean

The feminine question as social inequality: a historical overview

that they should be justified, not only by common sense but also by the functioning of the institutions.

All this gives the departure to the last part of my reasoning: in the system of practices that produces and reproduces a hierarchical division of the social world, by virtue of which the differences between men and women, elaborated culturally, are transformed into asymmetries and social inequalities, the genre is theme typed through a relational dimension and through an idea of open system to the constant reworking and redefinition of the company. What comes out of it?

It follows a vision of the cultural representations associated to the feminine gender, but (and this is the novelty) also of those associated with the masculine: for men as for women become fundamental points the social contexts within which they live and enter in a relationship. That's why using gender as a synonym for the female condition is misleading. Because socialization, openness to other ways of thinking and understanding life become important if one has respect first and foremost (and this is a strong idea of the Christian religion, for example).

And that is why it is also a common opinion that the processes of social/cultural change have influenced or invested even the masculinity and their hierarchies, at least in part to change the order of gender.

And here we take back the initial provocation... because the subject of violence, respect for women, family as core founding society, belong to us as westerners, as laymen... and as Christians... and they mark a watershed (it is not said that it is insuperable if there is common accordo....but the agreement must first be on the respect of the person).

In fact, violence against women that does not mention diminishing is probably the most striking aspect of these transformations. Because it constitutes one of the significant indicators of the inability of a party, of course, I refer to a minority part of the male world, to metabolise these transformations.

At this point we can try to identify albeit briefly at least two main attempts to explain the male violence on women: the first linked to the patriarchal order, where the lower the female status in relation to the male, higher it will be the presence of physical and sexual violence against women put in place by men; therefore, the gender inequalities in economic terms, contribute to foster a strongly hierarchized gender order and the violence against them would be nothing more than the expression of the daily reaffirmation of this order; the other, linked to the contemporary dynamics of the relations of power between the genres, highlights the inability of a part of the male world to welcome, and therefore to accept, and therefore to respect, and also to share choices of freedom, practices of autonomy, which contribute to the female biographical construction.

Roberto Veraldi

And this is why violence, not only of a physical nature but also of a psychological nature, made up of denied rights, transmitted fears, fueled by a chauvinistic culture that legitimises it as a form of expression of the self, linked to ancestral forms of culture that are they accept without any critical form or without any revision mediation, blessed by sometimes transcendental systems, mainly affecting women who try to break free. Very often, this happens in the relationships of a couple where intimate relationships become the privileged arena, unfortunately, the irrational unbecoming of male violence, and I repeat not necessarily physical.

3. Suggestions for a conclusion

How can we conclude?

From this historical overview, through the many sources cited and consulted, we could begin to give answers perhaps assuming that we should produce forms of deconstructing the concept of gender, forms that are capable of recognising and enhancing differences and thus transforming them into positive actions against discrimination. To do this, we must go beyond the dichotomic contrast of specifically masculine traits and specifically feminine traits. One of the ways towards gender equality could be to countless in social life, in the world of work, in political representation, in that educational, throughout the social arena, gender and to focus more on the similarities between genres than their diversity.

The political action of emancipation can, therefore, be interpreted as the dismantling of three processes: imprisonment in the family, exclusion from work, the submission with violence. The first is the expropriation of procreation, closure in the family and subordination within it. The second is to exclude from a series of activities and subordination in others. The third consists of the dissemination of practices of harassment and sexual assault and of physical ministrations.

The breakdown of the first block includes the legalization of the use and advertising of contraceptive methods, the decriminalization of abortion and the last decision on this point entrusted to women, greater equality between spouses with regard to the rights of children and the common heritage, equality with regard to the fixing of the domicile and the possibility of divorce and separation. The breakdown of the second block includes the end of prohibitions or quotas regarding access to various grades and types of education, professions and trades. In this block, the policies of quotas reserved for women and those of equal pay are also inserted. The third bloc should include the first attempts to penalise carnal violence within marriage, stricter

The feminine question as social inequality: a historical overview

judicial practices against rapists, public funding of housing-shelters for battered wives and their children.

The persistent discrepancy between form and substance of the process of emancipation, between rights and social positions has been tried to remedy, especially from the seventies onwards, with various legal instruments: the reserve of posts, an extension of the concept of equality wage, the prohibition of discrimination. The reserve of seats or quota system has been introduced in both higher education and public administration, especially in the United States, and with the autonomous decision by parties and trade unions in Europe as well. A resolution of the European Parliament (1988, no 2169) called on political organisations to set aside posts for women in governing bodies and lists. However, It has found political resistances because it seems to clash with principles of equity and with consolidated interests, and has aroused legal perplexity because it seems to oppose the principle of citizen equality in the face of the law. With the local electoral reform (Law No. 81 of March 25, 1993) in Italy, it was introduced the obligation not to put in the lists more than 2/3 of the same sex candidates, but in the subsequent elections, the law is not, in fact, applied. Equally uncertain was the success of anti-discrimination strategies. According to the principle of non-discrimination, it is not sufficient for a career to be formally open to women, that employers should not favour the recruitment of men. In the seventies, many western countries introduced laws aimed at avoiding discrimination in recruitment and careers: This is, among other things, a large part of the social legislation of the European Community (Guadagnini and Porro, 1988), for other verses very slender. In Italy, two norms (Law No. 125 of 4 April 1991, positive actions for gender equality in work, and Law No. 215 of 25 February 1992, positive actions for female entrepreneurship) sought to force entrepreneurs and public actors to take action. In the United States, the prohibition of discriminating is guaranteed by title VII of the Civil Right Act.

The courts, however, still seem to be inspired-at best-to liberal culture, according to which, today as yesterday, the public sphere of law must record what civil society produces “spontaneously”. This has meant, for example, that in about half of the cases raised in the United States, between 1972 and 1989, the judges accepted the position of employers who motivated the poor presence of women in key positions with the lack of interest of women to get those positions. On the contrary, and even before this date, the courts had accepted the thesis of the “futility” on black minorities, of the usefulness of applying for prestige positions when one knows not to succeed: we would say the argument of discouragement of groups discriminated against (Schulz, 1992). From this hypothesis comes the obligation of the employer to be active to counteract the discouragement

of minorities. This line denies or wants to bypass evidence and that is that women offer themselves in a different way on the job market. It is what he also observed Norris (1987) on the political market: the obstacle to equality is not so much from the discrimination of those who select candidates, either from the voters, or from the offer or, better, the scarcity of women's offerings. These considerations well propose to reorganise the social, working and political life to make it compatible with the functions of reproduction and care (Zincone, 1985; Hernes, 1985).

From here comes the idea of sober politics, a society that is friendly to women. These beliefs are rooted in the practical proposals for "laws on time", which concern both the coordination between working hours and schedules of services and shops, and the cycles of life and the possibility of a less rigid scan of the phases in which we study, you work, you devote time to the family. An objective emancipation budget must take into account an extraordinary acquisition of rights and a less extraordinary, but conspicuous, acquisition of social positions on the part of women in the last century. It is rather on the sexual and physical violence that the steps forward appear scant. Moreover, the reconstruction here made of the female emancipation draws its optimism from a heavy omission: that of many countries of the Third World. At the beginning of 1993, for the first time, a western democracy, Austria, grants political asylum to a Muslim woman because in the country of origin she is denied, for her sex, elementary rights. It is possible that the denial of women's rights at the international level and the persistent use of sexual, physical and verbal violence against women in our democracies become crucial political issues. There may be a serious commitment to reorganising our companies to make them compatible with reproductive and nursing activities. It's possible, but it's uncertain. From this uncertain possibility depends on the future of the process of empowerment of women, but also passes from a new vision: avoid considering the set of norms aimed at protecting the workers as protection norms to get to propose actions and processes Socio-cultural targets instead of equality, which propose to open women all careers to offer equal opportunities. In this way equality itself will be opposed to the idea of protection and will impose the waiver of differentiated protection given by the greater physical fragility and the more significant family commitment of women, opening the path to the new socio-cultural paradigm.

And if we go back to our deep and ancient roots, the persistence between gender differences in public life and private life can then become a battle fought and won.

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Roberto Veraldi

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