

Gintautas VAITOŠKA

International Theological Institute, Trumau, Austria

Gender Ideology and the Dignity of Women

SUMMARY. By denying the binary structure of sexuality, gender ideology suppresses women's rights in many areas of life. However, gender ideology fails the test of reality put to it by the very adherents of this theory, for the majority of them support the binary division of gender. The transgender movement is a cultural meme that affects the most psychologically vulnerable youths. The disproportionate number of girls who strive to become men seems to be connected with the objectification of girls in the mainstream culture – an attitude springing from the ideology of sexual revolution and its most important technical tool: the contraceptive pill.

KEYWORDS: gender ideology, women's rights, sex change, objectification of girls, contraception.

Introduction

In 2019, the Executive Director of United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) Phumzile Mlabo-Ngcuka proclaimed that this agency will no longer focus only women's rights, but rather on „equality of all genders,“ including LGBTIQ+. The latter acronym was defined as referring to lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender, questioning of queer, intersex... and „the full range of gender diversities that exist.“¹ Some feminist organizations, e. g. Women Liberation Front, oppose this and similar moves at the important UN agencies, because „women and girls are being erased from international assistance“ and the hard-won gains of women's battle for equality is being appropriated by the proponents of gender ideology. The purpose of this article is to describe how, in the marching forward of this ideology, women's rights are disrespected in concrete and, one may say, scandalous ways. Another aim is to inquire the reasons of the popularity of transgender movement and

¹ Stefano Gennarini, “The Gender Agenda: How the LGBT Movement is Hijacking Women's Rights”, *Center for Family & Human Rights*, August 31, 2020. <https://c-fam.org/definitions/the-gender-agenda-how-the-lgbt-movement-is-hijacking-womens-rights/>.

to expose the sharp contradiction within it, as the very desire to change sex is contrary to the basic principles of gender ideology which created the very same movement. And finally, we want to show that feminist objection to the advance of gender ideology, even though understandable and worthy of respect, is not able to substantially resist the erasure of women's rights because women lost power of resistance, paradoxically, by the move which was supposed to bring them to power: the widespread usage of contraception.

The main statement of this paper is that gender ideology contradicts the dignity of women, and that, behind the multiple cultural dynamism responsible for gender ideology, there lurks one 'quiet' factor: the contraceptive pill. Following Gabriele Kuby, we define gender ideology as a view which claims that there exist no essential or inborn differences between man and woman. This ideology denies and suppresses research data coming from neuroscience, medicine and psychology – the data which speak about important anatomical, physiological, biochemical, hormonal and genetic differences between male and female organisms.²

Recently, the author of *Harry Potter* J. K. Rowling was called TERF – a mocking term meaning “trans-exclusionary radical feminist.” She was proclaimed such for supporting the opinion that sex change is biologically impossible.³ Another “TERF” making the headlines in December 2018 was Julia Beck, the lesbian representative at the Baltimore LGBTQ Commission's Law and Policy Committee. She was found guilty for claiming that trans-identified males – such as sexual offender Stephen Woods who claimed to be Karen White after gender transition – should not be placed together with “other” women. For, Kate who changed “her” gender without removing the male genitalia, sexually assaulted a couple of “her” inmates. Julia Beck was accused of “transphobia” and thrown out of committee by a former man who now claimed to be a lady named “Ava Pipitone.” She has also preserved her male genital organs, continues to be attracted to women, and calls herself a “translesbian.”⁴ It seems that “Ava” felt solidarity with “Kate” because of their shared “lesbian” passion for women. The accusations of “transphobia” are not limited to women who defend other women from sexual assaults committed by “transwomen” in prisons: also women athletes, who protest “transwomen” competing and winning because of biological advantages of masculine sex in physical strength, are accused and silenced as “transphobic.”

Here the gender ideology offends women. Men, who consider themselves to be women, are allowed to use women's bathrooms and locking rooms – a perfect

² Cf. Gabriele Kuby, *Die Gender Revolution. Relativismus in Action* (Fe-medienverlag, GmbH, 2006), 57.

³ “J. K. Rowling Comes Out As A TERF”. *Forbes*, December 19, 2019. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dawnstaceyennis/2019/12/19/jk-rowling-comes-out-as-a-terf/>.

⁴ <http://womensliberationfront.org/baltimore-lgbtq-commission-anti-lesbian-bias/>.

possibility for lustful voyeurism, and, not infrequently, sexual assaults. The “transgender” athletes – males presenting themselves as women – hurt women who would win first prizes if they would not be competing with men. Consequently, the Istanbul convention against violence against women, which by now has become widely known Trojan horse for introducing the right for gender identity, if signed and ratified in our countries, grants a legal power for “transwomen” to push women into the corner, and often, literally so.

However, in the last decade gender ideology started massively harming women in still another way – a way which is harder to decipher because of the aggressive rhetoric of transgender rights, but is no less offensive than the assault on female dignity mentioned above. We need to think here about what the famous American psychiatrist Paul McHugh called a “cultural meme” – a fashion to change sex.⁵

Gender dysphoria in children – when a boy wants or claims to be a girl or vice versa – is a rare medical condition, affecting 1 boy from 10000 to 30000 of the population (0.001–0.0003%) and 1 girl in 40.000 to 100.000 of the population (according to Finnish data).⁶ However, the number of adolescents currently flooding the “gender identity” clinics requesting surgical sex-change is many times greater than the number of children who suffered from gender dysphoria. Based on epidemiological data, the Finnish doctors were expecting around 3 girls and 14 boys to complain to them about gender identity problems; however, what happens was that 41 girl – almost 14 times more than expected, and 6 boys – 2 times less the expectation – addressed the gender identity clinic. The overall number of requests for sex change has grown exponentially in other countries too: in Sweden, the number of girls wanting to become men grew 15 times in the 2008 – 2018 period (1500%), while the growth of boys willing to become women grew 4 times (400%).⁷ In the UK, Tavistock and Portman Foundation Trust’s gender identity development service (GIDS) claims that the number of candidates in England for sex change under 18 grew from 241 in 2012–13 to 2,537 in 2018–19 – that is 10 times.⁸ What calls for special attention is that around two-thirds of these persons are girls, and the highest number of referrals falls on 15 year-olds. We will discuss the latter number later.

⁵ Cf. Paul McHue, “Transgender Surgery isn’t the Solution. A drastic physical change doesn’t address underlying psycho-social troubles”, *The Wall Street Journal*, May 16, 2016, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/paul-mchugh-transgender-surgery-isnt-the-solution-1402615120>.

⁶ R. Kaltiala-Heino, et al., “Two years of gender identity service for minors: overrepresentation of natal girls with severe problems in adolescent development”, *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health* Vol. 9. Article number 9 (2015), <https://capmh.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13034-015-0042-y>.

⁷ “Sweden sees sharp rise in gender dysphoria among young people”, *The Local*, 13 February 2020, <https://www.thelocal.se/20200213/sweden-sees-sharp-rise-in-gender-dysphoria-among-teenagers>.

⁸ *Gender Identity Development Services*, <https://gids.nhs.uk/number-referrals>; https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/619960/response/1493983/attach/3/image002.png?cookie_passthrough=1.

These data lead to two conclusions about the essential dynamism of the gender theory. First, the current surge of the sex-change clinics by adolescents demonstrates a fiasco of the main purpose and claim of the gender philosophy: that the binary division of gender is a patriarchal artifact, designed for the subjugation of women. For the most celebrated gender theorist Judith Butler, gender is a “transformation,” a flux,⁹ and to define oneself as male or female is a regrettable exercise of “sexist” ideology. And still, the most liberated young people strive exactly for that: to be a man or a woman. They want to become one out of the “unsuccessful,” as they feel, variations of their femininity or masculinity, and to turn into a new “man” or “woman” in an extremely exaggerated fashion. Why these young people remain “imprisoned” in that patriarchal and oppressive binary gender narrative? Is there some deeper dynamism, some more profound endeavor than the progressive “non-binary” “choose your own gender” revolutionary striving? Perhaps there exists a deep-seated desire to be a perfect man or a perfect woman – so deep that a subjective conviction in one’s failure to achieve this ideal is so painful, that one abandons one’s attempts to become such and rather chooses to be of the opposite gender who falls in love with that version of idealized self now projected to the homosexual love object? Perhaps one’s body-image is so intrinsically connected with one’s self-worth so that the early childhood wound inflicted on the latter plays out in the dissatisfaction with the body at the time when it craves for love most powerfully? These are questions proper to the psychoanalytic perspective¹⁰–, however, the simple fact that young people want to be either men or women loudly shouts one truth: life does not support gender theory. With rare exceptions, people want to be men or women. They want that so much, that they are ready to mutilate their healthy bodies – even if often irreversibly and bringing them to later deep regret about what they have done to themselves.

The second fact is the manifold increase in *girls* among those who flood the sex-change clinics. To understand the reasons for this phenomenon, we have to think about the interior state of the soul of these girls. So, the Finnish study mentioned above, pointed out that, 75% of young persons who requested the sex-change became deeply distressed *before* they developed the desire to change their sex. Most probably the number of distressed adolescents (41 girls and 6 boys) was even higher – as 75% of them had an *official diagnosis* of a psychic disorder –, however, many a psychological suffering does not reach the level sufficient to diagnose a disorder, or the suffering person manages to exist beyond the medical attention. These girls were *distressed in general* without being discontent with their girlishness; and then, beginning with the

⁹ Cf. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (Routledge, 2004), 65.

¹⁰ Cf. the chapter of Veroniek Knockaert and Katrien Steenhoudt, “Anorectics and the mirror”, in which the relationship between self-image, body-image, and early childhood relational experiences are examined. In *Body Image and Body Schema*, ed. H. de Preester & V. Knockaert (John Benjamins Publishing Co, 2005).

second decade of the xxi century, they started coming to the gender identity clinics after they have *become* discontent with their femininity.

Why did this happen? The first reason is the oversexualized feminine image put forward as an ideal, which many a girl feels is impossible to reach. The British journalist describes the situation like this:

It is hard not to feel that social media and porn have recently been conspiring to create a rigid and ultra “femme” idea of what a beautiful woman should look like. Whereas once Jamie Lee Curtis, with her short hair and athletic build, was considered a sex symbol in Hollywood, these days the Kardashians’ femininity can feel almost as homogenized as it is commoditized. And its shallow markers—nails, lashes, bling—frequently blur the distinction between the world’s most desirable women and drag queens. Keeping up with the requirements of womanhood, as they are understood in these times, imposes a time-sapping burden, and all those (most of us) who are not prepared to devote a large portion of our day to our appearance end up feeling alienated.¹¹

Facing a tyrannical requirement to fit into the narrow limits of the required shape of the “perfect” feminine body on the one hand and stress as a remnant from psychological insecurity experienced already in earlier years of life seems to be a combination of factors leading to hatred of one’s femininity and the desire to stop being a woman. Even such (sexual) revolutionary-minded organization like American Psychological Association, in its 2007 Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls, complains about the negative effect of the widespread tendency to reduce the value of teenage girls and young women to that of sexual object.¹² Such objectification, according to the Report, has negative influence on the girl’s cognitive and emotional attitudes, and mental and physical health. In a peculiar experiment described in the Report, the girls were given a math task while alone in the dressing room: one group of girls were asked to wear just swimming suits, while the other – sweaters. The latter group did better in the test; the Authors of the Report conclude that, “thinking about the body and comparing it to sexualized cultural ideals disrupted mental capacity. In the emotional domain, sexualization and objectification undermine confidence in and comfort with one’s own body, leading to a host of negative emotional consequences, such as shame, anxiety, and even self-disgust.” Paradoxically, but in some way logically, the popular culture currently also promotes the ideal of a strong, masculine, unsentimental woman who talks, behaves, and also fights not worse and many times

¹¹ Emma Hartley, “Why do so many teenage girls want to change gender?”, *Prospect Magazine*, March 3, 2020, <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/tavistock-transgender-transition-teenage-girls-female-to-male>.

¹² American Psychological Association, “Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls” (2007), <https://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report>.

better than a man. In the last decade, it is difficult to find a detective movie where the police boss is not a woman – or at least the most effective detective. It seems clear that a woman needs to become as strong as a man to defend herself; the popular narrative tells that she has been the slave of the man for centuries – and now, finally, at least in the popular production, she can be stronger than a man. For a girl approaching puberty, who is already insecure in herself because of basic anxiety and is becoming even more insecure anticipating how lustful men will scrutinize her body, the feminine cult of masculinity sends the same message: don't be a woman, in order to be safe you have to be a man.

The feminist response to the domination of man, thus, is masculinization of the woman. In that sense, the woman loses her fight against the man because she disregards herself and denies her authentically feminine power. The genderist approach makes this loss even more tragic: by claiming that gender has no relation to biology, it produced the young women's movement to mutilate themselves in an attempt to deny that they are women. The main root of this powerlessness seems to lie not in the weakness of the muscle or the vividness of emotion – as none of these feminine qualities were considered a defect of a degree which would force one to stop to be a woman – and, on the contrary, in many a case, the classical feminine tenderness gave her quite a power of over the man. The main root of the powerlessness of the woman seems to lie in the fact that the sexual revolution robbed her of the power of her femininity.

How? First, she was made naked – and almost literally. One has to look at the way she is expected to dress: some two generations ago the level of undressing herself which is usual now was practiced only by those women who were caught in the tragedy of prostitution. If the publicly accepted purpose of the girl's appearance is to induce the man to lust after her, no wonder that many girls, especially those who are not sure in themselves for psychological reasons existing prior to puberty, will feel weak because they do not fit the “Kardashian” idol. The man, the one who looks, has power over the object of inspection; the woman of our days is trapped in, to use the expression of Michel Foucault, the “panopticon” – a degrading visual inspection for quality.

But was not a man always the “inspector” of feminine beauty? How our times are different from the previous ones? The logic leads to a huge question, which remains, as says Frances Fukuyama, to a large degree unreflected in the Western civilization, and, as writes Mary Eberstadt, by far insufficiently understood even in the Catholic culture.¹³ The logic seems to be as follows: to the question, “why would a woman who is caught in the slavery of prostitution dress provocatively?” the answer is obvious. Namely, in order to induce lust in a man so that he can buy her. But why would a girl who was not a victim of this trade was not dressing – or undressing – in that way? Because she did not want every man to lust after her – and here comes the answer

¹³ Cf. Francis Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption. Human Nature and Reconstitution of the Social Order* (London: Profile Books, 1999), 64; Mary Eberstadt, *Adam and Eve After the Pill. Paradoxes of the Sexual Revolution* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), ch. 8.

given by a sociologist Mark Regnerus – *because to have sex in the times before contraception meant the danger of pregnancy*. In our days, she can be the object of sexual lust because sex is “naturally” infertile – the expression of Mark Regnerus.¹⁴ The revolution told her that she can have sex just for her own pleasure with no consequences. That, obviously, is a lie.

Here seems to lie the reason why feminism has no power to resist gender ideology and “identity politics” as it is called now in the United States. Because before the revolution sex implied commitment because it risked pregnancy, sex was expensive because it meant marriage – and, amazingly so for our current mindset – men kept paying the price – and with enthusiasm. With contraception, sex has become cheap, as the title of Regnerus’ book says, and men are unwilling to pay for what they can take for free.

The man, while degrading the woman to the sexual object, has also lost his dignity. In the words of Mary Eberstadt, in the epoch of contraception, he stopped being the protector while becoming the predator of the woman.¹⁵ The topic is huge: Frances Fukuyama presents convincing statistical evidence supporting his theses that the pill is the factor that is most influential for the relations between the sexes in the whole history of humanity. Gender ideology seems to be the last forepost of contraceptive mentality: having neglected her access to life, the woman denied both, the power and her dignity. It seems that we have to still explain the profound insight of St. John Paul II: contraception is based on the understanding of the person which is irreconcilable with the Catholic understanding of sexuality.¹⁶ And, as the Church does not “order” women to close themselves in the “kitchen” with 10 children, and nevertheless clearly says that contraception is a serious sin,¹⁷ the topic calls for our special attention in the near future.

Conclusions

Even though gender ideology can be considered as the latest stage of women’s liberation movement, it offends women’s rights for privacy, fairness in athletic competitions, and for due attention from international organizations formerly created for defending women’s rights. However, despite the advance in political power, gender ideology fails the test of reality put to it by the very adherents of this theory. Namely, those who

¹⁴ Mark Regnerus, *Cheap Sex, The Transformation of Men, Marriage and Monogamy* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 11.

¹⁵ Cf. Mary Eberstadt. *Primal Screams. How the Sexual Revolution Created Identity Politics* (Templeton Press, 2019), 103.

¹⁶ Cf. John Paul II. *Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris Consortio on the Role of Christian Family in the Modern World* (1981), 32. http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html.

¹⁷ Cf. Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Persona Humana. Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics* (1986), 10. http://m.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19751229_persona-humana_en.html.

believe in the principle of the right to choose one's gender support the principle of the binary structure of humanity, thus contradicting the central statement of this belief that gender is not binary but rather a process of transformation. The disproportionate numbers of girls who flood gender identity clinics to be surgically mutilated to stop being women are fueled by objectifying sexualization of the woman in our culture. The deepest causal factor of these degrading attitudes can be traced to the ideology of the sexual revolution and its most important tool: contraception. The pervading influence of the latter on different aspects of life in modern society and also in the circles of people identifying themselves as Catholics deserve a wide and active discussion.

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Gintautas VAITOŠKA

GENDER IDEOLOGIJA IR MOTERS ORUMAS

S a n t r a u k a

Paneigdamą binarinę gimtiškumo (lytiškumo) struktūrą, *gender* ideologija pažeidžia moters teises daugelyje gyvenimo sričių. Nors ši ideologija plačiai įsigalėjusi, jai būdingas neadekvatus gimties supratimas aiškėja jau vien iš to, kad norėdami pakeisti savo gimtį daugelis jos sekėjų siekia tapti vyrais arba moterimis, t. y. savo pasirinkimu prieštarauja pagrindiniam ideologijos postulatui apie gimties „nestabilumą“. *Transgender* judėjimas yra kultūrinis memas, kuris, kaip rodo tyrimai, labiausiai pažeidžia psichologiškai sužeistus jaunos asmenis. Neproporcingai didelis merginų, plūstančių į gimties keitimo klinikas, skaičius yra susijęs su nepasitenkinimu savo kūnu visuomenėje įsigalėjus moters pažeminimo iki seksualinio pasitenkinimo objekto tendencijai. Viena iš giliausių tokios tendencijos priežasčių yra moters suvokimo nuskurdymas prasidėjus masiniam kontracepcijos vartojimui.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: *gender* ideologija, moterų teisės, gimties keitimas, moters sudaiktinimas, kontracepcija.

Gintautas VAITOŠKA – Psichiatrist, Licenciate in Theology, Director of Marriage and Family Studies Program at the International Theological Institute in Trumau, Austria. Areas of Research: sexual ethics, gender theory and homosexuality, pastoral psychology. E-mail: vaitoska@iti.ac.at.

Gintautas VAITOŠKA – psichiatras, teologijos licenciatas, Šeimos ir santuokos studijų programos vadovas Tarptautiniame teologijos institute Trumau (Austrija). Tyrimų sritys: seksualumo etika, *gender* teorija, homoseksualumas, pastoracinė psichologija. El. paštas: vaitoska@iti.ac.at.