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**FEMALE GENIUS: SOME ASPECTS IN THE CONTEXT OF
PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE**

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Abstract

The paper is devoted to philosophical problems of female creativity, which acquire a status of a promising field of research in the modern world. Their relevance is conditioned by historically established cultural anonymity of a woman. Being involved, along with a man, in a historical and cultural process, frequently taking part in the change of cultural paradigms, a woman has found herself beyond the status of genius. In this regard, the author aims to consider the evolution of views on a phenomenon of genius with emphasis on evaluation of the place and the role of a female in culture-creativity. The paper demonstrates that the idea of female subjectivity, mediated by specific bodily nature, acquires a new importance in the XX century. Transformation of views occurs in the framework of the shift of value benchmarks towards recognition of female freedoms and rights that are equal with those of men, including creative self-realisation. The author believes that cultural realisation of the creative potential of a woman, including in its highest manifestation – genius, can be realised not only in the framework of creation of values by the “male pattern”. In the latter case, a woman inevitably moves towards development of masculine qualities in herself, which in creativity are anticipated and recognized as essential for obtaining a status of genius. The true genius of a woman consists in her ontological specificity: female subjectivity, basing on bodily experience, acts potentially as a basis for one of the alternative ways of culture development, experiencing dehumanization today.

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1. Introduction

Female genius (and creativity of women on the whole) as a subject of research has been long beyond the framework of the interest of philosophers and scientists, since the suggestion that genius is a prerogative of men, formed as early as in the framework of the mythological concept, was beyond doubt.

Nevertheless, analysis of philosophical heritage of the past allows understanding the “world-historical paradox of cultural anonymity of women”, which as a problem has become acknowledged as a result of cardinal changes in the female status, actively revealing itself since the XX century. The question on admissibility and nature of female genius has demanded its understanding by means of comprehension of the peculiarity of the female nature, its specific biological and social sources.

Both for female and for male parts of the mankind, recognition of women’s creative freedom means more than simply a claim to the world of culture, created predominantly by men. In this respect, humanistic psychology in the person of A. Maslow has a valuable remark: “...we cannot study creativeness in an ultimate sense until we realize that practically all the definitions that we have been using of creativeness, and most of the examples of creativeness that we use are essentially male or masculine definitions and male or masculine products...I have learned recently (through my studies of peak experiences) to look to women and to feminine creativeness as a good field of operation for research, because it gets less involved in products, less involved in achievement, more involved with the process itself, with the going-on process rather than with the climax in triumph and success. (Maslow, 1971, p. 59).

2. Problem Statement

The fact that genius is mostly a masculine phenomenon is initially conditioned by the concept “genius”.

The deity itself, named in the ancient Roman mythology and religion as genius, acted as an embodiment of virile power and capabilities, realised through the will. Genius was conceived as “life-aspiration”, some force, inducing to actions (Losev, 1996, p.72; Zelinsky, 1996, p. 22-23). It was considered that each man had his own genius, whereas a woman had Juno as a spirit-patron.

Etymology of the words “genius” and “Juno” reflects a dialectic bond of the masculine and the feminine. “Genius” originates from Latin *genus* – “kind”, *gigno* – “give birth”, “produce”, *ingigno* – “endow”. “Juno” from the Latin word “*juno*” means “young”. The foundation, uniting men and women, is childbearing; at that, an ontological difference of sexes, their inequality, stipulated by nature, are emphasised in the idea about the spirit-patron: a male – granting, elongating kin life; female – reproducing.

All subsequent discussions about genius in the history of philosophical thought unfolded around the idea of the masculine creating foundation, aimed at providing the life of the human race. The world of ideas, things and relationships, created in the process of development of humankind not exclusively, but predominantly by males, was subjected to analysis and evaluation by men-thinkers. Many of them either passed the topic of female capability for creativity over in silence or attempted to substantiate their absolute incapacity for it.

3. Research Questions

In the XVI century, the notion “genius”, meaning temper, inborn abilities, as well as finesse and inventiveness, was established (Vlasov, 2000, p. 402). The thought of the Renaissance was aimed at nursing a new type of personality – a “universal human being” (homo universale) or polymath capable of, owing to his cognitions in science and art, seeing the foundations of existence, universal principles of existence of the world and the human being in it, and, on top of that – realising his knowledge in a new, created by him, reality. One begins to gradually consider genius in isolation from a divine patron, predominantly as an immanent quality, with which the human-creator is endowed by nature.

One of the first attempts of philosophical and psychological comprehension of genius belongs to H. Huarte, who argued about dependence of aptitudes on nature, emphasizing the significance of socio-cultural factors of its development. He thought that the nature had not provided superior aptitudes for women (Huarte, 1960). Consequently, external stimulations with respect to development of female talents for the purpose of bringing them to the level of genius seem meaningless.

The concept “genius” belonged for a long time to the sphere of artistic creativity, which gave an opportunity to obtain its autonomy, to demonstrate its particular vision and to try to construct a new reality.

In the XVII-XVIII centuries, in pre-romanticism and romanticism, as a reaction to classicism, an idea about the fact that genius is an artist, an author of, by all means, something new, original, drawing his inspiration from a divine, natural, irrational source. “Unordered amenities and perfection, devoid of examples, typical for the genius, lie beyond the bounds of authorities of knowledge and laws; to create these beauties, the genius must jump beyond these bounds”, E. Young pointed out (Anikst, 1977, p. 140-149).

Originality of creativity was expressed through the ability to see the generalised, generic and to reproduce it in such way as nobody else does. This ability was put in a direct dependence on the ability for self-reflection, helping to cut the strings of “the dark mass of everyday thoughts”, as well as on necessary respect towards oneself and that who is generated in oneself, which, in its turn, gives some freedom from standards, going from the outside.

In esthetics, an idea about close connection of genius with insanity was developed, but with insanity of a special kind, which takes place at a stage of total mental alienation when hypertrophied imagination produces non-existing earlier forms, but at that, the functioning of intellect is not destructed. Thus, S. Coleridge admitted “subtle lie – to pretend to be insane when we are actually close to insanity” as a supreme mastery in poetic creativity (Burwick, 1996, p. 541).

Aspiration for deep comprehension of the world and ourselves in it, for the freedom from stereotyped programmes, for the connection with reality, which is potentially connected with the risk of its loss, acted as a claim to genius namely from the side of men. And it is naturally that rivalry through the demonstration of a certain ability initially underlies male nature.

However, at the end of the XVIII century, in the European culture, a keen interest of women to independent self-expression through literary creativity is observed. This was treated favourably as an attempt of the woman to fill in the leisure time, as “ladies’ exercises” and no more than that. The works of women were treated as dilettante, inadequate to special knowledge about laws of artistic creativity, and

hence, they were unable to compete with those that came from male's pen (Burmistrova, 2014, p. 141-144).

The woman was able to rise above routine, but only as an image and/or only with the help of the man-creator. She was given an honourable role of an inspirer. "A wife, who encourages the despondent genius of her husband, and a mother, who is imbued with noble ambition at the sight of glory of her sons; isn't she a living creature, who ancient people personified under the guise of the muse?" English literary man I. D'Israeli wrote (D'Israeli, 2000, p. 220). If the woman felt a need for creativity, then it had to be co-creation with the man-mentor. Otherwise, if the woman creates independently, the results will be primitive female interpretation of reality, filled with subjectivism. This provision is worked out in detail in the correspondence of J.W. Goethe and F. Schiller (Goethe and Schiller, 1988, p. 209, 340).

German classic philosophy as represented by I. Kant developed an idea of unity of the male and the female in culture-creativity, with emphasis on the primacy of the active masculinity. The person who creates something which is beyond evaluation from the positions of existing rules, but which with time becomes exemplary, is named genius according to the thinker (Kant, 1994, p. 181). And this status is applicable to the man: "The fair sex has the same amount of mind as males do with the only difference that this is fair mind, but ours, male's is a deep mind, and this is only another expression of the sublime" (Kant, 1964). Aspirations of the woman for deep reflections, in the opinion of I. Kant, can surprise owing to its rarity, but they disturb the natural position, assigned to the fair sex (the philosopher even mocks: such kind of women need a beard for more confidence), and, hence, bring its merits to naught. And these merits are beauty, sensitivity, vehemence, modesty, kind-heartedness, mercifulness, inclination to specifics. At the same time, men bring to the forefront: nobility, thoughtfulness, will, utilitarianism, adherence to principle, industry, abstract thinking.

G. Hegel also believed that philosophy, science and art - the fields of knowledge, requiring the understanding of the universal, are impossible for the woman. And he compared the difference between the man and the woman with that which exists between an animal and a plant. The woman due to its nature is more spontaneous, limited by circumstances, assigned for her, and subjective. "Education comes to women by a mysterious way, as if in the atmosphere of representation, more from life than by means of knowledge acquisition, while the man reaches his position only by means of conquering the thought and many technical efforts" (Hegel, 1980, p. 216).

Subjectivity of the woman also became a foundation for A. Schopenhauer to negate a possibility of women's genius. Even though he admitted existence of some talents and even of the clairvoyant skill, congenial by nature to genius, in them (Schopenhauer, 1997, p. 171-172).

According to O. Weninger, mediocrity of the woman makes the understanding itself of a genius capability unattainable for her. "Genius is a certain degree of supreme manliness, and because of it the woman cannot be genius (Weninger, 1992, p. 117). It is noted that her thought is shallow on the whole, and in principle she is incapable of separating herself from the world in cognition, of building subject-objective relationships.

4. Purpose of the Study

The West European philosophical tradition, developing itself through the idea about the human being as a subject, capable to single out himself from the objective world, to look at it from the unbiased viewpoint, to create the world of culture and civilization on the basis of ingenuous knowledge, questioned the equality of the man and the woman in realisation of this opportunity. Subjectivity of genius, according to the philosophers of the past, is of special kind – masculine: it must contain the claim to objectivity, and subsequently must be expressed as objectivity. At that, an active subject of cognition and creativity must be directed by thoughts and actions towards acquisition of freedom, and hence – power over limiting, immobilizing circumstances. Otherwise, going beyond his own subjective reality for him inaccessible. And undoubtedly this striving for freedom is impossible without openness to risk and it is realised predominantly by the man. Hence, genius is an exceptionally male capability.

The provision that freedom for women, obtained without knowledge, is not so much impossible as pernicious was reflected in the works of the naturalistic orientation at the turn of the XIX-XX centuries. Thus, L. Ward, when characterising the intellectual progress of society, proceeded from the fact that by nature the purpose of female actions is protection, preservation of her own and her children security. Therefore, the female mind is characterised by passivity and extreme conservatism since any innovation is associated for her with danger, risk for life (Ward, 2001, p. 186-192).

Prevalence of stereotype in women and originality in men according to M. Nordau is a realisation of the immutable original law of nature. Essentially, the woman is subjected to the law of heredity, and her aspiration for independent creativity in its potency loses in comparison with the necessity of traditional reproduction of the earlier discovered (Nordau, 2006). The woman is banal, her “life energy” is within the norm which is necessary for the organism for preservation of the inherited; her activity is manifested in the striving for evasion of new conditions (Shalaeva, 2016).

Whether some of the provisions of L. Ward and M. Nordau are the results of the suffragette movement of the XIX and beginning of the XX centuries or not, but they contain observations on the fact that social factors can make their own emphases in the nature of females and males. Thus, it is acceptable for the woman, who initially supplements the man’s activity in the intellectual development of society, to take an equal place with the man. And this occurs owing to exchange of roles between sexes.

The personality in general and a creative personality in particular forms and evolves under conditions of freedom. Development of civilization made this sensation accessible for men. The feminism spreading itself in the XX century attracted numerous cases in favour of recognition of freedom for women. The claim for freedom and equality from the direction of women was on the whole an encroachment on the world, in which men have consolidated their leadership. It proceeded from the necessity to approve equal opportunities for both sexes.

Feminism represents a fairly contradictory phenomenon, but owing to it, the woman has acquired the voice. On top of that, it began to ring in science – in anthropology, psychoanalysis, psychology, philosophy, culturology, sociology. Women-theorists, including S. de Beauvoir, K. Horney, M. Mead, T. de Lauretis, S. Bem, H. Hein, A. Rich, J. Kristeva et al, demonstrated profound reflection in their works, of which the woman, as it was considered earlier, is incapable. Thus, H. Hein expressed it in the following way: “The word “feminism” is often associated with female supremacy. In fact, it is connected

with, first of all, the subjective status of women. Modern feminism focuses its attention on, first of all, prospects that women as subjects bring into life, which have been ignored so far. It creates new “ways of thought”, new meanings and categories of critical reflection – this new turn is the source of principally new ideas and cultural values” (Hein, 1990, p. 281). This thought is in tune with that which in the XIX century was expressed by French poet A. Rimbaud, determining the future for poetry – one of the first areas of creativity more or less available for women: “When eternal slavery of the woman is destroyed, the man – still being loathsome – will set her free and she will be a poet, so will she! The woman will find unknown! The worlds of her ideas – will they be different from ours? She will find something strange, immeasurably profound, repelling, charming. We will obtain it from her, and we will understand it. In expectation of it, we will demand from the poet of something new – in the area of ideas and forms” (Garin, 2003, p. 718).

The challenge was accepted. In science, the necessity of considering sex as corporality and gender – as a way of existence, formed and realised through historically formed conceptions about biological belonging of the human being, was outlined. The gender conception in many ways has influenced the formation of a new paradigm in the analysis of socio-cultural phenomena, among them – women genius.

5. Research Methods

In the framework of gender studies, the question on the reasons of biological and social determinateness of women’s abilities arouse. Did the nature itself deprive the woman of abilities of the higher order and limit her by the mission of child bearing, by care about children, husband and house, or by virtue of this necessity she is unable/unwilling to reveal her genius?

As of today, empirical data showed that existing differences in the intellectual sphere between men and women turn out to be insignificant and often do not exceed 5–10%. A number of studies trace a more pronounced degree of creativity in men: they have a distinct tendency towards the search of new, in contrast to the majority of the representatives of females (Ilyin, 2010, p. 206-210). However, some scientists, such as J. P. Guilford, E.P. Torrance, do not state differences by the parameters, characterising creativity. The majority of researchers agree that women have perceptive and verbal abilities more developed, while men – visual-spatial (Druzhinin, 2007, p. 125-131).

A well-known formula of success “Can-Want-Must” points to necessary constituents of any activity, including a creative one – abilities and motivation: extrinsic (external) and intrinsic (internal). And if there are no differences in abilities of men and women, they are revealed in the motivation sphere. The motivation of females is predominantly extrinsic, i.e. the motive is easily formed under the external influence, and intrinsic motivation is typical for males, which proceeds from their own understanding of the sense and personal importance in activity (Ilyin, 2010, p. 169-171). In childhood, the woman likes to perform stereotyped activity; at a mature age, her interest on the whole is directed to cognition, then – to creativity, to family. At an early age, men prefer activity of research nature; later they prioritize creativity in their interests, then cognition, and work (Ilyin, 2010, p. 183).

This is only a small part of what modern science has at its disposal, being interested in the question about similarity and difference in abilities and motivation of women and men. But it also allows explaining that fact that art and literature are the areas of professional activity, where women excelled at

spectacular achievements, which are so close to female nature. For example, in the Great Soviet Encyclopedia (3rd edition, 1970-1978) the following data are presented: the largest percentage of the outstanding female representatives includes actresses, artists, singers, ballerinas – 40%; on the second place – poetess and penwomen – 32%; then women politicians, stateswomen go – 25%; women-scientists are on the last place – 3% .

6. Findings

Time has proved that the woman in traditional (patriarchal) culture is able in principle to perform the functions which are considered to be masculine, but production of something new requires from her movement in the direction of masculinity. At that, virile feminine is subjected to gradual transformation and risk of loss. In fact, to bring the culture, arranged by the masculine type, to naught is absurdity, but it is possible to take place in the “gaps left by men”, and these are the spheres that use the main and distinctive female ability – “empathy”, owing to which, it is possible to “discover purely scientific, typical connections that are concealed from the man”. “In case of preserving objective culture, the form of which women obey, it is possible to expect from them new nuances and broadening the boundaries in case they create something *that men are unable to create* (italics – auth.)”, G. Simmel believed (Simmel, 1996, p. 242).

Today, owing to theoretical experience of feminism and numerous gender studies, the specific female subjectivity, basing on bodily experience, is represented not by something secondary after masculine objectivity, basing on the spirit experience, but by something that has its unique ontological status in creative self-realisation. In the theoretical understanding, intuitive-unconscious nature of the female way of the world understanding, a specific image of existence and activity in it becomes a promising area of studies, as well as a foundation for one of the alternative ways of culture development.

7. Conclusion

No harmonious theories relatively female genius have been formed yet. Up to the XX century, in the philosophic tradition, when considering the female nature, its indissoluble connection with the male nature was emphasised, but in the explicitly complementary and secondary status. The woman acted as an entirely natural (material), passive, sensuous creature as opposed to the man as a cultural (spiritual), active, rational one. In its basis, the prevalence of subjective over objective was seen.

Today, having obtained freedom, which is necessary for personal and creative formation, women lay claims to the creator of culture, without negating their ontological specificity. Female creativity can become a worthy response to the challenge, expressed in modern dehumanization of culture.

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