

Preface

Saying that *a woman is a mystery* seems to be a repeated commonplace. However, one of the most harmful and odd mistakes emerges when an obvious thing is ignored for its obviousness. One's bright intellect feels like sleeping in the safe consciousness of having things explored. But a true mystery does not cease to be a mystery because of being very often viewed. This means that a mysterious topic must be entertained by man again and again in order to see its depth, truth and good and to break stereotypes too. The process of getting knowledge consists in cleaning the real nature of schemas as well as in perceiving it more deeply through both academic and personal research even up to contemplation. In this way, an individual could enrich and strengthen his or her own life with what is alive.

A woman is such a mystery. And plenty of her actual and possible roles in history could be seen. She is a figure of salvation and condemnation. Eve was a woman and Mary too. A woman was being recalled in order to commit a sin and to be converted; to fall down and to rise up; to be lost and to be found. Beauty was admired in her while ugliness turned out to be most striking when her face was looked at. As “femme fatale” and Beatrix, a housewife, a mother, a companion, an inspiration, a leader, a scientist, an artist, an object and a subject, she, in her femininity remains the challenge not only for men but for herself too. Indeed, she does not exist. There are “she-they”, women, individuals being different one from another but concurrently bearing on themselves the female nature. Some of them are real while others belong to the sphere of imagination. But above all a woman appears as a mystery and woe betide an epoch which misses recognizing her.

In this large field our enterprise has been placed. Gathering researchers from four universities, namely the University of Ljubljana, the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Jagiellonian University, Krakow and Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University, Turkey representing various scientific professions, like theology, psychology, philosophy, family and social studies and philology we tend to undertake the question of woman in the horizon of our time. The title of our project “Faces of Women. In Search of Positive Prospects” expresses our aims and hopes. We want to see the question in its selected profiles according to our particular interests in order to search for, or to find positive prospects of being a woman and shaping the today. The word “positive” differs our attempts from a number of contemporary propositions which seems to reduce and

irresponsibly transform the meaning of womanliness towards ideology. Fully respecting the right to free studies we are open to refer them to the broad frame of objective values in order to be provided with a sense by virtue of what has been called *strong evaluation* by Charles Taylor. In this spirit – as part of the deed – the international and interdisciplinary conference “Faces of Women. In Search of Positive Prospects” was held from 17th to 18th of November 2014 in Krakow, Poland. All the speakers – additionally representing the University of Ljubljana (Mateja Centa), Ivan Franko Zhytomyr State University, Ukraine (Olga Khoroshun), National Taiwan Normal University (Grace Hong) and Solayea Institute, Ljubljana (Oliwia Borkowska, Maja Horvat) – delivered their contributions and fruitfully exchanged their experiences. An outstanding dimension of the meeting was a series of panels when questions sparked a lively discussion making room for final results submitted mostly in the present book. On behalf of all the participants the organizers – Stanko Gerjolj and Marcin Godawa – express the very special acknowledgments and tribute to Oliwia Borkowska for her excellent work on creating the idea of the project as well as on its successful implementation.

The monograph contains 11 most notable contributions and represents a unique whole of scientific papers. The authors’ propositions in the field of style and language are respected.

In the case of two famous Old Testament sisters Leah and Rachel, Stanko Gerjolj discusses the dynamics of women’s communication, which, in collaboration with a man in love the relationship changes faces. This dynamic, which is also as topical today as in Biblical times, challenges also the man to the changes in communication, as well as to changing of his face.

In the field of religious reflection Marcin Godawa presents the figure of Julian of Norwich (XIV/XV AD) as a woman who could be a leader on the way to full union with God. The English anchoress’ profound spiritual experience of God combined with her theological background gives a message to people beyond the borders of her epoch and social limits right up to be valid for today’s persons. Especially, the multi-dimensioned, rich and intensive life of joy—expounded here—with such a topic as joy overcoming sufferings and being both a part of humans’ state and the final fulfilment of their relation with God seems to be the very attractive prospect to explore and share.

Bojan Žalec moves from history in modern life, where, on the basis of the written documents of Luce Irigaray gives a very in-depth discussion on the dilemmas of personalism. The originality of his contribution is in fact precisely in the placement of Irigaray in the context of the solitary personalism, emphasizing the importance of dialogue, which is also distinguished by its retention. Žalec notes that her idea at its core certainly is an instance of solidary personalism,

while he discusses its conceptions of God and the truths that are in a certain tension with him. With their proper review, allowed by the framework of her thoughts, her view would become even more coherent and consistent.

Although Simone Weil and Edith Stein are both historic personalities, both characters address the fundamental dilemmas and challenges of modern life in a special way. Marek Urban places them right in the context of modern life, and along the specified characters an in-depth, and on a high philosophical and theological level, raises the question about the role of faith when faced with existential questions of life.

The following authors, in conjunction with the image of a woman, open questions of modern life issues. Katja Sabadin presents an empirical study on the impact of service or employment complexities on the dynamics of the partnership or marital relationship between husband and wife. This leads to interesting differences between how occupational stress is experienced by women and how by men and how this is reflected in their interpersonal relationships.

Barbara Simonič discusses the impact of motherhood on the marriage relationship. As shown by empirical research, the first crisis of marital relationship most often occurs in the first five years of a joint life. During this period a child is usually born. According to the author's findings, in this case, primarily the mother is usually engaged in the important personality shifts, which in the absence of mutual sensibility and professionalism can additionally strain relationships in the family.

In her survey, Nataša Rijavec Klobučar devotes her attention to women after divorce. It is interesting that women after separation experience their decision both as a negative as well as a positive one. Some of them experience this step tragically, while others take advantage of it for personal growth.

Iryna Semeniuk presents an interesting and eloquent situation and trends in relation to the education of women in Ukraine, which the author attaches to the issue of meritocracy. Miriam Stanonik comes to some opposite, but no less relevant findings and conclusions in her study; she discusses the question of feminization of work in the education and training field. On the one hand, the mere tradition pushes educational activities in the domain of women, while on the other hand, both responses of students as well as educators show the need for male and female approaches. This context also includes the very felicitous contribution of Iwona Węgrzyn, who critically and soberly reflects the feminist movement in Poland. Her discussion is in many ways contradictory with existing established trends and that is why it opens up valuable fresh insights.

The entire set of discussions is nicely rounded by Štefanija Jaksetič Dujc who puts a female character in the context of ecology and fundamental bond between generations of both family as well as social environment.