



"Women have become women's problem" — although this has been said by a man, I mention it because it comes from one of the greatest theologians of our time, Karl Rahner.

Let us not be fooled - when we are speaking of the contemporary women's movement, we are facing one of the most important social movements in this century, and perhaps in the history of ^{marking} ~~humanity~~. ~~This is a movement that, in its evolution,~~ ^{results from} ~~in its evolution.~~ ^{marks} the convergence of numerous factors, ~~we~~ will sum up the most obvious ones. of all, there is a new awareness:

Firstly, the recognition that we, women constitute a well differentiated group in society. ~~that women form a bio-social class.~~ (Of course we understand the concept of "class" as encompassing more the division between different social groups created in the process of production in the beginning of industrialization.) ~~a class is~~

a social formation ~~which is simultaneously~~ determined by the socio-economical ~~and~~ ^{structures as well as by the} cultural structures strictly linked to biological conditions. ~~On~~ ^{In fact, the} biological condition, assumed century by century as an inferiority and considered as such, in law and behaviour, ~~emphasizes~~ ^{is at the root of} ~~that condition~~ ^{specific situation} of civic minority, of social and economic exploitation, ~~which is common to other groups, and justifies it.~~ ^{they are given a new emphasis by their biological basis} Thus, because of her capacity for procreation, woman is reduced to a second class statute of citizenship and consigned to the mere condition of housewife; it is because of her absorption in the infrastructures of daily existence and contributing to the well-being of people, that woman sees herself reduced to the bottom of the professional scale and ~~to~~ ^{earning} the lowest salaries; it is by her assimilation into a

biological function and by her conformity to the established standards, that women's social status is affected in all societies.

All this would seem only a "minus" in relation to other groups, if that did not go beyond the barrier of what is considered humanly possible; now, there occurs in the superposition of all these "minus" a qualitative ^{leap} jump which makes the social group formed by women the most ill-favoured stratum in ~~humanity~~ ^{mankind}.

It is not surprising that, in the last ten years, an increasing wave of discontent has emerged amongst women, under the form of a certain consciousness of their oppressive condition and embodying itself in the collective discovery of their own strength as a group.

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

This social movement takes place in successive waves of the enquest for self-determination and for the human rights which should be granted to the discriminated and exploited groups, as well as to those kept under guardianship. The waking classes fight against the oppression of which they are the victims; they fight for the independence of the colonized peoples; young people fight against adults' guardianship and standards. In spite of all these continuous fights, women who engaged themselves in them, ~~realized~~ realized ~~that~~ they continued to be oppressed, colonized and kept under guardianship. Thus we come to the greatest social moment of self-determination in history. Some call it the fight against sexism; others reduce it to its most spectacular expression, that is, the

movements of Liberation; the women speak about neo-feminism or the new "Left".

What do we mean to say with the designation we give to our collective effort? It is true that feminism has already had two significant moments in this century. The feminism which was born of the industrialization claimed the equality of political and civic rights for women. But the voting right has not brought automatically the social right of being eligible for the public functions; neither has it brought the right to choose freely the state of life or the husband, nor has it abolished woman's subjection to legal norms of domination. That feminism was a necessary landing but left us still in the threshold of human dignity.

Therefore, the Fundação Cuidar o Futuro second feminism has been gradually growing more centered around the social rights of ~~equality~~ equality of salary, of the returning to the working world, of social security, of health, of collective equipment at the service of the family, children, patients and elderly people - these needs are justified by women's effort. Such a feminism has developed itself mainly at the level of the technical and cultural strata whose instruments of analysis allowed to a recognition of the failure of the feminism in its first stage. We see that in this second feminism, equality is not the solution and to try ~~to~~ attain the oppressor's situation is to perpetuate the "status quo". Thus, the social movement begins to transform itself into a political vector and to acquire the appearance of a political ideology. Nevertheless to gain a social impact, such a current is hindered by women themselves, who are alienated from the

values and the tasks of "femininity", ^{precisely} ~~exactly~~ as a
mainly society would want it and would make it
possible. But that "femininity" also suffers a deep
shock. The literature which propagates it is appointed
to the most ill-favoured strata amongst women and
it is going to clash progressively with the problems
the intellectual strata had been identifying and
denouncing. It occurs, after Edgar Morin's ^{fortunate} ~~good~~
expression, the fusion between the wide wave and
the shock wave. ~~The~~ Feminism acquires a concrete
existential and human language. ~~Femininity~~
acquires weapons and begins to discover its battle-
fields.

It is in the moment of this fusion or in its
possibility that a new political force breaks out -
women's force coming from their solidarity. Hence the
enthusiasm we put into our personal and collective
liberation. Our concern is not only about our own
reality as a human ^{person} ~~person~~ creature, asserting himself as
a complete being winning over the ancestral determinism
of society. We do not want our force kept as a
secret in the world either, though we wish that the
barriers of social class, of age, race, ideology or nationality
fall amongst us. The fact is that the political project
contained in women's solidarity force is ^{profoundly} ~~subversive~~, touching
the very foundations of the society we live in.

We are more interested in society than in the state.
We believe more in free organization of the people than
in institutions. We play the temporary dynamics
against the fixed stability. We accept the impulse of
the intuitions as an antidote against a logical

dehumanized rationality. We bet on the particular and the punctual as the sole substance of the conjunctive tissue of society which generates itself. We reject viscerally the political myth and its rituals, because its history shows us its incapacity to work. We laugh at plans made at short or long date, because up to now they have been very seldom translated into these simple things, which are, nourishment, health, ^{house} the job, social security, culture and the communication between people. We want to design an utopia which will be able to transform, here and now, the emaciated daily existence. We know that we have inside us the energies which have never intervened in history, but when that happens, the course of that same history will be changed.

And what is the place occupied by Christianity in all this? I think Christianity is indispensable to this project, because it gives simultaneously a last horizon and a possible immediate, for it is a scatology and a conversion ^{and}, because it is a communism and an alterity.

A Last horizon and a possible immediate... Before the contradictions of the political life and social mutations, Jesus Christ becomes more and more the absolute ~~aim~~ ^{end} of all the human struggle. But, at the same time, it does not send us to an idealism outside the field of the humanly possible. On the contrary, Christianity situates us almost in an "idealistic materialism" — the recognition that the laws of history are inexorable within the parameters which are fixed to it, but that we are supremely free

of introducing in it new parameters which ~~not~~ modify and orientate it. without Jesus Christ, the feminist social movement as a whole will be able to leave a ballast behind in time, but will not win the last stage of human evolution - the assumption of its condition in the cosmic face which is Christ in all of us.

A soteriology and a conversion... This means that the feminist social movement as a whole, prepares the future times, the plenitude of times, Christ's coming to this world, but not in the abstract vacuum of an ungrounded hope, rather in the concrete fullness of the daily faith, that is to say, in that radical transformation of the heart, which will allow us to discover our own truth, to shake off the yoke of our alienations ^{through} ~~through~~ and to walk through the painful and humble process of our own liberation. It is not by chance that many women who participate in the feminist movements try to find themselves in the psychoanalytic process. ~~By~~ that process or by others, it is necessary to expell me and for all the ghosts that live in us or ^{to} try with them a coexistence which does not paralyze us in our everyday life. That is women's conversion from our narcissism, our envy that attacks us in a Freudian way. And what way can that be, but the radicalism, the gospel points us?

A communion and an alterity... A solidarity amongst women is neither easy nor evident. Their condition of oppressed people leads them to interiorize mean defense mechanisms and to confront themselves, in similar moulds to those used by the oppressor, with the

problems of power. Now, the great sociological and political opportunity of the present feminist movement is the discovery ^{acquired through experience} of the anti-power of "engagement dégage", of the circuits ^{between} of relation and decision which do not come from competitive hierarchies, but from the spontaneous recognition of situational qualities and competencies. The words of the Holy Mary in her visit to her cousin Isabel, represent the full consciousness of that total inversion of the anti-power. Therefore "all generations will call her blessed".

But this communion, only possible in the surmounting of power relations, ~~is~~ is not a Bveller of consciences, a lesser common denominator, a construction of uniformity. On the contrary it implies the fundamental alterity of its elements ^{and in relation to others}. Now, what alterity more "another" can we find in history than that one which women experience in relation to men?

The present feminist movement reinforces this alterity. we are different and we like to be so, because we think that with that difference made social movement or political force, we also break through the horizon to other spiritual form of being in the world. we recognize so profoundly that, that difference, as all the differences, is an enrichment and a greatness for the whole ^{mankind} ~~humanity~~, that we open ourselves to the most absolute alterity - God's alterity in relation to our human condition. If the feminist movement remains only in the differentiation between men and women, it will be easily alienable in secondary forms of that

differentiation or in the ~~limit~~ boundary from differentiation to reparationism. The dialectics of the communion and of the alterity ~~has not~~ ^{will only be amounted through} ~~but~~ God's spirit - spirit which gives autonomy without dividing, which reunites without ~~hardening~~ ^{marginalizing}, which grants each one of us suitable exorcisms, but, at the same time, "operates everything in us all".

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

