

## Rational and Non-Rational Reasons for Gender Representation

<sup>1</sup>N.L. Vinogradova and <sup>2</sup>E.Y. Leontyeva

<sup>1</sup>Philosophy Department, Volgograd State Technical University, Ph.D 400005,  
Volgograd, Prospekt Lenina, 30, kv. 36, Russia

<sup>2</sup>Philosophy Department, Volgograd State Technical University, Ph.D 400082,  
Volgograd, 50 let Oktyabrya str., 17, kv. 643, Russia

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**Abstract:** This article renders the analysis of such a problem of full or partial change of person's gender-role characteristics that is expressed in gender representation. This happens when the necessity to present person's natural social gender becomes less eminent and one has possibility to choose his/her gender identity. Rational and non-rational reasons and gender representation factors are also introduced and basic types of gender representation are named.

**Key words:** Gender representation • Identity • Femininity • Masculinity • Communication principles

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### INTRODUCTION

Patriarchal attitude to human subject gender-role characteristics has traditionally predominated in Russia. Problems of feminism and masculinity had risen in the West already at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but they were not of current interest to the majority of Russian population and almost were not addressed by the Russian scientific thought. The same can be said about gender studies-their development stage happened only in the second half of the XX century, whereas the gender philosophy and sociology are still in their infancy. Nevertheless, very active globalization and computerization are of concern in Russia and promote actively the inoculation of western behavior and mindset in all life spheres-in economics, politics, culture, religion, etc. The philosophical topics that have not been actual in earlier years are intensively studied nowadays, in particular the topic of gender studies [1-4]. Globalization and westernization influence greatly the communications scene-mass media broadcast the behavior samples, standards and stereotypes, including the social gender characteristics. Human subjects find themselves in a situation, when traditional for Russia gender mindset is being criticized, reconsidered and positioned as obsolete, which entails gender representation.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

We understand gender representation as redefinition of the social role positions. It is a change induced by social circumstances or correction of the formed gender that is manifested in expressing the desired gender by appropriate communicative signs and symbols and communicating this gender to the social being. Theoretical stress of the gender representation notion is limited to the distinction between the predetermined biological reality and traditionally formed gender type and newly designed gender represented to the society in a certain situation.

Representation evolves as a problem when the human essence and the role played by the subject ceases to be apparent and is constructed as something self-consistent and independent of existential essence which leads in the end to the necessity of change or correction of the self-identity. Gender representation arises also as a problem when the choice of identity becomes possible. Until the identity is not disputed and there is no possibility of its choice, representation is not needed. It is in classical philosophy that is apparent that the idea of biological constituent is the fundamental for human essence expression of the subject [5]. Natural beingness, existence of a person are the primary fundamentals for demonstrating all the rest. However,

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**Corresponding Author:** N.L. Vinogradova, Philosophy Department, Volgograd State Technical University, Ph.D 400005, Volgograd, Prospekt Lenina, 30, kv. 36, Russia.  
Tel: 8-902-362-42-91.

the situation of post-modernism stresses the context and multiplicity [6-8]. That's what creates the possibility of gender representation which is in reality based on the multiplicity of a subject roles or variable identity. This reflects worldwide tendency to continual changes, transformations and metamorphosis.

Presentation develops into representation when the human subject has a possibility to choose the identity. Gender representation becomes possible in a situation when the subject has a desire or necessity to demonstrate not a real identity, but the identity that is objectively expected, demanded or subjectively desired. In accordance with that gender representation demonstrated the change or correction of identities that are not identical in reality or do not reflect the essence. In doing so, the representations affect greatly the society by substituting the "real essence". Subject's choice of the desired representation depends on subjective and objective self-appraisal, freedom of choice, rational and non-rational factors.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

What motivates the contemporary human being, acting in some situations as "agent", to ponder over self-gender identity and undertake some actions to correct or fully change it by means of representation?

First of all we are interested in social conditions, causes and situations that influence the gender representation processes. Let's mention that gender representation can be partial, full indecisive, full ultimate and virtual. We name it partial gender representation, when a person demonstrates some traits of other gender by means of communicative signs and symbols. Full representation of the gender-role essence can be a consequence of the impact of all rational and non-rational reasons and factors aggregate. It is manifested as demonstration of a complete set of other gender signs and symbols (visually the subject is perceived as clearly defined and communicated gender type). Full gender representation can be influenced by social factors, as well as clinical changes in the human body, which we do not consider. In case of full ultimate gender representation we speak of introducing physiological and clinical changes to the human body. More often modern world gives us the examples of full indecisive and partial gender representation. We would like to stipulate that clinical and physiological changes in the functions of biological organism of a man or woman that lead to change of gender-role behavior are not considered in this article.

Virtual gender representation is a special and distinct type. It is generated by information technologies, Internet and virtual communities, when a person practically does not represent his/her gender in social reality and demonstrates in virtual community the identity that is inappropriate to his/her gender. Such gender "game" can be multiple and in different virtual communities subject is free to demonstrate different characteristics of any gender. The intrigue of virtual community consist in the fact that a subject can simulate a gender identity and create a sequence of symbols that are not associated with biological gender. One of the options is a deliberate shift and confounding of gender signs and symbols that are defined as gender relativization. Such situation can be related to unrealized person's aspirations or can be considered as a start of actual representation.

It is obvious that reasons and factors affecting the gender representation are numerous. We will indicate those that are in our opinion the most evident and can be analyzed by means of traditional dichotomy as "rational and irrational", using the classic definition for the latter notions [9,10].

Rational reasons for gender representation are generated by objective reality in economics, politics and culture in some regions and in society in general. Conventionally the activity in these areas had been the priority of men. In accordance with that a subject who wanted to obtain any results in those areas had to demonstrate stereotype traits of masculine gender: highly educated level, professionalism, firmness, ability to be determined in decision-making, independency, impartiality, etc.

It would be unfair to think that gender stereotypes do not undergo changes. Social perceptions and standards, way of life and lifestyle change, so do the stereotype ideas of gender behavior. In modern society there is no more image of a man as of the only earner and defender in the family, the stereotype of a woman as delicate and powerless is broken. These changes are evoked by increased social activity of women that started in the beginning of the twentieth century. However, transformation of stereotype images of gender predetermination in politics, economics and culture happen at a much slower rate than that of a social reality changes. Therefore, human subject willing to achieve something that stands out of his/her gender stereotype is forced to represent him/her-self in order to assure suitable perception of the individual self. In other words, to propagate in communicative environment those signs and symbols that are grounded in stereotype perception of the majority of population.

It is apparent that rational reasons for gender representation lie in the need to adapt to certain conditions that have changed or in the need to conform to the present social reality. First, rational reasons are understood. Second, they are justified and thus, pragmatic. New job search, need to step into new social institution or to join new social group (stratum), obvious success of some expected results in problem-solving are the examples of rational reasons for gender representation.

Non-rational reasons for gender representation are generated by person's subjective perception of gender given to him/her at birth. A person thinks that to be a human of an opposite gender is more comfortable and pleasant, that it brings more satisfaction from reality and more realization of his/her plans. Such subjective views are very well described by a Russian proverb: "The place is best of all where we haven't been at all" or, in other words, "It is good for the one, who is not myself".

We understand non-rational reasons for gender representation as those that are beyond rational consciousness, they cannot be expressed in logical notions, are less studied due to their specific features and usually considered in theory. Human subject can know by the sixth sense about importance of a certain gender-role function (that is different to the gender he/she represents at the moment) in some situations. So he/she changes or corrects the behavior or appearance in accordance with that. Emotions can also influence the representation of self-gender. Use of loud voice and explicit language by a woman is an effort to emphasize her strength and masculine essence that is thought to be more demanded in this or that situation. Tears as female emotional symbol can be unconsciously used by men also in some situations and to present them as sensual and emotionally open-traits which are perceived to be positive characteristics for men nowadays.

Gender representation within the frame of communication environment is not a national or special feature. It is to a large extent evoked by globalization and unification of the world society. Nevertheless the phenomenon of gender representation has some peculiarities in each national and culture type that depend on mentality, special traditional lifestyle and existing gender behavior. All these can be special factors that influence gender representation.

For example, during a long time gender status of Slavic woman, her system of values related to balance between family and work had been the subject to significant changes. Patriarchial lifestyle in family

relations in the beginning of the XX century gave way to native version of emancipation. One of the most complex factor affecting gender representation is the assignment of the rights and duties, social roles and behavior types in socio-cultural environment. There is a direct relationship between such assignment and type of mentality, confession and existing morale and traditions. For reasons given it is possible to trace the evolution of functions belonging to social roles and assigned to men and women in history from complementarity to interchangeability.

In general, even regardless of great variety of factors, in the modern world where integration processes are strong, one can speak of tendency to reorientation of women towards masculine behavior and of men to feminine behavior and thus, of re-representation of social gender of one-self. Many girls that have been brought up in traditional gender mindset (towards family, bringing up of children, taking care of husband etc.), becoming adults and being influenced by external factors and mass media, change their orientation and communicate to the society a gender type with pronounced masculine characteristics (career oriented, freedom in sexual relations, unwillingness to bother themselves with children, etc.). Representation examples are relevant not only to women. Moreover, if the contemporary culture fosters woman's trait in small girls, it breeds less and less in small boys such traits as a warrior, hunter and host and renders authoritativeness, aggressiveness and assertiveness as negative values. In this sense the formation of masculinity in boys is tempered from very young age. Growing boy and adult man experience even greater suppression of the male principle when they do not find the demand for their skills and will to defend, protect, bear responsibility, be the earner and the only supporter of a family. Men presenting traditionally feminine traits such as tenderness, kindness and tolerance become more solicited (even when looking for a sex partner) which forces men to represent themselves in a different gender. Such changes in gender behavior styles are communicated by means of sociocultural signs and symbols.

## **CONCLUSION**

Summing up, the tendency to gender representation is a complex factor of men and women positions in the system of social stratification of contemporary society. It is related to system of values, social status and social gender preferences. Present human being finds himself in

a complex situation regarding the construction of his/her gender, because, on the one hand, he/she experiences the influence of traditional values and on the other hand, the influence of modern feministic sociocultural principles. As a consequence, it is not uncommon when gender representation takes place for social, economic and political reasons. Such phenomenon affects the stability of the whole society.

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