

# Thinking



VOLUME 11, NUMBERS 3 & 4

THE JOURNAL OF  
PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN



**SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE**  
**Women, Feminism and**  
**Philosophy for Children**  
Edited by Ann Margaret Sharp

**Volume 11, Number 3 & 4**

*Publisher*

*Thinking* is published by The Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, a non-profit institute that is devoted to educational purposes and is part of Montclair State University.

*Editorial Staff*

*Editor*

Matthew Lipman, Professor of Philosophy,  
Montclair State University, Director, IAPC.

*Associate Editor*

Ann Margaret Sharp, Professor of Education,  
Montclair State University, and  
Associate Director, IAPC.

*Editorial Advisor*

Adrian DuPuis, School of Education  
Marquette University

*Contributing Editors*

Gareth B. Matthews  
Department of Philosophy  
University of Massachusetts at Amherst

*Staff Photographer*

Joseph D. Isaacson

*Typography and Production*

Rocco J. Caponigro, Sr.  
Universal Typesetting Services  
West Caldwell, NJ 07006

*Circulation and Promotion*

Joanne Matkowski

Contents copyright © 1994 The Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children. All rights reserved.

ISSN No. 0190-3330

*Institutional subscription (yearly, 4 issues).....\$40.00*  
*Individual subscription (yearly, 4 issues)..... 25.00*  
*Foreign subscriptions add \$10.00 (U.S.) postage for four (4) issues. U.S. subscriptions add \$5.00 postage for four (4) issues.*

Manuscripts and related correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, *Thinking*, IAPC, Montclair State University Upper Montclair, NJ 07043

Correspondence dealing with subscriptions should also be addressed to IAPC, Montclair State University, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043.

Postage paid at Montclair State University, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043

**DEDICATION**

*This Special Issue of Thinking is dedicated to the memory of*  
Catherine Young Silva

# Table of Contents

**Introduction**

*Ann Margaret Sharp (U.S.A.)* ..... 1

**Part I: Philosophy for Children and Feminist Philosophy**

*San MacColl (Australia)*, Opening Philosophy ..... 5

*Sarah Redshaw (Australia)*, Body Knowledge ..... 9

*Jen Glaser (Australia)*, Reasoning as Dialogical Inquiry ..... 14

*Felicity Haynes (Australia)*, Male Dominance and the Mastery of Reason . 18

*Ann M. Sharp (U.S.A.)*, Feminism and Philosophy for Children:  
The Ethical Dimension ..... 24

*Christina Slade (Australia)*, Harryspeak and the Conversation of Girls ... 29

**Part II: Philosophy for Children in Formerly Authoritarian Societies**

*Zaza Carneira de Moura (Portugal)*, Seeds of Change, Seeds of Chance ... 33

*Gloria Arbones (Argentina)*, Feminism and Philosophy for  
Children in Argentina ..... 39

*Nina Yulina (Russia)*, Prospects for Feminist and Philosophy  
for Children in Russia ..... 43

*Margarita Dudina (Russia)*, Some Reflections on Our System of Education 44

*Teresa de la Garza (Mexico)*, Women's Education in Mexico and  
Philosophy for Children ..... 47

*Roumiana Tultkova (Bulgaria)*, Bulgarian Women Facing Changes  
in the Educational System ..... 51

*Mihaela Miroiu (Rumania)*, A Vicious Circle of Anonymity ..... 54

**Part III: Philosophy for Children and the Education of Women**

*Marie-France Daniel (Quebec)*, Liberating The Self in the  
Philosophical Community of Inquiry ..... 63

*Eulalia Bosch (Catalonia)*, Primary School: Love versus Knowledge ..... 71

*Megan Laverty (Australia)*, Putting Education at the Center ..... 73

*Sally Hagaman (U.S.A.)*, Education in Philosophy and Art ..... 77

*Wendy Turgeon (U.S.A.)*, Choosing Not to Play the Game ..... 80

*Patricia Smyke (Switzerland)*, Treading My Way Towards Philosophy  
for Children ..... 83

*Helena van den Aardweg (The Netherlands)*, Transforming  
the Community ..... 86

**Part IV: Philosophy for Children Comes to Brazil**

*Catherine Young Silva*, On Women, Feminism and Philosophy  
for Children ..... 90

*Catherine Young Silva*, Catherine's Story: The Echo of the  
Voices of Children ..... 92

**Part V: About the Authors** ..... Inside Back Cover

**Credits**

*Front cover and page 42: drawings by Jacqueline Morreau with special permission of the artist. Page 11: "Young Dancers" by Lisa Labbe. Page 53: Etching by Bonnard, "Dingo". Page 62: Drawings by Henri Kerels. Page 76: Pen & ink, "Lips" by Norman McLaren. Page 85: Pencil sketch by Valeska Gert. Page 91: Pencil by Jose de Almada Negreiros.*

# *The Vicious Circle of Anonymity, or Pseudo-Feminism and Totalitarianism*

**Mihaela Miroiu**

As a matter of fact, the two main goals of feminism are the equality of woman with man and her liberation from the domination of a world ruled by masculine values. When these two problems are taken into account in Western literature, they are discussed in terms of man being considered as an individual while woman is aspiring to this condition, to her assertion as an individual, to her being equal with man (according to liberal theory), not only before the law but also as the potential creator of specific feminist values (in the radical feminism).

This phrase, 'as an individual,' is generated by two hundred years of democratic practice. So what is the situation in an area marked by fifty years of socialist totalitarianism? What do the terms 'equality' and 'individual' mean in such a context? We may say that socialism worked systematically for the abstract human being through the systematic destruction of the concrete human being, the individual. Here are some of the instruments used by the socialist totalitarian system to carry out this work.

## **1. Political and economic strategies.**

The first step of socialist policy was to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat within a communist regime. By changing the name given by Marx to the notion of 'proletarian' (a person without any property, who earns his or her living by selling his or her own labor), the communist regime identified the proletarian with the industrial and agricultural worker (who had only an elementary training in 1950). From this category of workers were chosen the leaders at all levels. From the very beginning (1817 in Russia and 1948 in Bulgaria), the stipulation of the political equality of woman with man and her promotion through

the same mechanism as that used for man was formally established. The proletarian 'had no country,' but through this strategy s/he had also no religion, no nationality, no race and no sex.

The type of proletarian who had become a leader initiated the process of destroying private property. They started to ruin the property itself. This was the second significant step of establishing the communist regime. 'Everybody' became the owner of all the means of production, but not in the sense of having equal shares of a certain enterprise. The real sense was that everybody was an abstract owner of an abstract property. The results of this fact are very clear: there were going to be no real owners and no real competition among them. There was a single competitor, the state. But that couldn't compete with itself.

How was a wage-earner supposed to know s/he was an owner? Here we see another devious aspect of the communist regime: the absolute gulf between what the system proclaimed and the reality. The proletarian was repeatedly told through the mass media, or meetings, that s/he was the owner, the producer and the beneficiary of the principal means of production. Like any other ideological abstraction, soon these notions lost their meaning.

A second problem was this: according to the 'economic equality' everybody was the owner of all the means of production, but together and not as individuals. And so happened what Aristotle had warned of 2,300 years previously: 'what belongs to everybody belongs to nobody'.

What happened to the private property of consumer goods? In this case, things were different in different countries. In Romania, the equality of the people was pursued with a peculiar persistence. It was 'scientifically established' that each of

us needed only eight square meters of living surface. Most of the existing houses were destroyed and replaced by uniform blocks of flats which were all alike, and each human being got an apartment whose size was calculated according to a formula for giving the necessary number of square meters per person. In the last few years, the system tried to build food warehouses out of which we were going to feed ourselves in the same regulated way (it was precisely calculated how many calories were needed by every social professional category). These enormous food stores were nicknamed 'the temples of starvation'.

In schools and in all kinds of offices, a uniform was compulsory. The uniform itself had become the symbol of equality.

This strange equalitarian treatment was applied to women too. In Romania, 45.9% of the workers were women because (a) being equal with men they had an equal right to work; (b) being owners, producers and beneficiaries, like men, they were obliged to work; (c) every human being had to be occupied in a state establishment so that he or she could be easily supervised; (d) no working man could earn his family's living by his wage alone; (e) those who did not work were considered offenders and were sent to forced labor camps or even to prison; (f) the constitution stipulated the equal right and duty to work. 'To choose' a way of living was nonsense.

The totalitarian regime created devious methods through which men and women were bound up with their jobs and with a certain town or village. Only by getting married could they manage to change the place of their job, otherwise they were condemned to live in the place allotted to them as a working place.

## **2. The 'sound Family'**

Theoretically speaking (from a con-

stitutional viewpoint) any person of age could marry any other person, or could obtain a divorce when there were insufficient reasons for maintaining the family. Socialism advocated the formation of a 'sound family', but this was not to be understood on a psycho-physical basis. There was a 'metaphysical' element in the life of each person, a kind of Damocles' sword hanging over them, and this element was their personal record.

Each of us had a record which contained all kinds of data, including our political affiliation, our past, our parents and our attitude to the social order. Marriage with a person who had negative references in their record was damaging to one's personal record, resulting in impediments to any type of promotion, the loss of position or of one's job, endless criticism in front of the staff, all kinds of pettifoggeries, and the distrust of the society in you as a discredited element, and so on. Once married, divorce became a second problem, because the record of a divorced person was thereby spoiled. A lot of couples did not marry, and many married couples remained informally separated, for this reason.

The number of children was imposed by state policy, and was fixed at at least four children for every family. Abortion was forbidden below this number and the contraceptive methods accepted from a medical viewpoint were made almost unavailable. If the number of children was larger than four, the state offered encouragement and decorations but no satisfactory means of sustenance. Therefore, each child born to a family endangered the other children's health and worsened their malnutrition. A lot of women die trying to terminate their pregnancies by using primitive methods. Consequently, the number of orphans and unhealthy children nowadays is great. To have children was, and still is, a luxury but also a risk. The law's punishment for a woman who committed abortion was prison, while her partner (the child's father) was completely innocent in the eyes of the law.

The interference of the communist party-state in family life was more than obvious. The personal conflicts of a couple were commonly discussed at their places of work with the entire staff, and the 'guilty' party received political penal-

ties. Everybody's slogan had to be: "We have nothing to hide from society." Current feminist literature has discussed extensively the relationship between the public and the private sphere, the latter being considered as invisible to the public eye. We experienced a grotesque transference in the private sphere.

### 3. Training strategies.

I shall make reference only to official training (the school and the mass media).

According to the state's egalitarian principles, schools were mixed. A single form of training was financed, ruled and supervised by the state. In the fifties and sixties the most frequent discrimination was that of forbidding the children of former proprietors and 'intellectuals' to attend university studies, they having been considered 'unhealthy elements'. Later, this kind of prohibition was maintained for certain faculties only.

After 1980, general compulsory studies lasted ten years and had the same schedule and the same handbooks for everyone, irrespective of the possibilities, abilities and cultural level of the pupils. Formally, all the pupils in Romania got equal training up to the age of sixteen. High schools used some criteria of selection at the entrance examination, but their training schedules were almost identical and the school examinations were based on memorization. The political system obstinately tried to hinder or destroy all critical and reflective thinking and also the understanding of the social life.

Here are some of the methods used for this purpose: 93% of the high schools had an industrial and agricultural structure, and so had 70% of the universities. The Arts subjects, such as Literature, History, Philosophy and Foreign Languages occupied together only 10-20% of the study time and were dominated by political ideology.

Education was identified with political training which consisted in the canonical repetition of the texts made by the leader of the party-state. In the technical universities, humanist education was almost absent, but a lot of political training was done instead. Every day the television gave only political education during the two hours of its program (from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.). The party press plainly do-

minated cultural life.

The single purpose of this system was the creation of a so-called 'new man', an instrument devoted to the final goal of the 'communist terrestrial paradise'.

### 4. The 'new man'—man or woman?

This term, 'the new man', was the thematic obsession of all communist training. I believe that this term was an obstacle to the creation of both masculine and feminine genders, which tried obstinately to deprive the individual of his or her individuality and to obtain the gradual dissolution of the person and the melting of the individual into anonymity. The 'new man' was supposed to be the perfect and efficient anonymous person, with necessities as minimal as possible, without any personal aims, devoted to the general cause, and having duties only to the collective society, but not him/herself. Many of us were surprised at also hearing of 'duties to oneself'.

Paradoxically, some of the characteristics usually attributed to woman became features of the 'new man'. These features were: dependence, obedience, self-sacrifice and self-denial, all of them understood in relation to the society and not to the family. The 'new man' was described in functional and subjective terms as woman usually is. On the other hand, many features traditionally considered as specific to woman: the domination of the emotions over reason, sensitivity, intuition, a sense of detail, tenderness, the ability to make the environment agreeable or even delightful, personal charm, were all regarded as being completely bourgeois and injurious.

So half of the 'new man' was a semblance of the notion of woman, a maimed woman. How did this model consider those features traditionally associated with the masculine gender? Independence, the necessity of being prevalent, autonomy, the 'winner' spirit, the necessity of competition, force, dynamism, and selfishness were rejected as not being characteristic of the human type needed by a society in which the fundamental principle was: 'nothing for me, everything for society', in which personal interest was considered as a real crime against the community.

What does this new creature retain of those characteristics traditionally con-

sidered as being mainly masculine? Here are some of these features: a sort of rationality, subjected to the rules imposed by the political system; force, understood as physical power and as the capacity for enduring poverty; common sense, as applied to political ideology only; and existence in the public sphere, subject to the hitherto unprecedented imperatives of the state. So half of the 'new man' was a mockery of man, or, to put it differently, it was a mutilated man.

A pseudo-androgynous being was to be born; a man without manhood and a woman without womanhood. This creature was going to exist within both sexes, and in this sense had a new gender: *the neuter gender*. This being was not the result of a pooling of values between sexes, but the result of a mutilation that had as its final goal the creation of a 'nobody', a new individual lacking individuality, a person without personality.

Artistic representations of this ideal were produced in the shape of strange collective pictures with identical faces, multiplied copies of an anonymous person. In Romania, only the leaders, and sometimes the sportsmen, had the right to rise above anonymity. Only these persons had a face and a name, while the others were only numbers.

This social atmosphere was preserved by a very strong fear and by its instrument, the political police, the most powerful machine of repression that has existed in Eastern Europe since Stalin. This terrifying machine was 'helping' those who were 'losing their way' and made them at least simulate the ideal of the 'new man'.

Unfortunately, the imposition of such a model, though it might be rejected by common sense, tends eventually to produce self-satisfaction and seals the life of those who are more vulnerable, including those who do not have the possibility of seeking refuge in culture or in interpersonal relations in order to keep alive their need of appreciation and a meaningful life.

Culture and spirituality were the direct enemies of the purpose we have described below. Among all forms of culture the most dangerous to this purpose were considered to be philosophy, sociology and psychology. They became marginal subjects and they officially disappeared

in 1977 from the universities. A lot of barriers, real Chinese walls, were set to prevent encounters with information from the West (especially in connection with the social sciences and humanities), while the classical authors and contemporary Romanian ones who did not have a Marxist orientation were strongly forbidden. The 'new man' had to know only what was already interpreted by the system. S/he was not allowed to realize that s/he was a thinker, a sensitive creature, a man or a woman, young or old; s/he had to know only that s/he was a worker, a devoted builder of socialism.

## THE STATE OF WOMAN IN THE TOTALITARIAN REGIME

### 1. The 'worker' and the promotion of women.

The meaning of the word 'work' was corrupted in the sense that work became a purpose in itself. Moreover, it required such a high level of consciousness that you were not supposed to ask for rewards. Beside the traditional paid work, there was being practiced another form of work, and this new type of work was called 'patriotic work'—a form of service, especially in agriculture and construction, which was done mainly by students, pupils, teachers and soldiers but eventually by all the social categories. The 'patriotic work' was done especially on Sundays and during vacations, and often school was interrupted for these unpaid manual services. The reward was only the 'pride' of working. There were no wages, irrespective of the quantity, the quality and the type of work which was performed. Mediocrity, and professional self-sufficiency were encouraged in this way, while passion for work and innovation were regarded as doubtful attitudes. We were obliged to carry with nobility the title of 'working people'. Meanwhile, the standard of living was diminishing so much that many of us could not live properly, but merely survive, since for many of us to live meant only not to die.

The 'workers' of both sexes and no gender had uniform conditions of difficulty and payment. Women absorbed 45.2% of the jobs and occupied the majority of positions in culture, education, finance, commerce and agriculture. Women's representation in the public

sphere (and even in the political leadership) was considered to be exemplary. This representation—held so desirable by the Western feminist movements—was about 20-37% in the socialist countries. Positive discrimination was being practiced, which meant that women had to be represented in ruling positions, in proportion to their number in the respective institutions. Formally, they found themselves in privileged positions, given the situation in other countries where serious fights are still being carried on for such a state of affairs.

What kind of women were actually promoted and for what kind of woman was access to positions of power possible? Of course, only those who approached most closely the qualities of the 'new type of man'. The manager-woman, as well as the political leader-woman, was asked to have the following qualities: to be very authoritarian with her subordinates, to have a middling intellectual level and almost no cultural level, to be well trained in political doctrine and to have no personal ideas and opinions, but to support all the leader's opinions about any aspect of life. She was required to be married and to have a 'sound family', to struggle day and night for the cause of the party, to divulge her whereabouts, to hide nothing from her superiors, to be very obedient, to have no personal charm, to always have a tired look—the look of one deeply concerned about the fate of society, to promote only the interests of the working class and not those belonging to the intellectuality (note that usually she belonged to the ranks of the working class), and to be able and effectively to justify anything she was doing in front of the party. The same promotion criteria were also applied to men.

After the totalitarian period the image of the leader-woman was very bad, even worse than the image of the leader-man. The reason for this is the terrible educational methods used: criticism and self-criticism. The aggressive, talkative, quarrelsome women were well suited to this practice and so these types of women were promoted to positions of power. The image of the leader-woman, a combination of aggressive stupidity and wickedness, is still very much hated in Romania. The wife of the late dictator contributed greatly to the creation of this

bad image. She was number two in the party and state leadership, but was considered to have a more devilish character than the leader, her husband. Having considered herself an exemplary woman and a perfect model to be followed, she promoted similar women to all political levels. This sin greatly spoiled the Romanian women's reputation and has created a serious aversion to the idea of promoting women to positions of power. To put it differently, it has created a substantial basis for post-totalitarian sexism.

In the recent past, no moral, decent, and well-trained women wanted to be the colleague of the leader-woman. That is why the valuable women kept themselves far from power and refused to take part in the methodical extermination of the humanism of their fellow creatures. This was a fact applicable to men of the same kind too.

## 2. Woman—a life comrade and a crypto-servant.

By gaining equal rights with man, with or without her own consent, woman was no longer a lady or a young lady, but a life comrade, and man was no longer a gentleman, but also a comrade. In this way, they were both equal, but equal to zero. In family life, the woman was no longer the mere life, but the 'life comrade' of her husband, while the man himself became the 'life comrade' of his own wife, and things had to go on like that, at least from an official point of view.

Any concern beside 'global' or 'general' interests was considered frivolous and dangerous for any person, irrespective of sex. We should not forget that one of Lenin's retorts to Clara Zetkin was: "I could not believe my ears when I heard that the first state of proletarian dictatorship is battling over the counter-revolutionaries of the whole world . . . and active communist women are busy in discussing sex problems!" This, then, is how the communist propaganda trained the people in comradeship, for the allocation of tasks, and especially for the extermination of any kind of personal interest.

Duties to oneself such as preserving one's life, keeping healthy and developing one's talents and changes which were absent in socialist ethics, were replaced by their opposites; making the supreme sacrifice for the cause, not sparing one's

health, and having no desires for oneself. Moreover, the official doctrine was urging the woman to be a perfect mother and wife and a hard-working employee at the same time. And so the woman as a 'life comrade' was doing more than two thirds of the total amount of social work. She was doubly enslaved, towards the oppressive state in the public sphere and towards masculine domination in the domestic sphere (it is hard to call it the 'private' sphere in the circumstances of a socialist society).

Masculine domination manifested itself, not in the form of an explicit sexism, but in the form of unspoken sexism with deep roots in the old traditions—accepted by men and women alike—of the community. Even the word 'sexism' is still strange to our language. We were so far away from the problems of the developed West that, while in the West women were fighting for their emancipation, in the East women were, and still are, fighting for their family survival. In this last half of the century, in Romania the order of priorities has not been: (1) the husband; (2) the children; (3) the woman; but (1) the children; (2) the husband; (3) the woman. I think that the main cause of our behavior was the fact that the present did not belong to us; we could not master it and it brought us only fear, worries and tiredness. We were all thinking of the future, a future that seemed too remote and too abstract for us. This is the reason why we connected the future with our children.

The weakness of woman is sometimes explained by the fact that food passes only through her hands and not through her body. The inferior status of woman comes from the different ways of evaluating food. Thus, the one who produces food is more appreciated than the one who prepares it. East European women have produced and also prepared the food without redistributing it in their favor. But in a poor country, the man cannot be considered a privileged human being either. This kind of weakness has not been exclusively feminine, although it has been predominantly so. Generally speaking, in the socialist countries, the food has passed mainly through the hands and not through the bodies of people. This fact explains the apathy, the nervousness, the anxiety, and the so-called

ed 'living death' of the East Europeans.

A woman was spending (and is still spending) one-third of her spare time standing in lines to buy food and another third standing in the kitchen to prepare it. The domestic tools we have are those belonging to the years 1950-60, so our housekeeping is largely manual. The small quantity of edible consumer goods makes any acquisition of sugar, meat, eggs and flour, a painful and humiliating adventure. Standing in line has become a constant bane in the life of every man and woman, but cooking, house cleaning and also the bringing up of children are still the predominant occupations of the woman.

What has deeply exhausted the woman is the fact that tradition trained her for organizing and leading the household, for spending her time, her efforts and her imagination in making something for her household out of almost nothing. I use the past tense here, not because these problems belong just to the past, but because the dimension of hope, at least, has been added to the present time.

If a sociological investigation had been done (this form of investigation was prohibited during the past twenty years), women would probably have answered that their own pleasure was their children's happiness. Supererogation was so prevalent that any adult would have felt embarrassed to declare that he or she was aspiring after personal satisfactions.

The most exploited people in bringing up children have been grandmothers. Many of our children owe their survival, health and education to the united efforts and sacrifice made by their parents and grandparents. This has created a positive situation (the establishment of tight relations between grown up children and their parents) but also a negative situation (the increased dependence on the older generation, and the paying of tribute to traditional sexist education).

In Romania men were to a large extent deprived of their manhood. Because they were manipulated in the public sphere and had not been granted the exclusive status of bread winners, men did not have a privileged position as the head of the family. Women seemed to be better trained for the fight of living, owing

to the fact that they were doubly enslaved, and owing to their daily battles through which they tried hard to maintain a higher standard of living for their children and husband. However, this does not mean that they are not also deprived of their womanhood, especially as they have not got those conditions necessary to protect them from the external social evil. The protective man was not able to interpose himself between them and the public life and this fact has produced some serious defects about which I am going to write in another part of this paper.

Briefly, the day in the life of a woman was generally divided in the following way: 8-10 hours of working; 1-2 hours for transport; 2-3 hours standing in line for food and other consumer goods (which were sold in limited quantities); 2-3 hours cooking (if the gas, electricity or water had not been cut). What was left was reserved mainly for the children. The primary day for the housekeeping was Sunday. Comparing the situation of the man with that of the woman, the privilege of the man was that of having two or three more hours free per day, and also he was not so busy thinking about the problems of survival. This fact showed its results in the past two post-totalitarian years, as we are going to see later.

However equal with the man she might have officially been, the woman abandoned her status of being a life comrade for that of being a crypto-servant, the role which she had traditionally exercised in family life.

### 3. The area free from the 'new man'.

The main focus of what I have discussed so far has been on what the system wanted to make out of the people, and on what the communist regime has already managed to do, albeit to a lesser degree than it intended. We are still unable to know the results of this type of regime, firstly because the official ideology has spread the idea that only good things could happen in socialism while the evil, illness and death were carefully hidden, as if they never existed. The press had to put on a triumphal style: 'Nothing bad can happen in our socialist country', while sociological investigations were either prohibited or their results kept secret. Only the ruling

caste, the nomenclature, could have access to such kind of information.

Turning now to the idea of an area free from the 'new man', I am going to show some possible refuges for my fellow-citizens, trying to point out their importance for the condition of women. A first refuge was represented by the old generation's memory which was handed down through education from one generation to another. This enabled the child to notice the disagreement between ideology and reality, between 'the unity of our monolithic doctrine' and the wide variety of ways of thinking. Many parents could not decide whether they should have brought up their children as human beings with personality, or in the officially designated way. Many parents were afraid to tell their children the truth, in case the authorities found out. Some taught them duplicity while others taught them not to express their true opinions outside of the family circle. Thus family education has represented a zone free from the 'new man', but it also meant a subordination to traditional patterns, including the sexist one.

In effect, the little girl was receiving her mother's and grandmother's cultural heritage without coming into contact with the idea of woman's liberation from masculine domination. Moreover, this domination was nothing by comparison with that of the system itself, and a powerful oppressor produces blindness towards other forms of oppression which are weaker than its own. So the little girl was learning that housekeeping, cooking and children were her own duties, besides those imposed by society. *The Woman* was the only magazine intended for women. It talked about politics, and to a limited extent about cooking recipes and about how to bring up a baby, but it said nothing about women's emancipation. Most of the women in my country have neither heard about feminism, nor have any consciousness of their being exploited in a world dominated by men. Moreover, it is more important for them to be mothers and wives than to be workers or leaders. Motherhood, and housekeeping, the daily grind of unending effort were themselves refuges against public life which was rightly considered as an alienating force. Most women came back home from their jobs

with the feeling that their home was the only place where they had an identity, where they were no longer a mere tool, or a figure in some set of statistics. To be a housewife was a kind of refuge, a place hidden from the public eye, but a place of assertion on a small scale.

Culture, and especially reading, represented another free zone. The reading of books was a less supervised and manipulated occupation. Books have their own individual character and they have the great gift of speaking about yourself and of allowing you to escape reality. The almost nonexistent contact with Western mass media forced men and women to seek refuge in books, in the little spare time they had. Maybe this is the reason why many East Europeans are cultivated and imaginative people. There were many prohibitions regarding the publication of books. In spite of this, of the books not being up to date, and of a decrease in the number of translations made in the eighties, people sought refuge in books. And this is how they could learn and could escape reality.

Another refuge was represented by very strong interpersonal relations with relatives, with friends and with the opposite sex. These kinds of relationships could not be standardized or controlled. The main supporters of these relationships were, as they have always been, women. This situation was not possible within macro-groups, where personal relations were rather weak, for within macro-groups, the human being was only a figure, a puppet, a directed anonymous figure. In the micro-group of relatives, or of friends with the same spiritual affinity, the human being managed to have a face and a name, he or she managed to exist as an individual. Here he or she was no longer an unimportant and anonymous figure.

Irrespective of how much it was supervised, school training had its own free areas owing to the courage and the professionalism of the teachers. The sciences and practical subjects were emphasized during secondary education. Although the number of hours allotted for Arts subjects was very small, and despite the strong ideological themes of the lessons, there were teachers who abandoned the political themes officially imposed on them and who were really teaching Arts

subjects. They were risking a lot, as any going off the official track could end in one losing one's job. In those classes where such deviation was possible (owing to teachers) the pupils could learn other ways of thinking besides the official doctrine which was inculcated in them, and they could easily escape from the official ideology. Nevertheless, there were no lectures specifically for enabling the pupils to acquire good self-knowledge or to provide them with knowledge of their own everyday lives as concrete human beings.

The school books and the syllabus were all the same, irrespective of the type of school, the place and the pupils; and they were made according to an absurd principle, that of unique, identical training for all pupils. Optional courses did not exist at all, because the idea of 'option' was something to which those belonging to the communist nomenclature were positively allergic. School training was not sexist as a program since it did not refer to the individual but to the formation of that hypothetical and impersonal creature called 'the new man'. In secondary education, 53% of the pupils were girls, while in higher education the figure was 49.5%. We can say that, from a statistical point of view, school training was not discriminatory as regards sex.

During their higher studies, girls' and boys' performances are in a large measure alike, and no important differences regarding success in school can be noticed. However, after graduation most women are confronted with a decrease in their professionalism compared to that of their male colleagues. This decrease is real and is due to the reinstatement of the woman in the patriarchal model. The woman abandons competition (which seems senseless to her) and lets her husband assert himself.

The sense and the result of self-expression or self-assertion were lost to many people in a society where anything you might have done remained unknown. The system did not give publicity to valuable people; your wage was not increased, even if you were far more valuable than others, and any innovation you might have proposed was accepted only after years of waiting and even then under a collective signature. Even the artists were forced to sing, recite

or sign up for giant exhibitions together. The individual person was forced to disappear anonymously into an anonymous collective. We still do not know who are our most valuable people. Many women have surrendered to domestic accomplishment because only at home is there someone to appreciate their work and effort. They were forced into this type of accomplishment by traditional education and especially by the idea that it was useless trying to assert yourself in the public sphere.

We may conclude that areas free from the 'new man' could exist only within the family, within groups of spiritual friends, within books and in relationships with the opposite sex.

Feminist literature often notices that woman is the silent half of humanity, while the other privileged half hardly deigns to listen to the voice of this first half. And what is the difference between the condition of the East Europeans and that of women? The East European was forced to keep silent in his own country, and is now considered by the West in a way similar to that of woman, as a poor anonymous being who cannot or does not know how to express himself or herself, a potential existence that has not been, and is perhaps incapable of being brought up to date.

### III. THE STATUS OF WOMAN IN THE POST-TOTALITARIAN PERIOD

The two main and well-known alternative social strategies are individualism and collectivism. Any postulation of the predominance of the social order over the individual risks the annihilation of human rights. Romanian society had all the features of totalitarianism. One could not even appeal to the majority's right to sacrifice the minority, or to the predominance of the 'mob' over the individual, so not only did the individual's or the majority's rights fail to work, but the majority's rights did not function either. In the context of Romanian totalitarianism only the status of being the majority's exponent mattered, without there being any real or formal abidance by the rules of the game according to which that exponent must be elected. Access to decisions was held by a very small category of people. Work and life programs were regularly being

elaborated to substitute for the mystical concept 'destiny'. The party's 'oracle' was systematically providing information about progress in the building of 'the terrestrial paradise'—communism. It was thought of as a social paradise; and as the individual had already disappeared from any kind of program, a paradise inhabited by a ghost: the society without individuals.

The continuous indoctrination and the daily mass media exercises produced by the system in order to wipe out the possessive pronoun, and even the singular personal pronoun from the vocabulary, and also from people's minds, has left a deep mark in the people's consciousness. To an outside observer who has knowledge of two centuries of democracy, the post-totalitarian reactions to liberty are shocking. For instance: allergy to political pluralism, the nostalgia for a unique truth, the people's surprise at hearing some persons starting their public speeches with: 'I consider,' 'I want,' 'I do,' etc; and not with the impersonal 'it is considered,' 'it is wanted,' 'it is required,' etc. The impersonal way of thinking dominated the entire past period. In this way not only did individuality and the capacity for creation disappear, but also the people's responsibility. The impersonal mood is anonymous and generates anonymity. We are learning with great difficulty to eliminate the impersonal 'it' from our way of speaking, and maybe the women are those who find this most difficult of all. The explanation of this behavior lies in the fact that they have been disadvantaged by a tradition of thousands of years when they could not rise above anonymity, having been only 'the wife of X,' or 'the mother of Y.' While women from the West were learning to refuse their functional definitions and were starting to gain their autonomy and to get rid of anonymity, in the East women were taught that both they and their husbands were important only from a functional point of view. When the formal barriers to freedom disappeared and people learned (some of them for the first time) that they could do anything they wanted, so long as they did not harm the same right of another person, a lot of them were confused and did not know what to do.

Women suddenly were free from some

of their problems, like compulsory pregnancy, forced promotion into political positions, and the duty of having a job. The first two of these freedoms seem to be favorable to women, but the third is strictly formal, as almost no wage-earning man in Romania can keep a woman from his own salary, so Romanian men are not in the position to consider women strictly from an instrumental viewpoint, as they cannot afford to pay them even for the housekeeping. And yet, there are men in the uncultivated social strata who pass over this reality and act tyrannically and even violently towards their wives (it does not matter if the woman is financially independent or not). Many women were glad that political functions were no longer going to threaten them and they quietly agreed to being made outsiders at all the ruling levels, retiring from political life without showing any resistance. Women's representation in Parliament (35% in the House of Deputies and 1/119 in the Senate House) is very unfavorable compared with the representation in the former communist Parliament (over 30% women). There are no women with important political positions in the present Government, and this fact is mirrored at all the other levels of social life. This phenomenon of continuous decrease in the representation of women in social life seems to bother neither the men nor the women.

Fighting for the existence of her family takes enough time and energy, so the Romanian woman submits to the idea of self-sacrifice which has been presented to her by the official communist and patriarchal education. Women lose themselves in the invisible sphere. The public services do not help them to reduce the amount of time they spend with housekeeping. In this way a lot of them remain professionals with poor performances, anonymous parts made to serve ambitions that do not belong to them. This double oppression tires them out, so that their will for self-accomplishment becomes lost, making them into anonymous servants of a master who starts to get a face and a name.

I believe that this process has been caused by the new circumstances and is aggravated by the absence of any feminist education and literature, and also by the

acceptance of a kind of servitude that women are still not aware of. What is sure is that continued training in anonymity seems to be self-perpetuating. When you are forced by external compulsion to give up the idea of self-assertion, for the benefit of society, you many end up in the situation of not wishing to exist as a unique and individual being. You place yourself in the vicious circle of anonymity.

The post-totalitarian period seems to be regressive with respect to the emancipation of women, a silent giving up in the face of traditional patterns of male domination. Neither the man nor the woman dominated before this period, only the devilish system whose consequences we have already spoken about. No institutional act or rule places the woman in an inferior position; rather this inferior position is generated by the traditional patriarchal patterns and by the fact that we have not set ourselves free from the obsession of fighting for survival. This obsession keeps our spirits in prison, and we will only be able to liberate ourselves when we have the necessary objective conditions in place.

#### **IV. A CHANCE FOR CHANGING: FEMINISM AND PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN**

##### **1. Philosophy as a Subversive Discipline.**

As I mentioned above, in the totalitarian communist system, the most threatened disciplines were the social sciences, philosophy in particular. Obviously, a major danger to the totalitarian ideology and practice was the 'dubito' and the critical and reflective consciousness it gave birth to, as opposed to the system's endeavor to stumble over people's free thinking and acting.

But note that a totalitarian mentality exhibiting some features could be discerned in people who were subjected to the system of values characteristic of patriarchy. For in it, like in the communist and fascist states, one has to accept and obey an authority which absolutely transcends one's thoughts and will, giving all the rules of the game, considering a person as a non-independent, non-self-conscious agent. The patriarchal totalitarianism educated women in its values, as a condition of preserving its ex-

istence. Based on prejudices and on superiority and inferiority, it could be successful only if people—including women—came to the conclusion that only the 'rulers' are able to give norms and that the truth is owned only by them. The main difference in the different totalitarian practices lies in the group towards which the oppression is directed. In the communist systems they hint at all the members of the society; in a patriarchal system they hint at women; and in the educational systems, at children.

Teaching and learning the critical way of thinking is subversive in all three kinds of totalitarian systems, for it has the effect of doubting the systems' prejudices and the authority of those who own the power.

The contemporary world faces an irresistible and profound process of transition. The old mentalities should be changed by ones more fitted to the new emerging social realities, which involve to a large extent the need for moral responsibility. The original aim of the Philosophy for Children program was to restore the central, Socratic, mission of philosophy: teaching the human being in the spirit of wisdom, morality and responsibility. In so far as philosophy is just an academic discipline, it cannot answer Plato's call addressed to all those who saw the light of the 'Sun' to join their fellow citizens.

The esoteric way of doing philosophy facilitated a host of criticism on behalf of feminist theories. The main argument is that philosophy, as an intellectual enterprise, has a substitutive role, *i.e.*, to provide meaning to the otherwise meaningless masculine life. A fierce criticism was also directed against even narrower fields of philosophical inquiry. Some feminists, *e.g.*, insisted that logic is a phallogocratic instrument in male hegemony.

I believe that these lines of attack are powerful if directed against academic philosophy as an institutional activity. The criticism points to the social, political and psychological mechanisms through which women are still discriminated, even if the formal barriers have been eliminated. And it also points to the gender-laden mechanisms by which the selection and definition of the problematic aspects of philosophy—deciding what is a philosophical topic and what

is problematic about it—have been skewed towards men's needs and what they find puzzling. But I suspect that this feminist criticism loses its force if philosophy is conceived of, and practiced as, a means of improving one's thinking.

It is this attempt at redefining the social significance of philosophy which directs, in its main intentions, the Philosophy for Children program. The program is worth praising for its humanistic-oriented approach to education, which invites application from the very first year of the elementary school.

In developing the Philosophy for Children program, Professor Lipman questioned some very old—and very respected—prejudices. Among them we may mention: the view that philosophy is created by and for the adult man, and that women and children cannot be taught philosophy; and the view that dialectics ends in relativism and amorality, and saps the trust of young people in the values and norms of society. I think that the opposite extreme of this second prejudice can be found in the absolute rule of the dogmatic *diamat* in the communist countries. For it involved the attempt at reducing philosophy to a collection of unproblematic claims.

Philosophy is, however, a continuous fight against mystification. A fundamental characteristic of philosophy is that it attempts to revive the critical spirit, to promote reflection. It questions the deep roots of our thinking, of our preferences, and gives birth to a most significant thing: free thinking. A person educated in the spirit of the Philosophy for Children program will handle, in a genuine way, the intellectual means which lead her to the rejection of dogmatism, manipulation, intolerance and extremisms, *i.e.*, the basic tools used in implementing a totalitarian mentality, whatever the nature of this 'totalitarianism' might be.

A child educated in the spirit of the 'community of inquiry' would never agree to be the subject of unconditional subordination to the traditional 'magister dixit'. In a way liberation is a less complex process if its subjects are children. Indeed, the force of the prejudices to be faced is weaker if children are educated in the spirit of free thinking. In the case of adult people (be they women or men living in a post-communist society), the

process is more complex and longer, for it must involve radical achievements; *viz.*, the capacity to manifest one's personality and the rejection of the state of anonymity; the capacity to think by yourself and for yourself, instead of adherence to given standards, ideas or values; autonomy instead of subordination.

However, liberation is difficult to experience, and its burden is hard to live with. One should not be surprised, therefore, to meet unexpected phenomena accompanying liberation. For example, many people long for the past, when behavior they were asked to perform automatically was accompanied by a comfortable economic and social safety. Now one meets intolerance of other economic, social and political groups, as well as the tendency to ape the oppressive behavior of the former rulers, etc. People feel that they must first become oppressors themselves and be intolerant as a precondition for their divorce from totalitarian subjection.

The Philosophy for Children program advances, in my view, one of the most promising strategies for eliminating these unhappy consequences of the transition to liberty. The concept of a community of inquiry is central to Lipman's approach to teaching philosophy. He defines a community of inquiry as the embryonic intersection of democracy and education. Its strong position in educational theory is derived from the fact that children who participate in a community of inquiry become much more proficient in critical thinking and critical reasoning, and the development of their creativity, personal and interpersonal growth, their understanding of ethics and their ability to think for themselves are all enhanced.

The contradiction between dogmatic thinking and the idea that truth is a construct to be attained is overt. *Philosophia* is a search for meanings, rather than a supply of already-existing solutions to problems. Liberation cannot be reduced to the possibility of expressing the values of the society one belongs to. If school were devoted only to this type of liberation, then it could not pass beyond tribal thinking. The mission of teaching philosophy, though, is to question the established facts, values and norms, by calling into action skills like: wondering, in-

quiring, being critical, analyzing concepts and arguments, rejecting stereotypes, etc.

In this respect, the Philosophy for Children program suits the feminist approach. Feminism is also an attempt to question social stereotypes, in particular the modalities in which the hierarchical dichotomies came to be rooted in the collective mentality. However, one can find in some feminist accounts the temptation to substitute a feminine paradigm for a masculine one, (and this involves a new tendency to make hierarchies, as in radical feminism), and one can also find the view that gender should be substituted by genderless. I think that such accounts raise serious difficulties. "Genderless" impoverishes both men and women, as in the case which I mentioned above of the 'new man'. I argue that a proper strategy for enriching the human being is to provide a new type of education, the aim of which would be an androgynous or bi-gendered human being, as opposed to the sketchy and impersonal genderless human being.

The educational practice exemplified by the Philosophy for Children program facilitates a new account of dichotomies. They are constructed as differences which stimulate the individual to become more complex. As a member of the community of inquiry, the child raises questions and problems. The problems the child calls forth for inquiry do not belong to all, and therefore to no one. They are problems specific to this very individual member of the community, but they should become the problems of all the members of the community. This permanent personalization of the inquiry helps children to discover their own selves in the things they learn. The community of inquiry is not an entity which turns individuals into a mass of anonymous subjects one has to educate. Rather, it presupposes the moral development of the individual personalities it comprises.

The children have in a community of inquiry their own face and name, and are no longer a 'silent part of humanity' having to uncritically learn answers and adopt 'indubitable' values. As Lipman states, the community of inquiry aims at acquainting children with the mechanisms by which they can 'build their thoughts together' and, consequently,

they learn how to discover their own selves, as well as their relationships with others.

## 2. Community of Inquiry and the Ethics of Care

The political approaches centered on the individual favor an 'ethics of justice'. The political approaches centered on social relations seem to favor an 'ethics of anonymity'. An example is the 'socialist' ethics centered on society as a whole and in which individuals have no place.

The most powerful feminist attack against the ethics of justice invokes the egoism it involves (Gilligan, Toronto). Feminists tried instead to exalt the virtues of an 'ethics of care', which is meant to be the result of an approach centered both on individuals and the social relationships among them. Care was traditionally associated with love and friendship relationships, and it therefore seemed to be inapplicable to the relationships among people in the public sphere. But this is possible once we realize that the concept of a moral human being is not definable only in terms of cognitive abilities. Traditionally, ethics was associated with the pedagogy of learning moral principles, while the development of moral dispositions was absolutely neglected. As Toronto argued, to be moral is not tantamount to knowing moral principles; rather, it essentially involves moral dispositions like responsibility and relationships, the development of moral imagination and the ability to react appropriately in different contexts.

Now, I think that the Philosophy for Children program embodies virtues

which are strongly in favor of the ethics of care. Here are some of them: the development of ethical understanding and of morally responsible individual behavior; openness to a variety of views; pluralism; tolerance of intellectual diversity and mutual respect. As Lipman notes, 'these procedures of the community, when internalized, become reflective habits of the individual' (8 p.45). And in another work: 'the community of inquiry is a necessary seedbed for the cultivation of philosophy in the elementary school because it intermixes the critical concern with justice and the creative impulse toward caring.' (10 p. 254)

This aim of cultivating interpersonal care could be attained in a community of inquiry by pursuing the following strategies: (a) developing dialogue. Thus, the members of the community become partners in a common purpose. The child discovers the ways she or he differs from the others, and also the similarities she or he shares with the others. During common activity, the child replaces hostility towards others with partnership;

(b) learning the virtues of competition and winning. Children learn, for example, that the one who wins is the one who can help others to think better or to do something better;

(c) learning to listen to others, to be able to understand their problems;

(d) learning the positive as well as the negative meaning of liberty;

(e) learning to feel responsible in relation to the public sphere;

(f) becoming sensitive to context, caring about the problems of the other members of the community.

Thus, the aim of 'building our thoughts together' turns into the far more generous imperative, rooted in the ethics of care, of *building our lives together*.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. *Anuarul statistic al Romaniei*, Bucuresti, 1991.
2. Allen, Jennifer, 'Women and Food,' in *The Journal of Social Philosophy*, IV, 2, 1984.
3. Gatani, Moira, *Feminism and Philosophy, Perspectives on Difference and Equality*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991.
4. Gould, Carol, 'Freedom and Woman,' in *The Journal of Social Philosophy*, XI, 3, 1984.
5. Graham, Gordon, 'Two Types of Feminism,' in *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 25, 4, 1988.
6. Jay, Nancy, 'Gender and Dichotomy,' in Sneja Gunew (ed.), *A Reader in Feminist Knowledge*, Routledge, London, 1991.
7. Kymlicky, Will, 'Feminism,' in *Contemporary Political Philosophy. An Introduction*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990.
8. Lipman, Matthew, Sharp, Ann Margaret, Oscanyan, Frederick S., *Philosophy in the Classroom*, second edition, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1980.
9. Lipman, Matthew, *Philosophy Goes to School*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1988.
10. Lipman, Matthew, *Thinking in Education*, Cambridge University Press, 1991.
11. Straumanis, Joah, 'Duties to Oneself: An Ethical Basis for Self-Liberation,' in *The Journal of Social Philosophy*, XV, 2, 1984.

