



LOU ANDREAS-SALOMÉ ABOUT WOMEN*

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В статье рассматривается гендерная проблематика посредством анализа взглядов русской исследовательницы с немецкими корнями Лу Андреас-Саломе. Отмечается, что, несмотря на отсутствие явного участия в протестных движениях женщин, она активно поддерживала идею гендерного равенства. Лу Андреас-Саломе часто касалась проблемы роли женщины в обществе, критиковала ошибочные суждения о ее незначительности, основанные на традиционных представлениях о том, что женщина должна быть лишь послушной супругой, хранительницей семейного очага и благочестивой матерью. Лу Андреас-Саломе в борьбе с существующими стереотипами доказывала, что для женщины необходима возможность поиска жизненного пути и свобода его выбора. Она провозглашала новаторские идеи о женской эмансипации, о праве женщины распоряжаться своей судьбой. В работах Лу Андреас-Саломе женщина предстает свободной и твердой в своих суждениях личностью, находящей собственное призвание в жизни. Значительное место русская писательница отводит сексуальности как важному элементу жизни человека. По ее мнению, женская сексуальность выражается посредством чувствительности и эмоциональности, в то время как мужская направлена главным образом на удовлетворение эгоистических потребностей. Лу Андреас-Саломе значительно опередила свою эпоху и всем своим творчеством показала, как важны для женщины самореализация и свобода.

Ключевые слова: Лу Андреас-Саломе, женщина, женственность, материнство, феминизм, самореализация.

The article deals with gender issues by analyzing the views of the Russian researcher with German roots Lou Andreas-Salomé. It is noted that despite her lack of explicit participation in women's protest movements, she actively supported the idea of gender equality. That is why Lou Andreas-Salomé so often in his work touched on the role of women in society and criticized the erroneous judgments about its insignificance based on the traditional views that the woman should only be an obedient wife, keeper of the family home and pious mother. Lou Andreas-Salomé argued that women need the possibility of finding their own way in life and the freedom to choose it. She proclaimed the innovative ideas of women's emancipation, the right of women to control their own destiny. In the works of Lou Andreas-Salomé, the woman appears as a free and firm in her judgments personality, finding her own vocation in life. It is noted that the Russian writer gives a significant place in her works to sexuality as an important element of human life. In her opinion female sexuality is harmonious and it is expressed through sensitivity and feminine emotionality, while male sexuality is impulsive and aimed mainly at satisfying his own needs. Rejecting the view of the passive role of women in society, Lou Andréas-Salomé emphasized that women and men contribute equally to procreation. Lou Andréas-Salomé was far ahead of her time and showed through her work the importance of self-actualization and freedom for women.

Keywords: Lou Andreas-Salomé, woman, womanhood, motherhood, feminism, self-fulfillment.

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<https://doi.org/10.31119/phlog.2021.2.152>

* This article was written with the support of the National Center for Science (Poland) grant "The Second Plan: Women in Russian Philosophy", under contract No. UMO-2017/25/B/HS1/00530. In the article, I used materials from my doctoral dissertation *Philosophical aspects of the work of Lou Andreas-Salomé* (University of Zielona Góra, 2019).

The Russian researcher with German roots Lou Andreas-Salomé (1861–1937) in her works concerned a wide range of topics, she published works about philosophy, literature, Russian and German cultures.

Her writings did not run short of remarks on sex, women and womanhood, even though she herself was never politically active, never attended any protests about abortion, divorce law, equal access to higher education for women. In her novels and essays she made her voice heard. She went beyond formulaic patterns concerned with division of roles of a man and woman. She thought that everyone should self-develop according to his will, abilities, and what's most important, individual should be aware of his own actions. It can be said that her beliefs were reflection of her unconventional way of life. From the youngest days, she knew how to put her foot down. In secrecy from her family, she participated in private lessons from pastor Henry Gillot (1836–1916), as a young woman she traveled to Zurich to study at university, then she lived in an intellectual triangle with Paul Ree (1877–1901) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) and married a fifteen years older professor of orient studies Friedrich Carl Andreas (1846–1930), with whom lived more than forty years, which didn't stop her from acquiring new acquaintanceships and friendships, with both women and men, that was, in any situations, an inspiration for research and widening her knowledge.

In the novella *Eine Ausschweifung (Deviations, 1898)* the author presented many different female characters, among others: protagonist Adine, her neighbour and her mother Gabriele. Father of Adine encouraged her during childhood to pursue art. Her mother had conservative views of the responsibilities that woman should carry out. She wanted that her daughter would live the same way she did, but she supported her and enabled her to have independent life. When Adine was seventeen years old, she moved with her family to Brieg in Silesia: "From Brieg I had to go further and further away, and with leadership of a talented teacher I received art, which I missed. My father and I were thinking heavily about this plan, it was for naught, because he got sick, so leaving him was out of question. And me – I madly fell in love with my cousin Benno Frensdorff" [11]. Love for her cousin was reciprocated and couple got engaged. When her father died, Benno started taking care of her and her mother. He was working as a doctor in mental hospital and everyone took the residency near his job place. Benno didn't accept Adine's artistic activity, and wanted her to take care of the housework. She abandoned painting for him, but with the passing of time she realized, that it wasn't a good decision: "Task, that Benno had chosen for me, lead me to kitchen and sewing machine. For my mother it was crystal clear, that it was a preparation for my future life" [11]. Karol Sauerland points out the one childhood memories of a protagonist, when she saw her babysitter being beaten up by her husband and she didn't fight back. Adine asked herself, if the woman didn't like to subjugate or the independence wasn't meant for her. She discussed it with mother, who, as we know, had always been attached to traditional role of a woman, which was not easy, as she pointed out. Adine didn't take the route to be subjugated by her husband. In his opinion, in this particular situation, equality of men and

women, wasn't the point for Lou Andreas-Salomé, but the notion was that love and every-day reality can exclude one another [10, p. 42].

During her conversation with Gabrielle, daughter of the accountant that worked in a mental institution, Adine strengthened her view, that devotion to the hearth was a bad decision, because she felt like a prisoner. She thought at first, that Gabrielle liked to take care of house responsibilities, but it wasn't true and she wanted changes. She secretly studied late night, to go to Berlin, to pass teacher's exam and be finally independent. Relation between Adine and Gabrielle was a presentation of proletarian and bourgeois feminism respectively. Muriel Curmican thinks that it is an expression of acknowledgement towards Women's Labor Movement for critique of privileged class, which had no interest in improving living conditions of poor people. Lou by showing life possibilities for women went beyond the traditional roles of wife and mother. In this short story she presented many different attitudes of her heroines towards emancipation, because she reflected on real life and problems of women.

She touched upon the topic of sex in the essay *Der Mensch als Weib* (*Human as a Woman*, 1899)¹. It's worthwhile to consider the worlds that she used in the title. In the German language the word *das Weib* had neutral undertone at first and meant just *a woman*, but with time it became a boorish expression, usually used in colloquial speech, that meant *fishwife*, *haridan* [6, p. 1360]. Yet the word *Mensch* – human, put in the first place indicate humanity, where woman is its origin and the most important description of womanhood [8, p. 174–175; 7, p. 49].

Essay begins with a critique of contemporary scientific approach to the process of conception. Womanhood is described here as a mystic union with cosmos and something entirely independent. *Das Weib* represents pure harmony with the world. Direct opposition for it was *der Mann* – a man [3, p. 15–18]. According to Lou woman doesn't live in absentmindedness, she's harmonious, but that doesn't mean she's passive as compared with man, as it was thought back then, because "as a creator, she doesn't live with her creation, but is one with thing that is active. Man is constantly running, out of breath. According to her, contemporary woman is in danger of losing her uniqueness, because she tries to imitate man's behaviour" [10, p. 38–39]. She supported the notion of independence of women, but in her opinion they should stress that they are different from men and can keep something primal, something that a child can do while playing, it discovers the world and maintains its innocence [10, p. 39]. Woman needs freedom to properly improve and make free decisions about herself and shouldn't be restrained by anything or anyone.

Then Lou emphasized the positive aspect of being a woman. She could discern between woman's strong and weak points. She stressed that women and men have equal contribution in the process of conception. She distanced

¹ Also in: *Die Erotik* (1910), *Zum Typus Weib* (1914), *Psychosexualität* (1917). Grażyna Krupińska points out that in the work *Der Mensch als Weib* the concept of sex is essential and in other essays she modifies her position slightly and arranges accents differently [8, p. 174].

herself from the wide-spread opinion, that female sex is receiving side and male sex is giving side. Referring to the views of Wilhelm Bölsche (1861–1939), who was an early zoologist, the author of *Der Mensch als Weib*, she claimed that egg cell has the characteristics of single-celled organisms, and is self-sufficient. She brought forward a logical argument that male element is more needy, wants connection and is something that sacrifices itself, which womanhood accepts and treats it like an addition to herself. So woman plays bigger part in conception than man. In this instance Lou Andreas-Salomé motherhood is for something that defines womanhood and its identity. As Krupińska suggests, the example which was used by Lou Andreas-Salomé to show differences between sexes, served to underline and to show appreciation towards role of sexuality in human's life [8, p. 176–177].

Womanhood and manhood are two different things and two different ways to gain satisfaction from life. Krupińska writes: "...writer tried no to hierarchize and evaluate, starting from the assumption, that every sex rules by its own laws. There is different path for women through womanhood and there is different path for men through manhood" [8, p. 180]. Undoubtedly Lou Andreas-Salomé was ahead of her time presenting beliefs on women and their way of life. She was convinced that role of mother can harmonize with personal growth and don't have to clash with each other. She perfectly presented today's discussion on the woman's choice between family and work.

Although two discussed publications have similar subject, their approach differ significantly. While *Der Mensch als Weib* is a theoretical essay about women, womanhood and humanity, *Eine Ausschweifung* is a novella, that studies what kind of role womanhood plays in lives of particular women [3, p. 15]. Grażyna Krupińska states, that *Der Mensch als Weib* is a voice in debate about equality of men's and women's rights and dispute with representatives of emancipations movements of that time on matter of roles and definition of womanhood. Women should develop, but they must remember about their womanhood, because they have to strengthen and discover it paying no heed to the standards typical in the men's world. She did not approve of women, who from the notion of emancipation understood the necessity to adopt traits of roles reserved for men. Therefore nothing should be forbidden for women, so that they could define themselves and their development. Sex doesn't matter, when it comes to realization of their assumptions on different areas of life.

The contemporary writer of that period and women's rights activist Hedwig Dohm (1831–1919) in the text *Reaktion in der Frauenbewegung* (*Reaction of Women's Movement*, 1899) accused Lou, that *Der Mensch als Weib* is antifeminist. She thought that her description of women and their lives were boring, which didn't reflect the true house life of wives and mothers [5, p. 279–291]. Another critical review was written by Lou's long-term friend, Frieda von Bülow (1857–1909). She criticized the usage of words womanhood (Weiblich) and true womanhood (echt Frauenhaft) as negative expressions in literature. Lou responded in *Ketzereien die moderne Frau* (*Heresies against modern woman*, 1899) stating that only women can define the expression of womanhood and it's not an artistic measure. She

stipulated that women should firstly be women, and then try to define themselves through their work. They should be free in their activities to control their fate. She advised that women shouldn't take their writing too seriously. She even thought that women could write their works anonymously [12, p. 237–240; 3, p. 26–27].

Hedwig Dohm also considered Lou Andreas-Salomé, Helene Lange (1848–1930) and Laura Marholm (1854–1928) – writer and translator of Danish–Norwegian descent, as representatives of regressive movement. She didn't deny their writing craftsmanship. However she felt that they were trying to create a woman's ideal. She claimed that for Laura Marholm woman's main purpose is to get a man, for Helene Lange it's having a child and for Lou Andreas-Salomé it's desire to self-develop. Because womanhood here is defined with different things, it's further from the truth [4]. This statement can be considered as true, because the author of *Der Mensch als Weib* pointed out many times, that woman should strive for self-fulfillment, but she can choose in which she can feel accomplished, as she described in her works showing many types of women, brave and satisfied with their profession or their housework. Some are fully committed to motherhood and family values, others choose to have an independent life, yet another choose to mix these roles. With this she showed coexistence of tradition and modernity. Undoubtedly this take shows the life of female sex in positive light. The implication was that every female character is making independent decisions, they are not book ideals, but intelligent, empathic beings full of positive energy, making tough choices about their place in life. They touch upon two realms: house realm and professional realm, continuously pushing boundaries. Independence and passions that transcended known notions, on some level reflected the life of Lou Andreas-Salomé, who had her own opinion, improved herself, loved life and was timeless. She gave a proof, that every human can be equal, and don't have to take the roles that were accepted for both sexes, such as a man being the head of a family and making money, woman should take care of a house, be submissive to a husband and other members of a household.

Let's remind that Lou Andreas-Salomé was not an activist of women's movement, because she wanted to retain freedom, have her own outlook on this topic. That is why she distanced herself from any preconceived notions and institutions. Regina Ianozi points out that Lou Andreas-Salomé had this kind of approach to women's movement, because of her cross-cultural identity. It couldn't allow her to fully accept or deny any theory or culture, so she couldn't choose and usually accepted all of them. Her perspective about sex – manhood and womanhood – was similar. She didn't ascribe specific terminology to the terms of womanhood and manhood, because these are not physical constants, but mental states, feelings that can change subtly or fully, depending on individual experiences and mental development of a person. Different relations, that she had with women, earlier or later in her life, from mothers and wives to radical feminists – influenced her image of a woman in her literary and non-literary work. Even though she didn't describe normal woman's life in her texts, her opinion of different types of men and women comes directly from her personal life. While all of her colleagues were women that came from European countries and was strongly equated with one nationality,

the men that she knew were usually cross-cultured – most of them being Germans, Russians and of Jewish–German descent. Lou Andreas-Salomé, as a cross-cultured person, embraced her special individuality. This was the main reason why she had a distinctive attitude towards the concepts of contemporary feminists and expanded observations based on her individual experiences, departing from the mainstream views on women, men, and womanhood. Her works dealt with not only the issues of women in general, especially “cross-cultured” women, but also physical, psychological and socio-cultural boundaries [6, p. 98–99], which she proved by analyzing the eastern and western cultures in some of her literary texts¹.

In the essay *Zum Typus Weib (On Womanhood, 1914)*, similarly to her earlier works, she once again brought out the topic of womanhood and differences between sexes. She started with the development of a young girl based on her own experiences, when during her abroad travel with parents to Switzerland she heard the name of a mountain called *Jungfrau* (Virgin) [13]. Referring to her teacher’s opinion that a girl during puberty is suffering due to new wave of denial, especially when it comes to clitoris sexuality, she was trying to analyze this period as a moment, when maturing girl is coming-into-herself, which was for her a primordial fusion with nature. This kind of passivity can distinguish women from men, and the author of *Zum Typus Weib* interprets it as a foundation of women’s virtue, with which she can gain happiness. With passive coming-into-herself, her self-sufficiency “sexual desires, desires of ego (self-preserving) are combined, they make a unity, while in man they are distant from each other and in constant conflict. In this situation passive sexual drive in a woman, can submit to things, that are desired by ego: father, man in person of a father, God. For a woman spiritual and erotic elements are one. She is a blessed, undivided entity” [1, p. 282]. As she wrote: “Woman can experience something important, as something sublime. That mental ability to idealize, is created spontaneously and thanks to that in the process of giving love, starting point for woman in unchanged throughout her life. She perceives each person, as if she is transparent, sees her shape, which is filled with undisturbed light” [13]. From the above-mentioned considerations, a conclusion can be put forward, that woman’s psyche is structured in a way, that she is more inclined towards realm of feelings and that’s why women, through their sensitivity and emotionality, can communicate feelings to other person better than men.

A representant of male sex is in a less favourable position. His aggression points toward passive woman, if she excites him sexually. “His ideal of ego won’t realize in a sexual partner. He must search it within his own sex: his father, a man’s rules, that every man, searching for himself and surpassing his father, must worship. In relation to this, sexual and spiritual impulses in men are never convergent” [1, p. 282–283]. Because of biological determinants, desire for sexual fulfillment in male individual is stronger than his inner sphere responsible for emotions, feelings and deepening relations with

¹ These were: *Ma. Ein Portrait (Ma. Portrait, 1901)*; *Das Haus. Eine Familiengeschichte vom Ende des vorigen Jahrhunderts (Home. Family history from the end of last age, 1919)*; *Rödinka, Russische Erinnerung (Rodinka, Russian memories, 1923)*.

people. Lou Andreas-Salomé says “man exploring his role as a breeder, loses himself, because during act of procreation, he loses what he has, and what he becomes (I will repeat from Freud ‘altruist’... He characterizes with involuntary renunciation, in other words his nature is rooted in ‘sacrifice’, which is unpleasant, but it’s his honor” [13]. Woman however, passively turns into herself and is joyous in her egoism. Her passive spirituality and internal harmony causes, that for a woman, man is only individual representative of a whole, woman loving one man as individual, loves a whole represented by him [1, p. 282]. This nature predestines woman to behave the certain way. Her innate sensitivity make her open for others, helpful and happy. The author of essay *Zum Typus Weib* claims that woman has autonomic culture values, because she contains the unity of sexual and spiritual elements of herself, based on everlasting internal harmony. This natural unity is something that artists want to reach and express [1, p. 283]. Kathrin Bower states that works of Lou Andreas-Salomé about womanhood and eroticism were ground-breaking, because she took on the challenge and disproved conventionally established views on women and proposed new ideal of a woman, concentrating on self-sufficiency of female sex [2, p. 28–29] and self-awareness, which was underlined by Grażyna Krupińska [8, p. 178].

In *Erotica* she brought up an issue of emotional sphere of a human, she showed that physical love is not only satisfaction of one’s desire, but also connection with another person, which is an reconstruction of primordial unity. Woman however is more sexual than man, because he can separate sphere of feelings from the sphere of eroticism, but woman’s experience of love awakens her sensuality. She explained, that because of this reason man’s sexual drive, that is only pointed towards temporary gratification, is something repulsive compared to woman’s eroticism, which characterizes with purity, harmony and proportionality. A woman who becomes a mother has a trace of virginity, as a virgin has the potential to become a mother [8, p. 177]. We see that this is due to the fact that a woman and a man can be guided by different motives and feelings in an erotic relationship, as it also depends on the maturity and consciousness of the person.

Undoubtedly Lou Andreas-Salomé’s views about women and womanhood, which were presented in her works, were innovative. She was writing novels about important issues. Julia Romanova thought that she touched upon a problem of creating personality. It was back then when young heroines were searching for paths for self-fulfillment, and with this her authorship can be considered in a feministic context [9, p. 76].

Lou Andreas-Salomé emphasized the role of self-development and freedom in woman’s life. Moreover her behaviour in life showed ideal of woman free from the shackles of male domination. Caroline Kraide states, that there visible connections of Lou Andreas-Salomé’s views with women’s movement of her time and also with modern feminism. Kredie explains that to properly categorize her as a representative of modern feminism, one need to see the whole picture of her body-of-work, not only base research on individual statements, but to examine her life and works in a social context. Feministic themes Lou Andreas-Salomé’s work were based on her strong individualism, which was expressed in her every day activity and breaking

fixed conventions. With this she propagated feminism of unconstrained development, cause not only her works but also her life is the vehicle of content of meaning [7, p. 119]. We agree with this opinion, because in the example of the author of *Die Erotik*, one need to know the life of a thinker and its cultural context to fully understand her works.

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