

# The value of the person in 1st century narratives. Women, resistance and education

*EL VALOR DE LA PERSONA EN RELATOS DEL SIGLO I.  
MUJERES, RESISTENCIA Y EDUCACIÓN*

FRANCISCO JAVIER JIMÉNEZ-RÍOS\*  
Universidad de Granada, España  
fjjrios@ugr.es

GRACIA GONZÁLEZ-GIJÓN\*\*  
Universidad de Granada, España  
Autor Corresponsal Email: graciag@ugr.es

ANA EMLIA AMARO\*\*\*  
Universidad de Granada, España  
anaamaro@ugr.es

NAZARET MARTÍNEZ-HEREDIA\*\*\*\*  
Universidad de Granada, España  
nazareth@ugr.es

RECIBIDO EL 24 DE MAYO DEL 2022, APROBADO EL 2 DE OCTUBRE DEL 2022

## ABSTRACT

We start from an understanding of the human person as a communicative and symbolic reality. We emphasise the more subjective aspect of education, as showing the best of the person (*educere*) by creatively appropriating the treasures of history (*educare*). With these premises, we approach narratives that are surprising for the heterodoxy (*resistance*) they manifest, with respect to the social reality in which they were written, in the 1st century, in which they were written. In this approach it becomes evident that

the interruption of the silence of women, which appears in these narratives, shows the radical value of the human personal reality, opening an egalitarian educational space.

## KEY WORDS

person; resistance; woman; education; equality.

---

\*  [orcid.org/0000-0002-0505-904X](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0505-904X) **Google Scholar**  
\*\*  [orcid.org/0000-0001-9246-167X](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9246-167X) **Google Scholar**  
\*\*\*  [orcid.org/0000-0001-8083-0488](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8083-0488) **Google Scholar**  
\*\*\*\*  [orcid.org/0000-0001-7029-7127](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7029-7127) **Google Scholar**



## RESUMEN

Partimos de una comprensión de la persona humana como realidad comunicativa y simbólica. Acentuamos el aspecto más subjetivo de la educación, como mostrar lo mejor de la persona (educere) apropiándose creativamente los tesoros de la historia (educare). Con estas premisas nos acercamos a narraciones que sorprenden por la heterodoxia (resistencia) que manifiestan, respecto a la realidad social en la que se elaboran, en el siglo I, en el que se ponen

por escrito. En este acercamiento se pone en evidencia que la interrupción del silencio de mujeres, que aparece en estas narraciones, muestra el valor radical de la realidad personal humana, abriendo un espacio educativo igualitario.

## PALABRAS CLAVE

persona; resistencia; mujer; educación; igualdad.

## 1. Introduction

Equality lies in a fundamental fact that we now spontaneously name: we are people. This is our radical reality, which no one can take away from us and which equals us at the highest level to which we can aspire.

I am a person-woman and I am a person-male, I am a person in and beyond all the circumstances and decisions that make up my own personal reality. In this person-being lies all the rights that require the respect of all the people who participate in the historical march of humanity. The human personal reality is a worthy reality, and therefore the only reality that is an end in itself, a subject of rights and an object of respect. It is the only educable reality (Kant, 1983, 29). Woman and man are equally human since both are exemplifications of the same substantial form, both possess in equal measure reason and freedom, intellect, will and feeling (Savage).

In our personal reality is rooted the dynamism of transformation towards an egalitarian society. But this egalitarian radicalism of our personal reality, despite being an initially obvious fact, is not shown in the evolution of our history or in the social reality that we are living. Therefore, gender equality, based on personal reality, needs education to be established as an anthropological and social dynamism in a natural way.

An education that requires, while showing, a heterodox attitude in the people who make this process dynamic, making it really a poetic becoming. It is a genuine position of resistance (Freire, 1970), personal (Zubiri, 1988) and communicative (Habermas, 1988). The person who speeds up processes of personal and social change is found in the sphere of heterodoxy. To be heterodox is to focus on the person, the subject of education, at whose service the institutions must be: the Sabbath is for man and not man for the Sabbath (Mk 2, 23). The educating person is a heterodox person, a facilitator of great processes of creative appropriation, energised in resistance, provoking the word. From the centrality of the human personal reality in its process of realization, an authentic education in equality is shown to be possible. This is what is highlighted in the stories we are dealing with in this paper. Heterodoxy and education, and therefore, heterodoxy and education in equality form a system, based on the creative wealth that shows the reality of each human person in the construction of a new social reality (Berger

& Luckman, 1986) in the confluence of the processes of resistance in the go-to-speech (Ellacuría, 1991), with the person.

## 2. Method

We start from an understanding of human personal reality as a communicative and symbolic reality: the ex-tactic moment of human personal reality is principled to its enstatic moment, in the system that constitutes this reality. We live, we make ourselves the person we are, taking charge of the other than I (Levinás, 2014), con-passing a same and diverse historical reality.

Its educational correlate emphasises the subjective aspect of the process: to educate is to bring out the best in the person (*educere*) by creatively appropriating the treasures of history. It is a phenomenological appreciation in which the person, the subject of education, is radically placed at the hinge of his or her personal growth, as a continuous creative appropriation of values.

In this educational endeavour we evoke narratives from the 1st century, which we approach as treasures of history, the heritage of humanity. To understand them, we first turn to earlier narratives that help us to understand them in contrast with the social reality in which they were first elaborated.

In both cases we do not intend to make a precise historical study of the society and culture in which these flashes of life occur, although we cannot avoid some allusions that allow us to contemplate the contrast to contemplate the resistance they show. On the other hand, we disregard the alleged transcendent dimension that energizes and recreates these writings; and, therefore, a theological and exegetical approach to them.

We approach the narratives with the naivety of one who searches the treasures of history, hoping to find the rays that illuminate the present of our giving of self, in the appropriation of possibilities as creation of capacities, which constitutes the temporal *gerund* of history as a continuous educational action.

Our encounter is exclusively with texts. The reference to Jesus, as a Jew it seems in some texts of this work, is placed on the same level as when we name Don Quixote or the Little Prince, refer to Plato's texts or those of Aristotle. Narratives are enough for us, we place ourselves in Popper's "world three". With the stated aim: we use narratives to illustrate powerfully the value of human personal reality as a communicative reality, which is made in the creative appropriation of the treasures of history, the argument of this work, which focuses on a personalist philosophy of education.

In the background of our met-odos two greats of our time are shown: the understanding of the human person, in its educational dynamism as an overflow of reality, and the way of referring to it is fundamentally marked by Zubiri, When we describe the content of these texts as a silence-interrupted we are giving the word to Freire, especially in his vindication of resistance in his work Pedagogy of the oppressed; silence-interrupted is presented as a correlate of oppression-resisted. We are not going to lavish quotes and references, nor are we going to force a scheme that will introduce us by itself into education for equality, although it could be the object of a thorough study on the subject. We only want to lend our pen to the eloquence of the word in the testimony of a story, in the display of some narratives, hoping that the actuality of those words will contribute to the current torrent of femininity in the word.

Recovering memory is always a difficult task, especially when, as in the case of women's history, it is a matter of updating the memory of silence (Segura; Duby-Perrot 7-17); a silence that becomes lacerating in the writing of some peoples, an interrupted silence in the history of Israel.

### 3. Results

Women, in the narratives we evoke, discover themselves in the drama of this Silence-interrupted, of this oppression-resisted. Women have nothing to say, they stay at the door of the Temple and join the People in their union with the man. They have no right to any education other than the advice of the father to prolong the offspring, and in the death of the husband they are exposed to the lurking misery. Some are foreigners in their own country, and infidelity is punished by stoning.

The word of this dramatic silence is what we intend to outline.

The word of this dramatic silence is what we intend to outline in the first narratives, in which silence and oppression weigh more heavily, with some interruptions of the word, as is the case in the first text we refer to. Then we will show the counterpoint of a tenacious word that unfolds in a wide range of personal and social spheres.

### **3.1. An interruption that breaks the silence of speech**

The silence of the women shows the history of a village in small "stories", in almost forgotten narratives. For this reason, we would like to begin by bringing to mind the story of Susana (Dn 13, 1-64), a story of silence, in which, in spite of everything - as we shall see - silence does not have the last word.

A beautiful woman, in the grounds of her mansion, harassed by two men, elders and judges, and accused of daring to escape the harassment. The word of women, the word of Susana, is worthless in a culture that relies on the power of the word spoken: her word is worthless, much less in the face of the testimony of two men, to say the least, elders and judges. All is lost: with the denial of her word runs the annihilation of her life.

However, the silence of his word will be interrupted by the prophetic power of a child, Daniel, who will bring to light the empty and deadly word of a deceitful testimony, even to the point of stirring up the rebellion of the assembly (Dn 13, 45-63). Two judges try to abuse Susannah by setting a trap in her garden. Contradicted by her honesty, they accused her of adultery. Daniel dismantles the lie before an assembly deafened by the most significant voice: that of two judges. Thus, in the recourse to memory in the story of Susannah, like so many stories of women, silence is shown, but a silence that is already interrupted here, from the outside, by the prophetic word, which dares to contradict one of the strongest institutions and convictions of this people: the valid word is the testimony of two men and, to the utmost degree, if these are elders and judges of Israel.

From an educational philosophical point of view, this text is highly topical. It is a clear and effective denunciation of the persistent harassment that many innocent people suffer at the hands of the

powers that be. It is presented as a call for a courageous word, better shared, against the current injustice that makes the victim a defendant.

### **3.2. Exclusion and ownership: an educational challenge**

Women not only have no say. They are also denied entry to the Temple and the possibility of equal education. In short, they lack even their membership of the people of Israel.

Exclusion and possession are found in the social and cultural reality of women. Excluded from the Temple and the People, they are incorporated into the People because of their attachment to their husbands for the sake of their offspring, and sometimes close to the doors of the Temple.

Israel lives in the hope of a great descent, which will inhabit a fertile land. By virtue of the strength of the "promise" of descent, circumcision becomes a doorway and a symbol of belonging to the people of Israel; and from this moment on, women will only be part of the people insofar as they are linked to the continuity of the descent, by their attachment to the male.

And if they are not full members of the People, then they have no place in its two great institutions: the Temple and the Law. The Temple is the place of the People, the platform on which the men settle. Women can only be outside, in their own place, and looking after the children. Women's only attachment to the Law is in the strict obligation to comply with it.

No teacher in any school allows a woman to sit at his feet to listen to the word, to rejoice in the Law and the Prophets. All wisdom is forbidden to women except the advice of a father who indoctrinates them in the promise of offspring and in the care of the home and family, to the extent of the Law, to the armour of the laws.

Once again, silence is the norm in the possession of those who are excluded. And yet this silence is in itself interrupted: in the background, it is shown that there is no promise without the excluded, that there is no history without the women of Israel, that even the rigour of their maternal instruction shows its hidden importance. This text could be written today. The exclusion of many people, of many women, continues to be a highly topical issue that constitutes a major educational and philosophical challenge.

### 3.3. Handcuffed and disowned: against dependency

Without realising it, we have entered one of the institutions that reveal the role of women in every society: the family institution.

Angelo Tosato's analysis of marriage in Israel concludes that a monogamous customary regime prevailed, as in the other legal systems of the former Middle East, although in certain cases the man was granted the possibility of polygamy, especially if it was aimed at guaranteeing the woman a roof, a livelihood and assistance (Tosato 180-191).

However, we find texts that show how the law allowed the king to have polygamy (Dt 17, 17). And in the Talmud, 24, and even 48, women are contemplated in the royal harems (Bautista 28-29). In the time of the judges and the monarchy, the legal restrictions of polygamy are under minimums; thus, for example, while Gideon possesses many women (Judges 8, 30-31), bigamy acquires legal recognition (Deut 21, 15-17). And later, the Talmud will limit the number of wives of an individual to four, and to eighteen those of a king (Bautista30).

In this line, we find the studies of De Vaux. Despite the fact that monogamous marriage is widely represented (Gen 2, 21-24; 7, 7), however, polygamy appears in the Cainite lineage (Gen 4, 19). And just as Abraham, Nahor and Eliphaz had concubines (Gen 16, 1-2; 25, 1; 23:1-2; 22, 20-24; 36, 11-12), as was typical of their time and milieu, it can be observed, at the same time, that the titular wife is only one, with the exception of some cases such as that of Jacob, two wives and their slaves (Gen 29, 15-30; 30, 1-9) or Esau, three wives (Gen 26, 34; 28, 9; 36, 1-5). After a nuanced study, one can affirm the reality of relative monogamy, combined with the concubinage proper to the time (De Vaux, 1964: 55-64). "In the line of De Vaux, the conclusion that can be reached is that, in Israel, polygamy was not very frequent, but this was not due to legal difficulties or ethical considerations, but rather to other types of causes, above all economic ones. Tosato's statements, however, lead us to the (following) conclusion...: protection was offered to women in exchange for accepting polygamy" (Bautista 30).

For our part, we believe we find a confluence between Tosato's stricter interpretation and De Vaux's more flexible one: both ultimately revolve around the dependence, fundamentally economic and social, of women in Israel.

If, in the first case, the rule of the Hammurabi Code that grants the sick woman, replaced by another, the possibility of a "divorce" with restitution of the dowry, is interpreted as a rule of anti-polygamy that, at the same time, is in a situation of polygamy or divorce, If a woman's livelihood is guaranteed, then again the economic question determines the possibility of polygamy, even if in Tosato it is shown in a negative way (avoiding poverty) and in De Vaux in a positive way (he who has, can) (Bautista 29).

But this is not the end of the marriage of Jewish women: divorce and/or repudiation reveal more intensely the drama of the social situation of women in Israel.

The imputation of a simple tare to a woman becomes recognized as a reason for repudiation (Dt 24, 1). A statement so generic that it led to two divergent interpretations. The Sammay school restricts the causes of repudiation to adultery and bad habits. The Hillel school, on the other hand, admits any insignificance. But, in any case, the male has the power of the "act of repudiation", and even if the woman takes the "initiative", the consequences will always be negative for her (Bautista 31).

The procedure is simple. It is enough for the husband to declare his separation: "She is no longer my wife, and I am no longer her husband" (De Vaux 68-70). But it is contrary to Jewish law for the woman to ask for a divorce; and even when the rule is later relaxed (S. II), in fact, the prior presentation of the act of repudiation by the husband is made a condition (De Vaux 69).

But this is not his greatest misfortune. While the adulterous male is treated with indulgence, adultery constitutes, in any case, the "great fault" of the married woman (Gen 20:9; Hos 2:4-10); a fault that will have to be paid for with social and vital annihilation, in separation, exclusion and even brutal stoning (Jn 8, 2-11).

Even silence is silenced by the cruelty of death, of these deaths, of these ways of dying, of being constantly besieged by mortal silence.

Today, legal developments have evolved, but from a moral point of view, the cry of so many dependent people, so many women, bound exclusively by survival, and exposed to the risk of paying with their lives, continues to resound. This reality remains a dart for reflection and a challenge for education.

### 3.4. Separated and locked up: against isolation

The laws of ritual impurity, in a culture where blood is life (Ex 12, 1-14), culminate in the social prostration of women. "Because of ritual impurity, women could not participate in either public or religious life; they were excluded not only from worship, but even from the possibility of access to God, since, not being the subject of the law, a woman could not access God through her own merits, but only through those of her husband; hence she was not bound by the precepts that men had to fulfil at certain times; This, together with her lack of participation in public life, caused her to be relegated to the home, along with the slaves and the children" (Bautista 32).

She was not a beneficiary of the Law, but she was subject to the strict prescriptions of the Tora, which she could not study or understand given her real inferiority and the consequent duty of submission to her owner, father or husband (Bautista 32). The only right she had was that of domestic religious teaching, which was given by the father of a Jewish family, as the latter, invested with the supreme authority of the family by the law of Israel, was also a teacher and, when leading prayer and domestic rites, could also be considered a priest.

The ritual impurity was so extreme that on the days of the monthly purification and after the birth she had no access even to the court of the Gentiles (Jeremias 385-387).

Outside the Temple and the village, Jewish women are locked up in the house; and if they have to go out, they must do so doubly veiled and with the utmost restraint, for to be perceived may mean repudiation with no other right than the torture of hunger. "Without access to education, women's training was reduced to learning about domestic chores; until their marriage, women were under the absolute power of their fathers, who could even sell them into slavery until they were 12 years old, so that marriage meant a simple change of ownership for women; obedience to the husband was a religious duty, and the obligations a woman assumed made her a true servant of her husband" (Bautista 33).

Blind obedience and total servility: this is the daily silence of so many Jewish women (Green 235; Ballarín 599-611; Aubert). In the world of mass communications, paradoxically, we find such fierce isolation that it prevents the minimum of real communication necessary to

realise ourselves as people. We see this as a lacerating and urgent philosophical and educational challenge.

### 3.5. A broken silence: social inequality

But this daily silence is broken by social inequality: not all women suffer from it in the same way, or with the same rigour, or in the same circumstances.

The land of Israel is a strategic land, haunted by the powerful of all times, a Roman province in the time of Jesus. And Jerusalem, with its Temple, is the economic and political, social and religious centre, the centre of pilgrimage and the well of collection, the seat of merchants and the dwelling place of the rich (Jeremias 44-46).

In Joachim Jeremias's analyses of Jewish society, focusing on Jerusalem, three social classes are distinguished: the group of those in power, the middle class, and those beset by hunger (Jeremias 105-138).

Some nuance should be made with regard to the enforcement of the rigid rules that imprison women in Israel. These rules are so strict that they can only be enforced in noble and wealthy environments; a power that becomes an obligation, the burden of class pomp. However, in the lower classes of the urban environment and, above all, in the countryside, it was difficult to carry out tasks if they were veiled, for example: customs were less severe and relations were freer (Bautista 33).

But it is more. Some rabbinical writings show a certain rebelliousness of women in front of this situation of submission to the rules, especially those that articulated religious inequalities (Jeremias 388).

And finally a word about "foreigners", and among them the Samaritans. For the latter, contact with Jewish people was absolutely forbidden, especially if it was a boy. This is evident in Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (Jn 4, 4-9, 27). Of course, no one was exempt from going to Jerusalem, on a pilgrimage, to leave his belongings there.

The social inequality of our world is so great that we have no words to say it, it is itself a word, in its silence, and silenced. Opening 2014,

Intermon-Ofman reminded us, with data, that 1% of the world's population had 99% of the world's resources (Intermon-Ofman). And almost a decade has already passed, with inequality accelerating. Another top-level issue for philosophy and education.

### **3.6. Available and dependent: mothers and wives**

Trying to summarize the situation of women in Jewish society, in the time of Jesus of Nazareth, we can say that it was a matter of always being available in continuous dependence. In the words of Bautista Hope: "One of the conclusions that can be reached is that in Jewish society there existed, as a customary rule, an implicit authorization to dispose of women as a good or an object that was considered the property of men" (Bautista 34).

A property whose use goes beyond the material, to sustain the patriarchal, political and religious structure of this society. Only the first-born male is heir to the promise of countless descendants who will inhabit a fertile land. It is the realisation of this promise in time (religious), which will make Israel the greatest of all peoples (political), starting from Abraham and becoming the first-born male (patriarchal), that founds and sustains the law of the levirate (Gen 38 6-19; Ruth 1, 11-12; 2, 20; 4, 5-10; De Merode): the wife is to be married to the "seven," that is, all the brothers of the deceased husband in search of the forced offspring (Mk 12, 18-27; Mt 22, 23-33; Lk 20, 27-40).

In short, women are "servants" of the father, to be counted later among the husband's possessions, along with the house, the field, the animals and the slaves (Ex 20, 17; Dt 5, 12). Although, at least, she cannot be sold as a slave by her husband, and in case of repudiation - in theory - she has some right to livelihood (Bautista 34-35).

From servant to wife, and as a wife she can expect little, despite the fact that in some Old Testament narratives women are sung as loved and kind, listened to and treated equally to the husband.

So there is only one space left for women's dignity: motherhood. "Although the meaning of a woman's life was exhausted in motherhood, it made women especially honoured as mothers, and as such they were protected by the fourth commandment" (Bautista 35).

Only in motherhood does the availability of the Jewish woman take on some meaning, beyond her dependence on the male. Circumstances have changed, but we still hear the struggle against the corset of mother and wife. The dignity of each person, which founds their freedom and opens the space for justice and equality, requires the possibility of the maximum exercise of their overflow as a personal human reality. What a task for reflection and educational praxis.

### **3.7. Counterpoint**

In this situation of social inequality of women in relation to men that we have outlined, we find some accounts from the 1st century, which refer to a Jew, called Jesus, with a truly surprising behaviour in his relations with the women he meets along the way.

We focus on some encounters that are significant for us: We begin by discovering that there are women in his group, and then we stop at some particular moments, such as the one when Mary Magdalene breaks into the sacred rite of the meal in a house of the Jewish nobility, or the dialogue with the Samaritan woman in Sychar, by Jacob's well; the overflowing common sense that frees the adulterous woman from the mortal wound, or the firm tenderness with which she gives to those of her group at the moment of her death; the warmth that abounds in listening to Mary, or the disposition with which she receives the services of Martha. We stop for a moment in some passages, trying to show the social and cultural sense, finally educational, of these stories, as literary treasures of humanity.

### **3.8. There are women in his group. Equal participation**

A boldness that shakes the very heart of Jewish education. If there is anything noble and sublime in Jewish culture, it is the transmission of the Law and the Prophets by the teacher to those who sit at his feet as his disciples. If a woman's only space was her confinement with her children, and if all education was forbidden to her, it was unimaginable that a woman could even desire such audacity. We do not know of any case in which this happened (De Vaux 69).

Women not only listen to his word, but also follow him everywhere, as full members of Jesus' group (Lk 8, 1-3; Acts 1, 14-15; Garzonio;

Parazzoli). And finally, they will be the ones who persist when projects seem to fall apart: when everyone leaves, blinded by fear, they remain with Jesus, at the foot of the cross, in His death and burial (Lk 23, 28-29; 49, 55-56; Mt 27, 55-61; Mk 15, 40-41, 47; Jn 19, 25). "From this framework of Jesus' movement, and from the context of the situation of women in Jewish society, what could have meant the fact that Jesus had women in his community, instructed them as his disciples and recovered for them the category of full persons before God, takes on greater importance" (Bautista 39).

With the film "Gentell" we experience the dramatic effort of a woman to enter the world of the rabbis. In today's world, it is still a social challenge, which is still a challenge of education, equal participation in all areas of reality, for being a person.

### **3.9. The first, a prostitute. The person comes first**

A chilling contrast. In the place of supreme purity, at least outwardly, the home of a Pharisee, the total impurity represented in a woman, known to all as a prostitute, bursts in (Lc, 7, 36-50). Where would this woman, and prostitute, get the strength to jump from the bottom of Jewish society to the pedestal of the Pharisees?

We find no other answer than in the re-encounter with her own personal entrails recreated by the entrails of the person of Jesus: she would never have made that mortal leap if she had not been sure of not being annihilated in the emptiness of an unfinished search, if she had not had the total conviction of being received, as a person, by Jesus.

And in fact the story makes it very clear that beyond the rules of impurity, disfigured to the limit in Mary of Magdala, a transfiguring personal encounter takes place; and this contrasts with the disqualification of ritual purity with the same weapons that sustain it: the pure one has not fulfilled the ritual. "When I came into your house you did not offer me water for my feet; she, instead, has watered my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You did not kiss me; she, on the other hand, since I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not pour ointment on my head, but she has anointed my feet with perfume" (Lk 7, 44-46).

The silence of the women was interrupted in a place of great eloquence, in the house of a Pharisee, on the altar of purity: in front of Jesus, this woman showed herself in the fullness of her personal reality.

In this sense, it is not strange that, in her diatribe with the High Priests and the Elders of the people, who are at the top of the social ladder, she has the audacity to "raise" with her word the most neglected people to a higher level, in their true reality, that of a personal human reality: "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go before you into the kingdom of God" (Mt 21, 31).

The person comes first, and his or her circumstances - above all social rank - in no way touch the absolute (relative) value of the person. The person grows and overflows in the real and intimate reception of the other person, of the person who takes charge of his personal reality, with his circumstances. Philosophy and education meet in the personal overflow of the real encounter.

### **3.10. With the Samaritan woman. Proximity, encounters and misunderstandings**

If foreigners (publicans) are equated with prostitutes, in the same circle of social distancing from the nucleus adhered to the Temple and the Law, the greater the distance from a "foreign" woman, who to make matters worse was born in Samaria. A wonderful and significant passage we find in the fourth Gospel (Jn 4, 1-42; Brown).

It is important to note two particulars, two notes which, instead, reinforce the sense of the narrative: the disciples are not there, and the Jews do not talk to the Samaritans. The first enables and encourages the meeting, and the second expresses the relevance of the meeting.

We are at Jacob's well in Sychar in Samaria, a passage for Galilee. The woman goes to the well to get water and Jesus takes the initiative: "Give me a drink". The woman can only be perplexed by such an assertion: "How can you, being a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?" Can a Jew receive anything from a Samaritan? and from a Samaritan woman? It is already significant that the voice of the Samaritan woman is emerging, which may indicate a non-verbal expression of personal acceptance. This is confirmed by the word of Jesus: the symbol of water indicates the possibility and the reality of a symbolic exchange, a personal interaction.

The story continues. She too is ready to receive the "water" that this Jew offers her. The story continues and the situation is forced: not only is she a foreigner and a Samaritan, but she is also in a situation radically rejected by Jewish culture: she has had five husbands and now lives with another man.

But, strangely enough, there is no value judgment; neither does Jesus' recognition of her personal situation, which would put her even more on the periphery, silence the woman's voice; on the contrary, this leads her to full confidence, to raise her voice to the point of daring to ask her the radical question that separates Jews and Samaritans: "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain; but you say that the place where it should be worshipped is in Jerusalem". A problem that is not only religious, but that is masking a major economic and political problem, the problem of the Temple in Jerusalem, as an economic, political and religious centre.

In Jesus' response we find a radical destructuring of that Jewish tradition into a total bet on the Samaritan woman, on the human person: there will be no need to go to the Temple because the real temple is each person.

But it is more. This Samaritan "foreigner," distanced in every way from the Jewish tradition, becomes worthy of the word of Jesus, the depository of the intimate revelation of his conscience: "I am the Messiah who speaks to you".

And the genius of the narrator makes the end of the conversation coincide with the arrival of the disciples, accompanied by hesitant strangeness and contained silence: "His disciples came and were astonished that he should speak to this woman, though no one dared ask him" (Lk 4, 27). Strangeness and silence reinforce the meaning of the text, and once again show the eloquence of its distance, normal for the context, from the position of Jesus.

The silence was again interrupted, in the word of a hostile woman with an irregular life, until she became the depository of Jesus' word in the revelation of his intimacy.

The neighbourhood issue remains a major social and educational problem. In fact, in a global world, we find it lacerating in today's geopolitical problems. The neighbour can be in the overflowing entrails,

in a symbolic logic, or become the main enemy, in a diabolic logic. Our communicative structure needs to be thought out and educated from the personal to the global level.

### **3.11. With the adulteress: personal realism**

While Jesus is in the Temple, the lawyers and Pharisees bring him a woman caught in flagrant adultery (Jn 8, 2-11). The act itself is already fraught with the greatest social disrepute and the harshness of a punishment, even to death. But here it acquires an even greater density of content: on this occasion they intend to confront Jesus head-on with the greatest Jewish institution, the Law of Moses: "The Law of Moses commands us to stone adulteresses; what do you say?" (Jn 8, 5).

As on so many occasions, Jesus does not fall into the trap, but goes off on a tangent: he keeps silent for a while, a dramatic silence - for the actors - shown in the gesture that takes him away from the performance. A silence that breaks a single word: whoever "can", let him do it. A word that provokes silence in the flight, even to the loneliness of Jesus' encounter with the woman: "Has no one condemned you? I don't condemn you either".

The silence is interrupted by provoking the greatest density of silence, in the discovery of one's own personal reality. The actors have lost their "mask" and the woman has been doubly "restored" and considered in her personal reality: in the silence of the actors, and in the word of Jesus.

Another educational challenge of poetic rigour: the first thing is the person, always, with his limits and mistakes, with his possibilities and illusions. Our biography is built up in pieces, often beyond our control. Con-passion proves to be essential as personal and social realism, which we dare to state with a borrowed word: I am because my mother was a prostitute.

### **3.12. With Martha and Mary. In feeling and doing**

In two brushstrokes, we find in Luke's Gospel, two moments of relationship with Jesus, two moments of daily facing the reality of life,

and two moments in human relationships; two moments which, in this case, are symbolised by two women, Martha and Mary (Lk 10:38-41) With this position, and in line with our procedure in this work, we intend to assume and overcome the criticism of the androcentric and dualistic interpretation of this passage, either by establishing two places for women, or by indicating two lifestyles (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1996: 87): we are talking about two moments in the story, which can symbolise two moments of the respective system that constitutes human personal reality (Moreno, 1986).

In the narrative the relationship of friendship that these sisters have with Jesus, to the extent that they receive him into their home, is taken for granted. This relationship is even more evident in the Johannine narrative, for they come to Jesus at the moment of their brother's death, and Jesus responds as quickly as possible (Jn 11, 1-44).

In Luke's description Mary "sits at the Lord's feet to listen to his words". An action that provokes Martha's anger, which goes out of her way to prepare for his arrival. Jesus receives both offerings, Martha's activity and Mary's listening, although he clearly opts for the second. Beyond the many interpretations of this text, we are interested to note that Mary sits at the feet of the teacher, ready to listen to the lesson.

Sitting at the feet is what defines the disciple, in this case the friend and disciple. We are faced with an educational event, unheard of in Jewish society. And it is not surprising that this is in the intention of the narrator, since Luke was a cultivated man, a doctor by profession, and both he and his community could be quite sensitive to the subject of formation, and after his experiences with Jesus, also of women.

The silence is interrupted, this time in a coming and going of the word spoken and heard, a word that goes from-to recreating an educational, and formative, situation of a woman.

Heart and reason, feeling and doing, come together in our words. Two totally necessary dimensions in the art of accompanying the overflow of the person in their educational growth. Educating with co-reason is the constant demand of a committed educator (Toro, 2014). And if we think about it, these two figures reflect the two fundamental moments that express a great consensus around the description of Theory of Education: reflection-practice.

### 3.13. A Phoenician. No foreigners

In this case it is Jesus who, playing with the terms of the stories, is "evangelised" by a Phoenician, a Phoenician's Syrian, a full-blown foreigner (Mk 7, 24-30). In this case it is Jesus who hears the word; his silence is interrupted because his word has escaped beyond the borders of Israel and has returned to his ears on the lips of a foreign woman, a woman without the right to speak, without the rights of Israel.

In the face of Jesus' denial of the Phoenician woman's request, she reacts by proposing her own word, her fundamental project, her option for the most needy: "even the little dogs under the table eat the crumbs thrown by the children".

Mark, parsimonious in words and descriptions, and articulated by the strategic law of silence (the "don't tell anyone" assures an authentic transmission of a valuable secret), here words seem to be superfluous: in the region of Tyre, a woman, a pagan, a Syrian from Phoenicia. The writer's ruse anticipates the end of his story: the word of Jesus will be remembered by anyone to the ends of the known.

The silence is interrupted by a woman, clearly a foreigner, who reminds Jesus of his own word, his own project of life. Jesus accepts her word, a word in which the woman is recreated as a person, and as a person she is received by Jesus.

Another pressing issue of our time is migration, so much so that some have predicted it to be the major problem of the present century. Certainly, the evidence of this is shocking, and it is undoubtedly an unappealable educational task. And, of course, following the structure of the story, each person is always a gift to another person, in and beyond all their circumstances.

### 3.14. Women, to the end

We could bring many more stories, many more encounters, but the statements are enough to show the egalitarian and trusting relationship of Jesus with so many women, as such marginalized, and many of them in the extreme of social exclusion. Some are in his group and follow him in a more or less continuous way. And in their apparent silence they constitute an eloquent voice. They follow him and sit at

his feet as true disciples of the Master. They attend, in various ways, an extraordinary programme of training and humanising education. They too are always present in the most significant moments, in the most difficult and complex situations.

Women are till death and burial, until the end. In Luke's account, many women appear on the way to the cross, a path that structures his entire Gospel: a journey towards Jerusalem, where the decisive events will take place. Jesus turns to them and says: "Women of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep instead for yourselves and your children, for behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, the wombs that have not borne, and the breasts that have not given birth'" (Lk 23, 28-29).

The presence of a crowd is normal. The fact that there are so many women already begins to put us on our guard. The fact that Jesus addresses women breaks all social molds. And the fact that he "prophesies" the blessing of those who have not been and will not be mothers leaves us in the most absolute astonishment: What place is left for Jewish women if the little space of their survival is taken away from them by motherhood? It is clear. One cannot live imprisoned in the miserable fabric of almsgiving for motherhood: women's space is the "infinite" space of their personal reality, in the freedom of their life project. It is not a curse of motherhood, which has already been blessed in the person of Jesus in the word of a woman (Lk 11:27-28). It is a blessing of women for being women, human persons, in parity with any other person.

Further on, though keeping their distance, were the women who had followed him from Galilee. Finally, they followed Joseph of Arimathea to see how the body was placed in the tomb. Then they prepared aromas and ointments (Lk 23, 49, 55-56; Fitzmyer).

In Matthew's story, many women who had followed him from Galilee also look from afar, and the name is given to Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the Mother of the Zebedees. The tomb is closed: Mary Magdalene and the other Mary remain seated in front of the tomb (Mt 27, 55-61; Bonnard).

In Mark's account, the most primitive, there are some women, looking on from afar, among whom are Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Lesser and Joseph, and Salome, who followed him and

attended to him when he was in Galilee; and also many others who had gone up with him to Jerusalem. Mary Magdalene and Mary of Joseph watched where they put him (Mk 15, 40-41, 47; Sicre).

In John's account, Jesus' silence does not cause distance. Next to the cross are Mary, his mother, his mother's sister, Mary of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene (Jn 19, 25; Brown).

For the moment we are only interested in showing that there are women at the moment of Jesus' crucifixion and burial, that some of them are very close, that others have come with him from Galilee and Jerusalem, that some are by the cross and others at the door of the tomb, and that Mary Magdalene is in every situation (Ricci; Sicre). Thus, as a summary of this section, we can say in the words of a woman: "the four evangelists will testify that women are part, as full members, of the assembly of the kingdom that Jesus calls" (Bautista 40).

#### 4. Conclusions

As shown in these narrative passages, the position of women in Jewish society Jewry in the 1st century reflects a situation of helplessness and isolation from the public channels of social structuring.

This state of silence and exclusion, of possession and repudiation, of availability and dependence, of being apart and being contained, which marks an evident social inequality, contrasts sharply with the testimonies we presented in the second moment about Jesus' actions with women of his time. These are actions that take on greater value when we become aware that these stories were generated in the heart of this radically unequal society.

We interpret this contrast as an educational challenge that can contribute to today's commitment to an egalitarian society based on the radical dignity of human personal reality.

We understand that the indications that we have made are sufficient, in a first approach, to give an account of the contrast that we can perceive between the reality of women in Jewish society Jewry in the 1st century and the experiences of women in their relationship with Jesus, based on the testimonies that reach us: in the face of exclusion and inequality we find ourselves with equal and loving treatment, which takes on all

its force because it is gestated and transmitted in the same social reality in which this contrast is produced.

In many different ways, these women's meetings with Jesus, are referring to a fundamental event: it is a personal encounter, in which the dignity of the person is constituted in the absolute that bases its radical equality and the respect it requires.

We have referred only to some testimonies concerning the public life of Jesus, as witnessed in some first century accounts.

We have not directly alluded a very special woman, who appears in these writings, Mary of Nazareth. Nor have we referred to the accounts of the decisive role of many women in the testimony of Jesus and the birth of the early Christian communities.

These allusions, always in a narrative approach that obviates a historical, exegetical or theological approach, would only reinforce the contrast that we have presented. These references could be the object of other works (Jiménez, et al.).

The contrast between the position of women in Jewish society treatment of women, based on the testimonies we have outlined, opens up an educational gap towards an egalitarian society in which being born with one gender or the other and shaping life in one gender or the other is no more than the aspect of our personal human reality: an aspect that requires all the respect of the person who shows him or herself.

But this contrast also puts us back in a position of resistance and creativity: Jesus' position was against the tide, and ours can emerge in any situation where a person, woman or man, is oppressed. And from this position we open the egalitarian horizon beyond the following statement: Women play a relevant role in Catholicism; however, they have a limited role in the Catholic Church (Giorgi & Palmisano).

Our reading of these stories shows a place of interruption of silence, a space of resistance in oppression, which presents itself as an educational challenge, in so many current problems, which consists in the radical centrality of the person as absolute value, end in itself, dignified reality, subject of rights and object of respect: each person is worth more than the whole universe.

## REFERENCIAS

- Alcalá, Manuel. *La mujer y los ministerios en la Iglesia*. Salamanca: Sígueme, 1980.
- Aubert, Jean-Marie. *L'exil féminin*. Paris: Cerf, 1988.
- Ballarín, Pilar. "La construcción de un modelo educativo de 'utilidad doméstica'". *Historia de las mujeres en occidente IV. El siglo XIX*. Edited by Duby. Madrid: Taurus, 1993: 599 - 611.
- Bautista, Esperanza. *La mujer en la Iglesia primitiva*. Navarra: Verbo Divino, 1993.
- Berger, Peter and Luckmann, Thomas. (1986). *La construcción social de la realidad*. Buenos Aires, Amorrortu.
- Bonnard, Pierre, *El Evangelio según San Mateo*. Madrid: Cristiandad, 1976.
- Brown, Raimond. *El Evangelio según San Juan*. Madrid: Cristiandad, 1979.
- De Merode, De Croix. "Papel de la mujer en el Antiguo testamento". *Concilium* 16, 1997: 85-92.
- De Vaux, Roland. *Instituciones del Antiguo Testamento*. Barcelona: Herder, 1964.
- Duby, George and Perrot, Michelle. "Escribir la historia de las mujeres". *Historia de las mujeres en occidente I. La Antigüedad*. Madrid: Taurus, 1992: 7-17.
- Ellacuría, Ignacio. *Filosofía de la realidad histórica*. Trotta, Madrid, 1991.
- Estrada, Juan. *La Iglesia: ¿institución o carisma?* Salamanca: Sígueme, 1984.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph. *El Evangelio según Lucas*. Madrid: Cristiandad, 1986.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogía del oprimido*. Siglo XXI, Buenos Aires, 1970.
- Garzonio, Marco. *Gesù e le donne*. Milano: Rizzoli, 1990.

Giorgi, Alberta and Palmisano, Sfanía. "Women and Gender in Contemporary European Catholic Discourse: Voices of Faith". *Religions* 11, 2020:508.

Green, Nancy. *La formación de la mujer judía. In Historia de las mujeres en occidente IV. El siglo XIX*. Madrid: Taurus, 1993: 235-251.

Habermas, Jürgen. *Conciencia moral y acción comunicativa*. Península, Barcelona, 1988.

Harnack, Adolf. "Probabilia über du adresse und der Verfaser des Hebraierbriefe". *Zeitschrif für die Neutestamentichle Wissenschaft*. 1, 1990: 16-41.

Hoppin, Ruth. *Priscila, author of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. Philadelphia: Exposition Press, 1969.

Jeremias, Joachim. *Jerusalén en tiempos de Jesús*. Madrid: Cristiandad, 1977.

Jiménez Ríos, Francisco Javier; Martínez-Heredia, Nazaret; Amaro Agudo, Ana and González-Gijón, Gracia. "Women, Equality and Education: A model of person and society in 1st century Christian writings". *HUMAN REVIEW. International Humanities Review/ Revista Internacional De Humanidades* 15(2), 2022: 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.37467/revhuman.v11.4214>

Kant, Immanuel. *Pedagogía*. Madrid, Akal, 1983.

Levinás, Emmanuel. *Alteridad y trascendencia*, Arena Libros, Madrid, 2014.

Moreno, Amparo. *El arquetipo viril protagonista de la historia. Ejercicios de lectura no androcéntrica*. Barcelona: La Sal, 1986.

Parazzoli, Ferruccio. *Gesù e le donne*. Milano: Paoline, 1989.

Ricci, Carla. *Maria di Magdala e le molte altre*. Napoli: Claudiana editrice, 1991.

Savage, Deborah. "Redeeming Woman: A Response to the "Second Sex" Issue from within the Tradition of Catholic Scriptural Exegesis". *Religions* 11, 2020: 474.

Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *Pero ella dijo. Prácticas feministas de interpretación bíblica*. Madrid: Trotta, 1996.

Segura, Cristina. *La voz del silencio II. Historia de las mujeres: compromiso y método*. Madrid: Laya, 1993.

Sicre, José, *El cuadrante. Introducción a los evangelios I. La búsqueda*. Navarra: Verbo Divino, 1997.

Toro, José María. *Educación con co-razón*, Desclee de Brouwer, Bilbao, 2014.

Tosato, Angelo. *El matrimonio israelítico*. Roma: Biblical Institute Press, 1982.

Zubiri, Xabier. *El hombre y Dios*, Alianza, Madrid, 1988.

**Cómo citar:**

Jiménez-Ríos, Francisco Javier. Amaro Agudo, Ana Emilia. González-Gijón, Gracia. Martínez-Heredia, Nazaret. The value of the person in 1st century narratives. Women, resistance and education. *Discusiones filosóficas*. Ene. 24 (42), 2023: 31-55. <https://doi.org/10.17151/difil.2023.24.42.3>

