

International Women's Day Observed in Germany

Ute Lemme
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Stuttgart, Germany—Women through the centuries as seen by the world's writers provided the theme for the UPF-Germany observation of International Women's Day 2015.

Ute Lemme, leader of the Stuttgart branch of UPF-Germany, opened the meeting, which took place on March 14, 2015, in the UPF Center and was attended by about 20 persons.

A fugue written by Johann Sebastian Bach was played on guitar by Daniel Henrich to set the atmosphere for the main speaker, who was his mother. Margit Henrich, a specialist in German studies, gave an impressive and moving talk on "The Role of Women in Literature."



Based on the book *The Eternal Woman* by the German writer Gertrud von Le Fort, Mrs. Henrich stated that the symbolic value of woman is her devotion. According to a short explanation of the Kabalistic tree of life by the Israeli philosopher and historian Gershom Scholem, femininity is represented as a recipient and bearer of ever-flowing, godly life.

It is Mary the Immaculate who demonstrates the pure countenance of humankind before the Fall and who restores the religious attitude of devotion ("Fiat mihi") to the proclamatory angel, after this attitude was lost by Eve at the time of the Fall.



The power of devotion was the criterion that Mrs. Henrich used for her selection of women in literature. First to be considered was the final scene from Goethe's *Faust II*, "Bergschluchten." In this, eternal femininity is glorified by hermits, in order to restore the world order that had become unbalanced by Faust's one-sided view of life. Parallel to this, pictures from the hand-written Manessen songs made clear that at the time of the spiritual movement of the Cathars and Templars in the 12th and 13th centuries, a balanced masculine-feminine view of humankind was already being propagated in the songs of minstrels.

In the narrative poem "Der Arme Heinrich," written by the German poet Hartmann von Aue in 1195, the balance of the world is restored by the devoted willingness of a "pure virgin." Similarly, in Goethe's drama *Iphigenia in Tauris* the threatened godly world order is restored by Iphigenia's inner strength and veracity.



The fourth work to be examined that had a theme of devoted love was Sophocles' drama *Antigone*. It is exciting to follow the young heroine Antigone as she, in absolute obedience to her conscience and human duty, stands up to Kreon, the unyielding representative of power who provokes conflict with his haphazard laws. Antigone leaves a lasting impact on the audience with her harrowing but dignified lament about powerlessness—a powerlessness that actually triumphs over power, just as one can see in the cases of the German anti-Nazi martyr Sophie Scholl and the most recent Nobel Prize winner, the Pakistani teenager Malala Yousafzai.

Lastly, Margit Henrich presented an Indian fairy tale with ancient wisdom: "When men are conquered, the battle is lost. When, however, women are conquered, the people are lost." In this fairy tale, a young woman's goodness and mercy revive the almost lost soul of an Indian race.