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NATURE AND PERSON: DIVERSITY AND UNITY OF MAN AND WOMAN

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The great and undeniable diversity which exists between man and woman at the psychological level can become such that young adults, marrying in the heat of passion, may no longer be able to encounter one another after ten, or perhaps after only five years of married life. Divorce lawyers can expound upon this at great length… It can even be said that the more passionate the union of the young couple had been, the more violently determined they are to separate. In order to justify this violence every possible "good excuse" is found, and found in ways that are often astute and perverse. Indeed, nothing is more perverse than repressed passion; and should the passion of love have been very strong at the outset, the anti-passion, the passion of hatred leading to separation, will be all the more so. This manifests to what extent man is bound to woman and woman to man. They are two, united in their mutual passion; and then two, though irreducibly so, in their passionate opposition. The very violence of this opposition is a terrible sign of a very profound truth taught in the Bible.[1] There is a bond between man and woman willed by God, and it is to this bond that we must always return. Man and woman are different, yet relative to one another such that they may be one in a mutual love.

Should they go no further than their mutual passion, however, the awakening of a new passion may come to modify it. Indeed, the passion of a man of twenty years can change, and may prove itself a failure when confronted with the awakening of a new passion at the age of fifty! The passions are relative and measured by time. Only a spiritual love which has not aged, but which has rather grown richer and deeper, can resist the pressure of a new passionate love. Even then, however, the passionate love must be recognized as such! Man is relative to woman at the level of the passions. Should his love for her become a true spiritual love, however, he can love her throughout his whole life. In this case, their love does not age, unity triumphs over differences, and man and woman are one in and through their duality. We can insist upon either their similarities or their differences, but in reality they are one in their diversity. From this, it follows that there is something which triumphs over their diversity, not destroying it, but respecting it. True love is source of a unity that lies deeper than the diversity which remains visible and which increases over time. Indeed, a man does not age as does a woman. We see how grandfathers, for example, play a very different role and have a very different type of influence from grandmothers within the family.

[1] "Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gn 2:23-24). This opposition is clearly revealed after sin: "Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gn 3:16). In the Gospel Jesus returns to this initial intention of the Creator: "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one'? So they are no longer two but one. What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder" (Mt 19: 4-6).

This diversity between man and woman is manifested particularly in their bodies (it suffices to consider the face of a grandmother and that of a grandfather). But even should their bodies render them all the more different with age, their spirits, on the other hand, have been able to deepen in a great proximity. When they pray together this becomes quite clear: God must undoubtedly look upon them together with love. While treading along a common path, though in differing ways, they have become evermore interiorly and spiritually united. They have struggled together. Of course, in the measure that they have aged in varied ways, a great diversity may exist between them at the spiritual level as well, and this may even grow and accentuate itself. Their spirits may have developed very differently, one in a very contemplative way, the other in a very active way.

A NATURAL DIVERSITY ORDERED TOWARDS PROCREATION

The diversity between man and woman is primarily natural; neither man nor woman chose to be such. It is a real (*actuelle*) diversity that must be accepted with the understanding that it is with a view to procreation and exists in order to permit fruitfulness. It is not yet a question of the person, but of the nature of man and woman: their diversity is a natural fact.

Now the philosopher can specify within a judgment of wisdom, under the light of the discovery of the God who is Creator, that this diversity within human nature (which is with a view to procreation) gives the human race the privilege of being able to communicate human life to created beings. By this very fact, men and women who become source of life cooperate with God Himself so as to give life to other men. There is a great privilege here indeed, the privilege of achieving something with God. By procreation, man and woman cooperate with God, even though they do not perceive it. In every case of procreation there is the work of man who becomes father, that of woman who becomes mother, and there is the Creator of the soul, God Himself (who alone can create the human soul). It is peculiar to this operation that it should be the common work of man and woman with God. Within this joint work it is the man and woman, the spouses, who take the initiative, and not God. It is marvelous to see how God, the Creator of the human soul, is rather the one who responds to their initiative. God so loves men that He leaves them with this initiative of having children and of determining their number. Should there be cases where the spouses desire children but are left without any, the cause is not to be found directly in the will of God, but rather in certain impediments found in man and woman as proper cause of procreation. Sterility stems from human causes which are accidental, and not primarily from the Creator of the soul. This shows that in his wisdom, God respects the natural order existing amongst the various causalities.

This mark of respect that God the Creator of the human soul shows to the will of the father and mother is a sign of His love for them, of His divine and infinitely discreet love. We can thereby gauge the tactlessness and obtuseness of men who, of their own accord, seek to modify this great gift of procreation entrusted to them!

An exercise with a view to love of friendship

However astounding procreation may be, it stems from nature and remains natural. Now man and woman can make use of their natural complementarity in different ways. They can use it, for example, to find pleasure, carefully setting aside its finality, that is the appearance of a new little being, the embryo. In this case, however, because the act is not properly finalized, it is no longer a human act, but rather a passionate one, a bad one. Rather than cooperating with God, man

appropriates this capacity in order to take pleasure in it; and by the very fact that the act of this capacity is no longer natural, it cannot be personal: it does not help one become a person. But man and woman can also use the love and tenderness which unites them in order to increase and intensify their love of friendship. Indeed, the proper act which leads to the bearing of fruit, and so to this particular superabundance, demands to become a personal act of love of friendship. The bodily gift that it implies from the husband to his wife and from the wife to her husband calls for a personal and reciprocal love of friendship in order to be truly human, in order to be what it is meant to be: a mutual gift of their bodies by which they can become paternal and maternal sources, source of life.

THE FATHER AND MOTHER IN EDUCATION

Though a profound unity exist in this mutual gift of the spouses, a great diversity ensues. The father goes off and "regains his freedom," while the mother carries on bearing the fruit of their union, doing so to an ever greater degree throughout the nine months of expectation during which their fruit grows within her, takes root within her, and feeds off of her. During this time we can see to what point the roles of father and mother are profoundly diversified. The father retains his independence, and even though he remains united to his wife intentionally, nothing has substantially changed for him as regards his friends. His wife, however, must be present as a mother to the child she is expecting, present as one who is *source* of love and of life for her little one. After birth the baby is confided to her in its fragility and weakness. She is the guardian of the baby's life, of its sleep and health, and she is the one who protects the baby from the cold and heat of the milieu in which the baby is born. The mother must create a climate for the little one next to whom she learns silence and song. Thus, she quickly becomes the *vital milieu* of the child she has borne and nourished; and she continues as such even when the baby has grown.

The father does not have the same concerns. As the child grows under the gentle and loving authority of the mother, however, the child is also in need of an authority that calls for obedience. This is indispensable in all education, whether maternal or paternal; and so, as the parents exercise their authority and teach their child to obey, their roles as father and mother will be even further distinguished. These two types of authority unite in order for an obedience to emerge which will allow for an education that is both gentle and strong. Now too great of a separation between the one exercising authority and the child must be avoided, although one who commands must be separated in order to safeguard his authority, for too great a proximity tends to make it disappear. One parent ought to be close and the other separated if obedience is to be fully achieved. Thus, while uniting the parents ever further, education diversifies their functions as father and mother.

Now if procreation depends primarily on the physical diversity of man and woman, education, on the other hand, depends primarily upon the diversity of the father and mother from the viewpoint of the spirit, of their paternal and maternal authority. Education, therefore, requires a profound unity in diversity: a unity that comes from the end which is no longer merely natural but which stems directly from the paternal and maternal *persons*. In education, nature is truly surpassed and assumed by the person. This explains why the paternal and maternal roles are less determined and can thereby be much more easily modified. In the becoming of education, the personal dimension becomes ever more pronounced.

The sacrament of matrimony

Thus we can understand how necessary it is for the spiritual dimension of the person to be in act so that these most important acts of procreation and education preserve their full breadth. It was for this reason that Christ instituted a sacrament peculiar to spouses which would help them to love one another in an ever more divine way, with a true supernatural charity, a truly divine love of friendship. The sacrament of matrimony enables spouses to strive to live out their union in his Love, that is to say, it enables them to strive to purify their love from any excessively violent passion as well as enabling them to strive to educate their children to a life according to the Gospel. By grace, the person of the father and that of the mother can thereby divinely flourish in accordance with their important responsibility. The presence of the father and mother are necessary and irreplaceable from the birth of the children until the time when the children have acquired their own personalities. For this reason, the specific influence of each of the parents in the education of their children must be promoted and maintained.

CONTEMPLATION

Beyond the love of friendship that unites them, man and woman can know another flowering of their person: that of contemplation. Indeed, human nature can experience this ultimate development in which man can know his God and love Him with a love that takes hold of his entire life. He can choose a contemplative life. The human person can grow towards God in such a way that every aspect of his life be ordered towards the knowledge and love of God, and he can thereby discover that the human being exists in order to be a servant and friend of God. Within this ultimate end, human nature is surpassed by a personal choice. We can therefore ask ourselves whether this contemplation which finalizes human life is the same for man and woman. If procreation should require the complementarity of the father and mother, and therefore, diversity in their persons, is not contemplation beyond the distinction of man and woman? Human nature as such, implying a spiritual soul received from the Creator, is capable of developing in it that which is proper to the spirit: to see and love God. This finalizes all of the capacities of the human spirit, of the spiritual soul. Man and woman receive the same spiritual soul from God, and must therefore know the same orientation towards the contemplative life. Psychologically speaking, we might say that woman is more apt than man to lead a contemplative life, whereas man is more ordered towards the political life. Beyond the psychological point of view, however, we must affirm that man and woman are equally ordered towards contemplation because their souls are specifically the same, each of their souls having been created directly by God in their bodies. We do not know at which moment this takes place, though philosophers and theologians can discuss the matter and propose reasons of fittingness (*raisons de convenances*).[2] But God, who is the exclusive Creator of the soul has said nothing. Is it not a great secret of love that we ought to respect? One must be the Author of the human soul in order to know its worth and therefore specify the moment of its creation.

The very profound diversity between the development of the little girl and that of the little boy can help us better understand the difference between man and woman. The difference of sexes is anterior to procreation: it occurs from the outset and is of a substantial character. The human body is substantially masculine or feminine, and this distinction is not accidental. Nevertheless, it is not specific. By the body, it touches the *person* at the sensitive and affective level; without, however, imposing a different spiritual finality: man and woman have the same contemplative finality and the

[2] *Translator's note*: As we can have no philosophical experience of the soul or of its infusion, thinkers must determine reasons why it would be more appropriate or fitting for God, in His wisdom, to infuse the soul at one moment rather than at another.

same substance. We see thereby that should man and woman be complementary from the viewpoint of nature, they are nevertheless profoundly one by friendship and contemplation, and thus profoundly one at the personal level.

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Let us try to be very specific: man and woman are complementary in their nature, relative to one another with a view to a vital cooperation, with a view to a fruitfulness which transcends them as individuals and which calls for the transcendence of the Creator of the soul, this operation finalizing nature in an imminent and transcendent way.

This cooperation in fruitfulness requires a love of friendship between spouses which finalizes their person and surpasses their fruitfulness while nevertheless informing it. The love of friendship informs the natural operation of bearing fruit and gives to it a personal dimension; rape is not a personal act; it does not finalize and is a fault. It is *love* which unites the spouses and makes of procreation an operation which finalizes them. Thus we understand that the moral "value" of their action remains even when the proper finality of the act is not attained, even should it not be fecund. Indeed, the moral value of a human act does not depend upon its efficiency: the love which is at the source of the act gives it value and only love of friendship finalizes a person. Lastly, the perfect finality of the person, beyond nature, is the contemplation of God. Now this is the same for man and woman, even though there are accidental differences. A woman's contemplation will be more affective, while a man's will be more luminous, and in this way their respective contemplation can be complementary as well.