

## DUALISM AND THE NEW MORALITY

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On 1 November, 1950, Pius XII proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary: "... *auctoritate Domini Nostri Iesu Christi, Beatorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli ac Nostra pronuntiamus, declaramus et definimus divinitus revelatum dogma esse: Immaculatum Deiparem semper Virginem Mariam, expleto terrestris vitae cursu, fuisse corpore et anima ad caelestem gloriam assumptam*" (Denz.-Sch., 3903). Today, less than twenty-four years later, this definition seems at best irrelevant, at worst an embarrassment to post-Vatican II theology.

What is the relevance of this doctrine for us today? I do not presume to guess the purpose of divine providence. But one thing is clear. The definition of the Assumption has nothing to do with death. The definition carefully prescinded from the question whether Mary died. The dogma of the Assumption is related to the resurrection dogmas: that Jesus rose from the dead and lives now, and that we shall rise from the dead and, we hope, live with Jesus forever.

However, the fact that the dogma of the Assumption prescinded from the issue of death brings into sharp relief a facet of eternal life we might otherwise not think about as clearly. Eternal life for human persons is not to be angelic or ghostly. The bodies of all holy men and women will be taken up into glory just as Mary's body has been.

This truth of faith has very important implications. Even now, at this very moment, we are not selves having and using bodies. *We are bodies*—we are rational, sentient, organic bodies. Modern thought has rejected this truth. But the fact remains that the human person is a certain, special kind of body. Moreover, in the light of the teaching of faith that the human person becomes by adoption a member of the divine family (cf. Rom. 8:14-17) and a participant in divinity (cf. II Pet. 1:4), we also can conclude that the organic life and the biological processes of

the human body belong to divine life. Moreover, "belong to" here means inclusion, not merely possession. Human biological processes are not possessions and instruments of the person; they are parts of the life of the person. And as the dogma of the Assumption makes clear, the person as body is destined for heavenly glory.

St. Thomas Aquinas clearly teaches that the human person is a unity and that the body is the person who is to be saved.

The human soul, which is the person's intellectual principle, is united to the body as form. As form of the body, the soul is not merely a moving principle of the body. Nor is the soul an agent of which the body is instrument. Rather, the soul is an intrinsic principle of the human person. The soul makes the person be the body he or she is. Nor is there any other form which makes the body be body than the soul by which the person has the capacities of intellect and free choice. Each person has his or her own soul; substantial unity excludes many individuals having the same soul. Since the soul and the body are not distinct entities, no link is needed to unite soul and body. The human soul, as formal part of the body, makes the entire human body be a person; the entire soul is present in every part of the body. All of these points are explained by St. Thomas in a compact, synthetic treatise (*S. t.*, I, qu. 78).

Moreover, grace perfects nature and does not annul it (*ibid.*, I, qu. 1, art. 8, ad 2). Grace presupposes nature (*ibid.*, qu. 2, art. 2, ad 1) and perfects nature according to the proper mode of that nature (*ibid.*, qu. 62, art. 5, c.). Just as grace presupposes nature and perfects it, divine law presupposes and perfects natural law (*ibid.*, I-II, qu. 90, art. 2, ad 1).

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is clarified by the fact that the human person is a body considered together with the principle that grace perfects nature. St. Thomas, commenting on St. Paul, explains: "... homo naturaliter desiderat salutem sui ipsius, anima autem cum sit pars corporis hominis, non est totus homo, et anima mea non est ego; unde licet anima consequatur salutem in alia vita, non tamen ego vel quilibet homo" (*Super primam epistolam ad Corinthios lectura*, XV, lec. ii).

The human person is a body. The soul is not the self. The soul is only part of the body. Man wishes to be saved. If the body does not live in glory, then the self is not saved, for only one part of the person is saved. But this will not do, since, as St. Thomas continues, "homo naturaliter desideret salutem"; if only the soul is saved, "frustraretur naturale desiderium" (*ibid.*).

Classical modern philosophy substituted a radical dualism for the substantial unity of man. In Descartes, man is a thinking subject—*cogito ergo sum*—and the body is consigned to the objective world. In Hume, man is a momentarily unified consciousness—personal identity is continuity by memory over time—and the body is merely one set for phenomena among others. In Kant, man is an autonomous moral self—*Wille* which

in its noumenal reality is principle of moral value and of human dignity—and the body is left to nature, that is, to the phenomenal world from which moral value (and all value) is banished. In Hegel, man is the final moment in the self-realization of the Idea—Geist uniting the in itself and the for itself, the process and the product, the infinite and the finite—and any particular human body is merely a contingent datum of no ultimate meaning and no ultimate value.

Post-Hegelian philosophy has tried to restore the unity of man, but it has failed. Some speak of man as “incarnate spirit”. The very expression reveals the conviction that man is spirit; the person is not the body. The theological word “incarnate” is used to conjure up the phantasm that a person, already complete as spirit, somehow assumes a body of a nature other than that of the intending subject. Others, perhaps more influenced by Kant, try to reinsert Geist into the world. The very fact that Geist is considered by itself from the outset shows that the reality of the person as a special sort of body is negated. Some analytic philosophers still debate the problem of “other minds”; others still assume a dichotomy between language users—who determine the meaning of words by using them in particular contexts—and objects such as the body which can be given proper names by ostensive definition. Even Marxists and pragmatists, who exclude any reality beyond the dialectic of nature or the interaction of organism and environment, separate the human person who masters nature from the natural world in itself. For both Marxists and pragmatists, the human body and its natural biological processes belong to the natural world, which is matter, instrument and condition for the achievement of meanings and values which, in the end, are located in human consciousness alone.

This dualism, which pervades modern philosophy, is the basis of contemporary evaluations—the “new morality”—of human actions and attitudes regarding organic human life and sexuality. If the person really is not his body, then the destruction of the life of the body is not directly and in itself an attack on a value intrinsic to the human person. The lives of the unborn, the lives of those not fully in possession of themselves—the hopelessly insane and the “vegetating” senile—and the lives of those who no longer can engage in praxis or problem solving become lives no longer meaningful, no longer valuable, no longer inviolable. If the person really is not his or her own body, then the use of the sexual organs in a manner which does not respect their proper biological teleology is not directly and in itself the perversion of a good of the human person. Masturbatory sex—which includes many acts involving two or more individuals—is justified because it relieves tension and gives pleasure, and thus contributes to the good of the person, which is located solely in consciousness. Sexuality can be liberated from regulation by mere biological laws—as advocates of the new morality regard them—so that it can be employed for “interpersonal communication” or for the “fostering of conjugal love”.

A very clear statement of the dualism which is the foundation of the new morality is the following passage in a work of Joseph Fletcher: "Physical nature—the body and its members, our organs and their functions—all of these *things* are a part of 'what is over against us, and if we live by the rules and conditions set in physiology or any other *it* we are not men, we are not *thou*. When we discussed the problem of giving life to new creatures, and the authority of natural processes as over against the human values of responsibility and self-preservation (when nature and they are at cross-purposes), we remarked that spiritual reality and moral integrity belong to man alone, in whatever degree we may possess them as made *imago Dei*. Freedom, knowledge, choice, responsibility—all these things of personal or moral stature are in us, not *out there*. Physical nature is what is over against us, out there. It represents the world of *its*. Only man and God are *thou*; they only are persons" (*Morals and Medicine* [Boston: 1960], p. 211; emphasis in original).

For Fletcher, the body and its members, our organs and their functions, belong to physical nature; physical nature is not the person; everything of moral significance is located exclusively *within* the person. Thus, Fletcher argues in another work: "The right of spiritual beings to use intelligent control over physical nature, rather than submit beastlike to its blind workings, is the heart of many crucial questions. Birth control, artificial insemination, sterilization, and abortion are medically discovered ways of fulfilling and protecting human values and hopes in spite of nature's failures or foolishnesses. Death control, like birth control, is a matter of human dignity" (*Moral Responsibility: Situation Ethics at Work* [Philadelphia: 1967], p. 151).

For Fletcher, the human body is a pure means. The body in no way is and an in itself. No personal value inheres in the body, its processes, and their immanent biological teleology.

Discussion is now going on of the possibility—not very distant—of manufacturing new human individuals to order by biological engineering. Such discussion generally takes for granted the acceptability of killing individuals at embryonic stages and the production of individuals apart from normal sexual intercourse. Those who accept Fletcher's conception of the person, or any similar dualistic conception, find it difficult to explain why anyone should have reservations about the production of "better model" human organisms.

Anyone who sees the human person to be a special kind of body, who sees that bodily life and the biological processes for transmitting it are in and of themselves personal values, can see what is wrong with the proposal that human individuals be manufactured. A manufactured individual will be a person; he or she will deserve our respect as one sharing in personal dignity, as one called—together with the rest of us—to share in divine life. But such an individual also will be a product.

The producer is on a different level, inescapably superior, from the level of the product. The producer always can say to his product: "I produced you, I can destroy you; I am lord of your life, I am lord of your death". If human beings are to share in the same personal dignity, they must be begotten, not made. Only in being begotten does an offspring share the same nature and the same personal dignity as his or her parents.

The impact of dualistic concepts on moral thinking regarding human life and sexuality is not limited to extremists such as Joseph Fletcher and to those who are preparing to manufacture human individuals in laboratories. One finds this same thinking in the documents which were given unauthorized publicity expressing the "majority view" in the Pontifical Commission on Population, Family and Births—that is, the famous "birth-control commission".

For example, in the theological working paper of the majority group, "*Documentum Syntheticum de Moralitate Regulationis Nativitatum*", II, 3, we find what looks at first glance like a clear rejection of dualism: "Processus biologicus non est in homine aliqua pars separata (animalitatis) sed est integrata in totam personalitatem hominis". This sentence appears at the end of the paragraph. Near the beginning of the paragraph, there is reference to the teaching of Vatican II that the parents ultimately must make the decision regarding the number of children to have. The reference is to *Gaudium et spes*, 50; the majority document adds a phrase not found in the Council's teaching: "est eorum ius exclusivum". The majority document then says the decision should conform to objective criteria "seu conformiter finalitati obiectivae institutionis matrimonialis", a phrase significantly different from Vatican II's teaching that the moral character of a method: "... obiectivis criteriis, ex personae eiusdemque actuum natura desumptis, determinari debet, quae integrum sensum mutuae donationis ac humanae procreationis in contextu veri amoris observant; quod fieri nequit nisi virtus castitatis coniugalis sincero animo colatur" (*Gaudium et spes*, 51).

The majority goes on to say that it belongs to the couple to find how to attain the finality of the matrimonial institution in their own personal and social situation, and how to harmonize conjugal love with fecundity. The majority document then states: "In virtute huius decisionis ipsi (parentes) utuntur organis sexualibus ut scopum praefixum attingerent, sed non sunt ipsa organa per se fontes vitae". This sentence is followed by the seeming rejection of dualism, quoted above, and that rejection completes the paragraph, which opened by setting forth the thesis: "*Fontes vitae* sunt personae in et per actus coniugales voluntarios et responsabiles".

In other words, the sources of life which are sacred, according to the view of the majority theologians, are not the sexual organs themselves. The sexual organs are used to attain a planned end, and this end is determined by the institution of matrimony considered as a whole and also considered in the particular personal and social circumstances. Clearly, the thinking

in this document is that the “processus biologicus” in and of itself is not personal; it becomes personal only when subjected to rational control; the biological process becomes personal “in et per actus coniugales voluntarios et responsables”. Far from rejecting dualism, this document really is saying that in and of itself the “processus biologicus” is “aliqua pars separata (animalitatis)”; this part enjoys no sanctity in and of itself, but only when “est integrata in totam personalitatem hominis” by subordination in the concrete situation to the finality of the institution of matrimony considered as a whole.

The dualism of the majority’s view is clear not only in this paragraph, where it seems to be denied, but in others where it is expressed, probably unconsciously, in statements about using sexual organs for diverse purposes. For example: “... licet homini uti organis suis sexualibus tum ad amorem fovendum quum ad foecunditatem acceptandam, ut communitas coniugalis in bona matrimonii redundat...” (*op. cit.*, II, 5).

But the clearest evidence of dualism is in one sentence of the same document: “Ipsium donum mutuuum per totam vitam perdurat, foecunditas biologica non est continua et est subiecta multis irregularitatibus, ideo in sphaerem humanam assumi et in ea regulari debet” (*ibid.*, 4). This sentence contains several propositions, but the interesting one—which they assert and which I deny—is: *foecunditas biologica in sphaerem humanam assumi debet*. Obviously, if the biological fecundity of human persons is per se human, it does not need to be assumed into the human sphere. Nothing assumes what it already is or what it has of itself. Thus the majority theologians of the Commission clearly, although implicitly, asserted dualism.

In other words, in this view, just as in the view of Joseph Fletcher, sexuality in and of itself is a physiological process belonging to the physical world; the body in and of itself is not the person; the goods of the body are altogether subordinate to “personal” values. Moreover, the concept of “use” in this context is highly significant; it is not merely a matter of the technical expression, “use of marriage”, which is a legal synonym for “act of sexual intercourse within marriage”. Rather, in the context of this document, the concept of use means that the sexual organs of the human person are transformed into tools which can be used now for one purpose, now for another; persons using their sexual tools can prevent the merely biological consequence of a new life coming into being, because the coming into being of a new human life also in and of itself has been transformed into a merely biological fact. The rationale for contraception offered in this document implicitly but totally rejects the view that at conception a new bodily person proceeds from the two-in-one-flesh union of the parental bodily person; this rationale for contraception implicitly but firmly substitutes production for procreation. For these theologians, the human power to have children is not of itself specifically human; it must be “assumed into the human sphere”.

If we turn from this document to the encyclical which Paul VI actually saw fit to write, we find the first paragraph of a summary of the conditions of conscientious parenthood as follows: "Si primum biologicos processus reputamus, paternitas conscia significat cognitionem et observantiam munerum, ad eos attinentium; quoniam humana ratio in facultate vitae procreandae biologicas deprehendit leges, quae ad humanam personam pertinent" (*Humanae vitae*, 10).

This paragraph ends with a reference to St. Thomas' treatise on natural law (*S. t.*, I-II, qu. 94, art. 2) where the order of primary principles of moral reasoning is derived from the order of natural human inclinations.

This paragraph of *Humanae vitae*, which is based precisely on the insight that the human person is a body, that the biological laws of human sexuality are intrinsic to the person, and that these laws indicate moral norms to reason in virtue of the personal character of human biological teleology—this paragraph of the encyclical has drawn widespread attacks for its purported "biologism". Critics claim that Paul VI fails to appreciate the integral unity of the human person, which these critics suppose would justify contraception for the sake of personal and interpersonal values. Some of these critics even say that Paul VI here assumes a dualistic perspective in virtue of which mere physiology is allowed to legislate norms of sexual behavior.

In truth, the really dualistic view is that sexual organs are tools and that sexual performances are mere biological functions which persons can use for diverse purposes. The masturbator, not the chaste person, thinks of his or her genital organs as instruments at the disposal of his or her self; such a person identifies the self with conscious awareness in which alone value—in the form of pleasure and other desired experiences—is located. Dualists, not chaste Christian married couples who know themselves to be united interpersonally in the very bodily act of sexual intercourse, regard sexual acts as physiological processes which can be used "to make babies" or "to make love"—where babies and love are equally reduced from personal dignity to the status of products. (Reference here is not to real persons and couples, but to the abstracted types of persons and couples which figure in pro-contraceptive argumentation). Only the chaste person and couple has a completely liberated sexuality, for only chastity perfects sexual acts by eliminating compulsiveness and automatism. Only those who are always able to say "No" are ever able to say "Yes" with its full meaning and value.

The new morality claims to liberate the person from biological laws, in order to free him or her for the enjoyment and service of personal and interpersonal values. In fact, the new morality alienates the human person from his or her own bodily reality. Christian moral thought must remain grounded in a sound anthropology which maintains the bodiliness of the person. Such moral thought sees personal biological, not merely generically

animal biological, meaning and value in human sexuality. The bodies which become one flesh in sexual intercourse are persons; their unity in a certain sense forms a single person, the potential procreator from whom the personal, bodily reality of a new human individual flows in material, bodily, personal continuity. An attack on this biological process is an attack on the personal value of life, not always, indeed, on an existing individual's life, but on human life in its moment of tradition.

If one is a member of Christ, one unites Christ bodily with one's partner in sexual intercourse; this is one reason St. Paul gives for avoiding fornication with harlots (*I Cor.* 6:15). Christ liberates His members. He frees the sexuality of Christians from sin, from death, and from the law. For Christ died to save us bodies, and this salvation is liberation. Still, this liberty should not be taken as an occasion for sensuality, but as an opportunity for mutual service in charity (cf. *Gal.* 5:15). "And they who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk" (*Gal.* 5:24-25).

Neither St. Paul nor Paul VI teaches any sort of dualism. Both have been unjustly accused of it. But both understand man as does St. Thomas Aquinas, who said "anima mea non est ego; unde licet anima consequatur salutem in alia vita, non tamen ego vel quilibet homo". The definition of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary confirms this understanding of the human person.

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