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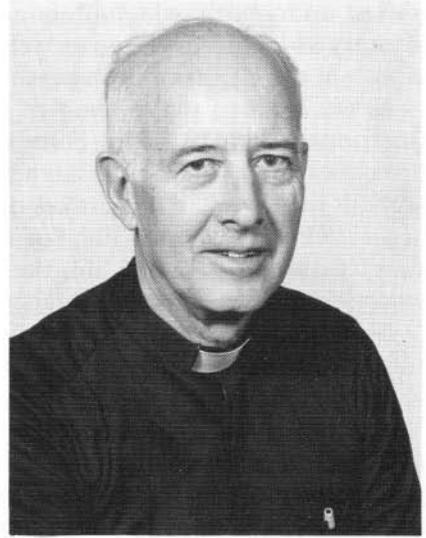
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Christian Anthropology as It Applies to Reproductive and Sexual Morality¹

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Introduction: Meaning of Christian Anthropology

The purpose of this paper is to attempt to formulate answers to specific questions about human sexuality within the larger context of what is called a Christian anthropology. In the context of our discussion here, there are two main questions concerning a sexual morality. One concerns the transmission of life, in particular the inseparability of the unitive and the procreative aspects of the conjugal act. This question is addressed in the encyclical, "Humanae Vitae".

The second has to do with the continuum of the transmission of life. Life is initiated in the conjugal act, takes place in conception, comes to term in the birth of the child, and is continued in the nurturing of the child. The "two-in-one-flesh" nature of the conjugal union describes the whole process as a unified continuum from beginning to its term and its continuation in the nurturing of the child. Questions that touch the

disruption of the “two-in-one-flesh” continuum of the process are addressed in the “Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and the Dignity of Procreation”.

First it is necessary to describe what is meant by the term “Christian anthropology”. It means the study of the various aspects of the human person within the context of the meaning of the whole person. According to our Christian faith, the complete meaning of the human person is found only through revelation.

In Christian anthropology, then, the partial perspectives find their meaning in the light of the whole. Through revelation we know there is more at work in the heart of man, in the world of things, in the events of history than can be discovered by reason. Revelation is precisely that light, picked up by faith, which illumines the whole meaning of man, both his mystery as a graced person as well as his enigmatic character as carrying with him the effects of both personal as well as original sin.

At the basis of the method of approaching the answers to particular questions from the wider context of Christian anthropology are two principles. The first is: the higher cannot stand without the lower; the second, the lower, in turn, takes on new meaning as it is subsumed in the higher. One intellectual life, for example, the higher, cannot of course stand without biological life, the lower. Further the lower is enhanced when it is taken up into the higher.

Both “*Humanae Vitae*” and the “Instruction on Respect for Human Life” point out that the moral evaluation of these questions has to be sought within the context of a total view of human existence. In “*Humanae Vitae*”, for example, we read: “The problem of birth, like every other problem regarding human life, is to be considered, beyond partial perspectives — whether of the biological or psychological, demographic or sociological orders — in the light of an integral vision of man and of his vocation, not his natural and earthly, but also his supernatural and eternal vocation”.² In a subsequent paragraph, the document uses the words of Pope Pius XII, referring to the “principle of totality” to emphasize again the need to find answers for specific questions within the context of a Christian anthropology.

In a similar way, the “Instruction on Respect for Human Life,” calls attention to the necessity of keeping in view the total view of the human person in questions that have to do with moral questions in the biomedical field. “For it is only in keeping with his true nature that the human person can achieve self-realization as a ‘unified totality’: and this nature is at the same time corporal and spiritual. By virtue of its substantial union with a spiritual soul, the human body cannot be considered as a mere complex of tissues, organs and functions, nor can it be evaluated in the same way as the body of animals; rather it is a constitutive part of the person who manifests himself through it”.³

This method of argumentation might be called the argument of “intrinsic coherence”. The whole network of relations that constitute the

identity of the human person has its own intrinsic laws. The violation of one of these laws leads to a disequilibrium that weakens and distorts the coherence of the whole.

The next question is: "Is there an adequate Christian anthropology that can serve as the matrix of meaning in which one can contextualize the answers to the specific problems and answers presented in 'Humanae Vitae' and in the 'Instruction on Respect for Human Life'?"

I think the most adequate is that which is presented in the writings of Pope John Paul II. His main thoughts on these subjects are found in a series of talks given at various general audiences over the course of five years from September, 1979 to November, 1984.

They have been collected in four volumes under the titles: *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis*; *Blessed are the Pure of Heart*; *The Theology of Marriage and Celibacy*; *Reflections on Humanae Vitae*. Even though the talks were extended over such a long period, there is a remarkable continuity and steady progression in the development of the theme.

However, the Holy Father's theology of the body is still waiting for someone to put it into systematic form so that it is possible to see how it all fits together.⁴ He brings a freshness to these "old" questions. This comes from his own insightfulness. At the same time, the doctoral work that he did on the thought of the German phenomenologist, Max Scheler, has reinforced the personalist approach that belongs to the inner spirit of the Pope.

His methodology is unique. He works out of a central insight that moves in a kind of shuttle fashion in both a horizontal and vertical direction. Along the horizontal level he pulls together the various truths, where each illumines the other. At the same time, on the vertical level he moves back and forth from the depths to the heights of the mystery of God and man. Thematic to all his writings is the mystery of the redemption. But it has to be admitted that, while a rich reward awaits the person who can accompany him in this shuttle movement, it is a laborious process.

It is not possible to comment on the series of talks in detail. However, before I attempt a brief summary, I would like to describe five terms which can help us organize the thoughts of the Holy Father on the meaning of the body.

Some Guidelines Toward a Christian Anthropology

First of all, I shall make use of a term used by C. S. Lewis. It is called "*transposition*." By this, Lewis wants to describe how there are descents of the greater into the less. It is not a difficult concept to grasp. We are constantly putting the more into the less. When we put the more of our thoughts into the words on a sheet of paper, or when an artist puts his inspiration into paint or words or sound, he is putting the more into the less.

Theologically the term is useful to describe the “descents” of God into His creation: in creation, when He breathes His own image and likeness into clay, and, as Scripture says, “man becomes a human soul (or person);” in the incarnation, when the more of the Word is put into the less of our human flesh; at Pentecost, when the depths of God, the Holy Spirit, is poured into the less of our human spirit.

The tremendous mystery of the Church as making present the paschal mystery of Christ, through the apostles, and their successors, is a mystery of transposition. “‘As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ He breathed on them saying, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you shall forgive, they stand forgiven. Whose sins you shall retain, they are retained’” (Jn. 20.21).

Here I use it to help understand the meaning of Christian anthropology. Through the gift of the Father, in the power of the Spirit, the whole network of relationships which belong to Jesus Christ is transposed into us, affecting the orientation of the whole of our lives, including the orientation of one aspect of our lives, our sexuality, which is the subject of our discussions over these days.

It is probably safe to say that the momentous meaning of this truth does not affect our Christian consciousness as it should, nor does it affect our thinking or moral judgments. An illustration might help us appreciate the significance of this transposition. In a planetarium one sees something like a facsimile of the sky on the ceiling. If one could imagine, on the other hand, the whole of space being poured into that tiny planetarium, we might get some remote realization of the mystery of the human person as graced. The infinite God has poured Himself into the limitedness of our humanity.

Secondly, it is important to recall the theological notion of *relationship*. In this book, *Introduction to Christianity*, a series of lectures given to the faculty and students of the University of Tuebingen by Professor Ratzinger about 20 years ago, he described how the modern notion of person dawned upon the world. This took place largely in the context of the theological debates concerning the Trinity and Christology. “With the perception that, seen as substance, God is one, but that there exists in him the phenomenon of dialogue, of differentiation and of relationship through speech the category *relation* gained a completely new significance for Christian thought. To Aristotle it was among the ‘accidents,’ the chance circumstances of being, which are separate from substance, the sole sustaining form of the real . . . It now became clear that the dialogue, the *relation*, stands beside the substance as an equally primordial form of being”.⁵

The notion of relationship is key to understanding the meaning of a Christian anthropology. It means that our mode of being is a mode-of-being-related. Further, that this mode-of-being-related is Christ’s own mode-of-being-related, which is His being-related to the Father. The Holy Spirit, Who is poured into our hearts, has created within us the very same mode-of-being-related that belongs to the inner life of the Trinity.

This mode-of-being is the transposition of Christ's own mode of being into us, the more into the less. Our sexual orientation, as well as every aspect of the "lower", takes on, then, through the transposition of Christ's relationships into us, a special mode-of-being-related. The higher processes of Trinitarian life are transposed into the lower processes of life.

They form an organic whole, a genuine hierarchy. The word "hierarchy," it should be remembered in its original meaning, means a "holy order." The very holy-order that belongs to the Trinity, then, is poured into us. In theological terms, this is called the sacramental character which comes through the reshaping of all our relationships through baptism.

Thirdly, the Scriptural meaning of *fruitfulness* is important in the questions we are discussing. There is a basic law at work in the whole of reality. Life exists, grows, becomes fruitful only in relationship. All life is bonded dynamically in a mysterious kind of circulation of life: reception of life, transforming of that which is received, and the transmission of that which has been transformed. All life, then, leads to fruitfulness, which in turn is put back into the process to lead to greater fruitfulness.

Fruitfulness is the word used in Scripture to describe linked levels of interrelatedness: the fruitfulness of deeper interrelatedness of husband and wife ("unitive"), the openness to the possibility of originating a new relationship in a conception of a child ("procreative"), which draws husband and wife into deeper relationship with God ("holiness"), the fruitfulness of the Holy Spirit.

This network of dynamic relationships forms an organic whole. The higher (holiness) cannot stand without the lower (unitive and procreative). And the lower is enhanced by being taken up into the higher.

In Genesis, fruitfulness is described in terms of a series of transpositions in the way that God's own creativity is transposed into creatures. First of all, He puts seeds into the plants, so that they cooperate with God in bringing forth fruit. Then He blesses fish, animals, and birds, with the power to be fruitful, sharing His own power to bring forth life. "Be fruitful and increase, fill the waters of the seas; and let the birds increase on land" (Gen. 1.10).

Then the climax of the shared creativity comes in the creation of man, male and female. The mystery of the creativity of God when it is transposed into man, male and female, takes the form of human sexuality. It is described as a blessing. "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase. . .'" (Gen. 1.28).

Genesis, then, describes in a simple way the most profound truth, the multi-leveled ways in which the life of the Holy Spirit is layered within the created world: the fruitfulness of nature, the fruitfulness of the womb of a mother, the fruitfulness of love.

The words "fruit", "fruitfulness" appear so often in Scripture that their inner meaning — one might say their metaphysical meaning — is overlooked. They form as it were a "spiritual physiology" where we can see the mystery of a co-creativity that brings into the world a completely new

reality. The newness of the reality comes out of a relationship and brings about a new level of relationship.

To take a few examples, Christ is called the “firstfruits” of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15.23). The Holy Spirit is given to us as the “firstfruits of the harvest to come” (Rom. 8.23). Paul speaks of the fruits of the Spirit, “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5.22).

The words, then, that have to do with fruitfulness bring out the intrinsic vitality of the relationships that are transposed into us, on the levels of nature and grace. Newness comes about as the fruit of a mutual gift of one to another.

Fourthly, there is the Scriptural meaning of the word “*presence of God*”. The word is not used simply to describe a fact. It is a way of describing a way of being present that creates communion. When Scripture speaks of man being created to the image and likeness of God, male and female, God’s presence envelops both male and female. First of all He creates a twoness, male and female, but it is a twoness that is a oneness. This mystery is a mystery of God’s presence as the originating mystery of a oneness that is shared in the Trinity of persons.

In the Old Testament, God’s presence is always an enveloping presence. The covenant relationship is the way He envelops each by enveloping the whole. This symbol of this enveloping presence is the Tent of Meeting, or the Temple. In the New Testament, it will describe the enveloping presence of the Spirit Who brings out new modes of fruitfulness, through new modes of relationships.

In the fifth place, there is the word *vocation*. In Scripture, this word is used to describe the various levels of the processes at work that have the same source, God, the same orientation, the same ultimate fruition of God, eternal life. The word means to call. It emphasizes God’s initiative in the whole process, both of creation, and salvation. He calls the world of nature into being as a pre-step in calling man, male, and female. He calls them into being as a pre-step to eternal life.

After the fall, an anti-life process enters into time and history. It is the process of dissolution of relationships, a fragmentation of the wholeness into parts which are at odds with one another.

But at the same time another entirely new process enters into time and history. It is the mystery of the redemption, of re-calling. But the re-call, however, is the revelation of a new calling in Christ. Now fruition takes on a new aspect. It will always take on the nature of *a victory* over the forces of dissolution. The unity of the network of relationships binding man and woman, mankind with one another, and the world of nature carries within itself now a kind of death-wish. Such a unity will always be fragile, vulnerable. It will need the support of all that comes from the redemptive event of Christ. Fruition now is always not simply a way of becoming, but of *over-coming* the processes of anti-life.

History, then, becomes salvation history through call or vocation. The

call of Abraham, of Moses, the prophets, Christ, the apostles, and each Christian.

All of God's plans, whether in nature or history are at the service of His calling. This means that the whole of created reality is held together from above, from in front, not from below. It is somewhat in the same way as a director of a symphony holds the whole together from above and from in front.

These ideas can help us organize the Holy Father's ideas into a more systematic form. Now I shall comment briefly on each of the books which contain Pope John Paul's theology of the body.

The Christian Anthropology of Pope John Paul II

The first series of talks is published under the title, *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis*.⁶ He takes as his text that forms the "composition" of his thought the passage from Mt. 19.3 ff. "And some Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, 'Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?' He answered, '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 flesh? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.' They said to him, 'Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?' He said to them, 'For the hardness of your heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.'"

The Holy Father calls attention to the fact that Jesus used the expression "from the beginning" twice. Jesus not only quotes from Genesis, but draws a conclusion to which He gives the same authority as the Scripture itself. "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder." He also teaches that Moses's teaching was an accommodation of the original meaning because man had lost the original innocence which was there in the beginning.

The word "beginning" does not refer only to chronological time. It refers to a mode of being which is a mode-of-being-related. This mode of being the Holy Father calls the "nuptial meaning of the body." Creation of man and woman in the image and likeness of God is the transposition of the mystery of God's own inner communion into a mode of being which by its very nature manifests the fruitful union of one for another. The body therefore manifests the interior orientation of the persons to one another with the orientation to a threefold interrelated fruitfulness, the fruitfulness of closer union with one another, fruitfulness which issues in the life of a new human being, fruitfulness of closer union with God, which is another name for holiness.

The orientation is not only a physical instinct. "In the beginning" it was the way of becoming oneself by making the gift of oneself to another. The

nuptial meaning of the body comes from the inner presence of God which envelops man and woman to live out as image and likeness the inner mystery of God Himself. In Scriptural terms it is a *shekina*, a transposition of the presence of God, a tent of meeting of two persons whose whole meaning is to be found in their fruitful relatedness.

The sense of the “wholeness” that was there in the beginning is described when the sacred author adds, “Now, both of them were naked, the man and his wife, but they felt no shame.” It is a term which the Holy Father uses to describe what he calls the “radiation of life” which belongs to the inbuilt nuptial character of the body. Nakedness, which is something physical, is a way of describing the absence of a mode of existence where the body says what the person is meant for, that is, to be a gift, and to make a gift of oneself. Woman discovers herself in relationship to man. And man discovers himself in relationship to woman.

“Thus, in this dimension, there is constituted a primordial sacrament, understood as a sign that transmits effectively in the visible world the invisible mystery hidden in God from time immemorial. And this is the mystery of truth and love, the mystery of divine life, in which man participates The body, in fact, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden since time immemorial in God, and thus be a sign of it”.⁷

Another name for his mode of being which is a mode-of-being-related is holiness. It is not something added to the union “at the beginning”. It is identified with their initial mode-of-being. “The sacrament of the world and the sacrament of man in the world, comes from the divine source of holiness, and at the same time is instituted for holiness. Original innocence, connected with the experience of the nuptial meaning of the body, is the same holiness that enables man to express himself deeply with his own body, and that, precisely, by means of the ‘sincere gift’ of himself . . . in his body as male or female, man feels he is a subject of holiness”.⁸

He says that it should not be strange to speak of a “theology of the body”. The Incarnation is at the center of our faith. All theology finds its base in the enfleshment of the Son of God.

In the second cycle of talks, collected under the title, *Blessed are the Pure of Heart*,⁹ Pope John Paul takes a text from the Sermon on the Mount as his point of departure, “You have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart” (Mt. 5.27-8).

This takes him back to the texts in Genesis which he had commented on. Lust is one aspect of the distortion in the mystery of creative-communion which belonged to man and woman at the beginning. He recalls the text from the first letter of John which speaks of the three-fold concupiscence. “If anyone loves the world, the Father’s love has not place in him, for nothing that the world affords comes from the Father. Carnal allurements, enticements for the eye, the life of empty show — all these are from the

world" (Jn. 2.15-6).

The fall from the graced mode-of-being-related brought about a distortion in the whole network of relationships. The higher cannot stand without the lower. And the lower loses its equilibrium if it is taken out of the higher. It brought about a rupture in man between body and spirit. "Concupiscence of the body limits and distorts the body's objective way of existing.¹⁰ The heart becomes a battlefield of contending forces, of love and lust.

The nature of man and woman "in the beginning" as co-signs of created and creative communion became a broken and often antagonistic symbol after the fall. "On the one hand the eternal attraction of man towards femininity frees in him — or perhaps should free — a gamut of spiritual-corporal desires of an especially personal and 'sharing' nature . . . to which a proportionate pyramid of values corresponds. On the other hand, 'lust' limits this gamut, obscuring the pyramid of values that marks the perennial attraction of male and female."¹¹

Christ's words, then, call attention to the heart, the center of the person, the ethos of the interior self. "Interior man is the specific subject of the ethos of the body, with which Christ wishes to imbue the conscience and will of his listeners and disciples".¹² It is a completely new ethos compared to the Old Testament and to the moral teaching of the whole of mankind. It is already an appeal to the sensitivity that will come from the gift of the Spirit through the redemption.

The third cycle has the title, *The Theology of Marriage and Celibacy*.¹³ There are two texts the Holy Father uses to develop further his ideas on the theology of the body. The first is taken from the discussion with the Sadducees. This was the group among the Jews who rejected the notion of the resurrection. Hoping to make the idea of the resurrection appear ridiculous, they presented Jesus with a hypothetical case. In keeping with the law of Levirate marriage, seven brothers married the same wife as one brother after the other died. They asked, "Now at the resurrection to which of these will she be wife?"

Jesus said, "You are wrong, because you understand neither the scriptures nor the power of God. For at the resurrection men and women do not marry; no, they are like the angels in heaven. And as for the resurrection of the dead, have you never read what God himself said to you: 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob?' God is not the God of the dead but of the living" (Mt. 22.29-33).

The Holy Father uses this passage to show the ultimate fruitfulness which belongs to the spirituality of the body. Man keeps his psychosomatic nature. But it undergoes a spiritualization. He says that the whole of theological anthropology can be considered an anthropology of the resurrection.¹⁴ It is a spiritualization through divinization. They will become not only like the angels but "sons of God." It is the fullness of the transposition. The human person, body and soul, takes on the very subjectivity of God Himself which is to take on the fullness of communion.

It is the fullness of the nuptial meaning of the body. It is the deepest revelation of the extent of God's self-communication to the world, in particular to mankind.¹⁵ The spiritual body means the perfect sensitivity of the senses, their perfect harmonization with the activity of the human spirit in truth and in liberty.¹⁶

Then he returns to the text from Matthew where Jesus spoke about marriage as it was "in the beginning". Jesus' words about the indissolubility of marriage struck the disciples as a hard saying. "If that is how things are between husband and wife, it is not advisable to marry." This leads Jesus to speak about an option that is open to those who are offered a special grace: celibacy for the Kingdom of God.

It is an entirely new aspect of the nuptial meaning of the body. Celibacy for the Kingdom of God is not something negative, the putting aside of a normal relationship. It is a new way of being related to Christ. It is a mode of communion with Christ which anticipates in time the nuptial union with God described in the passage about the resurrection. It is itself a mode-of-being-in-communion, for the Kingdom of God. The fruitfulness of celibacy for the Kingdom of God was already a manifest reality in the choice of Mary and of Jesus of celibacy for the Kingdom of God in their own lives. This leads the Holy Father to speak at length about the meaning of celibacy and of continence.

Finally, the Holy Father turns to the text which he sees as the perfect expression of all that has been said in the previous passages. He refers to Ephesians 5, where Jesus draws an analogy between the sacramental union of husband and wife and the union of Christ and the Church. St. Paul calls this "a great mystery".

The analogy of the nuptial union of husband and wife with the nuptial union of Christ and the Church leads the Holy Father to coin the word "bi-subjectivity." By this word he wants to describe the inwardness of presence of each of the spouses in the subjectivity of the other. He uses the word "subjectivity" to describe what is most personal in an individual.

There is then a parallel in the bi-subjectivity of Christ and the Church, and the bi-subjectivity of husband and wife. But there is more than a parallel. The more of the bi-subjectivity of the interrelationship of Christ and the Church is transposed into the bi-subjectivity of husband and wife, the more into the less. Now the bi-subjectivity of the spouses is animated by the bi-subjectivity existing between Christ and His spouse, the Church.

In the sacrament of marriage, there is found a new mystery of communion, a new dimension of the nuptial meaning of the body that goes beyond what was there "in the beginning." "This seems to be integral significance of the sacramental sign of marriage. In that sign — through the 'language of the body' — man and woman encounter the great 'mystery' in order to transfer the light of that mystery — the light of truth and beauty, expressed in liturgical language — to the 'language of the body,' that is, the ethos rooted in the 'redemption of the body' (cf. Rm. 8.23). In this way conjugal life becomes in a certain sense liturgical".¹⁷

The final collection of talks, *Reflections on Humanae Vitae: Conjugal Morality and Spirituality*,¹⁸ presupposes the "theology of the body" which

the Holy Father developed in the previous talks. He applies the theological anthropology developed in those talks to support the doctrine taught in "Humanae Vitae." Although the "Instruction on Respect for Human Life" came out three years later, the same principles developed in his talks on the theology of the body supply a foundation for the positions set forth in that document.

The book, *Reflections on Humanae Vitae: Conjugal Morality and Spirituality*, contains 15 talks that touch on various aspects of conjugal morality and spirituality. The topics range from questions that could be called strictly moral to those which describe the highest ranges of the spirituality of married life.

The theme that runs throughout is what he calls the "language of the body." "Here we are dealing with nothing other than reading the 'language of the body.'"¹⁹

The expression, "language of the body", is a short-hand way which the Holy Father uses to sum up the meaning of his Christian anthropology. He says: "The human body is not merely an organism of sexual reactions, but it is, at the same time, the means of expressing the entire man, the person, which reveals itself by means of the 'language of the body' ".²⁰ "It is necessary to bear in mind that the 'body speaks' not merely with the whole external expression of masculinity and femininity, but also with the internal structures of the organism, of the somatic and psychosomatic reaction. All this should find its appropriate place in that language in which husband and wife dialogue with each other, as persons called to the communion of the 'union of the body' ".²¹

Like all language, the language of the body can take on many forms. It can be clear, meaningful, and true; or it can be obscure, garbled, and false. In other words the relationships that were there "in the beginning" are no longer there. "In the beginning" the body "spoke" spontaneously the language of what it meant to be a person whose mode-of-being was to-be-related. This is what the Holy Father means by the "nuptial" meaning of the body. The body spoke the total relatedness, of man to woman, and of man and woman to God.

But the language of the body took another form when this relationship to God was broken. The twisted desires of the heart affected the total language-system of the body. What before was the language that came from union and led to deeper union has become an ambiguous sign. The external sign which signified love can now be a sign of lust. The language of the body which spoke of the inner gift of oneself to another can become a sign of manipulation and domination of the other. As was said above, the higher cannot stand without the lower; and the lower, when taken out of what is higher, becomes distorted.

The very nature of evil, then, is to destroy life which exists only in relationship by breaking the relationship into separate parts. This is evident in many contemporary approaches to sexuality. In the first place, there is the attempt to separate in our ordinary language truth from

meaning. Language has two inseparable aspects: the communication of meaning, but at the same time the communication of truthful meaning. For example, the words, "I love you," have meaning. But unfortunately they can also be a lie. To be a genuine communication, meaning and truth cannot be separated. As the Holy Father says, "The moral norm . . . arises from reading the 'language of the body' *in truth*".²²

The nature of evil, as we have stressed, is to take the lower out of the context of the higher. It is a process of breaking a relationship by breaking the continuum that gives coherence to the whole process from beginning to end.

Up to recent times this separation has only been possible in the separation of the unitive from the procreative orientation of the conjugal act through contraception. But technology has made it possible to break down the components of the act even further. The continuum of the act which by its nature is directed to inseparable stages of fruitfulness, the fruitfulness of closer union of the spouses, the fruitfulness of the conception of a child, and the fruitfulness of growth in union with God, can be broken in ways never before anticipated. This takes place, for example, in surrogate motherhood or in vitro fertilization.

An Approach to Understanding the Theological Anthropology of Pope John Paul II

I spoke above of the principles at work in a Christian anthropology: that the *higher cannot exist without the lower, and that lower finds its meaning in the higher*. Also, that Christian anthropology means a new mode of being which comes from being *related*. The relationships that belong to Christ are transposed into us. We also spoke of the mystery of *fruitfulness*. The source of fruitfulness is what Pope John Paul speaks of as bi-subjectivity. A new mode of life comes into being as the fruit of the same bi-subjectivity that brought into being the fruit of a deeper union with each other through love.

Throughout all these subtle distinctions, there is the *mystery of presence*. The Father's presence in Christ, Christ's presence in us, and the presence of husband and wife to one another in what is called their bi-subjectivity.

But all of the interrelated aspects of these mysterious networks of relationships are held together from above. This is the meaning of *vocation*. It is not morally licit to thus fragment and isolate the parts of the interlocking continuum of the stages which God's vocation shows, a point I have stressed in so many different ways. Activities which disrupt the intrinsic process that have to do with the circulation of life, reception, transformation, fruitfulness are disruptive not only of an aspect of our lives but have a domino effect on the whole network of relationships that constitute our human existence. Each moment and each step of our lives are a response to the dialogue with God to be faithful to the circulation of

life and love which issues in fruitfulness on so many different but related levels.

All of this is the *work of the Spirit*. We find that the lowest element in creation as well as the highest are united through the coordinating activity of the Holy Spirit. We find ourselves, then, at the ultimate answer, which is also the ultimate mystery. It is the mystery of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the mystery of the bi-subjectivity of the Father and the Son. He is the mystery of the fruitfulness of the gift of Father to God, and of Son to Father. For this reason we say he "proceeds" from the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit then is the energizing process between all levels of life. All levels of life are called to issue in the fruitfulness that belongs to their particular level. But all lower levels are called to take part in that fruitfulness which belongs to the Trinitarian love, Who is a Person, the Holy Spirit.

The violation of the laws that are inbuilt in this circulation of life and love are not only morally wrong. It is also what St. Paul calls "saddening the Spirit" (Eph. 4.30), or "stifling the Spirit" (1 Th. 5.19). They block the fruitfulness of the Holy Spirit along the whole continuum of His gifts.

Ultimately, then, *morality finds its norm in pneumatology*. St. Paul says "The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5.5). There is a level then where morality and spirituality meet in the mysterious bi-subjectivity of the Spirit. The Spirit, Who is the source of the mystery, is also the only one Who can give us an appreciation of the mystery. To quote St. Paul again, "A man who is unspiritual refuses what belongs to the Spirit. It is folly to him. He cannot grasp it, because it needs to be judged in the light of the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2.14).

The Holy Father uses this term, "spiritual appreciation", to describe how husband and wife have the secret and sacred power of being attuned to all of the signs that make up the mutuality of the language of the body. "This can happen only through a profound appreciation of the personal dignity of both the feminine 'I and the masculine I' in their shared life. This spiritual appreciation is the fundamental fruit of the gift of the Spirit which urges the person to respect the work of God. From this appreciation, and therefore indirectly from that gift, all the 'affectionate manifestations' which make up the fabric of remaining faithful to the union of marriage derive their true spousal meaning".²³

Conclusion

Have we provided answers, then, to the questions about contraception and the various ways of mechanizing the process of bringing a child into the world? Yes, and no. There are some questions that are answered by explanation, e.g., scientific questions. Other questions cannot be answered by explanation. Questions like: "Why be grateful? Why be humble? What is faith, love?" etc. They can be answered only within a *heightened*

awareness of the coherence of the interrelatedness and interdependence of all the relationships.

On the other hand, one should not underestimate the need, validity, importance of arguments based on reasons coming from ethics, psychology, physiology, or any other science, which gives strong evidence against contraception, abortion, and the mechanization of the process of conception. Again, to be realistic, not everyone has the ability or the opportunity to grasp the "architectonic" picture we have described. But this "architectonic" picture, a theological anthropology, reinforces these other arguments by situating them within a *morality of "intrinsic coherence"* with the whole network of relationships (natural and supernatural) that constitute human existence.

If a person does not have a sense of the whole, explanations might be a contribution to understanding. Ultimately, however, answers coming out of particular perspectives are satisfactory only to the extent that a person can see how they are "*demande*d" by the coherence of the parts with the whole.

This kind of refinement of the sense of the "harmonics" of the network of relationships created by the spirit can come only from the refinement of a pure heart. "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." This provides an instinctive sense of the "ought," that is, that immorality is not simply a violation of this law or that, but a disruption of the whole network of the relationships.

In his book, *The Joy of Music*, Leonard Bernstein, in commenting on a series of notes in one of Mozart's symphonies, says, "This note, no other, simply has to be there. No other note would fit." By way of analogy the same is true in the notes that make up the network of fruitful relationships which form our lives. What Bernstein is certain of through a refined aesthetic sense, the person of faith and love is certain of on the spiritual and moral level.

Another parallel from the life of Bernstein strikes me as applicable to what we are talking about. With the great sensitivity that comes with the refinement of the aesthetic sense, there is also the sense of outrage at what distorts that beauty.

On one occasion, when Bernstein was conducting Mozart's Fortieth Symphony at Harvard, the symphony was interrupted because of a bomb scare. Everyone had to leave the hall. The symphony was resumed after a couple of hours, but not before Bernstein expressed his horror and indignation at the fact that anyone could be so inhuman, crude, uncultured, insensitive, barbaric to interrupt something so beautiful as that symphony.

The application is clear. If our spiritual sensitivities were as refined as our aesthetic, we would not have to be seeking for rational proofs for the way that contraception, abortion, the mechanization of conception disrupts the whole harmonics of the relationships which belong to us as human beings.

Faith is another name for the special power of perceiving the network of

these relationships. Teilhard de Chardin calls this network of relationships "The Divine Milieu." Love is the name that describes the spiritual attunement of the heart that provides the sensitivity to all that can contribute to the deepening of these relationships or which threaten them. This sensitivity to the "symphonic" nature of our relationships is a special gift of the Holy Spirit. We should pray for it as one of the greatest needs of our time.

Bernard Lonergan describes the results of this lack of sensitivity on the social level by the term, "group scotosis," group blindness. It is an apt expression to describe the phenomenon that has affected whole segments of society in the way it perceives (or fails to perceive) the answers the Church provides to these questions — answers which also find support in the intrinsic coherence of a Christian anthropology.

References

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3. *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and the Dignity of Procreation*, Introduction, n. 3.
4. Only after finishing this paper did I discover the book of Mary G. Durkin, *Feast of Love: Pope John Paul II on Human Intimacy* (Loyola University Press, Chicago, 1983). This was the book I was looking for to provide a systematic presentation of the richness of Pope John Paul II's theology of the body.
5. Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal, *Introduction to Christianity*. A series of lectures given to the faculty and students of the University of Tuebingen about 20 years ago, p. 131.
6. John Paul II, Pope, *Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1981).
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 143-44.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
9. John Paul, II, Pope, *Blessed Are the Pure of Heart* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1983).
10. *Ibid.*, p. 73.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 126-27.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 190.
13. John Paul II, Pope, *The Theology of Marriage and Celibacy* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1986).
14. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 366.
18. John Paul II, Pope, *Reflections on Humanae Vitae: Conjugal Morality and Spirituality* (Boston: St. Paul Editions, 1984).
19. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 85.