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Being Human

The Person and Love

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Introduction

Being human is the fundamental vocation of every person. It involves understanding what is it to be a person and being able to answer the questions “Who am I?”, “How should I act?” and “How should I develop my own person?” In our culture today the answers to these questions differ markedly from Catholic tradition. This paper explores some of the underlying reasons and then turns to some themes on living our vocation today that are attributable to John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI.

Although the content of this paper is mostly philosophical, theological and scriptural, the presentation is designed for reading by the lay person. The paper consists largely of quotations and paraphrases from a few publications by outstanding authors. Where an entire section or paragraph can be attributed to a single reference, this is shown in the section title, or at the end of the paragraph.

An extraordinary change in the culture of western civilization took place during the second half of the twentieth century. The most turbulent decade was undoubtedly the 1960's. During this period the American civil rights movement, the feminist movement and the anti-Vietnam war movement had their resounding impacts. Coincidentally the effects of the second Vatican Council were beginning to be felt in the Church, and the “dignity of the moral conscience” (cf. *Gaudium et Spes* 16) began to be widely interpreted.

During the following few decades individualism, capitalism, consumerism, and specialisation, assumed more significance in the cultural milieu. At the same time the influence of the Church diminished, as measured by falls in Church attendance, in vocations to marriage and the religious life, and in adherence to Church teaching. This has been accompanied by alarming trends across the wider society in family breakdown, respect for human life, poverty and injustice, violence, drug abuse, suicide, sexually transmitted disease, disrespect for civil law and property, and enormous waste which may even be threatening the world environment. The Church remains the beacon of hope for the world.

The seeds for the twentieth century change were based in philosophical thought as it had been evolving for several centuries since Descartes. However it was the twentieth century philosophical movement known as phenomenology which appears to have had the greatest impact on the wider population today. Phenomenology is based on a subjective, experiential view of the world. It can be associated with the upheaval in cultural tradition, and also with the change in the way in which Christians, particularly those raised in the Catholic tradition, regard their faith.

Pope John Paul II was a brilliant philosopher. As a young priest he foresaw that the traditional Thomistic philosophy would not be sufficient for the Church to explain her teaching in the twentieth century, especially in the light of the Phenomenological movement. However, he saw that phenomenology connected ethics with experience and so he adapted phenomenology to teach the objective truths of revelation. Human persons can look at themselves, at their experiences, against the revealed truths of who they are and how they should act, and then decide for themselves if they acted appropriately.

This paper consists of four main sections. The first briefly discusses the traditional and the modern cultural views of the human person, and the adaptation of phenomenology by John Paul II. The second summarises the most famous application of phenomenology by John Paul II, known as *Theology of the Body*, and an earlier related work. The third

section consists of some extracts from the first part of Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical, *God is Love*, which relate to the previous section. The final section discusses the concept of betrothed love, identified by John Paul II, as it relates to marriage and religious vocations.

Catholic Theological Tradition and the Modern World

Catholic theological tradition is the result of the application of philosophical thought to the data of Revelation. This section defines key Catholic beliefs on human personhood and then sketches some of the important related differences in the modern world and the response made by John Paul II.

To Be a Person

Catholic belief is that God has made us in his own image, so that like God we are “persons”. The Christian-Latin philosopher Boethius (480-525) defined a person as “an individual substance of a rational nature”.

“Individual substance” is an overloaded term in philosophy. One meaning of “substance” is consistent with what the Second Vatican Council reminded us: that man and woman were the only creatures on earth that God created “for their own sakes”, that is, as infinitely valuable in themselves (cf. *Gaudium et Spes* 24). An individual being is defined by St. Thomas Aquinas as “quod est in se indivisum, ab aliis vero divisum” (a being undivided in itself but separated from other beings). It implies therefore unity and separateness or distinctness (see the web page www.newadvent.org/cathen/07762a.htm).

“Individual substance” also implies what for each of us is the outcome of our experience. According to the philosopher Leibniz, all the things that ever happen to an individual substance, together with all their circumstances and the whole sequence of external things, are included in the notion of that substance. (See the web page courses.umass.edu/chappel/MODPHILS06/LEIBNIZ/Leib5IS.html).

Rational nature implies someone who is reflective, self-conscious, and able to relate to other rational beings as “someones”. (Gleeson)

The Catholic tradition affirms that human beings are to be respected as persons from conception until natural death. (Gleeson)

The Soul (Gleeson)

There is clearly something ‘hybrid’ about human nature: On the one hand we are physical, bodily beings, and on the other hand, we are centres of consciousness, freedom and responsibility. This brings us to the principle of “soul” which makes a living thing the kind of thing it is. St Thomas Aquinas understood “body” and “soul” as complementary principles that together explain what we are as human beings, not a body *plus* a soul—which would make two individuals; but a body that is what it is (namely, a *human* body) by reason of its union with the soul.

St Thomas argues that the activities that manifest our distinctively rational human nature are not explainable in material terms. Human knowing and loving consists in a union between our minds and what we know and love. If we are able to grasp the intelligibility of the world in a universal non-material way then our minds cannot be just complex material

systems. Thus intellectual capacities and activities are more properly attributed to one's soul.

Thus my soul is not me, but it is the basis for my distinctively human capacities and acts, the "spiritual key" to the person I am, and the key to my continuing to be after I die.

Modern Understanding of Person (Gleeson)

Over the last few centuries human personhood has come to be understood in isolation from God. The modern era began with a turn to the human subject as a self-sufficient source of meaning and truth. Descartes' (1596-1650) famous claim 'I think therefore I am' signaled a new beginning. Then John Locke (1632-1776) defined a human as "a living organism of a certain species" and a person as "that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking and essential to it".

Thus the principle of substance that was crucial to Catholic tradition was omitted. Descartes divorced reality—the exterior world—from the interior life of every person because he grounded existence only in interior thought. Locke's approach is evident today when people suggest that an early human foetus, or a permanently unconscious patient is not yet, or is no longer, "a person" because he or she lacks consciousness.

Phenomenology (Hogan)

The philosophical movement called Phenomenology is a subjective, inductive, and experiential philosophical method. The founder of Phenomenology was a German philosopher named Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). Briefly, Husserl focused on the subjective, individual experience of people. He collected these experiences one at a time from different people. Husserl was interested in discovering how things are in the world (the being of things—what philosophy always investigates) through the interior perception of the world by individual people. In this way, he linked the interior powers of the mind, will, self-awareness (consciousness) to the real world and was able to overcome the division between the interior life of the mind and the real world which had first entered philosophical thought through Descartes.

Max Scheler (1874-1928), who had been a student of Husserl, was particularly interested in ethics and attempted to come to knowledge of ethical norms through phenomenology. Scheler argued that every human experience is connected with a value. We are either attracted to the value or repulsed by it. By studying human experience from the subjective, interior point of view, Scheler believed he could identify values. These values actually existed in the real world. They were concrete and objective, but they were known through subjective, individual experience. Scheler linked the values to the interior, subjective experience of the person. Values are objective and real, but only known through the interior perception of experiences. Instead of being commands and norms which one is compelled from the outside to follow, values (ethical norms) are part of one's own interior experience.

Fr Karol Wojtyla – (later Pope John Paul II) (Hogan)

Wojtyla saw that phenomenology was able to provide a link to reality, a way to ground ethical norms in reality, and not only in interior ideas. An earlier German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) had taught ethical norms are unknowable because they lie beyond immediate human experience.

Wojtyla wrote his post-doctoral dissertation on Max Scheler. Wojtyla was critical of Scheler because Scheler failed to provide an objective order of values. Since values were known through the subjective experience of each person, they could differ radically from one person to another. Further, the relative importance of these values was determined by the intensity of the response to each value. The value which elicited the most intense emotional response from an individual was, for that individual, the most important value. Therefore, even if two people had a similar set of values, the hierarchy of these values would differ from person to person. In Scheler's thought, there was no way to establish an objective order of morality. Of course, Scheler avoided any kind of appeal to duty or responsibility because he was reacting against Kant's "categorical imperative."

Wojtyla was also critical of Scheler because the German philosopher did not notice that through our ethical choices, we each become what we do. We become good or evil by doing good or evil acts. An ethical act not only has effects outside of oneself, but it also has an internal effect. Visiting a friend in the hospital not only benefits him, it also has an interior effect on me: I become a visitor of the sick.

Despite the criticisms Wojtyla made of Scheler's work, he saw that Scheler's use of phenomenology provided a powerful tool for the study of Christian ethics. If the Christian norms taught by Revelation could be understood as interior norms, i.e., if these norms could be perceived through experience, they would cease to have the character of external laws imposed on one from the outside. Further, one could speak about these values in a subjective way appropriate to the modern world.

Phenomenology and the Faith

During the lifetime of those people who were born before, or soon after, the Second World War the entire Catholic theological tradition has been turned on its head. While remaining rooted in both the Augustinian and Thomistic traditions, John Paul II adapted a new form of philosophical thought (phenomenology) to the data of Revelation because of the culture that had arisen.

Both Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas lived and taught in a culture which might be described as objective, deductive, and principled. The modern world is primarily subjective, inductive, and experiential. Objective means that something is real, i.e., it is true, regardless of whether or not I know it to be true. For example, if a blind man is outside, but cannot see the trees, the trees are still there. Even though he does not perceive them, the trees are truly there. The existence of the trees does not depend on whether the blind man perceives them or not. Objective reality exists independent of one's perception. The subjective view of reality claims that only that which I perceive to be real is actually real. Generally, the subjective view of reality is not applied to trees and physical objects. However, it is applied to non-physical realities, e.g., truths about the existence of God, truths about morality. The subjective view of reality is clearly captured by the phrase, "That may be true for you, but not for me!" In other words, what is true depends on what I believe or accept, or better phrased, on what I perceive. In the medieval world, such a claim would be utter nonsense. In fact, to most medieval academics, the truths of the faith, both dogmatic and moral truths, were more real than physical objects. The medieval world was objective. We are subjective. The modern world derives knowledge from personal experiences. (Hogan)

It is precisely because the person is vital to revealed truth that there can be a synthesis of phenomenology and the faith. Phenomenology begins its investigation with the individual human person. It begins with our conscious experience of ourselves as acting agents.

Phenomenology then leads to the mystery of human personhood. Phenomenology, subjective as it is, “opens the door” to the full truth about man revealed in the objective order by God. John Paul II makes this link between phenomenology and the objective order of the faith through the text in Genesis: “Let us make man in our image.” (Genesis 1, 26). Man is a person (has an awareness of his own acts, one of the most important marks of personhood) because he is like God, made in God's own image. The reference to the Creation of human persons in God's image at one and the same time saves the subjective insight of the phenomenologists without losing the objectivity of the Gospel. The true nature of human persons is revealed in the objective order but experienced and studied in a subjective way. The content of Revelation, truths centered on personhood—the personhood of God and each human being—is given to each individual human person and yet is experienced in a subjective way. The objective order of Revelation is linked in this fashion with the subjective experience of each human person. It is no wonder that one of the hallmarks of John Paul II's pontificate is the repeated and insistent teaching on the dignity (value) of each and every human person. (Hogan)

Revelation and Experience (Hogan)

God does not reveal Himself to us “from on high.” He does not, usually, “shout” from the mountain tops at us. Rather, Revelation occurs through the everyday experiences of life. God became man in order to relate to us in a completely human way. People met Him and heard Him. They had experiences of Him and experiences with Him. These experiences, containing the truths of Revelation, can be the subject of a phenomenological investigation. The meetings of people with Christ are simultaneously experiential (and therefore can be studied phenomenologically), but they also contain the content of Revelation. When phenomenology is applied to these experiences there is a double flow of data. There is the data which would come from any study of human experience which leads to the mystery of human personhood and, in addition, there is the data of Revelation which answers the very questions raised by the phenomenological study of human personhood, namely, “Who am I?” “Who is a human person?” etc. etc. The fullness of Revelation came through Christ, the very Word of God. However, God had revealed Himself in the Old Testament as well. The Revelation in the Old Testament had also come in and through human experiences. They have the same characteristics which the Revelation of Christ has. There is the double flow of data: the phenomenological data from human experience leading to the mystery of human personhood as well as the answers to these questions (given through Revelation).

Relativism and Conscience

John Paul II saw the greatest threat to Christian identity arising from the subjectivism, rationalism, relativism and indifferentism of much of modern Western culture as expressed by its philosophers and lived by millions of people who never read philosophy. Moral relativism is but one aspect of a broader relativising trend which undermines the quest for the truth in any form. Cut off from metaphysical and religious foundations, all forms of culture risk being dissolved into forms of competition fueled by the will to power. In the struggle for the soul of modern culture, the dialogue with modern Western philosophy takes on a critical importance. John Paul II was extremely critical of Descartes for seeking to ground philosophy in the human subject; he sees the fruit of this strategy in the later rationalism of the Enlightenment, which abandoned metaphysics, banished God from the world, and left humans to follow their own reason. In the French Revolution reason presided over the reign of terror. The search for freedom and pleasure divorced from responsibility has led to a culture of death in which the most vulnerable are made the victims. (Lefebure)

The latitude of emotional subjectivism evident in Scheler's application of phenomenology influenced a number religious education texts used in the latter part of the twentieth century. Today this trend has not only influenced the understanding and formation of conscience, but it has led to a general subjectivism in belief pertaining to the dogmas of the Church. For example, only about half of Generation Y Catholics believe that Jesus Christ was God and rose from the dead (see *The Catholic Weekly*, October 1, 2006, p21).

Phenomenology never displaced the Thomistic structure of Wojtyla's thought, but it did have a lasting influence on his way of thinking. In *The Splendor of Truth (Veritatis Splendor)*, John Paul II proclaimed the objectivity of values against the threat of moral relativism. While he publicly lamented a "crisis of obedience" in relation to the Church's teaching office, John Paul was unequivocal in rejecting coercion of the conscience. His conviction remained the inviolability of conscience and the necessity of drawing people to the truth through their own free inquiry and judgment. In *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, John Paul cites Aquinas: even an erroneous conscience that forbids one to profess faith in Jesus Christ must be followed. John Henry Newman once raised a famous toast: "To the Pope, if you please - still to conscience first, and to the pope afterwards." Newman insisted that conscience is the "aboriginal Vicar of Christ," and that the Pope cannot replace its role. John Paul says that in exalting conscience "Newman is not proclaiming anything new with respect to the constant teaching of the Church" and he cites the principle of Vatican II's Declaration on Religious Freedom: "The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it wins over the mind with both gentleness and power." (Lefebure)

Gleeson relates the objectivity of values and conscience in the following way: Rightly understood, the Church's teaching on conscience seeks to hold in tension a *number* of truths. The first is that each person is responsible for his or her own moral decisions, decisions guided by his or her own best judgment about what ought to be done. Coming to a judgment of conscience involves "a dialogue with oneself", which is also a dialogue with God. The second truth is that a person's own conscience judgments do not *create* moral truth. Freedom of conscience is not freedom to arbitrarily create a morality for oneself; it is *freedom from* coercion by others. Thirdly, the obligation to form one's conscience is the obligation to become the kind of person who will be in a position to know what kind of conduct is required in a given situation. Formation of conscience involves openness to the truth and a willingness to embrace the truth. Catholics open their minds and hearts to the wisdom and authority of their moral tradition that is guided by the Holy Spirit and the revealed Word of God, and is more extensive than their own reasoning capacities. (Gleeson)

Theology of the Body

The Theology of the Body, Human Love in the Divine Plan, is the title for the collection of topics covered in the weekly general audiences given by Pope John Paul II between September 1979 and November 1984. It comprises a catechesis on the bodily dimension of human personhood, sexuality and marriage in the light of biblical revelation. This section sketches that part of the theology which addresses the relationship between man and woman, and then draws on other work to expand on that subject.

Theology of the Body (Hogan)

The first cycle of the *Theology of the Body* (John Paul II) series is a study of the first three chapters of Genesis, primarily of the second and third chapters. John Paul begins with Christ's answers to the Pharisees when they ask him whether it is lawful to divorce one's

wife. Christ answers that “from the beginning” God made them (human beings) male and female and ” ‘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. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate.” (John Paul II) Noticing the word “beginning” in Christ’s answer, John Paul teaches that all those who heard Christ would have known that He was referring to the very first words of the Bible, of the Book of Genesis, “In the beginning.”

In the *Theology of the Body*, John Paul II provides a subjective, interior look at what happened to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden before and after the first sin. The results of this examination of the experiences of our first parents are then applied to important areas related to sexuality, marriage and family life. John Paul actually acknowledges specifically that he wishes to look at the subjective, interior reality of the lives of our first parents when he remarks that one of his absolutely central texts, the second chapter of Genesis, “presents the Creation of man especially in its subjective aspect.”

Original Experiences (Percy)

John Paul wants to take us back before Original Sin was even committed. Only in this way can we see the real meaning of human life and human sexuality. Three original experiences called Original Solitude, Original Unity and Original Nakedness occur before Original Sin. We have access to these original experiences, precisely because Christ grants it to us.

Original Solitude

In the second account of creation (i.e. Genesis 2) the word “God” is mentioned six times. In other words the man is able to sense God in his presence.

The man is asked to name the animals. Naming in the Bible means knowing the creatures and having dominion over them. The man realizes and begins to understand that, while he has a body like all the other creatures, his body is different.

What this means is that, unlike the animals, we relate directly to God. We are conscious that we know – we can reflect on events and our knowledge of them. We become conscious of knowing things and we realize how we have developed as a person.

There is a second meaning of Original Solitude. In knowing and naming the animals the man did not find a body like his. He was alone. Something is lacking in his life.

Original Unity

Adam awakens to discover another being and is really delighted. She is the same but different. She is a woman. Adam is immediately attracted to her. The man and the woman become “one flesh”. This is Original Unity. We are told that henceforth man will leave father and mother and cleave to his wife.

Original Unity consists of two things: accepting and giving. The man discovers the woman and accepts her for who she is. He accepts that she complements him – that she helps him to be human. The woman lifts the man beyond himself – helps him reach perfection. This is so precisely because the woman complements the man. Of course the reverse is true.

What does the experience of Original Solitude and Original Unity mean for us? It means that we are created by God to be in relationship with Him and with other human beings. Why would this be so? Because God himself is a related Being.

Original Nakedness

Original Nakedness is a symbol of freedom in communication. Clearly Original Nakedness was essential for the perfection of Original Unity. For love to be real it must be freely given and freely accepted. There were no barriers or difficulties for Adam and Eve in their communication and life together.

Original Nakedness goes hand in hand with freedom. Often we become confused about the meaning of freedom. Freedom is deeper than mere choice (choice is a symptom of freedom). Freedom means deciding to surrender to the love of another ...and the choices that go with it. Both husband and wife use their freedom to submit themselves to each other in Christ (see Ephesians 5, 21,22, 25).

Original Sin

Enter Original Sin and enter "sexual shame". Author and cultural commentator, Roger Scruton, says that sexual shame arises from the thought that "we are being judged as a body, a mechanism, an object". Thus sexual shame is like a shield "that protects us from abuse, either by another or ourselves".

Original Sin and concupiscence affect the other original experiences. We find it hard to sense God in our lives. People find it hard to get along with each other – to accept each other for who they are. In addition, people find it hard to be generous and to give of themselves.

The Four Qualities of the Human Body (Percy)

It is from (the first) three original experiences that we gain insight into the nature of the human body, the human person and human relationships.

The Human Body is Symbolic

From the experience of *Original Solitude* we understand that the human body is *symbolic*. Adam realized that he had a special connection with God. We can reach up to God and communicate with our Creator as the animals can't. We can know and love. We can relate to God intimately. Furthermore, human beings can relate intimately with each other.

A symbol is something that is seen, but immediately points our attention to something that is unseen, but real. The human body is more than just matter. It is also symbolic of the invisible, our spiritual principle, the soul.

Human beings are *body-persons*. Consider our five senses. Touch transmits love. Hearing is related to attentiveness and interest in what a person has to say, a symbol of love. Seeing is related to understanding, St John in his Gospel equates seeing with believing. Smell is related to curiosity, and taste to hunger and thirst and thus spiritual desire.

The Human Body is Nuptial

From *Original Unity* John Paul II says that the human body is nuptial. He means that the human body is meant for love – it is made for relationship.

Because the human body is symbolic – a visible reality that carries my inner reality – and nuptial, when a man and woman make love in sexual intercourse they are communicating. In other words the human body has a language and so too does sex. John Paul II says that sex is a unique form of language. *It is body language.*

The Human Body is Free and Fallen

In order to love, the human person must be free and this is exactly what *Original Nakedness* means. However, the body of the human person is affected by *Original Sin*. Sin belongs to our spiritual nature, but because we are a unity of body and soul – because we live symbolically – the human body is affected.

The Human Body is Redeemed

Christ, through his death and resurrection, restores to each one of us the meaning of human existence and the human body.

God has now entered history. God, who is entirely beyond our sight, is now visible to us. He can now be touched, tasted, smelt and heard. Christ is the most intimate of friends, far more faithful and intimate than anyone we can imagine. Our sin is wiped out, our life has been restored and we have been raised to a new life with Christ.

Our experience of knowing and loving Christ actually helps us to enter into the original experiences and thus come to a deeper understanding of who we are and what our life can be.

The Metaphysical Analysis of Love (Wojtyla)

(In the 1950's, long before he became Pope John Paul II, Father Karol Wojtyla had a deep involvement with young men and women, particularly young marrieds. "As a young priest I learned to love human love," he later said. "This has been one of the fundamental themes of my priesthood — my ministry in the pulpit, in the confessional, and also in my writing." Undoubtedly Wojtyla was applying the phenomenological method in understanding the experiences of these young people. "Their experience converged with and so to speak supplemented his own personal experience of, and feelings about, these matters, prompted him to reflect and mediate on them, and as time went by made him feel the need to testify to his knowledge. *Love and Responsibility* was the work intended to give voice to this testimony. It first found expression in a form of a series of lectures in the Catholic University of Lublin in 1958-59." (translators introduction to the English language edition of *Love and Responsibility*))

The Personalistic Norm

The commandment laid down in the New Testament demands from man love for others, for his neighbours – in the fullest sense then, love for persons. A basis for this can only be the personalistic principle and the personalistic norm. This norm, in its negative aspect, states that the person is the kind of good which does not admit of use and cannot be treated as an object of use and as such the means to an end. In its positive form the

personalistic norm confirms this: the person is a good to which the only proper and adequate attitude is love.

The Word Love

The word 'love' has more than one meaning. (In this section) we are only concerned with love between two persons who differ in respect of sex. Love is always a mutual relationship between persons. There is in every love attraction and goodwill. The love of man and woman takes place deep down in the psyche of the two persons, and is bound up with the high sexual vitality of human beings.

Love as Attraction

To attract some-one means more or less the same as to be regarded as 'a good'. The emotions and the will are involved in that cognitive commitment which has the character of attraction. Attraction has as its object a person, and its source is the whole person. Such an attitude to a person is nothing other than love.

In Y's attraction to person X the value most strongly in evidence is the one which Y finds in X and to which Y reacts strongly.

Love as Desire

The human person is a limited being, not self-sufficient and therefore needs other beings. Sex is also an imbalance, a limitation. A man therefore needs a woman, so to say, to complete his own being, and a woman needs a man in the same way. Love as desire is felt as a longing for some good for its own sake.

There is, however, a profound difference between love as desire and desire itself, especially sensual desire. True 'love as desire' never becomes utilitarian in its attitude, for (even when desire is aroused) it has its roots in the personalistic principle.

Love as Goodwill

Love is the fullest realization of the possibilities inherent in man. It is not enough to long for a person as a good for oneself, one must also, and above all, long for that person's good.

There is more to goodwill. Goodwill is free of self-interest and is a love in a more unconditional sense. Goodwill can keep company with love as desire. Love as desire must move in the direction of love as goodwill, and to a special degree in marriage.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is something *between* the man and the woman. Love is not just something *in* the man and something *in* the woman but is something common to them and unique.

Love as desire and love as goodwill are not mutually exclusive. A person who desires another as a good desires above all that person's love in return for his or her own love. The desire for reciprocity does not cancel out goodwill.

Reciprocity depends to a decisive degree on that which both persons contribute to it. If that which each of the two persons contributes to their reciprocal love is his or her

personal love, but a love of the highest ethical value, virtuous love, then reciprocity assumes the characteristics of durability and reliability.

Sympathy

Sympathy is love at a purely emotional stage. Sympathy is a manifestation of experience rather than of activity. People succumb to it in ways that they sometimes find incomprehensible themselves, and the will is captured by the pull of emotions and sensations which bring two people closer together regardless of whether one of them has consciously chosen the other as the object of his or her love.

What makes sympathy so weak is its lack of objectivity. However, only sympathy has the power to make people feel close to each other. But then love is an emotional experience. As soon as sympathy breaks down man and woman usually feel that love has also come to an end.

Friendship

The content and structure of friendship can be summed up in this formula. I desire a good for you just as I desire it for myself, for my own 'I'. The doubling of the 'I' implicit in it emphasizes the unification of persons which friendship brings with it. Unlike mere sympathy, the decisive part is played by the will.

Sympathy creates conditions for friendship between two persons to spring up, and, once it exists, to obtain vivid subjective expression. Love between a woman and a man cannot remain on the level of mere sympathy but must become friendship.

Mutual friendship has an inter-personal character, two 'I's become a single 'we'. Comradeship (an objective common interest) lacks the cohesion and depth that belong to friendship and may bind many people together.

Betrothed Love

Betrothed love is the giving of one's own person to another (person or God). No other form of love can take a person as far in his quest for the good of the other as does betrothed love. The person cannot be someone else's property, but what is impossible and illegitimate in the natural order and in a physical sense can come about in the order of love and in a moral sense (see Matt 10:39).

Betrothed love must ally itself closely with goodwill and friendship, or it may find itself in a dangerous void in which the persons involved may feel helpless.

If marriage is to satisfy the demands of the personalistic norm, it must embody reciprocal self-giving, a mutual betrothed love.

The Unity of Love (Benedict XVI)

Pope Benedict XVI says in his encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*: "I wanted here —at the beginning of my Pontificate—to clarify some essential facts concerning the love which God mysteriously and gratuitously offers to man, together with the intrinsic link between that Love and the reality of human love."

Let us first of all bring to mind the vast semantic range of the word “love”. ... Amid this multiplicity of meanings, however, one in particular stands out: love between man and woman, where body and soul are inseparably joined and human beings glimpse an apparently irresistible promise of happiness.

That love between man and woman which is neither planned nor willed, but somehow imposes itself upon human beings, was called *eros* by the ancient Greeks. Let us note straight away that the Greek Old Testament uses the word *eros* only twice, while the New Testament does not use it at all: of the three Greek words for love, *eros*, *philia* (the love of friendship) and *agape*, New Testament writers prefer the last, which occurs rather infrequently in Greek usage. The tendency to avoid the word *eros*, together with the new vision of love expressed through the word *agape*, clearly point to something new and distinct about the Christian understanding of love.

According to Friedrich Nietzsche, Christianity had poisoned *eros*. But is this the case? Two things emerge clearly from (an analysis) of the concept of *eros* past and present. First, there is a certain relationship between love and the Divine: love promises infinity, eternity—a reality far greater and totally other than our everyday existence. Yet we have also seen that the way to attain this goal is not simply by submitting to instinct. Purification and growth in maturity are called for; and these also pass through the path of renunciation. Far from rejecting or “poisoning” *eros*, they heal it and restore its true grandeur.

This is due first and foremost to the fact that man is a being made up of body and soul. Man is truly himself when his body and soul are intimately united; the challenge of *eros* can be said to be truly overcome when this unification is achieved. Should he aspire to be pure spirit and to reject the flesh as pertaining to his animal nature alone, then spirit and body would both lose their dignity. On the other hand, should he deny the spirit and consider matter, the body, as the only reality, he would likewise lose his greatness. The epicure Gassendi used to offer Descartes the humorous greeting: “O Soul!” And Descartes would reply: “O Flesh!”. Yet it is neither the spirit alone nor the body alone that loves: it is man, the person, a unified creature composed of body and soul, who loves. Only when both dimensions are truly united, does man attain his full stature. Only thus is love—*eros*—able to mature and attain its authentic grandeur.

Yet *eros* and *agape*—ascending love and descending love—can never be completely separated. The more the two, in their different aspects, find a proper unity in the one reality of love, the more the true nature of love in general is realized. Even if *eros* is at first mainly covetous and ascending, a fascination for the great promise of happiness, in drawing near to the other, it is less and less concerned with itself, increasingly seeks the happiness of the other, is concerned more and more with the beloved, bestows itself and wants to “be there for” the other. The element of *agape* thus enters into this love, for otherwise *eros* is impoverished and even loses its own nature.

On the other hand, man cannot live by oblation, descending love alone. He cannot always give, he must also receive. Anyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift. Certainly, as the Lord tells us, one can become a source from which rivers of living water flow (cf. *Jn* 7:37-38). Yet to become such a source, one must constantly drink anew from the original source, which is Jesus Christ, from whose pierced heart flows the love of God (cf. *Jn* 19:34).

Living Our Vocation Today

The word 'vocation' indicates that *there is a proper course for every person's development to follow*, a specific way in which he commits his whole life to the service of certain values. That a particular person has a particular vocation always, then, means that his or her love is fixed on some particular goal. Both virginity and marriage understood in an uncompromising personalistic way, are vocations. Vocations are meaningful only within the framework of a personalistic vision of human existence, in which conscious choice determines the direction which a person's life and actions will take. (Wojtyla)

'What is my vocation' means 'in what direction should my personality develop, considering what I have in me, what I have to offer, and what others – other people and God – expect of me?' (Wojtyla)

The challenge of vocation today is to understand betrothal, first the betrothal of marriage and then betrothal to God. In doing so we will have covered the first and greatest element in all the vocations.

The decisive character of betrothed love is the giving of one's own person. No form of love can take the person as far in his or her quest for the good of the other as does betrothed love. Marriage is the result of betrothed love. The problem of betrothed love in marriage does contain a very real paradox. The principle of individual substance does not admit a person to be transferred or ceded to another. Yet the most uncompromising form of love consists in self giving. It is possible to step outside of one's own 'I' in a way that we continue to possess ourselves and far from being impaired the 'I' is enriched in a moral sense. Thus married people can approach Original Unity.

Within man's relationship with God, understood as a relationship of love, man's posture must be one of surrender to God. This is perfectly comprehensible, especially as the religious man knows that God gives Himself to man, in a divine and supernatural fashion (a mystery of faith revealed to mankind by Christ). We see then the possibility of betrothed and requited love between God and man; the human soul, which is betrothed of God, gives itself to him alone. This total and exclusive gift of self to God is the result of a spiritual process which occurs within a person under the influence of Grace. This is the essence of spiritual virginity – *conjugal love pledged to God Himself*. (Wojtyla)

Spiritual virginity is closely connected with physical virginity and is the basis of the religious vocation, whether the vocation is as a lay person or in religious orders or priesthood. Of course all the forms of love identified in the metaphysical analysis apply to spiritual virgins in their giving and receiving love from other persons.

The value of virginity, and indeed its superiority to marriage, is to be found in the exceptionally important part which virginity plays in realizing the kingdom of God on earth. The kingdom of God on earth is realized in that particular people gradually prepare and perfect themselves for eternal union with God. In this union the objective development of the human person reaches its highest point. Spiritual virginity, the self-giving of a human person wedded to God himself, expressly anticipates this eternal union with God and points the way towards it. (Wojtyla)

Speaking of "those who have renounced marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" Jesus says "whoever can accept this (i.e. those to whom it has been granted) ought to accept it". (Matthew 19, 12)

Conclusion

On the occasion of the sixth biennial ,Convention of the Serra Council of Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific, we face the challenge of reawakening the sense of vocation in a career minded culture in which subjectivism dominates the conscience.

John Paul II has shown the way for a meeting of the mind between the Church's tradition and modern culture. Persons are invited to look at themselves, and at their experiences, against the revealed truths.

The personalistic norm is a statement of revealed truth concerning our relationship with other persons. No other form of love honors the personalistic norm as does betrothed love.

Betrothed love is the singular gift of self. It underpins all vocations, whether they be marriage, single or religious life, or priesthood.

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