

Le Nouvel Esprit:
A Video Series on the Theology of
the Body

TOB 22, General Audience of Mar. 26, 1980

“I have acquired a man” Gen. 4:1

- The conjugal union is defined as knowledge
- This knowledge involves a naming similar to that of the first man naming the animals in Gen. 2
- Here the parents give the right name, “man”
- The name “man” expresses humanity in the new man who is generated
- Knowledge is a taking into possession of humanity
- This possession is through naming
 - The possession of the new man is different from possession of animals
 - Possession of animals is that of master over them, this falls under the command to subdue the earth

Possession of Humanity

- “In this “knowledge”, in which they give rise to a being similar to themselves... the man and woman are “carried” off, as it were, both taken into *possession by* the very humanity which they, in union and reciprocal “knowledge,” want to express anew and take possession of anew by drawing it from themselves, from the marvelous masculine and feminine maturity of their bodies and in the end—through the whole sequence of human conceptions and generations from the beginning—from the very mystery of creation.” TOB 22:3, (p. 215)

Knowledge as Possession and Love

- The question is whether this knowledge is equivalent to eros or what is the relationship between these concepts
- Fn 35, three basic trajectories
 - 1) Platonic: eros is the thirst for transcendental beauty and elevates man to the divine. This yearning for beauty is a flight from matter and introduces a kind of dualism
 - 2) Biblical: love directed to concrete reality. Dualism is absent
 - 3) Contemporary: satisfaction of drives or hedonistic enjoyment
 - Dualism: “the division of something conceptually into two opposed or contrasted aspects, or the state of being so divided.” Oxford Dictionary
 - Cartesian dualism: man is composed of two substances, body and soul; personal identity is strictly associated with the soul
 - Council of Vienne dogmatically defined man to be composed of body and soul as a single substance
- According to Scripture, this possession is not in the manner of an object
 - Must reconstruct the meaning of reciprocal, disinterested gift of self

Knowledge and Original Sin

- Knowledge and generation are subjected to the law of suffering and death due to original sin
 - The horizon of death opens with the revelation of the generative meaning of the body
 - The naming of Eve is already within the perspective of original sin, from within the knowledge of good and evil
- Original sin broke man's covenant with God
 - Man is cut off from God and Love
 - The mystery of life and creation is restricted, but not taken away, through conception, birth, death, and hereditary sinfulness
- Knowledge is a seal impressed in the original revelation of the body at the beginning of human history

Some Observations

- Every man carries within himself the mystery of the “beginning” tied to the consciousness of the generative meaning of the body
- Masculinity and femininity contain the meaning of fatherhood and motherhood
- The consciousness of the generative meaning of the body comes into contact with the consciousness of death
- The knowledge-generation cycle
 - Is a struggle for life that always overcomes death
 - Life has unyielding strength
- Knowledge inserts man into the vision of God on the mystery of creation
- Despite all setbacks, man still participates in this vision and confirms the truth that creation is good

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