

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

TOB 42, General Audience of Oct. 1, 1980

JPII's Method for Analyzing Matt. 5:27-28

- Three pieces
 - “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’; TOB 35-37
 - “But I say to you: Whoever looks at a woman to desire her...”; TOB 38-41
 - “Has committed adultery in the heart”; TOB 42-43
 - Points concerning interpretation
 - Each piece has its own content
 - Each piece is interconnected, the three pieces explain each other
 - Elements of the text
 - 1) To commit adultery
 - 2) To desire
 - 3) To commit adultery in the body
 - 4) To commit adultery in the heart

Further Comments on Interpretation

- Christ's building of a new ethos requires a rediscovery of values that was lost in the general understanding of the Old Testament concerning the 6th commandment
- The statement "You shall not commit adultery" is a categorical norm
- "Whoever looks..." shows that this new ethos is to be lived interiorly
- "Has committed..." is a key expression for discerning the correct ethical meaning and source of values of this new ethos
- Question now of how to reconcile the meaning of the adultery of the heart

Understanding the Adultery of the Heart

- Adultery is defined as the conjugal union of a man and woman who are not married
 - This is a sin of the body tied to an external action and the state of life of the man and woman
 - This action is inappropriate to the state of life of the man and the woman, and hence they are not morally authorized to unite conjugally
- The text of Matt. 5:27-28 does not indicate whether the woman is married or not
- Question: Is the look of desire evil only in the case when the woman is not one's wife, or is it also inappropriate towards one's wife?

An Argument in Favor of Looking at Wife with Desire

- 1) Only man who is a potential subject of adultery of the body can commit adultery of the heart
- 2) This does not refer to a husband with respect to his wife, but only in regards to a woman who is not his wife that man can commit adultery of the body
- 3) So only the husband has the exclusive right to look at his wife with desire and not commit adultery of the heart
- 4) By the virtue of marriage, one has the right to conjugal union and so by definition cannot commit adultery of the heart since it is impossible to commit adultery of the body

JPII's First Comments on this Argument

- The argument appears consistent with the 6th commandment
- JPII doubts the argument based on Christ's words
- In order to analyze the situation correctly, we must morally evaluate desire on the basis of the dignity of the human person
 - This is the key to understanding the adultery of the heart
- Must wait until TOB 43 for JPII's view on the matter

Comments on Immanuel Kant

- JPII stated that “You shall not commit adultery” is a **categorical** norm
- Immanuel Kant, German philosopher, 1724–1804, began German Idealism
- The concept of a categorical norm comes from Kant’s ethics
- Distinction
 - Hypothetical norm: a course of action is a means to achieving something else; only good in the degree the action is a means to the end
 - Categorical norm: a course of action that is itself necessary regardless of any conditions; good in of itself

Quote

- “But supposes that there were something the existence of which in itself had absolute worth, something which, as an end in itself, could be a ground of definite laws. In it and only in it could lie the ground of a possible categorical imperative...

Now, I say, man and, in general, every rational being exists as an end in himself and not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will. In all his actions, whether they are directed toward himself or toward other rational beings, he must always be regarded at the same time as an end... rational beings... are designated “persons” because their nature indicates that they are ends in themselves (i.e. things which may not be used merely as means). Such a being is thus an object of respect, and as such restricts all arbitrary choice. Such beings are not merely subjective ends whose existence as a result of our action has worth for us, but are objective ends (i.e. beings whose existence is an end in itself.” Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals

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