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I V O M O Ž N Ý

MARITAL LOVE AND MARITAL CONFLICT AS THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS

Among sociologists there is no need to stress the fact that both the character and the form of a marital conflict are determined socially even though it is usually an incident in which both participants act spontaneously and if possible in private.

One of the basic social determinants of the character of a marital conflicts is the character of marital love in the given culture. No matter whether we conceive the marital conflict as a disturbance (Charčev, Mac-kovskij, 1979) or as an inherent constituent of the dynamics of a conjugal relationship (Sprey, 1979; Maljarova, 1984), in any case we suppose that the impetus, beginning, course and result of a marital conflict depend, to a great extent, on the relationship in which the conflict appeared.

The character of the intervention must correspond with the character of the relationship (and of the conflict). Or at least it should, if it is meant to be effective. We may suppose that the more appropriate the character of the intervention to the character of the conflict, the more effective it becomes.

This study summarizes the most salient conceptions of marital love (and its genesis) and the corresponding conceptions of marital conflicts in our culture. It reveals a certain discrepancy between them and the existing institutionalized way of family intervention. The observation results in a hypothesis about one of the reasons for the relatively low degree of success in our present way of intervention in marital conflicts.

1.

It would be an expression of ethnocentric bias to start from the assumption that marital love as a generally accepted model (if not reality) has been the universal conjugal relationship pattern, common in all ages and in all societies.

There may be no doubts about the fact that the basic norms of correctness of behaviour and of the organization of interhuman relations in

the family have been articulated for many centuries and in the most unmistakable terms by the church. From the inception of the literate society, this role was played in our territory for a long time first by the monopolist Catholic Church, and then, since the beginning of the Reformation (with incomparably smaller effect), also by the Protestant churches. The Czech family was formed and lasted for many centuries as a Catholic family. In a proper Catholic family, it is love that ties husband and wife together, quite a special type and manner of love — marital love.

The fact that Christianity defined the relation between husband and wife as love, belongs to its historically most important contributions. In addition to a new definition of humanity, it was this new definition of the relations between people that was the substantial factor, used by Christianity to open, on a certain level, a new way to the development of European societies.

Contrary to the Old-Testament world and to classical Rome — both slave societies that could easily dispense with love when defining the relations in the family — the Christian conception of family relations is entirely based on the assumption of mutual love between husband and wife. It is not only a historical novelty, but from a certain point of view it is even an anomaly in the development of our species. Most historians and anthropologists agree today that all present and past societies — with the exception of present-day societies of our culture have been reacting rather suspiciously to excessive love between spouses, because of the increasing risk that they would forget other social obligations, while concentrating their attention on each other. No society can afford to create an institution which would determine its physical (and to a certain degree also its social) reproduction on the basis of something so ephemeral and delicate as are the feelings, which the couple experiences in the period of courtship (cf. Tiger, Fox, 1971).

This Christian innovation is very persistent. At first sight, it has remained unchanged in its substance until today and has survived even the process of secularization of marital love. Also our present understanding of family relations (and here again it is not only the legal system or other explicitly expressed norms) presumes mutual love between husband and wife, who live together in a marriage.

But it would be a mistake to fall right here into a semantic trap. What has changed is not the symbol, but the content — the designation remains, even if the designated phenomenon is in a state of flux. A few remarks should be made here about this flux which, in its last stage, resulted in the secularization of the content of this term, which originally was understood as having a religious meaning.

2.

We should go back to the beginning of our era. As is known, the apostolic letters and among them especially Saint Paul's epistles are the permanently accepted starting point for the Christian conception of family relations. If a text is to be chosen, expressing most coherently this concep-

tion, then it will obviously be Saint Paul's *Epistles to the Ephesians*, 5,21—33:

„Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord; for the man is the head of the woman, just as Christ also is the head of the church. Christ is, indeed, the Saviour of the body; but just as the church is subject to Christ, so must women be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for it, to consecrate it, cleansing it by water and word, so that he might present the church to himself all glorious, with no stain or wrinkle or anything of the sort, but holy and without blemish. In the same way men also are bound to love their wives, as they love their own bodies. In loving his wife a man loves himself. For no one ever hated his own body: on the contrary, he provides and cares for it; and that is how Christ treats the church, because it is his body of which we are living parts. „Thus it is that a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh.“ It is a great truth that is hidden here. I for my part refer it to Christ and to the church, but it applies also individually; each of you must love his wife as his very self; and the woman must see to it that she pays her husband all respect.“

There is neither room nor reason for a more systematic analysis of this so often commented text. Let us point only to two facts which are conspicuous from our point of view.

The imposed love is felt asymmetrically, vertically; the lower position of the wife is clearly implied. It is still the Old-Testament (and Roman) patriarchy. But in contradiction to it, the New-Testament conception obliges the man to assume maximum responsibility for the material and spiritual well-being of his wife (and of his family, entrusted to him by God).

The second remark is more disputable and would certainly provoke a sharp disagreement on the part of theologians. The fact cannot be disregarded that the above-mentioned comparison characterizes the relation of the husband to his own wife as being the same as relation to his own body. In spite of its mystic and symbolic character it certainly signals the reality of carnal love between husband and wife. The problem of what fornication and sin are and what they are not, was considerably disturbing the first Christian communities. And the epistles clarified this problem in a way that was permanently binding for the Christian churches, even though the accent was historically changing, as will be seen later on. The relation of the first Christians to sexuality was more or less uncomplicated. It was based on the simple respect for human nature. Saint Paul formulates it in a most explicit way in his *Epistle to the Corinthians*, 7, 1—7 :

„And now for the matters you wrote about. It is a good thing for a man to have nothing to do with women; but because there is no such immorality, let each man have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband must give the wife what is due to her, and the wife equally must give the husband his due. The wife cannot claim her body as her own; it is her husband's. Equally, the husband cannot claim his body as

his own; it is his wife's. Do not deny yourselves to one another, except when you agree upon a temporary abstinence in order to devote yourselves to prayer; afterwards you may come together again; otherwise, for lack of self-control, you may be tempted by Satan. All this I say by way of concession, not command. I should like you all to be as I am myself; but everyone has the gift God granted him, one this gift and another that."

This tolerance, however, should not hide the fact that when the apostles speak about loving and about love, they talk about it like mystics. Even though love as an emphatically postulated universal quality of the relations between Christians admitted sexuality when love between husband and wife was consummated, what the apostles had in mind when using the word „love“ is immensely remote from the modern understanding of the same word. We think primarily of an erotic relation. In the present-day secular language, this word refers, above all, to the relation between man and woman, and the same words is used only derivatively for other relations. It refers to eroticism as being a part of civilization, which can in extreme cases do even without sexuality, but in its substance it is quite obviously a cultural superstructure over the basic natural fact.

The original meaning of the word „love“ is best brought to our mind in the classical text of Saint Paul's *Epistle to the Corinthians*, 13, 1—8 :

„I may speak in tongues of men or of angels, but if I am without love, I am a sounding gong or a clanging cymbal. I may have the gift of prophecy, and know every hidden truth; I may have faith strong enough to move mountains; but if I have no love, I am nothing. I may dole out all I possess, or even give my body to be burnt, but if I have no love. I am none the better.

Love is patient; love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; never selfish, not quick to take offence. Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men's sins, but delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith, its hope, and its endurance, Love will never come to an end.“

What is being sung by Elvis Presley and what is said in the Marital Counseling Centres by wives and husbands with schoolchildren at home, when they are going to dissolve their family because they have found a new love, is certainly something substantially different from what Saint Paul had in mind.

3.

The Fathers of the Church, who several centuries later were building the Holy Church not as a common spiritual tressure for small communities of spiritually exalted minorities, but as the state religion of a world empire were taking over the heritage of the Roman Empire from the hands which had not yet been cold. They fully respected the text of the Scriptures, but considerably shifted the accent. Nothing else could be done. The conditions had changed. Behind the Fathers of the Church lay the ruins of Rome, before them stood a gigantic task of assimilating the

consequences of the migration of nations. It was necessary to create law and order for the Middle Ages.

The Christian family was a substantial element of this order. The foundations of this order were laid and the need was felt for dissociation from egoistic hedonism of the Roman patricians and from wild selfishness of the barbaric chieftains of the heathen tribes which were being converted to Christianity. Ascetic discipline and iron will were required if the new order had to be created out of the chaos of the early Dark Ages. Being pragmatical politicians, the organizers of the new order knew that, if they wanted to build religion not only for the spiritual elite, but for the broadest masses of the population, they would have to take into consideration the fact that many believers would lack these qualities of ascetic discipline and iron will, especially in the sphere which is so difficult to subdue — in sexuality. This problem could not be evaded by pious reticence, because even the most pious Christians could not procreate without sexuality. A miracle would be the only way out, but the Church wisely enjoined its adherent not to rely on it.

The builders of the new order, however, did not retreat from the spiritual conception of marital love. On the contrary, to put order into economic relations, caused by inheritance laws, they made more stringent the differences between marital love on one hand and fornication and adultery on the other. But at the same time they laid the foundations for a special duality, which excluded love in our sense of the word from marriage and, at the same time, founded and institutionalized an independent parallel system of institutions of illegitimate extramarital love, perhaps still being under the influence of the living experience of similarly organized Rome. Their spirituality, not known to late classical Rome, only emphasized the traditional dichotomy and instilled new qualities into the new polarity.

„Christianity brought a tremendous contribution to love by making it a sin“, remarks Anatole France. It may be added that it certainly paid. The dialectic of sin, repentance, absolution, and forgiveness, the mechanism of guilt and divine grace as one of the main mechanisms for the functioning of the ecclesiastical order of the medieval world, had probably nowhere else such a room for its development as it had here, within the scope of the cardinal sin of human nature.

In order to actualize the spirit of the fourth and fifth centuries, a few lines from the writings of the Fathers of the Church should be quoted here. Saint Augustine in „The City of God“ teaches the Christians that it is to be admitted that sexual intercourse in marriage is not a sin, but only under the assumption that it is performed with the intention to procreate offspring. But even in marriage, a virtuous man tries to eschew lechery. In marriage too, as is manifested by the desire for privacy, people are ashamed of sexual intercourse, because „this inevitable act of nature has been accompanied since the time of the first parents by punishing shame. The cynics have thought that man can dispense with shame, and Diogenes tried to resemble dogs and boars in all aspects, but he too, after one attempt, gave up this impudence in practice“. What is so shameful in impudence is the fact that it cannot be controlled by will. These are Saint

Augustine's arguments: before their fall, Adam and Eve could have had sexual intercourse without shame, thought they did not have it. An artisan who plies his trade moves his hands without impudence; similarly Adam, had he avoided the apple tree, could have afforded to indulge in sexual intercourse without emotions which are now indispensable for it. The sexual organs would obey our will together with the rest of our body. The need of lechery for sexual intercourse is the punishment for Adam's sin, without which the sex could have dispensed with sensuality. If some physiological details are passed over, left judiciously by the translator in decent unintelligibility of original Latin, this is the whole Augustine's theory of sex amounts to. As can be seen, says Bertrand Russell, „... it is evident that what makes ascetics dislike sex is its independence on the will. Virtue, it is held, demands a complete control of the will over the body, but such control does not suffice to make the sexual act possible. The sexual act, therefore, seem inconsistent with a perfectly virtuous life.“

Because of the easily understandable imperfection of the Christians in this respect, the Middle Ages established, side by side with a proper Christian family, a parallel structure of brothels, sutlers, merry widows, concubinages, and delicate erotic relations with the ladies of the court, which were exalted by the troubadours in their songs. Without this parallel structure the life of the medieval Christian would have been unbearable. It is difficult to live without love. And only in this „other world“ of the Middle Ages could flourish love as we understand it, which was ousted from marriage. And it was really ousted from marriage uncompromisingly. Saint Hieronymus writes about it:

„He who loves his own wife too passionately is also an adulter. To tell the truth, every love for other man's wife is lecherous: and the same applies to excessive love for one's own wife. A wise man must love his wife with reason, not with passion. He should tame his sensuality and should not let himself be enticed to enjoy excessively marital coition. Nothing is so lecherous as to love one's wife, as if she were one's mistress.“

What is remarkable in this text is not so much the indignation with which Saint Hieronymus treats the amorous passion in marital relations, but the matter-of-factness with which he compares it to the relation with one's mistress. Even a saint had to suppose that the nature of such a relation was a well-known fact for the Christian.

Saint Hieronymus' attitude opens a new epoch. He shifts considerably the accent of the original concept of marital love and it remained like that during the whole Middle Ages. This shift was caused by implacable hostility to the important need of a cultivated erotic relation in marriage, which was wisely understood by the founders of the church, who said in their epistles: „Do not deny yourselves to one another, except when you agree upon a temporary abstinence“, and „It is not the man who is the master of his body, but the woman, and equally, the husband cannot claim his body as his own; it is his wife's.“ As is so well documented by Flandrin, Hieronymus' attitude was consistently supported by medieval and modern theologians who mostly preferred to quote the first and the

last sentences from his epistle. For instance, Benedicti writes: „The man who behaves towards his wife more like a profligate lover than a husband, is an adulterer.“ In the same way he condemns „the wife who behaves toward her husband like a mistress“ and „the husband who, being held spellbound by love, has such an intense intercourse with his wife to satisfy his lecherous desires that he would enjoy having an affair with her, even if she were not his wife.“ (Quoted in Flandrin 1979 : 162).

The expulsion of love from *marriae* did not only correspond to the needs of the church; this expulsion could be maintained for so long because it had throughout the Middle Ages a universally economic and social function, protecting the society which had to function in a relatively great material penury and manage carefully on very reduced means, from the capriciousness of human feelings. A divorce is not an economic catastrophe for the divorced couple only. It represents a substantial loss (and an economic loss as well) for the whole society. A repeated marriage does not complicate life only for one's own children, but it disturbs and obscures the whole web of social structures; this also applies fully to unmarried couples who live in cohabitation instead of being properly married and who consequently have illegitimate children. Therefore even the libertines with all their religious scepticism thought it prudent not to confuse one's wife with one's mistress, and in their bible, in Montaigne's *Essays* you can read:

„Marriage is a sacred and binding union. Therefore the delight which it affords us should be a prudent and serious delight, mixed with certain austerity. This delight should be, in its way, prudent and conscientious.“ (*Essays* I, 30).

4.

Cultural anthropologists agree that in all societies with institutionalized monogamy there exist also institutionalized forms of unfaithfulness. The stricter the monogamy, the more elaborate are these forms.

As has been already said, this rule applies also to the European Middle Ages. There is still another reason why it found its application there — the Christian marriage assumed monogamy to be without love or without what we understand as love, i. e. without erotism. Erotism was developing as a sin, often as a beautiful sin, exalted by poets from the minnesingers to Villon to Petrarca. On a more profane level, erotism was flourishing in the form of playful jokes, making fun of it the market places in popular farces and in *Commedia dell'Arte*. This arrangement, which had been satisfactory for many centuries, was smashed by the Reformation. With their religious fanaticism, which sometimes showed a complete lack of understanding of the character of human nature, zealous reformers of the faith drove erotism into a blind alley, from where was no way out for it, unless it established itself in marriage. Again it was a long and painful process, at whose end stands our secular conception of marital love, which is still far from being perfect.

We sympathize with most preachers of the Reformation because of

their moral earnestness. Whatever reservation one may have about their religious world outlook, we respect universally their moral integrity, consistency, straightforwardness. Wycliffe and Hus, Luther and Comenius, and even Calvin deserve our respect for their uncompromising attitude to the lecherous life of the ruling classes (which obviously did not mean tolerance to the lechery of the poor either) and for their sincere opposition to the profligate life of the rich — a life which, after all, they could be comfortably profiting from. It is just their moral sincerity which is the reason why the reformers of the medieval church and all the reformation movements (the Hussite movement being the most outstanding example in our country) are treated with greatest affection in the present-day popularizing publications and in the works of art.

But viewed from the sociologist's perspective, their moral sincerity appears to be a social naiveté. It was a very dangerous and socially dysfunctional naiveté. Wherever the Hussites came, they dissolved the brothels; they persecuted the love-affairs of the clergy, they frowned on merry-making of the merry widows; concubinage of the priests and profligacy of the monks were the targets of their sacred wrath. They attacked strongly the most important historical innovation of the incipient bourgeois class — the principle of mercantilism, whose manifestation in this sphere was the selling of indulgencies, which would make it possible for prospering merchants and craftsmen to sin in comfort. They were breaking up consistently the whole well-functioning structure, which complemented the spiritual conception of marital love. They destroyed completely a very useful and for human nature a very pleasant and cozy structure of complementary institutions, even though this structure might not have been respectable and not at all exalting, when appraised with the criteria of absolute virtue.

After the break-up of these structures, all of a sudden eroticism had no legitimate place in society. Paul's tolerance („I should like you all to be as I am myself, but everyone has the gift God has granted him, one this gift and another that“) was incompatible with the Reformation. The way back was closed for a new shift of accent. Neither did the Counter-Reformation succeed in reconstituting fully the shattered complementary structure. What was said against it, could not be retracted. Eroticism had to look for a new social room for its existence and it was found for the whole period of the modern ages in a place that is from our point of view the most natural and pragmatically the most easily accessible — in marital love.

The development in Europe is clearly summarized by Flandrin: „Love had existed for centuries. Among social élites, and particularly, perhaps, for women, it constituted an essential value, one of the principal motives for living. However, one could only speak about it in profane literature — since the twelfth century, this had been almost exclusively devoted to the topic — and one could only live it outside marriage or at the risk of upsetting the social order. Yet illicit love-affairs had been severely harassed both by the public authorities and by the Church. After the twelfth century the latter slightly liberalized its doctrines of marriage — and the same could be said of the Protestants — but only to put an end to adulte-

ry, concubinate and prostitution. More or less convinced of the immorality of this type of love, the élites of society, in the second half of the eighteenth century, refused to repress any longer their feelings and desires. They claimed the right to satisfy them openly, legitimately, within marriage." (Flandrin, 1979: 171).

A revolution in opinions, though, cannot change the character of any institution. New ideas of philosophic liberalism and the Enlightenment created the precondition for the application of the equality idea even between husband and wife, in so far that mutual choice according to love between the engaged couple and hence the establishment of a permanent marriage as a civil bond based on mutual love became possible. John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau and the encyclopaedists involuntarily laid the foundation for a particular way of looking at the family. That appeared to be of extraordinary vitality. We Europeans are all familiar with it. As long as the marital institution was the basic social establishment for keeping and passing on private property from generation (Engels, 1884), the new ideas did not have much space for realization in the fall of classic capitalism, which caused the proprietary relationships to become even more abstract and shifted the mechanism of passing on inherited capital onto the cultural level, that brought about the fall of patriarchal family relationships: the eighteenth-century theories have become a social reality in the twentieth century.

Also the origin of marital conflict in the contemporary sense of the word became possible only through the realization of Enlightenment ideas, based on the already mentioned changes, that is on the ideological as well as the economic fall of patriarchy. Naturally, as well as love, the conflict in couples has existed since time immemorial: „... a confrontation between individuals, . . . , over scarce resources, controversial means, incompatible goals, or a combination of these" (Sprey, 1978: 134) has always occurred within any couple. But if the sources are predistributed unequally, if the social status of a woman is significantly inferior to that of a man and his dominance is legitimized by the highest transcendence (blessed by God) and according to that strictly controlled by the society, then the result of confrontation is known beforehand. The weaker party knows that, and if possible avoids any direct confrontation. It also knows that even if, owing to any special individual advantage or coincidence, it won the confrontation within the victory would have to be concealed. If it came to light, the favourable result of the confrontation would be socially annulled, anyway.

Naturally, the overestimation of one's own resources or uncontrollable emotions can trigger a quarrel between a husband and wife even under such circumstances. But it has very little in common with the marital conflict as we today perceive it. Katharina could — and in fact due to her temperament had to — try to confront her aspirations with Petruchio's conceptions. Definitely it was not due to her or his temperament that her behaviour did not lead to a marital conflict in our sense of the word but to *The Taming of the Shrew*.

If the marital conflict is such a new fact in reality, then it is not surprising that social theory has started to take an interest in it only in the last decade.

5.

The form of the contemporary marital conflict is not influenced only by a certain socially accepted definition of a mutual relationship but also by a certain social definition (and self-definition) of the elements of this relationship and a certain definition of the situation. The equality idea that also marked the fall of patriarchy has not been the only contribution of philosophic liberalism to the nature of the conjugal relationship and conflict in European history. The idea — and practice — of individualism is much more important.

The philosophy of early bourgeois revolutions redefined the position of man in the world; the Protestant stress on personal conscience laid a new basis for human conduct and changed the relationship not only between man and God but also between individuals.¹ This change has influenced the European family as significantly as all the other social institutions.

Also the idea of individual independence changed from a theoretical project into an applicable value very slowly and in stages. In the initial phases of the secular process of the liberalization of the identity of an individual this idea was applied only in the sphere outside the family. On the contrary, the family functioned as a certain *tusculum* that defended the individual against the stresses brought about by newly acquired independence, rapid social changes and the emergence of weaker mediation structures in the process of urbanization and industrialization. The family functioned precisely in this way, because it remained, more or less, the last source of collective identity in the heartless capitalistic world after the disintegration of medieval communalism.

At the beginning, this idea concerned males only. This brought about a situation called by Berger and Berger (1983: 88). „a very creative schizophrenia“ when „the individual in the modern urban-industrial world can be „modern“ at work and „traditional“ at home, alternating between these two worlds of his life in a manner that is not only quite comfortable but actually productive.“

Under this condition, it was logical to have two different philosophies, one for males and another for females. The basis of the female philosophy was the axiom: „If everything is all right with the family, I will be all right as well“, while the corresponding male philosophy was based on the assumption: „If everything is all right with me, the family will be all right as well.“

¹ Since Max Weber's time this topic has been one of the most frequently worked out themes. Its modern reflexion in Marxist literature is found in *Philosophies of the Early Bourgeois Revolutions* (Ojzerman, 1983), a survey of its implications for the present state bourgeois family can be found especially in the study by Berger and Berger: *The War Over the Family* (1983).

On the basis of „limited individualism for women“ the generally accepted and practised bourgeois family model functioned for several centuries. Not before the second half of the twentieth century did the feminist movement even in the most conservative capitalist societies frontally reject the idea of „limited individualism for women“. The more accepted this change of thinking is, the more complete a fulfilment of the structural changes of social consciousness, started a long time ago by philosophical liberalism and individualism, it represents. For males this has eliminated the possibility of „creative schizophrenia“. Thus the double philosophy has become unjustified. What matters most is not only that was previously considered a male philosophy would become a legitimate and rational basis for females as well. For both sexes the significant change consists in the fact that the basic frame of reference of their identities and life plans need not necessarily be formed by the family: the orientation to one's own, individual development as the final aim is culturally legitimate for both.²

Thus it was the feminist movement that in its proclamations in the sixties and seventies of this century made the last step towards the universal acceptance of the individualistic perspective. Modern individualism, which proved itself to be unprecedently functional in the sphere of production compared to the traditional societies, brings, however, certain limits that at present are becoming conspicuous in the sphere of reproduction: the unstable family with one child is a logical consequence of the individualistic orientation on one's own development. I would say that, where and the extent to which contemporary Western European and North American feminism is a gender-specific female form of individualism, it remains one of the symptoms of the spiritual crisis of modern societies.

6.

Beside the definition of the conjugal relationship as love, that is as the primarily emotional relationship, and beside the definition of those who

² The redefinition of the relationship elements has also laid the foundation for a critical reassessment of the relationship itself. In the miscellany of sociological studies in „Women's research“ Haavind states (1984: 137): „... our kind of love impedes the potentials for individual development in intimate relationship between two persons of the opposite sex.“ This observation is indisputably correct. The connoting evaluation, however, shows the reverse of the aim and means in the new perspective: while originally the individual should have developed for the welfare of the relationship, or for the family system of relationships, nowadays the relationship is judged from the point of view of the possibilities it allows for the individual advancement. „Our kind of love“ indeed „impedes the potentials for individual development“. It used to serve better ends. Females were primarily concerned not with their individual development but with the welfare of their children. Males were concerned not with their individual development but with the welfare of their wives, or if you like, with welfare of their families. The basic perspective through which a human being perceived the purpose of his/her destiny was not the individual perspective but that of the family (or of higher units superior to an individual).

lay its foundations as individuals who legitimately demand a higher degree of autonomy and individual life-aims outside the family, a new definition of the inner family space as the private one is becoming very important in the character of the contemporary marital conflict.

The modern duality of the private and public realms was formed together with modern individualism. The constitution of the private world coincides with the constitution of the neo-local two-generation nuclear family. Such a family is the basic institution of the private world. Marital love and marital conflict are thus considered the very private core of the private family space. Any disclosure of this space to outside intervention was considered, up to a relatively recent time, a gross breach of the valid social norms. Intimate body pains were confessed to the family doctor; the intimate pains of mutual relationship were taboo for discussion outside the enclosed space where they took place.³

For a modern man this enclosed private sphere has become a vitally important enclave for his spontaneity, which has been strictly limited by the rational organization of the public sphere. In this sense it has also become an enclave of freedom — as opposed to the public world of necessity. And finally, after the fall of patriarchy, it has also become a sphere of equality, as opposed to the functionally hierarchized and thus strictly vertically structured public world.

The traditional dimensions are reversed here. The initial point of our civilization was quite the opposite: „In Greek selfunderstanding, to force people by violence, to command rather than persuade, were prepolitical ways to deal with people characteristic of life outside the polis, of home and family life, where the household head ruled with uncontested, despotic powers...“ (Arendt, 1959: 26). „The polis was distinguished from the household in that it knew only „equals“, whereas the household was the center of the stricest inequality. To be free meant both not to be subject to the necessity of life or to the command of another and not to be in command oneself. It meant neither to rule nor to be ruled. Thus within the realm of the household, freedom did not exist, for the household head, its ruler, was considered to be free only in so far as he had the power to leave the household and enter the political realm, where all were equals.“ (Arendt, 1959: 30—31).

But the observations of Berger and Kellner (1979: 311) are appropriate for the twentieth century: „In sum, it is above all and, as a rule, only in the private sphere that the individual can take a slice of reality and fashion it into his world. If one is aware of the decisive significance of this capacity and even necessity of men to externalize themselves in reality and to produce for themselves a world in which they can feel at home, then one will hardly be surprised at the great importance which the private sphere has come to have in modern society.“

³ The tradition of confession to a priest, which did not respect this taboo, did not contradict this: the priest and the Church were not part of the modern public sphere, for the Roman Catholic Church provided solece as a relic of traditional communality.

7.

The attempt to preserve the inner private family world as a special world of a different order contrast to the one surrounding the family is a futile ambition, of course. It only leads to a certain „non-creative schizophrenia“ in the perception and self-perception of the family. The ambiguity of the social universe, which could be perceived on the one hand as the public world functioning in the order of rational discipline outside the family and on the other hand as a private world reserved for emotions, spontaneity, and real self-expression inside the family, has shifted its boundaries. Two aspects of life world are not divided either in space or institutionally any more. The boundary has shifted into the inner family space: the present family is perceived simultaneously in the surrounding world order as an institution that is rational, pragmatic, functionally hierarchized vertically and culturally limiting and at the same time as a special private world of authenticity, spontaneity, natural equality and emotions.

The former aspect is the one more accessible to the rational understanding of the family. It serves as a natural context for sociological family analysis. In so far as it is the starting point for family self-reflexion, it is often critically perceived by social theory as „hyper-rationality“, which is believed to be a part of our mental climate: „Ordinary people now view themselves, their spouses, and their children as if they were participants in an engineering enterprise“ (Berger and Berger, 1983: 119).

However, if we look at the image of the contemporary European family in works of art or in mass culture, we suddenly see that the enterprise is rather un-engineering. Above all, of course, this applies to the character of the coupled relationship in the wooing period, but nevertheless it is expected that the character of the relationship founded during that period would remain a permanent specific feature of all family relationships.

This double perception of the nature of the relationships inside the family influences the nature of marital conflicts in such a way that it makes a managing of it even more difficult.

During the confrontation between the two individuals in a couple it is as legitimate to refer to the rational aspect of the family institution and its pragmatic functions („It's never tidy here“, „Look how much others earn“), as it is to refer to the emotional aspects („You don't love me anymore“, „Nobody understands me here“). This would not be such a great problem provided the particular aspects in our culture were explicitly arranged into a coherent system of priorities and if it were possible to refer to both them in the same language at the time of the confrontation. This is not the case, however, and this is why the degree of unsuccessful efforts to overcome the marital crisis is increasing.

8.

The existence of the two languages causes special difficulties. Through-

out all his existence outside the family, a human being is brought up to rational, non-contextual, unambiguous communication. In addition to it, in the world of complex organization in adult life as well as at school during childhood the substantial part of communication is verically oriented.

The conjugal relationship, on the other hand, is based and to a high degree reproduced on the basis of non-verbal, ambiguous, contextual, horizontal communication. Making love itself is the quintessence of a non-verbal type of communication. Thus the marital or lovers' conflict, especially if there still exists an attempt to repair the relationship, takes place mainly on a non-verbal communication basis. The lovers' argument is rich in gestures: the facial expressions, intonation, and body language carry more information than the spoken words.

This tendency may reach such a degree that words are felt as an obstacle in mutual understanding. In a lovers' argument such a sentence „If you don't know yourself, it's useless telling you“ makes sense. Translated into the language of technical rationality that means: „If you did not decode correctly my non-verbal message, there is no hope for you to be able to decode it even if I tried to formulate it in the verbal language. You know well enough that the verbal language is, from the point of view of this particular message, which is basic for our mutual understanding in the loving relationship, much more encumbered by hum and thus endangered by misunderstanding and disinterpretation.“ Here the layman intuitively proves the validity of the observations established by many anthropologists (Lévi-Strauss, Mead, Gehlen) who claims that the language of technical rationality generally is not richer, mere developed, or more comprehensive than the „primitive“ languages of non-technical civilizations, but quite the opposite: it is the language of a simplifying and pragmatically reductionalizing vision of the world.

We cannot explain here why the non-verbal communication is so important for mutual understanding in a human couple relationship. Let us recall at least one aspect that we find especially important. The language of technical rationality refers best and to a high degree only the pragmatic aspects of the universe. The need to transcend immediate utility and a rationally advantageous solution could be suppressed from the world of public institutions that have their place in a society because of their immediate utility for the individual. But it could not be suppressed from the inner family world. In the secularized world of our civilization the non-verbal communication refers to a non-religious transcendence of individual life: its adherence to the life of the species. The couple that relies on body language does not reflect on it, but they know, they feel, that they could not do without this type of communication.

9.

The population of the city of Brno is about 300,000, Last year there were about 1,200 marriages contracted there. Marital counselling points in the city registered approximately the same number — more than a

thousand couples applied for professional intervention in their marital conflicts. The taboo against exposure of the ultimate privacies — marital love and marital conflict — is gone. Disclosure of the private family space is considered a common, wholly legitimate step in attempting to repair the relationship.

Institutionalized professional intervention in the family conflict has been the result of a certain historical development. Compared to the traditional ways of non-professionalized intervention in family conflict (matron, paterfamilias, priest, neighbours), the professionalized intervention brings about many advantages due to the fact it is of the present time thanks to its rationality, orientation on practical results, and professional competence. Nevertheless, the degree of effectiveness — at least according to the rising proportion of couples that did not manage the family conflict sufficiently well to keep the family from breaking up — is very low.

A couple usually applies for help to the professional advisor only after all attempts to repair the relationship by themselves, in their private space, have been in vain. The fact that they seek help through the professional advisor has its sources and its logic in the aspect of the above mentioned schizophrenia in family self-reflexion, which perceives the family as „an engineering enterprise“: only from this aspect it is logical to apply for specialized help in case of disorder. Even before the application for help is made to a specialist, however, the conflict must be and usually has been articulated and ready for presentation in this reference framework. The couple usually goes to the marital counseling point only after they have ceased to understand each other on the non-verbal, emotional level and after the failure of their own attempts to repair the relationship by a rational search for the reasons and the background of the destructive confrontation, only after their own attempts to accept arrangements for restoring the harmony have failed.

The paradox, however, of the professionalized intervention consists in the fact that it must develop exactly those means which proved themselves ineffective. The marital conflict is usually a complex one. The marriage is totally involved. Discordance infiltrates the reflected levels and those of the will, as well as unconscious and spontaneous levels. It is only the collapse of the attempt to repair the relationship that shifts the problem entirely onto the rational level. At least phenomenally: this level can be better verbalized, and after all here we are in a realm for which our civilization has given us a language. The effectiveness of professional marital counselling is limited due to the fact that as far as the family is concerned it is not the only world. All professional intervention must be verbal, vertical, rational, and pragmatic and disturb the intimacy of the relationship that was founded and proceeds best on the basis of non-verbal, horizontal, emotional communication with the unreflected transcendence to supraindividual functions of the family institution. The marital advisor is permanently confronted with the problem of how he, being a stranger, a paid one, having his professional non-commitment, rationality, authority and pragmaticity, could prescribe emotions, equality, spontaneity, unselfishness and altruistic behaviour to his clients. Or to teach

them to live without it. Neither of these is easy, both to teach others or to realize himself. The results show this clearly.

10.

This essay is aiming neither at criticism, nor at the development or improvement of the marital counselling. It is not an essay with a practical orientation. Neither is it an attempt at cultural criticism of the present-day situation of the family in our civilisation.

We know that it is not possible to abolish the schizophrenic perception of the family by excluding love from it and by orientating it as an „engineering enterprise“ which is, due to its nature, capable of being repaired by professionalized intervention. The number of divorces would undoubtedly decrease and the counselling centres would be functioning better, but is there any institution that could aspire to achieve such a change?

After all — is this change desirable? What would life be worth without love? We are not going to give up something right from the beginning only because one day it may be irreparably ruined. As a matter of fact, we would have to give up everything.

I am afraid that no such easy road is open for an opposite alternative either. The antibehaviouristically and humanistically orientated schools of marital guidance try to find this alternative solution, emphasizing personal engagement, warmheartedness, non-authoritarian character of the therapist's position. It is, however, very difficult to be purposely spontaneous, to be warm as a result one's rational decision, and to be a leader without any authority — and in addition to it — to earn one's living in this way.

If it had not been so difficult, we would not have reached the point where we are today.

Translated from Czech by K. Berka

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MANŽELSKÁ LÁSKA A MANŽELSKÝ KONFLIKT JAKO SOCIÁLNĚ KONSTRUOVANÁ REALITA

Stat se pokouší o genetický rozbor základních charakteristik naší soudobé sociální koncepce manželské lásky a manželského konfliktu. Ústí v hypotézu o zdrojích malé účinnosti našich sociálně legitimních zdrojů stability manželského vztahu a institucionalizovaných způsobů intervence do manželského konfliktu. Manželský vztah je dnes sociálně koncipován jako láska a zahrnuje předpoklad erotického vztahu mezi manželi. Je to poměrně mladá inovace; klasická křesťanská koncepce lásky byla vysloveně spirituální a od počátku středověku smyslnost ze vztahu mezi manžely přísně vylučovala. Poměrně nedávno také začali manželští partneři percipovat sami sebe jako individua s prioritními aspiracemi na individuální rozvoj a sebenaplnění. Individualistickou filozofii inercializovali postupně od počátku novověku nejprve muži a v posledních desetiletích i ženy. Též vnitřní prostor rodiny byl redefinován. Vzniká vědomí soukromého prostoru v rodině. Rodina nejprve slouží jako tusculum před racionálním světem směny ve veřejném prostoru rozvíjející se měšťanské společnosti, postupně však přijímá sebedefinici povahy světa ji obklopujícího. Je tedy vnímána současně jako instituce racionální, pragmatická, funkčně vertikálně hierarchizovaná a kulturně omezující a současně jako zvláštní soukromý svět autenticity, spontaneity, přirozené rovnosti a emocionality. Pro komunikaci v rodině je platný i dvojitý jazyk. Celou svou mimorodinnou existenci je člověk veden k racionální, nekontextuální, nedvojznačné komunikaci. Ve světě velkých organizací v dospělosti i ve škole v dětství je ještě navíc podstatná část komunikace vertikálně orientována. Párový vztah je naopak založen a reprodukován v podstatném podílu na neverbální, mnohoznačné, kontextuální horizontální komunikaci. Milování samo je quintesencí nonverbální komunikace tohoto typu. Nereflektovaná schizofrenie těchto dvou koncepcí percepce manželského vztahu a existence těchto dvou jazyků (při čemž naší soudobé institucionalizované intervenci do konfliktu je dostupný jen jeden z těchto světů a může pracovat jen jedním z těchto jazyků) se nabízí jako vysvětlující hypotéza jedné z možných příčin soudobé destabilizace párové rodiny a nízké účinnosti našeho způsobu intervence do manželského konfliktu.

