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**Loving in Freedom: The Mystery of Marriage and Fertility
in the Light of the Theology of the Person**

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Loving in Freedom: The Mystery of Marriage and Fertility in the Light of the Theology of the Person

1. Main findings of the research

As we have seen, modern individualistic, and even more so postmodern structuralist thinking—which undoubtedly influences our social attitudes today—fundamentally does not take God's existence into account and attempts to understand the human being solely from within. In this context, the human person is reduced to either an object or a position of power. As David Schindler rightly points out, we cannot hope to solve the problems afflicting modern Western society if we begin by bracketing the question of our relationship with God, as embodied in its structures, because bracketing this question is itself the source and deepest connection of all these problems.¹ For this reason, this paper has emphasized throughout the created but transcendent reality of man, in accordance with the Christian view of man. The resolution to this paradox can be found in Pascal's brilliant line of thought, which I explained in detail in Chapter II.1.2. Here, I would like to refer to it again only insofar as I emphasize some of his statements that I find particularly valid in relation to fertility, more specifically, the fertility of marriage.

In Pascal's thinking, the various orders of interpretation of reality and life, and the perspectives associated with them, are not merely parallel, but form hierarchically ordered points of view. Each order—each interpretive framework or order of being—represents a particular worldview, from which life as a whole takes on different meanings and significance. These perspectives thus offer different, seemingly independent horizons of experience, just as each person and each marriage is a completely unique field of experience. In Pascal's line of thought, however, we do not remain within the horizon of relativism: the relationship between orders is not random or closed, but ordered, and there is even a privileged point of view that is capable of revealing the connection between different perspectives.² In this sense, the different orders, modes of interpretation, and life strategies find their ultimate unity and meaning in Christ. Jesus Christ, as the divine *Logos*, is the viewpoint that is capable of bringing together

¹ See SCHINDLER: *Modern, Postmodern...* p. 34.

² Pascal illustrates this with the geometry of conic sections: conic sections (circle, ellipse, parabola, hyperbola) are the intersection lines of planes intersecting a cone from different directions, which, when viewed on their own, present the image of independent shapes, but when viewed from the apex of the cone—the only point from which all cone segments can be matched to each other—the connection between them is revealed. In Pascal's thinking, the privileged perspective corresponding to the apex of the cone is none other than the *Logos* itself.

different interpretations of the world and in which the unifying power of truth comes into effect.³

Pascal's line of thought also includes the not insignificant fact that only part of reality is revealed from different perspectives, but that part is the face of truth, while this view does not exempt us from seeking the whole truth, leaving us with the paradox that it will only be revealed in the fullness of life.⁴ The meaning and purpose of existence is nothing other than participating in the self-giving of absolute Being (God) as love. Man becomes truly himself when he enters into this self-giving relationship as a responsive being. Thus, when we consider the question of fertility and arrive at practical problems of family planning or birth control, we must not lose sight of the fact that our perspective and rational discourse are necessarily one-sided and do not inherently possess the aforementioned perspective.⁵

2. Verification of the hypothesis and elaboration of the main theses

According to the hypothesis of this paper, a fertility-conscious lifestyle—based on mutual responsibility, dialogue, and self-control between spouses—is closely related to the ethos of redemption. This is the internal logic by which the human heart transforms from selfish love to self-giving love. The aim of the research is to explore the theological-anthropological structure of this transformation.

2.1. Transcending the modern image of man in the order of love

The anthropological turn of modernity—which made humanity its own center and excluded the dimension of transcendence—led to the instrumentalization of human nature, the body, and fertility. The crisis of the modern image of man can only be overcome by personalist anthropology and the theology of love, which interpret the human person in the order of creative and redemptive love, thus uniting nature, freedom, and grace.

- **THE EMERGENCE OF THE POSTMODERN VIEW OF HUMANITY.** Bacon's conception of nature made nature the object of rational cognition and domination, replacing the medieval contemplative and participatory approach to creation with human technical power and productive self-realization, which in the long run led to the instrumentalization of nature, the body, and life. Locke's empiricism and his thesis

³ Cf. Tamás PAVLOVITS: *Blaise Pascal*, SZIT, Budapest, 2024, pp. 245–246.

⁴ This is seeing God face to face, which is realized in the “order of glory” (cf. Pavlovits ibid. 252) – “Through faith we know [God’s] existence. In glory we will know his nature.” (*Pensées* 233)

⁵ With this, I tacitly question the legitimacy of the endless debate on methods and tools, with the addition that, of course, even within the rational order, there are numerous objective criteria (see Appendix 2) that influence the value of one method/tool or another.

on the unknowability of substance initiated an epistemological shift in which reality is not an objective given but a human construction, thus laying the foundation for the postmodern view of humanity and reducing human identity, the body, and nature to relative, functional, and interpretation-based projects. The philosophy of the Enlightenment—from Descartes' dualism through Kant's rationalism and Comte's positivism—interpreted human autonomy at the expense of the body and transcendence. This contributed to the emergence of a technicized, functional view of humanity in which the moral and spiritual dimensions of the person are pushed into the background.

- **REALIST PHENOMENOLOGY AND PERSONALISM.** Realist phenomenology posits an objective reality that can be known through the intentional acts of consciousness, while 20th-century personalism—in its various forms—emphasizes the transcendent dignity, freedom, and relational nature of the person in contrast to the impersonal view of modernity, providing a philosophical and theological basis for a personalist interpretation of marriage and love. Wojtyła's philosophy unfolds in the unity of Thomistic metaphysics and phenomenology: *Person and Act* reveals human self-realization in the experience of action, while *Theology of the Body* shows, in the light of the Incarnation, that the body is a sacramental sign of personal love and divine self-communication, in which the unity of *eros* and *ethos* is realized in the dramatic purification of the human heart.
- **MORAL THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS.** According to Pinckaers, moral theology focuses not on commands and prohibitions, but on virtues, happiness, and participation in love: human moral life is organized from within, oriented around vocation and the ultimate goal, and marriage is a concrete form of this, where freedom is guided by the grace of the Holy Spirit toward the fulfillment of divine love. The basis of Christian morality is not duty, but the desire for happiness, which becomes real when a person finds fulfillment in the selfless love of another; thus, in marriage, happiness is not hedonistic pleasure, but the fruit of a meaningful communion of life lived in love. The essence of Christian morality is the unity of love and truth: love is not a mere emotion or spontaneity, but self-giving fidelity, which is fulfilled in the light of truth, while truth preserves its life-giving power only in love—thus, at the center of moral life is truth realized in love. The unity of ethics and anthropology lies in the fact that human self-identity

can only be understood in transcendent openness, in Christ as the ultimate human being, where goodness is the ontological condition for fulfillment in divine love; thus, the basis of moral life is the order of love (*ordo amoris*), which is fulfilled in the person's vocation, self-giving, and orientation toward community.

2.2. The ultimate structure of human existence is the order of love (*ordo amoris*).

The order of love is both an ontological and ethical foundation that determines a person's freedom, responsibility, and self-fulfillment. All further anthropological and theological conclusions follow from this logic.

- **THE MANIFESTATION OF LOVE.** According to Augustine's teaching on *the ordo amoris*, the moral life of man is rooted in the order of love, in which everything that exists must be loved in its proper place: the supreme good, the love of God, orders all other loves and finds its ultimate measure in the *Logos*, Christ; thus beauty and love are united in the same movement, which is directed toward God's infinite goodness and man's continuous self-surrender. According to Pascal's anthropology, the paradox of human existence—at once divine and fallen nature—is resolved in Christ. In the hierarchy of the three orders—the body, reason, and the heart—Pascal considers the order of love to be the highest, in which the ultimate meaning of truth and existence becomes visible in Christ; the order of the heart transcends rational cognition and reveals the unity of reality in the light of grace, thus Christology becomes the basis of anthropology and the logic of love.
- **THE PERSON IN THE ORDER OF LOVE.** Scheler's "tripartite anthropology" – lived body, psyche, and spirit/person – describes the person as an intentional spiritual subject existing in acts, which cannot be reduced to psychophysical layers. This provides a non-reductionist anthropological horizon where moral decision-making is the sphere of the person's self-actualizing action—rooted in the primacy of freedom and responsibility—as opposed to the reductive views of determinism and technical-psychologizing images of humanity. In Wojtyła's anthropology, the person and the act are in internal unity: intentional acts shape the moral character of the person in the freedom of self-possession and self-direction, where freedom is ordered to the truth, the pedagogy of virtues—especially temperance and the theological virtues enables spiritual self-surrender and depicts a person who

cooperates with grace and fulfills himself. According to Wojtyła, the paradox of personal freedom lies in the fact that man is transcendent and self-determining in his spiritual essence: his freedom is not independence from laws, but openness to truth and love. In contrast, determinism and instinctual anthropology reduce man to mere nature, emptying the true meaning of responsibility and self-surrender.

- **AXIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS.** According to Scheler's value ethics, values are self-existent, hierarchically ordered realities that are revealed through emotional intuition, and moral goodness consists in the acting will being in harmony with the highest values that are preferred. Wojtyła further develops this order—the *ordo amoris*—in his phenomenology of personal action, where man responds to values in his actions, and love becomes the ultimate form of ethical and ontological cognition. Scheler sees a revolution in ethos in the Sermon on the Mount: love elevates human morality to a new, higher order of values, where moral law is no longer an external norm but the internal order of the heart. This idea is taken further by John Paul II, who interprets ethos as a form of man's relationship with God and his inner receptivity to values, contrasting it with postmodern relativism and technocratic utilitarianism, which deprive morality of its objective basis. According to Wojtyła, the fulfillment of the person is an ontological process: in all his actions, man shapes himself. According to Wojtyła, the fulfillment of the person is an ontological process: in all his actions, man shapes himself, and through his decisions he either comes closer to his own fulfillment or moves away from it; therefore, morality is the space for the unfolding of human existence, where conscience helps the person to realize himself in the recognition of values and in the truth of love.
- **THE ROLE OF CONSCIENCE IN THE ORDER OF LOVE.** The question of the subjectivity of moral values in conscience highlights the fact that modern man – especially due to the weakening of moral and religious community support – is often left alone in his value choices and thus tends to reduce the objective moral order to purely subjective convictions; In contrast, according to Wojtyła, conscience is an inner space bound to truth and goodness, in which human freedom is realized in the order of the "true good" and thus becomes the condition for the moral and ontological fulfillment of the person. In his view, the recognition of the objective good is not merely an intellectual insight, but a process arising

from the person's openness to truth, in which conscience functions as the meeting point of truth and freedom: the intellect recognizes the good, and the will decides and acts in light of this, thus the norm becomes an internal law within the person. It follows from this that freedom can only unfold in the service of truth. Conscience is the internal normative force of truth, which guides a person's actions not on the basis of external commands, but on the basis of an internal recognition of the objective good. Freedom is authentically realized when conscience serves truth and the person chooses the good based on their inner conviction. It is particularly important in decisions related to fertility that people be able to distinguish between apparent values and true, genuine goods.

- **INTERPERSONAL DRAMATIC ORDER.** A decision is not merely an action, but a self-definition: a person shapes their moral identity through their actions. Freedom is also responsibility. According to Scheler and Pieper, love is a creative force: the affirmation of another's existence, which unfolds the person as a continuation of the divine creative will. This accepting yet demanding love is capable of bringing out the good in the other, of "creating" what the beloved person can become. In a marital relationship, this creative love becomes a communal vocation: the partners not only respond to each other, but also help each other to recognize and realize their own divine calling. Responsibility is an internal form of self-determination: in their actions, people freely respond to the objective call of values and thereby shape themselves. Responsibility for another person is a concrete manifestation of love, in which self-giving and self-fulfillment coincide. The rejection of the order of love is one of the most serious anthropological crises of modern thought: freedom becomes an end in itself, and relationships become superficial. Existentialism, structuralism, and postmodern trends reduce human relationships to constructs of power, society, or performance, so that the other person is no longer a gift but a limiting factor. The loss of the transcendent dimension of love—the separation of sexuality from self-giving and the objectification of the body—leads to a dramatic impoverishment of human existence, from which only the rediscovery of the unity of the body and the person can offer a way out.

2.3. The sacramental reality of marriage is the primary expression of the order of love

The union of man and woman cannot be reduced to social or biological factors, but is *a communio personarum* reflecting the love of the Holy Trinity, in which the spouses share in the mystery of the unity of Christ and the Church through their self-giving love, thus transforming nature into grace and love into fruitfulness.

- **THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL IMAGE OF MARRIAGE.** In the Christian sense, marriage is a specific, relational form of human existence, which is the earthly reflection of divine love. The community of man and woman giving themselves to each other reflects the image of God: man does not realize himself in isolation, but in a relationship of love. Marital love is not merely an emotion, but a personal and spiritual gift of self, in which the partners recognize in each other the image of God's love. In this love, the dignity of the person is realized as a participation in divine life—marriage is thus not only a natural but also a sacramental order in which man becomes complete in the creative power of divine love. Marriage is a vocation—both personal and communal—that participates in the life of the Holy Trinity and calls spouses to make God's love visible in the world through their lives and fruitful love. Marriage is thus not only a natural institution, but also transcendent in nature.
- **THE SACRAMENTAL ASPECT OF MARRIAGE.** Married spirituality is a specific form of Christian life in which the sacrament of marriage becomes a way of sanctifying everyday life: work, raising children, joys and sufferings all become areas of sanctification. In the light of the concept of sacrament emerging from the biblical *mysterion*, according to John Paul II, the body itself is a "sacramental sign": it visibly carries and conveys the mystery of divine love. Marriage is true to its nature when the spouses truly manifest Christ's love for the Church through their mutual self-giving—that is, the body and marriage simultaneously signify and effectively communicate grace. According to John Paul II, the beauty of the body reflects the purity of the soul, the light of love capable of self-giving, which finds its ultimate meaning in the relationship between Christ and the Church. The sacramental unity of creation and redemption lies in the fact that both are the work of the same divine love: from the beginning, God wanted to unite man with himself in Christ, and this plan was not thwarted even after the Fall. Marriage is

a visible sign of this eternal divine plan, in which the grace of creation is fulfilled in the light of redemption: the union of man and woman into "one flesh" is a participation in the unity of Christ and the Church. Thus, marriage is not only the continuation of the created order, but also the sacramental space of redemption, where the drama of love—self-giving and redeeming grace—becomes reality. Marriage is a "primordial sacrament" because it reveals the life-giving and unifying mystery of divine love as a single great sacramental sign of creation and redemption, in which spouses share in the eternal covenant of Christ and the Church.

- **MARITAL COMMUNION.** Human beings are essentially open to God's gift of love; sin did not create a new, "natural" state, but rather a decline in human nature relative to its own dignity. In Christ, however, grace restores and fulfills the original order of creation: the sacrament of marriage is a visible sign of this unity between nature and grace, where man is once again able to receive and transmit divine life. In the New Testament, marriage is a sacramental image of the unity between Christ and the Church: through the grace of redemption, it realizes what it symbolizes and elevates human love to a part of divine love. The spousal embrace is the sacramental sign of the spousal covenant: it is the expression of a total, lifelong self-giving, which is realized in physical and spiritual unity. Marriage is therefore not a single act, but a continuous, daily renewed promise in which the parties make God's love visible to each other in every dimension of their lives. *Communio personarum* is the essential reality of marriage: the communion of man and woman living for each other, realized in mutual self-giving, which is an image of God's community of love. The covenant dimension of the communion of persons consists in the fact that marriage, following the model of the Old Testament covenant, is an indissoluble bond lived in love, which also reflects the relationship between God and man. Physical unity is therefore a sacramental sign that expresses the moral truth of self-giving, fidelity, and openness to life; if this sign is falsified, the reality of the covenant is also damaged.
- **COMMUNICATION FLOWING FROM COMMUNION.** The model of the Incarnation calls spouses to learn to love as God loves, by "incarnating" themselves in each other's world with attention, understanding, and self-giving. The sacramental meaning of marital communication is realized precisely in this attentiveness,

serving love, and mutual forgiveness. The stability of the relationship depends on the balance of the three levels of communication—psychological (dialogue of persons), physical (union), and spiritual (communion with God)—through which the marriage continually grows toward the fullness of love.

2.4. Sexuality is the physical and sacramental language of the order of love

The body does not merely serve a biological function, but is also a sacramental expression of love and self-giving. The body is given to humans in its duality, which is always a challenge and appears as a responsibility to which one must respond. The conjugal act is fulfilled in the possibility of fertility, which is the fruit of the logic of love.

- **THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL FACE OF LOVE – THE ENCOUNTER BETWEEN I AND YOU.** Love is a profound anthropological experience of human existence, in which the encounter between "I" and "you" gives new meaning to existence and prepares for self-giving and the unfolding of fruitful love. "Falling in love" is not merely an emotion, but an experience of self-opening existence, in which the presence of the other person transforms the meaning of the world and the structure of self-knowledge. In Hildebrand and Wojtyła's analysis, conjugal love is a personal and moral response to values: the recognition and service of the goodness, beauty, and dignity recognized in the other, where the parties do not love interchangeable values, but the concrete, irreplaceable person of the other. The essence of devoted love is the free and loving self-giving of the person, in which the person does not lose themselves, but rather becomes enriched. In Jean-Luc Marion's interpretation, love is not directed at an object, but at the "face" of the other: the loving self is born only in self-giving. Marriage is therefore the sacramental reality of mutual self-giving, in which individuals give their own being to each other—and thus find fulfillment. This relationship is not experience or use, but mutual presence, where one becomes oneself through the other. The logic of the I-It relationship—which reduces the other a function or a means—also threatens marriage: for example, when a child appears as a "planned project" rather than a gift of grace.
- **THE SCHOOL OF LOVE – VIRTUES, FIDELITY, AND RESPONSIBILITY IN MARRIAGE.** Ancient and modern thinkers alike – from St. Maximus to Fromm and Wojtyła – interpret love as a virtue, a habit, and an ontological vocation: human existence is fulfilled in love. Marriage is therefore an ethical and existential school where

unity, fidelity, and responsibility are a constantly learned and lived reality. According to Wojtyła, conjugal love matures when it grows from emotional sympathy toward the moral and volitional structure of friendship, for only in this way can feeling and fidelity meet in it. Marriage remains alive when the fidelity of friendship and the self-giving fullness of love are united in it. Marital love is, among other things, a volitional decision and a continuous practice that remains viable through virtues such as discipline, fidelity, and forgiveness. Fromm points out that the art of loving can be learned: it requires attention, sacrifice, and constant renewal so that marriage can be a place of personal growth and sanctification rather than mere cohabitation. Today, the maintenance of love is primarily threatened by the loss of values, self-interest, and consumerism. Often, relationships are based not on the true value of the other person, but on illusions, so that when the emotions fade, the relationship also becomes empty. Modern individualism, technological alienation, and capitalist logic also force marriage into market categories, where children are not gifts, but "projects."

- **SEXUALITY IN MARRIAGE.** The difference between men and women is not merely biological, but rather the theological and anthropological foundation of human existence: the concrete manifestation of the image of God. According to the Epistle to the Ephesians, God wants his bride to conceive eternal life: humanity is always in the position of the bride who receives God. The relationship between man and woman symbolizes precisely this relationship between Creator and creature. In this analogy, the man is the giver who gives himself, and the woman receives the gift, the other person. Sexuality is a fundamental dimension of the personal structure of human existence: the language of being. In the sacrament of marriage, physical union is not only a symbol but also an effective means of grace: the free, faithful, complete, and fruitful realization of love, or at least it should be. Marital sexual unity is the culmination of personal self-giving, where the parties—losing themselves and finding each other—participate in the mystery of God's creative and redeeming love. The unity of sexuality and procreation is one of the deepest truths of human existence: the sexual act is not only physical, but also personal and creative. According to Karol Wojtyła, man is not merely a slave to biological instincts, but is capable of controlling himself and placing sexuality at the service of love and self-giving. Through procreation, humans participate as

co-creators in God's life-giving work. Modern culture, which separates sexuality from fertility, disrupts this order and reduces the body to a functional tool. In marriage, mutual, passionate desire is the "driving force" of sacramental love, which heals, unites, and reflects the self-giving of the Holy Trinity. Marital unity signifies the love of Christ and the Church (Eph 5:32); the attraction between the sexes is embedded in a deeper, "cosmic" desire for God. The over-sexualized environment exploits our sensitivity, makes desire unstable, and obscures the person. A contemplative vision of the body that recognizes its beauty inspires peace and respect; the logic of use evokes restlessness and urgency. Desire must be nurtured and ennobled (virtues, attention, tenderness, time, guarding of the eyes and imagination) so that sexuality truly serves personal self-giving and covenant unity. The essence of the marital act is total self-giving, which means the "death" of self-centeredness and the birth of "us"; ecstasy is its vulnerable climax. The dimension of procreation proclaims the victory of life over death; among wounds and sins, selfless love heals and redeems.

- **LOVE AND RESPONSIBILITY.** The ontological basis of responsibility is the unique, intrinsic value of the person, which transcends all external characteristics. True love is therefore a mutual self-giving in which both parties are fulfilled and which, in the final analysis, takes on its full meaning in the perspective of eternal life. Responsibility here does not merely mean an institutional framework, but the conscious practice of daily self-giving between spouses—especially the cultivation of physical, intimate love. Preserving marital love requires constant work, discipline, and self-transcendence: only in this way can harmony in the relationship be maintained. Purity preserves the transparency and integrity of love, protecting it from distortions of desire and mechanisms of selfishness, not by suppressing physicality, but by incorporating it into the order of the person and love: purifying desire so that the other person can be loved for who they are. In this way, purity deepens conjugal love and makes the body an instrument of self-giving *agape*, which enables the sacramental fullness of love. Parenthood is the deepest form of responsibility in love, in which spouses say „yes” to a conscious participation in creation. Becoming parents reveals the transcendent dimension of human existence: love not only accepts, but also brings forth new life, and thus (also) makes marriage a visible sign of divine creative love. The essence of

responsible parenthood is that spouses consciously and openly accept the consequences of fertility, recognizing the life-giving nature of love. It does not merely mean regulating the number of births, but fidelity to fertility and respect for the gift of life.

2.5. Fertility is the fruit and overflow of the order of love

Fertility is the arena of the existential drama in which human freedom encounters the mystery of grace: it does not dominate life, but participates in it. Restoring this drama means recognizing that life is not entirely predictable, but a gift to which man responds with self-giving love and the freedom to accept.

- **HE CREATED THEM MALE AND FEMALE.** The creation of man as male and female is the central axis of John Paul II's anthropological thought: the sacramental sign of the two sexes, which reveals the self-giving logic of divine love. Although the Fall disrupted the order of this love, Christ's redemptive act restored its original unity, in which *eros and agape* become one again. Fertility is a fundamental existential dimension of human life: existence itself is the fruit of love and self-giving. Human existence is due to someone saying „yes” to it—thus, all life is a continuation of divine creation. According to John Paul II, fertility is not merely a biological reality, but also a spiritual and ethical one, expressing the self-communication in love of the human person, made in the image of God. The consumerist logic of modern societies and fears about population growth obscure this transcendent dimension. Christian anthropology interprets fertility from the perspective of love and responsibility, which is not a matter of numbers but an affirmation of life received in response to God's call. According to Wojtyła, the value of sexuality unfolds when it is integrated into the order of self-giving and responsibility, thus making man a co-creator alongside God.
- **IS FERTILITY A BLESSING OR A CURSE?** The fertility of nature reveals the self-renewing, self-giving order of life, in which all forms of existence feed off each other and pass on life to each other. In the Christian view, this abundance is a sign of God's providential goodness, while the modern age has subordinated fertility to the logic of control and utility, forgetting its symbolic, divine origin. In an ontological sense, fertility is a "yes" to life: the acceptance of existence as a reflection of divine self-communication. Those who say „yes” to life say „yes” to the *Logos*—that is, they recognize the meaning of existence in creative love and

become fruitful participants in it themselves. Fertility is an event that arises from human response: existence unfolds in the drama of love, where human freedom is not freedom of choice but a response to the divine call. Man becomes fruitful when he enters into this self-giving way of life and plays out his own life on the stage of God's love. The true logic of fruitfulness – following Schindler and Balthasar – does not follow the rationalized logic of production and domination, but the mystery of contemplation and devotion. The crisis of postmodern man is the ontological consequence of the absence of God: love, the body, and fertility have lost their sacred meaning because the awareness of the divine foundation of the world has been broken. Fertility is receptive participation in the life of the Holy Trinity: man becomes truly fertile when he allows divine love to permeate him and take shape through him. The model for this logic is Mary, in whom the unity of contemplation and self-surrender becomes visible in the Incarnation—as the deepest „yes” of human freedom to the Creator. Gratitude is the inner ethos of fruitfulness: an intentional, transcendently oriented behavior that, recognizing the gift of existence and the gift of the other person, awakens trust and opens us to self-giving. From a Eucharistic anthropological perspective, gratitude is not a mere emotion, but participation in Christ's self-giving: marriage becomes a liturgical "counter-offering," and fertility—in children or other life-giving forms—is the fruit of the logic of gift.

- **FERTILITY AND FAMILY.** The mission of the family is to preserve, transmit, and make love fruitful: it lives from love and is called to serve love. The family is the primary arena for personal growth and education, where selfishness matures into self-denial, desire into fidelity, and sexuality into love. As a "school" of love, the family is an icon of divine fertility, which fulfills its mission in the logic of Christ's cross and resurrection: serving life, offering itself as a sacrifice and a gift to the world. Marital fidelity is a pilgrimage lived in conversion and growth, which, with the help of grace, overcomes selfishness, desire, and the disorder of a fallen world. Fidelity to one's vows also implies openness to life: to reject fertility would be to falsify the sacramental "yes." Fidelity is therefore the ontological truth of the person: constancy in love, which realizes the image of God in man and thus becomes the concrete, everyday scene of the drama of salvation. The responsibility of spouses is before each other, their children, and ultimately before

God, and this is what makes the relationship truly fruitful. The self-transcendence of being for the other is the deepest form of love: the acceptance of life, of the other, and of the unborn child as a gift from God. Modern individualism, on the other hand, reduces responsibility to a choice and relationships to a risk, thus causing marriage to lose its transcendent direction. The culture of contraception reflects a profound anthropological crisis in modern human self-understanding: by artificially separating sexuality and fertility, humans lose their own bodies as carriers of meaning. Contraception thus becomes the emblem of a "culture of death" that chooses control and convenience over trust and fruitful love. The Christian view, on the other hand, professes Eucharistic logic: the human body is the sacramental language of love, which passes on life—and thus manifests God's creative beauty in the world.

- **THE RESTORATION OF DRAMA.** The "restoration of drama" is a Balthasar-Schindler reinterpretation of the relationship between the transcendent and the immanent: in contrast to the modern discourse of autonomy, reality is revealed as an ontological "given" and a gift, which is made fruitful by contemplative acceptance and self-giving participation. Marriage and fertility, within this theodramatic horizon, appear as a response to grace that often also entails suffering; the sacramental "*logos*-character" of the body becomes ethos in the practices of cycle awareness, self-restraint, and fidelity lived within infertility. Thus, the child—whether biological or in some other life-giving form—is not a right but an unpredictable gift that rewrites the story on the stage of love.

3. Theological and anthropological conclusions

I argue that the question revealed at the heart of fertility is not merely epistemological in nature—it is not decided on the horizon of epistemology—but is a metaphysical decision that *concerns* the nature of divine existence and, consequently, *the meaning of reality as a whole*. For when man says „yes” or „no” to the world (and with it to the order that is already given in it), he ultimately says „yes” or „no” to God.⁶ Reality, the world, and history do not present themselves as self-evident: they are full of contradictions, tragic ruptures, and absurdities. The structure of existence is not a harmonious whole, but a drama fraught with tension. There is no

⁶ Cf. SZALAY: *Notes...* (2) 292. "Those who have mastered the steps of this pedagogy of love realize that this 'yes' is only secondarily addressed to the wife and husband, the future father and mother. It primarily applies to the One *from whom* we are ready to accept life as a gift." (ibid., my translation)

human guarantee that can definitively alleviate existential dread—man is not the master of his own destiny and cannot "manage" existence either rationally or technologically.⁷

One of the fundamental tasks of Christian thought is to repeatedly explore and interpret the drama that unfolds before us in the relationship between the Creator and the creature, in Christ—and which gains depth and form through the revelation of the inner life of the Holy Trinity. The task of philosophy is not merely to systematize the details of this drama, but to argue for its truth: it is worth embracing this story because it unfolds the joy of complete truth.⁸ In the dramatic structure of created existence, sexual difference and the risk of turning to the other are part of this story of love: the acceptance of the cross that bears the image of divine life in community, vulnerability, and self-giving.

However, the answer to all this uncertainty must be trust, not control.⁹ The key to Christian revelation is that God does not interpret the world from outside, but enters into its depths by giving himself. The *Logos* becomes flesh (Jn 1:14) and not only touches the world, but goes to the ultimate darkness—death on the cross. He does not promise that life will be bearable, controllable, or successful, but declares that life itself carries death. However, incarnation and death on the cross are not tragic destruction, but a death that *is fruitful: an event of self-giving love that brings forth new life*.

In this sense, death is not the opposite of life, but the fulfillment of trust. The drama of love does not avoid suffering, but transforms it: self-sacrifice in Christ is the ultimate "yes" with which God not only acknowledges the weight of the world, but also enters into a new covenant with it—in the historical and cosmic drama of salvation. It is man's vocation to enter into this drama: not as one who dominates the world, but as one who is open to the fruitful transforming power of grace. Trust, therefore, which is the key element of an entire fertility-conscious lifestyle, is precisely the opposite of control. I trust and rely on the one who took our sins upon himself, and since God is present in the sacraments, this trust is not recklessness.

⁷ Yet it can be said with certainty that people in the 21st century are indeed doing everything they can to achieve this. (Just think of the multitude of insurance policies or objects and equipment beginning with the word "safety.")

⁸ Cf. SZALAY: *Notes...* (2) 293.

⁹ The following derivation is the conclusion of personal conversations with Mátyás Szalay. The logic of the train of thought fits perfectly into the dramatic theology of TT and Balthasar, but the conclusions are nevertheless unique to Szalay's philosophical thinking. (Cf. SZALAY: *Notes...* (2) 317-318.)

Losing control is therefore actually an integration into another order, not an irrational loss of awareness or reason, for what the heart discovers is an orderly world.¹⁰

4. Closing reflection – the horizon of the drama of love

Summarizing Ferdinand Ulrich's thoughts on the mystery of fertility, we can say the following: When finite freedom says its unconditional „yes” without preconditions, purely in obedience to being, it submits to the primacy of the Father and becomes part of the freedom that unfolds in the obedience of the Son. "To consent to be infinitely received means to approve the absolute fruitfulness of infinite freedom in the world and in history, and to accept the birth of God's power in the flesh of the world."¹¹ Those who act in the movement of love live from the Father's unoriginate initiative and thus reveal the truth of divine self-communication, which is not contradictory but simultaneously and definitively "yes"—because in the Son, everything has been given to us. We do not receive the Word of God in parts, but in its entirety, even where existence becomes finite and fragmented: in Eucharistic unity, which is always the same indivisible love. The Father's complete gift, the divine „yes”, resounds in Christ, and therefore man can say with him: "Amen, to the glory of God." In this way, man becomes capable of saying „yes” to the Father's authority in his freedom—of becoming a participant in the infinite fruitfulness that does not remain in heaven but becomes effective in human love.¹²

¹⁰ "From the order of the heart, just as from that of the mind, all logical incoherence and all contradiction are excluded. This clearly shows that the order of the heart also encompasses a certain rationality, which, however, differs from the rationality of the order of the mind." (PAVLOVITS: *What is a human being...* 156. my translation)

¹¹ ULRICH: *God is our Father* 105.

¹² Cf. *ibid.*

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