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I.

IN THE *New Introductory Lectures*, the true founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), sets down a basic tenet of his theory: “Where id was, there ego shall be.”¹ Even the occasional viewer of Woody Allen films will recognize this foundational principle of Freudian psychology. We find it displayed again and again in those characters Allen portrays struggling in tragicomic ways to sustain ego identity while withstanding strong and perplexing emotional or social pressures. During a film career of nearly forty years, Woody Allen himself has become the icon of the half-constructed ego. Because it is easy to tire of characters caught helplessly somewhere between uncontrollably exuberant id and shallowly cosmetic ego, some people no longer anticipate the latest Woody Allen film. There is, I suggest, only Freud to blame.

Freud and his views about the human person have influenced more than popular American filmmakers. Shepherding id has become a booming industry. Consider, for a moment, the many commercially available self-help and parapsychological resources.

We even speak today of a therapeutic culture. Who occupies this world? The “man” that Sigmund Freud has described for us. The chief characteristic of the fragile persona that Freud has introduced into modern consciousness emerges in the form of his or her inability to shape human emotion. No wonder so many people today find it easy to consider themselves victims; they have been tutored to think of themselves as vulnerable to powers over which they possess natively no evident form of control.

Freud's essays comprise a spectrum of argument that reaches from speculation about metabiology to conjecture about metaculture; his research moves from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* to *Civilization and its Discontents*. Psychoanalytic theory, however, aims at a narrower objective. In order to assist therapists in helping their patients, Freud's professional interests focused on supplying scientific concepts to explain certain kinds of human behavior. These explanations suppose the underlying framework of Freud's nineteenth-century mechanistic anthropology. He was, as Frank Sulloway has suggested, a “biologist of the mind.”² Take, for instance, Freud's so-called economic concepts: “desexualized Eros,” displacement, fusion, defusion, cathexis, regression, and even perversion.³ Whereas others, including those close to Freud (especially his dissident student Harry Stack Sullivan), have extended the scope of the psychoanalytic interview, Freud himself remained constrained by his founding intuition: “Wo Es war, soll Ich werden.”⁴ Where id was, there ego shall be. This basic affirmation governed his approach to helping the human person live a conventional (and it must be acknowledged), bourgeois life—to take tea at the Hotel Sacher without disabling emotion, within the environment of Freud's social milieu.⁵

Those old enough to have become acquainted with Freud before viewing the films of Woody Allen remember that the intellectual cachet of Freud, the Viennese practitioner who died in London while in exile from the Nazis, was much higher in the early sixties

than it is today. In 1961, Freud qualified as a topic even for the distinguished Dwight Harrington Terry Foundation Lectures on religion in the light of science and philosophy.⁶ In the autumn of 1961, French philosopher Paul Ricoeur delivered the Terry Lectures at Yale University. Ricoeur expanded these lectures in the Cardinal Mercier Chair at the University of Louvain in 1962 (ecclesiastical—or pontifical, as they were then called—faculty-sponsored lectures that treated the work of Freud as a “monument of our [Western] culture”⁷). The text of the finished lectures runs 550 pages in English translation. *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* is composed of three books, or sections: Problematic, Analytic, and Dialectic. The approach is French—Ricoeur ends with a question, but at the same time avows that he himself has not undergone analysis.

Dialectic, the third book, contains Ricoeur’s original proposal for understanding Freud’s project: his “Philosophical Interpretation of Freud.” A significant element of Ricoeur’s analysis centers on the distinction between archeology and teleology. Ricoeur writes,

It seems to me that the concept of an archeology of the subject remains very abstract so long as it has not been set in a relationship of dialectical opposition to the complementary concept of teleology. In order to have an *archê* a subject must have a *telos*.⁸

Ricoeur sets out to demonstrate something about the Freudian “system” that until then had gone largely unnoticed. In short, Ricoeur’s question arises from his observation that “Freud links a thematized archeology of the unconscious to an unthematized teleology of the process of becoming conscious.”⁹

By the early 1960s, this “system” had captured the educated imagination. In addition, it contributed to the development of psychology as a commercial enterprise. People actually began to think of

themselves in terms of id, ego, and superego. The evidence for the existence of id was not difficult to come by; id bubbled up all over the place. Superego was easy to spot or at least to explain in terms of formative influences. Parents, religious leaders, and society itself were likely candidates to have shaped our superegos or those of our neighbors. Ego, too, became part of the way people described themselves: ego strengths, ego weaknesses, and so on. But did the popularization of Freudian categories mean that people, even those with sufficient discretionary funds to undergo analysis, were better informed about what makes them tick? Not if we listen to the 1961 Terry lecturer.

Ricoeur aimed to expose something deficient in this Freudian image of the human person. He noted, "I wish to demonstrate . . . that if Freudianism is an explicit and thematized archeology, it relates of itself, by the dialectical nature of its concepts, to an implicit and unthematized teleology."¹⁰ In other words, Freud elaborated a putative archaeology of the human person but failed to identify the true end of humankind, or what *Veritatis splendor* calls the truth about the human good.¹¹

If the analysis set forth by Ricoeur is correct, then it is Freud's own psychological system that impedes him from offering a thematic account of what makes for the perfection of the human being. One thing is sure. The "dialectical nature of its concepts" is not that of Aristotle's dialectic at the beginning of his *Ethics*: "All arts and all teaching, and similarly every act and every choice seem to have the attainment of some good as their object" (1094a1–2; 8). Aristotle continues, "For this reason it has correctly been proclaimed that good is what all desire" (1094a2–3; 9–11). Through his reflection on Aristotle's *Ethics*, Thomas Aquinas was able to identify the ultimate good that all desire with the living God.

Four years after Ricoeur delivered his lectures, Woody Allen's first film, *What's New Pussycat?* appeared in 1965. In the meantime, the Second Vatican Council was held. By 1971, the year *Bananas*

opened (a film about revolutions in South America and what happens when you get caught in one), Freudian psychoanalysis had become a luxury only members of the economically privileged classes were able to afford. Freud's views, however, were already being exploited by the popularizers. These popularizations of Freud's views inspired Woody Allen to develop his 1972 film, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex but Were Afraid To Ask*. The film is loosely based on Dr. David Reubens's question-and-answer sexual digest. *Everything . . .* tells tales of sexuality from many unique perspectives. Allen wrote the script, directed the film, and played the fool, Fabrizio, Victor, Sperm, and the male spider. "Wo Es war, soll Ich werden." Where id was, there ego shall be.

Freud's analysis of the human person passed from the Victorian parlors of cultivated Vienna to the multiplex cinemas of suburban America. The result may have been predictable. Woody Allen may not have heard Ricoeur lecture at Yale, but the filmmaker surely grasped the Terry lecturer's thesis: Freud offers no teleology. That is why anything can happen. Freud thematized the id but left the rest of the life story unthematized. This insight allows a playwright with a knack for irony to concoct whatever endings he thinks will capture the creative imaginations of his audience. These creative imaginations, moreover, can be trusted, if Freud is correct, to recognize instinctually the starting point of the drama. In other words, thematization of the human good becomes the prerogative of the cinématiste.

II.

The nihilism represented by Woody Allen and other cultural icons of the late sixties and seventies also infected Christian theologians. The largely negative reception that awaited the 1968 encyclical *Humanae vitae*, which repeated the ancient truth of nature and grace that God has not confided to man or woman the right to sterilize

their own marriage acts, signalled an important moment of change in Catholic life. Some, including priests and, later, religious women, welcomed the new moment as one of bringing freedom from magisterial instruction, while others, including laymen such as Germain Grisez and William May, recognized the danger for the human race of keeping marital coitus from achieving its complete and proper *telos*. The twenty-five-year period following 1968 witnessed a time of enormous disorientation in moral theology. It would make an interesting research project to identify the human goods Woody Allen questioned in one film after another during this period and to compare them with various issues dissenters took up in the Church. We find a clue to the trajectory in Allen's 1995 *Mighty Aphrodite*, in which a couple too busy to give birth decide to adopt a baby boy. When the baby proves to be smart and likeable, his adoptive father decides to track down the boy's mother. Allen wrote the script, directed the film, and portrayed Lenny, the adoptive father.

By 1995, the Church had signalled authoritatively another direction. The Church's answer to the moral confusion that developed in the wake of the Second Vatican Council came in the 1993 encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, whose tenth anniversary was marked in August 2003. In this magisterial document, the Pope reminded Christians and all persons of good will that to overlook the metaphysics of human action and its ends reflects typically modern ways of thinking about acting persons and their agency. Ask a Christian what he or she understands by human action, and the answer will likely involve the words "freedom" and "responsibility."¹² The supposition of the encyclical, however, is that being human and acting human are profoundly related before a human action takes on the qualities of being free and responsible.¹³ In a word, they each possess a thematized teleology. This teleology converges both on the *telos* of human life—the various objective goods indispensable for human happiness—and on the truth that the Christian moral life achieves its

ultimate perfection in communion with the living God.¹⁴ Actions change us as we move toward the *telos*—the quiescent end of all activity found in contemplation, and, for those saved by Christ, in God. *Veritatis splendor* restored teleology to its place in the moral life and challenged moral theologians to take full account of the ends that perfect as they develop their presentations of moral theology.

The end, or *telos*, of human action gives definition to actions. *Veritatis splendor* canonizes the classical teaching in moral theology called “specification by object.” The key text appears in number 78 of that document: “The morality of the human act depends primarily and fundamentally on the ‘object’ rationally chosen by the deliberate will.” This same text explains that in addition to a good intention, “a correct choice of actions” is needed because “the human act depends on its object, whether that object is capable or not of being ordered to God . . . and thus brings about the perfection of the person.”¹⁵ Anything else constitutes a lie about human life. Even if one acknowledges the expedience that may attach in a given circumstance to engaging in a particular form of misbehavior, whatever does not serve the perfection of human nature takes on the character of a lie about the human good.

The abovementioned text, which occurs in a section of the encyclical titled “Conscience and Truth,” helps us to recognize the importance of distinguishing in human affairs between the truth and lies.¹⁶ *Veritatis splendor* explains, first of all, that good objects form part of God’s larger scheme for the world—what the Church calls eternal law.¹⁷ It goes on to distinguish between imputation and unhappiness: “It is possible that the evil done as the result of invincible ignorance or a non-culpable error of judgment may not be imputable to the agent; but even in this case it does not cease to be an evil, a disorder in relation to the truth about the good.”¹⁸ To put it differently, imputation does not supply the final consideration about how our actions affect us. Actions have a life of their own, as it were.

One prevalent lie that causes harm to the Church of God makes conscience, including an ill-formed one, an excuse for committing bad actions. Some persons even speak about leaving people in ignorance in order to avoid causing them qualms of conscience. To adopt this kind of approach to the moral life results in encouraging others to live a lie. The various examples of personal unhappiness that occupy those who work in our social agencies and therapeutic centers witness to the existence of these lies. Unfortunately, many of these helping bodies themselves fall under the Freudian myth: “Wo Es war, soll Ich werden.” Where id was, there ego shall be. Nondirection as a preferred method of moral instruction symbolizes the triumph of unthematized teleology for the human being. When it is accompanied by appeal to extrinsic reasons that exculpate, for instance, “I didn’t know it was wrong,” or “Surely there is another way to look at this matter,” or “Magisterium is fundamentally optative instead of normative,” the results can be disastrous.

III.

It should come as no surprise that the lies people tell themselves most often include lies that touch on human sexuality: desires, thoughts, words, and actions. Indeed, the very naturalness of sexual inclination testifies to the need to observe a human person’s God-given finalities or teleology. If anything that occurs within the fallen creature needs thematization, it is sex. Saint Augustine made this point admirably. However, Freud’s studies of libido did not disclose one apparent truth about human sexual desire: if God had made accomplishing coitus as difficult as learning calculus, the world would have lost its population long ago. Remember Ricoeur’s thesis: Freud’s own dialectic prevented him from recognizing the *telos* of human nature and action.

Veritatis splendor makes no such omission. That even a nonimputable bad action can cause personal harm to the one who commits

it explains why moral strategizing (what I call “justification by argument”) does not serve the purpose of arriving at the truth about the human good.¹⁹ Consider the example of masturbation. Some Catholic moral theologians from the late sixties argued that youthful autoeroticism should be viewed as a growth experience without moral significance. The eminent moralist Bernard Häring, in *Free and Faithful in Christ: The Truth Will Set You Free*, mentions two authors, R. O’Neil and M. Donovan, and their study, “Sexuality and Moral Responsibility.”²⁰ Of course, Häring himself introduces more nuance than O’Neil and Donovan into his views on the subject. Authors such as O’Neil and Donovan often supported their argument with statistics about the number of persons who, it was alleged, masturbate during the period that since the early nineteenth century has been called “adolescence.”²¹ In any case, by removing masturbation from the list of actions governed by moral law, theologians relegated concern about masturbation in the young to health care professionals.

The proposal was not entirely innovative. It did not require the popularization of Freudian psychoanalytic theory to sanitize masturbation of moral significance. We are told, for example, that Héroard, the seventeenth-century physician in charge of the young Louis XIII (1601–43), gives no indication in his detailed notes on Louis’s physical maturation that the young king’s masturbatory acts raised an issue of conscience.²² We now better recognize the disorders that the declassification of masturbation has introduced into the life of the Church. For reasons that touch on the life of the Trinity as well as the psychological health of the human person, autosexual gratification of any kind, but especially masturbation, prepares one for no known vocation in the Church. The point is that the truth about the good dictates moral norms and that no expedient rationalizations devised by theologians can alter God’s providence for his creatures.

I conclude with the single example of autoerotic activity because

masturbation so clearly exemplifies the frustration of human sexuality unchastity causes. What *telos* could be more manifest to human observation than the complementarity of the sexes? What teleology is more foundational to the good of the human race than the relational and fruitful character of human sexuality? The significance of such questions, however, escapes proponents of unthematized teleology. “Don’t knock masturbation, it’s sex with someone you love,” opines Woody Allen in his 1977 film *Annie Hall*. (This film explores what happens when a man obsessed with death falls in love with a woman who loves life.)

Ricoeur concludes the second part of his study, *Analytic*, by observing, “Freud never unified his early world view, expressed from the beginning in the alternation of the pleasure principle and the reality principle, with the new world view, expressed by the struggle of Eros and Thanatos.”²³ Freud himself remained enigmatic about the *telos* of human life: “And now it is to be expected that the other of the two ‘Heavenly Powers,’ eternal Eros, will make an effort to assert himself in the struggle with his equally immortal adversary.”²⁴

In 1931, as the menace that Hitler and his regime posed to Western civilization was becoming apparent, Sigmund Freud, in the second edition of *Civilization and its Discontents*, added to the abovementioned prophecy this haunting question: “But who can foresee with what success and with what result?”²⁵ It goes without saying, John Paul II offers a better prospect for happiness than Freud does when the Pope urges Christian believers to respect the God-given finalities of human nature and action—the moral teleology that finds its first expression in the inclinations of natural law, among which Aquinas identifies the coupling of male and female. No wonder Pope John Paul II also urges us to subordinate psychology to the truth of the Catholic faith: “the relevance of the behavioral sciences for moral theology must always be measured against the primordial question: What is good or evil? What must be done to have eternal

life?”²⁶ This thematization of man’s teleology escaped Freud. It still escapes some moral theologians. They should read carefully *Veritatis splendor* so their essays do not wind up exploited in the next Woody Allen film.

Notes

1. *New Introductory Lectures*, Standard Edition (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), 22: 80. *Gesammelte Werke* (London: Imago Pub. Co., 1940–73), 15: 86: “Wo Es war, soll Ich werden.”
2. See Frank Sulloway, *Freud, Biologist of the Mind: Beyond the Psychoanalytic Legend* (New York: Basic Books, 1979).
3. Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 296–97. Ricoeur asks, “Have we come back purely and simply to speculation about the quantitative, about free and bound energy?”
4. In “The Personality of Harry Stack Sullivan and Michael Stock: A Cross-Analysis” (unpublished masters’ thesis, St. Stephen’s College, Dover, Mass., 1969), I compared the origins of the interpersonal situation and its relationship to the development of personality, and suggested that Sullivan’s “interpersonal” model illumines one aspect of the place natural partnerships, according to Aristotle and Aquinas, hold in human life.
5. The Hotel Sacher Wien, founded in 1876 by Eduard Sacher, son of the inventor of the original Sacher-Torte (a rich chocolate cake), has become a Viennese institution.
6. The foundation comprises monies set aside “to the end that the Christian spirit may be nurtured in the fullest light of the world’s knowledge.”
7. Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, xi.
8. *Ibid.*, 459.
9. *Ibid.*, 461.
10. *Ibid.*
11. For further information, see my “Moral Absolutes in the Civilization of Love,” in *The Splendor of Truth and Health Care: Proceedings of the Fourteenth Workshop for Bishops*, ed. Russell E. Smith, (Braintree, Mass: Pope John XXIII Medical-Moral Research and Education Center, 1995): 43–57.
12. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (hereafter CCC) takes up this theme when it prefaces its discussion of the morality of human acts (nos. 1749–61) with several numbers devoted to “Man’s Freedom” (nos. 1730–48).
13. The abstractions of the nominalist theologians, who influenced the casuistry developed after the Council of Trent, explain in part why the Church capitulated to modern views about human action and human freedom. It is a recognized feature of nominalist moral theology that it tries to explain the quality of human actions by

appeal to an extrinsic measure, for example, the divine law. It would be an interesting discussion to discover how much of the bad moral theology developed between 1965 and 1993 was influenced by an overly formal account of action, such as an appeal to obligation. Consider how many theologians concluded artificial contraception entailed only a matter of teaching or command and, so once dissent became in their minds justifiable, proceeded to recategorize the sterilization of the mating act. Thirty-five years later we have sufficient longitudinal distance to reflect and see that this action, even when accomplished by appeal to chemical means, erodes the communion of love that should grow between spouses. Of course, both *Humanae vitae* (1968) and, later, *Familiaris consortio* (1983) had explained this truth, albeit in different idioms.

14. Recall that the Pope uses the words of the rich young man in the Gospel of Matthew (see Matt. 19:16) to describe the dialogue that transpires, at least in some way, between every human person and Christ: "The question which the rich young man puts to Jesus of Nazareth is one which rises from the depths of his heart. It is *an essential and unavoidable question for the life of every man*, for it is about the moral good which must be done, and about eternal life" (*Veritatis splendor*, no. 8).
15. *Veritatis splendor*, no. 78.
16. This strategy is characteristic of the approach Pope John Paul II takes when addressing today's Christians. He matches up modern notions, such as conscience or liberty, with a specifically Christian complement. Thus, conscience and truth, or liberty and Christ are paired.
17. "All law finds its first and ultimate truth in the eternal law" (CCC, no. 1951).
18. *Veritatis splendor*, no. 63, emphasis added.
19. Of course moral argument forms part of classical moral theology; Aquinas and other theologians develop these kinds of arguments throughout their writings. What distinguishes moral argument of the classical kind from that found in many contemporary moral theologians is the relationship of argument to moral being, especially to perfective ends. The reasons for this retreat from teleology and a metaphysics of the good has been clarified by moral theologians as well as moral philosophers, especially Iris Murdoch, whose essay, *Metaphysics As a Guide to Morals* (New York: Allen Lane/Penguin, 1993), remains essential for gaining a complete comprehension of the evolution of morals in the English-speaking world.
20. Bernard Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ: The Truth Will Set You Free*, vol. 2 (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 561. R. O'Neil and M. Donovan, *Sexuality and Moral Responsibility* (Washington, D.C.: Corpus Books, 1968), 107ff.
21. Guy Bedouelle, "La Morale devant la 'nouvelle histoire': L'Eglise et l'enfant, des Réformes aux Lumières" in *Novitas et Veritas Vitae: Aux Sources du Renouveau de la Morale Chrétienne*. Mélanges offerts au Professeur Servais Pinckaers à l'occasion de son 65^e anniversaire, ed. Carlos-Josaphat Pinto de Oliveira (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1991), 26, observes that Erasmus's *De civilitate morum puerilium* marks the beginning of giving special status to the child. The transition from the toy-child to

the child as full person had begun. By the sixteenth century, the miniature adult had become a schoolchild. Only from the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, do we hear about an intervening adolescence.

22. Bedouelle, "La Morale," 34.
23. Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 338.
24. *Civilization and Its Discontents*, GS 14: 506; SE 21: 145.
25. Ibid.
26. *Veritatis splendor*, no. 1111.