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florentissa



Human Potential & The Divine

OCCIDENTALIA

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Occidentalia

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The idea for the title of this essay is from Nick Spencer's Human Flourishing Project named A Christian Vision of Human Flourishing. I like his paper a lot and the title struck me as interesting as it avoids any notion of human improvement or human evolution or any similar trite and boring expression.

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I am alive; yet it is no longer I, but Christ living in me.
(GA, 2, 20)

INTRODUCTION

Each human being follows, in the short life that is his on earth, a path which we often refer to as evolution or improvement. I prefer calling it flourishing.

In this short essay we will try and define what is meant by flourishing, how it happens and how it is put into place in our lives

We will start by trying to define the human being and to understand how flourishing is such an intimate part of who we are.

We will then try and comprehend what drives this flourishing and how it can exist in our lives.

Finally, we will see what this flourishing does to us and how it totally transforms who we are.

PART I

THE HUMAN BEING

I. HUMAN NATURE

a. trine being

With Saint Paul, Christianity started to look at the human being as composed of three different aspects:

the body
the soul
the spirit

or, as we can also name them:

the physical
the psychological
the spiritual

In the essay, *De la mort à l'amour* (Paquette, *De la mort à l'amour*, Occidentalia) those three aspects are defined as:

The first layer, the physical, is made up of our earthly nature, our body, and includes mineral, vegetal and animal aspects.

The second layer, the soul, is made up of our human nature : it is our soul which profoundly defines who we are.

The third layer, the spirit, is made up of our divine nature : it is our spirit which is composed of two different but complementary movements which we will discuss later.

a. *body*

The human body is a gift from God. It was given to us and only a little maintenance is required to keep it working. The flourishing of the body requires a good life hygiene, a good diet and some sleep. That is discussed in the essay

Octonutrition (Tassé, *Octonutrition*, Occidentalia). The body is very intimately connected to the soul and to the spirit.

b. soul

As discussed in *Homeosophia* (Tassé, *Homeosophia*, Occidentalia), the soul is the movement principle in people. For Aristotle and saint Thomas Aquinas, the soul was the form of the body. The soul contains many different aspects, some of which we will be discussing shortly. All we associate with psychology: the emotions, the passions, our likes and dislikes and much more, all those are part of the soul.

What is of interest to us here is obviously the transformative ability of the soul. There is in the human soul two types of transformative movement. Those are the soul's two potentialities. Both potentialities are typologies we will be discussing later on. The first is composed of three quests, the second one is our gender. The soul is therefore comprised of:

quests
gender

c. spirit

The meeting of man and God happens in the spirit. In the essay *De la mort à l'amour* (Paquette, *De la mort à l'amour*, Occidentalia), the spirit is described as being composed of two aspects:

God in self
Self in God

The first one, *God in self*, is obviously related to a movement starting from God and going towards us. This

first step, even though it is initiated by God still requires a human intervention which we will define later on. The second movement, *self in God*, takes the opposite direction.

The realization of those two aspects of the spirit depends on the soul. This is because the soul is the origin of movement in the human being who is able, because of the potentialities included in the soul, to eventually realize those two aspects in his life.

II. FLOURISHING

a. goal

But, if human flourishing does exist, it must exist for a reason, there has to be an ultimate goal for it, one or many purposes. Obviously, human flourishing does not exist for its own benefit. In order for it to have meaning, it must answer to something that is vitally important to the human being.

There are, obviously, a number of secondary purposes. But the primary purposes all focus around the notion of unification: unification with oneself and most importantly, unification with God. This unification is the true source of happiness as it is defined in the essay *Amoressa* (Paquette, *Amoressa*, Occidentalia). As Christianity tells us, there is only one worthwhile goal: eternal life. It is in unification with the divine that we answer God's demand for us, through saying 'yes' to His calling for eternal love.

unification

A very common mistake is thinking that human beings can reach unification on their own. This false belief is dangerous on many fronts. First of all, as we will see,

human strengths are totally insufficient to accomplish unification by ourselves. But the most important reason is that the human being by himself is incomplete and thus cannot get unified. Without the presence of God inside us, we are not a complete human being. We are not as God intended us to be. The notion of unifying an incomplete human being is ludicrous and can never be achieved. Once God is present inside us, He will take care of our unification if we are willing to go along.

b. impulse

There is only one possible engine allowing flourishing to take place. This engine is also responsible for the built-in movement present in the human soul. This engine is love. As mentioned in *Amoressa* (Paquette, *Amoressa*, Occidentalia), love is at the centre of the human being and is, at the same time the movement and the engine for the movement. Love is not an emotion but a movement: love creates an expansion that is responsible for movement.

Love is only one thing. It is the movement of the creator towards the creature. This movement consists in an eternal opening and giving from God to us. All forms of love that we know of ultimately derive from this love.

c. danger

Human flourishing is a concept we must approach carefully. The idea that any human being is able, through his own efforts, to improve is ultimately false. Self-improvement is a demonstration of human all-mightiness that wants to decide by itself what is good or not and which direction is the best. The infinite depth of human beings and the never-ending complexity of the world we live in makes that a laudable but unattainable goal. The concept of making efforts in order to reach a goal is real and possible

in the world of matter. It is when we cross over to the spiritual realm that it does not make sense anymore.

Does that mean it is always wrong to try and improve oneself? The question is more difficult than it appears at first. Making personal efforts in order to become a better person is not wrong. It can, though, become a negative if those efforts do not go in the same direction as God's. As long as we follow the divine movement, our personal efforts will be effective and fertile. It is only when they only match our personal will that they can become sterile and dangerous.

We come back all the time to the old pelagian temptation which is always there: to save ourselves, by ourselves, without God. Unfortunately, this is impossible for all people.

PART II

MOVEMENT

I. IMPORTANCE OF THE SOUL

a the soul

The importance of the soul is paramount since it is central to the human being in addition to being the source of movement. We will try and define it better.

As we have seen before, the human soul includes two potentialities: quests and gender. But a potentiality is, in other words, also a purpose. The reason being that if something is being transformed into something else, it is in order to reach a goal. Ultimately, all that counts is the purpose. But we do not have to reach the goal in order to benefit from the positive aspects of the potentiality. All potentialities, like all purposes, drive us towards our ultimate aims.

b. first potentiality

Since the human quests were the subject of the essay *Primessa* (Tassé, *Primessa*, Occidentalia), we will focus only on what is needed for this discussion.

Human typology as described by Primessa includes two different aspects: quests and polarities. Although we present them separately, the fact is that the polarities are included in the quests. There are three quests: identity, love and meaning. The three quests thus define our relation to ourselves (identity), to people (love) and to God (meaning). Those three quests are never over, they are always in movement and they are responsible for actualizing our typology.

The quests are also defined as external or internal. Therefore, the mix of the three quests and the two polarities create what we call the six faculties. The polarities are unidirectional axes which give a direction to the quests. In

total, there exists 24 human typologies, all composed from the original six faculties. Each human being is composed of all the six faculties but in a particular sequence that defines him or her.

The faculties define the gifts and challenges that belong to us. Since our quests are potentialities, they include aspects which are in potency, some which are in act and many in between.

Our quests are so rich and so profound that a human life is always insufficient to exhaust all of their possibilities. In other words, we always die unfinished. Yet, the fact that we die always incomplete does not mean that we did not journey on our path.

The three quests push us forward towards the unknown, towards a becoming that is always greater than ourselves. As integral part of our typology, the quests are the major source of human flourishing since they correspond to our purposes without having any limits.

c. second potentiality

We will now try to define and explain our second potentiality, our gender. Femininity and masculinity do represent purposes that are connected to all of our life on earth, and in heaven.

We will try and understand why it is so difficult to define gender. The symbols used historically to represent the male and female or masculine and feminine aspects are very well known. They originally come from astrology and, at first, represented the planets Mars and Venus:



What we can see from those two symbols is that movement appears to belong more to the male aspect and stability to the female aspect.

But those symbols do only give a part of the answer and are, in my opinion, incomplete as to providing a good description of each gender.

Our gender expresses itself in human life within three specific areas which are: the self, the other, God.

We can therefore define gender as a movement within those three regions. But gender is not a one-way movement, it is a circular movement that cover an infinite number of possibilities. This circular movement also has a specific direction. It goes towards the centre (centripetal) or towards the exterior (centrifugal).

The only way to define the genders is therefore, in my opinion, with the use of movement. Using the symbol of the spiral pointing either inbound (centripetal) or outbound (centrifugal), we get the following table:

	self (personal)	others (society)	God (sacred)
femininity			
masculinity			

Self (personal)

In its personal aspect, femininity is, at its root, relational. It is centrifugal. The word relational is used here in the sense of accompaniment. It is linked to the notion of seduction as defined in Amoressa. It is closely related to the maintaining of the link, of the connection to the other. In the same aspect, masculinity is individual, turned towards itself. It is centripetal. Femininity wants to be accompanied and masculinity want to accompany.

Others (society)

In society, we find the opposite movement. Femininity is more focused on itself and therefore more centripetal while masculinity, more comfortable in the physical world, is more centrifugal. Femininity wants to help and support the world, masculinity wants to transform it.

God (sacred)

In the relation to God, femininity is centrifugal, able to go easily go towards the divine whereas masculinity is more centripetal, does not do that easily and therefore needs the help of femininity.

Although the directions of the genders as shown in the above table appear to be fixed and static, such is not obviously the case. The feminine and the masculine movements easily overlap those boxes. Nothing is impossible to each gender. The feminine and the masculine can do all they want. It is only more difficult and often takes more time when the gender steps over its limits.

Because the genders are, above all, pure movements, their potentialities are more limited than the quests. That means that we have received at birth all that is part of our gender, whether it is femininity or masculinity. We do not have, in our lives, anything to add to it. The work that needs to be done concerns the strength and the purity of the

movement. This gift we have received of our gender is very important. It means that our gender can be the primary driving force of our flourishing because it does not require as much of divine intervention to improve or express all of its beauty as the quests.

What the genders have to teach us is very important. They tell us that in human flourishing, in our realization of our human purposes, everything is easier for the couple than for the single person. This might appear at first to be paradoxical as living together poses many difficult challenges. But, as was discussed in *Amoressa*, it is those very challenges that allow each spouse to go beyond what he or she could do alone. A single person can go very far in her or his own flourishing but will never go as far as if the path included two people. The strengths of each gender are very present and it is very hard for any man or woman to go beyond the abilities of his or her own gender. What we have described above and what we see is that in the spiritual world, man needs the help of woman whereas in the physical world, the opposite is true.

In the New-Testament, the Annunciation shows how the Virgin agrees to the demand of the angel. This assent requires an extraordinary opening on her part, a capacity to receive that overwhelms us. For this reason, the Virgin represents the apex of femininity.

Christ gives of himself all the time and to all people he met, whether in the cures that he effected or in the wisdom that he shared. He never ever deviated from His mission. He willingly went to his death because of it, giving the ultimate gift of himself. He therefore represents the apex of masculinity.

II. PROBLEMS

The two potentialities of the soul we discussed in the previous section are linked together, meaning there is a relationship between our quests and our gender. Mainly because of our society's values and of our culture, we now associate certain behaviours or demeanours as male or female. Those aspects are present in the Primessa typology. Depending on the sequence of faculties but mostly depending on the first faculty of the person present in the Primessa typology, a person will be perceived as more feminine or more masculine notwithstanding their true sex. If we look at the possible faculties in Primessa, we see that some are more feminine and some are more masculine. In a very general way, we can make the following assertions. If your first faculty is the following, you will feel and you will be perceived by society as:

love internal	femininity + + +
meaning internal	femininity + +
identity internal	femininity +
love external	masculinity +
meaning external	masculinity + +
identity external	masculinity + + +

A man whose first faculty is *love internal* will see himself and will be perceived by the people around him as more feminine. In the same way, a woman with *identity external* as the first faculty will see herself and will be seen by her entourage as more masculine.

But this is not the case. The women and the men having those primary faculties must understand that typology is a potentiality, a challenge that was given to us by God in order to bring it along as far as we possibly can. We stay woman or man no matter what our first faculty is.

We must be careful when we say that men have a feminine side or women a masculine side. Reality is more complex than that. Men may carry in them aspects that society traditionally or culturally associates to femininity as

women may carry aspects that are associated to masculinity. This does not mean that man is part woman or woman part man. Nothing could be further from the truth. On the contrary, man is totally masculine and woman totally feminine. But more than that, each gender should do their utmost in order to purify their femininity or masculinity, to bring it along to its purest expression so that they will truly be able to help themselves and to help their partner's flourishing. Woman can help man the most when her femininity is well expressed as man can help woman the most with a well defined masculinity.

Both femininity and masculinity are greatly influenced by the culture and the society to which they belong. Yet, we must not believe that those are the only factors of importance. This is wrong. Femininity and masculinity do exist independently from any culture or society. In the same way, it is easy to see both femininity and masculinity as deeply intertwined, being defined by the other. In this way of thinking, femininity is best defined by its relation to masculinity and vice versa. But again, this is not the way things are. Both femininity and masculinity can live apart and still be what they are but, at the same time, they then lose their true meaning and become sterile.

PART III

ACTUALIZATION

I. SPIRITUAL PURPOSES

a. main goals of life

As we have seen above, human flourishing finds its ultimate end in the spirit. This is because the final goals of human life are, first, having God in our heart and, second, realizing our divine mission. The essay *De la mort à l'amour* summarizes all of that (Paquette, *De la mort à l'amour*, Occidentalia). I am only putting down the main points in order to better define the goals :

During all of our lives, God asks without stop for our permission to come in, to live in our deepest heart. He waits to hear the ultimate 'yes' from all of us.

This 'yes' will determine our eternal life and will be the source of our happiness on earth.

When and if accepted, God will dynamize our potentialities and will help us complete them as far as possible which will help us in our sacred mission on earth.

We have seen when discussing the soul that it has two potentialities : quests and gender. Those two potentialities are in direct connection with the spirit.

b. genders in action

We know that the spirit comprises two aspects we have named :

God in self
self in God

These two aspects are moved along by the soul. Even though the two genders are involved in each of the two

aspects, we can, more precisely, identify each of them as follows : the feminine is mostly responsible for realizing the first aspect, *God in self* and the second gender, the masculine, is mostly responsible for moving the second aspect, *self in God*. Therefore :

God in self: femininity
self in God: masculinity

The first of life's main movement, *God in self*, is helped by femininity because femininity does have this natural tendency towards the divine making it easy for it to easily open the door on which God is knocking.

The second of life's main movement, *self in God*, is helped by masculinity. The reason being that masculinity is associated to action, to our human capacity to give, to the realization of our mission.

Femininity and masculinity thus exist in order to allow those two necessary movements of human life :

Movement 1 : God in self

the opening to the presence of God in us

that is, the capacity to receive the divine, to say the ultimate yes which allow God to live in our deepest of heart.

The first movement is linked to the three theological virtues : faith, hope and charity (Paquette, *De la mort à l'amour*, Occidentalia)

Movement 2 : self in God

the life of all of our being in God

that is the total gift of oneself, the deepening of the gifts we received from God through the realization of our sacred mission.

The second movement is linked to the four cardinal virtues : prudence, justice, temperance and strength that are also described in the same essay.

The first movement can be accomplished in many different ways. Sexuality which is the expression of our gender is one of those possibilities. The reason for that is that human sexuality is first and foremost a means to help with the realization of the first movement: *God in self* (Paquette, *Amoressa*, Occidentalia). This is the creation of a relationship with God that leads us, if we do accept, to the acceptance of His true presence in our inner heart.

c. all is changed

Once the first step has been achieved with success, the next step can take place and that is: *self in God*. This second step involves the deep integration in our spiritual being of the two main gifts we receive from God: purification and education.

But, in the second phase, all has changed. We are no longer alone and following the acceptance of God in the first phase, He Himself will help us go through the second phase.

This second phase requires a true masculinity in the man that is able to put into action his gifts and challenges in the real world in order to participate, with the indispensable help of woman, to the realization of the Realm of God on earth. In order to do so, the quests of each of the spouses will be purified and helped by the divine.

In the years that will follow, the spouses will continuously deepen their connection with God. They will be purified and taught all the time. They obviously will be more and more unified, within themselves, to each other and each with God. Not in a deadly fusional unification but, on the opposite, in a union where each does preserve her or his identity while defining it more and more precisely,

where each of the human spouse become more and more herself or himself.

d. sacrifice

This second movement of human life, if it is true, will always include self-sacrifice. As was mentioned in Beatituda:

The answer of love is sacrifice. Sacrifice literally means *doing the sacred*. Sacrifice is therefore the sacred affirming its utmost importance in the ultimate order of life.

The death of Christ can be understood in many different ways (see Tony Jones, *Did God Kill Jesus?* HarperOne). What is clear is that His death was a direct consequence of His life. One explanation is that Christ died because He always refused to compromise on who He was and what He had to do. Christ came on earth in part to teach us what a true life should be and what God expects from His creatures. The Christ therefore died on the cross because of His love for us. If He did all He could to accomplish His mission, it was because of His love for all people. While doing His mission, He showed a perfect obedience to His Father and total humility. The sacrifice that He did is a sacrifice that we all must do. The life of Christ should be the life of everybody who wants to live a true, meaningful life.

Sacrifice **MUST** be a part of all successful human lives, that is what the life of Christ convincingly demonstrates. A human life cannot be successful without our own sacrifice. One of the many things that characterized the Christ is that He never deviated from His path, from where He had to go and what He had to do. He never let anyone take Him away from His mission, even His closest friends. While always knowing the ultimate consequence of

His acts, He never changed either His words or His actions. He always knew what He had to do and He did it.

This is a big part of why He died. The sacrifice he made of His life is a demonstration that nothing should take us away from our divine mission. The existence of evil in the world requires sacrifice. But, for you and I, the true sacrifice consists mostly in letting go of what the ego wants and to concentrate, as Christ did, on our divine mission and therefore on others and on God. In switching our attention from ourselves to others and to God, we sacrifice ourselves and play a part in the destruction of evil.

II. DIVINE MISSION

The entire universe endures and suffers under the burden of evil. Evil insinuates itself everywhere and perverts everything it touches. The origins of evil were discussed in *Beatituda* (Tassé, *Beatituda*, Occidentalia).

This is the reason why our gender is so important and why we cannot refuse the challenges it poses. Saying no to our femininity or to our masculinity is a refusal of the divine, it is a deconstruction of the Realm of God.

Femininity finds its perfection not in the false and outdated stereotypes of the different cultures and societies existing on earth but, first, in its reaching for God and, second, in the assistance it provides to the masculine mission. In the same manner, masculinity finds its perfection not in the rigid criteria of times past from the different cultures and societies of the world but first, in its connection to God through the help of woman and second, in the realization of its mission.

Christianity does not follow on the vision of the idealist philosophers as Kant or Hegel who see human

improvement in time always improving, going better and better all the time.

Christianity is Christ. The goal of the human life is not to improve oneself but to get to meet God and to accomplish our divine mission. Once we have agreed to the presence of God in ourselves, we will go through an always greater deepening of our relation with God caused by the two gifts that He gives us: education and purification.

This will allow us to understand what we are meant to be and to do. The presence of God will obviously bring about deep and numerous changes. But those changes do not originate from us but from Him. It is HIM that is working on us and getting us to become better human beings. All we have to do is to be docile and obedient to His actions in us and to stay humble in the transformations that are taking place in us. Difficult things to ask to modern people as docility, obedience and humility are far from being popular qualities.

We have to help this divine movement in us as much as we possibly can. But we must always be docile to what is being done, what is being changed in us by God. He is leading, we are not.

God has given us gifts and challenges. Accomplishing the gifts and meeting the challenges are part of what it means to be human. This is where our divine mission lay. Since our gifts were given freely, we have the responsibility to use them for others so that these gifts were not given in vain.

But the expression of our gifts and the meeting of our challenges cannot be realized without the divine presence inside of us. Without it, we become slaves to our all-mightiness and, inevitably, fall into error.

Destiny does not exist. God has not traced a previous path for us on which we will thread no matter what. Destiny would remove any meaning to human lives. God has created human beings totally free. We are free to choose Him or not, free to accomplish our sacred life mission or not. But the non-existence of destiny means that we are ultimately responsible for all of our decisions and actions. God has given us everything we need to make the right decisions and do the right actions.

For the reasons that were explained in Amoressa, marriage is the best location for this movement to exist and to happen. It is only in a secure environment and the certainty of a true, sincere and permanent relationship that woman can open herself up to the divine.

We all do live our lives as if they had but little importance and as if the ultimate goal was to collect experiences. Human beings will never be satisfied with that because they need way more than shallow experiences in their lives in order to be happy. This has been discussed in the essay Beatituda.

But, the reason God put us on this earth has very little to do with living more or less intense experiences or having to self-improve. We all do hear the call to mysticism, we only have to listen carefully.

CONCLUSION

The efforts required in the spiritual world are of a totally different nature than what we have to do in the physical world. The sine qua non condition of the spiritual world is the acceptance of the presence of God in ourselves (Paquette, *De la mort à l'amour*, Occidentalia). Without that presence, all spirituality is really worthless.

But once this step has been made, true spirituality can happen. Human flourishing will then depend on the education and the purification that God is effecting in us. The realization of our sacred mission must then happen and this cannot happen without self-sacrifice. Those two aspects depend on obedience and humility on our part in response to what God is doing in us. The true human efforts necessary for human flourishing can be summarized as such: obedience and humility. In reality, we never are the instigators of our own flourishing, God is.

In the end it is therefore love that is at the centre of everything. The love of God for His creatures, the love of the creatures for God, the love we have for each others and for ourselves. Love is paramount and is all there is.

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