

Emidio Tribulato

WORLD

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ECONOMIC WORLD

CONFLICT OR COLLABORATION?

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INTRODUCTION

When I was asked if I had the opportunity and the desire to introduce anyone to this book, I immediately put myself in the shoes of the prospective reader and asked myself what could induce him to read it... And I answered myself that perhaps a quick glance at the table of contents could induce him to read it.

The book's table of contents, in fact, together with the scanty information on the back cover, constitutes a sort of first approach that the author intends to launch at those who would like to walk with him along the path of his reflections and elaborations.

And the index of this book allows the eventual reader a free and informed choice for a sometimes challenging, but always worthwhile path.

This path is, however, facilitated by the author, in whose company it is also pleasant to walk, due to the original intuition that went into the very title of the book 'AFFECTIVE WORLD AND ECONOMIC WORLD'.

As if to say that if a possible reader were to pose the problem of achieving (or maintaining) 'happiness' or 'well-being' by perhaps seeking the solution to the problem through the application of the rule (or this or that) instead of the wiser ET rule (and this and that), the author, with a convincing and very respectful mode of reasoning, would invite him to retrace in his company the path, already taken by him, of not considering the 'affective world' as alternative and opposed to the 'economic world', but rather of considering them 'interdependent' as long as they are in favour of man.

And this is precisely the prerogative of Tribulato's text, that of recognising the reality of the 'affective world' as having a genetic value (even an ontological one, I would dare say) that is priority and fundamental in the face of all that ostentation of the 'economic world' smuggled in as an inalienable and fundamental reality... for the attainment of human happiness. It is a matter of choosing sides then, but not in the sense of AUT AUT, but ra-

ther in the sense of ET ET with a wink, however, at the 'affective world' which is in any case ontologically and logically prior to the economic world.

That one cannot 'serve two masters' is a wise admonition to follow... but this does not mean 'demonising' the economic world, but simply recognising that 'the economic world is important, but man's happiness does not depend on it'.

When the Dalai Llama was asked **what surprised him most about humanity**, he candidly replied with these three remarks that are fitting for introducing the reader to the reading of this powerful, intelligent and enjoyable work: *'Men...because they lose their health to make money and then lose their money to recover their health. Because they think so anxiously about the future that they forget to live the present, in such a way that they cannot live either the present or the future. Because they live as if they would never die and because they die as if they had never lived'.*

Happy reading.

Gigi Ahead
(family counsellor)

PRESENTATION

Dr. Emidio Tribulato's book, which is a smooth, enjoyable read, juxtaposes the emotional and economic worlds, within and in relation to which man and woman, husband and wife, father and mother, are called upon to operate in a variety of confrontations: a dramatic contradiction between family members and between the family itself and all the other components of society in today's complex, often opposing reality.

The author, after acute examination, arrives at certainties. Assigning each of these worlds certain spheres of influence, limits and transcendence, while identifying the surplus value of the affective sphere over the economic and service spheres, he admirably combines the flat dimension of matter with the agile dimension of the spirit, thus demonstrating the civil commitment of Man, the scientific and deontological rigour of the student of Hippocrates, in conjunction with the passionate ethical inspiration of the believer, whose reason is enlightened and comforted by faith.

And this, as a corollary not only to his professional competence but also - and above all - to the human depth and balance he derives from his own culture and as a gift of nature. -

The values that the author favours are embodied alive and palpitating as I travel, as if on an ideal journey through the categories of the spirit, through the pages that compose, with accents not devoid of poetry, like a fresco of life as it should be: and here hovers the religious sacredness of the feelings, attitudes, customs of the traditional family, the true small - large cell of society, of the State, so united around the paternal authority; rooted within the walls, even the narrow walls of the domestic hearth, the inimitable sanctuary of love.

Such a family reality existed as a rule - while today it only marginally resists in the small towns of our country - in times not so remote but outdated, 'out', as they say today and as, unfortunately, they appear to many. Because today we want nothing to do with the spirit of service, of sacrifice, with the self-sacrifice that informed the behaviour and character of those majors of ours. -

Today, those values are in fact suffocated, crushed by apparent certainties that have been superimposed and that, being dis-values, will sooner or later present the bill on an individual and societal level. - The fact remains that, from time to time, true values are 'exhumed', invoked, either for instrumental use or, always, according to convenience. Today, unfortunately, the fashion of 'everything and now' rages. -

Well, those acts and sentiments of the family were and are the result of a free - and therefore responsible - choice of its members. Those acts and sentiments are imprinted in the mind and heart of Our Lord, who lived them and relive them today precisely because they are fresh and genuine, thanks to the author's testimony, in my heart and mind and in the hearts and minds of all of us, crossing all space-time barriers and drawing on imperishable universal values: the True, the Beautiful and the Good.

No less worthy are the pages that propose, almost as if extracting it from the curtain of primordial mists, the encounter between primitive man and woman: the moment of acquaintance and the mutual help that will ensue, for life -

In relation to the above, I believe it is incumbent upon all those who are animated by goodwill to read this work, which certainly makes a contribution to the civilisation of the spirit, but even more so to accept its educational message by translating it into practice, with a commitment to the true values, as identified above, linked to the essence of human beings, rather than to transient existence, which the author, with an authoritative and yet persuasive voice, in a manner that comes naturally to him, realises.

Dr. Giacomo Longo

FOREWORD - THE WORLD WE LIVE IN

When in the morning we remain as if hypnotised and enchanted by the sweet music of the electronic alarm clock, without knowing it, without paying attention, two worlds are travelling and moving inside and beside us. Two realities in which our life, our body, our heart and our mind are totally immersed. The first is the world of affections, feelings and relationships: the second is the world of economics, commerce, services. While yawning we try to open our hearts and minds to the pleasures, afflictions and duties of life, whether we want to or not, whether we are aware of them or not, these two realities will accompany us, not only throughout the day, but throughout our lives. If we are lucky enough to have one or more people with whom we have established a good relationship and a solid emotional bond, in short, people we love and who love us, such as our parents or another family member: a grandparent, an aunt, a brother, a sister, a wife or a husband, our awakening will coincide with a kiss, a caress or a simple greeting from them. But, alongside these manifestations linked to the world of affection, there will certainly be and impose themselves other realities that are perhaps less tender, sweet and affectionate but certainly just as pressing and involving.

Already when we sip our first cup of coffee of the day, the thoughts and realities of working outside the family, the normal household chores to be tackled, the services to be used, the bills and taxes to be paid, will pop up. And so, throughout the day, these two realities will keep us company, sometimes one, sometimes the other, sometimes together. In some cases they will be joyful realities, in others they will be sad or distressing realities.

We will not always be able to distinguish them. We will not always be able to choose them.

In many situations we will see the two worlds as fused together, so much so that they are difficult to separate. For example, when we arrive at the office, the greeting to colleagues can be cold and detached, because they are only office colleagues, or warm and affectionate, because a sincere friendship has also been established with them that goes beyond work relations. A friendship that can take shape at weekends and in free time through dialogue, confidences, trips taken together, shared problems.

These two realities that accompany our existence, we sometimes distinguish clearly: how can we confuse an affectionate amorous encounter with work done at the computer to balance the accounts of the company where we work? How can we confuse the embrace and kiss of our daughter on the doorstep on the way home from work with the formal greeting of the accountant waiting for us with the tax file in his hand?

Other times, however, with difficulty, we are able to understand whether our commitment, our sacrifices, our time, our work, is dedicated to one or the other. When we give a radiant smile to the boss, of whom everyone speaks ill of, are we certain of the purpose of our gesture? Is that smile meant to make the office manager more benevolent towards us, so that he can help us in our much hoped-for promotion, or is our warm greeting just a polite way of making us and him feel at ease, while reassuring him of our helpfulness and friendship?

Confusion is also created when a bespectacled colleague gives us a mischievous glance and intimate confidences, and we remain puzzled and in doubt as to whether these manifestations are intended to win our interest and our hearts or are merely a means by which the gentle damsel aims to take advantage of a ride home in our car.

Like the two lanes of the motorway, these two worlds sometimes run parallel to each other, at other times they drift apart, only to cross and overlap, so much so that they seem to interchange and merge.

In reality they are always detached and divided because they are fundamentally very different. We realise, however, that the one, the affective and relationship world, addresses above all our

heart, our feelings, emotions and dreams, consoles and warms us, makes us cry and laugh, moves and exalts us, makes us happy and sad. It makes us choose the washing machine that is on offer rather than the microwave oven; it makes us opt for Giovanna, the rich heiress, rather than Francesca, beautiful but peniless; it makes us find a thousand tricks to pay less taxes or not to pay them at all; it makes us use the most reliable hospitals, the fastest and most efficient means of transport, the most avant-garde educational facilities.

Men and women are both immersed in one and the other. We both work, rejoice and suffer for one or the other, even though, as we shall see, the education, preparation and management of the emotional world was predominantly entrusted to the woman, while the undisputed king in the education, preparation and management of the economic and service world was the man. We shall see how these gender differences have changed and why. But we shall also note the consequences of these changes.

If we had to give a colour to these two worlds, there is no doubt that we would give the colour red as the fire of love to the world of affection and yellow as the colour of gold to the world of economics.

If we were to give it a home in our body we would place the world of affection near and within our heart, while the world of business, services and politics would place it in our cortex.

These two realities, like good brothers, sometimes seem to collaborate and go hand in hand, at other times we observe them quarrelling and clashing violently trying to prevail over each other. We will see together the consequences of this clash and the possibilities offered by encounter and collaboration.

CHAPTER 1

1.0 WHAT IS PART OF THE EMOTIONAL WORLD AND WHAT IS PART OF THE ECONOMIC WORLD

The first difficulty we face in understanding these two realities is, first of all, to establish what is part of the affective world and what is part of the economic world.

Who and what can we include in the reality of the soul, of the heart, of emotions, of feelings, of intimate dialogue, of profound joys, and who and what, on the other hand, is part of the prosaic but equally appetising, exciting, attractive and enthralling economic world.

Family life, children, commitment to education and care, relationships with the affective network, couple life, family, friendship, but also love for any living being, be it a human being, an animal or a plant, we instinctively place them in the affective world, while in the economic world we place work, money, social services, relationships with colleagues, politics, economics, defence, trade.

Broadly speaking, we can see that the affective world is predominantly made up of relationships and deep relationships with living beings, especially with human beings, while the economic world, on the other hand, is mainly made up of objects,

material goods and numbers¹ , while relationships with and between people are aimed at production, trade and the management of enterprises and services.

But things are not as simple and schematic as they appear. The nurse passing by rustling her starched white dress between hospital beds and the gruff teacher shouting from his desk, where do they fit in?

The answer is not difficult, neither for the patients nor for the young learners. They immediately recognise whether or not the two practitioners manage to establish, in addition to a good professional relationship, a warm human contact with the users. The answer is also easy for the operators themselves, who know, or should know, what and how much of their own reason and heart they are putting into their work. In theory, but only in theory, both realities could coexist in services. In practice, the technical and professional contribution often prevails, while the affective-relational one is marginal. It is for this reason that we have placed services in the business world.

What about sexuality?

Again, the answer is not difficult for the people who live it. If what we exchange with the other is only pleasure or if, indeed, we are bartering, selling or in some way buying this pleasure, there is no doubt that we are in the economic world. If sexuality is dialogue, listening, gift or manifestation of love towards the other, we are definitely in the world of affection and relationships.

As for objects, they too can be part of the world of affection if they manage to communicate something to our soul. Do we not give a ring, preferably with a diamond on it, when we want to let the loved one know that our heart is all for them? Do we not also attach ourselves to non-living realities when they are symbols or messengers of memories that bring us with their presence emotions and feelings that make our souls vibrate? The

¹ "The business side of any company begins and ends with an uncompromising analysis of its numbers".

B. GATES, *Business at the Speed of Thought*, Mondadori, Milan, 1999, p.203.

house of our childhood, whose rooms saw us as children; the memory of words, games, scolding and kisses, does it not bring out intense emotions in our souls? Doesn't the car in which we used to ride with the love of our life still give off its scent? The favour box from our daughter's christening, does it not still move us as we look at it?

And on the other hand, where to put the world of art, which is certainly a commodity, because every work has a price and a cost, while its content often has great emotional and affective value?

On the other hand, as far as religion is concerned, only certain aspects, the more external ones, can be included in one or the other world, while the deeper and more specific elements that bind our soul to a transcendent being constitute a separate reality of our existence.

Even if, as we have seen, it is not always possible to make a clear distinction between these two realities, since in both the world of affection and the world of business and services people move and with people move affections, ties, desires, passions but also more prosaic interests, we must nevertheless be able to understand where one ends and the other begins. When we are committed and involved for the one and when we are working for the other. What we give to the one and what we give to the other. What contributions we receive from one and what contributions we receive from the other.

For it is on this awareness that the richness or poverty of our ego and much of our present and future behaviour depends.

In fact, many of our personal, family, political, legal and religious choices are directed every day by the awareness and then the value we place on these two realities.

That is why we must be able to understand how to nurture and grow one and the other. The limits we must give to the expansion of one or the other so that one reality does not engulf the other, one reality does not make the other suffer, one reality does not subjugate the other.

The ultimate goal is therefore not whether one is more important than the other, nor trying to make one prevail over the

other, but the proper management of these two worlds, so that neither is sacrificed, neglected or limited.

This understanding and management has never been easy.

Already the Homeric heroes: like the cunning Odysseus, the great Hector and the Pelis Achilles, posed this question whenever they put one reality before the other or when they were involved in or committed their lives and existences to one or the other. Odysseus, surely, must have asked himself whether it was more important to go to war to defend the homeland and the honour of the Achaean people or to remain on his own island beside his faithful wife and little son Telemachus. And on his return to Ithaca, how many times the choice and the conflict will have troubled his soul: whether it was more important to be carried away by the spirit of adventure and discover new lands, new seas and new people or to return as soon as possible to his own home, among his loved ones. But Achilles too, while fighting beneath the Trojan walls, must have wondered whether it was his duty as a soldier, his love of his country or his desire for revenge for the death of his friend Patroclus, that gave him vehemence, resolve and strength. But even Hector himself, did he not have to choose between defending his homeland and the duties of a husband and father?

In modern Western society, the problem, as we shall see, has become so magnified that the management of these two fundamental realities of our personal and social lives is getting out of hand in many areas.

CHAPTER 2

2.0 THE FEATURES OF THE TWO WORLDS

2.10 PLACES

2.1.1 The uterus, arms and breasts.

The first place in the world of affection is surely the mother's womb and then her arms and her breasts. These are surely the warmest places of love and most comfortable that the child will encounter if the mother, as she should, is rich in those special qualities we call 'maternal'. In the woman's womb, after the first beats of the little heart, before the organs have fully formed, the child, who is already living, hears and feels what his mother is feeling, hears his father's voice, feels the emotions around him.

And it is always in the mother's womb that the child's ego begins to draw itself using sensations and emotions. The ego begins to build its identity from the little messages that reach it directly or through the mother's body and blood, which, like a river, carries and carries with it many things it encounters on its way. When the child is born, it already knows and attaches itself to its mother and father if they, during the waiting period, knew

how to give it a serene environment and if, once it was born, they knew how to converse with it, satisfying its needs, and if they knew how to protect it from opposition, fears and tensions.

If this has happened, an attachment bond full of constructive and positive elements will be created between him and his parents that will be fundamental in every moment of his life.

Immediately after the arms of the mother and father are surely warm, safe and comfortable places the arms of grandparents and uncles, brothers and sisters.

2.1.2 *The cradle.*

Together and beside the arms there will certainly be a *cradle*.

In all civilisations, the cradle has represented the extension of the parents' arms. Mothers in every country and every place have always competed to make it as cosy, warm and beautiful as possible. Concave like the mother's arms and womb, it welcomes, contains and warms the child in its first experiences of life.

The lace, the lace and the warm fabrics on which, during the months of expectation, the woman labours with zeal, almost represent the words of love and the tender, delicate feelings with which she wants to surround her child during sleep and in the hours of partial detachment.

2.1.3 *The room*

After the arms and the cradle there is the *room*. A room shared initially with that of the parents, to sleep peacefully listening to their breathing and sensing, also through smells and noises, their attentive presence, and then, if economic and living conditions permit, there is one's own little room. A space not far from that of the parents, so that they can respond promptly to signals of help or need. A space to be conquered gradually and with courage. Only a few metres separate his or her room from the parents' bed, and yet those few metres seem kilometres to the small child, who feels alone and bewildered when his or her senses fail to sense the physical presence of father and mother.

All the spaces in which the child moves at ease and serenely are not only an introjection of the physical world, but represent a

psychological and affective conquest and acquisition, which activates new potential and prepares him to conquer future goals.

Any acquisition, however, can be lost if the environmental conditions are too traumatic. The traumas can be of various kinds: difficulties in communication, poor and occasional presence of parents or their estrangement, frequent hospitalisations and medical visits, nutritional deficiencies, family conflicts, lack of respect for the physiological times that allow the gradual transition from one condition to another that is more difficult to conquer and accept.

Physical space, maturity and inner serenity are closely linked and related.

We realise this when, in the futile and vain hope of shortening physiological times, spaces away from the parents, too large or unknown, are proposed to the child: sleeping in the next room, the grandparents' house, the nursery, etc.

Her reactions are familiar. The first is one of alarm: he clings even tighter to his mother, clutches and clutches at her hand and her dress convulsively, and looks at her desperately and begs her not to go, not to turn away, not to leave him alone. The second is one of clear fear: she trembles, pales and sweats, before communicating with tears or words, her discomfort and then her poignant suffering.

This suffering may manifest itself in many ways, with increased irritability and motor instability, with sudden outbursts of crying, with aggression, with physical manifestations, with fixation at stages that should be abandoned due to age, and, in the most severe cases, with regression to stages that have already been overcome.

The children who show the most difficulty in conquering new places and spaces are precisely those who have the most psychological problems. These, being unable to take possession of the places and spaces around them, remain for a long time in the room or even in the big bed physically anchored to their parents' bodies because their fears and anxieties, which are important signs of suffering and pathology, force them for years to be physically connected to them.

2.1.4 The house.

After their little room there is the conquest of the whole house.

It is difficult to think of a family, a man, a woman and their children without thinking of their basic living environment: the home. It is difficult to think of a man without seeing him sitting in front of a crackling fireplace. It is hard not to see him hard at work inside the home building, fixing or repairing. It is hard not to imagine him around his home intent on sowing, planting, harvesting, working the fields.

It is hard to think of a woman without seeing her busy cleaning and making this particular place cosy. How hard it is not to see her cradling and caring for her babies, protected from the cold, the weather and enemies by the walls of a house built by her man.

Home is the place that protects and welcomes us. An almost sacred temple for the family, it is also the place that helps us grow.

But all houses are not the same. They have never been the same.

Man's environments have been shaped to adapt to the most diverse conditions. Home was and is made of fragile leaves and branches, when these are the most common elements to build it and no great protection is needed. It was of ice, when one was surrounded only by immense white expanses. It was of granite blocks or stones, when the danger of raids was heavier and more serious.

It was small, when nature offered people ample common spaces in which to live, play and love. It became large, when man could not live in peace in natural spaces, and was forced to enclose himself within high walls trying to bring the world into the house. as in castles and princely mansions,

Houses of stone, houses of leaves, houses of branches, houses of steel, houses of mud and clay, houses of ice. Houses small and poor. Houses luxurious, majestic and rich. Damp houses, grey and cold. White houses, sunny and warm.

Their position was also related to the situation at the time. Houses placed high like sparrow hawks, to increase defences and control the arrival of invaders from the sea. Houses lapped by the foam of the waves, to facilitate fishing and trade. Houses on the banks of rivers, to utilise their waters and the fruits of lush, rich vegetation. Houses placed next to each other, as if to support and help each other, in poor villages, but inhabited by people bound by intense neighbourly relations. Houses placed far from each other, to avoid unpleasant contacts between cumbersome neighbours with whom one does not want to share anything.

Houses as light as feathers. Houses heavy as rock and steel. Houses full of hate, houses full of love. Houses warmed only by a fire lit in stoves of precious majolica. Houses warmed by tenderness. Houses destroyed by barbarians, houses destroyed by the hatred of those who live in them. Houses warmed by love even though poor, houses cold despite the radiators on.

Condominium houses in which after passing through gates, photocells and anti-intruder and anti-intrusion systems one has to push heavy armoured doors to get in, or houses that are always open, with the key left in the keyhole to invite neighbours and relatives over for an exchange and a greeting.

Princely villas guarded on sight by a pack of dogs or gendarmes, or poor, damp houses, which the green envelops and embroiders.

What does the home represent for man?

- **Home is shelter.**
- **Home is the cradle of feelings.**
- **The home is the place of communication.**
- **Home is the place of welcome.**
- **Home is the arena.**

Home is shelter.

Shelter to protect oneself from the weather, from dangers from outside, from fairs, from vandals, from thieves, from robbers. The greater the external danger, or at least the more it is

perceived as such, the more the dwelling will be equipped with defences against any intrusion. Today, fear of the outside world must be considerable if we need to armour it with gates, armoured doors and sophisticated alarm systems.

On the contrary, it must have been nothing to that bearded man we met in the caves near the ancient Greek colony of Leontinoi.

Like all village boys, in our days there was always the search for adventures to be experienced first directly and then to be told for days and days sitting in a group on the steps of a house, during the cold winter days to the younger boys, to provoke and seek their amazement and admiration. We had already discovered, a few months earlier, under the little bridge at the end of our village, a sack full of trinkets, then precious objects, left by some local thief. The news of the discovery of some fountain pens, watches, empty wallets and brooches, which we had conscientiously divided among ourselves, had already spread among peers and youngsters of all ages, greatly increasing the prestige of our gang. This increased prestige drove us on to new and more risky adventures until we reached the caves of S. Mauro, near the remains of ancient Leontinoi. In one of these caves, almost at the entrance, we came across another burlap sack. The contents disappointed and surprised us not a little: a small pan, some matches, a few nuts, a piece of stale bread, a shirt. We were standing in a circle, animatedly discussing who could be the owner of that strange sack, when a tall, majestic shadow with a long, grizzled beard stood in front of the cave, almost closing it with its bulk. We immediately realised that the owner of that beard was also the owner of the sack and that we had unknowingly and unintentionally violated private property. Not knowing whether to try to escape or not, we looked at each other waiting for the oncoming storm. We were quite astonished when from his mouth, barely visible amidst the bristly hairs of a flowing, grizzled beard, a warm and serene voice greeted us and welcomed us to his home. How amazed we were by the tale of this man who had found serenity and joy in hermitage and in the extreme simplicity of his life! But most of all we were enchanted

and surprised to discover that in that sack were all his possessions, of which, by the way, he cared nothing at all, so much so that he had not even reproached us for handling them. Even then, when consumerism had not yet invaded our lives and homes, it seemed incredible to us that a small sack could contain everything we needed to live happily!

Home is the cradle of feelings.

From the sweetest, when it harbours love, understanding and mutual acceptance, to the bitterest, when it becomes a breeding ground for violence and confrontation.

When children go to a friend's house they immediately feel these feelings. Often we as parents do not understand why they like to go to one friend's house rather than another, only to discover that it is not so much the relationship with the friend that attracts or frightens them but the atmosphere in the various homes. The most pleasant home is not the one with the most toys, but the one where there are no adults constantly shouting, attacking or scolding.

The home is the place of communication.

In the home, dialogue takes place, the most important decisions for the family are made, but it can also become a place of silences, closures, clashes and fights.

Home is the place of welcome.

It welcomes the tired and hungry stranger. It welcomes the loving feelings of young married couples. It welcomes new lives, protects them and helps them to form and develop. It welcomes friends and relatives.

In the home one either strengthens ties or separates. In the home one meets and one clashes. In the home, new lives are generated but, if immersed in hatred, precious lives can also be killed.

Home is the arena

The home is the arena in which the people who inhabit it acquire practice and increasing skill in fulfilling a wide range of social roles. One learns to be mother and father, son and grandfather, uncle and nephew, brother and sister.

The type of house is not irrelevant.

In small villages there were, and still are, houses with narrow alleys, one next to the other, one supporting the other, one breathing and facing the other. Houses for talking to neighbours. Houses that smell of freshly washed linen. Houses that seem alive. Houses in which smells mix and mingle like the voices and stories of the people who live in them. Houses as white and shiny as the dresses of young brides or as dirty and sagging as the faces of old men sitting on the walls by the door.

The apartment houses in the crowded big cities, in which we are often forced to live, are the most common, but they are also the most anonymous, sad and violent.

These houses make one feel safe because there are people next door, above and below one's home, and their presence gives comfort. Often, however, these houses become the sites of jealousies, envy, aggression, wars and battles between neighbours in bitter condominium meetings. In these meetings, the kind neighbours turn into implacable enemies who attack, insult, or take advantage to unrestrainedly display arrogance and aggression in pursuit of their own exclusive gain.

Amongst village houses it is easy for the extended family to live or survive. It is easy, among small village homes, for the child to find grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins next door or within walking distance of his or her home and thus be able to relate to them at all times. In city homes this possibility of fitting well into the family network is becoming increasingly rare and difficult. This is one of the reasons why cities are built and structured to suit the economic world and not the emotional world.

The functionality of a home with regard to family, couple and child-rearing is related to many characteristics.

A house can be small and poor but clean, decent, warm and welcoming, open to others, because the people who live in it have managed to have a good dialogue with each other and with their neighbours, with whom gift-giving, exchange, dialogue, encounter are possible. On the contrary, the dwelling can be large, luxurious, and full of all the appliances and devices that technology and industry nowadays propose in abundance, but be cold. Cold because tools, if they reduce fatigue, also limit the pleasure of living in the home. Cold because tools, if they facilitate the woman's work, risk making it superfluous and therefore unappreciated by both husband and children. The latter appreciate more the effort and commitment of those who manage the home with their own hands, rather than the anonymous non-domestic work that increases the bank account but makes family relations dry and difficult.

Homes today are often empty, due to the lack of care and attention that each family member should give to others. Empty of joy, of ideas, of warmth and comfort. But homes today are often just empty of people. Mums and dads at work, children 'settled' at schools, baby-parking, after-school care. Grandparents either live on their own or are also 'settled' in institutions for the elderly.

A house can be empty even when people are present within its walls if they, rather than being close to someone and sharing moments of activity, rest and entertainment with someone, isolate themselves each in front of a screen, be it a TV, a video-game, a mobile phone or a computer.

In the pre-industrial period, much of the work of both men and women took place in or near the home. In the house, or close to it, cloth was woven, clay was worked to make pottery, iron was beaten to make tools for work or defence. Next to the house were fields for cultivation. In the storehouses of the house, the fruits of the earth were collected and processed.

The economic world and the emotional world often shared the same spaces, and the same places.

Today, places and spaces are considerably different.

Meanwhile, they are often considerably distant from each other. People frequently work on the opposite side of town or commute to other cities, if not other regions.² The people one works with are also different. One worked with relatives, friends and neighbours in the pre-industrial world, one works with strangers today.

When the places of work coincided, or were very close to the affective world, the structural characteristics of one and the other were very similar. The stables of the animals resembled the homes of their owners. The two environments were very close and, in poorer households, people and animals often shared the same places.

Today, the environments and places in the world of business and commerce are markedly different from homes. Offices are often located in tall, immense skyscrapers that tower superbly and shinily, thanks to the steel and glass with which they are built, above the homes of 'normal' people.

These skyscrapers show the proud triumph of money and power but, at times, they also show the desire to want to distance themselves from the lives of ordinary people, to drive away, once and for all, any residue of feelings and emotions that might be a hindrance to production and commerce.

Instead, industries almost always face each other in huge, grey warehouses, lit only by large neon signs. Grey boxes all the same, stretched out to cover what were once fertile plains and lush fields for kilometres. Boxes as cold as the machines that inhabit them. As cold as the iron and plastic running through their guts. Cold as the hands rushing to build objects that are always the same, always more aseptic, always more useless.

In these environments, when feelings and emotions arise between people, they are often compressed and driven out because they do not fit the needs of the economy and production.

² The number of commuters is growing at record rates. In just six years, between 2001 and 2007, the number of people who, every day, have to commute outside their municipality for study and work has reached thirteen million. Between 2001 and 2007, the number of commuters grew by 35.8%. On average, it takes 42.8 minutes per day for each journey. (Censis research)

2.2 THE TIME

As far as time is concerned, if we are immersed in the world of feelings, we feel the passing of time as a dimension to be experienced, savoured, enjoyed and sipped like a fine wine. In the arms of the beloved/loved one, while we remain inebriated by his or her perfume, the temporal dimension sometimes seems to expand out of all proportion, at other times we feel it flowing as fast as the beating of two hearts close together.

With a sense of sorrow, the lovers, before meeting, feel the slow passing of the hours separating them from their beloved, while, when they are in each other's arms, the cruel time rushes by, so that a new separation takes them brutally by surprise.

But even when a mother breastfeeds her baby or the father sits in bed with his little girl telling a fairy tale, time dilates, adapts to words and people, seems to vanish. Enclosed in a cocoon of love, father - mother and children live, immersed in the indefinite flow of time, the hours as if they were minutes. And that is why, in the affective dimension, haste and clocks should be banned or at least neglected.

Unfortunately, today we are unable to do this. We are not able to make time flow without constantly controlling it, and therefore we feel the difficulty of living and letting live with fullness and a sense of intimacy and complicity the minutes or hours spent together with loved ones; we are prevented from doing so by the 'pressing engagements', we are prevented from doing so by the tools we surround ourselves with, the mobile phone, the increasingly precise clocks, the deadlines.

Even dating is a challenge. He has classes at university, she has to prepare for an exam. He only has a few minutes in his work break, she with clipboard in hand is ready to rush off to court to face an important case. He offers her a pale sandwich but she has already chosen a healthy vegetable salad in a box in which everything is included: vegetables, herbs, oil, salt and vinegar and a plastic fork. Just shake vigorously and lunch is ready. He, after a day of stress and work, only hopes to fall asleep quickly, albeit with the help of the little pill recommended by a colleague; she, entranced in front of the video, gives him a hasty

goodnight kiss as the images of her favourite TV show scroll by, peppered with lots of good publicity that only fuels her desires and conflicts with her ever-empty purse.

Even the poignant sentimental image of the meeting of two young people walking hand in hand has changed profoundly. In the meantime, it is not clear who is the man and who is the woman, as both covered in shapeless clothes, both wearing earrings, both with long or very short hair make one think more of a homosexual encounter than of two normal young people dating. The image appears even stranger in that both are as if caught up in the St. Vitus dance, as they move to the rhythm of the music provided by the latest generation Mp3 headset, while their hands convulsively raise the last "thank you bye TVB" to the friend who has to "use up" the three hundred free daily SMS Card messages.

In times of globalisation, moreover, it seems only natural that that romantic encounter with the best friend is known by the whole nation. How can one not answer the dozens of persistent mobile phone calls? How do you lie to friends, relatives and acquaintances when all phone calls begin with the usual phrases: 'Where are you? What are you doing? Who are you with?'

In the world of business and services, however, time is above all a value. Something to be sold, used, exploited, bitten, bartered. People sell their working hours. Exchanges are made in the Time Bank: I give you one hour of mine to fix your leaky tap, if you give me one hour of yours to walk my dog. I give you an hour to care for your sick mother, if you give me an hour of yours to clear my garden of weeds. Radio and television stations, both state and so-called 'free' ones, sell every second of their 24 hours of broadcasting. And it is a pity that the day is only twenty-four hours long, a few hours more would have earned thousands of euros more!

But also the hours that the baby-sitter³ spends caring for and playing with the little one, or those spent in the crèche,⁴ are

³ 11% of children are entrusted to babysitters. Of these children, 33.1% spend 20 to 29 hours per week with their nannies, 28.2% 30 to 39 hours and another 19% 40 to 49 hours. In about 19% of cases it is the same baby-sitter who ta-

bought by families. And because those hours are bought, parents can hardly see what is behind that service. Sometimes professionalism prevails and no emotional bond is established, and the child suffers from this deprivation; at other times, an important bond can develop between a child and his or her nanny or babysitter. In the absence of a mother and father present, these persons often take over the role, with all the bonds and emotional implications that this implies. And when, for a variety of reasons, they are dismissed or quit, something very important is broken in the child's soul that can leave relics for a lifetime. They then feel resentment and aggression towards the person who left them or towards the parents who removed that person or towards both; or worse, towards the world that does not respect children's feelings.

Giovanna was a young anorexic of high social and cultural standing. When I met her as a young girl, she was so thin and lacking in strength that she needed two people to support her in order to walk. Because of her work but also because of the recreational and social needs of her parents who frequently went out to dinner with friends, she often stayed, even overnight, at the home of a maid of very simple extraction, who offered both her and her children very simple and coarse but for Giovanna very tasty food. When Giovanna's family broke off their relationship with this village woman, a resentment was born in the girl that never subsided, despite the many years that had passed, both towards what she perceived as a mother and towards her

kes care of the children in case of illness. Istat data - "Having a child in Italy", 32, 2006.

Babysitters are usually paid by the hour or by a monthly flat rate if the commitment is constant. Rates can vary from 5 euro/hour up to 20 euro/hour and more.

⁴ 22% of children are in day care. Of these 40% attend it for 40-49 hours a week, 31.2% for 30-39 hours and 21.4% for 20-29 hours a week. Istat data - "Having a child in Italy", 32, 2006.

Monthly nursery school fees vary widely by city and income. They range from € 100.00 in Naples, representing 3.2% of family income, to € 535.04 in Belluno, equivalent to 17.4% of family income. On average, crèche costs about 8.1% of the family budget.

real mother who often neglected her. Unable to understand whose responsibility it was for the loss of this intimate emotional relationship, she began to hate both women, to the point of rejecting from both what they valued most: food. He punished them both by not eating, in order to prove that he could do without their love, he challenged them both with a tenacious will-power that made them refuse any food, even the finest.

Entrepreneurs scramble to buy the latest type of robot machine that builds items faster to sell, because they know that if a box is made in three seconds rather than five, they will be more competitive in the markets and earn more money. And so the shippers know that if the goods arrive at their destination sooner, they will be able to beat the competition. In America as in England, lawyers charge for every minute they use for their clients. La Kinsella describes very well what a lawyer's time is like in a big law firm: 'You get used to measuring your life in small six-minute segments. And you get used to working. To working all the time. If you're at Carter Spink, you don't sit on your hands. You don't look out the window, you don't daydream. Not when six minutes of your time is worth so much. Let me put it this way: if I let six minutes go by without getting anything done, I've lost the firm fifty pounds. Twelve minutes, a hundred pounds.'⁵

In some countries, doctors charge for the time they use in telephone conversations with their patients, who are thus also forced to pay for words of comfort and support given over the phone!

These considerable differences between the two worlds, in the way time is managed, has numerous consequences in relationships with children, relatives and friends, and in the couple's relationship. If at least one of the two parents lives time with breathing and the slow cadence of the emotional world, then it is possible to take advantage of this bubble of serenity and tranquillity to develop correctly and in a more harmonious way, the relationship with oneself and with life, but if both spouses live

⁵ S. KINSELLA, *The Queen of the House*, Mondadori, Milan, 2005, p.17.

time in a frenetic and convulsive way, with the rhythms imposed by the economic world, the inner harmony is transformed at first into tension and then into anxiety and anguish that grips the soul, preventing it from breathing. The youngest children will initially suffer from these disturbances, and later on also older children and adults themselves. Under these conditions nothing, or almost nothing, manages to survive of the emotional world: true dialogue, love, sex, the exchange of tenderness, the pleasure of being together in free time, everything is first shaken and shaken as in a raging hurricane and then suffocated and swallowed up by a deep, black whirlpool.

Under these conditions, dialogue with both children and the other spouse or other family members resembles an interrogation rather than an exchange: "What did you do at school? Were you interrogated? What grade did you get? Why don't you answer me? Damn you for being as closed off as your father." The same happens when we approach the other person with the intention of understanding and then solving his or her problems. The increasingly hurried and frantic attitude prevents both the identification of the causes of discomfort or malaise and the preparation of the necessary interventions. "What's the matter with you? You look pale today! Maybe we'd better go to the emergency room, yes but who's going to drive you there? Wait, I'll get the car keys, let's go, let's run. Get your jacket. Yes, but how can I, I'm late, I have an appointment at the studio, I just can't, I'm sorry, you'll go tomorrow with your father to the doctor. So he does something for you too."

Even play, use of leisure time and parties turn into a whirlwind of thoughts, worries and convulsive activities that make one lose sight of the goal one had set.⁶

"Tomorrow is your birthday, you have to warn all your comrades, did you remember to ask for their phone numbers? Give them to me! No? You didn't remember? God, what a son I have. What shall I do now? Who do I get them from? But why don't you ever cooperate, why don't you ever do what you're asked? I only asked you to get the phone numbers, is it possible you can't

⁶ C. BONAITI, 'Un orologio nella testa', in *Famiglia oggi*, 2005, 8-9, p.87.

even do something so simple? Give me the diary, let's see what numbers you have. Only Giovanni's? But what would I do with just Giovanni's number? The teacher should have them. I can phone her at home. But it's useless at home: she can't have the phone numbers of the whole class. Meanwhile I phone the clown. But why doesn't he answer me? That jerk told me - I'm always on call when he wants me -, is it possible that people are all like that nowadays, without dignity and without speech?"

Even happy occasions are turned into an obstacle race and thus into a whirlwind of things to do rather than moments to be enjoyed and lived in simplicity and communion with others.

When moments of tenderness, love, dialogue, exchange are subjected to the style, rules and values imposed by the economic world, not only do they fail to give what was intended: comfort, warmth, pleasure, relief and joy, but often the words or presence, to the heart and soul of those around us take on the bitter and sour taste of a poisoned fruit that is best rejected and removed from us.

When the economic view of time prevails in societies and hospitals and surgeries become 'companies', under the guise of optimisation and speed, the relationship with and between people is lost even in the most delicate and difficult services.

2.3 SPACE

Space also has a different dimension and valuation. In the affective world, space is like invisible. What walls or cells can close or limit a heart in love? What jailer can shackle the space of the soul, dreams and emotions? A small hawthorn hedge fills the heart, a green meadow expands and widens in the soul and fills it with peace and joy.

Affective space expands and shrinks at will in a single moment. In a single moment, if happy to be with ourselves, with nature or with the person we love, we reach for the sky and the stars, just as in a single moment, if abandoned, sad and lonely we touch hell.

In the economic world, space is something to be measured, bought, sold, folded or surpassed.

An attempt is made to climb over it with bridges. You attack it with cars. By building highways and allowing cars to increase speed, you try to make it look shorter.

We buy it by the square metre to build houses, by the cubic metre to mine it. The hurry to get there and arrive soon makes us hate mountains, so we drill them like a sieve to be quicker, without reflecting and fully evaluating all the joys and pleasures of the spirit we are giving up. By piercing them, by going from one hole to another, from one road sign to another, we renounce enjoying the nature that lives and explodes in them.

We forego the vision of the trees that dot them, the streams that flow through them, the birds and other animals that inhabit them, the flowers that adorn them. We puncture them or worse, we often plan them without any criterion, without fully appreciating the value they have for the spirit, development and well-being of the human person.

Economic evaluation makes us see space as something to be exploited or sold to build buildings, industries or roads. The affective-relational evaluation should make us see the spiritual well-being, the moods and teachings that the natural environment gives to young and old.

Often comically, we neglect immense expanses and beautiful meadows offered for free, in order to huddle together as sea or snow people one after the other, each one branded with a season ticket around his neck paid for handsomely. All on a piece of beach paid for by the pound, all behind a ski lift to experience the thrill of a few descents on fake snow.

2.4 GRATIFICATIONS

The rewards of the economic and service world are also significantly different from those experienced in the affective relational world.

In the business world, power gives pleasure and joy. A promotion, an advancement in rank, a prestigious position that others have not had, a bright and fast career, fill and gratify our ego.

Many times power is measured by the number of people subjected to us. Our ego always swells with satisfaction and pleasure whenever we can magnify what we possess or the importance we have. "I am a great industrialist: over two thousand employees work in my factories." Or: "I am the head of a division with over fifty employees. I am the general manager of a hospital with over a thousand employees."

In the economic world, money and profit give pleasure and joy. The more our wallet is inflated and our bank account is large, the more we feel proud and confident of our abilities as well as confident in the future. Many times we do not even care what we can achieve with this money as much as the fact that we possess it. We get exhilarated knowing that the number of zeros in our bank account is increasing every year.

The gratification of the business world also feeds on people's attestations of esteem and respect. The larger the social group that knows and esteems us, the more gratification our self has. Being known and esteemed by the entire city gratifies much more than being known only by the neighbourhood where one lives. Just as being known by the whole region or the whole country gives much more importance than being known within the city alone. Let us not talk about when fame crosses state borders. When a singer, but also an industrialist, lands in Australia or America, it means that that singer or that industrialist is really good and important.

The rewards of the emotional world are very different. Sometimes the reputation of a good mother or father does not even cross the yard of the house where they live. But that is as it should be. Nor does it ever occur to anyone to carry their images in procession to St Peter's Square for their beatification. And that too is right.

In the world of affection, numbers are of little importance. Even the care, love or glance of gratitude of a single person, or even a single living being, such as a kitten or a small dog, can give meaning and purpose to a life. Power or fame is of no importance. Just as time or money has little value. The exchange takes place between two glances, between two hands or two embraced bodies. A few words fill the heart and make it richer than

a bank account. A thank you serves to reward a thousand attentions, cares and labours. Joy seems to arise from nothing, but sacrifices made with love also seem to vanish into thin air.

Since love and the space of the heart can be infinite, there is no such thing as, and neither would one need, measuring instruments to calculate all that one gives and all that one receives to check whether the exchange has been equal or not.

2.5 ODORS

Smells are also different. In the emotional world, there is the smell of mother's milk, of talcum powder, of the sweat of bodies. There is the sweet smell of love and tenderness, as well as the bitter smell of disappointment, anger or fear. There is the smell of freshly mown grass, the smell of the sea breaking on the rocks, and the smell of moss in the woods after the spring rain. In the emotional world there is the smell of the white snow just picked up in the fist of a child's hand or thrown as a joke to the beloved girl.

In the economic world there is the smell of earth, of cement, of hot asphalt. The smell of coal in the mines. In the economic world there are the smells of chemical poisons and the stench of industry, along with the strong smell of machine oil in factories. In banks, the acrid smell of money prevails.

2.6 VALUES

2.6.1 Contrasting values.

The emotional world and the economic world often have different and conflicting values. How could one compare a marriage of love with one of convenience? For the emotional world, the main value in a marriage is passion, falling in love, love; for the world, daddy's money or a good dowry are more important. Family is a core value of the emotional world as business is to the business world.

In the world of business, the grit with which one faces difficult situations and adversaries; the dynamism and speed with which decisions are made; communication and persuasive skills; resourcefulness, determination and inventiveness; adaptability and intuition; stubbornness and organisational skills are valued.

In the affective world, gestures, caresses, closeness, gifts, care have value. Words and listening have value; availability and sacrifice; presence and stability; continuity and fidelity. In the affective dimension, words have value, but so do silences and gestures. A word or gesture of sweetness and tenderness makes us fall in love, bends our will, enlightens and warms our day, but sometimes also our life. A rude, aggressive word makes us sad, puts us on the defensive, fills us with resentment, anger or sadness. Just as we fall in love over a word, sometimes love ends or is undermined by a few too many words, said without thinking, that hurt or offend.

But silence is also a value. There is the silence that welcomes the other, there is the silence that rejects it. In silence, the eyes speak, instantly communicating desire or disillusionment, love or hate, presence or absence, welcome or rejection.

But even in the economic world, words have great value. Words to sell, words to buy, words to work with. Words to agree. Words to write the rules of civil coexistence. Words to condemn. Words to absolve.

Many people in the field of communication are paid to say or write sentences: to entertain, to amuse, to convince of the goodness of a product, to bend the will of the buyer, or to make judges accept one's argument.

Little space, but only because it is difficult to know how to use them correctly, have silences instead in the economic world. Although the best advertisers know that the best commercials not only do not shout or incite to buy, but are structured in such a way that they gently enter the human soul with images full of silences.

In business, ideas are important, especially new ideas.

Many companies have come into being and imposed themselves on the market as a result of a new idea. An idea to invent

a product, an idea to better present and sell or better distribute goods. A new idea to build, a new idea to trade or travel.

On the contrary, in the world of affection, the words or gestures that win and convince are not the new ones, the modern ones, the latest fashionable ones, but the traditional ones, the old ones, the ones that are as old as the world and as humanity. The heart of a child, of a person in love, of an old man needs the same gestures, the same caresses, the same certainties, the same words used by mothers, by people in love, by affectionate children, thousands and thousands of years ago.

The world of production needs dynamism as much as the world of affection needs slowness and calmness. The world of production needs grit while the world of affection thrives on gentleness and acceptance.

2.6.2 Common values.

Just as there are differences, there are also some common values and many synergies. Sometimes the contrast in values, between the emotional and economic worlds, is more apparent than real. It is said that if a mother stays an extra day at home with her sick child, the family takes something away from the enterprise. If the enterprise forces a mother to disregard her child's problems in order to come to work, it is the enterprise that takes something away from the family. It is also said that life, especially human life, has great value in the emotional world, much less in the economic one.

Much of what is said is not always true. If the manager of a company is a truly capable and knowledgeable person, he will not be able to disregard the family problems of his employees, as he is only concerned with the profits he will have brought to the company at the end of the day. It will only take him a few moments of reflection to realise that a serene, contented and grateful employee performs much better than an anxious employee or one with family problems. A satisfied and happy employee will work with more drive and, above all, make far fewer mistakes.

Returning to the example of the mother with the sick child, it is short-sighted to think that a mother who is worried about

having to leave her little son with a fever at home makes more than a serene mother who feels her employer is close and sympathetic to her needs.

Regarding the value of honesty and sincerity, in human relationships these two values are essential. How to pursue a friendship or love without honesty in intent and sincerity? At first glance, these two values seem much less important in the business world.

Yet all good economists are convinced otherwise. Dishonesty and lies do not pay in the economic field either. If, by means of a thousand subterfuges and a few lies, advertising convinces us to buy a product, when this product does not substantially correspond to what is described, the company that put it on sale will be negatively marked for years, both by small buyers and by wholesalers and retailers.

If a bank advises us on an unsound investment and makes our hard-earned savings go up in smoke, it will surely have a negative return for years. If a shopkeeper keeps shoddy products on his counters, his shutter will hardly be open for long.

Just as, in the economic world, a company or enterprise is often born small and puny, in the garage under the house, and then gradually expands and consolidates, so too affective and relational life is born small and puny. Although, like the other aspects of human life, it is already present before birth, as on the other hand all other human functions are present in bud, it is certainly not the same as the one we know in the adult. It gradually expands and enriches itself like a tree that grows and opens its shiny leaves to the sun, and then gives its splendid flowers in spring and its tasty fruit in summer.

But when family and couple conflicts shake the child's soul, the affective life is as fragile as a small tree forced to face the wind and the weather that can whip it, shake it and tear it from the roots, just as it can bend and break it. Relational affective life is fragile in the face of the lack of affection and constant attention that the child needs and cannot do without. It is fragile in the face of an environment that is unsuitable for its development if it is too cold, too distant from its needs, not attentive or available to love.

In the human soul, openness and availability to the other are born with love, nourished and enriched by love. There is no other suitable food. The affective world does not like surrogates because love, attention and presence have no surrogates.

Another common characteristic is the persistence of memories. While we forget immediately after an exam, with remarkable rapidity what we learnt in long endless days of study, in contrast an affectionate gesture or a frustration, a caress or a violence suffered as a child, are remembered for tens of years if not a lifetime.

How forever we are reminded of a snub, a cold attitude, an absent behaviour, especially from people as important to our emotional life as parents.

The persistence of emotional memory for decades, both consciously and unconsciously, is due to defence mechanisms present in all living beings, especially mammals. In order to survive, mammals must be able to remember throughout their lives who is their friend and who is their enemy. Who can help them and who can harm them. It is not only the elephant that remembers for years a rudeness suffered by its handler, but all animals, some more, some less, remember affectionate gestures as well as aggressive ones or excessive punishments.

The persistence of memory is not foreign to the world of business; on the contrary, it is one of its peculiar characteristics. The good manager must be able to remember and recognise the reliability and correctness of suppliers and collaborators, just as we customers must also have a good memory to remember correct and punctual people and companies that have sold us a good, reliable product, as opposed to those that have bamboozled us with their shoddy products, lack of attention or lack of punctuality in delivery.

2.7 PRODUCTION

We know that the world of business, economics and services is fundamental to human living. From this reality come those goods and material well-being that rich or poor societies enjoy.

It is in industries that appliances, tools and machines are born, which make life easier and less tiring. It is in the countryside, through agriculture, that the food to feed people is born. It is the services that work to build good healthcare, proper justice or effective state defence . It is the educational services that allow culture to spread throughout the population. It is the roads, bridges, airports and ports that allow goods and people to move and travel. Those involved in the world of business and services know that they are doing something useful and important for humanity. He knows he occupies an important place in social life and gets the rightful gratification and fulfilment from it.

But the product of the affective world is also rich, varied and fulfilling. It is from the affective world that feelings and love in all its nuances are born: love for oneself; love for others; maternal and brotherly love; filial love. And it is always from the affective world that fidelity, friendship, sympathy, acceptance, the ability to give joyfully are born. But it is also from the affective world that the personality of the individual is born and develops.

When the world of affection and feelings is rich, healthy, robust and knows how to fulfil its purpose, it is capable of producing, in the new generations, strong, secure, balanced and serene personalities who will then be able to open up and understand others with ease and be useful to humanity. Personalities capable of spreading mature feelings of joy, acceptance, closeness, understanding around them. People capable of integrating well, socialising and exchanging. People capable of creating and maintaining deep emotional bonds of friendship, brotherhood, love. Correct, honest, straightforward people who value justice, fairness and respect for others.

When the ego is healthy and robust, it is capable of warm, intense emotions of joy and trust not only in those closest to it but also in those far away. A healthy and mature Ego opens itself with ease to life, knows how to experience itself and others with fullness and completeness. A healthy and mature Ego is able to offer security and attachment, deep gratification and immense inner strength.

But when the product of the affective world is modest or deficient, on the contrary, fragile, sick, disturbed, poor, hypo-affective or anaffective, aggressive, dishonest, insecure, unreliable personalities are born, incapable of planning, fidelity, warmth and joy. People are born who are frigid or impotent sexually, but also frigid and impotent with regard to emotions and the expression of feelings. Selfish personalities and closed to life and others.

2.7.1 SIGNS OF WELL-BEING AND DISCOMFORT

The signs of well-being and malaise in the economic world are well known. Not least because several times a day, both radio and television report indices showing how much more or less each country produces, consumes, trades, transports, imports and exports. Moreover, the statistical centres do not fail to inform us periodically of how much, on average, each of us produces, earns, spends on food, housing and so on.

The newspapers then also very analytically report on the economic trends of every listed company. In short, we know and are informed almost daily of how much richer or poorer we are individually and as a nation, but also in which sectors we are growing and in which there is stagnation or regression.

Only rarely do we find indices of well-being or malaise in the affective world in the pages of newspapers. Because they are more difficult to detect or because there would be unpleasant confirmations?

While it is true that it is more difficult to measure a person's happiness or *well - being*, with a little more effort and goodwill one could discover and detect numerous indices capable of informing us about the improvement or deterioration of our affective-relational life in the same way as one does with the indices of the economic world.

From a situation of greater affective relational well-being we should expect:

- a family, friendship and affective network present, rich, close and attentive to the needs of individuals, whether men or women, children, adults and the elderly;
- a serene, rewarding, solid and stable life as a couple;

- pleasure and joy in the search for and reception of new human lives;
- a sexual life within the couple that is warm, active, rich and open to life;
- a decrease in homosexual and bisexual situations;
- the presence of stable, responsible, lasting and harmonious emotional ties;
- low marital and family conflict and aggression;
- real fidelity both in the engagement period and, above all, in the marriage period;
- a decrease in mental disorders;
- a decrease in deviance-related phenomena, especially among young people;
- the reduction of child, adolescent and youth distress;
- a decrease in the use of psychotropic drugs, alcohol and narcotics;
- the decrease in illnesses from psychological causes.

On the contrary, from a situation of psycho-affective malaise we should expect:

- a poor, frayed family network, incapable of welcoming and helping;
- an unrewarding, conflictual couple life, with escapes into increasingly tenuous, precarious and unstable ties;
- a low desire for motherhood and fatherhood;
- a poor couple's sexual life, which can only accommodate instinctive needs and is therefore deeply and substantially unsatisfactory;
- a greater presence of precarious, superficial emotional ties, without a creative project that is projected into the future;
- increased infidelity, both before and after marriage;
- an increase in mental disorders and adolescent and youth distress;
- an increase in deviant phenomena;

- an increase in the use of psychotropic drugs, alcohol and drugs.

It would suffice to monitor all, or only the most important of these parameters, to know every day what the situation is in our affective world, both to be aware of it and, above all, to take the necessary measures.

2.7.2 The influences of the affective-relational world on personal and social life.

The positive or negative feelings and emotions a child may have, influence the human being throughout life.

1. The way of experiencing friendships will certainly be affected

The friendships of children, young people and adults who have experienced a good and full relationship with their parents and family members and who have had a rich and warm emotional life are easier, more sincere and longer-lasting than those who have suffered from a lack of affective stimuli or have experienced cold, pathological or disturbed relationships.

2. Learning will be affected.

All learning, scholastic and otherwise, requires good inner serenity because both attention and memorising processes occur correctly when the person lives in harmony, serenity and peace with himself and others. They do not occur or occur abnormally when the person is in the grip of anxiety, fears, or has an affectively poor personality. Reason and emotions are not separate. The key to intelligence and mental development lies in early relationships and emotional experiences, which are experienced through exciting reciprocity with the mother and are not represented by isolated capacities. Greenspan states: 'We have found that the highest capacities of the human mind, such as intelligence, morality and sense of self, have unexpected common origins.

Analysing the early stages of the mind's development, 'it was seen that each stage requires a series of fundamental and

specific experiences⁷ and subtle emotional exchanges. It is not the intellect that dominates passion and feelings but the other way around.

For Morin, too, 'there is a close relationship between intelligence and affectivity: the faculty of reasoning can be reduced, if not destroyed, by a deficit of emotion; the weakening of emotional capacity can also be at the root of irrational behaviour and, in some ways, emotional capacity is indispensable to the implementation of rational behaviour.'⁸

3. *Communication skills will be affected.*

Communication skills are greatly influenced by psychological well-being or malaise. These abilities are restricted, blocked or deconstructed to the point of elective mutism, dissociation and autism, when inner experiences are more or less severely disturbed. Some children become locked in their elective mutism when their fragile and insecure ego cannot master the fear of the foreign environment.

Francesca, for example, could only communicate within the home and only with her closest family members: dad, mum, sisters, while not only language but all communication, even non-verbal communication, became impossible when she walked or drove down the street, but also at school, as well as in shops or offices. Her elective mutism was so severe that even at home, if any of her family members picked up the telephone receiver or opened the door or window, Francesca would automatically block any kind of communication and close herself in absolute silence. This major disorder, fortunately, did not prevent her from attending school as, in writing, she was able to answer correctly in all subjects, except when asked questions that even remotely touched on her personal or social life. Even then, she did not answer and, subsequently, became much more careful

⁷ S.GREENSPAN, B. LIEFF BENDERLY, *The Intelligence of the Heart*, Mondadori, Milan, 1998, p3.

⁸ E. MORIN, *The Seven Knowledges Necessary for Future Education*, Raffaello Cortina, Milan, 2001, p.19.

and suspicious of those she feared were trying to breach her confidentiality.

No less serious is the situation of some logorrhoeic children and adults in whom the communication disorder manifests itself in excessive verbosity while the ability to listen and deep understanding of others is sacrificed. In these people, who talk a lot but do not know how to listen, there is a disconnect between themselves and others, between their own needs and the needs and requirements of others, and therefore they are unlikely to be good parents, good spouses, but also in the work field they will have considerable difficulties and limitations.

4. The ability to love and to love will be affected.

Many people who come to adulthood with a great hunger for affection, if they are sometimes able to experience instinctive and immediate passions, such as sexual pleasure or the thrill of falling in love, have considerable difficulty in fully experiencing love and care for others. Their hearts hunger for warmth and affection and are unable to give what they do not have or have not received sufficiently. Often, moreover, the more or less latent aggressiveness with which they experience their relationship with themselves, others and the world leads them to arrogant and destructive behaviour. With difficulty they will be able to express and fulfil the role of father or mother. With difficulty will they be able to live out fidelity consistently in the life of a couple. With difficulty they will be able to manage a serious and demanding relationship, also because resolving the inevitable conflicts requires serenity and control, which they do not possess.

5. Behaviour will be affected.

Not only instability and distractibility, but also aggression and other behavioural disorders such as impulsiveness, irritability, provocative and hostile attitudes, quarrelsomeness, susceptibility and grumpiness, often arise from an emotional life that is lacking in quality or quantity.

6. Skills in socialisation, integration and autonomy will be affected.

The expansion of the relational affective world occurs step by step, but in each case it first arises in the child's soul and then, and only then, is realised and concretised with outward attitudes.

It is often said, at least partly improperly, that the child needs schoolmates in order to socialise. In reality, the child only acquires the possibility of socialising with strangers if he or she has experienced a serene and satisfying relationship with family figures. It is only the goodness of this relationship and the serenity of the living environment in which it is lived that will make it possible for him to open his soul, his interest and his constructive attention to strangers as well. It is therefore not only futile, but also counterproductive, to attempt to advance a child to a more mature level of socialisation if this capacity has not already developed in his soul. "Autonomy has a gradualness that only the child knows and depends on the security that comes from the mother's responses given at the right times and in the right ways."⁹ This concept of extending a capacity is clear to us in some human functions, but we often fail to understand and extend it as we should to all functions. No one would dream, for example, of feeding steak to a child who is still unable to eat pasta. No one would dream of forcing a child to climb stairs, when he still cannot walk, or worse, cannot stand, but then we expect the child, who has not yet acquired a good affective and relational maturity and a good integration with parents and other family members, to 'socialise' with teachers and other children who are strangers to him.

7. *His abilities in personal and social autonomy will be affected.*

Although inscribed in the genes, the stages of personal and social autonomy take place, and become reality, not only if someone stimulates them and helps them to develop, but also and above all if the child feels, around and within himself, serenity, security and contentment. He eats, washes, dresses himself, not only when his intellectual and motor skills allow him to do so,

⁹ G. V. BARTOLO, 'L'amore che fa crescere il figlio', in *Famiglia oggi*, 2003, 2, p. 25.

but also when his soul and heart are serene. If very upset or disturbed he will still seek help from others, even with good intellectual and motor skills, because the desire and need for care remain within him.

8. *Work capacity will be affected.*

In order to think or to engage in any work, whether repetitive or especially creative, psychological and emotional well-being is essential. If our souls and hearts are troubled by anxieties, worries or worse by sadness and depression, our work capacities will be greatly reduced to almost zero, or they will fluctuate: sometimes the same person produces a hundred, other times ten.

In this regard, I recall the pressing request of a depressed lady who described her distressing condition to me in these terms: 'When I wake up in the morning, I don't feel very bad, because I'm in bed, quiet, but then as the minutes and hours go by, my anxiety increases more and more. Almost all the housework is done by my daughter, who lives with me, while my husband does the shopping and takes care of the family's outside commitments: going to the bank, paying bills, etc. Unfortunately, my daughter, who works outside the home, wants me to fill the pot at lunchtime and put it on the stove just before she and my husband retire, so that saves time. But I, doctor, as I lie in bed all morning I think about this thing that I have to do and that weighs so heavily on me. I think and agonise more and more, about when I will have to get up, fill the damn pot and put it on the fire, Can't you tell my daughter or husband to do this job for them when they get home?'

Many people who pass for slackers, inconclusive or inattentive, always with their head in the clouds or who put their lives and the lives of others at risk at work, are people with psychological problems. They are people whose emotional world is more or less severely disturbed or disturbed.

CHAPTER 3

3.0 LA FUNZIONALITÀ DEL EMOTIONAL-RELATIONAL WORLD AND THE ECONOMIC WORLD

3.1 WHO DOES IT DEPEND ON?

Just as the capacity and functionality of a company is closely dependent on and related to others: managers, employees, workers, suppliers, in the same way the functionality of the affective relational world is related to the possibility and capacity of the adults surrounding the child.

It is the inner world of adults that prepares, activates and helps the development of its affective world.

This functionality, only to a small extent, depends on the child himself, because it is not the child who can manage the affective network or find an environment that is favourable to him: it is others who must seek and offer these things. The responsibility of us adults is therefore considerable.

Man's puppy is unable to find himself a good, present, affectionate, serene mother, he is unable to find himself an active, authoritative, affectionate, dialoguing father, just as he is unable to

find himself a family that lives with serenity and joy a good part of its day.

Only later, when his personality is already almost fully formed, will he have the capacity to choose and manage. Only at a later stage will he be able to discern and approach friends and people who make him feel good, who accept, understand and value him or, on the contrary, he will be able to distance himself from people who make him suffer or make life difficult for him.

Its capacities in the management of the affective world are therefore minimal at birth; they increase slowly and gradually with the years and only in adulthood are they fully realised.

3.2 HOW THESE TWO WORLDS DEVELOP

Like all human potentialities: motility, language, logical-perceptual abilities, autonomy, etc., the ability to know how to live and manage the world of affect is also developed through education. It is education that makes the development project in our genes concrete and palpable.¹⁰

Just as every building needs not only a precise project to serve as a guide and reference, but also engineers, architects, labourers and masons to transform that project into pillars, walls, floors, so too affective development, whose project is already written in our genes, needs, in order to become a concrete reality, an adequate environmental contribution and educators trained and committed to that end. Man can only express his humanity if other men are committed and invest a good part of their energies in this goal.

On the other hand, just as, at the end of the construction of a house, if it turns out to be unlivable or with crumbling walls like the Leaning Tower of Pisa, it is to the combination of project and environment that we will place the responsibility and not only to one of the elements, also for the altered or pathological affective-relational development it is in the combination of genetic heritage and environment that we will have to look for the causes of failure.

¹⁰ E. TRIBULATO, *L'educazione negata*, EDAS, MESSINA, 2005, P.53.

By environment we mean the place and home where we are born and take our first steps, but above all the people who will guide and accompany this project in its realisation. The physical and social environment also has its importance: there is an environment that facilitates this work of parents, there is an environment that hinders it or makes it impossible.

Having achieved a certain degree of economic and material well-being is certainly useful because, if economic hardship is excessive, affective well-being is also negatively affected. But even excessive material well-being, as is currently the case for large swathes of the populations of the western world, can create problems for a child's affective development, both because excessive well-being is not the best training ground for developing in human beings the strength and determination needed to face life, and because the abundance of money often leads parents to permissive educational behaviour and, in children, stimulates disengagement, apathy, abulia, vice, alcohol abuse or easier use of drugs.

It is a serious mistake, therefore, to aim, as is currently done, at a continuous steady increase in GDP (Gross Domestic Product). This indicator of the average level of wealth available per inhabitant is associated with the concept of the well-being of a given population. A concept that is fundamentally false in that there is absolutely no evidence that the richest peoples are also the happiest. "In September 2006, it was the Chinese government that commissioned the National Bureau of Statistics to come up with a 'happiness index' of the people, to be used alongside the GDP to measure collective well-being and adopt effective policies. Maybe it is because, despite the unparalleled economic boom and average incomes that have almost tripled, a study has shown that the satisfaction of the average Chinese is now lower than it was at 1994"¹¹

If a mother cooks good meals for her family the GDP does not increase, but if she buys the same food in the nearest delicatessen the GDP increases; but we doubt that it increases her, her

¹¹ R. BIFFI, "La ricerca della felicità", in *Famiglia cristiana*, No. 9, 2008, p.38.

husband's or her children's welfare. If a child is cared for and looked after by his parents or available grandparents the GDP does not increase, but if he is entrusted to the hired care of a baby-sitter or a day-care centre, the GDP increases. But are we sure that the joy and serenity of that child will also increase? If an elderly woman or man is lovingly cared for by her husband, wife or children, the GDP does not increase; if a caregiver or the staff of a gerontocomio takes care of him or her, the GDP increases; but we doubt very much that the well-being of the elderly person also increases. If young people and adolescents stay at home and read a good book or go out with friends for a nice healthy walk the GDP does not increase, if they spend considerable sums to go to the disco the GDP will increase; but who can say that for many of these young people brutalised by alcohol, drugs, promiscuity the well-being has increased?

If global wealth is high, as it is high in the Western world, the problem is not to try to increase it even more, but only to distribute it more fairly.

As regards the period in which affective development takes place, it is certainly in the first months and years of life that much of the game is played. This does not detract from the fact that the experiences and encounters of later years are also important and may or may not provide specific contributions for the successful construction and preservation of a valid and functional affective-relational world.

Just as in a house it is during the first works that the foundations are laid, which will or will not ensure the stability and security of the building, it is during the first years of life that the personality of the individual is formed, which can therefore be serene or anxious, joyful or sad, adequate or inadequate, responsible or irresponsible, gentle or aggressive, welcoming or reactive, healthy or disturbed, depending on how these first years are experienced.

But, just as for the home, future events or environmental disasters can affect its structure and even its solidity at any time, even for the strongest and most well-structured personalities, negative and traumatising experiences and events can have a ne-

gative and destructive impact at any stage of life, even in adulthood or old age.

3.3 THOSE RESPONSIBLE

As we have said, these two worlds pervade the days, minds and hearts of men and women of all ages; they can produce wealth or poverty, they can bring joy or sorrow, they can bring material misery and moral misery, and thus they can make all citizens of a state feel good or bad. We should at this point ask ourselves who is responsible for the one world and the other. By responsible we mean someone who has specific characteristics, competence and preparation, in studying, favouring, defending, developing, realising, and disseminating the one and the other. A role that is entrusted to him and recognised by society; a role that is valued and prepared for.

In the world of economics and services, there are, at the institutional level, various people in charge: the minister of industry and commerce, the director of the Bank of Italy, the minister for social activities, the minister of education, the minister of defence, the minister of health, and so on, after them, a myriad of undersecretaries, civil servants and employees, business executives, trade unions. A whole host of people working and active to better organise and develop their respective institutions. A large part of this staff was, and still is, male. Therefore, this world was, and still is, basically run by men, with a style, culture, values and ways, that are purely masculine. The other sex, even though there are more and more business executives, is mostly used if and when needed, but above all they have to make the values and styles of the business world their own if they want to do their job well.

The world of the affective is not dealt with by any specific ministry, nor are there any leaders engaged in this field. Despite the fact that it may never have had, at an institutional level, any state body to deal with it, this particular and fundamental universe has for thousands of years functioned just as well. How so? The secret of its excellent functioning lies in one word: 'women'.

While the economic and service world needs a series of managers, organised in a pyramid fashion, committed and busy defending, promoting, studying, coordinating and managing this multifaceted and complex reality to the best of their ability, the world of affection has greatly simplified everything by implementing an extremely compartmentalised management that is entrusted to and coordinated by women. No ministers, undersecretaries or managers, but women. Women mothers, women grandmothers, women aunts, women cousins, women daughters, have managed, for millennia, to make the affective-relational world work perfectly by using a specific culture, which was passed down from generation to generation from mother to daughter, grandmother to granddaughter, older sister to younger sister, friend to friend.

It was women who studied, defended, promoted, deepened, built, organised and perfected over the centuries a system to make the affective-relational world work at its best, also using men, (fathers, husbands, uncles), when it was necessary and functional to the aims set by the female clan.

The different and specific commitment of the two sexes to the economic and affective worlds served to balance the needs and requirements of the one against the needs and requirements of the other, so that each reality had its own space and appropriate valorisation, resulting in a good overall balance.

3.4 LA PREPARAZIONE

The preparation for the world of business and services is fairly well structured, although there are many complaints in this regard from industry associations¹² who would like to see a more massive and coordinated effort on the part of the school to prepare for technical and managerial employment.

In truth, the number of hours that society, through schools, dedicates to this preparation is considerable. In Italy, in our in-

¹² There are approximately 5 million enterprises in our country, with a ratio of 1 enterprise for every 11 inhabitants.

stitutions, an impressive amount of time is made available for cultural, professional and technical content. Although the function of the basic school should be, by law, formative and therefore should essentially develop the child's full human potential, if this at least initially happens in nursery and primary schools, so that affective and cultural preparation go hand in hand, later, in the other school orders, cultural aspects clearly prevail over affective-relational and formative ones.

But also in the family, the usefulness of preparation for the affective world is today in the Western world often misunderstood as well as largely underestimated. One is just as proud of one's children, grandchildren and family members who have obtained a diploma or, better still, a degree or a doctorate that will lead them to be valid professionals in medicine, psychology, engineering or mechanics, as one is deeply disappointed when one's scions do not achieve the coveted goals. In the judgement towards their children and grandchildren, on the other hand, many parents and grandparents lack both pride and disappointment regarding their good or modest affective-relational skills. It is widely underestimated that having good skills in this field means having good and honest citizens in the future, good husbands and good wives, good fathers and good mothers.

Nor is it correctly accepted that, from a social point of view, for the future of mankind, a good father or a good mother, a good husband or a good wife, is much more useful than a good scientist or a great professional

To hold a child in one's arms; to understand, welcome and satisfy its needs; to breastfeed it, cradle it and dialogue serenely with it; to know how to deal coherently and correctly with the educational, care and assistance problems present in the various ages of life; to know how to manage the many and various situations, sometimes dramatic, in which a family may find itself (sick children, disturbed children, handicapped children, maladjusted children); transmitting the fundamental values and basic culture of humanity; all these activities and commitments are much more complex than one would think, requiring, despite the help of instinct, considerable and precise natural gifts, but also careful, long and thorough preparation.

The same can be said of the preparation and management of relationships with the opposite sex. Whichever way these relationships manifest themselves: whether with friendship, with love, or even better if there are long-term common projects, such as marriage and family; these relationships, these commitments, involve a considerable amount of problems for which young people should be prepared from childhood. Therefore, the correct management of behaviour and feelings is remarkably complex and should not be entrusted only to extemporaneous and contradictory indications.

3.4.1 The purposes of affective education.

As far as the aims are concerned, education in affectivity and relationships should give the child and then the boy, the young man and the future man, inner well-being, together with good skills in various areas: in the area of dialogue and communication; in the sexual and sentimental area; in the correct management of the life of the couple; in the integration and conduction of the affective and family network; in the development of maternal and paternal skills.

3.4.2 Tools and Methods

In order to carry out a good affective - relational and sexual education, it is first of all necessary to respect the specific needs of the child, the adolescent and then the young person. Needs for care and attention; needs for listening and dialogue; needs for understanding and education. Moreover, it is essential to scrupulously respect the ways and times of their maturation and evolution. For Ackerman: 'When an individual matures, he or she conquers an identity that is both individual and social, and these two aspects cannot be clearly separated.'¹³

As the world of production builds an object, it can, through experience and new technical achievements, modify the designs or methods of execution that lead to the finished product, speeding up as much as possible certain stages of processing, using

¹³ N. W. ACKERMAN, *Psychodynamics of Family Life*, Boringhieri, Turin, 1968, p.79.

new machines, new materials and different, more efficient processes. It is also possible to modify the type of personnel involved in production, trying, through certain strategies, to reduce them as much as possible. The same thing cannot be done in affective-relational education. This, like all other types of education, has inescapable and unchangeable needs.

The designs contained in the genes cannot, at present, be changed. The actors or, if you like, 'the technicians and specialists' involved in this type of production cannot be changed or replaced with impunity. Neither the methodologies and tools used nor the times and modes of production can be changed.

One of the main damages caused by the prevalence of the economic world has been to have imagined and tried to use the same philosophy and rules for the world of the affections as the economic and service worlds. Nothing could be more mistaken. Nothing more illusorily harmful.

3.4.3 Quantity.

First of all, as far as quantity is concerned, every child that is born, according to its age and characteristics, has unavoidable needs: it needs a certain amount of caresses, dialogue, good examples, serenity, affectionate words, presence, acceptance, closeness, tenderness, sweetness. It is not possible, without causing damage, to deprive human beings of the affective stimuli necessary for their development. Below a certain threshold of deprivation, one risks harming him, compromising his present psychological well-being, but also, if the deprivation situation should persist, his future equilibrium. In order to achieve 'normal' affective development, therefore, a certain amount of needs must be satisfied, or else there will be deficiency symptoms.

Just as our body needs a certain amount of food to grow and develop well, our heart also needs a certain amount of food to grow, strengthen and mature.

The food of the heart is made of caresses, affectionate cuddles, games, hugs, tenderness, smiles, words, special attention, dialogue.

Just as lack of food brings specific signs in the body: weight loss, anaemia, lowered immune defences, rickets, etc., so too af-

fective deficiency, when it is important and lasting, leads to the appearance of signs and then specific symptoms, such as crying, irritability, instability, sadness, aggressiveness, fears, tics and in the most serious cases closure, depression, regression or fixation at a certain stage of the child's development. Just as deficiency or incorrect nutrition can predispose or facilitate the onset of acute or chronic illnesses, similarly, lack or deficiency of affection can lead to more or less severe and lasting psychiatric illnesses.

3.4.4 Quality.

As far as quality is concerned, just as the food of a newborn baby is different from that of a one-year-old child and, in turn, this is different from that of an older child or an adult, and thus the child's diet passes from the mother's milk to homogenised baby food, to baby food and then to normal food, so the quality and quantity of the affective-relational contributions will necessarily have to be different, adapting to the child's age, but also to his or her individual peculiarities.

Consequently, affective and educational contributions must also possess certain special characteristics. They must be reassuring, serene, free of anxiety, fears or worse, anxieties.

The presence of the 'operators' in charge of this type of 'production' must guarantee stability, security, warmth, softness, closeness, cosiness.

The child experiences poorly any sporadic, anxious, cold, detached, aggressive presence, with little capacity for dialogue and understanding of his needs and problems. Therefore, they must not be presences that bring anxiety or cause anxiety. They must not be rigid, aloof presences. They must not be belligerent, quarrelsome or worse, violent presences. They must not be irritating, stressful or communication-disruptive presences.

There is a continuous and constant exchange between the social environment and the individual. If the social environment is properly activated, it receives great benefit. Similarly, if it activates poorly, disorderly, sporadically or limitedly, it suffers great harm.

For example, when a mother knows how to welcome the child, how to breastfeed it, cradle it, care for it and know how to enter into an intimate dialogue with it, she does many things, and all of them of extreme importance for the future emotional life of that child, but she also does many things that are important for the relationship she is establishing with that new human being and therefore also for her own future life. Whether that child will become irritating, grumpy, aggressive, or whiny, and thus become a burden and nuisance if not a serious problem for herself as well as for her husband and other family members, much will depend on how the initial relationship was implemented and experienced.

The individual characteristics of each child can cause individual needs to vary in quantity and quality. There are some children who are more spartan and others who need constant cuddling. There are children who cry when offended by a reprimand or a mildly aggressive attitude and others who bear frustration better. These specific individual needs must also be taken into account by parents and educators when helping the development of affective-relational skills.

It is important, however, that this individual variability does not become an alibi to cover our own shortcomings. Like saying: 'I took little care of my son because I thought that, due to his character, he did not want or need a lot of cuddles, a lot of words or my presence'.

These reported alibis with phrases such as: "I thought that," "I didn't believe that", "I was under the illusion that", are today numerous and constant. "I thought that the child was bored at home alone or with his old grandmother and that is why I put him in the nursery where he would meet many other children and young educators." "I believed that it was more fun for him to go to school in the bus in which he would find many classmates rather than being accompanied by us parents." "I was under the illusion that these whining and complaining behaviours of his were due to the fact that he was teething and not to the constant bickering of us parents."

3.5LA SCUOLA PER PARENTS

But who teaches parents and family members the many basics of proper affective education? Where are the schools for parents and who are the teachers?

Every type of education in fact requires content and experience, teachers who are effective in transmitting and verifying skills, and pupils who are willing to be taught, and then places and times in which training and apprenticeships can take place.

While it is true that there has never been a school or university as we understand it, with a professorship, a ministerial syllabus and report card grades, to be a good parent, since the origins of the human species for the young of both sexes there has been no shortage of teachers, content to learn, apprenticeships to do and examinations to pass, as this type of education has always been fundamental to the development of the human species.

3.5.1 *The masters.*

As for teachers, who is an effective teacher?

A master is effective when he is close to his pupil and follows him, step by step, on his journey. An effective master loves his pupil and understands him. He is wise, serene, helpful, mature and authoritative. He respects the pupil and makes himself respected.¹⁴

His qualities and abilities are inner tranquillity, goodness of mind, authoritativeness, and the ability to listen and communicate. An effective teacher must also firmly believe in his or her training work and have clear ideas about the content and methodologies to be deployed.

These qualities and knowledge, as with all teachers, must partly already be in his or her background, and partly be learnt in direct contact with the pupils. And, as with all good teachers, he or she must be attentive to the maturation achieved by them, so as to communicate and implement the necessary experiences to the pupils gradually, in the right way and at the right time, using as much time as necessary for the purpose.

¹⁴ E. TRIBULATO, *L'educazione negata*, EDAS, MESSINA, 2005, P.233.

The institution with the greatest responsibility for these studies was always the family. The place where the lessons and placements took place was mostly the home or environments close to the home. The effective teachers were always family members, but to some extent also friends. And of the family members, for the females, it was mainly the mothers and other women in the family, just as for the males, effective teachers were mainly the fathers but also all the other men in the family entourage: grandparents, uncles, as well as school teachers and adults in general. Each one of them with perseverance, self-denial and sacrifice, knowing the importance of their task, did not neglect to give knowledge and experience so that in the end they would form mature men and women, ready not only to face the problems of society and work but also those of the couple and the family. Men and women who were confident and capable of amalgamating differences, assessing and correctly resolving problems, differences and disagreements, and then in turn being good professionals in the education, care and training of other human beings.

Ultimately, as is the case in so many professions and trades, those who have been good apprentices and students will have the opportunity to become masters in turn.

Pupils learned through a variety of tools. First of all, the most valuable tool was not the book but the concrete example of life and the attitudes and behaviour of parents and adults in general. Pupils also learned through words that accompanied actions and presence. They educated themselves by watching and participating in the education and care of younger siblings and grandchildren. They learned with peers through the myriad role-plays in the corners of houses and courtyards.

In these games, playing father and mother was the most popular game. By playing with dolls and baby dolls (dolls have been found in the tombs of little girls thousands of years ago), mothers-to-be learned about what a small child is, how to care for it, cradle it, put it to sleep, bring it up and care for it, hold it to their hearts with love, and punish it when it has been naughty.

It was through these pedagogical tools that a basic culture was transferred, similar in all social strata and in all families,

similar in all historical eras and in all peoples. Alongside this basic culture, information was communicated that was more in keeping with specific social and family realities.

All in long days, alongside their older sisters and mothers, without the empire of TV, video games, sports, dancing, martial arts, horse riding, foreign languages and the thousands of other, mostly useless activities with which we fill our children's days today. But above all, without the new dolls such as Barbie with which little girls identify themselves as girls and women: ready to meet the handsome young hunk to love; ready to buy the most fashionable clothes and the most beautiful and glittering accessories; ready to become showgirls, singers, actresses, in a world projected and immersed in pleasure, luxury and consumerism, while they learn little or nothing about how to experience motherhood and how to establish an effective and intimate dialogue with a small child.

Today we feel a serious lack in the educational project, in the places and times to be used, in the teachers to be engaged. Mum and dad are often away from home, busy with a thousand other things, while the children are entrusted at best to grandparents, at worst to babysitters, day-care centres and baby-parking centres.

Even when parents are at home, since the hurried, nervous, grumpy parent who is more attentive to their mobile phone than to the needs of running the family, more concerned with making ends meet than with the emotional upbringing of their children, is not a good teacher, the transfer of information from one generation to the next is interrupted and parcelled out in small sporadic appeals without succeeding in materialising into a harmonious global project.

Today's pupils in the affective world thus suffer the consequences of the fractured education chain. Educated poorly and poorly on affective-relational issues by their parents, they can educate their children and grandchildren poorly and poorly.

3.5.2 Aims and objectives.

Then there is an even more serious underlying problem and it concerns the aims and objectives of the educational process. If

we are clear in our minds about the purpose of the educational activity, we will try in every way to achieve the set objective, but if this purpose is not clear, or rather is considerably confused or contradictory, it will be impossible to engage in an effective, correct and coherent manner, with the risk of leaving everything to chance or instinct.

The lack of clarity in the educational project arises above all from the confused view of gender identity and gender roles. If there is no clear-cut answer to the question of what the role of the woman, the wife and the mother should be in relation to society, the man, the children, and the family, and vice versa, what the man's role should be in relation to society, his woman, the family, and the children, it is not possible to define a precise educational plan on the part of both the father and the mother, as well as the other players in education.

If we fail to give clarity and linearity to the characteristics, roles and tasks of the two genders, male and female, no credible and coherent educational project can be carried out.

In fact, one wants both man and woman to be confident, strong and authoritative but also tender, delicate and soft. Neither too masculine nor too feminine. They should divide their time and energies equally between the business world and the affective-relational world, without losing or limiting anything, without giving up anything.

Neither of them should be brought up to take on the task of being responsible for the family, because responsibility within the family will have to be shared with the other.

Neither of them should be taught to take initiatives on their own, as all initiatives should be discussed and taken together with the other.

These few contradictory indications would be fine if men and women had no specific characteristics, if opposite characteristics could coexist in the same individual, and if the needs of society were constant and uniform.

In short, it is as if a large company deluded itself into thinking that it could train its personnel in such a way that they could be used simultaneously in all areas: in production, customer relations, marketing, sales, market research, and so on, wi-

thout taking into account the peculiarities of each function and the specific characteristics of each employee.

3.5.3 The models and examples.

As far as examples to imitate are concerned, the behaviour of parents, friends, relatives or those seen on TV are examples and models that the child learns from and can follow. If the models are inadequate, incongruous and contradictory, not only will they be of no use but, what is worse, they will tend to present and transmit negative, confusing and misleading messages that the child, as well as the young person, will believe to be valid and correct, with the consequences that are easy to imagine. Just as absent or absent-minded or absent-minded fathers or mothers in the home, frequently with conflicting attitudes, often in pursuit of a new and more gratifying sentimental and sexual relationship, are certainly not good examples; those from which children, young people and adults are nourished every day, via TV or video games, are by no means valid examples.

3.5.4 Experiences and internships.

Personal experiences and apprenticeships are also missing. Children remember more what babysitters or nursery teachers do than what their mothers did for them. There is a lack of training in caring for other children, since many children will live their entire lives as only children. Above all, there is a lack of time devoted to these activities that are fundamental to the future of the human species.

As with so many other needs that today's families are no longer able to meet, people turn to the state school for this type of education, without realising that the contribution that the school institution can make is very limited for various reasons. First of all, the school, and therefore its programmes and teachers, are being put on the ropes by a culture that wants, through professional training, a financial return for the enormous investments made in this institution.

As if to say: "I, the company, who pay taxes and invest a boatload of money in education, want from you schools, in return, capable technicians and trained professionals in the various

areas of production and trade." Also missing, as we have said, is the basic preparation, which should have been imparted to the teachers by their parents and apprenticeships with siblings and other relatives. There is a lack of specific training programmes and content for the two genders.

We rely on the sensitivity and ability of individual teachers to draw the appropriate learning from the affective content present in literary, historical, artistic and religious subjects. Woe betide if one were to propose different syllabuses for the two genres: one would immediately be labelled as retrograde characters who want to restore barriers and fences that have now been definitively broken down.

3.5.5 Contents.

As far as content is concerned, the dissimilarity present in magazines, newspapers, books and even worse on television, does not allow a clear and unambiguous view of the problems, but accentuates relativism with regard to many affective-relational attitudes and problems.

There are, for example, a thousand ideas on the various languages of affectivity. Often on mobile phones today, the abbreviation TVB appears at the end of every message, which means: "I love you." But what is the meaning of this 'I love you' that young people send to friends and acquaintances every day? Does it perhaps have the meaning of feeling a special kind of affectionate emotion towards that person? Does it mean: "I feel good with you, I feel excited and happy when I am next to you?" Or does it mean: 'I am in love with you'? Are we sure it has the proper meaning of wanting and seeking the good of the other? Like saying 'I work, I strive, I work day after day for you to be well'?

If you ask some young people about the meaning they give to that TVB, they will tell you that, except in special cases, this acronym means nothing or almost nothing. It is often written out of habit, without being given any particular meaning other than to close a text. "See you tonight in the square TVB." "You didn't pass me the paper today, you're a jerk TVB." Ultimately, it is a way to close a conversation without wasting a lot of energy.

If one then examines how topics fundamental to relational and love life such as engagement, love, fidelity, marriage and family are treated in the media, one will notice:

- confusing, incongruous and uneducational content;
- a great variety and dissimilarity of ideas. "To allow with the pluralism of ideas to form their own ideas," we say. To accentuate confusion in the minds and souls of young people and adults, we say;
- an accentuated sentimentalism. If there is something resembling a passionate feeling that is most often confused or passed off as a loving feeling, everything can be done, everything is allowed, everything is possible, everything is permissible;
- a use of sexuality for purely commercial purposes. In the mass media, sex, in all its forms, even the most bizarre and pathological, becomes a stimulus to sell, to make people buy, to make them accept what is on offer.

All this cannot fail to provoke in the minds and hearts of young people truly sad as well as dramatic consequences, both culturally and emotionally.

3.5.6 Verification.

With regard, then, to checks on the maturity and quality of men and women who intend to form future generations, such checks have been almost totally lacking for decades. In the past, in patriarchal families, the value of a young man or woman who intended to establish a stable affective bond was linked not only to his or her aesthetic appearance or dowry assets, but parents, relatives and friends of both valued and put on the scales also and above all the capacity for work, care and sacrifice; moral and spiritual qualities; the qualities of fidelity and seriousness. This work of evaluation and verification is currently almost completely absent, since the premarital or marriage bond is born and takes into account almost exclusively the feelings present in the couple, neglecting the qualities and personality characteristics of the young people interested in forming a family.

CHAPTER 4

4.0 ACTORS FROM THE EMOTIONAL WORLD AND THE ECONOMIC WORLD

4.1 THE MAIN AND SECONDARY ACTORS

Who are the actors in affective education?

Just as in the theatre there are the first actors, followed by the second and third actors up to the extras, so too in affective education there are the first actors, the child's parents, initially above all the mother, and then the secondary actors, represented by the people who in some way live with the children, young people and youths and have a stable affective relationship with them such as brothers, sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

In a more marginal position are teachers and friends. The extras are the people with whom we relate very little. They do not engage us with their presence and dialogue, like work colleagues, friendships and casual acquaintances.

But these characters also have their importance. Just as in the theatre the mistakes of the extras can compromise the entire performance, sometimes even minor characters can have a positive or negative impact on the balance of affective education. A neighbour who is affectionate, present, conversational, willing to listen, support and help is just as precious and important to our hearts as a relative or family member. Conversely, an aggressive, argumentative, annoying neighbour can act in a negative sense.

The same goes for the economic and service world. In order to understand all its mechanisms, to be able to use it and improve it, to learn how to manage it in the best possible way, it is initially important to have parents, especially the father, and then, during the school placement period, teachers and, later, operators and colleagues in the sector.

While it is true that the main actors are initially different, they later diverge considerably. Above all, it is the school activity that, while initially it has a great emphasis on affective education, whereby the school collaborates closely with the parents for the formation and human upbringing of the child, later on, with the prevalence of instructive activity over formative activity, the school becomes more active in favour of the development of the economic world and services, often neglecting the more strictly formative and educational activity.

4.2 PARENTS

Who are the parents?

Parents are called primary educators "because they are not only the first to approach the child and have a dialogical relationship with him, but above all because they have, in the formation of a new human personality, the fundamental task."¹⁵

First of all, they are people who work and bet for the future. Because children are the future. Unlike those who like to live, enjoy and devote their energies to grabbing in the present, they

¹⁵ E. TRIBULATO, *L'educazione negata*, EDAS, MESSINA, 2005, P.66.

work and sacrifice their time and best energies to build the future of the human race.

Parents are therefore adults who have taken on a fundamental task and commitment, certainly the most important task in society: that of transmitting human life in its broadest and most complex sense.

First procreate a human life, through a loving relationship, and then? And then caring for it from the first moments in which it blossoms in the mother's womb, while it is assisted, cared for and expected by the father as well. Care for it during those long nine months necessary for it to develop. Nine months to begin a dialogue. Nine months to start a journey together. Nine months to adapt one's personal, couple's and family life to welcoming a new human being.

Transmitting human life then certainly means *procreating it*, but also and above all *caring for it*, before and after birth, and finally *educating it*. It will be education that will allow man's offspring to develop all the qualities specific to the species. Education will allow the development of intelligence. Careful and effective education will allow the cultural growth, spiritual and moral maturity of the new human being, together with the development of affective, relational and social skills.

This is not enough. The parents' task does not end there. Their role continues even when the child has developed a good maturity. It continues in that it is necessary for the mature adult who has formed to integrate and engage harmoniously, actively, critically and supportively in the society and environment in which he or she lives.

Unlike animals, therefore, the human growth period, due to its complexity, is particularly long, about one third of the average lifespan, whereas for more evolved mammals it is only the fifth part.¹⁶

We can then distinguish four stages:

1) a generational phase;

¹⁶ P. A. OSTERRIETH, *Introduction to Child Psychology*, Giunti - Barbera, Florence, 1965.

- 2) a phase aimed at the care of the body and the development and enrichment of human qualities;
- 3) a phase aiming at full maturity and autonomy;
- 4) a phase in which new human beings are stimulated to family and social commitment.

In all four stages of human growth, both affective-relational and economic-services contributions are of great importance, as the environment that facilitates affective development is also made up of material well-being. A child also needs a home, food, health care, social services, and then education, work, etc. There is no doubt that it is from the collaboration and perfect integration between these two worlds that the survival and development of the human species is possible.

4.3 FATHER AND MOTHER

Whereas until the 1970s in Italy it was easy to talk about the mother and the father as their personalities, characteristics, tasks and roles were clear, defined and delineated, nowadays talking about these two fundamental figures has become extremely difficult. One runs the risk of being immediately labelled as old-fashioned, retrograde male chauvinists.

It is equally difficult to talk about men and women, husbands and wives. For proof of this, just read one of the many books dedicated to love and the problems of the couple. In these books, although advice is given to men and women, to husbands and wives, to girlfriends and boyfriends, you will mostly find generic and undefined terms such as 'partner' or 'the other element of the couple' 'sometimes 'the partner'. It does not matter whether male or female, whether gay or lesbian.

Reading one gets the distinct feeling that the problems are identical and transferable from one to the other without any problem.

If you ask a child today what a mother is, one of the few answers you will get is 'one who makes food'. If you then ask what a father is, you will probably get no answer at all. If you then ask a student at a classical high school, as we did, what they

would like to be when they grow up, they will tell you a range of jobs and professions: policeman, policeman, engineer, doctor, but almost no one will tell you that they would like to be a good mother or a good father, a good husband or a loving wife.

The distinction resurfaces, however, when young people and adults spontaneously talk about their relationship problems. It is then that the aforementioned terms crop up again and again: "Men are...". "Women are..." "Wives, for goodness sake are all..." "Husbands all have the same defect..." "Fortunately, we men..." "Fortunately, we women..."

This strange situation, and the reluctance to talk about roles and tasks, reminds me of the images shown on TV when some villages are wretchedly hit by a mudslide. In those images you can see the slime that covers everything and everyone and gives everything the same earthy colour, eliminating all original form. The greyness of the mud flattens and erases everything. People, animals, houses, objects take on confusingly similar characteristics.

Yet, whether we want it or not, the future of generations is played out on concepts such as: father or mother, husband or wife, male or female. It is on these that we must question ourselves if we want true and consistent answers to the most serious problems of our families and social life.

We then have a duty to rediscover these terms and to clean them with the clear water of reason and experience, as the rescuers in mud-swamped countries do with objects, animals and things. Patiently clean them until the primitive colours and forms, lights and shadows, purposes and functions currently confused or greatly distorted, re-emerge.

4.4LA DONNA -MOTHER

Meanwhile, let us discuss the characteristics of the co-players of affective education: the father and the mother, starting with the one who should be the queen and main protagonist of the affective world: the woman-mother.

In this historical period of the Western world, it is difficult to speak of woman-mother, since this term, so widespread and

important in all centuries and in all peoples, so much so as to be seen as a sacred and divine element (la Dea Madre has been an object of veneration in many civilisations for millennia), is today superficially and erroneously judged as a limiting and partial definition of the female function.

Increasingly, professional qualities and social 'achievements' are overrated and exalted: 'woman - pilot', 'woman - magistrate', 'woman - architect', for goodness sake, are fine, 'woman - mother' is not. This term makes one think of baby food to be cooked, little bottoms to be wiped, washing machines to be filled and laundry to be ironed.

Ultimately, the emphasis is increasingly placed on the characteristics and realities of employment and production, while devaluing the educational and caring role. However, how else to define a woman who takes on this particular task than by calling her by the sweet name of mother? On the other hand, as we shall see, her task is much more demanding, varied and fundamental than preparing baby food and wiping little bottoms.

4.4.1 Characteristics of the woman-mother.

For the project of affective-relational education to be correctly and fully realised, it is indispensable that this woman possesses special qualities. Winnicott calls this type of mother the 'normally devoted mother'.¹⁷ On the contrary, she must not possess characteristics that could make the harmonious development of the child difficult, if not impossible.

As far as skills are concerned, during expectation the woman must already have developed all those feminine qualities that will enable her to experience pregnancy with instinctive participation as a natural, carnal event. An overly rational outlook would prevent her from that empathic contact that is indispensable in the first months of the child's life. Unfortunately, this instinctual attitude contrasts sharply with the need for professional efficiency that is demanded of women in the workplace.

¹⁷ D. W. WINNICOTT, *Children and their Mothers*, Raffaello Cortina, Milan, 1987, p.1.

To the pregnant woman, society offers, at least ostensibly, assistance just as a mother through parental leave. In reality, not only is this protection not complete, but above all it is not flexible and adaptable to the situations and needs of both mother and child.

While it is true that the risk of premature birth increases in the last few months, it is also true that no two pregnancies are the same and that every woman experiences this fundamental event in her life, both psychologically and physically, in a special way. The mother, therefore, should have the right to work if and when she feels that work is perfectly compatible with her and the child's well-being, at the times and times when she feels able to commit herself. This was, moreover, the case in pre-industrial, agrarian societies, which privileged the maternal and affective role over the working and productive one.

As regards the post-pregnancy period, while two to three months are generally sufficient for the woman to regain good physical capacities, in order to effectively meet the psychological, intellectual and care needs of the newborn child, a few months of mandatory parental leave are by no means sufficient. If due consideration were to be given to these needs, parental leave should mandatorily last not two to three months, but at least three years, since it is in the first three years that the child needs special maternal care and attention.

The nest period, which is the most delicate and important period in the psycho-affective development of the human being, as of all higher animals, in which the mother figure is fundamental, covers, in fact, this period of time. But it is also the period of two to three years in which the mother, immersing herself totally in her role, can acquire those particular attitudes that we call maternal, which will serve her for the rest of her life and which she will be able to pass on to her offspring as a specific basic value and culture.

We know, however, that these needs clash and conflict with the management needs of companies and organisations or services that employ women workers, since any company or organisation that hires a woman would like her to give her full capabi-

lities and all her time to the development of the company or organisation, without long periods of parental leave.

When a baby comes into the world it goes from a soft and warm environment, (what could be softer and warmer than the amniotic fluid in the mother's womb?), to the cold, hard bed of the delivery room. She goes from an environment in which sounds are soft and gentle, punctuated by the reassuring beat of the mother's heart, to the noisy environment outside. It passes from a situation in which all its needs are automatically met by the influx of the umbilical cord to the need to breathe and feed in order to live.

Not to mention the moment of birth. A traumatic event for the mother but above all for the baby, who is pressed, squeezed and forced into the birth canal, sometimes for several hours, before being able to come into the light.

The new human being coming to life manages to overcome this trauma and this physically and psychologically stressful event that could push him to close in on himself to escape a world interpreted as traumatic and aggressive, the moment he realises, through the arms that carry him to his chest and through the sweetness of the caresses of those around him, that the world outside him has not only negative but also positive values.

Positive are, in fact, the sensations he feels when his mother welcomes him, and cradles him, holds him to her breast and nurses him while her own ego builds and forms the child's ego and is attuned to it.¹⁸

The child accepts that there is a place outside him and opens up to it because of the way in which the mother lays her tender gaze on him and communicates with him.¹⁹ And it is because of the sense of security and festive welcome and the 'good enough' maternal care that the child develops the innate tendency towards integration with inner and outer reality.

¹⁸ D. W. WINNICOTT, *The family and the development of the individual*, Armando, Milan, p28.

¹⁹ D. W. WINNICOTT, *Children and their Mothers*, Raffaello Cortina, Milan, 1987, p18.

And it is from a good integration with the mother that the child distinguishes the self from the other, from the outside, and can build up a delimiting membrane, so that it can say: 'I am', while, finally, it is after it has acquired an individuality of its own that it can truly be part of a group.

Within this *self*, memories and experiences can be collected and the infinitely complex structure that is inherent to the human being can be built.

His overall emotional and affective growth is, therefore, directly influenced positively or negatively by the way in which the mother knows how to welcome, play, communicate, care for and meet his needs. In order to do this, to understand and better meet the child's needs, the mother, as Winnicott says, makes herself as small and fragile as her little one.²⁰ But in order for this making herself small and fragile not to compromise her Ego and that of the child, the person who adopts these attitudes and behaviours must possess considerable solidity and basic maturity, and must have a man and a family and affective network at her side to help and support her. When this does not happen, when the mother finds herself alone or too fragile, serious dangers arise for her and her child. The risks for the mother are well known: post-partum depression, anxiety, restlessness, difficulty in relating to the newborn. The risks for the child are equally serious and numerous and range from the risk of being neglected both physically and psychologically to that of being abandoned or even killed. These risks are portrayed in the media as moments of madness, whereas in reality they are the consequence of a series of incongruous social behaviours that did not give the woman the necessary support so that she could live this fundamental experience well.

In summary, even if all the prerequisites for good self-building are in place at the genetic level, nothing can be taken for granted.

Returning to the example of building a house, until a good builder has materially built foundations, pillars, walls, the house

²⁰ D. W. WINNICOTT, *Children and their Mothers*, Raffaello Cortina, Milan, 1987, p. 94.

is not there. Until he has built the windows that allow light to enter the house and at the same time to look out of it, and until he has built a door that allows one to go out of that house to meet others and communicate and interact with them, the door and the window will not be there, even if in the project it was planned for them to be there. Therefore, until someone builds an autonomous self, the person is not there. Until someone builds social and interpersonal skills, these will be missing or not fully developed.

But who can this someone be? Who are the specialists capable of doing this?

A human being certainly, because humanity is born from contact with other humanity. But this is not enough. This human being must have the necessary skills and preparation to do this work and the full willingness and adaptability to this task. We do not know what will happen in the future, but so far the best specialists in the construction of a human being have, with few exceptions, proved to be its parents, and of these, in the first years of life, especially the women-mothers.

4.4.2 Role of the mother before the age of three.

Even before birth, the mother has the task of creating *the most favourable environment* around the child she is carrying. An environment free not only of physical pollutants (drugs, adulterated food, dangerous radiation, etc.), but also one free of all those psychological pollutants that could harm the child she carries in her womb. Anxiety, fatigue, inner tension, conflict, stress, all represent potential dangers for the unborn child.

To do this, she must know how to draw on all the positive elements of her own experience and basic instinctive capacities, just as she must also know how to use, with intelligence and shrewdness, the contributions of the family and affective network in which she is embedded. The functions of these two networks: the family network and the affective network, which should be broad, rich, warm and available, are fundamental to her and her little one's balance and psychological well-being.

The first and main node in this network is certainly the husband, the child's father, who initially has the task of provi-

ding her and her child with the indispensable contributions of care and protection, while, subsequently, he will contribute to the newborn's educational and training process through an enrichment and expansion of the mother-child relationship.

The dialogue between mother and child starts very early. Even before birth, woman and child converse. The child senses from its mother's breathing, warmth, smell, noises and heart-beat²¹ whether its surroundings are serene and welcoming or anxious, fearful, aggressive, unfriendly and cold.

At birth, therefore, every child, whatever its genetic programme, needs a warm, tender, available presence, capable of welcoming and communion with it. A presence that has good caring abilities, great communication and relational skills, and remarkable availability. We identify this presence precisely in the mother, although soon her needs will widen to include other figures: father, grandparents, brothers, uncles, cousins, friends, etc.. The amount of this relationship varies over time. While towards the mother, initially, it is almost 24 hours a day, it gradually decreases until, in the adult, the need for the mother figure becomes, within the day, only a few minutes.

To better understand the mother's task, we must enter the world of the new human being coming into life. We will discover that this world of hers is special.

Meanwhile, from the adults' point of view, the world in which the newborn child lives is very small, as it is basically represented by the mother figure.

This alone should give us an exact sense of the importance of this presence and the attention we should pay to it.

Our world as adults is wide and varied. It is made up of work, friendships, casual encounters, loves and passions. It is made up of parental relationships, but also of men and women from the past whom we have come to know indirectly from books or the works they have written. All these realities leave a trace in our being. The world of adults is also made up of imaginary characters, whom we approach through the books of poets

²¹ D. W. WINNICOTT, *Children and their Mothers*, Raffaello Cortina, Milan, 1987, p.98.

and novelists; it is made up of actors, actresses, singers whom we have heard on the radio, seen on TV or applauded live at the theatre or in concerts.

All of these characters enrich our souls with affective-relational relationships from which we can draw when we need to, for listening, consolation, strength, security, pleasure and joy.

Then there is the world of religion, unknown to the young child, which, however, in adults is a source of considerable positive contributions. If there is in fact a God who judges and punishes, there is also and above all a God who understands our anxieties, who listens to our prayers, as well as our needs. A God who consoles and welcomes. A God who is close to us and supports us in times of sadness and despondency.

Well, in the world of the young child, all these affective-relational elements are reduced to one and only one person: their mother.

From the characteristics of this woman, from her ability to create and maintain a welcoming, loving, warm, affectionate, dialoguing reality around the child, derives the birth and robustness of the new human being's very ego. If the mother's body and blood are irreplaceable in building the child's body, her personality characteristics and abilities are equally irreplaceable in shaping the fundamental psychological structure of the new human being: personal and sexual identity, sociality, relational abilities, mental health.

If all goes well, if the mother has appropriate characteristics and behaviour, the child's world will be one of pleasure, joy, satisfaction, serenity, warmth, openness and trust in himself, others, and life. On the contrary, if things do not proceed in the right way, his world and therefore also his ego will be invaded by suffering, disappointment, anxiety and fear that he will manifest through weeping, wailing, somatic symptoms and, in the most serious cases, through closure to others and to the world.

The affective messages that the child receives from the external environment, especially from his mother, can then colour his ego with positive feelings, such as love, joy, hope, pleasure, desire, affection, esteem towards himself and the world around him. Or, on the contrary, if the affective messages are invalid his

world and the world around him will be invested with negative elements, such as anger, rage, aggressiveness, restlessness, fear, anxiety, depression, sadness, rejection, denial, conflict.

By the way, these qualities are not stable: they need the continuous effort, emotional commonality and support of others to be maintained.

The functions of the child's personality are oriented in two directions: towards the inner organism and towards the social environment. Both need continuous maternal input to develop.

For Winnicott, in fact, '...the mental health of the individual is founded from the beginning by the mother who provides what I have called a facilitating environment, that is, one that allows the child's natural growth processes and interactions with the environment to evolve in accordance with the individual's hereditary pattern. The mother, without knowing it, is laying the foundations of her mental health. Not only that. Beyond mental health, the mother (if she behaves in the right way) is laying the foundation for the strength, character and richness of the individual's personality.'²²

If the mother fails to understand her child's needs and/or fails to respond adequately, a state of mind arises in the child that Winnicott describes as 'offended'.²³ In the 'offended' soul there is disappointment, suffering and a tendency towards closure, towards the one who made us suffer. And if this 'who' is the *mother - world*, the risk is that this closure also extends to everything and everyone.

Gross errors of adaptation do not initially produce anger, because the child is not yet organised in such a way as to be able to get angry about something; anger, and thus its manifestations such as aggression, presuppose the retention in the mind of the shattered ideal. Anger and aggression will come later, when the child is older, for Osterrieth around two to three months. Anger when habitual sequences are not respected or the gratifications

²² D. W. WINNICOTT, *Children and their Mothers*, Raffaello Cortina, Milan, 1987, p. 50.

²³ D. W. WINNICOTT, *Children and their Mothers*, Raffaello Cortina, Milan, 1987, p.75.

he was accustomed to receive do not occur at the right time and with the right people.²⁴

Children, but also the young of other animals, are creatures of habit. They only feel calm and trust when events around them always unfold in the same way. Changes, especially if sudden and inadequately prepared, make them anxious and burden them with fears that, in the eyes of adults, appear strange and excessive, when in fact they are only the logical consequence of inappropriate behaviour and attitudes.

When the mother cannot or does not manage to have a good relationship with her child, the latter experiences anguish, a feeling of falling apart, a feeling of complete isolation, a split between psyche and soma, a breakdown in communication.²⁵ The most serious risk is that the newborn child cannot even structure its own ego, because the environment around it does not have the qualities to accommodate a new ego. What happens then is what happens to the seed that falls on the stone or on unfertile soil: it tries to hatch but immediately shrivels up and dies before it has even become a seedling.

Often these 'offences' are made by the mother, but also by the doctors, nurses and staff who look after the child during the days when he or she is in an in-patient facility. These staff are sometimes more concerned with the cleanliness, management and organisation of the facility than with the emotions and feelings that stir and live in the souls of their little guests.²⁶

It happens more and more often to discover, after careful studies and research, which by the way are also very expensive, what some semi-illiterate old lady already knew perfectly well all along. For example, it is proposed as a novelty for premature babies, rather than the icy cold incubator, the mother's breast and arms. With this technique, which is called Kangaroo care, or Marsupioterapia, the naked baby is placed upright between its

²⁴ P. A. OSTERRIETH, *Introduction to Child Psychology*, Giunti - Barbera, Florence, 1965, p. 62.

²⁵ D. W. WINNICOTT, *Children and their Mothers*, Raffaello cortina editore, Milan, 1987, p.98.

²⁶ D. W. WINNICOTT, *Children and their Mothers*, Raffaello Cortina editore, Milan, 1987, p.75

mother's breasts, so that its mother's warmth, her smell, and her voice reassure it. With this 'new (?)' technique, weight recovery is faster. Hospital stays are shorter. Maintenance of vital parameters and hormonal balance is achieved more quickly.

One of the characteristics needed in a good mother is adaptability.

"At birth, the child is not a *tabula rasa*; there are significant hereditary and congenital differences between one child and another. Children vary in physical type, intellectual potential, temperament, metabolism, affectivity, motor activity, nervous reactions. Nevertheless, the environmental influence in definitively shaping the expression of these potentials is enormous,²⁷ and thus the mother's adaptive abilities are crucial.

The symbol of this physical mother-baby intimacy is the breast-feeding period. A period in which dialogue is made up of words but above all of mutual glances, light touches and massages, caresses and warmth. In our western society, the lack of knowledge and, above all, of affective-relational preparation on the part of new mothers is so great that it is often necessary for them to take a specific course from specialised teachers, to prepare them for contact with their babies through infant massage.

While sucking at the breast, the child watches and is observed by its mother, who often speaks softly to it to tell it of her joy at having it in her arms, her pleasure at holding such a beautiful little puppy to her heart, her gratification at giving it a part of herself with warm, sweet milk. In fact, Bartolo says: "Affective nourishment is as essential to development as, and more so than, the milk that comes from the mother's breast."²⁸

In the mother's face, the child sees himself, and if the mother has a sweet, smiling and serene attitude, he sees himself smiling and serene; if the mother is upset, this upset is immediately transmitted to his soul and to the child's self-image. But the mother, while nursing him or caring for him, also begins to talk to him about the other people he will meet and who will gra-

²⁷ N. W. ACKERMAN, *Psychodynamics of Family Life*, p. 69.

²⁸ G. V. BARTOLO, 'L'amore che fa crescere il figlio', in *Famiglia oggi*, 2003, 2, p.27.

dually become part of his life: his father, his grandparents, his little brothers and sisters. And in talking to him about these she reassures him. As if to say: 'You can trust them too. They will know how to welcome you and listen to you, as I have welcomed and listened to you.' And that is why 'Milk is vital, but how it is given is essential to development. One cannot breastfeed while watching television or reading the newspaper under the pretext that that is the only time to include a relaxing recreational activity.'²⁹

Breastfeeding is not always possible. "Personally, however, I always feel regret when breastfeeding fails, simply because I feel that the mother and child or both lose something if they do not have this experience."³⁰

When this happens for reasons not dependent on the mother's personality, the damage is minimal. Even through the bottle, it is possible to give the baby warmth and tenderness and establish an initial dialogue made up of smiles, caresses, sweet and endearing words. The problem arises when breastfeeding is refused by the mother or is made impossible by her inexperience or psychological problems (anxieties, fears, phobias). In these cases, it is already an important sign of the presence of difficulties in the mother-child relationship. Difficulties that, if not resolved promptly, may undermine their relationship, making it tense and difficult.

The child immediately senses the mother's difficulties and responds with signs of distress (crying, restlessness, insomnia) or organic symptoms (vomiting, diarrhoea). Symptoms that often worsen the mother's anxiety and make her responses even less effective and congruent, even more tense and anxious. A vicious circle of unpredictable consequences is then triggered.

Numerous specific qualities are therefore required of this key figure in psychic development, but 'when a mother has the capacity to simply be a good mother, we should not interfere',³¹

²⁹ G. V. BARTOLO, 'L'amore che fa crescere il figlio', in *Famiglia oggi*, 2003, 2, p. 26.

³⁰ D. W. WINNICOTT, *Children and their Mothers*, p. 50.

³¹ D. W. WINNICOTT, *Children and their Mothers*, pp. 10-11.

as a good mother knows what the child needs at that particular time.³²

Interference can be of various kinds. Some are caused by business and services.

This requires the mother to perform a thousand checks and a thousand tests. Many more than are really necessary. The risk of the medicalisation of this physiological act is that the mother, having to act, worry and take care of too many things, loses the most important thing, which is the serenity necessary for the meeting and the relationship with the newborn. Interference from the services continues with indications, these too often excessive, concerning the amount of food the child must eat, the weight and height it must reach, vaccinations and check-ups to be carried out.

Interference also arises from friends and family members who feel obliged to make long and frequent courtesy visits to the new mother, without thinking that she should devote a good part of her time and energy not to guests but to meeting and talking to her baby.

4.5 THE ROLE OF THE FATHER

If it is forbidden to talk about the mother-woman, it is fashionable to talk about the tasks of the father-man.

Unfortunately, however, there is hardly any talk of its specific tasks but of how it should be in relation to the often changing and contradictory needs of the woman or woman-mother.

In the meantime, it is said that the father must participate in the preparation for childbirth together with his wife, and then assist her in those crucial hours.³³ But are we sure that the wife and the gestating baby need a father who attends an assembly of bellies?

In almost all societies of the past, pregnancy, motherhood and childbirth were considered women's things. Things from

³² D. W. WINNICOTT, *Children and their Mothers*, p.93

³³ Fathers attended the birth: in Northern Italy 88.4%, in the Centre 70.6%, in the South 30.3%.

which men were excluded. Are we certain that all societies were wrong in this practice while only we citizens of modern Western societies are right? That the presence of the husband at certain times is good for the wife is possible, although many women have confided in us that they are very embarrassed by that presence, but that this practice is good for the husband and the future life of the couple we have many doubts. Sexuality and motherhood need mystery and modesty. It is not pleasant for a man to witness an often very bloody and distressing spectacle without being able to act directly and personally. There is no doubt that this participation, not always voluntary, but often extorted to please his wife or to conform to what is 'right to do', can then make the resumption of emotional and sexual life with his wife more difficult.

It is also dictated to the father-man to be tender and maternal with the newborn child. And the man, driven by the dictates of psychologists and his spouse, does everything to be tender and motherly. The 'mummies,' as they are called, are able to change a baby's nappy in a jiffy, they know how to rock and soothe the baby as much and more than their wives. Let us not mention the ability to bottle-feed or prepare baby food: they are masters in the art of baby cooking. There would be nothing wrong with acquiring typically maternal skills if there were not the risk of underestimating, not using, or worse losing, purely paternal skills and qualities. Something that will immediately afterwards be reproached to these fathers by the wives themselves and by the social environment.

The role of the father, when a new human being is on the way, should be a different one.

We have said that during pregnancy the mother is particularly fragile and delicate. This new and unfamiliar experience often makes her more anxious, fearful and insecure than she normally is. Her already fragile and delicate soul becomes even more so. She fears for her life and that of her child. Fears include not being able to cope with pregnancy, childbirth or puerperium. She fears the death of the child she is carrying for various reasons but also, which is worse, through her own fault: 'Will I be able to give birth to it?' she asks herself. She fears that the fruit

of her womb may have hereditary defects or be born malformed (fear of handicap).

Reassuring responses to this greater fragility, emotionality, anxiety, and fears can certainly come from the stronger and more solid part of one's ego, just as they can come from the experiences, advice, and support of the mother and other women close to her. However, one should not underestimate the fact that a large part of the woman's serenity and security should be entrusted to the father of the child.

If this figure is there, and unfortunately today she is not always present, if she has assumed all the responsibilities of fatherhood and if she has acted in the right way, and therefore in a masculine way, by her presence, by example and by words she will succeed in reassuring, stabilising, comforting and supporting the mother.³⁴ The mother, relying on her husband as a solid and valid support, can allow herself to regress to the level of the newborn or small child, in such a way as to be extremely delicate, tender, sensitive and ready to meet the new being, otherwise either she will fall prey to anxiety and worries or, seeking only in herself the strength needed to face these events, she will highlight her masculine side that at that moment is neither wanted, nor desired and appreciated by the new human being.

Therefore, the father, since the environment in which the child develops is the mother, has the task of creating a climate of serenity, security, tenderness and warmth in and around the mother, so that the expectant mother can more easily enter into that special atmosphere, that special intimacy that is indispensable for initiating the fundamental empathic relationship with her child.

He must also shield her, with his work and attention, from strenuous activities and polluting or stressful environments that could damage the product of conception.

Today, unfortunately, in Western societies there is not always a man next to an expectant woman who is fully available to perform her fundamental task. Often, even when there is a

³⁴ N. W. ACKERMAN, *Psychodynamics of Family Life*, p.209.

man beside a woman, he has neither the characteristics, nor the culture, nor the necessary maturity to take on this role.

Many times, the poor education received not only failed to form a mature and responsible man, it often failed to form a man either.

The product of a permissive upbringing, attentive more to blurring than to emphasising and enhancing masculine characteristics, is often a fragile, emotionally unstable, insecure and inconstant being, incapable of being a point of reference, security, support and bulwark for his woman and his family.

Moreover, even if the man is there and has appropriate masculine characteristics, he frequently, due to work, social, political and leisure commitments, has little time and energy to use to stay close to his woman and the developing child.

Since there is not always a marriage relationship, the essential prerequisite for a serious, ongoing and stable commitment is often lacking on the part of these fathers. Relationships in which the use of full sexuality among young people is the norm and not the sad exception are becoming increasingly widespread. In addition, cohabiting relationships are spreading in which, due to the explicit or implicit need of one or both partners, the commitment and responsibility of one towards the other is limited or reduced to a minimum.

Other times this help, this support, is not even asked for, nor, if offered, is well accepted, because 'gender equality' demands that the woman does not show herself to the man as weak and in need of assistance, but as strong, decisive and autonomous. "A woman who never has to ask for anything." This asking for nothing, rather than empowering the woman, prevents her from sharing anxieties, fears and apprehensions with a man who knows how to listen and support her. All this, of course, makes her even more fragile and insecure and thus even more prey to depression and anxiety.

But even after birth, the father has multiple functions that are not always clearly highlighted by psychology. Paparella summarises them as follows: 'In the father figure, acceptance is always linked to prescription, the norm is always linked to the ability to forgive, justice is always open to mercy. The relation-

ship with the father opens up to otherness, pushes for novelty, orients towards the outside world; it does not sever tradition, which on the contrary is enhanced, it does not exclude memory, which on the contrary is cultivated, it does not dampen desire, which on the contrary is channelled and made productive, but frees from immobility, from standstill, from nostalgia and repetitiveness.³⁵

As the child begins to face the outside world, the father figure becomes more and more pregnant and important.

- "Meanwhile, the child's interaction with his father epitomises the child's first separation from his mother and his first adaptation to a stranger(...) prepares the child for the increasingly broader contact with the outside world, with the social universe that extends beyond the family."³⁶ He therefore has the task of gradually interrupting, by means of a series of educational interventions, the excessively intimate, 'fusional' relationship between mother and child, which may continue even after birth, so that for the child the road to sociality opens up.
- As early as a few months after birth, the father's manner of education, care and dialogue will serve to stimulate in the child potentialities such as autonomy, strength, courage, determination, security, motor and emotional control, a tighter and more direct dialogue, and more linear and responsible behaviour.³⁷
- A father has the task of nurturing in his child the necessary grit, dynamism, resourcefulness, determination. If one of the mother's main tasks has been to protect the child, the father's main task, after the first few months after birth, is to instil in him strength, courage, determination, security and daring, through games and activities that strengthen his character, that make him more confident and determined. The challenges that he proposes to him,

³⁵ N. PAPARELLA, 'La famiglia e la educazione alla legalità', in *La famiglia*, 1992, 154, p. 26.

³⁶ N. W. ACKERMAN, *Psychodynamics of Family Life*, p.210.

³⁷ E. TRIBULATO, *L'educazione negata*, EDAS, MESSINA, 2005, P.67.

the pretend fights that he carries out with him, have this purpose. The child encounters in the father figure a world that is rougher but exciting, firmer but engaging, more secure and solid than the one he experienced with his mother. He discovers with his father the possibilities offered by his body, his muscles, his reflexes. He discovers within him the passion and determination to achieve his goals.

- The father figure's purpose is to instil in his offspring's soul and behaviour the values associated with virility. These masculine values are also useful for girls but are indispensable above all for boys. These include: firmness, courage, linearity, quick decision-making, strength, a sense of honour, pride, loyalty, respect for rules and standards and therefore for authority. As regards the latter value, if, within the family, the father's authority is debased or obfuscated, there is a risk that the sense and purpose of authority, of all authority, will also be debased and obfuscated. Just as the authority of the father is not recognised, the authority of teachers, guardians of order, elders, administrators and so on will not be recognised. This, of course, can cause serious harm to society since, not recognising any authority, undermines the very foundations of civilised living and leads to anarchic and delinquent behaviour and attitudes.
- The father's task is to germinate a sense of duty. Duty towards his wife, towards his children and family, towards humanity in general. Duty to society, to the state, to the wider community. Both the boy and the girl can make these male contributions their own and use them when necessary. It is enough to reflect on the many, many situations in life that one must face with realism, determination, courage, strength and straightforwardness, to understand how this masculine heritage is fundamental in the development of the personality of the child and then of the young person and the adult.

- The father grows in his son the need to enlighten his own actions and behaviour through past experiences and future needs and prospects. He therefore helps him to look not only at today, but to use and value past experience to project the consequences of his actions and decisions into the distant future. It also encourages him not to limit his interests exclusively to his own person and family, but to broaden his horizons to others, to the city, the nation, the whole world.
- The father inserts in his children's minds and makes them grow up, the need for and the serene acceptance of norms and rules that are indispensable to civilised living.
- The child discovers with his father the courage to make quick and immediate decisions.
- He discovers with his father the joy of conquest, the control of pain and emotions, the pride of daring.

Like the woman, the man too, therefore, has an immense heritage to pass on. A precious and irreplaceable heritage that unfortunately, today, is confused with the excesses or pathological expressions present in some men. Aggressiveness, violence, inability to understand the needs of others are not 'male defects', they are instead pathological expressions of disturbed or deprived personalities. They are the consequence of a careless and inconsistent upbringing. They are the effect of a conflictual relationship between the genders. Today, on the female side, the lack of the paternal role is felt, especially in adolescence: forla Cristiani "This is why adolescents today are particularly at risk, not only because there are no institutional paths designed to accompany them, as was the case in traditional societies, but because the maternisation of the family first and then of the school, apparently smoothes out growth, but in reality, by marginalising or devaluing paternal values centred on the development of abilities and autonomy, makes adolescents fragile and disarmed in the face of the challenges posed by society. And again the same author: "It therefore seems rather to be the father who has to support the adolescent, male or female, grappling with the social debut, reassuring them not with the re-proposal

of childish securities, but rather with listening and enhancing the resources to be brought into play for the realisation of the true self. Moreover, unlike the mother, who cannot handle conflict, when necessary she will know how to oppose it by tolerating the loneliness involved in saying no to claims that are improper or too risky."³⁸ If, therefore, the adolescent is weak, fragile, immature, it is because he comes from a childhood in which the father figure did not or could not give, his indispensable contributions of strength, security and determination.

These maternal and paternal contributions will benefit both males and females even though each sex will then use them with different characteristics, merging them with the other genetic and environmental elements linked to the different personal and sexual configurations. All this will be possible if each parent carries different sexual characteristics. Otherwise, only personal messages will reach the child. Each of us, in fact, has a personal baggage that is different from that of the others, but it is an incomplete baggage if it lacks the richness that only two parents with different sexual characteristics and roles can provide.

Ultimately, to make the father, as is often attempted, an 'almost mother' or a mother's helper, is not only useless, but harmful to the children, the family and ultimately to society. For Lidz, in fact, "It is becoming more and more evident in scientific terms, as it has always been in terms of common sense, that children need two parents who, by providential law of nature, are of opposite sexes in temperament and appearance, but who together constitute a single entity in which they complement and complement each other."³⁹

4.6 FATHER'S AND MOTHER'S DUTIES AFTER THE AGE OF THREE

³⁸ C. CRISTIANI, 'Old and new dynamics', in *Famiglia oggi*, 2002, 11, p.11-13.

³⁹ T. LIDZ, *Family and Problems of Adaptation*, Boringhieri, Turin, 1977, p.41.

The mother's and father's tasks do not cease when the child is mature enough to begin its journey of integration and socialisation. Both parents must give this child the tools to receive and transmit the elements of human culture and history.

4.6.1 Communication.

It is above all the mother who is committed to giving her child the opportunity to understand and then to express herself. First through *body language*. A language made up of gestures and expressiveness through which he can communicate his needs. Gestures such as raising his arms to ask to be picked up and held close to his heart. Gestures such as sending kisses with the hand to make relatives and friends happy. Gestures to recognise and point to objects and people. Gestures to make them understand that they have correctly understood verbal language. Gestures to express needs: hunger, thirst, annoyance. Gestures to express desires: "I want that object", "I like that thing or that person, I don't like it, I don't want it."

And then a *language made up of verbal expressions* that initially consist of 'mommy jargon'. Simple vowels and syllables to express basic needs and then words and phrases to converse and acquire information from the people and media, such as the radio and the TV, with whom he or she will come into contact. For Osterrieth '...the child cannot discover speech except among people who speak' and again the same author: 'In short, there can be no specifically human development without contact with human beings'.⁴⁰

A language that is learnt through the joyful and continuous commitment of family members but especially of the mother.⁴¹

A language therefore indispensable for understanding and expressing his needs even better: food, water, affection, cuddles. A language to say: "I love you." A language to make oneself understood and to understand. A language to smile and play together. A language to better express the reasons for one's joy, as

⁴⁰ P. A. OSTERRIETH, *Introduction to Child Psychology*, Giunti-Barbera, Florence, 1965, p. 25.

well as fears and anxieties and, if possible, also the causes of one's suffering. A language to express the joy of being in the world, but also, when needed, the difficulties encountered on the streets of this world. A language to say yes and accept, a language to say no and impose one's will.

Alongside verbal and mimic language, parents, but once again above all mothers, with their presence, with their words, with their gestures, with their actions, with their example, also have the task of building and developing in the hearts and minds of their children the world of feelings and emotions, the world of care and attention, the world of affection and relationships, the world of tenderness and attention to all, but above all to the youngest, to the neediest and weakest.

Both parents, ultimately, but especially the mother, have the task of developing and caring for the world of the heart. This is a fundamental and irreplaceable task, because it is the basis of every human, social and spiritual relationship. It is the basis of the future capabilities of mother and father. Yes, even of fathers. Because the affective, relational and spiritual heritage belongs to and is the heritage of both sexes, whatever their future role. This heritage can be used in a thousand ways: as father and mother, we said, but also as husband and wife, as teacher or pupil, as priest or doctor, as psychologist, plumber, magistrate, politician. It will be a precious asset, indispensable for every man and woman, to be spent in the most appropriate way, according to individual or group choices, within human society.

Without this heritage, future men and women will be formed who are stunted or disturbed in their affective-relational life. Unable to feel good about themselves and others. Incapable of understanding and being understood; incapable of loving and being loved; incapable of acceptance and forgiveness; incapable of acceptance and availability.

4.6.2 Correct sexual identity.

Parents then have the task of helping the development of a correct sexual identity and role in their children.

Therefore, 'The security of one's sexual identity is a factor of fundamental importance in achieving a stable ego identity. Of

all the factors that contribute to the formation of personality characteristics, sex is the most decisive. Uncertainties and dissatisfactions regarding one's sexual identity can contribute to the aetiology of many neuroses, character deficiencies and perversions."⁴² "From an anthropological perspective, sexuality is properly a condition of existence; in fact, even before being a deep procreative and drive function, it is a structural dimension of the person that deeply marks the entire experience and self-consciousness of the individual..."⁴³

The genetic heritage, with the XX chromosomes for future sissies and the XY chromosomes for future boys, is only the blueprint for beginning to build a correct sexual identity.⁴⁴ To these initial inputs must be added, in the meantime, the correct information provided by the hormones coming from the primitive testicles and ovaries which, like good messengers, will carry the same information to all organs: "From this moment onwards, organise yourselves in a masculine sense" or, on the contrary, "From this moment onwards, organise and specialise yourselves in a feminine sense." If the message is sent correctly, if it is sufficiently intense, if it is received by the various organs and districts, and if the organs obey and adapt to this communication, a good basis for a correct sexual identity will be built. But this is not enough because other specific educational elements will have to come from the environment. Other hormonal elements will, at the appropriate time, have to be added throughout the individual's life, especially during the pubertal period

While parents must make every effort to ensure that the new born is protected from physical pollutants that could deviate normal sexual development, their fundamental task is to constantly ensure that consistent and correct messages arrive from them, and from their surroundings, that respect identity and specific roles.

⁴² T. LIDZ, *Family and problems of adaptation*, p.76.

⁴³ M. L. DI PIETRO, 'Educating for sexual difference in the family', in *La famiglia*, 1994, 164, p.37.

⁴⁴ E. TRIBULATO, *Education denied*, p.312.

Meanwhile, for Lidz, 'the maintenance of the correct sexual role by the parents throughout their union is of decisive importance in guiding the child to develop positively as a man or a woman',⁴⁵ if this is missing so that roles are confused, blurred or worse reversed, the child will lack a valid role model.

In addition to proposing their own correct male or female lifestyle, parents must also make an effort to give the child that is to be born specific stimuli to better direct its sexual identity and roles. This task is carried out by the mother even before the child is born, preparing the most suitable layette but, above all, preparing, in her own innermost self, those attitudes and behaviours most suitable to help and make a correct sexual identity and role concrete.

This inner preparation today is made easier by the premature knowledge of sex, but even when this was not possible, parents prepared their souls to help nature in the definition of a correct identity. The choice of colours, in our western society: pink for little girls and blue for little boys; the choice of clothing styles: little dresses, lace for little girls, more sober dresses and shorts for little boys, had and have the purpose of making it easy to identify the respective sex, at a stage of development when the two sexes could become confused.

It is a message for the newborn and then for the child, but it is also a message for the community of relatives and friends. Like saying and asking everyone: "Please treat this child as a girl or, on the contrary, as a boy."

We are what we carry in our bodies, we are what we carry in our minds and hearts, but we are also how others see us and how we see ourselves. Personal experience and that of those around us is not indifferent in the development of our personality. Therefore, the name, the clothes, the colours, are messages of identification for oneself and for others, so that a coherent inner experience is built up and thus we behave accordingly and the project of sexual differentiation already present in the genes from conception goes smoothly.

⁴⁵ T. LIDZ, *Family and problems of adaptation*, p.76.

This commitment to correct sexual differentiation continues through family attitudes and behaviour.

Both parents will devote themselves to educating and developing in their daughters intense sensitivity, warm emotionality, understanding, sweet and tender attitudes. They will strive to develop in their daughters excellent skills in caring and communication, both verbal and non-verbal. A language for listening. A language for understanding and responding appropriately to the most immediate and instinctive needs. These qualities are indispensable for understanding, loving and caring for young children, as well as boys and young teenagers.

As a corollary to all this, there will be no lack of useful and indispensable teachings for the best use and functionality of the domestic environment: order, cleanliness, food preparation, physical, material and spiritual care, first aid, medical care, etc.

The differentiation activity will continue, day after day, by means of a series of messages and cultural elements typical of women's style. A style that will be evident in the way she dresses, in the way she relates to other women and men, to her neighbours, to her parental and affective network, to her husband.

A style that puts family values, feelings and the emotional relational world first.

At the same time, the father will strive to make the male sexual identity and role clear and defined by enhancing and stimulating various functions.

Meanwhile, a more agile, impetuous and strong motility. Maximum coherence in actions. Linearity and determination in decisions. The courage and security in facing dangers and tasks that may arise. The pleasure in the care and protection of women and children. The use of a drier and leaner language that goes straight to the core of the problem. A control of emotionality, so that life decisions and choices are not overly influenced by the emotions and feelings of the moment. Stimuli for adventure and action. Stimuli to dare to achieve more and more advanced and important goals for the family and social good.

In the masculine style that is communicated there will be: the need for sobriety, sobriety in clothing, sobriety in food, in

the use of objects; the importance of a strong sense of honour, to avoid being a weathercock and turncoat vis-à-vis one's family and society; stimulation of a very broad view of internal and external reality that takes into account not only the current situation but also correctly evaluates past indications and possible future developments.

Parents therefore have the task of giving both children the specific experiences and experiences they have.

While all relational life between parents and children should be attentive to the development of a correct sexual identity, there are some particularly important moments that psychology has identified: the first two to three years of life, the oedipal phase, adolescence.

In the oedipal phase that begins around the age of three or four, that love and preference for the parent of the opposite sex that Freud called oedipal love develops. A true, real love, even if lived in a very different context: more protected, less intense and involving, than that which will be experienced as an adult.

An exclusive love, a jealous love, a possessive love, a seductive love towards the parent of the opposite sex. This feeling will be a protected and safe training ground for learning to manage future emotions, such as those given by falling in love and future intense and exclusive emotional feelings, but it will also be a tool for improving sexual identity. The child will say: 'If daddy is a man and I am a woman, in order for daddy to love me I will have to try to be like mummy'. She will then introduce all the feminine characteristics of the mother, her gentleness, her tenderness, her ability to give and care for the little ones, her ways of getting what she wants through non-direct attitudes, etc. The opposite is true for the boy. In order for 'oedipal love' to fulfil its task correctly, however, certain conditions are necessary: there must be two parents of the opposite sex, who live their role and their love relationship with fullness and mutual respect, but also two parents who are present and active in their upbringing and in dialogue with their children.

Friendships and social relationships are also important. While friendships within the same sex improve sexual identity, through the exchange and communication of feelings, thoughts,

dreams, experiences with the peer group, friendships with the opposite sex allow a better understanding of the characteristics of the opposite sex and thus prepare for understanding and love encounters. Although both are useful, in childhood and boyhood the former should be clearly favoured, because it is from a good and correct sexual identity that the possibility of a better understanding can arise. Excessive frequency with the opposite sex, as is the case in our society today, both at school and during leisure time, risks confusing the proper development of sexual identity, detracts from the mystery and enchantment of the encounter, while at the same time trivialising relations with the opposite sex.

Schools, too, should contribute to the construction of a correct identity by valuing individual gender peculiarities in the education of pupils and not, as is the case today, by levelling out learning. Planning and then implementing educational styles as if humanity were characterised by a single sex, constricts, limits and stifles specific characteristics, to the considerable detriment of the woman and man who are being formed. If one adds to this the clear and predominant presence of female teachers, the school's contribution to the correct attainment of sexual identity not only falls to zero, but risks being negative for both boys and girls.

We know, in fact, that sexual identity is not something firmly and definitively concluded, neither at birth nor after the first years of existence; it needs at every stage of life continuous, incessant input. Otherwise it can become confused or deviate at any time.

4.6.3 Cultural contributions.

For personality development to be complete and harmonious, it is necessary for the child to acquire the basic culture of his or her family. The roots of each of us lie in a specific cultural substratum that should be handed down from generation to generation. This cultural substratum, which characterises the various family realities, is steeped in values, norms and unwritten rules that are transferred and passed down orally from parents to their children.

Just as we inherit a piece of land, a house or jewellery from our ancestors, if parents are fully committed to their task of transmitting the specific cultural identities of the family and environment, the child will receive thousands of messages that are and represent the fundamental cultural roots from which to draw throughout his or her existence.

In the human soul, this family substratum of values and experiences stimulates each new human being to a peculiar and particular lifestyle, in keeping with the traditions and models of the families from which the individual comes. When these specific cultural elements of a given family and society are missing, the child and then the young person and the adult, will be forced to take in only the often confusing and contradictory elements coming from society and the mass media.

In this case there is a serious risk of falling victim to the cultural fashions of the moment. And these cultural fashions can only give rise to personalities who, precisely because they are not tied to a specific past, will be insecure and with confused, unstable and fluctuating behaviour and attitudes.

4.7 MATERNAL AND PATERNAL QUALITIES

Each element of the couple and each parent should possess qualities that are indispensable to their role as husband and wife, father and mother, such as:

- Good maturity.
- Good communication skills.
- Good ability to give consistent, stable, complete and satisfactory answers.
- Good psychic balance.
- Altruistic and generous attitude.
- Good educational and caring skills.
- Physiologically appropriate age.

4.7.1 Good maturity.

A mature parent:

- He has full and solid trust in himself but also in others, especially in his children, in the other spouse and in the world.
- He can deal promptly and appropriately with serenity, inner clarity and determination even in the most difficult situations.
- It is able to correctly select the messages coming from the social environment, without being overly influenced.
- He is capable of living his individual needs by limiting them, if necessary, in order to joyfully give other family members the gift of his commitment, his presence, his self-sacrifice.
- It knows how to emphasise the value of motherhood and fatherhood, couple and family over the value of work, professional and social activity.
- It is able to fit into, nurture and maintain a large and rich family network, properly integrating and connecting its family with the families of origin.
- He has an elastic mindset that allows him to adapt to various realities and social changes, while taking into account all the valuable contributions of traditional culture.
- He knows how to be tender and understanding, but not permissive. Therefore, he knows how to address his children's educational needs with decisiveness and authority.
- He can derive satisfaction, gratification and joy from his care and education tasks.
- He can see his home as a sacred place to be made warm and welcoming with love, to be illuminated with a smile, to be made alive and palpitating with his presence.
- She knows how to be for her man or woman the other part of herself, a safe, warm and welcoming harbour in which the other can take refuge and feel protected.
- He knows how to manage household finances intelligently and carefully, without being influenced by fashions and the sirens of consumerism.

4.7.2 Good communication skills

Alongside good maturity, parents should possess good skills in verbal and non-verbal communication. Already the mother-child dialogue begins in the embryonic phase. It is a biochemical, hormonal, immunological communication that then gradually becomes full and complete with the development of perceptive abilities.⁴⁶

Good communication skills require not only the ability to listen and understand the needs of the child one holds in one's arms, but above all involves adapting to his or her basic needs by providing correct, coherent and valid answers.

For Winnicott, 'Many women fear this state and are afraid of becoming vegetables, with the consequence that they cling to the vestiges of a career as a precious life and do not even temporarily allow themselves to be totally involved. It is probable that in this state mothers learn to put themselves in their child's shoes, that is, to lose themselves almost in an identification with the child, in such a way that they know (generically if not quite specifically) what the child needs at that given moment.'⁴⁷

This requires *good listening skills*.

There are people who have great linguistic abilities, they can dissertate on anything, they have an encyclopaedic culture, they are able to have their say on any subject, but they are not able to listen properly to the other person, especially if it is a child or worse an infant, who uses mainly non-verbal messages in communication. Sometimes it is their excessive speech that causes their difficulties in understanding, which 'involves a process of empathy, identification and projection'.⁴⁸ These people are unable to create silence in their souls, which is a prerequisite both for the correct decoding of messages and for planning and implementing the most appropriate and adequate response(s).

The difficulty in listening is sometimes found in people who have a hypertrophic ego. These people are unable to listen because they mistakenly think they already have all the informa-

⁴⁶ E. TRIBULATO, *Education denied*, p.175.

⁴⁷ D. W. WINNICOTT, *Children and their Mothers*, p.93.

⁴⁸ E. MORIN, *The Seven Knowledges Necessary for Future Education*, Raffaello Cortina, Milan, 2001, p. 99.

tion they need to make decisions. In addition, their overconfidence prevents them from pausing to check the correspondence or otherwise, the usefulness or otherwise of the answers given, and so they have difficulty realising the mistakes they are making.

In other cases, these are difficulties related to anxiety, stress and worries.

Anxiety and stress create, in the human soul, like a deafening noise from which it is difficult, not only to isolate external messages, but also to respond appropriately.

In other parents, the difficulty in listening is caused by the presence of psychological problems in their souls. These may be acute, and thus limited to a certain period of life, or they may be chronic, and thus may persist over time. In any case, the consequences are those of a considerable disturbance in their relationship life.

It then happens that the child gives signals, with crying, mumbling, vocalisations, body movements, but these are not received because the parents' inner problems, anxieties, fears, depression, prevent proper listening, while at the same time making effective and coherent responses extremely difficult.

These parents are victims, therefore, of a congeries of emotions, feelings and thoughts that prevents calm listening but also prevents effective responses.

In addition to not listening, there may be *difficulties in decoding messages*. This difficulty is not always caused by the presence of intellectual and cognitive retardation. Often those who cannot decode messages present normal scores on intellectual tests.

These are then apparently intelligent people, sometimes with a degree or two, who have good abilities in understanding explicit requests, while they have difficulties, more or less severe, in understanding less obvious and implicit messages, as they lack the necessary sensitivity and adequate tools to translate them correctly.

These parents, when their child verbally expresses need, suffering and discomfort clearly, understand the message and comply with it. They take the child to the doctor, avoid giving unsui-

table food, or administer appropriate medication, but if the child cries and despairs without being able to communicate the problem explicitly, they fail to understand the message or misinterpret it: "This child is capricious, spoilt; he wants to focus attention on himself; he wants to make us despair; he wants to punish us because we have not indulged his whims; he is a brat. Parents with these problems are often able to make a thousand assumptions but are unable to choose the correct one.

The causes of this difficulty in understanding messages can be traced back to congenital difficulties; most often, however, this handicap arises from the presence of a massive influx of disturbing messages. Good comprehension requires sufficient time for pause and reflection. This is very difficult to achieve when thoughts and emotions are swirling in the mind, crossing each other, due to anxiety or stress born in turn from the many commitments that parents are unable to cope with serenely and with balance.

In other cases, the problem is due to difficulties in using the *correct key*. In encrypted communications, used by spies in both peacetime and wartime, if the enemy does not have the appropriate codes, he cannot understand the messages.

In this case, it is as if these parents are not in possession of the correct codes for various reasons. Sometimes the lack is already in the genetic heritage. Other times the cause is to be found in an educational deficit. This is what happens today, in modern Western societies, in the women of the new generation in which the maternal instinct, characteristic of the female being, is not educated and adequately valued and exalted. In these societies, since the traditional female role is not accepted, the specific instinctive peculiarities made of intuition and immediate contact with the soul of other human beings, especially children, are not transmitted or are lost. These peculiarities, indispensable for a correct and healthy educational and caring relationship, are diminished or subverted by an education that for many years has exalted technical or managerial and professional qualities. This difficulty is also aggravated by the lack of a long and proper apprenticeship to be carried out with younger siblings, and by the absence of valid, continuous and efficient maternal tutoring. The

difficulty in using the correct keys can also be caused by the presence of clear psychological disorders. Anxiety, depression, inner restlessness cause a deafening noise at the mental level, preventing the serene and careful examination of reality. In all these cases there may be a more or less severe difficulty in understanding the messages.

4.7.3 Good ability to give consistent, stable, complete and satisfactory answers.

It is not enough to listen to a message, it is not enough to interpret it correctly, it is also necessary to be able to give stable, coherent, complete and satisfying answers.

Giving consistent answers means making sure that subsequent actions are consistently related to the message: "I realise my child is cold and I will put a coat on him." Consistent response. Conversely: "I realise that the child feels cold and I take off his shirt too." Inconsistent answer.

Inconsistent answers may arise from incorrect or excessive assumptions: "I think (wrongly) that it is right for him to get used to the cold as it will make him stronger and sturdier, so I also take off his shirt." Or: "Coats should never be put on children because they clog them up."

This kind of incoherent response is typical of men who would like their children to be as Spartan as possible.

Inconsistent responses can also be caused by an incorrect parallelism: "I feel hot, so my child must also feel hot." This seeing reality with one's own eyes and feeling and not with the senses of others makes it difficult to accept other ways of being and other experiences, so that the child's behaviour is seen as different from reality.

Sometimes the response is not consistent with the request because one has neither the strength nor the will to satisfy it: "I understand what he needs, for example the little coat, but I cannot give it to him, because I should take it home but I am in a hurry, I have no time, I have neither the serenity, nor the patience, nor the capacity for sacrifice necessary." In this case, the wrong answer stems from a request perceived as excessive by an immature, lazy or disturbed ego. "I am tired, I don't feel like ta-

king the little coat," therefore I convince myself and try to convince him that the little coat is not needed.

"In the business world," says Bill Gates, "it is essential to listen to customers and welcome their bad news as an opportunity to turn their mistakes into the concrete improvements they desire."⁴⁹ Unfortunately, very often the same is not done in the emotional world. Few of us are willing to ask our 'customers' - husband, wife, children, family, friends - whether or not they are satisfied with our behaviour and where we are going wrong, so that we can correct the mistakes we have made. We prefer, on the contrary, to find a thousand justifications for our shortcomings.

On the other hand, much of this justification is provided to us by the world of business and services, precisely to avoid overthinking and correcting ourselves. If a child cries because he is dissatisfied with our attention and our presence distracted by an interesting television programme, the business world will tell us that, most likely, this crying or moaning is due to a digestive problem or to the teething that is emerging and irritating the gums; therefore, our response can be very quick and hasty, perhaps by just giving him a digestive aid or a new type of dummy that massages his gums. These interventions make us feel our conscience is clear even if the child continues to cry unsatisfied.

If the child shrieks, vomits or refuses to get up every day to go to the nursery or kindergarten, it is because he has not yet got used to the new environment and therefore one should not retreat but insist on his behaviour, without delving into the causes of his discomfort. If a wife is sad and depressed, it is because women always have one and are never satisfied. If the same happens to a husband, the wife will defend herself by saying that men have not understood that times have changed and that they must adapt to the new way of life. If it is then the old father who complains that his children never come to see him, it is easy for these children to sulk because he 'doesn't understand' the new lifestyle that leads young people to have a myriad of pressing

⁴⁹ B. GATES, *At the Speed of Thought*, Mondadori, Milan, 1999, p. 190.

engagements that prevent them from caring too much for their parents.

If a child has made it to secondary school but still reads and writes poorly, he or she will certainly be a victim of dyslexia and dysgraphia, while many other causes are largely overlooked, such as errors in techniques for learning to read and write, on the part of the school, the lack of help and support in the various stages of learning, on the part of the parents, the severe discomfort in which he or she lives due to conflict within the family.

With regard to *stability in behaviour*, this means continuing to have the same type of behaviour over time: "I understand that my child has this need, I will put on him today and tomorrow what he asked for, what he needs, without him asking me for it every time. I don't dress him one day in a coat and the next day in a T-shirt."

Unstable behaviour often stems from an insecure ego that cannot see reality correctly and clearly, but above all cannot make lasting decisions: "Am I doing right or wrong?" "Should I listen to my instincts or my reason?" "What the doctors say or what my mother suggests?" "What my husband says or the neighbour? Should I do what is right or what pleases me?" Indecision can lead to a blockage of the action itself or to unpredictable and changeable actions, often at odds with each other.

It has been found that in families where both parents are present and relate harmoniously, children have a greater number of responses that are consistent and appropriate to their needs, whereas when parents disagree with each other or only one parent is present, the number of inconsistent responses increases significantly.

When there is only one mother to lead a family (*mother-centred family*), apart from the more restricted or precarious economic conditions, the feeling of loneliness, insecurity, the fear of not being able to cope, of not succeeding, is frequent. The fear of not knowing how to educate the child well, and therefore the sense of guilt. And then the suspicion of transmitting this insecurity and these anxieties to him, so as to prevent him from achieving a healthy balance. There is also the risk of a symbiotic relationship with the son or daughter who may take

on the role of friends and girlfriends or substitute love for a man. These symbiotic relationships risk limiting the child's emotional and social growth. The single mother wonders whether she is really able to give her child everything he or she needs. She weighs every decision too heavily, is constantly afraid of making mistakes, tends to oscillate between permissive and authoritarian attitudes without ever finding a stable balance, a consistent course of action.⁵⁰

But the single *father (father-centred family)* also has his problems. The man, not being genetically predisposed for the most personal care, finds it difficult, in his daily life with his children, to assume a flexible, warm, gentle and welcoming relationship. He tends to regiment the family with a series of rules and regulations that make the relationship with his children stifling and rigid. Since he has difficulty seeing and hearing the emotional nuances in dialogues and situations, he is more inclined to give immediate answers to problems, rather than to revive and allow emotions to settle.

The same happens in families where parents are caught up in the rush or in a thousand commitments.

In these and many other cases, the child, in reality, finds himself relating to people who, due to immaturity, incorrect or deficient education in the parental role, psychological, social or relational problems, or incorrect external support and backing, are unable to give what he needs.

One of the most frequent causes leading to incorrect or inconsistent answers is often anxiety. If the parent is consumed by anxiety or stress, he or she begins to give correct and consistent answers but then, not having sufficient and stable psychic energy to continue his or her efforts, neglects the child's needs by offering him or her inconsistent or incorrect answers. All this leads to a deprivation of the satisfaction of needs, which may be more or less severe, more or less lasting.

Sometimes there is difficulty in giving *complete and satisfactory answers*. The answers are there, they are consistent, but

⁵⁰ J. STEFANI, 'Women at the Helm', in *Contemporary Psychology*, 2006, 195, p.15.

they are insufficient. Therefore, the child's needs are met, but only partially. These parents are like poor people who are asked too much. They are aware of the child's request and needs but do not have sufficient capacity to respond adequately. This is a very common situation today. The consumer society pushes many parents to overwork in order to have the money to meet ever-increasing needs, demands and needs, most of the time absolutely superfluous, but which are proposed by advertising as essential needs. Therefore, even if there is a good awareness of the emotional needs of children, these cannot be adequately satisfied because there is a need to satisfy other needs that are wrongly judged as primary needs.

In this regard, I am reminded of the conversation between a banker father and another unionist parent. The former confessed that his salary did not allow him to satisfy certain needs that he considered important, such as shoes, T-shirts and designer backpacks that all the children had but which he could not afford to buy for his little ones. Therefore, fearing that this deprivation would traumatise them and make them feel inferior to others, he desperately sought, with the help of his trade unionist friend, a second job for Saturdays and Sundays. In this way he would feel like a good father and put his conscience at rest.

The tragic aspect of this way of feeling about work and the satisfaction of family needs is that the poor banker was willing to sacrifice the only two days of rest and possible peaceful dialogue with his children and wife, in order to buy backpacks and designer clothes for his children; the comical aspect is that the bank managers who had convinced this father to prioritise designer clothes and backpacks as essential goods were the same ones who, in a few months' time, would complain about the poor employee's declining productivity, forced to work seven days a week, and were perhaps the same ones who were already grumbling that the new young recruits no longer had the maturity, education, seriousness and serenity that was to be found in the young people of the good old days.

When parents have problems communicating or do not give consistent answers, the consequences are very serious. The child feels that it is useless to talk or communicate if one is not listened to; that it is not useful to communicate when one's requests are not granted;⁵¹ that it is harmful to communicate if the communication has negative effects on others. For example, if it increases their anxiety or leads them to clash.

The child learns not to trust the possibilities inherent in communication. He learns not to trust parents, but also adults and then human beings in general. When serious flaws in communication persist, distrust of others can spread to the whole of external reality and, consequently, a closure (autism) to the real world can set in. The child in such cases remains alone and a prisoner of his fantasies and mental processing.⁵²

The father must also possess good verbal and non-verbal communication skills. But the differences are substantial. While maternal communication⁵³ aims to welcome, comfort, dialogue, cuddle, vent and soothe suffering, paternal communication is more directed towards conquest, action, discovery, commitment. If the former comforts, paternal communication stimulates and directs, provokes, activates the child's capacities to the maximum by directing and targeting them to action. If maternal communication sends out signals of prudence, paternal communication sends out signals of courage, urging the child to dare, but never overstepping the limits imposed by prudence and common sense. If maternal communication is consolatory, paternal communication is more activating and lashing out.

If maternal communication teaches one to understand the needs of the individual and the needs of the small family group, paternal communication teaches one to understand the needs of the wider society of which one is a part, right down to the needs of humanity at large.

⁵¹ T. LIDZ, *Family and problems of adaptation*, p.115.

⁵² D. W. WINNICOTT, *Children and their Mothers*, p.7

⁵³ E. TRIBULATO, *Education denied*, p.176-177.

If maternal communication emphasises the heart and feelings, paternal communication emphasises reason. If maternal communication aims to develop and comfort the child's ego, paternal communication aims to give impetus, strength, determination, courage, security to this ego.

It is for this reason that paternal communication is more rational, stringent, linear, direct, free of frills, devoid of unnecessary adjectives, sharper and seemingly colder.

Paternal communication also serves to develop good listening skills in order to respond exactly to the needs of others, to avoid asking too much, to dare too much, to amalgamate the needs of the heart with those of reason.

With regard to stability in behaviour and consistency of responses, these qualities should be greater in paternal communication than in maternal communication, which can afford to be more flexible, fickle and tied to the fashions of the moment.

4.7.4 Good balance.

Having well-balanced parents does not mean having psychologically perfect, mature and wise parents without any psychological discomfort or problems. The human race has evolved and achieved admirable progress despite having many limitations.

From her first appearance in the earthly paradise, both the mother of us all (Eve), and the representative of the stronger sex (Adam), have shown neither wisdom, nor balance, nor consistency before the good Lord!

But even later, history is full of massacres, wars and infighting in which common sense, wisdom and balance seemed to have disappeared from the human mind.

Good psychic balance means possessing an inner reality that is not particularly disturbed. It means having a normally and harmoniously formed and developed Ego that does not fall prey to serious unresolved inner conflicts.

A harmoniously developed ego is not prone to anxiety; it relates serenely, easily and well with itself and others; it can observe reality objectively; it can maintain good judgement and critical faculties even in difficult situations.

An anxious, depressed, confused ego is like a person in a storm or on a raft in the swirling rapids of a river. Although he cannot understand the reason for his anxiety, he lives many moments of his life with apprehension and anxiety. He has difficulty seeing reality calmly and objectively; his actions are often dictated by the impulse of the moment, rather than by a rational analysis of the facts.

This leads to frequent and easy mistakes. It only takes the slightest thing for these people to become irritated or for apprehension, restlessness, insecurity and aggression to be created in them, which they easily transmit to the other spouse and children.

One mother, with a child with autism, confessed that she was the best client in the emergency room because, for events that she judged important but which objectively were not, almost two to three times a week she was in the hospital waiting room to have her son checked for problems that only her pathological anxiety made her judge particularly serious and important. A coughing fit, a rise in temperature, a 'strange' appearance on her part were enough to send her running to the hospital.

Anxiety alters behaviour, prevents or makes decisions incoherent. It creates around itself, in the home and in the children, a climate of unjustified alarm that triggers a vicious circle: anxiety> malaise and anxiety in the child> accentuation of anxiety-based disorders in the child> accentuation of the alarm situation in the parents

In the case we reported, the unfounded fears created uncontrolled anxiety, to which the child reacted with anguish, flight from reality, and psychotic and psychosomatic symptoms. The latter only increased the woman's anxiety, resulting in a request for new medical interventions, which, in turn, further traumatised the child, causing a worsening of his physical, but above all psychic, situation.

Ultimately, anxiety not only creates problems where they do not exist, but also makes it difficult to deal with them and solve them correctly and consistently.

Equally problematic is life with those individuals who focus their fears in one or more objects precisely called 'phobic'. Phobic objects can be very numerous and can change over the years. Insects, rodents, the lift, open spaces, enclosed spaces, aeroplanes, dirt, the sparse presence of people or their excessive presence, sexuality, etc., can cause considerable anxiety, which limits the lives of these people and those around them.

A few years ago a child came to our observation who had the strange habit of sleeping on the balcony of his house. This decision was the consequence of an intense phobia of burglars: "I am terrified of burglars, so it is better to sleep on the balcony so that if burglars should break into the house, I can always escape from the balcony into the street and call for help." But this is not at all strange when one considers that the child's mother was also not without fears. She confessed that she also had the same fear of burglars, so much so that every night before going to bed, she used to look inside the cupboards and under the beds to make sure that no intruders were hiding there.

Anxieties, whether they have a phobic object or not, are transmitted not only by that part of heredity that is always present in psychological disorders, but above all by the distressing and limiting climate that these behaviours create in children.

Different though equally serious is the issue of depression.

If, in the severe depressive form, one does not even have the strength to ask for help, while one has the feeling that one is moving ever further towards the precipice, even when this pathology does not manifest itself in a severe way, it is capable of severely limiting one's relational possibilities, both with regard to one's spouse and children.

Because inner and outer reality is perceived in a significantly altered way, the world of the depressed person is coloured in gloomy hues. The shadows are considerably more diffuse and extensive than the lights. Pessimism and sadness fail to make one enjoy even the happiest events and distort even the most pleasant reality in an unpleasant way. Apathy and asthenia prevent or make even the slightest commitment extremely burden-

some. Feelings of guilt and unworthiness tear at the soul of those who experience them. Therefore these patients experience life, others, themselves, the world, with black pessimism, closure and sadness.

As is easy to understand, these parents, immersed in mourning and sadness, are unable to give their children that joy, that openness to the world and to others that is indispensable at any time of life, but especially in the developmental phase. On the other hand, even for the partner, being next to a person who lives every moment of his day without hope, without pleasure, without joy, without desires, is extremely painful.

If, sometimes, depressive events have their cause in the difficult, traumatic or unpleasant and mournful situations of life, other times these pathologies are caused by hormonal changes, age or other organic and genetic conditions. In all cases, however, if these symptoms are frequent or persist over time, the negative consequences on the psychological development of children are significant.

When Maria introduced herself to us to talk about her son John, we were struck by the golden medallion around her neck. In the centre of that locket stood a colour photograph of a handsome young man smiling. That smile contrasted sharply with the hollowed-out, sad face of that woman with fine features but who looked prematurely grey and aged. She told us about Giovanni, her youngest son, his fears and phobias: about school, noise, clowns, his mother's death. Fears and phobias that severely limited his social and school life, so much so that for months he refused to go to school. When we asked her about the locket, talking about her son lost at a young age, one of many young people who died in a car accident, she could not hold back the tears. She told us how her life had radically changed since that day: no more smiles, no more joy, no more parties. That event had made her hole up in the house, from which she did not leave except to go shopping in nearby shops. John, born after that event and bearing the same name as her dead son, was the result of advice from family members but also from some doctors who, seeing her in that pitiful state, had suggested that she fight

death, and the resulting depression, by giving herself a new life. But this instinctive therapy had been of no use and the woman had for years given up fighting against the grief and depression that, with its black wings, had massively involved Giovanni since birth.

If one bears in mind that it is predominantly women who suffer from depression, and if it is true that the causes of reactive depression in women are mainly to be found in family and emotional problems: loneliness, disappointment in love, betrayal, abandonment, then there is no doubt that the much-vaunted sexual freedom is ultimately a heavy burden for the female sex.

Another type of pathology is represented by obsessive-compulsive syndromes. People affected by such problems, in order to diminish their anxiety, feel 'compelled' to repeatedly perform, sometimes to the point of exhaustion, one or more physical or mental actions, the 'obsessive rituals'. The lives of these subjects are considerably limited by these operations they must perform, as these rituals, over time, become increasingly complex, elaborate and lengthy.

Fear of dirt can lead them, for example, to wash their hands constantly, to sterilise the house with a myriad of detergents. Fear of misfortune may lead them to repeat certain mental formulas, or superstitious gestures. Not tolerating the slightest disorder, they force them to fussily arrange every object in the house, while they cannot bear that others may move what they have ordered.

It is not difficult to imagine how painful life is for a child entrusted to the care of these parents. The child will inevitably be plagued by constant reprimands for touching, soiling or moving objects, or for performing or not performing certain actions. "Take off your clothes, wash your hands, get composed, don't make a mess, don't make a mess," are the constant remonstrances these children have to endure. Just as these parents find themselves in a situation of internal constriction from which they cannot escape, except for brief moments, they do the same with their children, who are forced to live bound by a thousand prohibitions or obligations in a climate of continuous frustration.

At other times, inner conflicts are evidenced by irritating, surly or clearly aggressive attitudes, which take no account of the sensitivities of those around them. The aggressions are most often verbal in females, while in males they can also result in physical violence, but the result does not change much as, in any case, continuous humiliation and suffering are imposed on those around them.

In order to understand the consequences of psychological experiences, one must bear in mind that feelings, both positive and negative, tend to generalise, widen and expand, both in space and time. Just as a feeling of joy, love or trust widens and expands even to strangers, a feeling of sadness and lack of attention or anxiety leads to resentment and aggression towards everything and everyone. The same happens with regard to time. If today, my trust in others has been well accepted, recognised and rewarded, it is easy for the same to happen tomorrow and tomorrow again. Conversely, if my behaviour has been frustrated and brought me disillusionment and suffering, I expect the same to happen in the future.

A good psychic balance is fundamental in both parents, but if the woman can without any problem for her offspring have an intense and varied emotional life, even if not pathological, the same cannot be said for the man. The latter must have a more controlled and stable emotionality, both to be able to correctly perform his role of uniform and linear guide, and to allow his partner to live a more tender, delicate and involving emotional relationship with her children, which would not be possible if the man also had and lived with the same emotionality realities and events.

4.7.5 Altruistic and generous attitude.

A quality that cannot be lacking in people who want to build a family, and therefore in parents, is a propensity for altruism and generosity. Committing a good part of one's time and energy to listening, bringing up, caring for, helping and supporting children presupposes a great willingness to give of oneself in favour of another.

Giving oneself for another entails sacrifices and renunciations of one's own time, personal aspirations and desires. These renunciations can only be made easily if they are experienced with pleasure and joy, while conversely, what is felt as suffering and loss of self can hardly be offered to another.

Prerequisites for a generous and altruistic personality are maturity and inner serenity. The child tends to ask and receive more than give, only the mature and serene adult feels fully gratified and happy in giving. Only the mature adult succeeds in joyfully experiencing giving even in very difficult situations that, in the eyes of egocentric and individualistic people, are seen as great, impossible sacrifices. Another prerequisite for a generous and altruistic personality is having received, in turn, much from one's parents. Being rich in affection prepares one for giving. Those who have received little or badly from the world of affection are unlikely to be generous to others.

The serious deficiencies in the emotional world will inevitably have repercussions in subsequent generations, creating an avalanche of negative and sterile attitudes towards life and love.

But there is also another condition that prepares one for altruism and self-giving, and that is the educational style. There is an educational style that rewards and gratifies power, efficiency, cultural and intellectual abilities, and the drive to face others and life, and there is an educational style that rewards and gratifies the ability to open up to others and to give, bear, and accept. There is a consumerist style of education that pushes one to demand more and more for oneself, and there is an educational style that teaches one to be content and happy with even the little. There is an educational style that tends to inflate one's ego beyond measure, and there is an educational style that tends to value the ego of others.

In a society where the values of the economic world predominate, there is little room for altruism and generosity.

For Fiorentino, in modern Western civilisations, 'In the foreground is what each person earns, the gratification of the self, the damage and inconvenience a child can give. The centre of gravity has shifted to gratification and preservation, rather than forward, in relation to a committed life project, personal or cou-

ple. The consumerist attitude is greater than one of forward investment, of confident risk-taking. The forces that govern what one does are predominantly self-centred, often defensive, rather than long-term giving."⁵⁴ When young people go towards each other with empty suitcases, the emotional shortcomings of childhood and youth have disastrous effects on couple and family bonding.

4.7.6 Good educational and caring skills.

Care is not an emotion, it is not a feeling. This word is spoken of very little, indeed today it is almost unknown along with the other neglected word: 'sacrifice', except in hospital wards or doctors' surgeries. Caring is a commitment, it is work, it is an activity directed towards the other.

It can and certainly does involve considerable fatigue and limitations, but also intense joy, pleasure and gratification. It presupposes willingness and dedication to others. It requires constancy, continuity and patience.

This topic brings to mind some scenes I witnessed almost daily as a child.

At dusk, which was also the time of our return home, after having roamed the streets and courtyards, suddenly the procession of carts began. First the small ones, pulled by horses, then the slower but larger ones, with their tall wheels, which frightened us a little, pulled by a parade of oxen and, on top of the carts, a mountain of blades of grass and, on or beside the green mountain, the men, with their straw hats under which we could see their tired faces, scorched by the sun and the summer heat. Wagons from which to expertly and cunningly steal the tender blades of grass with which to make trembling, fragile bagpipes with a good taste of grass and the countryside. Chariots to hang under to demonstrate courage, skill and agility. Chariots to smell to catch the scent of meadows and freshly cut grass.

⁵⁴ L. FIORENTINO, 'Taking care of it? Only if it is poor and the State liquidates the family', in *Rezzana news*, 1997, 6, p. 1.

This procession of carts went up, at first well ordered, in the streets leading to the village and then, as if on cue, opened up and disorderly scattered through the streets and courtyards, seeming to swallow up oxen, horses, carts, grass and horsemen in an instant.

We children also followed the fate of the carts. As if on cue, the compact, numerous and vociferous group that had greeted them at the entrance to the village would split into many small revolts that would run after their father's, grandfather's or uncle's wagon and then disappear into the small white houses, interested in watching the second part of the evening show.

The animals, freed from their harnesses, were cleaned, groomed and dried of their sweat and lovingly led to the stables to rest, with a pat on the back, which was almost a caress, a thank you and a goodbye. While the horses, oxen and donkeys, exhausted, ate some of the same grass they had brought, we were already running after our fathers, grandfathers and uncles to fish out, in the capacious pockets of our jackets, the gifts they had brought for us children: the first orange or mandarin of the season to smell before tasting; an almost implacable little bird to stroke in the night; a precious little black snake with which to frighten the most fearful little girls the next day.

And then there was the moment of silence. The women of the house: mothers, wives and grown-up daughters, would appear as if from nowhere to impose on us, with silence, the utmost composure for the new ritual that was about to begin.

While the men sat in a circle in the poor living room with its red clay tiles, the women, also like us in silence, after wearing large white aprons, entered the kitchens as if for a mysterious ceremony. From those smoky rooms they would come out in single file, after what seemed like a long time, carrying in their hands or on their arms, as in the Mass one carries gifts to the altar, enamelled basins, white cotton cloths, towels and finally large jugs from which volutes of white smoke came out.

Slowly they squatted in front of the men and, gently but surely, repeated gestures they had made a thousand times. They untied ties, undid buttons, pulled off jackets, pulled off boots, boots and socks smeared with black soil, until their feet, also

black with soil, were immersed in basins full of hot water. A few minutes of waiting and then down to soaping and washing those feet motionless from exhaustion and then massaging them, gently, as if trying to revive one toe after another. And after the feet, the hands; and after the hands, finally, the face. And only after the smiles, a few caresses and a little kiss in passing. And then the words, a few words to communicate the events of the day.

Even for us children, it was only after that ritual that we were allowed to embrace our fathers, uncles and grandfathers and receive from them the caresses, words or deserved reprimands.

A scene like this, repeated every evening, if it had been filmed could have served to demonstrate, in feminist assemblies, the passive, resigned slavery of women in the past. But on one condition: not to show the faces of those women who, kneeling, washed the feet, hands and faces of their men. Because I remember those faces as if it were yesterday. They were serene, proud and austere faces, anything but those of slaves. There was in those faces the clear awareness and need that that ritual had to be done and had to be done just like that. Without removing or modifying anything. Not the silence, not the hot water and soap, not the knees bent on the floor, not the white cloths to dry, not the delicate hands to caress and massage those aching feet soiled with earth.

Nothing could be different, for only in that way could and should gratitude be shown for those bodies and men battered by sun, sweat and toil. Nothing of that care could be taken away from those exhausted men who, once again, had provided for the well-being of the family by working, bent over the barren earth, from dawn to dusk.

Still on the subject of care, I remember the revolt of the women of the family against one of them, Aunt Nunziata, who, in her care for her husband and man, in their opinion, exaggerated and therefore overshadowed them. Towards her, the other women felt a kind of envy and jealousy that they did not fail to point out.

When, for years now, all the women in our family had freed themselves from the drudgery of homemade bread and bought it directly from the baker, she was the only one who still got up at dawn, tied a handkerchief around her copper-coloured hair and then went down to knead kilos and kilos of flour, which she kneaded for a long time with lots of water, natural yeast and a trickle of oil, using her big clenched fists. Then he would turn on the wood-burning oven and when it was hot, he would bake the loaves, side by side like so many fat little sisters.

Hours of work, so that her husband could eat the fragrant home-made bread, which he preferred and had always eaten since childhood. But the attentions towards her lucky husband did not end there. She was also the only one who would burn her fingers to peel the freshly roasted peppers so that her man could eat them hot and seasoned with excellent oil, because that is how he preferred them: thin, hot and dipped in olive oil.

And it was only she who at lunch and dinner, after thanking the Lord with a short prayer, ate together with her groom in one big bowl, because she had also discovered this way to show her bond and her love.

What types of care do we know?

There is care of a material kind, which may, for instance, concern all the care that a husband or wife may have for their spouse and children. In the pre-industrial era, on the part of the man, this care was aimed at protecting and safeguarding the physical health of the woman and her offspring, and was therefore a taking care of the well-being of the whole family. Man through his work built the house to live in, procured food, water and the necessary tools for work, was active in transport and trade, engaged in the search for places and strategies necessary to ensure maximum security and shelter, built the appropriate defences or directly offered his own life against enemies in battle.

In turn, the woman offered her care by making every corner of the house cosy, clean and tidy; she prepared food; she skilfully and artfully used her fingers to spin wool and weave cloth, indispensable for clothing and furnishings; she engaged in clea-

ning not only her own body but also that of her man and children.

To these cures, he added his attentions to cure or counteract illnesses and infections with the remedies that the medical science of the time or popular tradition made available.

Then there is *affective-relational care*

This care, using dialogue, presence, listening, cuddling, tenderness, sexuality, aims at satisfying the deepest and most intimate psychological needs, also stimulating affective growth. While developing a warm and intense bond with the other, the aim is to make him or her safer, stronger, more serene, so as to remove or diminish anxiety, depression, tension, stress, upset.

Besides *material and emotional care*, there is also *social care*. The father in particular should devote himself and commit himself to this care. He has the duty of accompanying and guiding the child in his knowledge of and integration with the wider social and political world. It is also the father who, through his commitment to education, stimulates, supports and develops his children's will, determination, courage and loyalty, and then, through a series of interventions aimed at connecting children to the reality outside the family, he helps them first to discover and then to integrate into the social and political life of the city and the nation.

By giving his children security and offering them the fundamental moral instances for the formation of an ethical-social conscience, the father manages to mediate with society, for the family, and especially for the children, the best possible relationship. Moreover, he ensures that there is a good balance between the world of work, business and services and the emotional world of relationships, so that neither reality suffers.

When, for whatever reason, there is no father, the consequences for the children are often serious and numerous. There is an increased risk of delinquent behaviour, greater problems in learning and entering the world of work, greater difficulties in integration, less psychophysical balance.

There is spiritual and moral care.

This kind of attention, which is equally important, helps new generations to discover in their own hearts and in the world,

the ethical and moral values of their actions, but also the divine presence underlying these values.

However, it is good to bear in mind that very often material cares also have affective implications. Just as affective, relational and spiritual ones have material implications. Cleaning, medical care, assistance in illness, prevention of organic disorders and eating disorders have considerable affective implications.

A clean bed is not just a hygienically perfect bed. In a clean bed it is pleasant to drift off to a restful sleep. A dirty or untidy bed is not only hygienically unfit for purpose, it is above all a bed in which it is unpleasant to fall asleep, and thus it is an object that communicates the woman's lack of care for her child, husband or home. A clean shirt is not only a microbe-free garment to wear; it also communicates the love, commitment, attention and dedication of the person who washed and ironed the garment. This object, touched by her hands, is the bearer of her warmth, her love, her care, her effort, her joyful sacrifice. Awareness of this reassures, gives security and joy, gives warmth and love, and spurs one to reciprocate with other warmth, with other love, with other care and attention directed not only at the parent or spouse who has done this but also at society and others.

Love and care spreads as coldness, selfishness and individualism spreads and spreads.

We understand better how important care is, in relation to the people who provide it, when we think of those children who are unfairly accused of throwing tantrums if they want their mother to make milk soup in the morning and not their grandmother or, worse, another stranger.

These children are hungry and crying and desperate, but they insist that a certain treatment be carried out by a certain person and not by others.

This does not mean that the child lacks confidence in the grandmother's ability to warm the milk, but it does highlight the child's need for the added value in food provided by the hands and attention of a figure particularly dear to him: his mother.

This link between the caring action and the person carrying it out is even more evident in children with severe psycho-

affective problems. These children, despite having good fine-motor skills, often demand that certain people (most often their mother, sometimes their father, grandmother or nanny) take care of them. And it is only by a certain person that they want to be dressed, fed or cleaned. They are still very hungry, hungry for caresses, hungry for attention and care, and they try to satisfy this hunger by being touched only by certain 'special' people.

This behaviour is not so strange if we think that we adults also perceive or remember as much better and tastier the tart, pizza or other dish made by our mother's or wife's hands, rather than the one bought in the supermarket or rotisserie.

These psychological realities, so deeply engraved in our hearts, are well known to advertisers who try, in every way possible, to associate with the objects and foodstuffs to be sold, not the machines that produced them or the anonymous workers who collaborated in their manufacture, but families and affectively relevant human figures, who can bring to mind or trigger positive feelings. So, if it is pasta or biscuits they want to sell, they will put a grandmother or a mother, or a family full of smiles, warmth, sweetness and helpfulness. If they want to sell a car, they will put a great racer or a beautiful sexy girl with a helpful, smiling attitude. If they want to sell a detergent, they will put a handsome young man, preferably with super powers, to entice the housewives, offering the detergent as a lover would offer a bouquet of red roses.

From what we have said, it can be deduced that it is not indifferent for the child, as for the adult, the link that is established between the food, objects and care activities offered to them and the person or persons offering them.

Similarly, it is not indifferent for parents, the pleasure and the bond of attachment that is established in this way with their child. If this is missing, if there are other arms to cradle him, console him, other hands to dry his tears, other eyes to respond to his smile, other hearts to converse with him, something important is broken, something important is altered or not built.

The child finds himself in a state of mind similar to that of a motorist who, through his misfortune, discovers that the road he is driving on is a dead end. This unfortunate motorist first, in di-

sbelief, looks at the wall or hedge in front of him, then stunned, frightened, looks around, and only then, angry, annoyed, turns the car around in search of another road.

These basic psychological realities do not seem to be taken into account by the world of economics and services, when it tries, more and more, to expand the market of objects, tools and services, offered to women and mothers, glamorising them as a help and support for women and families.

Why waste time and effort, why burn your fingers and hands to prepare and cook food if it can already be bought pre-cooked, or ready to be heated and served?

Why use your time to knead, mix, process flour, sugar, eggs and more when the cakes or biscuits are already packed in their shiny sealed packages?

Why drive your children to school when there is an efficient bus service specifically organised to do this?

Why follow your children at home when there are nurseries ready to cater for the needs of young children?

Why waste time and try your patience in getting your older children to do their schoolwork when there are plenty of teachers and graduates in literature or pedagogy who, for a few euros, can give this school help better than us?

The number and quality of offers is increasing. 'To free women of the most unpleasant and tiring tasks, so that they can devote themselves completely and fully to their children' is what the media says. In reality, we know very well that the economic world explicitly aims to eliminate or almost completely replace work as a wife and mother, so that she devotes more and more time and energy to work outside the family.

It is also neglected how much this 'liberation' costs in terms of gratification, pleasure and joy, for the children, for the husband, for society and for the woman herself.

What is not being said is that a clear expropriation of the most important figure for their psycho-affective growth, the mother, is actually being implemented towards future generations.

It is concealed that this woman will be deprived, perhaps forever, of the most important and beautiful pleasure and gratifica-

tion she could have had in feeling fully capable and integrated in an irreplaceable role.

It is not conveyed that a person who does not sufficiently care for the other will never be able to have a valid bond with the latter, just as he or she will never be loved and respected by the latter, and that on the contrary, resentment, aggression and resentment will arise towards that person. These feelings are capable of suffocating a budding love and preventing the formation or destroying forever, any future or pre-existing deep bond.

What is not said is that this woman will forever lose her special image in the hearts of her children and husband, to become, in their eyes, one of the many cogs in society capable of producing wealth and money.

4.7.7 Physiologically appropriate age.

One can have a child even if one is not an adult, at a very young age, but we know that biological maturity makes it more favourable for the woman to carry the pregnancy and childbirth, while at the same time psychological maturity is indispensable for dealing adequately with the upbringing and care of the child.
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On the other hand, she is not an adequate mother, a woman who is too old,⁵⁶ because of possible chromosomal pathologies,⁵⁷ because her body, no longer young, is not always perfectly capable of carrying a pregnancy without the help of medical aids and, above all, because older age makes the human being, whether man or woman, emotionally more fragile, less resilient, depressed and insecure, whereas a child needs for ma-

⁵⁵ It is in Gran Bretagna that has the highest number of children born to teenagers in Western Europe. In 1997 in England there were 90,000 children conceived by teenagers. Only three fifths of these were given birth (56,000). Ninety per cent of them were children of unmarried girls.

⁵⁶ The average age at birth of the first child rose from 24.7 years in 1975 - 1976 to 28.7 years in 2001. Istat data - *'Having a child in Italy'*, 32, 2006.

⁵⁷ According to recent American research conducted by Prof. Nagy, women who wait to become mothers beyond the age of thirty risk not only Down's syndrome, but also infertile daughters. Indeed, it appears that the genetic damage present in aged mothers can be inherited by their daughters.

ny years to have psychologically joyful, strong, serene and healthy parents at his side, who know how to grow with him.

As far as the man is concerned, it is not his young biological maturity that is important, but his lack of psychic maturity and working skills. The responsibilities he has to take on require good personal and social maturity, both to maintain the family and to provide the right degree of security and stability for the household.

Unfortunately, the age of first pregnancy is getting higher and higher, and the reasons are numerous.

The years of study, which are compulsory for men and women, are increasing as people want a greater and richer basic preparation than in the past.⁵⁸ Optional years of study are also on the rise. Many families can now afford to have their children attend university to obtain a degree and then specialisation. The number and number of years spent out of university are also increasing.⁵⁹

Many later decide to continue their studies with a master's degree and other subsidiary courses. To these must be added the years waiting for a job and stable employment.

Economic independence comes later and later also because the consumer society, in order to obtain the economic serenity necessary to face marriage, proposes and demands ever higher incomes. As the salary of only one spouse is not considered sufficient, couples wait for the other to finish his or her studies and have an adequate salary.

Sometimes the wait is caused by the different place of work. How can you get married if he works in a company in Milan and she has found employment at the post office in Palermo?

A double salary, even though one might be sufficient, is also requested today because it represents a form of insurance in the

⁵⁸ There are currently ten compulsory years of study.

⁵⁹ While the theoretical duration of degree courses is 4-6 years, the actual duration is 7.3 years on average. Out-of-course students account for 38.6% of the university population, while out-of-course students among graduates make up 88.4%.

very frequent case of divorce or separation. "If she/he already has her/his salary I do not have to support her/him".

There are also a number of reasons linked to the difficult and conflictual relationship that has been created between men and women, which tends to worsen over the years. Men, in particular, but also women, are increasingly doubtful and perplexed when it comes to approaching marriage, as this institution is no longer seen enveloped, as in the past, by graceful pink clouds, but, on the contrary, they feel it shrouded by menacing black clouds, an omen of future thunderstorms with accompanying lightning and thunder.

Finally, some women are urged to be mothers at an age when it would be more physiological to be grandmothers, by artificial insemination institutes that are set up with the mother's considerable financial gain and selfish desire in mind, without giving due consideration to the needs of the child and society.

With regard to aged fathers,⁶⁰ from an educational and psychological point of view, these have the same handicaps as mothers in later years. Mature fathers have less physical and psychological strength, less energy to spend from an educational point of view, not to mention the fear that children feel of losing their aging parents early on.

For both mothers and elderly fathers, the distances to their children's generation being increasingly distant, detachment and misunderstanding can be accentuated.

Unfortunately, Italian fathers are the oldest in the world.⁶¹

4.8 PARENTS FAVOURED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFFECTIVE-RELATIONAL WORLD

⁶⁰ While in almost all of Europe the majority of young people at the age of 25 have already left their parents' home, in Italy, in the 25-29 age group, the vast majority still live with mum and dad. Source: Istat press release 2005.

⁶¹ The median age at first child for men born in the first half of the 1960s is over 33 years and has increased by about 3.5 years, compared to those born in the early 1950s. Source: Istat, 2005 press release.

If maturity, basic qualities and character and psychological peculiarities are fundamental, equally important are the relationships and bonds present between the two parents. If there is mutual understanding and understanding between them, if there is love or at least benevolence between them, it is easier to live and let live a warm, serene and welcoming emotional life. If there is conflict, coldness, confrontation, fighting, and a quest for supremacy of one over the other between the parents, it is almost impossible to think that the affective product can be qualitatively, I won't say good, but barely sufficient.

Love is transmitted, as is aggression and even verbal violence. One transmits acceptance, as one transmits rejection. One transmits gift, as one transmits selfishness. One transmits openness, as one transmits closure. One transmits patience and acceptance, as one transmits intolerance and distrust. Openness is transmitted as intransigence is transmitted.

In couples with sadomasochistic attitudes who enjoy and like to live in confrontation and conflict, in couples who enjoy and like to do and receive harm, not only the pleasure of violence is transmitted, but also the false concept of the normality of violence and confrontation in couple life.

Apparently, but only apparently, in the economic world the psychological reality of the workers has no influence on the end product. In theory, a worker placed on the assembly line with optimal personality and family life characteristics should produce the same amount of objects as a worker with mild personality disorders. We were saying apparently, because in reality the number of errors, the number of absences, the number of conflicts that this worker causes in his relationship with his other colleagues, is clearly higher and this translates into a net decrease in overall productivity.

If there is a serene and stable bond between the parents, the children who will be born and live this reality will be significantly better off than those forced to live with parents who are separated, absent or different in time. The conflicts, anxieties, fears, disappointments and clashes are considerably greater among the latter. Of an opposite sign, but much rarer than the former, are the 'fusional' couples in which an excess of invest-

ment by one in the other could prevent relational, loving and affective availability towards a newcomer: the child.

The educational difficulties of a single mother, or worse of a father, are well known to speak of. Just as the damage caused to offspring by individualistic and selfish parents, incapable of giving generously and altruistically, are well known.

But concrete and real presence in family life is also fundamental. Those parents who manage, without considerable effort, to guarantee a stable and continuous physical and psychological active presence with their children are clearly favoured over those who, busy with work or a thousand other occupations, are unable to provide this.

In recent decades, the excess presence of parents has been emphasised. Parents totally dependent and overly attached to their children. Parents too involved in the movements of their souls. Parents who try not to let their children lack anything: the most beautiful, expensive and technologically advanced mobile phone, the most prestigious schools, the most fashionable clothes, language courses, attendance at various sports and gyms. It has been said that these parents were spoiling their children by being too loving and too present. The reality of parents being too affectively involved or too present has served as an alibi to sharply diminish their parents' affective involvement, under the pretext that too much is bad for them. Even if it is true that all excesses are bad, it is not an excess of love and affection that can harm a child, but rather a pathological affectivity born of psychological problems, of unmet needs, of childish deficiencies, that one tries to satisfy in the ongoing relationship with one's children, who, therefore, come to be instrumentalised by the pathology of these parents.

In recent years, however, it is certainly not a problem of excess of affection that children suffer from, but of a deficiency, more or less serious, which is masked most often by a series of gifts and handouts, at other times by very demanding activities that are fashionable at the time in the social environment, but which contribute little to a true and serene human and affective growth.

Parents who manage to have clear and distinct educational roles are also favoured over those who present confused, unstable and blurred roles.

Finally, those parents who present generosity and correct openness towards the family and social network in their family style are favoured over those who adopt an overly closed and limiting family style.

In summary, the most favoured parents will therefore be those who are young, serene, ductile, authoritative, rich in values, wise and mature. Parents with organic diseases or psychic disorders, parents who are not very adaptable, too permissive or repressive, poor in spiritual values, psychologically immature, will have more difficulties.

4.9 GRANDPARENTS

After parents, grandparents are the most important players in the emotional world.⁶²

With them, the child comes into contact almost immediately. In the meantime, throughout the pregnancy, it is almost always the maternal grandmother who follows her daughter, step by step, through this wonderful new experience. It is to her, perhaps before her husband, that a suspected delay in menstruation is confided. It is she who gives the first advice on how to cope with the new pregnancy: what to eat, how to move, how to dress, which activities are recommended and which are not, and what weight to give to the ailments that occur during expectation. In doing so, the maternal grandmother uses her personal experience and that of all the other women in the family with whom she has talked and exchanged valuable information over the years, but also uses the experiences of women from the past.

⁶² E. TRIBULATO, *Education denied*, p.224.

It is not uncommon for a grandmother, usually the maternal grandmother, to be the one who will assist her daughter during the birth and give her grandchild's first bath.

Her help, her psychological support, her experience, is also invaluable in the first weeks and months of the baby's life. It is she, or when this is lacking, it is the mother-in-law who teaches the new mother how to breastfeed it, how to put it to sleep, how to clean it, how to dress it, how to manage the various events that may arise: insomnia, crying, illnesses or organic disorders, signs of psychological distress. It is she who gives the key to correctly interpreting the child's needs expressed in a non-verbal manner.

After the father and mother, it is the grandparents whom the child inserts into his or her soul as important reference figures when parents are missing. They, after the parents, are the people in whom the human child can most trust. Grandparents love stories from the past, as interesting as true tales. To them they gladly give and ask for a goodnight kiss. To them they allow very intimate gestures such as being fed or cleaned.

From them they learn a different way of living and seeing the world. They learn the value of friendship, with them they discover the soul of things.

Yes, because everything has a soul. The pebbles gathered on the seashore, on which perhaps one distant day the pirate Barbarossa launched his battle cry as he invaded the island, have a soul. The yellow flowers with which one can weave a necklace, to give to one's mother, as Indian women do, have a gentle soul. The papyrus plants in the gardens have a soul, ready to tell of their adventures in the house of the great Pharaoh, located right next to the Nile. They have much to tell the park's little geese, who, flying from distant countries over a thousand lands and a thousand places, have seen with their own eyes the world's largest flower, under which you can also eat, sleep and which can shelter you from the rain.

With grandparents, who do not need to run here and there like their parents, time regains its normal physiognomy. With the elderly, even space, normally trampled by hurried feet rushing to go who knows where and who knows why, is better

known, discovered and enjoyed inch by inch. With grandparents, the children discover that dialogue is not about rushing to say what one did at school. Dialogue is that thing that brings two people together. It is that thing that makes you laugh, dream or fantasise while being together.

With grandparents, children discover that the best games and the best toys, are those that cannot be bought. They are our hands, our bodies, they are the toys built by millions of children and grandparents using the poorest objects: paper, leaves, wood, wire, nails, a hammer.

But there is a physiological way of using grandparents and a pathological way.

The physiological way wants the child to choose and desire to go to the grandparents' for a few hours and not be dragged there by force. The physiological way wants the child to be able to leave his grandparents' and return to his parents, or at least to one of them, when he feels like it, and not to wait, struggling against sleep, for dad and mum to return from work to his home, to his things, to their arms. The physiological way wants the child, if he has been really good and obedient, to be able to sleep sometimes, but only sometimes, in the old grandparents' house and not to be forced there, instead, every time dad and mum want to go with their friends to get pizza or 'hit the disco'. In short, the physiological way to live with grandparents is to allow them to be grandparents and not parents or babysitters. In the same way, it would be good if the grandparents' house continued to be the house where dad or mum lived when they were little and not just another nursery school, school canteen or baby-parking⁶³ free of charge to

⁶³ 43 out of 100 children under the age of 2 are cared for by grandparents, 42 out of 100 between the ages of 3 and 5, 34 out of 100 between the ages of 6 and 10, 22 out of 100 between the ages of 11 and 13. R. Maderna, in *Famiglia Cristiana*, n° 21/ 2002.

The commitment required of grandparents is very intense. 31.5% of the children spend between 20 and 29 hours a week with their grandparents, 26.1% between 30 and 39 hours and another 25.5% between 40 and 49 hours.

In the US, more than three million children live permanently with their grandparents because of their parents' divorce, because they are children of

available at all hours of the day and night.

single mothers, or because they were abused or neglected by their family of origin.

CHAPTER 5

5.0 LA FAMIGLIA

5.1 THE ANCIENT PACT BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

It was almost evening when the hunter, having tied his prey to a long stick with a double knot, returned to his hut. The sun cast its last bloody glow as he advanced slowly, despite his strength and size. It weighed on him the fatigue of a day spent outside his shelter, first scouting, then chasing and killing possible prey. It weighed on him the stress of the fight with the beast he had finally managed to trap between two large rocks. Above all, it weighed on him the fatigue of having to quarter it with such rudimentary means as the flint knife he kept in his saddle-bag. And then there was the deep wound that the animal, in a fit of rage and anger, had inflicted on his bare thigh with a paw. A wound that made every step he took painful and weak. Although he had taken only the most appetising and easy parts, that carcass seemed heavier with every step as from the thigh wound, at

intervals, the blood flowed slowly but inexorably, mixing with that of the animal dripping from his shoulder. Between his burrow and the lane where he trudged painfully, there was still a hill, which he had trodden briskly in the morning, but which now seemed to rise immense and black, blocking his painful and agonising path. He thought about resting, sitting on a boulder for a few moments before facing the ascent, when he saw a human female advancing towards him. She was alone and much smaller than him. He often saw them, the group of females, dragging their young at a safe distance from the males, for fear of their violence. He saw them gathering herbs, roots and the remains of prey that the males disdained. That face was not new to him, he had recognised her as one of the females he had mated with in the spring, although now her small, frail and petite body was swollen and deformed from the imminent birth of a new creature. Despite the excruciating pain of his wound he thought, with sadness, of what was likely to happen in a few weeks' time. That large, tender-eyed female was too frail to endure the labours of childbirth and the long lactation. In all probability she would have died and with her the creature she was carrying. The same fate would probably have befallen the young, if she had any and if they were still unable to look after themselves. Their race, the human race, already so modest in numbers, would once again have lost some of its precious components, while the other animals, stronger, faster, more aggressive, increased in number and covered, with their raids, ever larger spaces of territory. Who knows if someone would have buried her to spare her from the beasts' latest indignity. She thought that, like all females in that state, it would be impossible for her to hunt even small prey for months, and that she had followed him in the hope of taking a part, though not the best parts, of the animal he had killed to feed herself and her human cubs.

At any other time, except at mating times, he would have chased away with a howl that small, fragile being who looked at him expectantly, but that evening he had to save his strength, which was indispensable to get to his abode, so he accepted that it approached him. He did not fear that it might snatch his prey. Even so wounded, he had sufficient strength to kill it with one

hand. The females, smaller and more fragile, only became dangerous when they attacked a lone male in a group.

The woman carried a bowl of water, which she offered to the hunter. He accepted. Not that he needed it: he too always carried a small wineskin full of water. He accepted because he remembered how good he had been to her in the time of love. He accepted because her eyes, large and tender, had nothing aggressive about them, and because he was too tired to assert his strength and capacity for autonomy.

But afterwards, and this was the first time it had ever happened to him, he agreed to let her clean and heal his wound well, putting healing and disinfectant leaves on it. And, afterwards, he agreed to rest a moment, but only a moment, in the cave that was the woman's refuge. A cave that was tucked away in a ravine right there, near the path he walked every day to enter the forest.

When he awoke after a nightmare-filled sleep, however, the sun was already high in the sky and a blade of light penetrated from the cave entrance to his feet. The woman was not there. He looked around but did not find what he had imagined: he did not find her and he did not find his young. Perhaps they were all outside, looking for food.

When he saw her after some time, she was alone. In the half-darkened cave she appeared even more gaunt and petite, while her swollen abdomen seemed to be no part of her. Only her eyes blazed as he had never seen them before. He watched her, with difficulty, crouching on the ground, reaching for her leg to check her wound. As he watched the woman change the dressing with expert, delicate hands to other leaves and herbs, a new and different thought crept into his mind: a pact.

Yes, he wanted to propose a pact to that woman. A pact that would be useful to both of them. A pact of mutual help and support. He already had in mind what he would ask for and what he was willing to give if she agreed.

What the exact terms of that first contract were is not known to us. We do know, however, the results it produced. From that day on, every time the hunter returned to the cave he found a smile, a hug and a kiss waiting for him. From that day on, ex-

pert hands healed his wounds and his tired body, while words and caresses healed his spirit.

From that day on, someone cooked, as he had never been able to do, his prey. From that day on, his cleanest and tidiest cave also seemed much warmer, bigger and cosier.

In return, from that day on, the woman was no longer forced to go far to snatch from other animals or steal from men, some food, which became more and more difficult as the pregnancy progressed. From that day on, no one dared do violence to her or take advantage of her, knowing that she had a brave, robust and strong man as a companion. And when, after a few months, she gave birth to her creature, she was able to breast-feed her without any problem, because her body, more robust and full, could offer abundant nourishment. Moreover, since she no longer had the anxiety and fear that had gripped her since childhood, the lullaby dedicated to that child was sweeter and more effective in procuring peaceful and happy sleep than that of other women who were more aggressive, insecure, uncertain and aggressive.

Later, for the first time, other unexpected events occurred. The children of that first couple, who had formed at the foot of the hill, were strangely not only more robust and strong than the other small humans, as might be expected since they had been better nourished, but they were also more intelligent, serene, balanced and inwardly strong. Less aggressive than the others, they used reason rather than brute force in finding food or defending themselves against enemies. More sociable and with more capacity for integration, they soon became the undisputed leaders of the group of humans.

After that first successful contract, many others were established that helped to spread particularly adaptable, intelligent, courageous and balanced human beings across the planet.

Despite the success of that pact, since as with all contracts it too created unpleasant obligations and limitations that they wanted to eliminate, in the years and centuries that followed there were countless attempts to change some clauses in whole or in part. But almost all attempts failed miserably until... until

the conditions seemed all favourable for a momentous and radical change.

We wanted to tell this little story because today it is really difficult to understand what happened and why. It is difficult to understand what the pact that has bound men and women together for thousands of years was based on. So difficult that false stories, about this ancient, primordial relationship, take root much better than a probable truth. This unfortunately happens not only among ignorant people but also, which is more serious, among educated people.

5.2 CONSTITUTION OF THE FAMILY

The pact from which the family is born, represents the best example of collaboration and understanding between the affective relational world and the economic and service world. In the family, in fact, many elements of both are present and act. On the one hand, there are undeniably economic elements: income, expenditure, mortgages, bills and taxes to be paid; on the other hand, the family is the centre and beating heart of the affective world, because it is in the family that the main actors of affectivity and relationships move and act.

The family, from a psychological point of view, can be defined as the primary and irreplaceable place of those relationships of trust, reciprocity and gift that are essential to build, nurture and protect the development of other human beings.

From a sociological point of view, it constitutes the foundation of the totality of human societies and can be defined as a group of two or more persons bound by blood, marriage or adoption, who form an economic unit, are responsible for the mutual care and upbringing of any children and often live together in the same household.

Persons continuously and stably employed in domestic service, as well as other persons who, in whatever capacity, habitually cohabit with the household, are also considered to be part of the household, as members attached to it.

Thus in the family there are several persons, variously assorted, but together sharing in a pact of mutual help and assistance a past and relevant prospects for the future. Every man has more than one family: the one he was born into; the one(s) formed after his marriage or as a result of cohabitation; the one present during the twilight years of his life.

Every family leaves, in the souls of its members and consequently in their behaviour and experiences, indelible marks, both positive and negative. Positive signs left by an effective reality will remain in all the people who live in it, just as negative signs will remain, left by a group that acts and relates in a dysfunctional manner.

5.3 FAMILY FUNCTIONS

If the family has a good degree of functionality and efficiency, it must be able to guarantee numerous benefits. This institution has been, in fact, in all peoples and in all centuries, the main instrument of mediation between society and the child. It has provided not only for the biological needs, but also for the psychological and educational needs of the offspring. Every human child, in fact, in order to become an affectively rich, mature, serene and sociable person, needs a family that helps it in the formation and structuring of its personality.

The family takes action to pass on the basic culture and to develop the skills necessary for successful integration in their children, so that they can live correctly and make a valuable contribution to society.

Thus, the family is a '*seminarum civitatis*', a natural institution that 'gives rise to and grows the city and thus society'.⁶⁴ This organism is the basic unit for society to evolve positively. But man's destiny also depends on the family, his psychological well-being or malaise, his ability to grasp the small pleasures and joys of life, his ability to give meaning to his existence.

⁶⁴ D. TETTAMANZI, 'La famiglia di fronte alle sfide dell'attuale situazione socio - culturale ed ecclesiale', In *Consultori Familiari oggi*, 2000, 3, p. 21

If families are functional, future generations will be strong, rich in material, cultural and spiritual goods. If not, they will be weak, fragile, disturbed, physically, psychologically or socially ill. The family, therefore, is the most important capital of any human society.

In the family union, more than in other forms of cohabitation, freedom and responsibility can dialectically harmonise; autonomy and solidarity; care for the individual and search for the common good; planning power and readiness for the unexpected; solicitude and discretion; healthy aggression and forgiveness; readiness to communicate but also to listen.

The family, if functional, can fulfil many important functions:

5.3.1 Emotional and affective function.

Since the family is the privileged place of affection, and therefore the place where the first feelings of love are born and experienced, it has, as a fundamental function, the development of affective and sexual expressions.

If the family is functional, it will succeed in recreating a number of psychological elements that are fundamental to human development and well-being, such as the satisfaction of emotional needs, security, and the exchange of love, joy and pleasure.

As the primary place of love, welcome, embrace, caress, reassurance, solicitude, this institution is a dispenser of the child's, young person's and adult's basic trust in life and the social environment.

If the family succeeds in being a place of warmth, acceptance and love, it will be capable of producing in its offspring remarkable affective and relational capacities and possibilities; if not, in addition to numerous psychological problems (neuroses, psychoses, character disorders, drug addiction, etc.) it will give rise to frustration, impotence, aggression, hatred and resentment. These problems will inevitably be transferred to the social context, creating economic and functional damage to the system that is all the more serious the more numerous and important the problems of its components.

5.3.2 Support function in adversity.

If harmoniously structured, the family can very effectively be a support during the tensions associated with the inevitable transitional phases of life: support during stressful events, in cases of disability, illness, as in old age and in the presence of bereavement or loss.

5.3.3 Economic function.

The family is a small enterprise between people who share and commit themselves to common projects. These certainly include financial ones. In fact, the family provides, through the work of its members, the necessary resources for life together: food, clothing, housing, health care and other material needs. Since it consumes with its expenditure, while at the same time generating income through the work of its members, the family is the main engine of the economy. Through the payment of taxes, it provides for the needs of the state, while, in turn, it uses state aid to care for children, the elderly, the sick and the disabled.

For Ackerman, "The family can be compared to a semi-permeable membrane, a porous envelope, which allows selective interchange between its members inside and the outside world."

⁶⁵

The comparison is correct. In fact, the membrane of a cell in a body can open its pores to take from the outside, from the circulating blood, what it needs and at the same time give what is useful to the organism.

The same cell membrane also has the possibility of defending itself by closing its pores when, in the external environment, toxic or dangerous substances circulate. In the same way, the family should have the possibility of exchanging with society elements that are useful to both, but it should also have the possibility of diminishing or closing these exchanges when, outside, deteriorating elements circulate, either for one of its members or for the whole family.

⁶⁵ N. W. ACKERMAN, *Psychodynamics of Family Life*, p.29.

However, this is possible when there is a single, attentive manager who is entrusted with the choice of what to exchange, how to exchange, when to exchange, and whether to close or open up to the outside world. This mechanism becomes jammed and therefore ineffective if more than one person in charge engages, sometimes contradicting each other, in these vital operations.

The comparison brought by Ackerman also helps us understand other situations that can greatly damage the family. If an individual, on a frequent or constant basis, consumes toxic substances such as alcohol, drugs or toxic or adulterated food, the cell's chances of exchanging without risk are greatly reduced as, at any moment, it could be brought into contact with material harmful to its survival.

A similar situation is present in our society which, in an absolutely irresponsible manner, does not care to bring, via TV and the other mass media, close to families and within families, along with useful material also elements that are very harmful to the life of this institution or to some of its most fragile and defenceless members.

It is possible, but not at all convenient, as is often desired and attempted, to break this intimate partnership between family and society, because cells need the whole organism to live, but the organism also needs cells for its health and survival, and so if the family, every family, needs society, society, in turn, cannot do without families.

5.3.4 Reproductive function.

Within the family, future human generations are born. If families find sufficient capacity within themselves and a favourable environment outside, they are able to provide society with enough children to replace the deceased and gradually expand the spread of the human race. Otherwise, both qualitatively and numerically, the 'product' of this institution will be meagre and insufficient to even cover the deaths.

This is what has been happening in Western societies for several decades now. The 'product' of families is so modest, both qualitatively and quantitatively, that Western societies, in order

to survive, need a considerable number of men and women from economically and culturally poorer, but humanly richer backgrounds.⁶⁶ There is therefore not, as is often trumpeted in the media, an 'invasion' by men, women and children from non-EU countries. What is taking place is an indispensable 'substitution'.

We import arms and muscles for the heaviest and most menial jobs. We import brains for research and study. We import presence, dialogue, care and assistance for our sick in hospital, for our elderly, for our children. This is what happens and has always happened in societies rich in material means but poor in the family sphere.

5.3.5 Care, breeding and social solidarity function.

It is only within families that loving care between spouses, towards offspring, sick, disabled or lonely persons, has characteristics that make it unique, irreplaceable and particularly important. Psychologically, family members are bound by a mutual interdependence, for the satisfaction of affective needs. State services or those offered, or rather bought by private individuals, are rarely able to deliver what they promise. No public or private service is, in fact, capable of giving as much and as well at such a low cost as a normal healthy family is able to do, since no public or private service succeeds in creating, around a child or a person who is sick, elderly, disabled, alone or in need of care, that climate of affectionate and attentive presence that gives the necessary comfort, soothes suffering, alleviates problems, accelerates healing.

5.3.6 Protection function against external dangers.

The family should be able to offer all its members, protection and shelter, so as to be a safe haven against the negative factors of the social environment in which it is embedded.

The dangers present in the social environment are of various kinds: they are physical dangers, but they are above all psychological dangers: contact with disvalues, violence, abuse or offences of a spiritual, moral and relational nature.

⁶⁶ In the Veneto region alone, 37,000 immigrants are needed each year.

The family, if properly prepared, helped and supported by the institutions, has the tools to recognise them, has the antidotes to neutralise them, has the strength to eradicate them, so as to prevent irreparable damage to its members.

We said 'if helped by the institutions'. It is therefore imperative that institutions take charge of protecting families and their members, without lowering their guard under the guise of freedom of speech and thought. Today, in western societies, this protection is almost completely lacking. The few paedophile ogres are sought out and severely punished, but a putrid sea of slime produced, even at the expense of the community, is allowed to invade the minds and hearts of minors and adults through the mass media.

5.3.7 Educational function.

"The family, beyond its various configurations, refers us to that relational structure of persons that defines our truest and deepest selves."⁶⁷ Therefore, the primary and basic educational function can only be entrusted to the family. Only in this can future generations find that bond of love between two beings of different sexes, that affection, attention and care, capable of developing all the potential of the human being, in an atmosphere of serenity, openness to life, trust and security.

Only in this institution are those prerequisites of continuity and gradualness of educational processes capable of developing and growing persons with a stable and secure identity and personality. People who are therefore not only intelligent and capable but also serene, mature and responsible.

This is because it is only in the family that we find affective bonds with those characteristics of intensity, stability, continuity and responsibility. Qualities that are indispensable in the formation and education of future human generations.

The educational function of the school or other services can only be secondary and subsidiary to that of the family, since, these services have neither the capacity, nor the linearity, nor the

⁶⁷ D. TETTAMANZI, 'The family facing the challenges of the current socio-cultural and ecclesial situation', p.19.

consistency, nor the responsibility, present in a healthy normal family. It is therefore above all in this that the child is transmitted the fundamental values that are indispensable for his existence and for society. It is in the family that he learns to limit his needs; he understands how to respect those of others; he learns to place needs in a correct scale of values. And it is in the family that he learns to understand that true freedom is nourished by responsibility and respect for others, for himself and for the truth.⁶⁸

5.3.8 Socialising function.

As the primary intermediate group between the individual and the larger society, the family is the smallest social cell but also the main social mediator.

It is in the family that the foundations of education for the integration of social roles and the acceptance of responsibilities towards the wider world outside it are laid. And it is in the family that the socialising journey for children begins, which will later be extended and completed through the work of the school and other educational agencies.

And it is always in this institution that the best apprenticeship towards the community and towards each other takes place. One learns to limit one's own desires, to compare them with the needs of others, one learns to recognise in one's own behaviour the positive or negative consequences that may result from this behaviour.

The individual's release from the rigid ties of the family network, while on the one hand offering greater freedom in the personal choices of spouse, work, profession or residence, on the other hand entails a whole series of easily identifiable negative consequences, such as: greater loneliness; a marked increase in dangerous, erroneous or unsuitable behaviour; infidelity; greater difficulty in settling quarrels or problems that arise within the couple. This is why married men and women generally enjoy greater social consideration, as their behaviour is conside-

⁶⁸ G. MOLLO, 'The family as a place where values are formed', in *La famiglia*, 1993, 159.

red closer to the norm, less egocentric and more oriented towards the common welfare.

5.3.9 Religious and ethical function.

It is within the family that, in the various peoples, the deepest and truest religiosity is cultivated and expressed. It is only in this institution that moral, religious, ethical teachings and the fundamental values of mankind are transmitted from adults to the new generations, without frills or grand external manifestations, but in the most intimate, profound and true manner.

In everyday life, within the walls that enclose and unite families, the religious spirit is transmitted not only as cultural information but, drop by drop, is precious and essential nourishment in the structuring and shaping of personality.

It is no coincidence that in all peoples of great civilisation, it is within the family that the ethical and religious sense of life is initiated, nurtured and developed, so much so that for the Catholic Church, the family represents the 'little domestic church'.

5.3.10 Cultural transmission function.

It is the family that provides for the personality development of the individual members.

It is through the family that the basic knowledge and culture of humanity is passed on to the next generation. Through daily example, teachings concerning relationships with one's neighbour, basic educational principles for good social living, moral values, sex roles, tasks and generational ties are passed on.

5.3.11 Sexual and personal orientation and identity development function.

The purpose of the family is to develop the sexual and personal identity that is in a potential state in our genes. At least one third of sexual identity and sexual roles are entrusted to the affective relational environment in which the child lives. This means that a large part of correct sexual identity requires appropriate interventions by the family of origin.

One only has to browse and dwell for a moment on what are its basic functions to realise that the family is not a historical fossil, but remains the best and irreplaceable tool for the survival of the species and society.

54 FAMILY TYPES

Over time, various types of families came into being.

5.4.1 *Closed, open and random families.*

As far as relations with society are concerned, families can be more or less *closed or open*.

In *closed families* the authority of the head is highest, roles well defined and accepted. Order and discipline guarantee a firm sense of security; relations with the outside world are regulated and filtered with the constant concern to preserve the family's intimacy and well-being from any unwanted intrusion or occurrence. Control over the activities of the various family members is carried out with constancy and severity.

On the contrary, in *open families* there are minimal barriers and impositions on the people living together. The outside world is widely accepted. Towards it, exchanges are constant and continuous at all levels. Much energy is directed towards the personal fulfilment of each family member. External relationships are encouraged, both with the parents' and the children's friends. Discipline is very mild and decisions are made with the consent of all.

As in many other fields, the secret in building a good and healthy family lies in an intelligent and careful balance in the use of internal and external resources. If, in fact, in the very closed family there is the risk of scleroticisation, frustration, atrophy and rebellion, in the excessively open family there is the risk that the individual's freedom⁶⁹ becomes libertinism and ar-

⁶⁹ For Zanardo: "The word freedom is one of the most ambiguous words among those we usually handle with ease. In the name of freedom, the most despicable dictatorships have been born, the law of the strongest has not infrequently been imposed (...) Yet in the name of freedom, the phenomenon of democratic life has also spread (...) The fact is that freedom can build as

bitrariness, just as there is the risk that the absence of clear roles and tasks, the prevalence of destructive and centripetal elements and inordinate individual interest end up generating destructiveness, in a psychological situation of chaos and family inconsistency.

This can lead to the so-called '*casual family*', in which everyone does as they please and there is insufficient sense of group identity.

5.4.2 *Extended and restricted families.*

In terms of the breadth of this institution we have on the one hand the '*extended family*', on the other the '*restricted family*'. In the *extended or extended family* several generations live within the same family. In this family type, there are one or more cohabiting relatives, ascendants (grandparents), descendants (grandchildren), collaterals (brothers and sisters), all linked by blood and kinship ties headed by a man.⁷⁰ The parental pair has close relations with the other members, who also have the task of choosing the most productive and useful new mates for the clan.

The shortcomings of this type of family essentially concern the lack of individual autonomy and freedom, which are significantly less, especially for younger people and women, than in nuclear families. There is less autonomy and freedom both in sentimental and sexual choices and in work, political, social and religious preferences. Just as there are limitations in deciding the location of the family itself.

However, the merits of the extended family are numerous and important:

- A large part of education and socialisation takes place within the family itself;
- in case of need there is a large family group available to help, advise and support;

much as destroy, because it says mostly about the quality of a human being's gesture, but nothing about its purpose."

S. ZANARDO and others, *Lessico della libertà*, Paoline, Milan, 2005, p. 13.

⁷⁰ MARVIN HARRIS, *Lineamenti di antropologia culturale*, Zanichelli, Bologna, p. 87.

- the strong and rich family culture succeeds well in counterbalancing the disruptive pushes that might come from outside; pushes that, on the other hand, have an easy time destroying and undermining small family realities;
- the sense of solidarity, among the various members, is transformed into a sense of serenity and security for all, especially for children and the disabled;
- In extended families an important role is given to the older members of the group, both male and female, who are greatly valued. The elderly, therefore, are not only not a burden on the family and society but become a considerable resource for all members, especially the younger members of the family group, who can use their wisdom and their strong and profound influence on the group itself.

5.4.3 Single-parent and single-parent cohabitation

The current trend, due to ever greater individual fulfilment and the marital conflicts that produce separations and divorces, is instead towards ever smaller families (*atomisation of families*), which produce *single-parent cohabitations*, sometimes formed by only one parent, usually a woman with one or two children, or *single-parent cohabitations* in which there is not one parent but another family member, for example a grandmother or an aunt with one or more grandchildren. While these types of families have greater freedom in political, religious, sentimental and sexual choices, they also suffer from considerable and serious limitations.

The feeling of loneliness that accompanies these families often drives these parents to unstable, inconsistent and inconsistent behaviour. Frequently, *single-parent* families are forced to delegate to outsiders or to the social services, tasks that are the responsibility of parents or family members, with considerable economic burdens for society, but above all to the detriment of minors, the elderly and the weaker or more problematic.

Frequently, these lone parents who lack solid family support fall prey to anxiety and depression. These disorders can lead

them to reject motherhood or fatherhood, take away responsibility for their educational tasks, and adopt aggressive attitudes towards their children or themselves.

Family culture is much more easily lost, and with it valuable traditions and sound moral principles and values. This culture, which should be the basis of every child's education, is being replaced by the contradictory, fragile and unstable cultural stimuli present in large quantities in the mass media, which often influence both children and adults in negative and destructive ways.

These families live in such isolation that a single crisis is capable of shaking them from their foundations and breaking or destroying them.⁷¹ They are therefore easy victims of both separations and divorces.

5.4.4 Reconstructed families.

As for the composition of families, these may be formed by spouses entering marriage for the first time, or by spouses who have already had marital experiences. These are the *reconstructed families*. Families in which at least one of the spouses comes from a previous marriage from which they had children. In these families, there may therefore be children from the current and the previous marriage. Whereas, until the advent of divorce, this type of family was made up of widowers, it is now mostly made up of divorcees and is a constantly, steadily increasing reality.

The psychology of this type of union is particular.

In the meantime, since, as we have said, at least one of the spouses comes from a divorce experience, willingly or unwillingly this type of family will have to reckon with a third or fourth wheel, since the other may also have settled down. Triangular or quadrangular relationships are then formed which are not easy to manage, either practically or psychologically.

From a practical point of view, the biggest problems arise on holidays. On these occasions, the children often insist on spending these special days with all the siblings and both pa-

⁷¹ M. T. and G. GILLINI, 'An open family hypothesis', in *La famiglia*, 1993, 162, p. 48.

rents. This, however, is much easier said than done when there are children of several men and women in the same family. On these occasions of apparent togetherness, never-quenched feelings of anger and jealousy often erupt.

After years spent together, a part of him or her, for better or worse, is inside our hearts and is part of us. Knowing that others have his words, his kisses, his caresses, his body, arouses intense feelings of jealousy and rivalry that are very difficult to contain. Then the poisoned barbs start, tending to discredit the new partner or companion, bringing out the negative elements of the new relationship. Phrases such as: 'I can't stand your new partner, he looks like a bear, what cave did you find him in?' Or: "If you lend him to me tonight with his bald head I can play pool." Reserved for him are phrases like: "I can't stand that new companion of yours. God, what taste! I didn't know you liked big silicone tits' or 'When Joan talks she looks like a goose that woke up in the morning with a sore beak' and so on. Belittling the new partner or companion is the most popular sport when one manages to maintain relations on a tone of so-called 'civility.' When, on the other hand, the lava of aggression is still flowing and incandescent, resentment explodes in the form of irrepressible rage. In this situation, one must speak more of destructive broadsides, with slammed doors and telephones, vitriolic swear words, letters from lawyers, threats and other such amenities, rather than punches.

An almost impossible task is to manage each other's children. If you try to be paternal or maternal, these children are ready to block you with: "You are not my father/mother, you cannot command me, you cannot tell me anything, don't touch me, mind your own business." If, as is most often the case, you try not to meddle so much in the life and upbringing of these children, then the accusation of the new partner or companion is ready: "You make no effort to get closer to them, I had hoped that you would become a good father/mother figure for the children".

But even for the children, the reconstructed family is not an easy or desirable living environment.

Who is my father? Who is my mother? There is the 'real' father, 'the one who has done all sorts of things to mum,' then over time 'there is the friend of mum's who always comes to dinner'. Then there can be "the one my mother deludes herself into marrying." "There is that man who only stays with us on Saturdays, because the other days he is with his other wife and children." And finally, "There is the one who has finally decided to marry mother."

"Who should I love? The real one who always upsets Mum, the one who won't give us money to go on holiday and whom she doesn't even want to talk to? To mummy's friend who always comes to dinner and pretends to be my friend but I understand perfectly well that he comes and then locks himself in the bedroom with mummy?" "Who should I love? The one who teases Mum, deluding her into thinking that one day, when things have settled down, he will marry her?", or "the one who really did marry her but I don't like him at all because he looks like a jerk?"

Who is my brother, who is my sister?

Even these questions are difficult to answer from, for example, a daughter of a reconstructed family. "Who is my brother? The one my father had with that shameless girl he's with now, after leaving his mother and who is as cross-eyed as she is?"

"Who is my brother? The one who touches me taking advantage of the confusion because he says, we are not real brothers anyway'?

Then let's not talk about grandfathers and grandmothers. Meanwhile there is the one to be hated and mouthed at because the mother says: "She ruined her son by not knowing how to educate him to be a good husband." "Then there is my mother's mother, who always insults her daughter by telling her that she was an idiot to let Giovanni get away to marry a good-for-nothing like my father." Then there is the new grandmother, "But she won't even look at me because she says I am just like my father."

There is so much violence to which these minors are subjected that it would take a long time to enumerate them all. The most incredible and strange thing is that very often these parents

who want to 'recycle', caught in the whirlpool of feelings or passions, do not even realise the harm they are doing to their children. But, what is worse, not even civil society realises the harm they are doing to minors, which continues to look for the problems of minors in the ogres on duty.

Different genetic heritage, different surnames, different educational experiences, accentuate jealousies, envies, rivalries and conflicts, complicate relationships, prevent necessary identifications.

The sense of family belonging decreases, security and stability with regard to oneself, others and life.

The situation of these minors makes me think of a piece of lily pad rhizome detached from the mother plant. This rhizome had already been floating for a year in the water of the tiny pond in my garden, carrying two miserable little leaves; every now and then the fish would pinch it and the rhizome seemed to run away from their bites, every now and then a frog would rest on it thinking it would hold its weight, but it would sink. It could not take root, it could not make flowers, until I decided to place it with stones and soil in a pot so that it would rest firmly on the silt-rich bottom. Only then did it take root, only then, in a few months it filled the pond with round leaves and large pink flowers.

If there are things that children cannot do without, these are stability, clarity and security. When these three elements are missing in the environment in which they live, the child's development, if not regressed, certainly comes to a halt or is impaired.

5.4.5 Cohabitation and de facto couples.

Cohabitations and de facto couples are lumped together for statistical convenience, but in reality they are fundamentally different modes of union in a couple's life.⁷²

⁷² In ten years, de facto unions and cohabitations have more than doubled from 227,000 to 550,000. Istat data for the years 2002 - 2003.

Cohabitations.

Meanwhile, there are various types of cohabitation.

There is cohabitation as a first step towards marriage. *Premarital cohabitation*.⁷³ As if to say: "Marriage is too bold and complex a reality, let us take one step at a time. For now we cohabit, meaning without having children, at a later stage we hope to take the next step: marriage."

There is a cohabitation intended as a rehearsal. A rehearsal of how he or she or we as a couple will behave in a situation that is no longer engagement but marriage.

The uncertain and the doubtful are open to this type of cohabitation. There are the doubters towards their partner. "I don't like surprises, better to see how she/he will behave first," and then decide.

Then there are the doubters of the reality of marriage. "Who knows what it looks like or what happens in this situation that everyone talks about, which is called marriage, why accept it blindfolded? Better to try it first."

Finally, there is *cohabitation as an alternative to marriage*. "We also hope to be together all our lives and have children together but, better to leave the door open, if things don't work out, if our love should melt like snow in the sun, we can always break up without many obligations."⁷⁴

People who are insecure: about themselves, about each other, or about the institution of marriage, therefore come to cohabitation. People who seek and wish to live and enjoy something together rather than people who have the desire to build something together that is useful and important for both of them, for the children that will be born, for society. Something that will last, that will solidify and expand over time.

Both of these psychological situations are consequential to the educational methods by which young people today are brou-

⁷³ Premarital cohabitations: before 1974 they were only 1.4%; in the years 1984 - 1993 they were 14.3%; in the years 1994 - 1998 they were 14.3%; in the years 1999 - 2003 they were 25.1%.

⁷⁴ E. TRIBULATO, *Education denied*, p.154-155.

ght up. An education whose perverse fruits are individualism and hedonism.

When living with these principles and these kinds of values, the person, every person, arrogates to himself the right - duty - to choose and live at any time what he likes,⁷⁵ as well as to reject and not accept what is not congenial to him at that time or no longer as pleasant and interesting as before.

The goal in individualism is to constantly feed one's own ego. There are no others except as one of many possibilities and an instrument to satisfy oneself. There is no planning; there is no willingness to struggle or sacrifice; there is no concept of gift for an ideal, gift to others, gift to society.

This type of choice also stems from an upbringing that tends to produce people who are fragile, immature, insecure, poorly determined and motivated. People who are poor affectively but also poor in their ideals and dreams. Frightened people. Frightened by too many negative realities that move and stir around them, in their family, in their hearts, in the lives of the couples that revolve around them. Frightened by too many quarrels and displays of aggression between people who should have loved, respected and accepted each other instead.

This kind of choice stems from an upbringing that looks neither to the past nor to the future but is content and happy to live only in the present.

This explains why couples, who have experienced cohabitation before getting married, are less close-knit, have more profound disagreements, support each other less, have more difficulty in solving marital problems, and finally separate more easily.

De facto couples.

⁷⁵ "...individualism tends to inflate the concept of freedom to previously unimagined limits, in an attempt to sweep away obligations, external interferences and even bonds."

D. ANSELMO, S. ZANARDO and others, *Lessico della libertà*, Paoline, Milan, 2005, p.13.

In de facto couples, the situation is very different. The people in these unions do not stay together waiting for marriage, they do not live together to experience what it is like to be married, nor do they intend to test their own or each other's qualities. People who form this type of union are certain of their own and others' qualities, believe in the indissolubility of their union, have a concrete and stable plan for life, want to have a home of their own and children. In them there is openness to procreation, a commitment to fidelity and to the stability of their union, but they do not want to give this union the sacramental form of the church, nor do they want to submit to the obligations and impositions given by the State. In short, de facto couples want neither the blessing of the church nor that of the state.

This type of couple traces a situation as it must have existed in the first millennia of human history, when the pact between a man and a woman was still a private pact, not codified by norms and rules given by society and religions. Norms and rules which, let us remember, were born and should be aimed at making these particular contracts more reliable, solid, stable and lasting. It is a return to the origins that denotes the unease felt by these people with regard to a civil society that has bridled this natural institution with excessive and heavy legal implications, with excessive and contradictory norms and rules that, rather than guaranteeing solidity and stability, disrupt the nature of the institution and the lives of couples.

Both of these family life choices should, however, set alarm bells ringing in the palaces of politics, for it is politics that has made the institution of marriage increasingly unattractive, increasingly uncertain, increasingly difficult to live serenely and in harmony, due to inadequate, contradictory and destructive laws of family unity.

5.5 HEALTHY FAMILIES AND SICK FAMILIES

Depending on its functional characteristics, the family can be the focal point of frustrations or tensions, or it can be the source of resources to resolve frustrations and ease tensions. It can be the cause of illness and psychological distress, or on the

contrary, it can and must be the best support and medicine for every human being when an illness or problem, whether physical or psychological, intervenes.

Healthy, balanced, efficient and well-functioning families are recognised by the results they achieve for their members. Scholars identify certain characteristic elements in this type of family:

- the parents and other adult family members who live in the family environment present good dialogue and listening skills and full willingness to provide adequate responses to the relational and affective needs of minors;
- parents and other adult family members have such maturity and wisdom that they feel joy in giving and are therefore more willing to give to others than to receive, and have developed commitment and great solidarity with the family network;
- the parents possess different, specific and complementary sexual characteristics and have been specially prepared for the care and rearing of their children;
- the role of each member appears clear, well-structured and defined, accepted and supported by the others with continuity and consistency;
- each role is in tune and in harmony with the needs and expectations of the others;
- in order to minimise disruptive tendencies, there are different roles but one person in charge.
- each member of the family community feels a sense of participation, involvement and solidarity with the others;
- family orientation is very much focused on non-material values;
- the love between the various members is solid, true and constant, and manifests itself in frequent moments of tenderness and mutual attention;
- discipline is fully present but manages not to be suffocating;
- free communication is systematically stimulated and valued, while at the same time clear and defined rules and

norms are enforced with respect for everyone's age, gender and roles;

- each family member is constantly concerned about the psycho-emotional and social needs of the other members and takes steps to avoid or prevent conflicts and frustrations;
- while the family leader maintains a balanced adherence to the changing and changing realities of life, at the same time he or she does not forget but constantly values the traditional, tried and tested values that come from past experiences.

Predominantly unhealthy or dysfunctional families are those families unable to perform one or more of the essential family functions. In this type of family, the following prevail: confused roles; lack of involvement in the needs of others; frequent outbursts of aggression or, on the contrary, running away from intra-family responsibilities and commitments; difficulty in establishing effective communication; indifference or lack of attention to common needs.

In children, signs of family disintegration or poor family functioning cover a wide and varied range of psychiatric and social symptoms and pathologies. Frequent are fears, sleep and eating disorders; complaints of physical complaints (headaches, abdominal pain, vomiting); sudden emotional outbursts such as crying, fits of rage, muteness, aggression towards adults, peers, objects, and animals, even self-harm; difficulties at school, oppositional or defiant attitudes and running away; immature behaviour or regressions to earlier developmental stages.

Even in young people, family discomfort⁷⁶ can manifest itself with one or more symptoms such as: withdrawal into oneself or into the pack; poor school results; asocial or anti-social behaviour; self-destructive and high phenomena through alcohol abuse or drug use; a sexual and affective life without a real plan and without any responsibility towards others or towards one-

⁷⁶ E. TRIBULATO, *Education denied*, p.370-371.

self; behavioural disorders, eating habits or gender identity and role.

Also present are abnormal behaviour such as running away, straying, sloppiness and aggression, without any obvious motivation; poor planning, even if only of a work-related nature; lack of commitment to family and relatives; reduced hours of sleep or loss of restorative sleep; reduced capacity for attention and concentration; loss of interest in other living beings; suicide attempts; euphoria alternating with depression; feelings of guilt or indifference towards others and one's own behaviour; boredom, apathy, asthenia.

5.5.1 The duties of the State.

As far as the civil community and the State are concerned, these should ensure that within each family there is the constant presence of an authority capable of helping, mediating and directing. An authority to whom all members can refer, who has undisputed qualities of maturity, responsibility, listening and dedication. It seems opportune at this point to specify that authority derives its prestige not from the role assumed but from the capacity to render a valid, efficient service, and the ability to give generously and sacrificially. In this sense, the authority of a father with the role of head of the family is by no means superior - substantially - to that of a mother who knows how to fully express her maternal role.

The State should also provide laws that help to effectively structure an understanding and harmony between the sexual genders so that there is union and not disunity, there is trust and not mistrust and suspicion, there is love and not hatred. Laws that protect individual roles, the integrity, stability, and solidity of marriage, the harmony of spouses and other family members, and the educational choices and directions of parents. Laws that oblige a common residence, and facilitate the relationship with the family network. Laws that prevent the mass media from penetrating the family fabric, weakening it, disrupting it, confusing it.

Otherwise, the risk is that the family will increasingly turn from a place of transmission of life to a place of denial of life,

from a place of welcome, love and comfort to a place of competition, confrontation and aggression. From a place of transmission of values to a place of diseducation because of the many negative examples of disobedience, lawlessness, immorality and infidelity. From a place of education in the faith to a place of indifference, agnosticism, if not hostility towards the faith.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ T. BERTONE, "Famiglia e trasmissione dei valori nella società complessa: la questione educativa", in *Tribunale Ecclesiastico regionale siculo, Inaugurazione anno giudiziario*, Palermo 2006, p. 34.

CHAPTER 6

6.0 COUPLE - FAMILY AND

6.1LA RICERCA DELLA MATERNITY AND PATERNITY

The joy of being a husband or wife is heightened if one's role also extends to fatherhood or motherhood. Creating a new human life, watching it grow, participating actively and with commitment in its development and maturation gratifies not only the instinct, but also the heart and mind.

Initial and primitive means of opening up to life is once again instinct. This represents the mode chosen by nature to accompany even the most recalcitrant individuals to paternity and maternity. Instinct is a primordial, but very valid and effective system for the reproduction of the species, but it can be an equally effective way of embarking on the adventure of building and raising a new family. The instinct towards motherhood, it seems, is stronger and more incisive than the search for paterni-

ty. Nevertheless, many men desire to be fathers, but for different purposes and in a different way, than women desire to be mothers.

For women, motherhood is something that is part of their DNA. Before it becomes rational thought, it is already in their bodies and in their blood, as it is born with them. And if women are brought up correctly, it evolves and enriches them through their childhood games; it matures through identification with their mother and other mothers and women; and it is present in every component of their body as well as their spirit.

Therefore, trauma and grief ensue when the woman is unable to be a mother or when, due to serious pathological problems, she is forced to undergo operations that destroy the organs of reproduction.

Many women yearn to have a child, even if born of another woman; even if their physiological age would not allow it; even if the man next to them is not one of the best; or even when there is no man next to them worthy and willing to be a father. We said earlier that the instinct towards motherhood must be educated, stimulated and helped to manifest itself until it reaches the characteristic richness of a good mother. But this does not always happen; on the contrary, more and more often, the maternal instinct is neglected, mocked, devalued, compressed in favour of other values and other goals.

This is why she does not always present herself with all those characteristics that are indispensable to a good mother. Moreover, in many women, the desire for motherhood shrivels to the point of almost disappearing when the man, who is next to them, is unreliable or when the commitment or stress of working and professional life outside the family takes up too much of their time, their life, their emotions.

Man's motivation for family, procreation and the desire for fatherhood, on the other hand, arises and is realised differently.

The man who likes to design and then build bridges, roads, machines, tools, trade routes, new cities and new states, sees the family as a construction that, to be desirable and acceptable, must possess certain characteristics, otherwise it is of no interest to him.

Just as a building needs a good plan, qualified architects and workers, a person in charge who with passion, strength and rationality is capable of bringing it to fruition, with precise decisions and responsibilities, using first-rate materials, so too in committing to the formation of a family, man needs to find certain requirements that he considers necessary so that, in the end, the purpose is achieved. And the purpose is achieved when what is built has characteristics and qualities that correspond to the initial project.

The prerequisites for embarking on a path of responsibility to parenthood thus include a whole series of parameters, without which the man does not commit himself or commits himself partially, momentarily or unwillingly.

In the meantime, he needs a reliable partner and therefore a woman with certain requirements.

He is looking for a woman to love and be loved and respected by. Love includes many things: dialogue, the pleasure of being together, sex, but also feeling, mutual respect, mutual attention.

He is looking for a woman capable of care

Love includes caring for the other. He therefore expects to find, as a companion for life, a woman with distinctly feminine characteristics: tender, sweet, passionate, but also capable of special care for him and his offspring.

He is looking for a woman with maternal characteristics.

In this woman, the man must clearly recognise sufficient characteristics to be a good mother. She must therefore be a mature, serene, caring, available person, capable of managing family life with sound judgement, with wisdom, prudence and shrewdness, also from the educational point of view.

He is looking for a life partner.

Another desired characteristic is the ability to be a life companion for him. He therefore does not like a woman who is hard, aggressive, always on the defensive, too independent, too strong, too free, frivolous or swaggering, who likes to attack rather than welcome. He therefore seeks a woman who accepts with responsibility and commitment a complementary role to the male one.

He is looking for a faithful woman

In the woman to love and with whom to build a family, he looks for fidelity, not only from a sexual and sentimental point of view, but also in relation to the commitments made in marriage. A faithful woman assures him that the children that will be born and the sacrifices he will make will be directed and utilised by her offspring and not by that of an occasional lover, and that the common project will succeed.

He desires a woman who has developed a healthy sense of modesty.

Since, unlike women, who are more easily aroused by words and gestures than by images, men are more easily aroused by sight, he severely judges women who emphasise their forms or worse, uncover them. He therefore loves a woman with a healthy and high sense of modesty.

He is looking for a woman who values and respects his management skills

The woman to love must also know how to give him an important role in organising and planning family life. The man therefore desires a woman who knows how to accept, respect and value him as a valuable and important, indeed indispensable, companion in this splendid human adventure.

It requires a woman who is not an easy prey to fashions

Since men tend to be more traditionalist and therefore tend to preserve the existing, they look for a woman who does not passively adapt to the fashions of the moment, but can rationally and objectively see what is most useful for the couple and the family.

Only if most of these conditions are met does the desire for paternity and family arise, otherwise paternity and family for men have no value, no meaning, no interest. This is why men are unlikely to be persuaded to embark on a family path by women who do not possess or in whom they do not recognise these requirements.

Above all, he is very recalcitrant towards women in whom he does not see good mothering and caring skills. Skills that are

indispensable for the proper management of both eventual children and a healthy family life.

Interest in the professional abilities of a possible partner is so low that it is often even viewed negatively, since the man knows, and realises from the experiences of the families he comes from or is surrounded by, that high professional abilities do not go well with good mothering abilities, since high professional abilities do not go well with good attentiveness and care towards him, his children and the family network.

In many Western nations such as America, la Francia, Italy men often seek out and marry foreign women, not because they are more beautiful and attractive than those in their own country, but in the hope of finding women who have requirements close to their own ideals.⁷⁸

Having to deal with and live in a consumerist society, a man is faced with a dilemma: on the one hand, rationally, he is attracted to and understands that a second salary in the family would be convenient for him to meet all those expenses that modern western society proposes as indispensable living expenses, on the other hand, he is reluctant to commit himself to a path of fatherhood.

The most reasonable solution he sees, and often chooses, is to share with his partner a minimal commitment that still allows him a pleasant, and if possible intense, sexual, friendship and social life, without marriage-like obligations, limiting births as much as possible or abolishing them completely. The later men come to marriage, the more they tend to postpone the decision to bring children into the world, as their enthusiasm for fatherhood diminishes, while at the same time their misgivings about an often chaotic social and family life increase.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Eurispes notes that the percentage of mixed marriages is constantly increasing: from 3.3% in 1993 to 14.3% in 2005. In the majority of cases, these are Italian men marrying foreign women.

⁷⁹ The propensity to have the first child is reduced by about 80 per cent, all other characteristics being equal, for those who marry around 35 years of age compared to those who marry around 25 years of age. Source: Istat, press release of 20 October 2005.

In this rejection of procreation, men may agree with certain types of women who, because of an upbringing focused on professional life and hedonism, see pregnancy and the change of role, from woman to mother, as a limitation, a ball and chain that restricts them in their career possibilities, friendships, pleasures, travel and entertainment.

With regard to one's role within the family, instinct, as well as covenant and millenary tradition, urges the man to ask to be accepted as a leader and responsible. He warns that in order to express his paternity in a full and complete manner, he must have the possibility of responsibly directing the various components of this in a virtuous, stable and secure path, leading to the transmission to his children of all that information and reality that he possesses and that could be useful in forming a mature man and woman.

Man is also aware that natural selection over millions of years has endowed him with certain characteristics that make him better suited than woman to the task of head of the family.

In fact, characteristics of the correctly educated man,⁸⁰ are moral strength, determination, and the ability to fight and dare in the most difficult and hardest moments without being easily discouraged, without wavering, and without running away due to emotionalism and fragility. This enables a man to overcome difficulties better and achieve his goals more easily.

Other masculine characteristics, such as knowing how to give and accept rules and norms, easier and more frequent linearity in behaviour, a broader social vision and the lesser influence fashions and customs have on him, can also allow him a more stable and secure guidance, a more objective view of the situations to be faced, a better use of past experiences and a more correct planning of the future.

In spite of this, he, for millennia accustomed to fighting, hunting and working in groups, under the direction of a leader, is willing to accept and collaborate with a manager whom he re-

⁸⁰ E. TRIBULATO, *Education denied*, p. 106 - 111.

spects, admires and accepts, even if she is female. This woman, however, must be able to take upon herself all the honours and burdens of difficult family management.

The male, accustomed to dealing in social environments with pyramidal roles, unlike the woman who likes equal roles, seeks and demands, in the activities in which he engages, clear, safe, rapid, concrete and stable decisions. Therefore, both instinctively and rationally, he feels a serious discomfort when he is forced to operate in a system, such as the Western one, based on totally shared responsibilities. He knows, in fact, that in a complex, variegated, continuously busy structure such as the family, in which speed and linearity of decisions are fundamental, this management methodology is not at all functional for the purposes it is supposed to fulfil. It also knows that laws are inadequate to make any serious project of a stable and responsible family random. Laws that seem to be made on purpose to give jobs to the worst kind of lawyers. He is therefore unwilling to accept involvement in an enterprise doomed to disintegration and failure, both economically and psychologically.

Society and institutions should therefore bear in mind that if the male figure within the family continues to become increasingly peripheral, in the shadows, neglected, if men are deprived of all authority, as has been the case systematically in recent decades, if they are no longer able to make themselves respected and obeyed, if their disciplinary power within the family is drastically reduced, if the masculine and paternal role is diminished, while at the same time the feminine and maternal role is exalted, it is not difficult to foresee that the hope of finding men willing to take on a serious and stable family commitment will diminish more and more, until we return to the dawn of human history when the new generations were brought up only by women, with whom men had only occasional sexual relations.⁸¹

6.2 DECLINING BIRTH RATES

⁸¹ The UK has one of the highest percentages of single-parent families (13%).

Although the maternal instinct is very strong, the main causes of the decline, or rather the collapse of births,⁸² are not only due to males, but involve both sexes: men and women,⁸³ husbands and wives, but also grandparents, family members and friends often contribute negatively, not encouraging or clearly discouraging procreation.

There are many reasons for this, and all of them contribute to delaying, if not excluding, the arrival of new lives in families.

6.2.1 Awareness of not being able to guarantee a peaceful environment.⁸⁴

Both instinctively and rationally we feel that a child should be conceived and born in a stable, serene environment, full of tenderness, peace and love. How can we think of bringing children into the world when misunderstandings, accusations, quarrels, or conflicts are frequent and serious, and upset and tear couples and families apart almost every day? How can one think of bringing children into the world when quarrels between spouses are not an exceptional occurrence but poisonous daily bread; when fathers do everything they can to make mothers look bad and vice versa; when grandparents spit venom at daughters-in-law and sons-in-law; when 'friends' are divided to defend or blame one or the other? It is difficult to think of bringing children into the world when the extra-familiar environment does not shine with harmony and serenity. Not only because of the many wars scattered around the world, but also and above all because of the atrocities that are partly true, partly the product of fiction, poured into homes at all hours of the day and night by a television that seeks to attract viewers by stirring emotions and low instincts.

6.2.2 Awareness of not being able to guarantee the satisfaction of a child's basic needs.

⁸² Since 1975 to today, the average number of children an Italian woman has during her reproductive life has halved from 2.4 to 1.2.

⁸³ 40% of women who have only one child do not intend to have more in the future. Istat data - 'Having a child in Italy', 32, 2006.

⁸⁴ E. TRIBULATO, *Education denied*, p. 220 - 224.

What are the chances of this child continuing to have two parents when separations and divorces are so frequent? And then how can this child be guaranteed the necessary education when the 'needs' that the consumer society proposes are ever more numerous, expensive and sophisticated?

How can a proper education be guaranteed when, with the state's endorsement, children's homes and souls are being penetrated by a TV, the radio, the Internet and now also by mobile phones,⁸⁵ scenes, thoughts and situations that are highly uneducational, in which sex, violence, vulgarity, lies and aggression are the masters? Destructive and destructive elements from which it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to be able to defend one's family, but above all one's children.

6.2.3 The lack of or low amount of gratification.

A child to be desired should also be a source of joy and gratification. In a normal situation, the time, energy, effort, patience and sacrifices required for the growth of a new human being should be, at least in part, rewarded by pleasure and gratification. A newborn child should be a source of joy, for the sweetness of its face, for the funny expressions with which it welcomes new experiences, for the tender smiles it dispenses. It should be a source of joy for the child, when he begins to conquer the world with his childish but rich personality. It should be a source of gratification for parents the adolescent, who faces maturity with characteristic exuberance, strength and determination, and then the young man who infuses with his work and his new family, new life into the history of mankind.

The young son should soon be able to take the baton from his parents' hands and carry it further and further, but at the same time, he should be close to them to help and assist them through the difficult years of old age, trying to alleviate problems and limitations caused by age. Unfortunately, many of these gratifications, pleasures and joys are no longer the prerogative of parents.

⁸⁵ 84% of children aged between 8 and 15 years own a mobile phone.

Dad and mum, when the child is young, chased by hurry, commitments and work, social and economic needs, very often fail to appreciate and enjoy the dialogue, love and presence of their children. When these children then enter the stormy period of adolescence, parents often feel them growing more and more distant, while the meeting and understanding risk turning into clashes or into cold, detached and superficial relationships.

Finally, to think that they are accompanied, supported, relieved of the burdens and limitations of years and old age becomes more and more often a pure illusion since, next to the old parents, to listen to them, assist them and care for them, it is much easier for them to have unknown and foreign arms, faces, ears and eyes from faraway countries, than eyes, arms and faces that they have always known and loved as those of their children.

Ultimately, there is a clear sense that this give-and-take relationship between the generations will end in a net loss for the parents. This awareness only accentuates the frustration and rejection towards motherhood and fatherhood.

6.2.4 The lack of a safe and valid affective space.

The safe and valid affective space is that space made up of dialogue, attention, listening, availability, in which the child, on the one hand, can move in complete security, while on the other, in this space, he or she can receive and make his or her own valuable educational and training contributions. The affective space can be broad, as in extended families, in which many people, both adults and minors, united by blood or kinship ties live together in harmony and mutual collaboration, or it can be limited and restricted to just the two parents or even to a single parent and a few sporadic family friends. We know that the broader the affective and relational space with positive characteristics in which the child can freely and safely exchange, the easier it is to manage, since the multiple positive points of reference reduce the direct and personal commitment of the parents. On the contrary, the narrower the affective and family network, the more difficult, painful and nerve-racking is the management of the child's growth. The riskier and more dangerous the space of rela-

tionships, the more care is needed to make children experience it without too much risk. When the economic world and family policies not only do not favour but rather make it difficult or hinder a rich, positive and effective family network, today's mini-families are structured, which on the one hand are unable to properly manage the child's upbringing, and on the other make it extremely difficult to commit to the child's development.

6.2.5 The insufficient presence of a physical space.

In addition to affective space, physical space is also important. If the child has a large space around him that is structured in such a way that he can move around freely without risk to his physical and moral safety, such as courtyards, gardens and other green spaces around or near the houses, the family's direct commitment is greatly reduced, while at the same time the child's mood and psychological well-being improves. When, on the other hand, the child is confined to limited and restricted spaces, such as those found in normal flat blocks, the limitations, prohibitions, and also the risks are considerably greater, resulting in greater commitment and control on the part of the parents and greater frustration and emotional tension on the part of the child.

6.2.6 The considerable economic costs.

A child, 'a new mouth to feed', as they used to say in the peasant societies of yore, has always had an economic cost, but never in human history has the economic cost of caring for, rearing, training and educating a human being been as high as it is today in Western societies.⁸⁶ And this is essentially for two reasons.

⁸⁶ According to a study by Federico Penati of the Department of Economic Sciences at the University of Verona, the cost of maintaining a child between the ages of 6 and 13 and an adolescent corresponds to 32.65% and 35.8%, respectively, of the cost of an adult. On a monthly basis, for basic needs such as food and clothing, a child costs on average 252 euro if he or she is 0-5 years old, 212 euro between 6 and 14 years old, 233 euro between 15 and 18 years old.

The first concerns the lifestyles imposed by advertising and the consumer society, which heavily condition the choices of parents who do not feel like good parents if they do not conform to certain standards. To feel like 'a good parent' it is not enough to buy your child shoes, but these must be fashionable and, if possible, designer. The same goes for the schoolbag, the diary, the notebooks, the clothes, the furniture in his or her room, etc.. A telephone in the home is not enough, but every member of the family must have at least one, if not two or three. Just as a television or radio is not enough in the home, but there must be a television in every room. In order to develop a child's body normally, it is not enough to walk, run and play freely, but good physical development must pass through gyms or sports activities to be attended, of course, for a fee. Then there is the cultural and scholastic education that is associated with the ban on work. Family education is not considered absolutely sufficient, just as a few years of education in public or public schools is not considered sufficient either. Many, many years must be spent on books and school desks. Because the state imposes it and because, in order to find a prestigious job, certain educational standards are required. The fact that the state imposes, by means of compulsory schooling, a certain basic education, currently in Italy up to the age of sixteen, could only be a good thing if civil society could assume all the burdens. One would then expect tuition to be completely free, but books should also be completely free. But not only that.

If the state imposes on families for minors to study, rather than the work with which they could quickly become independent, this should be at zero cost to the families, since it is civil society that should take responsibility for the necessary maintenance of minors until the age at which the schooling obligation and the ban on work persist. For the sake of a minimum of fair-

For Cisl director Francesco Belletti, "the family, in fact, invests in an asset, the child, who is a dependent for 25-30 years and can cost up to 100-150,000 euro, depending on the type of school, university and family lifestyle choices that are made."

F. BELLETTI, 'Le scienze umane chiamate a raccolta', in *Famiglia oggi*, 11, 2007, p. 12.

ness and justice, of the two options: either the state leaves families free to regulate their educational and training choices as they see fit, or, if society is aware that it is good for the civil community for its fellow citizens to have a high level of education, it should take on all the burdens involved. If not? If not, it can only accept, without blaming parents for selfishness, what millions of families already do and that is to limit the number of children as much as possible or exclude them altogether, in order to avoid incurring huge expenses for many years.⁸⁷

6.2.7 Limitations in professional, political or social careers.

If a professional or political career is considered important, and put first, there is no doubt that this will be limited by the birth of one or more children. How can one think about a career and follow a child effectively at the same time? How is it possible, if requested by the employer, to move from one city to another and follow a child? Job stability, redundancy, career advancement and higher pay often depend on how much you can give at work, not on how much you can give as a parent.

6.2.8 Limitations in leisure time and personal gratifications.

A child or, worse, several children limit and condition many personal choices and needs. They limit the possibility of using free time.⁸⁸ They limit the possibility of access to body care. They limit the possibility of engaging in the political and social arena. They limit the life of a couple. If the education of the new generations has been set on the valorisation of the individual and on the conquest of maximum personal pleasure and gratification and not on the joy of conquest and gift these, and other limitations on individual freedom, will be experienced with a sense of painful sacrifice, which they will try to avoid by avoiding or limiting pregnancies as much as possible.

⁸⁷ "Since 1975 to today Italy has lost 350,000 births a year of the initial 870,000, while the average number of children of Italian women during their reproductive life has been reduced by exactly half, from 2,4 a 1,2" . R. VOLPI, *La fine della famiglia*, Mondadori, Milan, 2007, p. 7.

⁸⁸ Women have just 2 hours and 28 minutes left for leisure time.

6.2.9 Inadequacy.

Then there is the problem of inadequacy. In the advanced societies of the rich and technological West, all parents should have Superman-like characteristics. They should at the same time be engaged in one or more work activities, 'because money is never enough'; they should then be able to cope with all the bureaucratic commitments dictated and imposed by an advanced society; and, at the same time, they should be able to engage in educating and caring for their children.

This may not sound too difficult, but it becomes so because of an increasingly complex and demanding bureaucratic and technological machine. It is not enough, in fact, to be willing to pay taxes but one must have a degree in economics and commerce in order to be able to fulfil all tax obligations without errors. Mistakes that, by the way, are then punished severely as if they were crimes.

Sending a parcel is not just a matter of wrapping it up and taking it to the post office, but of knowing how to fill out the right forms in the right way. To make a phone call, it is not enough to simply pick up a handset and dial the number, but one has to take a course in communication in order to be able to understand how the myriad devilries in normal mobile phones work.

High technological and fiscal skills and culture are just two of the many requirements that good parents should have. These, like Saint Anthony, should then possess ample powers of bi or tri lease to be present at their first and second jobs at the same time; to be ready to accompany their children in the various sports, music and school activities 'indispensable for them to grow up well'; they should multiply to be always available to accompany them to the visits of the various doctors and specialists so as not to overlook problems once considered absolutely acceptable but which are now presented as important and fundamental for the future health of the young scions.

At the same time, parents should be vigilant to ensure that their children do not put themselves in risky situations with radio, TV, Internet and mobile phones. Tools which, despite being

constantly repeated that 'they are not good or bad in themselves, but it all depends on how you use them', force parents to be available and present at all times while their child is connected to the Internet and paedophiles and pornographic sites are there ready to seize him or her as soon as he or she is distracted for a moment.

And again, parents must be present and willing, as is rightly recommended by good psychologists, to sit next to the young virgins watching TV programmes in order to select, with them, the most suitable programmes and at the same time discuss what they have seen or heard.

Of course, parents themselves cannot fail in their role as taxi drivers ready to accompany their children to various parties, but also to the dance, theatre and cinema "because children need to improve their culture and at the same time relate to their peers". When the children are older, their chaperoning also extends into the night. It is normal that during adolescence, but also during the long years of the children's youth spent with the family, the night is no longer for parents to rest. In fact, during all these years, the parents' night job consists of accompanying the young boys and girls to the various discotheques or houses, often in out-of-the-way locations, such as villas in the countryside and at the seaside, 'where it is right for them to have fun with their peers', and then waiting for them for hours in the car, or going home and sleeping on the sofa waiting to pick them up. If they have then reached the age of eighteen and thus their driving licence and are entitled to their own or dad's car and keys, things do not get any better because it is not until midnight that one has to wait for one's children, but until five to six in the morning. It is only while it is dawning that one would have the right to rest and find some peace and quiet, after hearing the noise of the car parked in the apartment block and the thud of the front door that finally signals the return of the young night owls to the home. These two signals are essential to realise that, at least for that night, one's children and the precious car did not crash into a tree or a wall, nor did they crash into another car. At that point, however, one has to be ready and raring to go for another day's work.

Inadequacy also occurs at the time of the relationship. Men and women both educated and educated alike in the prospect and expectation of a common future professional and career commitment, with little or no preparation for parental and family life, should be capable of attitudes and behaviour that are hardly compatible. For example, if they have chosen a military career, they should go for a few months on a 'peace mission' to drop bombs and machine-gun mercilessly those rebels who do not want to accept our democracy, demonstrating virility, grit, dynamism, aggressiveness and security in this daily 'job' of theirs, and then return home to lovingly care for the newborn, preparing excellent baby food before singing sweet and tender lullabies at his bedside!

Despite the fact that the inadequacy between what is required of parents and their real possibilities is considerable and evident, few are addressing the problem of both preparing these parents and facilitating and enabling their task. Instead, there is a race to complicate it more and more by pouring and inserting into families needs, demands and instruments that are increasingly difficult to govern and control.

One wants, for example, the family to educate children in love, legality, respect and good manners, but then one allows, one says for the sake of freedom, the mass media to invade the homes, hearts and minds of every family member with images and content dripping with violence, vulgarity, superficiality, aggression and opportunism.

6.3.0 INADEQUATE LAWS CONCERNING LA FAMIGLIA

In any civil society, i.e. one founded on law '*ubi societas ibi jus*' 'where there is a society, there is a legal system', there is a need for laws, regulations and various other norms, including those gathered and codified in Unique Texts, Codes, that regulate, in particular, the relations between the citizens: individuals, groups, institutions, the State, constituting its legal system. These norms, by their nature, should tend to improve and make rela-

tions between the various components of society more solid and stable.

Unfortunately, this does not always happen. More and more often, due to pressure from various power groups or special interests, laws are enacted, for example, that not only do not improve relations between people or between social groups, but often accentuate contrasts, exalt them and place them in a perverse spiral of instability and destructiveness.

As far as the family is concerned, the rules should also aim to make this natural institution, which is the basis of society, more functional, just as they should succeed in making the relationship between its members, between them and the institutions, including the State, purposeful and rich.

When this is not the case, and all the statistics are there to prove it, we are in the presence of provisions that are non-functional and not adequate to their task.

A regulation should be judged by the short-, medium- and long-term effects it brings about and not by the ideology that informs it or for which it was created.

The family is a primary institution, inasmuch as it arises naturally and historically before any other institution: it is from the essence and existence of the family, the proto-cell of every society, that the State, as an order, with laws that govern it and by which it, in turn, imposes them on all its members to observe, and on the other hand, the Church or Churches that flank the State, and not vice versa, arise. Consequently, laws concerning the family, this fundamental pillar of the State, should be few and clear but, above all, they should be careful to protect its autonomy, integrity, stability and proper functioning,

Surely laws should not be passed that insert perverse mechanisms into the relationships between the sexes, between spouses, between spouses and their children, between the family and other institutions.

Instead, in recent decades there has been a desire to harness families in a large number of laws and rulings that claim to direct, limit, organise and manage what should instead be the sole responsibility of the families themselves.

In the meantime, it should not be a legislative competence to establish the roles or lack of roles to be played by spouses.

How, for example, can an institution as complex and difficult to manage as a family, in which needs, necessities and burning emotional, economic, relational and social problems are intertwined every day, function if by law, unlike all other institutions, there must be no diversified responsibilities or single coordination within it?

When there are different roles and competences, such as when the husband is responsible for the world of economics, work and services, while the wife is responsible for the emotional-relational world, the overlapping of competences is reduced to a minimum. Since it is then already defined who is ultimately responsible for the family, even when there are different ideas on certain topics, knowing and relying for these decisions on the one figure who is in charge, greatly eases the tension and quells mutual aggression.

For what do we all do, every day and in thousands of offices or institutions, when we have different ideas at work than our boss (and we all have a boss!)? We expound, even fiercely, our ideas and our thoughts trying to convince him, with the best arguments of our thesis, but then, if we have due respect for the various roles, we leave the final choice to his responsibility and return serenely, or at most with some grumbling, to our usual work. Above all, and this is important, we do not feel offended in the slightest because he has not accepted our ideas, nor do we harbour any intentions of revenge against him.

It was not difficult to foresee what would happen when, with the reform of family law, on the push of a 1968-style equalitarianism and liberalism, and in order to satisfy both feminist and economic pressures, the role of the head of the family was effectively eliminated. Putting, in fact, by law, two persons at the head of this fundamental institution: father and mother, husband and wife, with 'parental authority', i.e. giving both equal functions, equal weight in family decisions, equal responsibility, meant practically putting no one at the head of the family.

On the other hand, why not try to put, by law, a man and a woman with equal responsibilities and equal functions at the head of each public or private institution, so that there would be two Heads of State, two Presidents of the Council, but also two Presidents of the Bank of Italy, and so on, right down to two headmasters in every school, or two parish priests in every parish? The reason why this 'democratic' reform is not implemented is very simple: institutions, from the largest to the smallest, could not function at all.

The summit, by its definition, is defined by one point and not two, and so the concept of leader and responsible refers to one person and not two. For Mills 1953 and Strodbeck 1954 quoted by Lidz, in fact, 'Small groups, even those of three people, tend to split into dyads that exclude others from meaningful relationships and arrangements, and weaken and disintegrate group unity. To minimise these disruptive tendencies requires the existence of structures, norms, and leadership.'⁸⁹

In families without leadership, what is described occurs. Conflict leads to alliances: one parent allies with all the children against the other parent; one parent with the children of the same sex, against the parent and children of the opposite sex; or conversely, alliances with the opposite gender arise, the father with the female children, against the mother allied with the male children. But alliances can involve friends and relatives of one and the other in a game of slaughter.

Among other things, shared responsibility is wrongly extolled as a 'democratic system' within the family, whereas the previous situation was branded as an 'authoritarian or tyrannical system.' It is well known that the concept of democracy (government by the people) by no means stipulates that all rules must be accepted and enforced after all citizens are fully convinced of their goodness. Even in the oldest small village assembly democracies, the concept of majority decision-making and not unanimity of consent applied. On the other hand, what kind of majority can there be when the people to whom decisions are referred

⁸⁹ T. LIDZ, *Family and Problems of Adaptation*, Boringhieri, Turin, 1977, p. 59.

are only two who, among other things, have, by their very nature, remarkably different ways of seeing and experiencing problems, realities and experiences?

Democratic family does not mean putting decisions to a vote or establishing a permissive system of chaotic freedom, but it does mean taking responsibility for the needs of each person within it, but also responsibility for the functionality of the institution itself. And this naturally demands individual limits and sacrifices in the perspective of the common good.

A law that imposes, as mentioned above, an equal ownership of parental authority seems tailor-made to fuel permanent conflict in couples that becomes more and more serious over time, with obvious repercussions for individuals, the family and thus society.

To deal with the problems that arise daily and to solve them, the importance of dialogue is almost always emphasised. Through dialogue, the couple should be able to make all the decisions that are useful for family life. Without denying the importance of dialogue and calm confrontation, if there are no different areas of competence and if there is no leader who ultimately takes responsibility for the most important and incisive decisions, since a majority system is not possible between two people, one is forced to use at least one of the following decision-making methods.

The decision is implemented alternately by the two spouses.

"I make one decision, you make one." This way of operating does not diminish the conflict and confusion in family life. Indeed, not all decisions are of equal importance or have the same consequences for the economy of the family or couple. "What sense does it make for you to let me decide today whether it is better for our son to wear a coat or a jacket when you decided the previous time, which is much more important for the child's emotional life, that it was better to enrol him in day care, a decision that I disapproved of and continue to disapprove of?" "What sense does it make for me to decide whether or not to buy a hoover while you decided whether or not to buy a new car?"

This decision-making methodology risks bringing schizophrenic-type dissociation into the family management sphere. If it is the mother's turn to decide whether or not her child should go on a school trip and it is the mother's turn, she will decide 'yes', but when her daughter asks to go on a school trip and it is the father's turn to decide, the father, who is against school trips on principle, will decide 'no', for example, creating disparity and bewilderment among the children. If then, rather than arguing within the family, you imagine yourself in a car and the decisions on which road to take at the various crossroads are taken alternately by one or the other spouse, it is not difficult to think in which direction and which route this poor car with all its unfortunate occupants will end up.

Another operational possibility is to find for each decision a middle way between the vision of one and the other.

As far as this mode is concerned, what confidence is there that the intermediate decision is the best one the couple could take? Imagine, and it is not difficult to do so, two parents who cannot agree on the children's evening return time: the father, who is modern, understanding and open-minded, would prefer his son, now 18, to decide when to return and go home. He therefore prefers to accept that he usually retires around five to six in the morning, when the last clubs have closed and the hot cream croissants, necessary for breakfast before going home, have just been baked.

On the other hand, the mother, who is much more attentive to the material and moral risks to which a child may be exposed at night, is of the opinion that the child should return to the family early, no later than nine o'clock at night. If one implements the above methodology, one will tell one's child that they can safely return at one o'clock in the morning. In this way, the son, the father and the mother will certainly remain unhappy. But then, are we sure that this is the best decision?

Incidentally, if the couple accepts this rule of the middle choice, the husband, wife or both will quickly get smart, trying

to start from very distant positions in order to be able to find a middle way, closer to their own desires.

Another way could be for all decisions of the day to be taken alternately by the two spouses.

As in: "One day you decide, one day I decide." This can translate into practice as: "One day I decide to buy a big car, the next day you decide to sell the same car because you think we cannot afford it." This methodology is the same as that used in politics when the government formed by a given majority makes its decisions in complete contrast to the opposition. Many, if not all, of the measures taken by this government will be revoked or overturned after the next election when a new majority is in government.

Another way could be to implement the decision only when both are convinced of the rightness of a choice.

With this mode, the risk is that decisions will be the result of one spouse's ability to wear down the other to the point of making him or her say yes. In wars of attrition, the winner is not the one who has the best or most appropriate solution to the problem, but the one who resists and insists the most.

Should both spouses have the same ability to stand up to each other with grit and determination, an even more serious risk would arise, which is that of immobility. With this methodology, every decision would be taken after who knows how long, while at the same time mutual aggression would skyrocket.

In every family, dozens of decisions are made every day, some of them very important. How is it possible to manage these decisions when, for each of them, the time could be stretched indefinitely?

And now let us ask: Who is more likely to win in this dialectical tug-of-war? And then: What can be the experience and behaviour of the loser?

In the meantime, victory in linguistic disputes is more likely to go to those who have a better dialectic. Then there is another category of people who cannot back down and always need to

have the last word: these are men and women with obsessive-compulsive traits in their personality. These people, precisely because they are very rigid, are able to stand up to their interlocutor for days on end, endlessly repeating their ideas and thoughts, right or wrong.

Now let us ask ourselves what happens in the soul and what reactions those who are forced, despite themselves, to give in, even though they know they are right. In the meantime, there is a build-up of resentment and aggression accompanied by a devaluation of the person who put him on the ropes. Aggressiveness that may, later on, lead to attitudes and behaviour that, in some way, may cause the other person to suffer or limit him or her, even in fields and topics far removed from the matter in dispute.

The person forced to give in will feel entitled, for instance, to deny himself sexually, to humiliate the other, or to take advantage of any other occasion, to boycott any initiative of his spouse. He will also try, by all means, to carry out his retaliation by constructing and then implementing plans to delegitimise in the eyes of his children, friends and relatives, those who have done him violence. He may retaliate with betrayal, seen in these cases as a means to humiliate the other, or he may implement a partial or total escape from family commitments.

In this case, sometimes slowly but inexorably, sometimes abruptly, he will first move away from the couple's communion and then from the family, to seek elsewhere that gratification, that understanding, that welcome that he no longer finds in his own home. The fields in which he can find gratification are many: he may work himself to the limit in his work, so as to reserve for the other spouse and the family the indispensable minimum of time and energy, or he may devote himself more to friendships, hobbies, sexual adventures, or he may go in search of a new love to replace the first.

6.3.1 The family judge.

The legislator, then, foreseeing the insaniability of many decision-making conflicts, has included as the final arbiter the family judge to whom spouses who disagree can turn. Fortunately, few know and use this rule, which would only serve to lengthen

decision-making times indefinitely, while at the same time increasing the already numerous grounds for referral to the courts. To let others: lawyers, judges, courts, decide, we do not know on what parameters, on the family life of millions of families, seems to us a truly naive way to deal with these problems. On what parameters in fact can a judge decide? How much weight is given to the lawyer's skill in finding all the legal grounds in favour of his client? What are the biblical timescales for each decision?

The truth is that this rule of shared responsibility, present in the new family law, apart from the beautiful and pompous words with which it has been hailed and accompanied, makes families ungovernable, creating a perennial, serious regime of conflict between spouses and, what is worse, between the male and female genders.

This is what has happened. For decades now, the media have loved to compare and emphasise the greater or lesser qualities of the two genders. But above all, they love to highlight the achievements and better qualities of the female gender, compared to the male gender: "Women are smarter, better at school, more resourceful, more committed to the family, more helpful"; while men "study less, do little housework, sexually they are forced to defend themselves and are challenged by female resourcefulness, they are violent, rapists, paedophiles and so on." At the same time, laws are enacted and associations founded to defend women against men's violence.

One certainly does not realise that pitting women against men harms both sexes, as the trust, esteem and thus the interest and openness of one towards the other is undermined. What Risè calls a gender perspective is created. "Now the gender perspective, looking at the interest of each spouse as something different from that of the other, undermines precisely this cohesion and this solidarity, this vision of the family as a whole, in which either everyone wins or everyone loses, because it is the family itself that is denied, and all its members that are weakened by this denial."⁹⁰

⁹⁰ C. RISE', 'The effects of gender policy', in *Famiglia oggi*, 2005, 11, p. 27.

If this law was made in good faith to achieve what was stated, namely, greater democracy and a better distribution of power between men and women, it would certainly be the most naive law in our legal system, since the legislator, in drafting this rule, seems to have completely forgotten the elementary characteristics of human psychology, especially laws concerning group psychology and those concerning the psychology of sexual genders. He would also have ignored the experiences of all other public or private institutions at the top of which two persons with the same prerogatives, responsibilities and functions are never placed. It would also have ignored the experiences of past families, and those of the animal world, where the group leader is almost always either a male or a female.

6.3.2 The suspect.

At this point the suspicion arises that the legislative intent was not at all to make the family system more democratic or to empower women, but another. The suspicion is that the state, under pressure from the business world, aimed, through its institutions, to become much stronger and that, to achieve this, it needed to weaken the other forces within it, in this case the strength of families.

Many data seem to confirm this suspicion.

Meanwhile, the technique of '*divide and rule*' is very old. It has been abundantly exploited by all conquerors. It is systematically used in industries, universities, and all state and private institutions. When one wants to weaken, without making much noise, the power of a leader and/or even of the structure he or she coordinates, it is enough to put another person with the same prerogatives, the same functions and the same powers next to him or her. The ensuing, consequential conflict and clash will diminish to the point of almost nullifying not only the authority of that head but the very weight of that structure, while at the same time increasing the power of the person at the immediate top of the management pyramid, but also increasing the weight of the other divisions or services. The state at this point is as if saying: 'I am truly saddened that you husbands and wives quarrel and cannot agree on so many problems, but don't worry, for-

tunately I am here. Luckily for you, you can safely turn to me, who can make the right decisions for you'.

Using the technique of *divide and rule*, it is, in fact, the contenders themselves who deliver themselves into the hands of the one who wants to subjugate them!

By disempowering the father of the family by sharing power with the mother, the aim was achieved of greatly diminishing the real power of families. By then inserting the last codicil in the law that allows recourse to state judges to resolve disputes over the management of the family, in essence the state has taken upon itself and its judiciary the ultimate responsibility for the choices and functionality of families.

6.3.3 The Patriarch State.

That the power of the state over families has greatly increased is fully reflected in the interventions of judges in separations and divorces.

Parents, even if they are separated or divorced, are responsible for the upbringing and care of their children, but then the courts decide on which days and hours each of them can carry out the educational task and up to what age the child can loiter, without engaging in work, which is usually maintained by the father.

Judges decide how much maintenance one spouse must give to the other, even if the latter may work and live with another person who could support him/her. And so on.

The use of the institution of divorce is very old. However, it has always been very controlled and restricted, in all societies of the past, because it endangers the functionality of the family and the upbringing and education of offspring.

One may be for or against the breaking of the marital pact, but the manner in which it has been implemented in Italy and in many states in the western world suggests that either no thought has been given to the most perverse consequences, or the aim was exactly what was achieved: to have ever smaller, more fra-

gile and weaker, but also poorer families,⁹¹ all dependent on a patriarchal state.

Meanwhile, no penalty is provided for those who violate the various rules of the contract or who request the dissolution of the marriage contract. It may happen then, and it does happen, that one of the spouses can quietly flout the marriage vows, cheat on his spouse, ask for a divorce and then be maintained by the other for life. And, if the lawyer is particularly good, he can, with the money passed on to him by the ex, also support his mistress and her dog!

In all civil contracts there is almost always some provision for those who breach the contract or for those who request its early termination. The reason is simple. Contracts, all contracts between two or more persons or between two or more companies, must be defended. Defending a contract means giving greater seriousness and guarantee to it, but it also means giving greater guarantee of stability to civil society and an injection of confidence to the contracting parties. The other will not be able to negotiate or flirt with the competition against his own company; the other will not be able to consider the contract as waste paper and throw bits of the agreement into the air like carnival confetti. The other, if he wants to do this, will have to pay heavy compensation. The higher the indemnity, the more he will be forced to think twice about treating commitments too lightly.

That the state assumes more and more powers, taking them away from the family, is also quite evident in many other fields.

- It is the state that, under the pretext of the possible exploitation of children, establishes a priori through compulsory education up to what age children must attend school without working,⁹² thus nullifying all decision-

⁹¹ According to a study conducted by Jay Zagorsky of Ohio State University, married people accumulate much more wealth than single people or divorcees, as the former work harder, pool everything, and have family goals they want to achieve. The same scholars went on to point out that in divorce, on average, three quarters of previous wealth is lost.

⁹² The financial law 2007 in Italy, decreed that compulsory education must be provided for at least ten years. The age of access to work is thus raised from fifteen to sixteen.

making power of families. These are treated as if they were all ready to exploit their children, but also as if they were all equal in terms of wealth, life choices, values, etc.. Whereas, on the contrary, we know very well that there are rich families, poor families and very poor families; families that choose to give more space to affective - relational life, rather than to economic or cultural life. There are children who find their gratification and fulfilment in their studies and others who find it in their work commitments. For some parents, the ideal proposed to their children is schooling up to the highest levels of university education and a master's degree, for others, the ideal is an early occupation that allows them to become independent and take responsibility early on, helping the family of origin or forming their own family.

- It is the state, and not the family, that decides at what age minors can enter into a proper marriage,⁹³ although the maturity to embark on a matrimonial path could much better be judged by those who know these young people from birth.
- It is the state with its counselling centres and the juvenile guardianship judge that decides whether a minor can have an abortion or not, not the families of the two young people who know people and situations much better.
- It is the state, through its counselling centres, its health services, together with the woman concerned, that decides whether she can have an abortion, excluding the man, her other children and family members. Excluding, therefore, the family in which this woman lives and of which she is an essential component.
- It is the State that decides through the institution of special adoption, which should be "to protect the interest of the child in a situation of material and moral abandon-

⁹³ Currently in Italy, the minimum age for contracting a marriage is 18 for both the man and the woman, which may be reduced to 16 for both when serious reasons exist.

ment", whether or not to take children from poor or destitute families, unable to give them the necessary schooling and vocational training, while they would be able to give the necessary listening, warmth and affection for their growth and human formation, to institutions or other families.

- It is the state is in charge of choosing which families or institutions to entrust minors to when their parents, for whatever reason, are temporarily unable to give the minors the necessary care and assistance. Again without taking into account that alongside each family there is a friendship and affective network that could much better help the family in difficulty than the state.
- It is the state that decides what means of correction and punishment to apply or not to apply to children.
- Even the State decides whether, when and how a seventeen-year-old girl may date a young man, and at what time she must go home after being with her 'morose'. The decree of 13 May 1972 by which the Bologna Juvenile Court ordered the parents to allow their 17-year-old daughter to date the boy to whom she was affectively attached is truly illuminating in this respect.

...Omissis... Noting that in the family of P. U. a serious state of tension has arisen in the relationship between his parents and his daughter M., aged 17, in view of the fact that she is drastically prevented from being able to see D. U., to whom she has long been affectively attached; whereas no objective evidence has come to light concerning D. U. to justify such a preclusion, which appears to be linked to strictly subjective resentments; whereas(...omissis...)

decrees:

P. U. and his wife, L. M., must allow their youngest daughter, M., to see, where she believes, D. U. at least one hour a day;

They must allow their daughter to go out with D. every Sunday afternoon and at least two evenings a week.

P. M. will take care, on such evenings, not to return after twenty-four o'clock; (sic)

The state always decides, through its services and its technical and judging bodies, even though we know very well that it has neither the information, nor the preparation, nor the flexibility, nor the independence of judgement necessary to make so many of its decisions credible and acceptable.

The power of a good lawyer, who is then the one who charges the highest fees, to bend laws and regulations in favour of his client is well known, compared to a modest lawyer, who is the one only the poor can afford. The ideologies and stereotypes of which practitioners and specialists are victims are well known.

It is well known that there are honest judges and less-than-honest judges. Careful and responsible judges and careless and superficial judges. Technicians and professionals who are prepared and responsible and others who are ill-prepared and superficial.

The heavy and intrusive intrusion into the relationships between spouses and between them and their children and other family members not only restricts the effective freedom of families, but also claims to manage their relationships and those with their children.

This behaviour makes me think of when I, like all children, was interested and intrigued by flowers, but also by the power I could freely express. When I held a flower in my hand, it was exciting to think that I could with impunity pluck off one of its petals to fully feel its softness, but also to concretely manifest, in this way, my power over it, over this beautiful thing that I was free to manage as I pleased. I remember that it felt good to keep removing one petal after another and throwing it on the ground. But then, at the end, when all the petals were scattered on the floor and I was left with an ugly, peeling stem in my hands, bitterness and sadness would set in and I would feel like a little fool for what I had done.

Modern states have behaved in the same way towards the family institution. Law after law, sentence after sentence, using their power, have made the family a sad, ugly, empty vessel. Empty in power, autonomy and choices, but also empty of its beauty, its harmony, its dignity, its soul, its warmth and vigour. Empty of its potential capabilities and possibilities. Sadly, however, they are still able to observe the disastrous results of this successful operation, placing the blame on others, but they are not at all inclined to correct their mistakes and finally become adults and responsible.

6.3.4 Women's laws.

Then there is a whole series of laws or applications of laws to women.⁹⁴ These, at least on paper, are supposed to protect the so-called 'weaker sex', in reality they create glaring inequalities between men and women with serious consequences in terms of the relationship between the sexes, and with a further weakening of the couple and the family institution.⁹⁵

Think for example of the proposal of pink quotas. Men and women are equal, but it is only fair that there should be the same number of men and women running local, regional or national politics, while there is nothing wrong if, in nursery, primary and secondary schools, the overwhelming majority of teachers are female⁹⁶ and therefore children and young people, during the most important years of their education, will have only women as their only reference figures. Despite the fact that: "With a ma-

⁹⁴ E. TRIBULATO, *Education denied*, p.126.

⁹⁵ There were 277,738 religious marriages in 1997; there were 260,904 in 2001.

There were 57,398 separations in 1997; there were 64,915 in 2000. In Europe (Orega 2006) one in two couples separates. There were 32,717 divorces in 1997; there were 34,341 in 2000.

Istat data 2002.

⁹⁶ The female presence in pre-schools is 99.57%, which means that there are only four males for every thousand teachers. In primary school it is 95.38%, in secondary school it is 59.16%. Data from the Ministry of Education.

le teacher in the chair 51% of primary school children perform better and 42% try harder.⁹⁷

Let us then think of the application of divorce law, by which the children, even now that shared custody is in place, are almost always entrusted to the mother, who also enjoys the marital home, furniture, furnishings, and her maintenance. The application of this law leads one to think that a marriage is almost always dissolved through the fault of the father, who is rightly punished by severely limiting his relationship with the children, condemning him to support his wife, who can enjoy the conjugal home, furniture and furnishings.

But this is certainly not the case. In at least fifty per cent of cases one would have to assume that the other is at fault or that there is a shared responsibility.

Think of the law on violence in the family, in which the violent spouse can only be the husband to be sent out of the house if he has an outburst of aggression towards his wife or children. While the wife, precisely because she is a woman, and therefore by definition a fragile and defenceless creature, can hardly ever be accused of exasperating her husband with her words or behaviour.

Let us think of the retirement laws, whereby the woman, who lives longer, retires earlier than the man.⁹⁸

Let us think above all of the law on the termination of pregnancy, which allows the woman to eliminate her man's child, while the man is forced to accept and support for decades any of his children born out of wedlock, against his will or even through deception.

Since there is always a natural tendency towards balance and equilibrium, these laws and their sectarian application work against women themselves, against marriage and ultimately against the family. A striking sign of this malaise in the relationship between the genders is the frequent rejection of marriage,

⁹⁷ E. CHI, "Maestro maschio alumni più buoni", in *Famiglia Cristiana*, 32, 2007, p.19

⁹⁸ The Maroni reform (Law 243/2004) also provides for men to retire after women (men 65 years, women 60 years).

of paternity, but also of any bond that could result in a commitment that is not directly manageable,⁹⁹ and thus the condemnation of many women to live in solitude, without the warmth of a family and without the support of a man. Risè comments "...as, in fact, the psychotherapist bitterly notes, forced to measure the anguish of these women who are affectively alone, because they lack an emotional, and often cognitive, male sideboard capable of accompanying them along a life path."¹⁰⁰

A sign of an exasperated gender conflict is the tragically increasing number of violent acts against women who are raped, beaten, killed in ferocious and heinous crimes within and outside the family.

6.3.5 Tax laws and the family.

Then there are the tax laws, which have been well analysed by the former president of the Forum of Families Luisa Santolini¹⁰¹, who pointed out a number of inconsistencies of which a civilised state should be ashamed. For example:

"A family with two children and an income of 25,000 euro that spends 16,000 euro to support them has a tax benefit of 1,000 euro, whereas if they donate the same amount to a party they get a tax benefit of up to 3,000 euro.

In Italy today, alimony to a separated spouse can be deducted from taxes, but if the same amount is transferred to the family, it is taxable for the tax authorities.

The termination of pregnancy is free of charge, while for ultrasound examinations to check the health of the embryo a co-pay fee is charged.

⁹⁹ As age increases, the difference in marital status between men and women, whether married or cohabiting, increases significantly. At the age of 18/20 the difference between men and women is 2%. Between the ages of 30/34 it reaches 21.7%. In practice, out of 100 women, 69.5% are in a more or less stable couple compared to 47.6% of males.

¹⁰⁰ C. RISE', *The Effects of Gender Policy*, p. 27.

¹⁰¹ L. SANTOLINI, "Families call for a social pact" in *Famiglia cristiana*, 32, 2003, p. 45.

Until the age of 18, girls are not allowed to vote or drive, but from the age of 16, girls are allowed to have an abortion freely with the approval of the tutelary judge.

Under the current tariffs, 90 metri cubi of water consumed by six people with six meters, does not cost 20 Euro, but the same amount of water consumed by six people in the same household comes to 70 Euro.

If they enrol their children in kindergarten, separated people score higher than regular families, who often do not get a place.

Unfortunately, in the game of democracy there is what Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, interviewed by Giacomelli, calls 'legal positivism', according to which 'A law is considered good because in the game of democracy a procedure is established, whereby it is the majority that decides even on the content. In reality, whoever has more strength, more money or more power wins, whereas a true democracy should respect fundamental rights and not bend them to the strongest.'¹⁰²

If the suspicion that the state was able to gain more strength at the expense of families were true, the victory, if victory could be spoken of, would be a Pyrrhic victory. The strength of a state is directly proportional to the quality of its citizens. If this quality deteriorates, if malaise and psychological illnesses spread, if dishonesty, corruption, unlawful attitudes and behaviour, aggression and lust for power spread, the state not only does not become stronger, but quickly weakens and dies in the malaise of its citizens.

6.4.0 WORK AND FAMILY

What is work?

Work can represent many things to human beings.

- It can be a place of commitment and hard work in order to survive as a person but also as a family.
- It can be a means of becoming independent from the family of origin or the other spouse.

¹⁰² R. GIACOMELLI, 'Famiglie nel vuoto', in *Famiglia cristiana*, 4, 2003, p. 39.

- It can be an opportunity to be able to have for oneself and one's loved ones not only the means of subsistence but also the services and tools to increase one's knowledge, to make better use of one's leisure time, to improve one's culture and spirit.
- It can be the means by which human beings can realise dreams, projects and aspirations.
- It can be a means to ignite the imagination, unleash creativity.
- It can be the means by which we return to society and others what society and others have given to us. This reciprocation can be based on the most important emotional and spiritual goods or on material goods. When we educate our children and give them the necessary cuddles, advice, values, presence, affection, tenderness, and education, we are merely reciprocating, with our commitment, what we have received from our parents. When, through our work, we provide our children with a roof under which they can shelter, food, clothes, or medicines, we are merely giving them those comforts necessary for their lives, which others have given us.
- On the contrary, work can be the means of giving to others what we have not received. Giving it to others is a bit like giving to oneself, giving cuddles, presence, attention, affection and care to others is a bit like loving oneself a bit more.
- There can be work as a source for satisfying essential needs and work as a source for satisfying consumerism-induced needs and thus, work as a means to obtain even the superfluous for oneself and one's family. In these cases, the risk is that our work is of no use to anyone but only succeeds in satisfying the consumerist creed for which: 'If you work you will be able to satisfy your needs, the more you work the more needs you will be able to satisfy', while enriching those who are already very rich, we add.

- Work can also be the idol, which absorbs all our energy, on which we pour much of our expectations and confidence, in the search for joy, security, happiness. Idol placed at the centre of our lives, to which we sacrifice everything: personal life, couple life, family life.

For millennia, work and family coincided. They coincided *as place*, in that work was carried out close to the family. They coincided *as actors in the work*, in that it was all the members of the family: men, women, children and the elderly, and when families could afford it, the servants, sharecroppers or slaves who were part of the extended family, who engaged, according to need and possibility, in the useful activities to produce enough for the needs of the family group.

They coincided in terms of the *quality of time committed*, as no qualitative difference was made between work aimed at producing goods of an educational, affective and caring nature and work aimed at producing material goods. Men and women enjoyed the same dignity even though predominantly and preferably the work of caring and nurturing was performed by women while predominantly and preferably the work of procuring material goods and organising and protecting the community was performed by men.

The separation and estrangement of work from the family only began to manifest itself at the end of the 18th century, when men, women and children began to sell their time, the strength of their arms or their talents for others, obtaining from them the money needed to purchase the necessary goods and services.

Industrial society has been from the beginning, and still is, most responsible for the conflict and rift between family and work, spreading this conflict and rift to the vast majority of the population.

In this conflict between family and work, there have been and are continuing attempts, successful ones at that, to subjugate the family to the world of production, even to the point of desiring and striving, as in Sweden, to eliminate the family alto-

gether, as it is seen as an obstacle to full employment for women.

On the one hand, there is the drama of work that is not available or of temporary work, which exposes families to uncertainties and risks of poverty, while preventing young people from realising their desire to form a family; on the other hand, there are the problems of those who have a job but are not satisfied with it for various reasons.

Meanwhile, in the era of the globalised economy, entry into working life takes place in stages: at first, young people waiting to find work, in order to gain experience, devote themselves to voluntary work, then enter the world of precarious employment, and only after years, finally, will it be the turn of the permanent job. The job, therefore, when it arrives, arrives too late and gives no guarantee of stability.

6.4.1 The workplace.

The place of work is often far from home, sometimes in another city if not in another country or continent. This leads to commuting¹⁰³ or massive emigration resulting in being away from the family unit often for hours, sometimes for days, months or years. The current globalisation of markets and production has accentuated these problems. Due to the presence of a global market, companies are often forced to send specialised personnel to wherever in the world their work is required. It is not difficult to find workers from the same company, spread across five continents, absent for several months from their country and family of origin.

The fairly cheap use of fast means of communication, such as aeroplanes, certainly allows better mobility, but at the same time accentuates this phenomenon. Absences from the family and the affective and friendship network lead to fractures with

¹⁰³ The number of commuters is growing at record rates. In just six years, between 2001 and 2007, the number of people who have to commute outside their municipality every day for study or work has reached thirteen million. Between 2001 and 2007, the number of commuters grew by 35.8%. On average, it takes 42.8 minutes per day for each journey. (Censis research)

the spouse, children, as well as other family members and friends, which cannot always be recomposed.

The person who leaves to look for work elsewhere, while having the gratification of knowing that his or her work is in demand perhaps on the opposite side of the globe, while being solicited and stimulated by new acquaintances on a professional, sentimental and sexual level, nevertheless has the psychological impossibility of putting down solid roots in the various places he or she frequents and of establishing stable, strong and effective bonds with the many people with whom he or she comes into contact.

This can lead to anxiety, restlessness, depression. When these commuters return, attempts to recover their educational and relational role in the family management are often in vain, as they were sought and implemented not at the right time and not in the right way.

Equally difficult are people who remain in the family home. These people are forced to live in a seesaw of emotions, feelings and relationships: during the distance there is sadness and longing; during the days when there is the presence of the other person it is difficult or impossible to pick up the threads of an interrupted or incomplete relationship and dialogue.

6.4.2 Working Hours

Working hours and the demands of production are ill-matched to the needs of the family. Just think of what has happened to night work. Even just fifty years ago, night work affected only a small percentage of workers. Subsequently, in a continuous crescendo, night workers have become a large number, not least because, in some countries, the idea of keeping shops and supermarkets open for the entire twenty-four hours is spreading.

The same was true for holiday rest and lunch breaks. The number of people who, for various reasons, work on Sundays and public holidays has been increasing, just as the number of employees who do not go home for lunch has increased greatly. If in the morning it is a general stampede to get to school and workplaces, during the lunch break it is now considered 'normal'

to eat with work colleagues in the rotisseries under the office or directly on building sites, next to workshop machines or above desks.

For the family to reunite, in many cases, it has to wait until the evening, when tired, exhausted, stressed, incapable of effective dialogue, family members find it difficult to live the few hours spent together serenely. Often, because of the tensions and frustrations accumulated during the day, these moments are experienced not as occasions to meet but to clash, not as moments of dialogue but of closure. Also because, frequently, they are experienced in front of the television set(s) at home, each one locked in his or her own monad.

*Two parents, in crisis as a couple for several years, with a son with serious mental disorders, when we suggested that they spend at least a quarter of an hour together as a couple, even if only for breakfast in the morning, so as to ease the serious family tension and begin to improve understanding, they both defended themselves by saying that given their family problems and the many commitments they had to fulfil, they had absolutely no chance of being together, to experience some pleasant moments of life as a couple, even for a quarter of an hour a day.*¹⁰⁴

6.4.3 Working hours.

In the pre-industrial period, in peasant civilisation, there were no working hours. There were days or periods when people worked in the fields from sunrise to sunset, while on other days or at other times they only worked for a few hours a day.

During these times, the family came together with considerable possibilities for dialogue, meeting, and common experien-

¹⁰⁴ "Today, one in five families in Britain get together to eat once a week or less. The children locked in their rooms, glued to the computer with a tray on their lap, the parents sitting in front of the TV."

S. GUZZETTI, "Help! The family dinner disappears", in *Famiglia cristiana*, 2004, 40, p.17.

ces. With industrialisation, the number of working hours, even ten hours a day, became fixed for every day of the week (except, of course, Sundays) and for all months of the year. After the 1920s, also thanks to trade union struggles, the number of working hours gradually decreased. Over the last few years, however, at least for some categories of workers, working hours have actually been increasing, due to overtime, refresher courses, meetings, but also and above all due to increasingly pressing demands for greater performance that force many workers to bring, either by paper means or by computer, their work inside the home in order to render what is required.

For many, the necessary distinction between work and private life has been lost because of e-mail and the ringing of mobile phones, which can reach you wherever you are. With the use of these electronic means, it becomes increasingly difficult to draw a line between work and leisure.¹⁰⁵ For many, therefore, free time is less and less free, which is why most people work far more than their contractual hours.

In this way, work becomes a deity jealous of all other interests.

A deity greedy for that essential resource for personal, relational, friendship and family life that is time. If for some people it is possible, albeit with great difficulty, to reconcile private and professional life, for others this integration is difficult, if not impossible.

The conflict between family and work has been increasing in recent years and, at least apparently, the victories are increasingly being borne by the business world.¹⁰⁶

Family and work are for most people two fundamental pillars of life.

In the confrontation and clash between family and work, in the face of a labour market that wants people to act as indivi-

¹⁰⁵ Two thirds of managers also work at home, and so do 29% of office workers and 10% of factory workers. Half of all people also receive business calls after office hours.

¹⁰⁶ Although the primary goal of Italian children is for 70% the family and for only 21% work. For teenagers, on the other hand, the family goal drops to 46% while the work goal rises to 35%.

duals and not as a family or couple, a market that wants maximum flexibility and mobility of people, things, ideas, realities, it is the family that is all too often forced to be subordinate and to shape itself to the measure of work and production.

Since work takes up a large part of our day, there is little time left for relationship life, while at the same time the quality of time spent together changes.

If work thoughts and worries invade the couple's conversations with their children or friends, it means that they cannot 'detach' themselves from work even for brief moments.

The emotional needs of the family and individual members are not respected. Above all, the needs of children are not respected. The times at which children need their parents are not respected, just as the needs of a husband for his wife and vice versa are not respected.

There is a crisis in dialogue, there is a crisis in affective and sexual manifestations, which become increasingly rare, increasingly experienced with tension and anxiety.

6.4.4 The energies used in the work.

While it is true that, at least on paper, official working hours have decreased, the commitment required is more all-encompassing. There is no doubt that work demands a lot of our physical and mental energies, as companies demand performance, adaptability, complete availability, maximum output, in order to compete with increasingly fierce competition. For careerists addicted to work or frustrated by marriage crisis, the pursuit of success at work is almost manic and obsessive. Complete immersion and participation in the needs of the company and its philosophy feeds, sustains and gratifies them. For these people, the workplace becomes their home, and their commitments and relationships are ardent wives, affectionate mothers, loving children, loyal friends.

For all the others, who do not feel like idolising or espousing the organisation or the company, being faster, grittier, more effective, better, so as to bring more profit to the company, entails a tension that is hardly acceptable and bearable, while it be-

comes increasingly difficult to harmonise professional and private life.

Whereas until a few decades ago, most jobs required predominantly physical energies, which stimulate and improve mood, so that in the evening one felt physically tired but happy and satisfied inside, today the majority of jobs require almost exclusively psychic energies, the excessive use of which can worsen mood. Such energies are needed for creating, thinking, processing and for dealing with users or customers.

There is also a considerable amount of psychic energy that is used in relationships with colleagues and superiors. The difficult and tiring management of these relationships has become one of the main causes of insomnia, stress, family rifts. Often the relationship with work is marked by disillusionment. "a monster survey (January 2005) reveals that one Italian in two declares himself dissatisfied with his professional life. A Monster survey just conducted shows that one in five women leave their job after their first child.¹⁰⁷

The causes are numerous: often in companies one is not recognised as an individual, but as an income producer. The idea of a space for oneself and one's aspirations, let alone one's family, is not accepted. One has the feeling of being just a cog and a number. One cannot make sense of what is done. One is stressed by impossible schedules.¹⁰⁸ One is demotivated by the lack of recognition, while one does not feel the pleasure of seeing one's personal contribution valued and recognised.

Many complain that they are not appreciated for who they are and what they give. They suffer from being manipulated in wars between colleagues. They suffer as lacerating wounds from injustice, prevarication and psychological violence at work. The mobbing to which one is subjected weighs like a boulder on one's soul, bringing anxiety, depression, dissatisfaction.

Since energy is limited, it is evident that by increasing expenditure on one side (work), one inevitably takes away from

¹⁰⁷ A. CALLEGARI, in *Psychologies Magazine*, October 2005, p.4

¹⁰⁸ A. CALLEGARI, in *Psychologies Magazine*, October 2005, p. 49

the other (emotional-relational life). This causes deep and frequent feelings of guilt and dissatisfaction.

Since there is no escape from these sufferings and wounds, on pain of punishment and dismissal and thus misery and starvation, one also suffers from a feeling of helplessness. This is one of the reasons why many employees engage in so-called "*rebalancing*" volunteer work. Which is not the volunteering of the insertion (before entering the world of work), but neither is it the *volunteering of the pensioner* who needs to fill his days with something useful.

Volunteer work for rebalancing is explained by those who perform it as an indispensable release valve after hours of tedious and stressful paid work. In other cases, one is dissatisfied because the amount of remuneration does not correspond to one's commitment, since the work one is forced to do is not commensurate with one's skills, studies and culture.

6.4.5 Women and work.

It is often repeated that many women manage very well to reconcile family and work, yet of the women surveyed by Istat in 2002, 35.6 per cent of working mothers said they had difficulties reconciling.¹⁰⁹

To the question of whether it is work that is irreconcilable with family or family that is irreconcilable with work, it is human history that can give the most correct answers.

Men and women did not start working in the last few years or in the last century. Men and women have always worked, and their work, harmoniously integrated with relational and family commitment, has been a source of continuous and unceasing progress.

The problem then is not the work of man or woman or both, but the characteristics of work and its compliance with social and human needs, especially the most important ones.

6.4.6 The objectives of the work.

¹⁰⁹ Istat - *Having a Child in Italy*, 32, 2006.

As far as goals are concerned, there are at least two types of work: one aimed at the affective-relational world in which we spend time, energy, imagination, preparation, availability, to provide others with the affective, educational and caring elements they need, and one aimed at the economic and service world in which we offer with our commitment the indispensable elements for survival, progress and material well-being.

But which of the two jobs is more important?

Both are fundamental and indispensable. Just as it is not possible to live without food, protection, medicines and services, in the same way it is not possible to form ourselves as men and women, to grow and live, without affection, warmth, care, education. But if both of these activities are fundamental to the wellbeing and survival of the human species, we ask ourselves: is it possible to engage in only one of the two areas, for example only in the affective-relational area, or is it possible to put one's skills and ingenuity into both areas?

There is no doubt that both hypotheses are possible. Many women committed, and especially in the past, their time, wits and energies almost exclusively to caring for children, the elderly and the sick, while, at the same time, their men worked to procure food, services and other material elements necessary for subsistence. But the other hypothesis is also plausible. Many women today, while juggling, try to balance the needs of family work with work outside the family.

At this point, the question to which we must give a clear answer becomes another: "Is it useful and convenient for the individual, for the couple, for the family and for society to focus all their efforts and energies towards one of the two goals, or to work in both directions?"

And in this case: "Is it more useful for one of the spouses to deal predominantly with the economic world while the other will deal predominantly with the emotional world?"

To answer these questions, we need to examine when a job is useful to the individual, the family and society.

A job is useful to ourselves when it is gratifying; when it allows us time for study, reflection, rest and updating; when it is not alienating; when it fits into a person's physiology; when it

does not isolate us from others; when it allows us to perform well the tasks inherent in our role as husband or wife, father or mother, but also in our political role as a citizen committed to our country and state. A job is useful to ourselves when it suits our individual characteristics, our character, our gender, the inclinations of our soul. A job is useful to ourselves when we can engage our mind, our imagination, our humanity, as well as our hands or our body in the work.

A job is useful to society: when it takes into account its needs; when it benefits others; when it is carried out respecting and not exploiting others; when it is an instrument of social growth; when it is respectful of all other living beings and the ecosystem; when it integrates harmoniously with the commitment and work of others.

A job is useful to the family and the couple when it succeeds in providing the contributions necessary for material well-being, but at the same time is compatible with the educational, caring, active presence, dialogue and assistance commitments necessary for each member of the family and the couple. We know that within couples it plays negatively by increasing tension and anxiety, the presence of serious economic difficulties that are the cause of unsatisfied needs, but we also know that excessive commitments and stress, even in the presence of considerable economic contributions, are equally destructive of the couple's well-being. Entrepreneurs such as Cavalli also note, in addition to the needs of businesses, those of families: 'We are facing a fantastic increase in well-being for billions of people, thanks to the wonders of science and technology, knowledge and our businesses. But who thinks of the family, without which there is no need for inventions and discoveries?'¹¹⁰

As for the people to whom the work is directed, our commitment can be to those closest to us: our children, our parents, our spouse, or other family members, or it can contribute to the better welfare of civil society and thus be directed towards indu-

¹¹⁰ F. CAVALLI, 'Family: the responsibility of business', in *UCID Letter*, 1, 2007, p. 56.

stry, education, common defence, transport, politics, ecology, communication, etc.

6.4.7 The primary values to be safeguarded.

All these considerations bring us back to an ideal job that unfortunately does not exist or exists only for a very small number of people, as it is difficult, if not impossible, to find a commitment that satisfies all or most of these needs, including our aspirations, without betraying our duties.

When each of us is confronted with the reality of work, we are forced, through accommodations, renunciations and sacrifices, to descend from an ideal plane to a practical one, and thus are forced into a job that can only satisfy some of our social and personal needs.

This does not exempt us from the duty to engage in one or more activities that can satisfy and be compatible with certain principles and values that should be considered as primary values:

- *The value of family.*

We have duties towards our family members that we cannot and must not delegate to anyone else because they oblige us personally. If married, we have duties towards our spouse and children: duties of dialogue, listening, presence, closeness, loving care. If we are not married, we have the same duties towards the family members closest to us: father, mother, sisters, brothers, uncles, nieces and nephews. They too ask and expect affection, attention, dialogue, active presence from us.

- *The educational value.*

Whatever work we do, from the humblest to the most prestigious, from the most intellectual to the most material, we cannot exempt ourselves from the educational commitment not only to minors but also to the adults we meet on our path and with whom we collaborate or share commitment and presence.

- *The value of the relational affective world*

We owe it to ourselves and those around us to nurture, mature and grow in and around us, the world of feelings and emotions, the world of intimate and profound dialogue, the world of

the spirit and soul, the world that stimulates human and personal growth.

- *The value of civil and political commitment.*

We also have a duty to help build around us in our cities, in our nation, but also far away from us in the world, a more honest, more just, less violent, freer, more responsible society.

- *The value of life.*

We have a duty to commit our energies and resources in favour of all life, especially human life, but also the life of the earth and the planet on which we live and our children and grandchildren will live. Therefore, our work must be able to improve the environment and the world that has welcomed us and that surrounds us and never degrade, offend or worse, destroy it.

We used to say that these are primary values in the sense that in a scale of values they come before the others, although they do not exclude the others.

When choosing a job and carrying it out, we cannot disregard these principles. Otherwise, our commitment will not be for someone but against someone.

The risk is to realise, on the edge of life, that this someone to whom we did not give as much as we should have done was very close to us. The risk is to discover that this someone we neglected and did not love enough was us, it was the people we should have loved the most.

With regard to the alternatives we were talking about earlier, the millennial experience of social and family life, from which we should draw the necessary lessons, confirms what psychology and pedagogy have always maintained, namely that, in the family sphere, the third hypothesis, the one in which one of the spouses deals predominantly with the economic world while the other deals predominantly with the affective world, is certainly the best.

This solution:

- is the only one that guarantees the survival and the harmonious and balanced development of both worlds;

- is the only one that emphasises specific sexual peculiarities;
- is the only one that can allow a peaceful and balanced couple and family life.

We then have a duty to fight for work that is tailored to the person, the family and the couple and not to the consumer and business society. We have a duty to strive for our own emotional well-being and that of our family members, who are the ones closest to us and expect the most from us.

A concrete and considerable downsizing of the work needed to produce material goods and services could allow us to invest a good part of our energies in activities that develop affection, love and relationships with people, especially those closest to us.

We choose activities in which men and women can integrate and meet each other and not clash, can work together and not divide. Work that respects sexual and personal characteristics. Work that does not crush the personality of the other but respects and values it.

Let us ensure that the demands for flexibility and profitability, which the business world rightly demands, are compatible and reconcilable with attention to the family and its tasks, since emotional life and good family relations are the prerequisite for any growth, including economic growth.

The state needs a policy that values and promotes women who commit themselves to study and prepare to work in the world of affection and family relations. The choice of women who decide to devote themselves primarily to the family must therefore be protected and respected as much and more than that of women who want to engage in the world of business and services.¹¹¹

6.5.0 CONSUMERIST SOCIETY AND THE FAMILY

¹¹¹ About 64% of mothers who do not work do so by choice. Because they want to dedicate themselves completely to their family.

In consumerist societies, not only are there no families, but there are also no infants, children, young or old with their real needs, their aspirations, their sorrows, their problems, their joys whether small or great. In these societies, where the world of economics prevails over the world of affection, every person is regarded as a labour arm, as a mind to be exploited or as a possible buyer and user of services for a fee.

There are no husbands or wives, fathers or mothers, no children or grandparents except from the perspective of production and consumption. There is no home, cradle of affection and relationships, but rooms that need industrial products. "The global economy is only interested in the individual, it is interested in *homo emptor*, as Cassano calls him, consumer man, individualist, disconnected from the community and from any ethical reference."¹¹² Sexual characteristics and roles are observed, described, studied only from this perspective: how to succeed in stimulating men and women so that they work and produce more and better, and then what is the best strategy to convince them to use, more and more, what the world of production and services puts on the market. The aim is to train good workers and good users and consumers of ever increasing quantities of objects, tools, machines and services.

In order to achieve the set goal, i.e. the highest sales of products, the female world, which is the one that manages a large part of the expenditure and at the same time is the most sensitive to the sirens of advertising, is adulated, pampered and pampered by advertisers and industries much more than the male world.

In order to push people to work, earn and spend more and more, using appropriate psychological tools and knowing some human weaknesses, it was not difficult to convince them to change traditions, cultures, values, behavioural styles, worldviews, roles.

Through the massive use of the media, it was enough to make women believe that before industrialisation they were slaves

¹¹² P. CAVALERI, "The ills of the family: when a rainbow of peace?". N. TRENTACOSTE, (ed.), *Tearing a difficult embrace*, in Cittadella editrice, Assisi, 2006, p. 106.

to their husbands, housework, children, and patriarchy, so that a cultural model, a value that had been a winner for millennia, made up of understanding, collaboration and complementarity of roles, but which was not very functional in the industrial world, was destroyed.

At the same time, a relationship between the sexes based on suspicion, confrontation, conflict, competition and confrontation was provoked and thus emerged and spread like wildfire, reproducing the relationship that existed between men and women at the dawn of humanity. This relationship, it should be remembered, was abandoned very early on, even when the first hominids began to appear on the earth's scene, because it was considered non-functional for the species.

It was enough to make people believe that 'women's liberation' could be achieved through the economic autonomy of every woman, the massive use of household appliances and private and state services, to convince millions of women to earn as much as and more than their husbands and to fill their homes with mostly unused appliances and contraptions.

The credo to adhere to read: 'If you work, if you earn a lot, you can have, without asking your husband, all the clothes, jewellery, accessories you want. You can have all those gleaming, wonderful appliances in the house that can relieve you of fatigue, while you can then use what you have left, for your physical and psychological well-being: gym, beauty care, travel, etc.. And if your man or husband protests, you can easily leave him and do without. A good society, with efficient social services, will be there to meet all your needs.'

Frequently and systematically, in fact, the mass media insist on favouring individual 'fulfilment' over meeting the needs of the other, artificially creating the condition of the single person as an enviable status.¹¹³

Goldmann, in his manual 'The Art of the Good Salesman' writes: 'What is essential? One buys a commodity to satisfy a

¹¹³ Mothers in professional status (employed or seeking employment), which in 1980 constituted 44.8%, reached 57.2% in 2000/2001. Istat data - *"Having a child in Italy"*, 32, 2006.

certain need. This (the commodity) is not an end in itself, but merely a means to an end. The seller does not have to offer the goods as such; instead, he tries, through his article, to awaken in the customer the desire to attain a certain end."¹¹⁴ Since the purpose of a good salesman is not to give a good product but a product that can satisfy his customer's immediate inner need, it is the concept of pleasure and joy that is proposed, as a lure, knowing full well that the highest human aspiration is to attain maximum pleasure, maximum joy, in short happiness.

In order to sell happiness, pleasure, joy or well-being, it is enough to convince the buyer that what is offered, of course 'cheaply', provides what is promised. It is enough to make men and women believe that the more objects you have, the more sophisticated, shiny or technologically advanced they are, the happier you are.

To impress girls you need a shiny motorbike. To 'pinch' more mature women you need a very comfortable and powerful machine. The ultimate in pleasure and joy is an iPod.

It was enough to make people believe that the better you look on the outside, the better you feel about yourself, the more you are loved and desired: "To feel good about yourself you need a body that is always firm and toned, youthful, wrinkle-free, wrapped in shiny clothes." "To tie a man to you, you need a sculptural body and the right accessories to seduce him."

In order to avoid male interference, it was enough to nurture suspicion in women, by all means of mass media, and to trigger conflict with men, and above all revulsion against an 'archaic peasant civilisation', described as one of misery, hunger and poverty.

To convince people to buy as much machinery as possible, it was enough to convince everyone that manual work is tiring and dirty. Fatigue and dirt are negative realities: the less you work manually, the better. To work without fatigue and without getting dirty, it is enough to use a multitude of products and machines.

¹¹⁴ H. M. GOLDMANN, *The Art of Selling, handbook for salespeople of all levels*, Franco Angeli, Milan, 1997, p. 27.

To get food, not only do you not have to go into the forests to slaughter animals or grow wheat bent in two from dawn to dusk in the fields; you don't even have to buy the individual ingredients and prepare them in the kitchen: food can be ordered already cooked and ready on trays, simply by picking up the phone and connecting to the nearest deli. All you have to do is pay.

It is the same for clothing. To obtain a jumper, not only is it no longer necessary to breed sheep, shear them and spin the wool, but it is no longer even necessary to knit it stitch by stitch: all you have to do is choose it in the nearest shopping centre or, even better, from the comfort of your own home. In fact, just click on the shopping trolley next to the picture of it on the Internet to see it arrive by courier a few days later, already nice and packed and then, at your leisure, pay for it. Not immediately, mind you: you can also pay it the following year in small monthly instalments, with interest, of course

For cleaning and keeping the house tidy, there are appliances and detergents that will make floors and tiles shine in no time at all.

A father who felt his family's failure thus wrote to Famiglia Cristiana: 'We see each other at home in the evening, knowing nothing of what the boys have been up to. Of course, we could have made it on my salary alone if we had given up five mobile phones and a landline, three televisions, weekends at the disco for the boys, two cars to maintain, forced holidays at the seaside in August, a dog, clothes, shoes, bags, all designer labels, the motorbike, a hundred electronic gadgets, PCs with their Internet connection, etc.' But then he added: 'If we had made it on my salary, we would have been able to make it.' but then he added: 'If we had been content with what could 'pass the convent', perhaps the children would have grown up less spoiled, they would have used less profanity, and my wife would have compared me less to her boss...' ¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ A Wrong Father, Colloqui col padre, in *Famiglia Cristiana*, 36, 2005.

The world of business and work, as a whole, played aggressively and unscrupulously with family members, individual ambitions and competition between the two sexes, making the bond between couple and family increasingly fragile and strained, while at the same time managing to increase its demands on men, women and children who had to adapt, on pain of the spectre of regression and starvation.¹¹⁶ All this could not fail to weaken the solidity and strength of families, who became prisoners of taxes, tariffs, mortgages, loans, inflation and price increases¹¹⁷

Even the duration of marriage is linked to money, in fact, today, economic hardship is one of the main causes of separation. When one of the partners loses his job, the probability of separation becomes double.

Increasingly unbridled and greedy capitalism and consumerism force and persuade us to increasingly ridiculous and absurd behaviour. Behaviours in which comedians such as Beppe Grillo can find inexhaustible cues to make us laugh, but also to reflect. Rather than selling us the windscreen wiper rubber, the brush head or the rear-view mirror, they force us to buy the whole windscreen wiper, the whole toothbrush and the whole apparatus connected to the rear-view mirror.¹¹⁸ They push us to buy and use in our work, in our daily journeys, in our entertainment, increasingly complex and sophisticated tools and contraptions, in order to avoid even the slightest effort and strain. "Why scrape the cheese when there is an electric device that, when placed on top of the dough, scrapes it for you?" "Why engage your hands in such a tedious occupation as washing and cutting vegetables when they are sold ready to be served at the table?" "Why prepare food and cook it when it is sold already in trays ready to be

¹¹⁶ C. RISE', The effects of gender policy, in *Famiglia oggi*, p.29.

¹¹⁷ According to 2005 ISTAT data, the average monthly expenditure per family is EUR 2,398: more in the north (EUR 2,689 and in the centre EUR 2,478) than in the south. (1,913 euros).

¹¹⁸ B. Grillo, *Tutto il grillo che conta*, Feltrinelli, Milan, 2006.

heated in a microwave oven?" "Why walk to the corner to buy cigarettes when they invented cars long ago?"

However, when we feel that lack of movement dangerously raises cholesterol and blood pressure, dulls our thoughts, weighs down our bodies, and makes our movements awkward, the same consumerism urges us to rush to the nearest gym, pool or sauna to walk, move or swim in order to make shrunken and numb muscles and joints active and toned.

When the lack of the pleasure of making things with our hands, with our ingenuity, with our patience, makes us feel sad, empty and bored, then consumerism itself suggests we buy pills to improve our mood, to stimulate our dormant senses, to regain lost pleasure.

The same happens with food. First the many urges to eat more and more of all the delicacies offered by advertising and then, immediately afterwards, the thousands of pills, diets and 'wellness' centres to lose weight or shed the extra kilos.

The same with objects. First the incentive to 'scrap' perfectly good and functional cars, furniture and household appliances in order to buy the latest cars, wardrobes, beds, fridges and washing machines, and then the problem of paying for new purchases, paying to dispose of disused furniture and machines, and finally still paying the rubbish taxes, which increase disproportionately every year.

To convince us that educational, affective and relational needs can be entrusted to others, it was enough to suggest that there are good teachers and pedagogues constantly being churned out by universities to follow children in their homework, who, if they wish, can also entertain them until the evening when, if necessary, a babysitter is available who, if desired, can stay with the 'little ones' all night long, so that the parents can relax after work by going clubbing, continuing to do what they did as teenagers.

Therefore, the affective, care and assistance skills of mothers and fathers can also be dispensed with and they can fully devote themselves to one or more well-paid, rewarding and fulfilling jobs. Specialists in the field will take care of everything.

But also to care, educate and assist children, the old, the sick and the disabled, the problems have been addressed and solved by a splendid society that has thought of everything and provides everything. It is enough to use the state and private services best suited to the need.

Children, even very young ones, can be accompanied on the way to work, when the sun has yet to rise, to the nearest crèche.

The handicapped, poor things! even better: at the scheduled time, the minibus arrives with the lift to pick them up in front of the house and take them, after having driven them all over the city, to 'specialised centres where they are well looked after, all day long, better than at home'!

For the old, to lovingly settle them permanently, it is sufficient to offer them a '*one-off*' lift, with a suitcase near, to the gerontocomi located in the city's lovely hills.

For the sick, all they have to do is call 118 and the ambulance arrives with sirens blaring, right in front of their house, to pick them up and take them to the local hospital.

To convince us not to go home for lunch, it was enough to say that lunch with one's family was a big waste of time. Better to have lunch at the company canteen or get a sandwich at the nearest McDonald's.¹¹⁹

As far as children are concerned, the magic word is 'socialisation'. If parents do not come home, who feeds the children?

¹¹⁹ "A survey carried out between 10 April and 10 May by the Observatory on the Rights of the Child on a sample of 500 children (aged between 7 and 10 years) found that only 36% of young Italians eat once a day with their entire family. In addition, 33% of those surveyed found that during mealtimes, in the absence of a family conversation, they devote themselves to reading comics and 39% watch television. The privileged moment of family unity is, on the other hand, the time between 9pm and 11pm when 81% of children meet with their parents in front of the television to watch programmes chosen, in 96% of cases, by adults."

O. VETRI, 'Tutti insieme a tavola', in *Famiglia oggi*, 2004, 6-7, p. 94.

Who takes care of the children out of school if the parents are away on business?

Fear not! There are good solutions for them too. They can stay at school full-time, so they have the opportunity to have lunch with the other children and continue to "socialise". By eating at the school canteen, they can not only "socialise" but also overcome the tantrums they have at home over food. If it is not possible to use the canteen, the municipality will take them back to their homes with its vehicles: just leave the children the key tied with a string around their necks. In the meantime, in the minibus they can continue to 'socialise', albeit with their fists, with their classmates. And if you are really unlucky and live in a 'cheap' municipality that is unable to offer a school bus service, there is always a transport company that, for a few tens of euros, can take the children wherever you want: to their grandparents', to another institution where they can have lunch and do their homework, or to their home, where the television is always on or, if they are too young, a nanny is waiting for them.

In order to have a job, in order to earn money, in order to live at an ever higher level of financial well-being, the family often splits up: the father works in one city or region, the mother in another. The father comes home in the evening, the mother as well, while the children stay with their grandparents or fall asleep exhausted in some paid baby park.

Before going home in the evening, after so much work and so much stress, one cannot help but drop by for an hour or so at the health club or gym along the way. Just to relax a little or to tone up that tummy that doesn't want to be as flat and firm as a drum, as it was a few years ago and as it is that of the desk neighbour in the office.

Of course, to pay for all this, as money is never enough, it is essential to work two or more in the family. And if that is not enough to pay all the bills, there is always the possibility of overtime, holiday or night work, second and third jobs, "if possible moonlighting, so you don't pay taxes."

Everything OK?

Not everything, in truth, goes right.

Both men and women, despite the fact that they are so much richer in possessions that they are immersed in a world of technologically perfect and amazing objects and ever more efficient and numerous services, who knows why they are no happier than before. On the contrary, stuffed with pills that promise, if not happiness at least a few hours of serenity and sleep, they move swiftly but zombie-eyed in the mornings to the undergrounds of the subways, as if pushed by a river in flood: destination work.

Men and women, even though they have known each other and been together since childhood, despite being well looked after and advised by psychologists and psychotherapists for singles, for couples, for families, bicker more than before, attack and kill each other more than before, separate more than before, but above all, they no longer feel the need to make any long-term contracts or commitments. Therefore, while the crisis inexorably affects florists, photographers and restaurants specialising in weddings, things are much better for lawyers, magistrates, judges and doctors.¹²⁰ Even children, those few that are born, do not seem very happy to spend their hours in the company of more or less specialised but hired nannies and teachers. And if when they were young they cried and begged, unheard, to stay in their home, among their toys, in their favourite corner, when they are older they become, who knows why, aggressive, ungrateful and rude, especially towards their mothers, who, seeing them disturbed by a thousand fears and anxieties, despite the fact that their children's rooms are full of trinkets and toys, do not let them lack the care of expert psychologists and neuropsychiatrists.

But even women, who are increasingly frequenting psychiatrists, psychologists and wellness centres, do not seem any more gratified and happier than in the past. They blame their discomfort on men who do not cooperate as they should and on society that does not help the process of integrating women into work,

¹²⁰ In Canada, married couples with children make up only 44.5% of all households; in 1961, they were almost 65% of all Canadian households.

although many psychologists do not take this view. For these, the natural energies of femininity, put at the service of productivity and no longer at the service of the emotional world and relationships, have made them unhappy, depressed, unfulfilled creatures.

But we are all, or almost all, convinced that it is only a matter of time and adaptation to the new situation and then these small, marginal problems will be happily solved!

In reality, while it is true that society adapts the function of the family to its more general interests, in this case it is only one part of society, the economic and business part, that has adapted the family to its interests, as it has done with politics and many other institutions in order to derive maximum benefit from them, to the extent that its very psychological identity and unity has been profoundly altered. "In the economic code, family welfare is the product of the autonomous mercantile capacities of its members, hence of their work, income and consumption that they are capable of procuring. Liberalism (today neo-liberalism) emphasises this point of view when it calls for more freedom for families as economic subjects."¹²¹

6.6.0 ATTEMPTS TO SUPPLANT LA FAMIGLIA

There have been, and still are, various attempts to supplant the family and replace it with state or private services or others with different characteristics. Already the Spartans tried to educate children in special facilities, where they were given a particularly strict education and upbringing, something the state thought families could not do.

The same was the case in Israeli Kibbutzim where several parents got together to manage their children.

But even in the communes of the 1960s, a group of people, usually of young age, lived together under the same roof, making their individual resources available to the community, ge-

¹²¹ P. DONATI, "Ripensare i servizi di Welfare alla luce di un nuovo concetto di Benessere familiare", in *Consultori Familiari Oggi*, Atti del XII Convegno Nazionale, Alghero 2000, pp. 154 - 155.

nerally performing housekeeping tasks in rotation, and bringing up children as if they were children of the group. There were the rural communes where the prevailing purpose was to cultivate the land in an atmosphere free from the tensions and worries of city life. Very different from these were the urban communes of the hippies in which drug use and sexual promiscuity were the norm.

The same attempt was made in the Soviet Union during the Stalin period when the state invited the masses, including women, to work for the regime and ensured that child welfare services would guarantee the education of children entrusted to them from an early age.

And finally in Germany, the Nazi regime, in order to create an elected class, sought to educate groups of young people chosen for their pure Aryan characteristics by limiting or excluding the influence of their parents.

In today's capitalist regimes there is apparently none of this. The state does not impose itself on families to remove children from their upbringing, nor does it, at least explicitly, propose to exclude families from social life.

What it does not explicitly suggest, however, it tries to achieve by nurturing, advising and stimulating, a series of behaviours that ultimately lead to the same results as totalitarian regimes.

It does this by defrauding families of educational, economic, legal and religious tasks and roles. It does this by displacing many of the activities and tasks that used to be the preserve of the family. It does this by fuelling the clash between the sexes and that between parents and children.

6.7.0 FAMILY SERVICES

"The term -family services- is intended to indicate all those forms of intervention aimed at promoting the well-being of the person and thus of the whole family, but also and above all those

actions aimed at supporting the family organisation in the event of the presence of serious situations of difficulty."¹²²

The social services that the State has been offering women, couples and families for several decades now are increasingly numerous and organised. Paediatrics services, family advice centres, family mediation centres, centres for families in difficulty, obstetrics and gynaecology departments, crèches, schools, universities, child neuropsychiatry services, medical psycho-educational centres, rehabilitation centres, etc.

Towards the end of the 1960s, the widespread diffusion, indeed the explosion of these services, was seen as a panacea to the ills of individuals, families and couples. At the same time, these services were intended to enable women to embark, with more serenity and self-denial, on the road to work, social and political commitment and thus their 'civil redemption'.

The image of these services, in those years, was emphasised and exalted as structures that, using selected and qualified personnel, were supposed to offer valid support, help and assistance to individuals, parents, minors and families. Even today, the serious educational problems that manifest themselves in Western societies are almost always blamed on a 'lack of social services'.

Quantitative shortcomings are identified above all in the school (sub-optimal teacher-pupil ratio, especially with regard to the handicapped); in the number and spread of crèches: 'Every child that is born would have the right to its own crèche';¹²³ in residences for the elderly: 'Every person who grows old would have the right to be cared for by specialised and competent personnel in a suitable place'. The stressful complaint is repeated about the problems of couples that "cannot be adequately addressed due to the lack of family advice centres well distributed throughout the territory." And so on.

¹²² C. SIRIGNANO, 'I servizi alle famiglie in Italia', in *I consultori familiari oggi*, 2005,4, p.17.

¹²³ 23% of children of working mothers in northern Italy are cared for in public and private crèches. While again in northern Italy only 7.7% of couples, where the women are workers, manage to care for their children themselves. Source: Istat, annual report 2003.

The other horn of the problem was and is seen in terms of *quality deficiencies*. "If things are not going well, it is because there are no adequately qualified and motivated staff in schools, kindergartens, counselling centres, etc."

As a consequence of this vision of the problem, the services, some of which are free, some of which are paid for, have multiplied considerably and have greatly expanded their sphere of competence, especially in the wealthier, better administered or more 'sensitive to the problems of women and families' regions, while at the same time numerous training and specialisation courses have been offered to better prepare or update the staff who should be dealing with all or almost all social emergencies: children, adolescents, the elderly, drug addicts, the mentally ill, couples, families. Over the years, however, along with the real possibilities of the services, which cannot and must not in any way be forgotten or devalued, their shortcomings and limitations have become apparent.

6.7.1 The exact nature of the service users.

The first limitation concerns the exact nature of the service users. Administrators, in their inauguration speeches, often proudly and with a hint of emotion (one does not know whether true or fake) emphasise or promise new and more functional services. But no one asks if and who will benefit. The axiom we uncritically accept is that if a certain amount of money is spent on a service used by, for example, normal or disabled children, the children or the disabled will benefit.

Naturally, the higher the figure, the more staff involved, the more favourably the initiative is judged. In short, we uncritically accept that money dedicated and spent on children and the disabled is always money well spent. Yet many times this is not the case at all.

The example of kindergartens is the most striking. A city, a region, but also a small mountain village, is all the more proud of what it does for the citizens it administers, the higher the number of crèches. Yet psychology and child neuropsychiatry have always warned and still warn about the serious risks chil-

dren run when they are removed from the family crèche at an early age.

For Winnicott: 'We recognise that the appropriate group for the young child is his or her family, and we know that it would be a disaster for the young child if an interruption in the continuity of family life were to become necessary'¹²⁴

Winnicott again says: "For my part, I am convinced that the technical part of caring for the child can be taught and even learned through books, but that the ability to behave like a mother towards her child is entirely personal and that no one is able to take on this task and perform it as well as the mother herself."

For Pellegrino: 'The current picture is one of a highly atrophied family network, whose younger members spend little time with their parents, are brought up by figures outside the family circle, or spend their youth years in several families, as divorces lead to the formation of couples in which only one of the adults is the parent of the child with whom he or she lives. This is contrary to traditional theories of developmental and learning psychology, which consider the input provided by parents and their role within the family to be fundamental to children's development'.¹²⁵

Unfortunately, the risk is high whatever the quality of the institutional 'nest' in which the child is placed.

It is therefore not a problem of numbers, nor of the more or less thorough preparation of staff, but a problem of institution. The crèche institution is not the same as the family institution. It has neither the same nor similar characteristics, it is something else.

The fact that the child stays in the crèche 'only' a few hours does not change the perspective in his or her eyes and heart.¹²⁶ In fact, the 'few' hours the child spends in the crèche are really 'a

¹²⁴ D. W. WINNICOTT, *The Deprived Child*, Raffaello Cortina, 1984, p. 242.

¹²⁵ A. PELLEGRINO and M. SANTINELLO, 'Parental training on educational skills: the results of an experience', in *Learning Difficulties*, 1998, 4, p. 541.

¹²⁶ Istat data - '*Having a child in Italy*', 32, 2006.

lot' if we consider that 40% attend it for 40-49 hours a week, 31.2% for 30-39 hours and 21.4% for 20-29 hours a week.

Physiology would have it that, at least until the age of three, the child should be close to his parents or at least to family members very close to his heart: grandparents, uncles, in a stable manner. If this does not happen and the little one, instead, is placed in a foreign environment, such as a nursery or a baby - parking, this is felt by his fragile soul as an abuse and violence done to him. How can you blindly and fully trust a mother or father who every morning takes you away from your little room, from your cot, from your toys, from their own safe and warm arms, to place you in an environment that is foreign to you, cold and extremely frightening and difficult, due to the presence of people towards whom you have not established any affectively valid relationship?

How can you love, nay love, parents who every day force you to stay for hours in a place without their presence, the only ones capable of giving you sufficient security, warmth, comfort?

How can you love the reality around you, and therefore the world around you, when it allows this daily violence against you?

That the parents' request or 'need' has been fulfilled, at least in form, if not in substance, there is no doubt, but we should ask ourselves whether alongside the parents' 'need' the children's 'need' has been met.

Another example can be found in schools. "In order to meet the problems of families in which both parents work," school services, primarily private but also public ones, try in every way to extend school hours by including full-time, extended time, and school canteens. To complete the chain of services, they often provide school buses through which children can be transported from home to school and back, or to other facilities requested by parents, without the intervention of parents or another family member.

Again, that the need or demand of parents and teachers seeking employment has been met, at least apparently, there is no doubt, but we should ask ourselves whether, alongside the

'need' of parents and teachers, the needs of the children have been met.

Are we sure that children prefer to go to school carried by a bus in the company of loud and sometimes aggressive classmates and an anonymous assistant and not accompanied and comforted by the hand, the greeting, the kiss and the advice of their father or mother?

Are we sure that children are happy to spend many, too many hours of their day sitting in a desk or within the walls of a school, far from their homes, in a foreign environment?

Are we certain that spending a good part of the day in an institutionalised environment away from their home, their parents, their family, their toys, is beneficial to their psycho-physical development?

There is no doubt that if the children concerned knew to whom they owed their prolonged presence in the school environment, they would not give them much applause.

But even we adults, I think, would have a different view of the problem if only we could fully assess the damage caused in the mother-child, father-child relationship.

A fragile and delicate relationship, which should be protected and safeguarded in every way, but which is instead trampled on, undermined, broken up and sometimes destroyed forever, precisely because of the 'services' offered to women and families.

If one were then to pay attention to the importance in a child's development, also from a cultural point of view, of his or her parents and family, there should be no doubt as to the lack of usefulness and goodness of such services.

What about civil society? It too could hardly consider these choices positive when it is forced to deal with and worry about the distress of these children. For these, in order to assess and try to deal with the consequences of such violence, to heal the purulent sores on the souls of these children, who are also its future, it will have to engage numerous and talented professionals, at a considerable cost to the state treasury and to individual families, with very doubtful and certainly limited results, since

emotional scars like organic ones do not heal or heal very slowly, almost always leaving some relic.

Not to mention the consequences when the discomfort becomes apparent in the form of learning or behavioural disorders: need for support teachers, need for psychological and rehabilitation therapies.

Certainly not every child in day care or full-time education will become a disturbed, temperamental or learning-disabled child, but what is the point of increasing the risk to which they are exposed?

Past experience does not seem to have served to enlighten or teach us anything at all. And yet there are still among us, many severely disabled adults, who, when they were still children, as a result of a hammering campaign conducted by the social services against their families, were entrusted by them to grandiose and splendid specialised institutions.

Institutes built and run with Christian love and self-sacrifice, often by friars and priests in the most pleasant places on the outskirts of cities. Institutions in which distinguished luminaries in the psychiatric, neurological and pedagogical sciences did their work. In these institutions, the best care and assistance was promised for these children to cope with and overcome their handicap. Unfortunately, the results were not at all what was promised or hoped for.

Most of these children entered these specialised institutions with a disability and came out as adults with greater and more serious problems. Torn from their family and social environment, the primitive problem was compounded by serious psychological disorders that worsened their condition and made the management of these individuals within the family and society much more problematic.

Ultimately, an enormous amount of time, professionalism and money was used and spent to aggravate, and by a great deal, the primitive disability. Not least because "a family (as well as the workers in an institution) tolerates far more discomfort in the

physical sphere than in the psychological and behavioural sphere."¹²⁷

It will be said that a few hours of day care cannot be compared to the prolonged institutionalisation of the past.

Unfortunately, clouded by what we feel are the inescapable needs of a modern society, we have difficulty looking at reality and time with the eyes and heart of a child.

It is known, in fact, that the smaller the human being, but the same principle applies to higher animals, the stronger the bonds of emotional dependence on parental figures, the greater the fear of detachment, loss and abandonment. This is because, for him, these fundamental figures are the only anchors of security, the only sources of serenity and joy.

The smaller the children, the greater the need to feel their parents close to their hands, present to their gaze, available for protection and welcome. Because the smaller the child, the more fearful the world outside his family and home is in his eyes.

A striking demonstration of this fear of anything unfamiliar occurred many years ago.

My daughters often played with a little girl from the block of flats. One day, this little girl also brought her little sister Simona, almost three years old. To me, who already had three children, to me who love children and have always had a very good relationship with them, it seemed natural to invite her to look at an album of logical associations I had just published, to amuse her, but also to confirm the mental age for which I had proposed the album. I remember her big eyes going, in a few seconds, from anxiety, to fear, and finally to terror, before bursting into tears. Immediately I was forced to stop trying to engage her in this activity.

I was astonished by her reaction also because next to her was her elder sister and my two daughters, but I was even more astonished when, in later years, having to drop off and pick up my daughters and the two neighbours' girls from school, while

¹²⁷ C. ANDREOTTI, and others, 'The family of the problematic handicapped person', in *La famiglia*, 1992, 155, p. 34.

her sister had no problem coming in my car, Simona refused for several years to let me drop her off.

I had become in her eyes the monster from whom she had to stay away. Attempts by her mother and sister to reassure her were always futile; I remained the monster man for her. Was Simona too fragile, my intervention too clumsy and premature, or was the child too young for such an approach from an almost stranger?

We also overlook the fact that the smaller the child is, the more his or her subjective time dilates. What for us are only a few hours of separation, for the child can represent long hours of fear, waiting and therefore suffering. On the other hand, it is enough to see what happens in the nursery school with children who are not one to two years or a few months old, but three to four years old. Although for their chronological age these should have overcome the fear of the stranger and that of detachment and abandonment, some of them, those whose psycho-affective development is not adequate for their chronological age, still show their suffering sometimes for months, if not listened to and understood, by crying, by physical discomfort, by refusing to go to school. For Osterrieth, 'It must be remembered, however, that the core of child life at this age is of the affective family order, and that while the child benefits greatly from regulated activities, in contact with others, its forming personality equally needs solitude, tranquillity, and autonomous activity'.¹²⁸

As for the elderly placed in the gerontocomi called in the sweetest and most poetic ways: "Villa Quiete", "Residenza dei Pini", "Le Betulle rest home", "Parco delle Rose." I don't think there are many people who are willing to thank their children, grandchildren and administrators for allowing them to spend the last years of their lives among these splendid villas, which, however, in their eyes turn out to be what they are: sad and grey gerontocomi, in the company of other poor old people. And we

¹²⁸ P. A. OSTERRIETH, *Introduction to Child Psychology*, p. 137.

also know that there is little point in choosing the cosiest villa with the most qualified staff.

6.7.2 The compartmentalised view of reality.

The second limitation is the compartmentalised view of reality. Services, all services, by their very nature, have a very compartmentalised view of complex and articulated realities such as the human heart. Often the care of the affected organ, for example a paretic arm or a brain that is not fully efficient, makes one forget that behind these organs affected by pathology, there is a small child, with the fragility of an ego still in formation. A child with its fears, its anxieties, its needs.

Behind a woman's need for abortion there is a woman who would need closeness and comfort, and there is a child who would want to live. Next to a man who wants to break his marriage contract there is the other spouse who wants to fight to preserve it.

The partial view of problems frequently leads services to carry out uncoordinated interventions that often, rather than comprehensively addressing these difficult realities, provide partial responses that ultimately complicate the problem itself or give rise to others.

6.7.3 Staff recruitment.

The third limitation stems from staff recruitment. In services that are in contact with people and thus have considerable emotional and affective implications, one would expect a careful selection of personnel, especially with regard to specific aptitudes and human maturity, to be complemented then, of course, by excellent technical and professional skills. All too often, however, things do not proceed in this way. Alongside technically prepared and humanly committed and helpful people, there is, both in services managed by the public and in those organised by the private sector, a flood of people who are ill-prepared, not at all motivated and often, in turn, disturbed. In our professional work, we have encountered many of these people who were not only unable to help others but who, in turn, would need help because

they were suffering from serious neurotic, character or even psychotic disorders.

The causes of this are well known:

- In the meantime, a selection is rarely made that takes due account of the presence of psychological disorders or abnormal personality characteristics;
- even when this selection is made, since, precisely because of the emotional distress in which children, adolescents and young people are brought up, the number of people who are disturbed in some way is increasing considerably, the choice becomes very difficult and laborious;
- Recruitment in services, both public and private, is often driven by politicians, trade unionists, or in any case by people who, for whatever reason, have the opportunity to exercise their power. These people regard the public services as their exclusive pasture in which to place relatives, party friends or acquaintances. In this way, the logic of clientelism prevails, which inserts, in extremely delicate activities, without a selection that takes into account not only the personality structure but also purely professional merit, people who are unable to guarantee the minimum functionality of the institution itself.

6.7.4 Trade union rights.

The fourth limit is consequential to trade union rights. This limitation is also inherent in the very logic of the services. Operators, like all employees, are paid to do a given job, but they have union rights that cannot be underestimated or eliminated. They have the right to work a certain number of hours and a certain number of days a week and no more, and then 'off', to go to their own homes and attend to their various personal occupations. They are entitled to a certain number of holidays and leave days during the year. They have the right to transfer when requested and if they are eligible. They have the right to resign or change occupation, and so on.

This means that even when, in the best of hypotheses, perfectly trained and motivated personnel are brought in, they do not and cannot provide a stable and continuous affective bond, but rather occasional, partial and limited in time. This detail is not insignificant because it is fraught with consequences. If the child finds a particularly sensitive, affectionate and close person, he or she will love them like a mother or father. But what happens when this person disappears after a short or long time? How do you continue to love and place your trust in people if they then abandon you? It is by no means easy for a child to understand, but above all to accept, that there are union rights and personal needs.

Ultimately, when one thinks of being able to replace, for example, the family crèche with the institutional crèche, one must take into account the fact that the presence of even highly qualified staff, in place of a mother, father or grandmother, will not be able to give the child something more than the family environment since, these staff will almost certainly be forced to neglect, for personal or managerial reasons, many of the needs of the child, especially if small.

6.7.5 The self-supply of the service.

The fifth limitation stems from the tendency for the service to be self-supporting. If the service is modest and employs few staff, the fame and reward for those who run that service will be low, but so will the employment possibilities and money to be managed, both public and private. If a service is large, the importance and fame for those running the service will grow, as will the employment possibilities and money to be managed.

This means that many times it is not the need that drives the creation or expansion of a service, but it is the service that creates, stimulates and expands the need.

An example of this can be found in the excessive use of clinical examinations and medical and surgical interventions, which are not strictly necessary, in obstetrics and gynaecology services. While in poorer countries, even the simplest and most basic monitoring of the mother, embryo and foetus fails to come into operation, in richer countries there is a proliferation of gy-

naecological examinations and tests that the pregnant woman 'has' to perform.¹²⁹

Some of these examinations are indispensable, others useful, many, at least for the child and the mother, are unnecessary or superfluous. While the contribution made by obstetrics and gynaecology services, which have considerably reduced the risks and consequences of organic pathologies, both for children and their mothers, is certainly commendable, more and more in recent years, mothers are being driven to perform an increasing number of clinical examinations, ultrasound scans, and diagnostic interventions that are not always useful or strictly necessary. The medicalisation of a physiological event such as pregnancy has increasingly increased: ultrasound scans, amniocentesis, genetic tests, preventive episiotomies, epidural analgesia, caesarean sections.¹³⁰

The grandeur of the birth event is thus reduced to a set of medical and specialist practices. The woman is seen as a shell that must give birth to a perfect baby. The naturalness of the event is lost. Just as the bond, solidarity and support of the female community is lost.

Because of all these interventions, the feeling that is transmitted to the future parents is that a child equals considerable commitments, appointments to be made, queues to be queued up, expenses to be incurred, surgeries and medical interventions to be undertaken. This excess of visits, checks, examinations and surgical and medical interventions, in fact creates, in the most anxious and fragile parents, a disposition of mind that is certainly not favourable towards the unborn child, seen, even before coming into the world, as a source of suffering, commitments, problems and financial outlay, rather than as a bringer of gratification and joy. The medicalisation if not commodification

¹²⁹ The list of examinations with or without co-pay is truly impressive and would cover two whole pages, especially if one considers that some of these examinations have to be repeated monthly.

¹³⁰ The number of Caesarean deliveries was estimated at about 35% of all deliveries in 2000/2001. In Southern Italy the percentage of caesarean sections for women who went to a private institution reaches 56.9%. Istat data - *"Having a child in Italy"*, 32, 2006.

of a physiological event is certainly not the best way to begin a relationship.

The world of production adds to this the almost always negative judgements on the working mother. Who is the mother-to-be if not a woman who, on a whim or through inexperience, jeopardises her career with a pregnancy, while at the same time bringing disruption to the smooth running of the company, especially a small one, by depriving it of its labour input for several months? This encourages mothers, who are more attentive to the problems of work and career, to continue to commit themselves, if not physically then at least psychologically, to the companies and organisations for which they give their services, while they fail to enter into that particular intimate world that is necessary in waiting for and dealing with a new human life.

6.7.6 The 'domino' and 'paradox' effects.

Since it takes people, sometimes several hundred thousand, to make one or more services work, there is a real risk that in order to make one task work well, others will be neglected. If a mother leaves her small child in the nursery to go and work as a nurse in a hospital, this mother on the one hand demands a service, and on the other hand offers it. In turn, the woman or women who will care for the child during the hours when she is busy at the hospital, are forced to neglect other people in order to be able to carry out this activity, e.g. they are forced to neglect the mother or the disabled or elderly father. These, in turn, will be entrusted to other women whose task it is to look after disabled or elderly people. But even these women, in order to perform this service, are forced to neglect whoever is cleaning the house, whoever their sick husband, and whoever their children.

A *domino effect* is triggered that binds all these people who, when they give a service to others, are forced to ask other people for other services that they themselves could have performed perhaps better and more successfully.

In this situation, services tend to swell and one can arrive at *the paradox effect*, less frequent, but just as real. That is, it may happen that a teacher, very busy and committed to her work in the school, between lessons, preparation, meetings, and imple-

mentation of specific projects, is so busy that she in turn needs a colleague to help her child or children with their homework. And so it may happen that a doctor is so overworked that he needs a colleague to look after his children.

In the economic world, *the domino effect* not only does not bring negative consequences, but allows, through specialisation, products to be improved and made competitive. If my specialisation is to make shoes, it is very easy for me to produce them in large quantities at a competitive price.

The same unfortunately does not happen in the affective world. In this reality, the relationship and the bond that is established or has been established between the person giving a service and the person receiving it is fundamental. A child asks, for its care, not a specialist, such as a pedagogue or a paediatrician, but a well-defined person with whom it has established a deep bond of affection and trust: its mother, father or at most its grandparents.

These are the people in whom he places his trust, and it is from them and not from others that he accepts and joyfully seeks care and attention.

The same applies to the sick, especially if they are minors, as to the elderly or disabled. Therefore, even if the child, the sick, disabled or elderly person, in the absence of their own family members, gritting their teeth and doing violence to themselves, manages to accept the help, assistance and care of strangers, because this help and assistance is experienced reluctantly or unwillingly, the desired effect is not achieved. Often these realities are tinged with sadness, resentment, mistrust and disregard both towards the people who deprive them of their attention, and towards the society that allows or worse encourages these situations.

6.8.0 GENDER IDENTITY AND ROLE EDUCATION

Let us now ask what kind of upbringing is best for the future well-being of the couple and the functionality of a future family.

There can be, in fact, an education that tends to enhance and exalt sexual diversity and consequently diversity in sex roles and an education that tends to blur or if possible erase sexual diversity and consequently diversity in sex roles.

This first question can in turn be translated into three questions:

1. Is it possible, through education that does not value sexual differences but actively opposes them, to make differences disappear in the attitudes and behaviour of those who will become men and women, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers? Is it possible, in other words, to achieve, through appropriate education, a homogenisation of the experiences, behaviours, instincts of the two sexes?
2. If it is not possible to erase them, is it possible to diminish these gender-specific attitudes?
3. Is it convenient for the couple's understanding, for the upbringing of offspring, for the functionality of families to do this?

The answer to the first question is no. It is not possible, at least in the current state of knowledge, to make differences in attitudes and behaviour disappear, as these differences are inscribed in the genes. Returning to the example given earlier of the design of a house and its execution, it is certainly possible that the construction of an artefact is changed in the course of time. For example, as is often the case among the 'furbetti' of our house who want to circumvent the strict building laws in Italy, it is possible, if one has agricultural land at one's disposal, to first build a nice chicken coop, the authorisation for which is easily obtained, and then transform it into many small flats that will yield much more than a chicken coop. Unfortunately, even if this is possible, so much so that it is done, something of the initial project remains, and is evident even after all the transformations have been carried out. On the contrary, a peculiar phenomenon occurs, as we shall see, whereby those flats, built using the design of a chicken coop, will no longer be chicken coops, but neither will they be real houses. What emerges is a hybrid

that has the defects of the one, without having the merits of the other. That is why it is not possible for men and women to live, feel, think in the same way, except for a radical genetic change that we do not know if and when it will happen and if it is convenient for it to happen.

But, and let us immediately answer the second question: Is it possible to decrease the genetic incidence that makes us male or female with all the characteristics we know, by means of different educational behaviour? The answer is yes.

On one of my trips to Spain, in the region of Andalusia, while the guide was taking us to see one of the many beautiful Andalusian houses, I was struck to see some orange trees, pruned in such a way as to cover, as if they were creepers, the walls of a courtyard. Since I was born and live in Sicily, the home of citrus groves, I felt a shiver run down my spine, seeing how the nature of those evergreen trees, so beautiful and majestic, had been, so foolishly, raped and sacrificed. There was no shadow of doubt that those Spaniards had managed to turn a majestic and large tree into a simulacrum of a creeper that carpeted part of the courtyard. But, apart from the curiosity it aroused, its usefulness was modest: it did not present itself as a true creeper because its trunk was too big to cover the wall properly, but neither did it have the characteristics of a true orange tree because, having been sacrificed, its fruit would have been too modest in quality and quantity.

6.8.1 Caricature effect and predominance effect.

The same happens when an attempt is made to modify or oppose such an important genetic project as gender identity and gender role. The result that is obtained is often a hybrid, which has neither the characteristics of one nor the merits of the other.

What you get is called a *caricature effect*.

When we look at a man who, in the care of a small child, pampers, moves, smiles, cuddles like a tender mother, what feeling do we get if not that of a caricature effect of woman and mother?

And the same when you see female soldiers in male clothing, with a male haircut, with a man's frown and foul-mouthed language, what feeling does even a very inattentive observer get, if not that of a caricatured male effect?

This effect stems from the fact that, unable to grasp the essence of a certain type of reality and behaviour, certain more obvious, but also more outward characteristics, which are then the least important, are imitated and exaggerated. These characteristics, however, do not qualify true femininity, nor true masculinity.

This is ultimately what a caricaturist or an imitator does, who, in order to make people laugh, accentuates certain details of the subject: the nose, the bald head, the belly, the crooked legs, the squeaky voice, all features that do not, however, correspond to the deepest, most intimate and important part of the character to be imitated, but only to some of the most striking attributes.

The consequences of these changes, however, are not indifferent. When a man or woman is confronted with these people, with confused or ambiguous characteristics, they may be curiously interested precisely in their ambiguity, but few dream of falling in love with them, even fewer dream of marrying one and forming a family with them.

Even more obvious are the needs and experiences of children. Since these, by their nature, love and seek out people with clearly defined characteristics, their interest in and attachment to these characters is minimal.

The other effect in the social sphere we could call the *predominance effect*. When an attempt is made, as has been done, to merge the affective world and the economic and service world into a single reality, the result that is obtained is that of a prevalence or predominance in some areas of the values of the one, for example of masculine values and therefore of the economic and service world, while in other areas feminine values and therefore those of the affective-relational world prevail, without a proper balance between one and the other being achieved.

To recognise the dominance effect, one only has to look around. Men and women work with the style and values characteristic of the business and service world. The love of power and profit, grit and arrogance, haste and dynamism prevail and are exalted. Women managers, precisely because of the 'caricature effect', seem to accentuate these characteristics, so they move, dress, relate, and act like super males, while at the same time, their skills, love, and commitment to the family, children, and caring for the weakest diminish.

The same happens in behaviour, language and sentimental and sexual approach. Since there is no male model, no other competition, this predominates and is accentuated in both males and females to an abnormal degree. Above all, its limitations and defects are accentuated. Aggressive, vulgar, foul-mouthed language prevails over serene, respectful, polite language. The playful and free use of sexuality prevails, as opposed to its responsible use aimed at a family and life project. Infidelity prevails over fidelity, superficiality over the depth of the relationship, aggressiveness over acceptance and understanding.

On the contrary, in educational models, the female model predominates and therefore attitudes of dialogue, acceptance, understanding, forgiveness prevail, with all the permissive type excesses. Thus, there are: rare and timid 'no's'; considerable tolerance and justification of negative behaviour; passive acceptance of individual and personal wills and needs; excessive concessions; little consistency in behaviour. On the other hand, male values such as courage, determination, strength, responsibility, linearity, autonomy, norms and rules, and social needs are largely undervalued. Both men and women adapt, accentuating and exaggerating female role models, as well as laws and their implementation. To the great detriment of individuals, families and society.

Now let us answer the last question: if, as we have just said, it is possible, at least in part, to achieve this change through careful educational style, is it worthwhile to do so?

Rather than being given by us, we would like the answer to arise from observation of reality.

Reality, experience and science confirm that, in the natural world, evolution has always taken the line of specialisation. This line was chosen when primitive amoebae moved on to more complex beings, culminating, through ever greater specialisation, in birds and mammals.

Specialisation was chosen in the field of sexuality, so we went from non-sexual organisms to hermaphrodites and then to animals with clear-cut sexual differences.

It was chosen in the context of organs and apparatuses: evolution moved very early away from simpler organisms, in which the same cells could perform numerous functions, towards more complex organisms, in which the various tissues and organs had specific tasks. Subsequently, as the organism became more complex, further specialisation became necessary. No longer just generic nerve cells, but nuclei and areas of second and third level specialisation: specific areas for vision, for motor activities, for the sense of smell etc.. And later, if this were not enough, within these specific areas, other sub-units specialised for even more specific tasks. For example, in the area of vision, groups of cells are recognised with the sole purpose of highlighting who the colour, who the shapes, who the size and arrangement of lines.

The same thing happened in societies: specialisation was chosen in transport as in trades. In the simplest societies everyone did everything. There were no mechanics, just as there were no ecologists, bricklayers, weavers, lawyers or doctors. As societies became more complex, specific trades sprang up as an unavoidable necessity. The more complexity increased, the more numerous and specific were the specialisations. Nowadays, industries do not ask for generic blue-collar workers, but neither do they ask for mechanics, which is already a specialisation, but they look for welders, millers, pipefitters, machine operators and so on.

We find this tendency in all fields. In the medical field: cardiologists, paediatricians, neuropsychiatrists, dermatologists, angiologists, podiatrists, haematologists, etc. In the field of law: civil lawyers, criminal lawyers, matrimonialists, labour lawyers, accountants, administrative lawyers, tax lawyers, etc.

There is therefore a general rule: the greater the complexity of an organism, the greater degree of specialisation is necessary. Well, as we have said, the functions of the parental couple are extremely complex and delicate for them to be carried out without prior specialisation and specific roles.

The proof of the unsuitability of seeking a single role and a single sexual identity comes from the historical observation of events.

6.8.2 Separate role or single role?

As is well known, the revolution in the female role, the partial, but increasingly desired and widespread independence of women from family care and their massive entry into the world of production and services began with the affirmation of certain principles:

The principle of equality: men and women are equal not only in value but also in nature. The small differences in behaviour and inclinations are due to the different upbringing received from parents. To demonstrate the principle of equality, it was pointed out that women, who had been precluded for centuries from a whole range of male trades and activities, soon proved to be good doctors, good lawyers, brave aviators, good railway drivers. Similarly, men, who had been precluded from caring for and rearing offspring, were also able to cook, change nappies and put a baby to sleep, start the washing machine, do the dishes and push a pram to walk the baby.

The principle of equality and justice: having equal status and dignity, it was right to have equal responsibilities and functions in society, in extra-family and domestic work, in sexual and emotional relationships, in political and economic management, as in the religious and ecclesiastical sphere. Equal responsibility in family decisions meant that man and woman, husband and wife had the same rights in making every decision regarding children, family and work. Thus, every decision, from the smallest to the most important, had to be scrutinised by one and the other and implemented only if it was accepted by both. Equality in the social sphere meant that both men and women were not precluded from any work, based on gender. Women soldiers,

airmen, painters, miners were perfectly fine, just as men were perfectly fine in kindergartens, nursery schools, or child care. It was just as well that men and women spent equal time and energy caring for children and elderly family members. It was then necessary for men to devote the same amount of time to domestic tasks and the care of children and family members as women did. While men could not yet give birth, it was only right that they should at least suffer, together with the woman, by participating in the pains of labour and childbirth. If it was permissible for men to be 'hunters' and to make sentimental and sexual overtures to women, so too should women be able to do in relation to men. And just as men were allowed to make use of a vast array of women who sold their bodies, it was only fair that men too should decide to sell their sexual services and bodies to women who wished to spend a few minutes in their company. Therefore, all discrimination in the religious field had to be overcome as soon as possible, as it was not right that only men could be priests, bishops, cardinals and popes. Even the ecclesiastical career had to be opened to women, so that equal dignity would become effective for both sexes.

The principle of subsidiarity: the relationship between men and women was to involve mutual help and interchangeability of roles. In this way, children, even with the temporary or prolonged absence of one parent, would always have another in reserve, capable of being mother or father from time to time, depending on the cases and needs. One parent could rock the child, feed it, change its nappy, while the other was out directing traffic, on a mission, in another city lecturing at a university, or another country flying a plane. In this way, responsibility for the world of affection and relationships, and that of the world of business and services, would be equally divided 50-50 between men and women, between fathers and mothers, between husbands and wives.

The principle of freedom: the relationship between man and woman was to be characterised by maximum mutual freedom. Prohibitions on the part of one or the other were to be minimal. The understanding between these two genders was to be based

on dialogue, love and mutual acceptance, not on impositions or old dogmas.

Unfortunately, things do not happen just because we wish them to and rationally plan them, as we do not always manage to see all the elements that influence the problem we wanted to address and solve. When we neglect, as we have done in recent decades, some important and essential factors, what we get from our behaviour is very different from what we planned, desired or wished for.

In societies that have chosen the path of equal commitment of both spouses in the emotional and working world, things have not happened at all as expected.

When the trend towards role equality began in the early decades of the twentieth century, it also began a challenge, which for many is not yet over, to reconcile both the affective and caring worlds of women and men with the economic and service worlds. The aim that was to be achieved was to harmonise, in such a way that no one suffered, the independence of women from their traditional role in the family and affective sphere and their newly assumed role in the field of production.

As women mothers began to work away from the home, away from the family, in the employ of others, the family income for many families increased to almost double, and with it came a considerable improvement in living standards, savings and investments.¹³¹

This solution therefore seemed to be the egg of Columbus to achieve, along with greater female fulfilment, greater family and community wealth. Why have one salary when it was possible to have two? Why not give children more wealth and more means for their future? Why make only one person, the man, enjoy the benefits of the most advanced culture: diploma, degree, doctora-

¹³¹ From 1993 to 2003, the number of employed women and job seekers worldwide increased from 1.2 billion. In 2003, there were 63 women for every 100 men in the labour market. In Italy, there are about 8,780,000 employed women: 1,418,000 in more than in 1993 and they reach 47.4 per cent. Source: Istat.

te, master's degree? Why always make the man enjoy the security gained through economic independence, and not the woman as well? Why not free the woman from the slavery of the kitchen and give her a more prestigious place in the cultural, social, economic and political spheres?

Of course, it was soon realised that this transfer of women's commitment outside the family did not happen painlessly.

Who would carry out all the activities that had until then been the preserve of women such as sewing, cooking, cleaning the house, caring for children, the elderly, the sick?

The answer did not seem difficult at all. First of all, it was necessary to obtain greater cooperation from the men, and then it was sufficient to buy the necessary tools and machines with the increased income.

Regarding the first point: the cooperation of men, it was not an easy task to obtain it¹³² and this for several reasons. Men who were educated and accustomed to a certain role and lifestyle were hardly willing to change it. Moreover, given the male characteristics in the management of their energies, these men, after having put all their resources into work outside the family, expected a well-deserved rest when they returned home and could not stand or accept other jobs and other commitments. A second reason stemmed from having to endure rather than accept a reality they did not share. To career women, the talk from their husbands was more or less the following: "You like and care about working outside the family for your personal fulfilment and economic independence, so you make do". This attitude naturally resulted in the emergence or accentuation of contrasts within the couple.

It was easier to obtain the cooperation of suitable machines to reduce women's work inside the home. Gas cookers, refrige-

¹³² Men spend 2 hours and seven minutes on family work, compared to 6 hours and 44 minutes for women.

M. C. ROMANO, L. L. SABBADINI, *I tempi della vita quotidiana*, Famiglia oggi, 8-9, 2005, p. 19.

From 1988 to 2003, men's family work effort increased by only 21 minutes.

Source: Istat, press release of 20 October 2005.

rators, washing machines, dishwashers, hoovers, microwave ovens and others were, and still are, indispensable tools at a time when much of women's work had moved outside the home.

Among other things, the use of these machines and the increased economic possibilities in industry acted as a driving force to trigger a series of positive events. More purchases, more production, more research, lower costs, greater purchasing power, more dissemination of objects and tools within households, greater economic prosperity. The flywheel of the economy began to turn much faster than before.

Alongside these positive effects, negative consequences were immediately noted, both economic and affective-relational. From the economic point of view, the more the tools needed to reduce women's tasks and labours increased, the more the expenses increased for families: for purchases, for repairs, for the energy needed to run the machines and for waste disposal. Women's and men's needs also increased, in order to present themselves well in society every day. Having to live all day, elbow to elbow, with other women and men and not be disfigured in front of their eyes and in their appreciation, personal expenses for clothing and body care increased. Transport expenses also increased. No longer one car, but two, to get to and from work. Global pollution and stress also increased accordingly. Stress caused by the rush, by the multiplication of commitments. Stress due to the longer and longer time needed to travel from home to and from work. Stress due to the difficult and often conflictual relationship with colleagues and superiors. Stress due to living with rhythms not befitting a human being. Stress due to increased conflict between men and women. Since, due to so much stress in and out of the home, there was a need for greater gratification and pleasure, there was also an increase in expenditure for the satisfaction of recreational needs but also for the use of psychotropic drugs.

The increase in expenditure led to an increase in economic needs. Hence the need for both men and women to work more.

In order to cover the emotional, relational, care and assistance needs left unmet by women who went to work outside the

family, numerous services sprang up and spread. These, although initially very few in number, increased considerably within a few years. However, the number was never sufficient to cover the ever-increasing needs. Retirement homes for the elderly, municipal, regional and private kindergartens for young children, nursery schools, company kindergartens, extended time and full time in schools, and centres for the disabled were established.

School buses were needed to pick up and take children to school and back home. There was a need for babysitting, child-care services in schools for children whose parents were forced by their work schedules to leave them early and pick them up after school hours. Free childcare services by grandparents, or a few compliant aunts, increased. Company canteens and meal vouchers were instituted, so as to avoid going home during the lunch break. And again after-school teachers were needed to help their children with their homework.

Of course, much of these additional services had a cost that was borne either by individual families or by the community as a whole.

At present, while the use of increasingly sophisticated machines and services aimed at the normal management of the home and the family is constantly increasing within the home, the demand for specialised personnel with pedagogical, psychological and psychiatric functions is also expanding considerably. These personnel are necessary to cover the needs for minor and serious dysfunctions due to the increase in psychic pathologies of minors, couples and families.

If adults are followed by psychiatrists and psychologists, many children with problems are followed or treated by pedagogues, psychologists and child neuropsychiatrists. These specialised personnel are activated, either to solve existing problems or to cover the emotional shortcomings present in families.¹³³ The-

¹³³ Research by the US National Children's Institute shows that children who do not stay with their mothers in the first year of life, but are placed in day care, learn less than those who stay with their mothers, but above all show psychological disorders with aggression.

se very expensive personnel sometimes only function as ears or hearts, willing to finally listen to thoughts and emotions.

For adolescents with drug addiction problems Sert¹³⁴ and therapeutic communities are activated. For young anorexics and alcoholics specialised clinics or self-help groups. For couples in difficulty, family counselling centres and couples and family therapists.

If this were not enough, in recent decades many well-off families have been organising themselves with handymen to cover the remaining needs of home care (cleaning the house, preparing food),¹³⁵ while the emotional and companionship needs of the elderly, even if perfectly self-sufficient, are being entrusted to carers¹³⁶

One can then distinguish three phases: a first phase in which it was necessary to cover only certain material needs; a second phase in which it was also necessary to cover psychological, care and nursing needs; a third phase, the current one, in which it is necessary to cover the significantly increasing pathological needs concerning couples, children, adolescents, young people, mature people and the elderly.

At this point it is clear that we find ourselves unwillingly, and I believe without having a clear understanding of it, caught in a vicious circle: neglecting the world of affection, while on the one hand it increases per capita income, on the other it increases the need for replacement instruments and services, but - and this is the factor that should most alarm the world of politics, economics and services - with the increase in situations of

E. CARETTO, 'Mothers at home, children grow up better', in *Corriere della sera*, 20 July, 2002, p.14.

¹³⁴ According to the Ministry of Health, the annual number of Sert users was 77,005 in 1991, while it was 182,286 in 1997. According to the annual report to the Parliament on the state of drug addiction in Italy, in 1998 no less than 300,000 Italians between 15 and 54 years of age occasionally used heroin; of these, 137,657 are to be considered real drug addicts in treatment at the Sert.

¹³⁵ There are 600,000 domestic helpers regularly registered with the INPS; however, it is thought that just as many are hired 'in the black'.

¹³⁶ The number of carers, which was 53,861 in 1992, increased to 1999 a 114,182 persons. Source: INPS data

hardship and illness, specialised personnel and the activation of services and facilities are required, which increase costs, both for the state and for families: with the increase in situations of hardship and illness, there is a need for specialised personnel and the activation of services and facilities that drive up costs, both for the state and for families. Economists such as L. Bruni of the University of Milan have, in fact, pointed out that: "The growing indigence of families is also a consequence of a growing famine of gratuitous relationships, of the fraying of family and community networks. - It takes the whole village to raise a child,' says a wise African proverb. But when the village is no longer there to raise the child (or to care for the elderly) there is a need for the market: baby-sitters, carers, crèches, care services, etc., which take the place of the missing relationships. The economic value of 'relational capital' is enormous, we realise this when it is lacking and we have to resort to the market."¹³⁷

In order to better understand what has been said, let me refer you to the case of a family we followed a few years ago.

This family consisted of two parents and three children. The mother, a professional, when asked how their family life was going, told me that from the beginning of their marriage, she had preferred to devote herself to her profession for a very simple and easily understandable reason: 'I am a professional, one hour of mine is worth 50 euros; if I hire a domestic help for cleaning the house, I spend 7 euros per hour, thus earning 43 euros. If I do the same with the cook, who prepares lunch for me and my children and whom I pay 10 euros, I earn 40 euros. If I add to this a good teacher to help the children with their homework, who costs me 15 euros, I earn another 35 euros.

This professional complained of having serious conflicts with her husband (so much so that she was later forced to separate from him) and of having, despite all her sacrifices, all three children with more or less serious psychological problems.

But that was not all. After a few years, strangely enough, despite all these 'earnings' of hers that were added to those of

¹³⁷ L. BRUNI, "Italiani poveri perché il risparmio non c'è più" in *Famiglia Cristiana*, N°6, 2008, p.3

her husband, she realised that she could not make ends meet, because the number of people and therapies and thus expenses she had to bear to cope with the difficult situation that had arisen over time was increasing every day, and she was forced to work even at weekends to try to make the necessary money.

The above-mentioned mother, in her correct but incomplete calculations, had not taken into account the fact that neglecting the world of affection causes considerable damage to the individual, the couple and the functionality of the family as a whole, damage that often has considerable economic repercussions.

Despite the fact that what we have reported is an extreme case, the experience of these years in caring for children in difficulty confirms more and more every day that the underestimation by individuals and society of the world of emotions and feelings produces considerable breakdowns that are evident on the level of individual well-being, families, couples, and social relations. This malaise has considerable economic implications.

In fact, for every child, young person or adult with psychological problems of a certain significance, borne by the family and/or society, are to be taken into account:

- costs for specialist visits, examinations and interventions that often involve numerous centres and operators. Frequently, for a psychic problem, in addition to the general practitioner, at least three specialists and two to three hospital facilities are involved, resulting in numerous examinations which, in recent years, have become increasingly expensive: mental and personality tests, EEG, CT scans, REM, chromosomal examinations, etc. These clinical examinations are often considered routine in many centres;
- costs for educational and rehabilitation interventions at specialised centres and facilities. These therapies often last for several years;
- costs, within the school framework, to implement individualised teaching with the help of support teachers. These costs must also be incurred over several years;

- costs for transport to these facilities;
- costs of buying or using special teaching materials;
- costs, in the most serious cases, for school assistance with the help of specialised personnel;
- costs for individual, couple and family psychotherapy interventions also lasting several years;
- Since parents or other relatives are necessarily involved for visits, hospitalisations, check-ups and rehabilitative and therapeutic interventions, the costs resulting from their involvement must also be considered;
- costs for hospital care¹³⁸ or home care;
- welfare and pension costs when recovery did not pay off;
- To all these expenses, one must add the indirect ones linked to the negative influence that subjects with psychological problems have on their families and normal subjects, and the loss of earnings due to the partial, scarce or non-existent work activity of subjects affected by psychiatric pathologies. In fact, unfortunately, all of the above-mentioned interventions frequently do not allow for a total and often not even partial recovery of the subject's working capacity;
- If, as is often the case, when the importance of the emotional world is neglected or underestimated, the relationship between the spouses also falls apart, to these expenses must be added those of pursuing separation and divorce proceedings and those of maintaining another home with all the costs of services that are practically doubled;
- not to mention how much the state is forced to spend when delinquent behaviour takes place for which courts, prisons, rehabilitation centres and so on are needed.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ The average cost of a hospital stay in Italy is EUR 674 per day.

¹³⁹ To get just an idea of how much neglecting the emotional world costs, one only has to think that according to a survey carried out in 2008 by the financial economic newspaper 'Il Sole 24 ore', addictions cost the country around 60 billion euro a year.

CHAPTER 7

7.0 DEFICIENCIES IN THE AFFECTIVE-RELATIONAL WORLD

7.1.0 SIGNS OF DEFICIENCIES IN THE AFFECTIVE-RELATIONAL WORLD

What confirms that there is a lack of commitment to the world of affection and relationships?

There are many *signs* that indicate a lack of commitment to the affective-relational world.

- The decrease in time spent at home by parents.¹⁴⁰
- The decrease in time spent with children.¹⁴¹
- An increase in the use of TV and video games.
- The increase in the use of baby-sitters.

¹⁴⁰ If the woman works, family work was 7 hours and 27 minutes in 1988-89, while in 2002-2003 it was 7 hours and 15 minutes. Istat data.

¹⁴¹ Out of one hundred expert Italian pedagogues and psychologists interviewed, sixty-five agree that never before has there been such a reduction in shared space dedicated to play in the family. About half of those interviewed are of the opinion that fathers play with their children less than half an hour a day and mothers a little more, but not much.

- The increase in the involvement of grandparents, other relatives and the nursery for the care and custody of children.¹⁴²
- The increase in the use of frozen food; pre-cooked, ready-to-eat take-away food.
- The increase in the number of occasions on which the family or various members eat meals outside the home.
- The increase in the use of external teachers to follow their children in their homework.
- The increase in the use of carers for the elderly.
- The decrease in family care for sick or injured persons;
- Excessive and improper use of health services, even for situations easily managed within the family.
- The poor or pathological bonding one establishes with one's children.
- The scarce moments of dialogue and care towards the various members of the affective and family network.
- An increase in time spent away from parents by children.

7.2.0 THE INCREASE IN PSYCHO-AFFECTIVE AND RELATIONAL MALAISE

Equally numerous are the signs that indicate an increase in psycho-affective and relational malaise.

- The family network becomes smaller, poorer, frayed, incapable of welcoming and helping.¹⁴³
- Life as a couple is less and less rewarding, more and more conflictual, so much so that many men and a large

¹⁴² 54.6% of children under the age of two are cared for by grandparents, 22% attend a nursery school, 11% are entrusted to a baby-sitter, 3.2% are cared for by other family members or acquaintances and only 8.9% are cared for by the parents themselves. Istat data - *'Having a child in Italy'* - 32-2006.

¹⁴³ Couples are present in 65 out of 100 households, while children are present in 53 out of 100 households.

R. VOLPI, *"La fine della famiglia"*, Mondadori, Milan, 2007, p.45.

number of women prefer to remain alone than to marry or cohabit.¹⁴⁴

- There is a decrease in the number of marriages.¹⁴⁵
- The average age of newlyweds increases.¹⁴⁶
- There is a marked increase in violence within the family.¹⁴⁷
- The number of children born out of wedlock is increasing.¹⁴⁸
- Separation and divorce cases are increasing.¹⁴⁹
- The desire for motherhood and fatherhood decreases.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ A survey carried out by the Statistics Department of the Milan City Council, involving 900 women in the Lombard capital between the ages of 20 and 49, found that 83.2% of Milanese women like living alone, compared to 56.8% of Italians. Indeed, having a partner by their side increases their liking to 86.6%.

R. QUERZE, 'Matrimonio addio, la vita da "single" seduce le milanesi', in *Corriere della sera*, 4 June 2003, p. 47.

¹⁴⁵ In the years 1970 - 1974, there was an average of 408,000 marriages per year, which dropped to only 275,000 in the years 2000 - 2001.

¹⁴⁶ The average age of marriage was 25.5 in 1972, 31 in 2005. Source: Istat.

¹⁴⁷ "The result that seems to follow is that the family, rather than a safe haven in the face of life's threats, is actually a hellish crucible of anger and violence. Not a few people are aware that terror has invaded many families, not only because of the risk of minors being sacrificial victims of adult hatred, but also because of the opposite: there are parents who are afraid of their children, to the point that they lock themselves in their rooms at night for fear of being attacked by them."

L. ANCONA, 'Family life: containing fears and the roots of hope', in *Consultori Familiari Oggi*, 2002, 3-4, p. 63.

¹⁴⁸ While natural births averaged around 7.5% in 1994- 1996, in 2000/2001 they constituted 10.6% of the total live births. Istat data - *"Having a child in Italy"* 32, 2006.

¹⁴⁹ The total number of separated couples is 1,327,553 (from 1971 until 2002). The total number of separated couples who have not yet divorced in Italy is 562,855; the total number of divorced couples in the same years was 764,698.

The number grew steadily from 17,000 in the first twelve months of 1971, to over 50,000 in 2001. In 1971, there were just over four divorces for every 100 marriages. In

2002 there were 19 divorces for every hundred marriages. M BONANATE, *Sexuality mortified*, in *Madre*, July 2003, p.34

- Sex life in the couple becomes increasingly poor and unsatisfying.¹⁵¹
- Cases of premarital and matrimonial infidelity are on the rise.¹⁵²
- There is a greater presence of precarious, superficial affective ties without a rich, broad and future-oriented project.¹⁵³
- There is an increase in even severe mental disorders both in childhood and during adolescence or youth.¹⁵⁴
- There is an increase in deviant phenomena¹⁵⁵ and a massive spread of disvalues such as sex, money and power.
- There is an increase in the use of psychotropic drugs, alcohol and drugs.¹⁵⁶

7.3.0 THE MALE-FEMALE RELATIONSHIP

¹⁵⁰ The average frequency of live births in the years 1970 - 1974 was 888,000 per year; this frequency was reduced to 544,000 in the years 2000 - 2001.

¹⁵¹ "...37% of couples, according to the latest CENSIS data, have only one sexual intercourse a week, a frequency that ... decreases with age." M. Bonanate, 'La sessualità mortificata', in *Madre*, July 2003, p.34

¹⁵² According to the 4th Asper report, 57.7% of males and 58.1% of females have cheated. Only once cheated on 26.4 per cent of males and 25.8 per cent of females; 8.4 per cent of males and 8.9 per cent of females systematically cheat on their partners.

52% of women who cheat on their partners are married (Aied).

¹⁵³ In Great Britain, unmarried couples have increased by 65% in the last ten years.

¹⁵⁴ 70 to 80 per cent of the population in industrialised countries have suffered at least once in their lives from manifestations that are accompanied by anxiety: sweating, unfounded fear, fear of unforeseen events, feelings of guilt.

¹⁵⁵ If the crime rate in 1970 for murders committed or attempted was 100, in 1999 it was 228; for thefts 331; for robberies the index reached 1975 in the same year.

¹⁵⁶ In 2002, 3,932 kilos of cocaine were seized, compared to 1,809 in 2001, an increase of 117%.

With regard to the male-female relationship, a certain male resistance was certainly expected when demands for equality were made. It was foreseeable that the renegotiation of every aspect of couple and family life would lead, especially with regard to the first male generation and in the phase of adaptation, to an increase in conflict, but I think what happened was not at all expected. Also because the premises seemed very promising.

Meanwhile, the acceptance of women's rights seemed to meet with only marginal resistance on the political and institutional level. On the contrary, a large number of men in politics, trade unions and the church accepted the proclamations of women's liberation, making them their own, in the same way as other libertarian proclamations, committing themselves to implementing them through a whole series of laws that sanctioned many of the demands.

In the cultural sphere, too, the majority of scholars embraced these new principles in the relationship between the sexes. These scholars from various psychological, political and social disciplines themselves became champions of the new egalitarian course that was to be established. The few who dared to doubt the validity of these principles were branded as old-fashioned, macho retrogrades, still tied to an outdated, archaic peasant world.

In the religious sphere, even though the Catholic Church's doctrine on the ordination of bishops and priests continued to exclude women, nevertheless, in order to show that it accepted and embraced egalitarian principles, the indications on male and female roles within the family contained in the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Epistles of the Apostles, and the Church Fathers were explained and bent to these principles. All the expressions that gave the husband the role of head of the family were explained as concepts born in a society and age with a male-dominated imprint and therefore no longer relevant.

Despite the fact that these premises seemed to be the best for fostering a new understanding between men and women, however, like a river that runs deep and wide, forming immense underground tunnels and dark caverns that then suddenly collapse,

se with all that nature and men have built upon it, something has gone wrong. And the reasons are numerous.

"First of all, if we are equal, if there should be no differences between us, why should only the man make the sexual and sentimental approaches and the woman have to play hard to get and refuse or carefully choose? Why should this possibility and freedom to express one's desires, impulses and needs not also be offered to women?" That this then results in a massive accentuation of cheating, both before and after marriage, and thus in considerable suffering for both sexes, for the family, for society, is only a negligible consequence of the right to gender equality.

"If we are the same, and if there should be no differences between us, why not dress the same? Why not have the same language? Why not frequent the same places? Why not have the same styles of behaviour in moving and managing?" Too bad though that males, women and girls who dress like them, talk like them, swear like them, care little or nothing. And if there is any interest it is only from playful or sexual motives. But even women, despite the fact that they are by nature more willing than men to accept the fashions of the moment, do not show much enthusiasm for men with feminine characteristics.

"If both men and women are free human beings, who or what can impose chastened customs and attitudes? Who or what can indicate that there is a limit to decency in the way we dress, speak or behave?" It is a pity, however, that these unseemly attitudes often appear in the eyes of males as shameless sexual availability, so that the type of approach towards these girls or women, has almost exclusively the stamp of free and carefree sexual play, with painful relapses in those who were hoping for something else.

"If we are equal, if we have the same rights of choice, if we are free and of age, who or what will be able to decide where we go to work, where we spend our holidays, the people we meet, the activities we undertake? No one, certainly." Too bad this breaks up families and makes it extremely difficult for both men and women to bring up children and be faithful.

"If we are equal, if there are to be no differences between us, if we have the same roles, who or what can be or count as di-

scriminating in deciding choices, on what to do and not to do? Who should do a certain type of work rather than another? And above all, how should a certain type of work be done?"

In industrial, commercial or service activities, but also in the common experience of living in the same house, it is well known what happens when there are no clearly defined tasks.

In a course as part of a project for the prevention of psychological distress held a few years ago in our city for out-of-town students, we had hypothesised as possible problems for these university students, the distance from their home country, homesickness for their parents, and difficulties integrating in a new environment, in a new city. We had therefore set the meetings around these issues. We soon realised that we had not achieved the course objectives. A large part of the problems reported by the young people were not related to homesickness for their home and parents, nor were they due to the loss of childhood friendships or the difficulties of putting down roots in a big city. Instead, many of the problems arose from the difficult cohabitation of several young people in the same house. Cohabitation between people who, at least in theory, should not have had such problems, as they were of the same sex, with the same interests, with no particular ties or duties other than those of studying and having fun. The main problem, brought up by these university students in group discussions, was the division of labour. Put simply: who, when and how was to wash the kitchen, the hallway and the bathroom, was the main topic of quarrels and bitter arguments between the young men and especially the young women students. Despite the fact that some of them, dividing all the tasks evenly, had defined beforehand, at least in theory in a perfectly equal manner, what had to be done, how it had to be done and above all who had to do it, endless arguments still arose. Because "there is always someone who wants to be smart and when it is his turn he either doesn't do what he should or does it badly, or not as well as he should."

The reality that we should be able to accept is that each one of us, especially of a different gender, has his own way of seeing

things, his own way of dealing with them, his own way of solving them.

Conflicts are much less intense and gratification is much greater when a person is entrusted with a specific task, when that task, for which he has been prepared for a long time, he is able to perform it well, and when for that task this person is amply rewarded by those who use his service.

Conversely, if there are two of us having to perform a task, it is difficult, if not impossible, to divide it equally, so it is easy for friction to arise over what the other does not do or does not do well. If there are two of us having to perform a task, the gratification obtained is much less, not only because the pleasure felt has to be divided between two, but also because we do not feel it to be fully ours. And all things not felt as ours give little pleasure and little satisfaction. Contrasts increase, long faces increase, personal dissatisfaction increases. The joy and pleasure in performing that task decreases, the sense of duty and responsibility decreases.

The latter is perhaps the most serious event.

If a given task is entrusted only or predominantly to one person who is also responsible for it, that person prepares to perform it to the best of his or her ability, does his or her utmost to perform it well because, whether he or she fails or succeeds, that person alone will be credited with the merits or imputed with the demerits. If there are two or more than two, there is always the possibility of offloading the demerits onto the other or others and taking the merits onto oneself.

This is what actually happened in the task- and role-sharing experiences.

The shared responsibility and authority over all aspects of education and training, given to both parents, has been further extended to grandparents, teachers and service providers. When something does not go right, and there are more and more occasions when things do not go well, there is either denial of the problem: "My child has no disorder, he is better off than you and me; he is just capricious" or the responsibility, out of instinctive self-defence, is inevitably shifted onto others. "It was his classmates who led him astray." "It was his father who was always

absent." "It was his permissive mother who ruined him." "It is the incompetent and unprepared teachers who did not understand him." "It is the fault of the psychologist we entrusted him to who did not know how to do her job."

The denial of any responsibility for their children's education leads more and more parents to denounce or beat up teachers for allowing themselves to fail or reprimand their ignorant or rude child. In our daily work as child neuropsychiatrists, we have noticed that, for some parents, it is already offensive simply to have told them that their child has psychological problems that should be addressed.

7.4.0LA PROPOSTA DEL 50%

Why is it so difficult to engage equally in the emotional and economic world so that no one suffers?

Many indeed, especially in the religious sphere, would not have wanted the world of production to be privileged over the world of affection, as they foresaw the harmful consequences on the couple, the family and the upbringing of offspring. Therefore, they proposed that men and women should share these two fundamental commitments equally.

It was and still is for many psychologists, sociologists, educators and churchmen, '*the 50 per cent proposition*'.

In practice, to implement this proposal, the husband and wife, the man and the woman, would have to commit their time and energy by dividing it equally between home and work; between the world of affectivity and the world of production and services.

In this way neither reality would suffer. Men and women would have equal gratification. Both sexes would have dual capabilities and dual skills.

This, unfortunately, did not happen.

In reality, something else happened. What some predicted happened.

Despite the fact that men walk their children in prams or wash dishes, they have never really involved themselves, nor have they committed themselves, except rarely, to using half of

their time, preparation and energy for the world of affection. But, what is worse, women, despite their intense and innate maternal instinct, at first gradually and now, in recent years, precipitously, have almost completely abandoned the world of affection to pour their energies and time into the world of services and production. And even when she takes care of her family and children, she does so with the style and values imposed by the economic world and not with those characteristic of the world of affection, so she is often unsuited to this role.

How come the accounts do not add up? Why is it that if two people do different jobs, the emotional world is not affected, whereas if both spouses are engaged in the two worlds and thus try to balance work and family needs, the emotional world is deprived, if not completely abandoned?

The problem stems from the fact that only a small number of people - men and women alike - manage to maintain a balance of even close to 50 per cent.

As for women, a part of them, a minority, after their first experiences or after the birth of their first child, reverts to a division of roles. In general, the woman returns to a prevailing role in the family and emotional sphere and the man to a prevailing role in work and social commitments.

Of the women who opt for the family, only some, however, do so convinced that they have made the best choice, for the others it is a necessary fallback imposed by circumstances. For the rest of the women, the prevalence of commitment, though not always of time commitment, is in favour of the business world.

But why does this happen? What motivates such a large group of men and women to commit a large part of their energy, time, training and passion to the world of business and services?

75.0 CAUSES OF ABANDONMENT OF THE AFFECTIVE-RELATIONAL WORLD

There are many causes of decreased commitment or abandonment of the affective-relational world.

In order to accept and make women's social and labour commitment unconditionally accepted and to counter those people and institutions that foresaw the harm and were therefore opposed to this change of role, a series of reasons were suggested and presented that have found acceptance in Western societies in sociological, political and religious circles.

It began by emphasising women's dual commitment as an imperative necessity for some of the neediest families: "That woman needs to work: because her husband is unemployed; because her family lacks the indispensable means of subsistence; because their children and themselves would starve; because they have too many mouths to feed."

Later, it was said that women who worked inside and outside the home were heroines and workaholics because, for the love of family and children, they took on a double, indeed triple service: as working women, as mothers and as wives.

The communist-ruled world was no less, which proposed to give dignity and freedom to women only if they engaged not only in domestic work but also in all extra-familiar activities. In this way, the woman, by unconditionally offering her arms and mind within and outside the family, would make her valuable contribution to building the communist state. One only has to go to Moscow to see how the regime's photographs, paintings, statues and demonstrations never lacked the exaltation of the woman peasant, worker, train conductor, but also engineer, aviatrix, astronaut, etc.

The theme of liberation was also emphasised in the capitalist world; this, needing a lot of cheap labour, for decades repeated the false refrain that 'woman had been the slave of the tyrant man for millennia. Slave bound to the cooker, to baby food and child poo. The new and modern society had the duty to give her back, with work outside the family, complete freedom, new value and new dignity'.

In the sixties and seventies then, the rebellion against all authority, including paternal authority with the consequent liberation from it, presented the people of the fathers as a people of master fathers. A people of authoritarian tyrants, ready to limit, prohibit, chastise and punish wives and children if they disobe-

yed or dared to rebel against their rule. Fathers also described as affectively distant, deputed only to economic sustenance and the administration of punishments.

To justify the decrease in time spent with husband and children, the slogan was proclaimed that: 'It is not the quantity of time made available to the family and children that is important, but the quality'.

To these slogans were added many others such as the one that reads: 'Women can make a very important and essential contribution of sensitivity and humanity to the social and political life of the country if they are included in the various activities and services and in all political and institutional contexts'.

As a consequence of this, 'equal opportunities' committees, councillorships, ministries were advocated in all institutions with the aim of having at least half of all positions of power held by women,¹⁵⁷ no matter if it was political, industrial or service-related.

That these are just slogans is not difficult to prove. In the meantime, it is well known that the education of children needs a very high level of availability, both in quality and quantity, just as it is well known that the energy that nature has made available to us and which we can spend on various activities and commitments, we cannot increase except for a short period. It is then a question of distributing this energy well. One can concentrate it in a few hours or dilute it over many hours. Or one can channel it all for one commitment or divide it into two or ten commitments. In the end, the amount of energy used is always the same. If we force our potential for a short time, we may increase the quantity of results but at the expense of quality.

As for the alleged enslavement of women, is it possible to define as a slave a person who is given the most important task

¹⁵⁷ Forla Harding "A woman who spends her whole life on this developmental plane can be successful while she is young and the power and influence acquired will satisfy her throughout her maturity. But faced with the problem of old age she will inevitably feel lost."
E. HARDING, *La strada della donna*, Casa Editrice Astrolabio, Rome, 1952, p. 91.

for mankind, which is to give life and then care for, help grow and mature other women and men?

Slaves are given the most menial jobs, not commitments at the highest level of prestige.

Is it possible to call a mother a slave and simultaneously give her honours and glories like a goddess? Yet in many religions one of the most important deities was the mother goddess.

Is it possible that 'slave men' take the heaviest and riskiest aspects of mankind for themselves, leaving the less heavy and dangerous work to the female slaves?

Has there ever been a tyrant who sacrificed his life for one of his slaves? Yet one cannot count the men who have sacrificed their lives to save their women.

Is it possible for a slave to raise male children in such a way that as adults they in turn become the torturers of women?

Is it possible that half of mankind has kept the other half of mankind in bondage for millions of years without there ever being a rebellion, except for the last few decades?

Without forgetting, by the way, that a great many men have participated and are participating in this 'rebellion', supporting it fiercely. Which should at least arouse some suspicion!

Is it logical that in a household it is the family slave who holds the shopping purse and not her master?¹⁵⁸

The Aztecs were in many ways an aggressive and bloodthirsty people, yet in the advice of an old father to his married son we read: '...take care of your wife and your home, and work so that you may worthily accommodate and comfort your kinsmen (...) sow and reap; and make for yourself a home where you may leave your wife and children at your death.'¹⁵⁹

Not to mention the Roman civilisation: "The wife appears in every age the companion and co-operator of the Roman man; she stands by him at receptions and banquets,(...) and shares

¹⁵⁸ The husband takes about one third of the family's spending decisions, while the wife takes two thirds.

¹⁵⁹ M. LUCENA, *How the Aztecs Lived*, Fenice 2000, Milan, 1993, pp. 38-39.

with him authority over children and servants, sharing also in the dignity that her husband has in public life."¹⁶⁰

If we want to go even further back in time, there shines the figure of Ulysses who, out of love for Penelope, on the trunk of the olive tree to which she was affectively attached, builds their nuptial thalamus, and around the thalamus their bedroom, and around their bedroom their house and palace. With this series of symbols, Homer wanted to indicate that the man, if he possesses all the characteristics of the true man, not only does not enslave, but also activates himself and commits himself to the utmost in apparently absurd projects in order to please the woman he loves and by whom he is loved.

But the thing that most offends the man-father of the past is the image one wants to have of him: tyrannical, violent, authoritarian fathers, dedicated only to financially supporting their wives and children and inflicting punishment.

Many of us who have lived in patriarchal eras, in typically patriarchal countries and families, do not find ourselves in this description at all, just as many poets and writers who have recalled, in splendid pages, the relationship with fathers do not. Moreover, statistically we know that the serene, mature and authoritative father scolds and applies punishments much more rarely than normal mothers, because he knows that his authority arises from and relies above all on the deep respect and love he has for his children.

If then by 'tyranny' is meant following with care, love, commitment and authority the overall course of the family, setting rules for the common good and enforcing them without compromise, then yes, they were tyrannical fathers.

If by 'affectively distant' one means a father who does not cuddle and smooch his children every moment as mothers do, but who in times of need stands beside each of them to suggest, stimulate, encourage, help and support, then yes, they were affectively distant fathers.

F. Scaparro quotes an excerpt from the ethologist Eibl-Eibesfeldt in which we read: 'In all the cultures we have visited,

¹⁶⁰ U. E. PAOLI, *Vita Romana*, Mondadori, Milan, 2000, p. 101.

the father represents, after the mother, the undoubtedly most important reference person (...) In all cultures, I have also observed that fathers treat their children tenderly, and this is also the case in warlike and typically male-dominated populations, such as the Eipo, Yanomami and Himba.¹⁶¹

With regard to the specific contribution made by female characteristics in the workplace, politics, institutions and services, the experience of recent decades has provided discouraging answers. Can it be said, in all conscience, that schools, healthcare, politics or the management of industries have improved in recent decades since the massive entry of women?

However, many of these slogans and many others, repeated ad nauseam, hit the mark, as is often the case with good slogans, succeeding in impressing some basic concepts on the minds of citizens, both women and men:

- Looking after the home, bringing up children, caring for and looking after one's family members is a boring, unpleasant, repetitive activity. A degrading legacy of a past that must be forgotten, therefore, like all unpleasant things these should, if possible, be eliminated or made to be done by others.
- If one is unable, for financial reasons, to delegate them to others, the unpleasant things should be divided equally: she does the dishes, he dries them; he does the laundry, she irons it; he feeds the baby, she breastfeeds the newborn.
- In contrast, non-domestic work, whatever it may be, is rewarding, interesting, exciting, fulfilling. It ennobles those who do it and those who receive it. Only work and extra-family commitments are worthy of cultured and socially engaged people.
- The real important contribution to society comes from the world of business and services. So those who stay at home and only look after their children, and those who look after and are close to their husbands or old fathers, take away something vital and fundamental from society, depriving it of

¹⁶¹ F. SCAPARRO, 'Encouraging contact welfare', in *Famiglia Oggi*, 2003, 2, p.29.

its precious energies that could be used for more essential tasks and for a much greater number of people.

- The world of affection is not something to get overly involved in, it is not something to be constructed but something to be experienced and enjoyed within the couple or in free love, carried away by the exaltation of falling in love, emotionality and sexual instinct.
- All men are potentially violent slavers ready to relegate and chain their women to the kitchen and childcare if they let their guard down.

It is easy, at this point, to understand the lack of male involvement and limited commitment. In fact, if husbands do not shy away from gardening, maintenance and repair work, and if their commitment has increased, also to protect themselves from the accusation of non-cooperation, as escorts of their children to school or to the swimming pool, or of their wives to the supermarket and shopping, the lack of understanding and full participation in the family's affective life was widely predictable. Just as a commitment that was more facade than substance was to be expected.

There are essentially four reasons for this.

- 1) Man, even if educated by new mothers to help the working woman in the management of the home and children, has not developed and could never have developed, if not by substantially modifying his genetic components, those maternal qualities indispensable for a real commitment to the world of affection. There is in fact a considerable difference between washing dishes or changing a baby's nappy and living a fully maternal relationship with one's children, relatives, home and friends. There is the same difference between the two as there is between giving an injection or dressing a wound and being a doctor. Being a doctor comes from a vocation, long studies, great application, training and experience. All these qualities are not acquired just because someone tells you that it is your duty to have them and to express them.

- 2) For the man, rejection, disengagement and disinterest in a role disdained by women and society were to be abundantly expected. A role far removed from his culture, from his sensibilities, but above all a role described as unpleasant, uninteresting, boring, castrating, as inferior beings, as 'slaves'.
- 3) If the image of the father who cares for the overall well-being of the family, who lays down rules and enforces them; of the father who works and strives to support his wife and children; of the father who is affectively close and follows his children in his own way, precisely as a father, is so mistreated, then it is better to be a friend, a brother, a playmate when it happens, but not a father, never a father.¹⁶²
- 4) On the other hand, the education implemented in both the family and the school environment, aimed at professional commitment and enhancement, also took away the last options from men, since no one can be asked to perform an activity for which one is not genetically predisposed and has not been prepared in any way.

As far as women are concerned, it is painful and difficult for us to describe the causes that have led millions of women in the western world first to neglect, and then gradually but inexorably to abandon, the world of affection and relationships, which constituted their world and their unchallenged realm.

A world in which their progenitors, for millennia, had been active, skilled and specialised. A world in which they had succeeded in involving even the most recalcitrant males.

A world they had built with the bricks of intelligence, experience and instinct, but also with the cement of tenderness and love.

We find it hard to believe that culture, projects and experiences that had been accumulated and passed down to the next generation for hundreds of thousands of years, with the certainty

¹⁶² "From considerations of this kind we can only draw the conclusion that in our contemporary culture there is a profound distortion in the masculine ideal, such that no man can mature to the fullness of adult masculinity." N. W. ACKERMAN, *Psychodynamics of Family Life*, p.232.

that they would not only be utilised but also improved and passed on to the next generation, have been discarded as old and useless things.

It is difficult for us to speak of the destruction of a world that billions of women in the past had perfected in every detail, in every detail, so that nothing was out of place, so that everything converged to the purpose for which it was built.

It is difficult, we said, to put down on paper the causes of this abandonment. This work has the smell, it has the sadness, it has the bleakness of an autopsy. But we do it because even autopsies are indispensable for understanding death and fighting for life.

- 1) Our assumptions start from the observation that women are very prone and sensitive, by nature, to change. She is therefore likely to embrace any proposal that tends to change her status quo, especially if other women close to her are converted to this change.
- 2) On the other hand, it is better to change when the commitment one leaves behind is repeatedly and obsessively described as worse: poor, repetitive, dreary, boring, dirty, old-fashioned, poor little women, while on the contrary, change is linked to greater economic and contractual power, greater social prestige and greater autonomy.
- 3) When women find themselves competing with other women and other men in offices as in factories, in schools or in politics, if they want to remain on a par or overcome and defeat their opponents, male or female, they are forced to fully espouse the times, rules, values and norms of the economic world. But these norms, these times, these values and these rules, are markedly different, divergent and contrasting from those in the affective world. Since these two realities are very different from each other and can hardly coexist in the same person, in the end one limits the other, one drives out the other, one replaces the other, one suppresses the other.
- 4) The gratification and joy of the affective world is only achieved when the bond and readiness for such relationships are experienced fully and unconditionally. Otherwise, frustration is predominantly achieved. The child, such as the el-

derly person, the sick person or the spouse, immediately feel the lack of empathy, participation and availability, and react with aggression, poor attachment and mistrust, towards those who limit their availability and do not allow themselves to be fully involved in affective relationships. This mistrust, this poor attachment, or worse this resentment and aggression, accelerates the flight and detachment. "If I cannot be a good mother and wife, it is better to abandon everything and completely change my life's goals and aims."

- 5) Women are also driven to flee the world of affection because, not feeling adequate due to lack of preparation, they can no longer manage it properly. As we have said, preparation for the world of affection must be long and very thorough to be effective. It is easier to prepare a good engineer, doctor or psychologist than a good mother-to-be. The resulting frustrations caused by children and then by a spouse or other dissatisfied family members push these women even more towards the other field for which decades of study have prepared them and which, by the way, is also much easier to manage.¹⁶³
- 6) The world of business and work is full of sentimental, sexual and social opportunities and this makes it, like the glossy covers of certain weeklies, more sparkling, attractive and interesting.
- 7) Finally, the houses, inside anonymous buildings, embedded in huge cities, without or with scarce social spaces, have greatly diminished the possibility of a life between women and between workers specialised in the management of the affective-relational world. While relatives on the opposite side of town or in another city are unreachable and distant,

¹⁶³ "Reciprocally, the woman, who on the outside presents herself as aggressive, self-sufficient, dominant, is in reality insecure, competes with the man, is sidetracked in her feminine development, does not learn what it means to be a woman, and remains a secretly frightened child, who aspires, in fantasy, to leave the marital state to return to being her mother's daughter. Situation far from rosy!"

N. W. ACKERMAN, *Psychodynamics of Family Life*, pp.232 - 233.

flats protected by steel doors have become bunkers in which to defend themselves but also prisons for their occupants.

7.6.0LA TRASFORMAZIONE DEL AFFECTIVE-RELATIONAL WORLD

We have said that the affective-relational world is an essential component of the ego and thus of the life of animals, but even more so of human beings. It cannot therefore disappear from the scene of humanity. It can, however, and this is what has happened, change. Since the need for cuddling, tenderness, dialogue, relationship, emotion, passion, love, exchange, care remains, these needs are substantially modified.

The objects of love change. The love, attention and care of a father or mother towards their children and vice versa is transformed into love towards work, social or political commitment, interest in objects, machines and tools. Never before have objects been so loved, admired and collected. At best objects of love become animals, more easily managed than humans they require less care and less emotional involvement. Never before has so much attention and care been given to dogs, cats or exotic animals that there is now a good number of shelves dedicated to them in every supermarket.

Goals change: why love and relate to only one or a few people when you can relate to a thousand and more? Since technology allows it, greetings messages with the inevitable final TVB are exchanged for pennies with hundreds of people. Since one cannot have quality, one at least tries with quantity to cover the gaps in one's soul, while instances of shyness and introversion increase.

The moments and places in which to experience feelings change. Not alone, in the intimacy of one's own home, but in front of an audience of tens of millions of spectators who can thus quiver, throb and emotionally participate in our every sigh and kiss, our every word of love, our every sexual approach. The most personal and intimate things are then sold and exposed to the eyes, ears and hearts of a huge audience, eager to expe-

rience, by proxy, what they can no longer experience directly and personally.

Despite the fact that these realities are clearly visible and burn on the skin and hearts of millions of people, we continue to delude ourselves that the current malaise is a passing reality due to the slowness of men, women, and children to adapt. We still hope for the miracle of adaptation. Many psychologists and sociologists, in fact, see the travail and crisis in which western societies find themselves as a transitory situation, a messianic expectation, a painful birth from which should be born, in a more or less distant future, a new man and a new woman capable of being and living as the man and woman of today are unable to do.

It seems to us that taking a step back, when one has embarked on a road with no useful outlets, does not mean returning to the past, but facing the future more realistically and wisely.

If one continues to delude oneself that man and woman will find, perhaps miraculously, the squaring of the circle, one forgets that nature does not adapt downwards but tends to adapt upwards, and that it is not possible to give simple answers to very complex problems. But these natural rules are unfortunately less and less understood and accepted by modern Western societies, and this is one of the reasons for their degradation.

The illusion, to which we want to cling, is even more tragic when one considers that it involves dozens of nations and hundreds of millions of people, and not only that, but that it seems so beautiful and important to us that we want to export it, with the use of smart bombs, to the peoples who, 'poor things', have not yet discovered it or made it their own.

CONCLUSIONS

"Five hundred years before Christ, the Chinese sage Lu Bu We wrote: "If the person is well then the family is well, if the family is well then the state is well, if the state is well then the world is well!"¹⁶⁴

With this book we hope to have highlighted how the interest of the business world in the smooth functioning of the affective-relational world must be considerably greater than in the recent past. Because one depends on the other, one is connected to the other, one comes to life from the other.

The intent to dismantle, or relegate only to the emotions of the private world, the affective world means not having fully understood the profound scope of this reality and the consequences of its dysfunction.

These consequences are of two kinds:

- 1) consequences of altered psychological development;**
- 2) consequences of impaired educational development.**

1) Consequences of altered psychological development.

With regard to the consequences of altered psychological development, we know that it is only this well-being that enables the person to live serenely and well with himself and with others. Psychological well-being, as we have said, arises and is built up through a series of acts and behaviours that start as early as the prenatal stage and must develop in a particular, precise and punctual manner throughout the individual's life.

¹⁶⁴ F. CAVALLI, (quoted by) 'Family: the responsibility of business', in *UCID Letter*, 2007, 1, p.55.

These are acts and behaviours that have long been studied and codified by scholars of developmental psychology, but which were intuitively and instinctively present in traditional human and family culture for millennia.

They are acts and behaviours that require *a certain amount of presence of parents and other family members and clearly positive psychological characteristics* on the part of all educators. They also require a warm, serene, welcoming, relaxed, accepting, dialoguing *affective environment*. Acts and behaviour must have, depending on the age of the child, *perfectly prepared actors* who take action when and as required for the well-being of the child, and then of the adolescent and young person.

Being able to count on people who have a good psychological balance is crucial for the business and service world. Just think of the poor and unstable performance of a worker or manager even due to a slight psychological malaise that does not require specific interventions.

It is enough to reflect on the fact that even modest symptoms of anxiety, sadness, apathy, and asthenia can make attention, commitment, and creativity difficult, while they can increase disinterest, the number of mistakes made, absenteeism, and disengagement. Not to mention the considerable damage that clearly disturbed persons engaged in the most delicate services such as schooling or paediatrics can cause.

We also know that every person, from the most modest worker or clerk to the most senior manager, is an important element in the smooth running of the business. When a psychological problem alters the functionality of an employee, to a greater or lesser extent, the entire production structure is affected.

Every entrepreneur knows that the quality and meeting good standards of so-called 'human material' is just as, if not more important than the efficiency of machines or non-human material.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ Human capital represents at least 70 per cent of the value of companies. F. CAVALLI, 'Family: the responsibility of business', in *UCID Letter*, 2007, 1, p.55.

Many elderly company managers note, how for the same type and quality of work, they are now often forced to duplicate staff. The same happens in services, for example in public education, where far more teachers are needed than in the past to educate the same number of pupils.

The damage caused by one person's mistake can sometimes be quantified in millions of euros of increased disbursements or lost earnings. Like the damage suffered by the American Church because of a few paedophile priests,¹⁶⁶ or like the serious damage that can be suffered by a car or household appliance manufacturer when, due to an error in design or execution, there is a danger to the user or the product does not meet quality standards.

In such cases legions of fierce lawyers or consumer associations are set in motion, and the least the companies involved can do is to withdraw the products, but then often, in addition to the damage to their image, they are forced to pay heavy penalties in civil court.

Just reflect on the spread of the drug phenomenon. All of us, from the largest businessman to the most modest citizen, can be affected by this serious phenomenon. Touched as parents, brothers, sisters. Touched as victims of assaults, thefts, muggings and robberies, by users of those substances. We can also suffer the consequences of the psychological alterations caused by them when driving a train, a plane, a car or a taxi is a person with altered or obnubilated reflexes. The massacres of every weekend (thirty to forty dead and thousands injured), white deaths in the workplace and other 'disasters' due to human error amply demonstrate this.

Since neurotic problems often manifest themselves with an accentuation of aggression and an altered inner balance, these two manifestations of psychological distress make relations with service users or other companies particularly difficult, with easily foreseeable consequences. Who will entrust errands to a com-

¹⁶⁶ The Diocese of Los Angeles reached an out-of-court settlement that provides \$660 million in compensation for the 508 victims of paedophile priests.

pany that presents itself with the grumpy and aggressive face of its salesperson?

It will be said that the problem is solved by careful and careful selection. But the very specialists in this field often complain about the difficulty, if not impossibility, of finding personnel who meet the minimum requirements in the field of communication and interpersonal skills.

2) Consequences of impaired educational development.

Educational development in the strict sense also requires particular and specific conditions for it to take place optimally. First of all, it requires a normally constituted family and a rich family network. In this family there should be two parents and not one, who have the richness of sexual diversity; a good psychic balance; a lot of authority, availability, serenity and patience; good skills in dialogue and communication; a rich store of true and healthy values; intense emotional skills. Moreover, it is necessary for these two parents to be able to lead their own family life and fit into the affective network with feelings of joy, harmony, understanding and mutual understanding.

When this is not the case, and therefore there is poor or impaired educational development, attitudes and behaviour that do not give due consideration to respect for others, as well as honesty, straightforwardness, honour, responsibility and fairness, are consequential.

Educational deficiencies have a considerable influence on the personal and social level. The life of each of us is made more difficult, dangerous and improbable by the constant presence, day and night, of a myriad of small or large-scale drug dealers, robbers, thieves and other miscreants, against whom we are constantly forced to adopt an attitude of alarm and defence. Moreover, the negative influence of altered, failed or incorrect education spreads throughout society, whether in politics, management or services, in the form of immature, antisocial, irresponsible or fraudulent behaviour that has considerable economic repercussions.

Alongside the classic gangsters, we are surrounded by a myriad of seemingly normal people who, lacking in sound values

and principles, commit, for the sake of money and power, a series of crimes in which we can somehow be victims. Crimes of fraud, embezzlement, vote exchange, bragging, bribery, extortion, embezzlement, tax evasion.

These and other crimes or dishonest behaviour, both when they are discovered, and especially when they are carried out for a long time without being brought to light by the inquisitorial organs of the judiciary, produce considerable economic and social damage.

The most obvious demonstration of this has been in recent years when market distortions, false accounting and fraud at the expense of unsuspecting citizens or shareholders, lost revenue from the state and squandering at all levels in both public life and private companies have, as distrust has spread, resulted in serious economic damage to individuals, families, companies, services and nations.

If a banker's word, honesty, correctness cannot be trusted, how can I entrust him with my money? How can I entrust responsibilities to a person who pockets bribes? How can I give my vote to an indicted politician? How to put the management of something important and vital for the nation in the hands of such people?

The basic values of civilised living, such as honesty, fairness and responsibility, are not moral behaviours that are of interest only to religions, they are the pillars on which every nation and every social group is founded, and therefore cannot be blithely dismantled even in the most liberal and permissive societies.

The second element that we would like to emphasise in conclusion is that it is not by increasing services and their personnel that the problems of the affective-relational world are solved. If not properly used, 'services' can even be the cause of 'disservices' for the souls of minors, families, couples, and the elderly.

Our hope then is another: it is that ignorance of the needs of the affective world will become knowledge, indifference will become attention, commitment and responsibility towards this fundamental human reality and that, ultimately, the clash will turn into an encounter and understanding between these two

fundamental worlds between which the river of fragile human life flows.

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