

## A RESPONSE TO DANIEL MAGUIRE

I was asked to respond to Daniel Maguire's paper, rather than directly to the 1977 CTSA Report *Human Sexuality*, and I shall do that.

Dr. Maguire "accepted" the Report and recommended that step to other members of the Society. He seems to have met the book with the enthusiasm that is "excitement in the service of possibility."<sup>1</sup>

Several reactions to the report are cited without scorn at the beginning of Dr. Maguire's paper—an achievement for which the report set the example with its respectful presentation of diverse positions. Another kind of quotation service might also be done: a collection of the report's most profoundly religious passages. Persons of good will could then conclude, by at least the popular hermeneutic of what "fits," that since such passages show where the authors' treasure lies, other passages may be given a reading less fear-filled.

I cannot agree that the epiphenomenon is more interesting than the book.

Dr. Maguire affirms of *Human Sexuality* that it has "changed the *status quaestionis*." I presume he means that it has shifted the publicly available terms and insights for discussion of what we wish to understand about human sexuality. How has the book done so? Partly by making clear the gap between some church teachings and a noteworthy tendency in conscientious counselling and practice. He affirms that the report is a contribution to theory and method. How so? By bringing neglected issues of method to the agenda of moralists. The issues I note his mentioning are these: combining of deontological and teleological analyses; active conservation of the best of probabilism; doing one's moral theology out of a serious ecumenism. I thank him for the weight his paper adds on the side of such ecumenism, and for the attention he gives to the "appreciative" components of moral evaluation, to the interconnection of the virtues, to insight (rather than quantification) as the achievement of probabilism, and to the need for formulation of "violence-specific principles" in considerations of social change. I should like to see the examples he would develop for "sex-specific principles."

Most space is given in Maguire's critique to the first of his six conclusions, i.e., to the dichotomy he sees the report as making between "creative and integrative" and "procreative and unitive" as terms descriptive of the "regulative purposes" of sexual behavior. (That he gives this point most attention—a pattern I follow in my response—may be a tribute to the authority of the terms "procreative and unitive.") I, however, read the report as wanting "to broaden the traditional formulation" (86), wanting to find "a more total and inclusive way of expressing the whole finality of human sexuality" (87). I understand that at times

<sup>1</sup>Cf. S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*, trans. by L. Capel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971 printing), p. 217.

Dr. Maguire, too, recognizes that the new terms are inclusive, but he wants to work on getting out of the reproductive-orientation-always problem by distinguishing species-need and individual obligation. I think that the report's intent to "broaden and include" the bearing of the older terms may get lost under that effort.

In speaking of species-need and individual obligation, Dr. Maguire gives the lovely example of a gracious meal offered to guests who are free from desperate need for food—an example which can take us in several directions. For instance: I wonder what is happening among those who choose to live—if not among the poor, at least among poster-pictures of the famished, and who fast repeatedly in their parishes or take simple meals together in their compassion for the crying need that is hunger. What happens then to the gracious meal? I am not asking whether one stops having it, with all the fun and beauty the example suggested. I am asking: with what altered consciousness might one have the meal? With what articulated awareness of ties to personal and social needs that are elemental?

My question is whether some part of what has been meant by "procreative orientation" might have to do with persons' muted (or clear) recognitions in sexual intercourse that this is how, in this universe, they themselves came to be—however incapable of or unready for children they are—and that their delight is linked in multiple ways to their own elemental "need" to exist. As still another attempt to understand "procreative purpose," mine is a more "traditional" suggestion than Maguire's, but so also is the report's insistence that "unitive and procreative" are subsumed (not separated) by "creative and integrative."

In a film called "Lies My Father Told Me," a little boy's father has made it quite clear to him that only babies nurse at the breast. It is a poignant moment for celibates, singles and the ignorant when we discover along with the child that "only babies nurse" is one of the lies his father told him.

The bearing of both my examples—the meal taken in consciousness of poverty; the film—is that our actions may be more integral than we think. Perhaps if the playing is done well enough, the ties between delighted playing and basic need are there? (Where? In the bodiness.) Our filmmakers may know. Our dreams surely do.

Perhaps our mistake has been to expect the procreative-unitive link to turn up in our articulated consciousness; hence Dr. Maguire's concern to free waking consciousness from pretence of constant advertence. But what is known by our dreaming can be adverted to or not, according to the success of various consciousness-raising efforts. What ethicists, theologizing, might be called upon to do is to articulate the advertences with a vivid appreciation of the vertical wholeness of our best symbols. And for this they would be served by Maguire's own attempt to speak of "natural liturgy," by theologies of sacrament and by the report's terms "life-serving" and "creative." I have no fear that, when he starts from what he might call "physicalness," Dr. Maguire

would minimize the integral power of symbol. He speaks of it repeatedly. No "mere" physicalness is for him thinkable, "given any chance." It is inversely, when he starts from delight or graciousness and argues from these as "free" from basic hunger or species-need or reproductive orientation, that I ask for a comparably integral formulation.<sup>2</sup>

My point thus far about Maguire's first critique has been concerned with the CTSA committee's effort to subsume the meanings of "procreative and unitive." My other point has to do with what the new terms ("creative and integrative") add, and is therefore related to the report's "definition of sexuality" (82). That definition, it seems, is of greater importance to me than to Dr. Maguire.

If what we say about human sexuality is not always to be about marriage (and "deviations" therefrom)—if we really wish to say something important about ways of being human to the "forty-one million" singles (175),<sup>3</sup> or to those whom the report speaks of as living in the Church "celibate and virginal sexuality" (185)—then attempts similar to the report's effort at inclusive definition have to be made. To Dr. Maguire, then, I suggest: without something like that "definition," books about human sexuality are talking about you and not about me.

The report is so often brutally misrepresented<sup>4</sup> that we should not miss the exact wording of passages which contextualize the definition.

Such a formulation ["procreative and unitive"] too narrowly restricts the meaning of sexuality to the context of marriage as has been the case throughout much of our tradition (87).

Sexuality is the Creator's ingenious way of calling people constantly out of themselves into relationship with others (85).

There exists, then, a sexual atmosphere whenever two human beings meet. . . . There is a call, an invitation that goes forth from bodily existence to bodily existence. It colors every transaction between the sexes, adding interest and delight, promising mystery and disclosure and delivery from loneliness (85).

The last of the above quotations is not from some torrid account of what moralists unesthetically refer to as "genital encounters." The passage refers to us doing just what we are doing here and now (meeting in trust

<sup>2</sup> Standing opposite both Dr. Maguire and the report, I wonder whether the "unitive" orientation of all sexual behavior is as clear as is presumed by those busy denying the constancy of the reproductive orientation. A Scripture scholar has suggested to me recently that part of what Genesis 2 and 3 say is that for Eve to be Adam's "helper/opponent" is what God had wanted; what Eve and Adam managed was that she be his "one." Consult Dr. A. E. Combs (Dept. of Religion, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario), author with Dr. K. Post of the paper "Comparative Reflections on Death in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad and Genesis," presented at the May 1978 Conference of the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion/SCER.

<sup>3</sup> The report's statistic is American. By "singles" I mean those who are not presumed to be endowed, by reason of duty, surgery or statistics, with the gifts of consecrated celibacy.

<sup>4</sup> An example strictly comparable in ugliness would be to take the key phrase "celibate and virginal sexuality" as intending to encourage unchastity in convents and rectories.

for discussion) *and* to those other encounters. To make sure that we have not mistaken the meaning, we can read also:

Men and women, at every moment of life and in every aspect of living, express themselves, others, and indeed the entire world in a distinctly male or female way (82).

We can also note again the references to "celibate and virginal sexuality."<sup>5</sup>

We said at the 1978 CTSA Convention that we would hear "other voices." The attempt at a fuller definition of sexuality was for me a large part of the nourishment offered by the report *Human Sexuality*, even though I am aware that it is precisely the "forty-one million" who are rendered especially vulnerable by it, subjected to an ideal of being invited out of themselves integrally in every encounter, with little help from institutions for imagining what forms their religious response might take. Dr. Maguire said that the report changed the *status quaestionis*. I think it possible that in our Roman Catholic community the question can now change.

Other elements of my response to Daniel Maguire's paper can be expressed briefly. Each relates at once to several points of his critique.

Leaving to Dr. Maguire and his first respondent, W. Everett, a discussion of social science contributions to ethical theory, I would ask Dr. Maguire if it might be appropriate to seek collaboration also from something called philosophy—even from something called cognitional theory—to help us not to make mis-steps if we are going to talk in moral matters, as Maguire does frequently in his paper, about evidence, data, insight and common sense. (Used in a context of professional reflection, Maguire's final appeal, in the H. Davis quotation, to common sense understood as "some obvious way of making up my mind" seems to sabotage what he had said earlier about the ethicist's need for method.)

In response to Maguire's concern with the report from his point of view as moral theologian, I suggest that if the context of the report be theologically broad enough—and the authors say that the context is "in the light of the life of the Lord" (95)—and if, from it, our discussions of human sexuality be rich enough, we should be able to bring gifts from and for the report, according to the preoccupations of theologians other than moralists. What seem to me the doctrinal areas with the strongest links to the report are those of Trinity (ways of having a nature),<sup>6</sup> of

<sup>5</sup>D. Maguire sees the "definition" as unhelpful to those of homosexual orientation. Without considering that orientation normative (but considering it as sexual) I see the definition as easily readable in terms of bodied self-transcendence.

A greater difficulty lies in the adoption, by the 1978 CTSA Report on Women in Society and Ministry, of a "one-nature, single-model anthropology" which sharply contradicts what seems to me a central achievement of the 1977 CTSA Report: its placing of human sexuality in a sufficiently broad context to be able to say (as cited above), "Men and women . . ." (82). Consult the 1978 Report, p. 32: "beyond the reproductive functions, persons are essentially the same." Beyond? That the examples given on pp. 33-44 are clear failures as formulations of "complementarity" need not cut short the search for a better formulation.

<sup>6</sup>I am surprised that the thoughtful authors of the 1978 CTSA Report on Women were

Incarnation and sacrament (bodiness understood freshly out of a fuller definition of sexuality) and of ecumenism (a sufficiently radical trust in the Spirit; equivalents to Maguire's explicitness on this point occur frequently in the report).

My final point has to do with questions of style which can lead us back to questions of method. It has to do obliquely with Maguire's sense that still another way in which the *status quaestionis* has been changed by the report is the tentative and probing style of its approach to the difficult questions of human sexuality. (Surely, mistaking tentative approaches and reflections for pretensions to authoritative pronouncement has evoked much of the anger against the book.) It has to do directly with the theology of discernment which is one of the reasons for Dr. Maguire's interest in probabilism.

It is easy to approach Maguire's paper and the report in the style of solemnity (or of giddiness, its twin): any talk about humanness means so much to us! If we could instead achieve irony in our discussions, we would have the service of that peculiar combination of personal and social consciousness irony demands. But that, presumably, is charism. As suitable replacement for talent in irony, I suggest dialectical method.

To begin an explanation of what I understand by dialectical method, I recall to you a fact about our first reading of *Human Sexuality*. The book reached many of us a few days before the 1977 CTSA Convention and thus our reading was fresh at the time we heard the opening address, "Theology and Praxis." In that address, you may remember, interesting proportions were suggested:

Now *Dialectic* stands to theology as pull and counter-pull stand to the spiritual life. And *Foundations* stands to theology as discernment stands to the spiritual life where it sorts out pull and counter-pull. . . .<sup>7</sup>

Is *Human Sexuality* an instance of dialectical method in theology? I have thought that it is, and I adduce as evidence the structure of the report and Maguire's understanding of it. I therefore have seen it as making these kinds of contribution to our spiritual life: heightening and articulating our consciousness of pull and counter-pull, both in our experience of human sexuality and in our experience of trying to live patiently, gratefully and creatively within a strong religious tradition; providing "a technique that objectifies subjective differences"—i.e., the plural voices of our theologies, of our authoritative traditions and of our experience—"and promotes conversion." "It meets persons."<sup>8</sup> In encounter of that type, we are not so much counsellors or teachers as we are learners. According to the proportion suggested above, we are being prepared for discernment.

not enticed by their Trinitarian imaginations to modify their "one-nature anthropology" in the direction of ways-(plural)-of-having-a-nature.

<sup>7</sup>B. Lonergan, S.J., "Theology and Praxis," *CTSA Proceedings* 32 (1977), 14. Cf. also the reference on pp. 15-16 to "the multiple differentiation of consciousness possible at the present time and often needed to master issues in theology."

<sup>8</sup>B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), p. 235; on encounter: pp. 252 and 247.

There are those who fear that "objectifying subjective differences" has nothing to do with discernment or with conversion, and that differences are rather to be suppressed in matters of religious import. They might be helped by Kierkegaard's sense that the trouble with the Sophists was not that they made everything vacillating but that after having done so they rendered it all secure again—by argumentation putting reflection back to sleep.<sup>9</sup> Or they might be helped by Maguire's reminder of how demanding a theology of discernment can be.

If we return to the beginning of Dr. Maguire's paper, to the interpretations of the report which are recalled there, or if we advert to the additional interpretations offered in his paper and in these responses, or advert to the report itself, constructed as it is of differing opinions and teachings, we find confusion threatens. I, for example, have affirmed of the book that it is a contribution to dialectic and correspondingly to our spiritual life. But is it, rather, a contribution to decline where other and better insights have become unworkable?<sup>10</sup> We need to ask, and we need to help each other by supporting the questions our lives are, thus illumining for each other pull and counter-pull.

Faced with the wash of multiple interpretations, what can we do? As E. Voegelin might suggest, quoting Aeschylus,<sup>11</sup> we can dive. We can cease talking about Maguire's paper, and about the report he is talking about, and we can begin to swim into our experience of human sexuality. If we do so, we then come immediately against two disappointments: the shallowness and the distortedness of that experience. And we repent. But we also count on something tidal, something dynam-

<sup>9</sup>Cf. S. Kierkegaard, *op. cit.*, pp. 228-30. It might also help to recall that Kierkegaard sometimes thought of irony as being like bantering, or lovers' quarrels: the incitement to love, in the sphere of intelligence; *op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>10</sup>B. Lonergan, *Method*, pp. 243-44.

In William Everett's strong paper, the charge is made that the Report *Human Sexuality* is a piece of culture-accommodation that either does not know its own face, or at least is not careful to train others to look for it. The worry Dr. Everett introduces must be allowed to do its work. But I offer these observations:

Granted that community (even world-community) responsibility ought by now to have succeeded to the "personalist ethic," still that should not happen by devaluation of personalist insights. A "personalist ethic" which is clearly interpersonal should not be equated with individualistic self-improvement. It will undoubtedly be a new experience for the committee to try imagining themselves as forgetful of institutions.

My basic question to Dr. Everett would be: suppose the "mere" cultural conditioning recognized, the Hildebrandine distancing achieved; then to what religious, communal and interpersonal values would we hope to be converted? He may not have taken the religious purpose of the authors' work to be as pervasive as I think it is. Where it is the grounding element, openness to the universe cannot stop at culture-accommodation or at humbled recognition of same. Dr. Everett's hard questions can only help.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. E. Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. IV: *The Ecumenic Age* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), pp. 252-53. Voegelin had developed the image of the diver also in "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History," *Eternità e Storia* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1970), pp. 215-34. There, variants of the diver image are presented also: "A descent into the depth will be indicated when the light of truth has dimmed and the symbols are losing their credibility. . . . The depth is fascinating as a threat and charm—as the abyss into which man falls when the truth of the depth has drained from the symbols by which he orients his life, and as the source from which a new life of the truth and a new orientation can be drawn."

ically good within us: hope, and grace, and God, and our "aesthetic appreciations," and our wit. We pull up with us from our experience an interpretation of it, and we affirm that interpretation if we can. Thanks to Rahner on charisms, or to Voegelin on balance, or to the dialectical experience the report fosters and Maguire underlines, we know it is *an* interpretation, from the perspective of which we look in the direction of other voices. Thanks to Lonergan or Voegelin, or to a long tradition on discernment, or to Dr. Maguire's Pauline quotations, or to a long life, we know also that sometimes there are pull and counter-pull, nor merely differing perspectives. But there is no substitute for diving. No exegesis of paper or book, no angry defense of religious authority, will turn out to be a replacement for reaching the level of our own experience and our own basic questions. When we surface, we will be dripping and inelegant. More like learners. I suggest that this diving is the motion modelled for us by the committee. Trying to follow it, as I understand Dr. Maguire to be saying we should, we in the CTSA are looking these days a little less like leaders and a little more like learners.

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