Of Hysterics and Hummingbirds

The world of the emotions is a world of interwovenness of the whole personality. According to Father Kentenich, the heart is the harmony between the sensitive appetite (feelings, passions, instincts) and the spiritual appetite (will)….between the “animal” and the “angel” in us. It sets the personal equilibrium (balance). The objective of the emotions is love, surrendering to the other, the generous surrender to the human or divine “you.”

For a long time, our emotional life did not receive the place which belonged to it. It was believed that what was decisive was only the will and the intellect. It is true that these, according to the objective order, are superior and are called to enlighten and definitely rule our actions, but it is a great error to believe that they can do it without the integration of the emotional life. The fruits of that error have been and are the rationalist person and the self-willed person who deny or sacrifice the emotions.

Without the harmony of the heart and the emotions, the will can do very little. Neither is the intellect able to “objectively” know the truth. We can conclude that human conduct is largely defined and determined by the area of the emotions, by the heart.

Now, what does emotional immaturity consist of? Father Kentenich often gives various answers to this question. He mentions hysteria and the lack of firm attachments in addition to infantilism. Let us clarify somewhat two of these forms.

1. Hysteria. It is a level of immaturity, far more serious, more delicate. The hysterical person gravitates around the “I” which is possessed by the “I.” The hysterical person is so submerged in the search for self that it loses rationality. The person cannot be understood, is not crazy, but is a rare person, a neurotic.

There is something very typical of the hysterical person, and that is that it seeks attention, it always wants to be at the center by any means. To achieve this, it often invents “illnesses.” Our “hysterics” are generally not serious. There may be hysterical persons among us who are hysterical about cleanliness… or about studying… or about order… or about punctuality… or about gaining weight… or about not growing old.

2. Lack of firm attachments. This is another chapter of emotional immaturity. It is hard for the person of today to love, hard to attach himself / herself to others in a healthy way. So then, we have two extremes.

2.1 Unstable love. A person who does not have deep attachments is like a butterfly in his/her relationships: incapable of taking a stance….incapable of penetrating….incapable of establishing or becoming fixed (Hummingbird)… incapable of being faithful. This person tries a little bit of everything and allows itself to be guided by sensations; therefore, it is unstable in its emotions.

Fidelity is what is hard for the person of today…..committing forever…..surrendering for life. Nevertheless, the great human values are for life: love, family, marriage, religion, priesthood, sanctity. Especially love, be it between a man and a woman or between the soul and its God….it is strong like death and until death. If it is not this way, it is not love. There are people who change it like changing one’s dress: throws away the used one and buys a new one. True love is everlasting and strong.

2.2 The other extreme is possessive love. It is like a climbing vine which does not let the “you” grow. It is not an attachment for freedom, for fullness. Instead it is an egotistical attachment, a love which suffocates. It can be a mother or a father or a possessive friend. It seems that these persons only want to receive, they have a terrible hunger for receiving. It is like a bottomless barrel. It is horrible for the children of possessive parents: they suffer with that problem throughout their entire lives. In summary, emotional immaturity is placing the egotistical “I” on the first level and “you” on the second level. That all may adore “me” and that I may dominate the others!

Questions for reflection
1. Where is my emotional immaturity?
2. Am I a possessive person?
3. Would I be able to name one of my “hysterias?”

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