

SEX AND THE SINGLE NUMINOUS:

THE SEX PROBLEM OF TYPE #5 RELIGIONS ----- ELLIOTT #1955

The problem just doesn't exist for these types of religion:

Type #1--religions (e.g., animism) of the nonarithmetical, undefined (except as mysterious-pervasive power), anonymous numen (or kami or mana or wakan). (I use Otto's word "numinous" to embrace more than do the terms "divine" and "supernatural"--and I translate his Latin phrase as "the mystery that so frightens us that we want to flee [*mysterium TREMENDUM*], yet so fascinates us that we can't [*m. FASCINANS*]--"terrible," awe-inspiring, holy, sacred. Interesting etymology: (Eng.) "nod" yes, same root as (Lat.) "nu"-o (the verb of the noun "numen") = expressing one's will by "nodding" yes; by extrapolating onto the Beyond, the More Than, the Will under whose power "all things" exist (and, consequently, are in danger and hope). As the experience such religion expresses is common to humankind, the religion itself is in the archetypal unconscious and often surfaces (as, e.g., in the Marxist philosophy of history). Sex everywhere/always is a people problem, but it's no ontological-numinous problem for type #1 religions.

Type #2--religions (e.g., in the ancient Near East) in which the numinous is arithmetical and its number is 2, corresponding to the two human sexes: god/goddess in cosmic marriage. In both Near & Far East, this sexuality appeared also as heaven/earth, yang/yin; and recently it has reappeared in a man of the East who professes a religion of the West: Sun Moon and his wife are the messianic couple, supplanting Jesus as single-sex messiah. In late Jewish Wisdom, it appears playfully (but not antimonotheistically) as YHWH and his consort Hokma (the Heb. wd. for "wisdom" being feminine). (And I went through a period when I began public prayers "Our Father-Mother God"--as does Christian Science! But, concluding this was too expensive in terms of alienation from and corrupting of the Faith's tradition, I return to what Jesus taught us to say, viz., "Our Father.") Sex is dual, and may be said to vote for cosmic dualism of one sort or another (and with or without moral denotation). Again, sex is no theological problem.

Type #3--religions whose numinous is plural instead of single, dual, or nonarithmetical (e.g., Hinduism). Sex is all over the place, earth and heaven--and, again, no theological problem (except in rare instances of philosophical monotheism within polytheistic religions).

Type #4--religions in which the numinous is statedly impersonal (e.g., Buddhism and some recent Western philosophical theologians). No personality, no sex--so no sex problem.

But the problem appears with religions of type #5, "sex and the single numinous":

#5a--God is personal, a person, and male (e.g., Mormonism).

#5b--The Great Goddess is personal, a person, and female (e.g., the recently reappeared Original Matriarchy with its ancient and modern attendant myths).

#5c--God is personal but asexual. Some are now playing around with this notion, as did the Cappadocian Fathers. It lacks clarity (since it asks us to imagine a nonsexual person) and power (since such an image of God is gutless).

#5d--God is personal and androgynous. Currently, a very popular notion among the advantaged of the First World, where sexual partnership is held up as the intersexual ideal. Some are trying to convert G #5f into G #5d.

#5e--God is personal, dominant feminine - subdominant masculine. This appears in the writings of many in the current "feminist theology" movement.

#5f--God is personal, dominant masculine - subdominant feminine. This is the position of Judaism and Christianity, and best represents the God of the Bible, who accordingly is addressed as "He" and illumined more through masculine than through feminine metaphors.

The problem disappears, however, with religions of type #6, viz., ersatz religions created in the heads of certain global thinkers (the first in America being Jn. Dewey's A COMMON FAITH, 1930). As media-promoted, it just may become the chief competitor of Biblical religion, which is type #5f, my religion.