

Personhood, Sexuality and Reproduction

Post-congress document

On October 21st and 22nd 2010, was held in Rome at the National Council for Research (CNR) the Congress on the theme “Personhood, Sexuality and Reproduction”.

The aim of the Congress was to reflect upon questions of vital importance since these topics are essential to the wellbeing and development of society. Physicians, jurists, scientists, anthropologists, philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, economists, gathered to confront their views and ideas trying to shed some light in a particularly delicate and controversial sector of knowledge and human behaviour.

Human sexuality is an essential aspect of every person; moreover, it is the source of life and the basis upon which generations succeed each other. Sexual polarity, male and female, is rooted in biology. In biology the different roles between the two sexes are paramount, since the process of reproduction needs the encounter of the masculine and feminine gametes, irrespective of whether pregnancy is achieved naturally or through assisted reproduction technology.

Recently the expressions “gender identity” and “sexual orientation” have come into use. The theory of gender identity is opposed to biology and implies that masculine and feminine distinctions are a social construction, therefore additional genders can be created. The concept of sexual orientation, on the other hand, identifies these additional genders as natural variations upon sexual behaviour and includes gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, and other categories.

The use of the expressions “gender identity” and “sexual orientation” therefore is an attempt to relegate biological diversity based on the two sexes, and its essentiality in the reproductive process, to a much less important role.

Even though such “gender” terminology has entered both common and scientific language, it has no biological basis, since nature’s observation shows, unequivocally, the existence of males and females (*i.e.* individuals either bearing XX, or XY set of chromosomes). All existing variations, whether genetic, phenotypic or psychological, although important at a human level, cannot dismantle the biological construct based upon the biological diversity of sexes.

For these reasons, sexual orientation should be seen within the context of an individual’s free behavioural expression although the costs, at personal and social level, of these variant lifestyles should not be underestimated, as documented by the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, (USA)

<http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/newsroom/msmpressrelease.html>.

Mass media tend to create the impression that every expression of sexual behaviour must be granted equal value; they mainstream the gender perspective, without any consideration for the health risks, at personal and collective level, deriving from the promotion of disorderly lifestyles.

From a juridical point of view, the dignity of each human person and the equality of rights and protections accorded to everyone must be upheld always and in any situation. Nonetheless, the equality principle cannot have as a general consequence a uniform juridical discipline when biological differences represent the pre-conditions for a legal statute (as in the case of marriage). Moreover the specific recognition of the expression of variant sexual behaviors, as seen in the resolution 1728 (2010) of the Council of Europe of April 29th, risks conflating different categories of subjects under the guise of promoting diversity, with the result being unequal treatment for other categories of individuals.

<http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta10/ERES1728.htm>

The conclusions reached during this Conference aim at inducing policy makers and institutions to reflect upon their responsibility for an orderly progress in this vital area. When creating rules and regulations, they must be careful to make sure that such regulations are rooted in scientific evidence, especially in those sectors where research is still ongoing and issues are unsettled. If not, there is a danger of adopting policies and regulations that are simply an expression of so-called politically-correct attitudes; this may end up promoting behaviours that are risky for the health of the individual, and, whenever institutionalized, damaging to society at large.