

GENDER AND THE PROCESS OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE THOUGHT OF PAUL EVDOKIMOV

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[In the writings of Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov (1901–1970), Western theology can find new resources regarding the relationship between gender and moral development. The author presents Evdokimov’s unique theological anthropology in the context of both the complicated question of gender, as well as the effects that gender has on the way women and men act. While the goal of the Christian life for both is the transformation of the individual through asceticism, the role each plays in the salvation of the world differs markedly.]

CONTEMPORARY WESTERN theological thought on the categories of both gender and moral development still stands to benefit from some of the insights of Orthodox theologians. This can be seen in a consideration of the thought of the Russian Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov. Evdokimov’s theology reveals a thorough account of moral development that incorporates both the categories of gender and a unique theological anthropology. As this article is written from a Catholic perspective, the denominational difference will help situate the other differences in emphases found in Evdokimov’s thought. His thought is, as I hope to demonstrate, notably unsystematic. Evdokimov himself stated: “The Russians are not gifted to build great systems, because they would feel pinched in them.”¹ In other words, the challenge is to put some order in an exposition of his writing, but that same apparent chaos (at least to those familiar with Latin theology) expresses a profound and joyous freedom of ideas. These ideas often contain elements that appear too speculative for Western thought, but it is the courage of Orthodox theologians such as Evdokimov to try to comprehend

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¹ Paul Evdokimov, *Le Christ dans la pensée russe* (Paris: Cerf, 1970) 60, quoted in Peter C. Phan, *Culture and Eschatology: The Iconographical Vision of Paul Evdokimov* (New York: Peter Lang, 1985) 40.

in part the mystery of the triune God that makes these ideas so intriguing for the reader.

My first two sections contextualize the content of Evdokimov's thought in the currents of modern psychology, philosophy, and theology. The third and longest section demonstrates the role of man and woman, masculinity and femininity, father and mother, in the "theoanthropology" of Evdokimov. This will be followed by a presentation of his thoughts on asceticism, which most clearly articulate his account of spirituality. It will then be possible to consider how these ideas impinge upon the notions of gender and moral development.

EVDOKIMOV AND HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE ACADEMIC WORLD

The Russian Paul Evdokimov was born on August 2, 1901 in Saint Petersburg. Although he began his theological studies in Kiev, it was not until his move to Paris in 1923 that his education reached its fulfillment. Over the next 35 years, he acquired doctorates in both philosophy and theology, studying under both Sergius Bulgakov and Nicholas Berdiaev. During the Second World War, his own experience among the displaced of the Russian Revolution led him to run a boarding house for Jewish refugees while aiding the French Resistance. This ministry of charity prevented Evdokimov from pursuing a full-time academic career, but after the war in 1953, he was appointed to the faculty of the Institut Saint Serge. In the 1960s, he was invited to teach at the Institut Catholique of Paris and to work with the World Council of Churches, while also publishing numerous books and articles with a keen analysis of philosophy and theology in the West. He was even an official Orthodox observer at the Second Vatican Council. He died on September 6, 1970, at the age of 69.

Evdokimov came into contact with many different currents of thought during his life, and his relationship to those currents is worth investigating. In fact, Evdokimov challenged many of the ideas he encountered in the West.² Understanding these challenges will aid in appreciating his own ideas.

The structure of Evdokimov's thought is loose, which makes it difficult to organize.³ However, it is not disjointed or scattered. Instead, it holds together through the consistent repetition of important ideas and themes. A few methodological guidelines for interpreting Evdokimov are in order. The first is somewhat paradoxical: one should not seek to hyperorganize his thoughts since, as Peter Phan has written: "[A]ccording to him, while

² Evdokimov did most of his work while living in France.

³ In fact, Evdokimov's thought is best understood as a series of sketches rather than as comprised by a universal method. See Phan, *Culture and Eschatology* 289.

the West universally manifests the need to define, the East not only has no need to define, but also needs not to define."⁴ To overdefine would be to "impoverish the mystery of faith."⁵

Among the terms Phan uses to describe Evdokimov's method are "liturgical," "iconographical," and "eschatological." The most useful description, however, is the analogy of his thought being organized in the form of a spiral composed by a dotted line.⁶ The spiral relates to the constant return to previous ideas, spiraling upward as one progresses in understanding. The dotted line refers to the inconsistent process of uncovering the mystery: moments of epistemological darkness are punctuated by moments of sudden lucidity.

In addition to his (lack of) formal method, Evdokimov also wrote in an academic climate in which many ideas now taken for granted were still being developed.⁷ Ideas that subsequently became the standard as it were, or at least became more commonplace as academic "currents of thought," such as the role of gender in philosophy and the greater influence of the discipline of psychology, were still novel during the period in which Evdokimov taught. Thus, it is worthwhile to consider some of the comments he made regarding philosophy, theology, and psychology, in order to understand better how his own thought agrees with or contrasts with it.

In a text published posthumously in 1984 (and then later translated), Evdokimov makes reference to existentialist currents that would eventually lead to the philosophical approach called deconstructionism.⁸ He reacts negatively to the absurd notion of the death of all normative values. The inevitable result of this death would end with deconstructionism itself being deconstructed. His insight is particularly interesting coming before 1970, as it is now echoed today by those launching criticisms against this school of thought.⁹

The critique of this specific strand of thought thus impinges upon contemporary feminist philosophy. Lest one too readily enlist Evdokimov as sympathetic with some form of "difference feminism," however, one should

⁴ Ibid. 41.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ François de Seynes-Larenque, "Témoignages particuliers," *Contacts* 73-74, XXIII (1971) 254-56, at 255.

⁷ Evdokimov died in 1970.

⁸ Paul Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation of the World: Christian Anthropology on the Charisms of Women*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel (Crestwood, N.Y.: St Vladimir's Seminary, 1994) 13.

⁹ Specifically in the realm of feminist thought, one can see such arguments in Lisa Sowle Cahill's cautionary statements in *Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University, 1996) 30 and a summary of some other authors in Elaine L. Graham, *Making the Difference: Gender, Personhood, and Theology* (New York: Mowbray, 1995) 187.

take note of his engagement with the thought of Simone de Beauvoir.¹⁰ He takes exception to the notion of examining woman from entirely within her own context. This approach, he argues, creates a false artificiality for the investigation.¹¹ Because of the structuring of society around man, de Beauvoir perceives woman most clearly as “not man.” Evdokimov rails against this idea as a rejection of the inherent mystery present in woman from the beginning of creation.¹² Progressing outward from de Beauvoir alone, Evdokimov takes exception entirely to the notion of egalitarian feminism; the quest to achieve fully balanced equality between men and women. The result of this, he says, is masculinized woman, rather than culture paying proper respect to that which is mysteriously male and, especially, female.

Evdokimov’s disdain for existentialist thought also comes through in his comments on the idea of a philosophy, rather than a theology, of history. When God and the act of Creation are removed from the account of history, all the attention ends up subsequently on the possible end of history. Humanity no longer considers its source, but instead focuses on its own progress. “It is a matter of man as creator of his own destiny.” Furthermore, instead of moving toward an ultimate goal in history, there is a “naïve finalism that runs the risk of short-circuiting itself.”¹³ Once history reaches its man-ordained conclusion, what then? Instead, Evdokimov refocuses attention back on a theology of history, with the focus not only on the end “here below,” but also on the “beyond.” Along these same lines, Evdokimov criticizes the Enlightenment from a spiritual perspective. He notes: “the male suddenly became aware of his own value. . . . The power of man’s reason gained the upper hand over the mysterious.”¹⁴ Previously in history, Evdokimov claims that the birth of the Church signaled the end of the influence of demons and spirits over humanity for those who accepted it;¹⁵ now, with the Enlightenment, technology has exorcised the divine. The result was the reduction of humanity to rationality, the sole identification of humanity with its works, and the complete masculinization of society. Though humanity as a whole suffered in this arrangement, women fared worse for having their inherent mystery stripped from them.¹⁶

One might erroneously imagine that these comments about philosophy mean that theology is spared any judgment. In fact, Evdokimov the dis-

¹⁰ De Beauvoir defies easy classification. She has also been claimed by “gender feminists” against the idea of essentialism. See, for instance, Graham, *ibid.*

¹¹ Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 21.

¹² *Ibid.* 22.

¹³ *Ibid.* 119.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 165.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 166.

placed Russian has much to criticize in the methods of Western theology.¹⁷ In particular, he rails against the cold sterility of theology as an academic enterprise. He writes: "Today, as a substitute for the 'aeonic thought' of the Fathers and the flame of their vision, one all too often sees the work of scribes who delve painstakingly into texts, methodically pick them apart and produce many articles for dictionaries of theology, but no longer *do* theology."¹⁸ Evdokimov also sees the necessary link between spirituality and theology. The Scriptures are a prominent element in Christian spirituality; in particular, Evdokimov stresses that the way in which one encounters biblical texts must express the awe appropriate for the actual meeting of Christ in those texts. In contrast to modern forms of exegesis, he posits: "Scripture must be interpreted through Scripture, which means that neither exegesis alone nor any other theological discipline alone can provide a satisfactory solution."¹⁹

Theology is not the only aspect of the Western Church challenged by Evdokimov. He is also troubled about the loss of the Church's relevance in the modern world.²⁰ Rather than taking the easier route of blaming an increasingly secularized society for this result, he chastises the Church for its loss of focus on the important things in its quest for greater social acceptance. He even suggests that atheism would be preferable to the present state of the Church, sluggish in apathy and lack of conviction, for at least it would then generate a reaction from society.²¹

The lynchpin of this present crisis is the loss of focus on eschatology. Eschatology is the totally unique contribution of the Church to the world. Without this connection, the Church has only two options: either lose itself in the world or cut itself off from the world. The middle ground of a Church thoroughly rooted in the world while still preaching a fulfillment that is yet to come is strongly denounced by Evdokimov. He refers to the Church, the Eucharist, theology, and Christians themselves in strong terms: a "vast insurance company for eternal life with a minimum of risks"; "the pill of

¹⁷ The challenges and shortcomings of Evdokimov's thought regarding the Church are also contained in Michael Plekon, "Paul Evdokimov, a Theologian Within and Beyond the Church and the World," *Modern Theology* 12 (January, 1996) 85-107.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 14. Emphasis in original.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 14-15.

²⁰ Rowan Williams offers a strong counterpoint to Evdokimov in terms of art's role in culture. Though art is only one small aspect of "culture" as a whole, Evdokimov found little value in most secular art and attributed high value to iconography. Williams asserts that this "Christian cultural imperialism" is a mistake. See "Christian Art and Cultural Pluralism: Reflections on 'L'Art de l'Îcône,'" *Eastern Churches Review* 8, no. 1 (1976) 38-44.

²¹ Paul Evdokimov, "Message aux Eglises," *Dieu vivant* 15 (1950) 31-42, at 32.

eternity”; “purely cerebral speculations”; “existential heretics.”²² This strong language conveys the passion of Evdokimov’s position.

The challenge he proposes to the Church is to re-establish a point of contact between the Church and the world in which the world may come to realize that the Church exists to offer something which no other entity is capable of giving: salvation. All aspects of human society must be transformed by the Church’s message so that their true transcendent meaning can be realized and the kingdom of God can truly be established.²³ Such is the forceful nature of Evdokimov’s critique.

At this point, one brief observation about psychology must also be mentioned. Evdokimov finds value in the work of Carl Jung, especially in the concepts of *animus* and *anima* to describe the masculine and feminine aspects of the human soul.²⁴ In what follows later in the section on anthropology, I explore this connection.

Up to now, I have demonstrated some of the characteristics of Evdokimov’s thought in relation to the academic trends of his time. He had firm opinions about the value of modernity and the prospects for Christianity in this environment. I have also demonstrated some sense of his appreciation for the transcendent and the eschatological, as well as his reliance on the tradition of the early Church. Both his engagement with and criticism of modern philosophy and psychology demonstrate the breadth of his scholarly work. In what follows I present some of the most central aspects of his thought.

THE UNDERSTANDING OF “HEART” IN EVDOKIMOV’S THOUGHT

One of the scriptural terms to which Evdokimov appeals in describing the human being is the “heart.” Understanding Evdokimov’s use of this term is necessary for understanding his the anthropology. It is a mistake to assume that the scriptural meaning of this term is the same as the present psychological meaning of it: the emotional center of the human person, where all one’s deepest feelings reside. Evdokimov would agree that the heart does represent the center of the human person, though he does not subscribe to the meaning offered by the contemporary use of the word.²⁵ Instead, he uses the technical meaning of the term found in Scripture. Instead of being the seat of one’s emotions, the heart (*leb* in Hebrew, *kardia* in Greek) is where the deepest realizations of the individual’s mind

²² Phan, *Culture and Eschatology* 78. The phrases of Evdokimov are from “Message aux Eglises” 32–33.

²³ Evdokimov, “Message aux Eglises” 39–40, quoted in Phan, *ibid.* 79.

²⁴ In regard to Jung, see Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 81.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 42.

are situated. "Man's relationship to the content of his heart, the place of indwelling, constitutes his moral awareness, where the Word speaks."²⁶ It is also the place where the true self, the "I," dwells. "The heart's inmost depths are inaccessible. I do indeed have self-awareness: it belongs to me, but it can neither reach nor understand the 'I.'"²⁷ This is a different and deeper notion of the heart than the one found in modern psychology.

Though the terminology differs in many places, it is apparent that Evdokimov finds value in the very discipline of psychology, even though he questioned its use of certain terms like 'heart.' His criticism, however, goes beyond the merely linguistic. Despite the value he found in some aspects of psychology, it too was also subjected to the scrutiny of his critique of the modern world. He found dangers in the idea of modern psychology's attempt to divorce itself from the specifically religious or spiritual. The results are a diminution of the distinctly human.

Without God man lives in profound confusion, and is totally ignorant of the laws governing his inner "economy." Left to himself, he sinks into the neurotic; in moments of loneliness, no social arrangement can either protect him or solve the deep conflicts that have accumulated in the depth of his soul. It is not surprising that Freud saw in mental illness a "stratagem," an escape from inner conflicts that had become unlivable.²⁸

The human person not only loses his or her sense of self in times of difficulty, but any account of morality apart from sin and judgment results in further confusion.²⁹ The solution is not the elimination of psychology as a viable discipline for the human psyche, but rather for psychology, like all other aspects of the distinctly human, to embrace the transcendent character of the human person. The notion of "heart" leads directly to a more detailed presentation of Evdokimov's theological anthropology.

EVDOKIMOV ON (THEO)ANTHROPOLOGY AND GENDER

In order to present the fundamental aspects of Evdokimov's anthropology, I now consider, in even greater depth, one of the most important

²⁶ Ibid. Evdokimov here provides ample references to Scripture to demonstrate the biblical meaning of the term in a number of different contexts: Luke 24:25, John 1:8, Mark 5:9, Psalm 52:1, Colossians 3:22, and Psalm 86:11.

²⁷ Ibid. This way of describing the psyche bears similarities to the transcendental psychology of Martin Buber. See especially his *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York, Scribner, 1970).

²⁸ Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 79.

²⁹ This is evident in some of the well known psychological texts that appeared in the 1970s and 1980s. See, for example, Karl A. Menninger, *Whatever Became of Sin?* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1973); M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie: The Hope for Healing Human Evil* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983). For instance, Peck's widely read book offered the common sense observation that perhaps some people actually did evil things. Peck concludes by saying that human sinfulness could be treated through psychology.

aspects of this anthropology: his unique understanding of man and woman and masculinity and femininity.³⁰ It is not an overstatement to say that Evdokimov has presented a thoroughly innovative account of woman's place in salvation history (at least from a Western point of view), though he would likely say that he is only presenting a strand of thought that has been strongly represented in the Eastern Christian tradition from the very beginning.

Evdokimov was convinced that there are two ways of viewing the human person from a theological point of view: through the *imago Dei*, and through analogy with the Trinity. One needs to begin here to understand what Evdokimov has to say about man and woman.

Image of God

The notion of the image of God situates the human relationship with God. In this way, the Eastern understanding of the concept differs from that of the West. Rather than the need for the Incarnation being based upon the Fall, as is the case in much of Western theological thought, the Eastern understanding of the Incarnation instead makes sense in light of humanity's original creation in the *imago Dei*. In other words, the meaning of the Incarnation is not specifically oriented toward the reconciliation of the human race, but rather to serve as an example of what humanity should be.³¹ Furthermore, the idea of the image also has psychological meaning.

From the human standpoint, the image is not limited to its function as a single link between the model and its reproduction, but it is offered simultaneously as something that prepares man for the coming of the model in its complete manifestation (*pleroma*). . . . The image calls up that for which it exists and toward which it aspires; in a certain sense, it attracts the reality it represents.³²

The image of God thus represents the full potential for growth in holiness and maturity for each human person. The engagement of the human person with the mystery of the triune God should result in greater conformity to the image, which was made known to humanity specifically in Christ.

This transformation takes place through two specific means: participation in the sacraments and ascetical purification.³³ Participation in the

³⁰ Here I am using the terms "man" and "woman" as biological realities, and "masculinity" and "femininity" as those traits or qualities, psychological, emotional, and spiritual that are typically ascribed to man and woman respectively, but not exclusively.

³¹ Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 37–38.

³² *Ibid.* 57.

³³ Paul Evdokimov, *L'Orthodoxie* (Neuchâtel-Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1959) 22–23.

sacraments is also a participation in the life of the Trinity, to be considered momentarily, while asceticism will be considered at some length below.³⁴

From an Orthodox point of view, the transformation that is effected in the human person is not solely moral, though that is of principal concern here. Understanding this transformation requires a return to the event of the Fall. The nature possessed by human beings after the Fall is not, in fact, the fullness of human nature. Instead, the spiritual development of the human person is directed toward becoming what one “should be” by nature.³⁵ This occurs through the Christification of the individual. The process of Christification begins (and ultimately ends) with the divine initiative, but also involves the effort on the part of the individual in response to this call to strive for greater conformity to the image of God.³⁶ Thus, any account of moral development will certainly involve this process. The important result, however, is that the individual has not simply developed a sense of moral maturity, but rather has become a whole new creature. This fact demonstrates how much further the thought of Evdokimov goes in terms of “moral development” in comparison to contemporary developmental psychology. The greater understanding of transformation found in this approach, when compared to any other theory of psychological or spiritual maturation using levels or categories of development, should not be passed over too quickly.³⁷ If one is speaking about moral development in terms of Evdokimov’s thought, one is speaking about nothing less than ontological transformation.

The Trinitarian Analogy

While the theological concept of the *imago Dei* applies more to the generic notion of moral and spiritual (and ontological) development of all

³⁴ Participation in the sacraments especially means participation in the Eucharist. Olivier Clément outlines the characteristics of a eucharistic spirituality in “Eucharist in the Thought of Paul Evdokimov,” *Eastern Churches Review* 7, no. 2 (1975) 122–24.

³⁵ Phan, *Culture and Eschatology* 173.

³⁶ Evdokimov, *L’Orthodoxie* 107–8.

³⁷ Here I am referring principally to the stages of development put forth by Lawrence Kohlberg, with his arguably excessive emphasis on rationality, but also to the response to Kohlberg by Carol Gilligan, embodied in her “ethic of care.” The ethic of care avoids Kohlberg’s rationalism, but still does not go so far as to suggest a whole transformation of the person occurs in the process of moral maturity. Evdokimov’s approach supercedes both of these and strives for a higher goal. For more on this, one could consult Lawrence Kohlberg, *Philosophy of Moral Development* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981) and Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1982).

people, the concept of the Trinity in Evdokimov appeals to the specificity of male and female persons. Though this point is a fairly simple one, it sets up a necessary relationship between man and woman for comprehending Evdokimov's thought on gender.

Christ stands as the Archetype of all humanity and, as such, in his fullness, exists beyond the categories of male and female. The triune God does, however, encompass these categories. Evdokimov, basing himself on the thought of Gregory of Nyssa, explains.

The Father (*monarchos*, sole ruler) reveals Himself as Source and Goal of the trinitarian unity. This is why He is also the third Person of every love. In accordance with the distinction of persons (the hypostatic distinction), there is an ontic affinity between the masculine and the Word, as there is an ontic affinity between the feminine and the Holy Spirit.³⁸

Thus, the Father exists in relationship with both the Word and Spirit, with both the male and female in every relationship, while the Word and Spirit individually signify the masculine and the feminine types in divinity. Proceeding from the opposite direction, male and female are thus a type of the Son and Spirit, originating in the love of the Father. This analogy is the basis for most of what Evdokimov has to subsequently say about masculinity and femininity.³⁹ Evdokimov goes even further in his description of the intradivine life by stating that the Word and Spirit are not in fact equal processions from the Father (as would be commonly understood in Orthodox thought), but that the Spirit, as a maternal principle, is "the co-principle of the generation of the Son."⁴⁰ As the Father assumes the paternal role, the Spirit thus assumes the maternal role.⁴¹

³⁸ Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 27.

³⁹ This analogy fails on one level in the West on account of the *Filioque* controversy. Evdokimov's account here relies on two processions from the Father, not one. If, as in the West, the Spirit spirates from the Father and Son as their mutual love, then woman would exist in a sort of conditional relationship with man. The spiration of the Spirit would analogically suggest that woman would be the result of the love expressed between man and the Father. Apart from this man-Father relationship, woman would cease to exist. Even on the level of analogy, this is problematic. As the basis for a theological anthropology, it does not seem to coincide with Evdokimov's exaltation of the role of women in salvation, which I consider in greater depth in what follows. Evdokimov offers the idea that the West in defending the *Filioque* has ignored scriptural and liturgical evidence, though this does not solve the anthropological difficulty. See *L'Esprit Saint dans la tradition orthodoxe* (Paris: Cerf, 1969) 49–78, esp. 68.

⁴⁰ This idea is developed at greater length in Evdokimov, *L'Esprit Saint*.

⁴¹ Further intriguing evidence of this can be seen in an early text, in which Evdokimov notes that the Son and Spirit presided in this gendered capacity at the wedding at Cana. See Paul Evdokimov, "Le sacerdoce conjugal" in *Le Mariage* (Paris: Maison Mame, 1966) 91.

Even putting aside its highly speculative nature, there is a certain unevenness in this account.⁴² Despite frequent references to how the female is archetypically related to the Spirit, there are no explicit references as to why the Logos is the archetype of the male beyond the existence of the Logos as Son.⁴³ A plausible reason for this omission is that Evdokimov's thesis develops the special role of the feminine, and thus particular attention on the masculine is either unnecessary or readily apparent by way of inverse comparison to the feminine. In addition to this omission, the relationship between male and female seems skewed. The Father exists as the third party in all relationships, but the trinitarian archetype of the male-female relationship would seem to be mother and son, not husband and wife. This is problematic for two reasons. First, if this is the case, then the human paradigmatic relationship of Son and Spirit is lacking a counterpart in a father-daughter relationship. A counterpart is not necessary, nor is there a ready trinitarian theological analogue for it elsewhere, but without it, the presence of a mother-son analogue seems unbalanced. The second problem lies in the theological link made between the intratrinitarian relationship and human marriage in Christian thought. With the co-generation of the Son by the Spirit, there is no longer a symbol for human love in the life of the Trinity. Whether or not this conflict can be resolved will be seen when I consider Evdokimov's thoughts regarding marriage in the next section.

Peter Phan summarizes the methodological guidelines used by Evdokimov to study the concepts of masculinity and femininity beyond what one can deduce from the trinitarian analogy. One needs to begin with the original creation of humanity, before it was separated into male and female, before the Fall.⁴⁴ From this point, one can consider specifically man and woman, again before the Fall disrupted their relationship.⁴⁵ Combined with this, the final reparation of this disruption in the fulfillment of history provides the final goal to be achieved. Phan then concludes: "Third, we should observe the primacy of the spirit over the psychological and physiological components of man."⁴⁶ It is the spiritual that ultimately determines the psychological and physical components of the human person. This adds a significant component to the basic psychological insight that

⁴² It is the language here that seems controversial. There is even a Scriptural basis for the contrary idea of the Spirit's paternal role in the Spirit's "overshadowing" of the Virgin in the conception of Jesus (Luke 1:35).

⁴³ Peter C. Phan, "Gender Roles in the History of Salvation: Man and Woman in the Thought of Paul Evdokimov," *Heythrop Journal* 31 (1990) 53–66, at 57.

⁴⁴ Paul Evdokimov, *La Femme et le salut du monde* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1983) 14.

⁴⁵ Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 24.

⁴⁶ Phan, *Culture and Eschatology* 198. Also see Evdokimov, *La Femme* 14.

one's mental state has an effect on one's physical state of being. From this perspective, it is not one's state of mind, but rather one's state of spirit, that has an effect on the individual's physical state.

Methodological Framework

The methodological framework outlined here becomes more interesting with the recognition of the realm of the spiritual component of the human as essentially feminine. The masculine, while possessing a certain value of its own, is simply not spiritual in the way that femininity is.⁴⁷ Furthermore, when the masculine attempts to dominate over the spiritual, the result is empty. Atheism is essentially masculine. Evdokimov contrasts the two further as follows:

But the ultimate source of morality lies precisely in the maternal principle: purity, self-sacrifice, the protection of the weak. Kant, in his ethical doctrine, severed the link with the transcendent, and relegated God to the rank of a postulate; he treated love logically as a "sensual, pathological affection," because love *is* irrational, and does not derive from the will. Thus, Kant proved to be very "manly." There are no true Kantian women.⁴⁸

Evdokimov identifies those characteristics that most readily correspond to Christian morality with the feminine and (more controversially) with the irrational. It may be the masculine that has ruled society, but it is the feminine that will ultimately save society. The potential implications of this proposition should be noted. This means that patriarchal society must eventually give over control to the feminine.⁴⁹ This is not so a matriarchy can rule in its stead, but rather a new vision of human society can come to the fore in which concern for the oppressed and submission to the divine are dominant concerns.⁵⁰ From a sociopolitical standpoint, it is difficult to imagine what form this society would take, though its appeal for most people is readily apparent.⁵¹

⁴⁷ The details of this distinction are considered at great length in Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 151–63.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 153. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁹ This corresponds to the ideas of the static and dynamic masculine and feminine outlined in Patrick M. Arnold, *Wildmen, Warriors, and Kings: Masculine Spirituality and the Bible* (New York: Crossroad, 1992) 46–48.

⁵⁰ Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 259, 267–68.

⁵¹ Modern "neo-pagans" seem to have a good idea of what such a society would look like, though one can certainly question whether or not it would accurately display a concern for the oppressed in general, or if it would just disrupt the present patriarchal power structure and replace it with a matriarchal one. See a detailed consideration and critique of this possible structure, in Philip G. Davis, *Goddess Unmasked: The Rise of Neopagan Feminist Spirituality* (Dallas, Texas: Spence, 1998).

In other parts of his exposition about the differences between the masculine and feminine, Evdokimov adopts Jungian ideas with little modification and subsequently adds to them a saying from the gnostic *Gospel to the Egyptians* and obscure speculative ideas drawn from the mysticism of Jacob Böhme, and the notion of the demonic succubi.⁵² The reason for this is to display the etiology of the present subjugation of femininity to the masculine. This subjugation is a result of shame. The particular gnostic saying he uses refers to the coming of the Kingdom “when you destroy the vestment of shame, when the two become one, and the male with the female neither male nor female.”⁵³ This difficult statement about the “vestment” refers to the shame that resulted in the Fall.⁵⁴ Prior to the Fall, man and woman existed in harmonious relationships, which were subsequently disrupted with the knowledge of nakedness and of good and evil.⁵⁵

The Jungian concepts of *animus* and *anima* reflect not only (or even primarily) the exteriority of masculinity and femininity, but also their interiority.⁵⁶ In this way, a man may access feminine characteristics in the *anima* of his psyche and vice versa. Shame as a consequence of the Fall destroys this interiority and externalizes the polarized elements of man and woman.⁵⁷ The result is a destruction of the mutuality of their relationship. A further side effect of this is the reduction of nudity from being a profound symbol of the self to being a mere biological reality.⁵⁸ Nudity becomes a physical state of being and a precursor to the use of mechanical sexual technique.

Evdokimov also uses the Jungian concept of the archetypes to describe the relationship between man and woman and their roles in society and salvation history. A few of these archetypes will be presented here. Above

⁵² Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 147.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ For an extended treatment of the notion of “the vestment of shame,” see Panayiotis Nellis, *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person*, trans. Norman Russell, with a foreword by Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1987). Nellis, however, refers to the “garments of skin.”

⁵⁵ This account of shame is very similar to John Paul II’s account in *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan* (Boston: Pauline, 1997) 54. It also has similarities to the account of shame found in the third chapter of his (Karol Wojtyła’s), *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H. T. Willets (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1981).

⁵⁶ The concepts of *animus* and *anima* are internally consistent in Jung’s thought, and seem to be applicable to Christian thought without excessive difficulty. However, one should consider the origins of these ideas from Jung’s own perspective, which then calls into question how readily one should apply them to Christian thought. For a critique of Jung, see Davis, *Goddess Unmasked* 298–305.

⁵⁷ Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 147.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 147–48.

all else, woman is mother. This is an incontrovertible fact of her being. Evdokimov writes:

The question of knowing whether the woman will be wife, mother, or bride of Christ (*sponsa Christi*) is only secondary. Her charism of interiorized and universal “maternity” carries every woman toward the hungry and the needy and admirably defines the feminine essence: virgin or spouse, every woman is a mother for all eternity (*in aeternum*). The structure of her soul predisposes her “to protect” all that crosses her path, to discover in the strongest and most virile being a weak, defenseless child.⁵⁹

The predisposition toward maternity thus comes with high praise for the woman and a specific moral mandate to protect all those with whom she comes in contact. This passage also indirectly makes reference to the notion of a distinctly feminine account of virtue in women as well. Though the term “virtue” is never used, Evdokimov makes reference to the defining characteristics of the role of the mother: to protect the weak and to see in everyone a little child in need of protection and nurture. It is this form of excellence that seems unique to women. Men are not called to this vocation as will be seen below. Thus, there is an indication here that men and women possess different excellences of character. Evdokimov is not clear on his use of the term “essence” in this passage. It is not clear if he is using the term in a colloquial fashion, in which case, it would be a reference to the feminine “character,” or if he is using it in the strict philosophical sense, in which case, woman and man are essentially, i.e., on the level of being, two different creatures.

While maternity is essential to the mystery of woman, paternity is less so for man. Evdokimov uses the person of Joseph to represent the paternity of men, best expressed by silence. “The Word-become-flesh is the child of masculine silence and of the motherly *fiat*.”⁶⁰ Human paternity had nothing to do with the Incarnation of the Logos, while the mother was utterly necessary. In fact, human paternity does not actually exist as a natural role as does maternity. Evdokimov makes this plain.

Man (masculine) has nothing immediate *in his nature* that would spontaneously reproduce the religious category of paternity . . . *the maternity of the Virgin presents itself as the human figure of the paternity of God*. If *fatherhood* is the category of divine life, *motherhood* is the religious category of the human life.⁶¹

As the exaltation of femininity is further unveiled here, one sees that: (a) human masculinity exists as something clearly secondary to femininity and/

⁵⁹ Paul Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love: The Nuptial Mystery in the Light of the Orthodox Tradition*, trans. Anthony P. Gythiel and Victoria Steadman (Crestwood, N.Y.: St Vladimir’s Seminary, 1995) 33.

⁶⁰ Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 156.

⁶¹ Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love* 34–35. Emphasis in original.

or a mirror of a divine fullness of masculinity, and (b) all humanity, male and female, exists in a feminine way in relation to God through receptivity.

Most of what has been said thus far corresponds to the relationship of masculinity and femininity by way of analogy to the intratrinitarian life. In this analogy, humanity, male and female, are fundamentally feminine in relation to God. Evdokimov also has two principal archetypes that correspond to masculinity and femininity from a christological point of view. Though the implications of the trinitarian correspondences are more significant, it is on the level of the christological that one can find a more viable account of the vocations of man and woman, for it is these archetypes that define how male and female persons will effect the coming of the Kingdom.

The christological archetype for the male is John the Baptist. Evdokimov holds John to be the witness *par excellence* of the coming of the Kingdom, especially by his martyrdom. Evdokimov states:

The mystery becomes clear if one understands St. John as the “integrated archetype” of witnesses, the radiant principle of all forms of witness, the assemblage of all male vocations. This is why the liturgical prayers call him, “Prophet, Apostle, Forerunner, Baptizer, Priest, Preacher in Hades, Model for Monks, Desert Flower, and Martyr.”⁶²

The language used here suggests that the vocation of the masculine is in active witness or martyrdom (the highest form of witness).

As John the Baptist represents the masculine, the Virgin as Theotokos (God-bearer) represents the feminine. Evdokimov indicates this in five ways: (1) the woman is life-giving by her willing acceptance of the cross;⁶³ (2) she acts as the human hypostasis of fulfilled holiness as Christ is the divine hypostasis;⁶⁴ (3) she is priestly and acts as the type of the female royal priesthood;⁶⁵ (4) she is the model of the integration of humanity in its fullness;⁶⁶ and (5) she is the archetype of the female as she is both virgin and mother.⁶⁷ These reasons adequately explain why *Mary* is to be esteemed, but most of them seem to apply to *femininity* only secondhandedly, inasmuch as *Mary* is a woman. It would seem that, for Evdokimov, the woman is to aspire to the same characteristics possessed by *Mary*. Perhaps this could occur by way of analogy, in the same way that a man’s witness corresponds to the action of John the Baptist.

Evdokimov provides one last christological archetype and this is Christ himself, who is the model of integration and transcendence of the mascu-

⁶² Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 238.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 211–13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 213–14.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 214–17.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 217–19.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 219–22. Peter Phan also summarizes these five points in *Culture and Eschatology* 201–2.

line and the feminine. This notion is visually displayed in the icon of *Deisis*, with Christ flanked on either side by John and the Virgin. Phan summarizes well the vocations that result from these christological archetypes.

This synergism implies that man and woman have each a specific charism and role . . . man has the function of eschatological witness to the coming Kingdom. To him belongs the ministerial priesthood of testifying. . . . Woman has an opposite but complementary vocation. For Evdokimov, she has the function of Virgin and Mother; to her belongs the royal universal priesthood. . . . In Christ these two charisms are integrated.⁶⁸

Both men and women are called to be witnesses and priests, but each is called to do so in a different fashion. These differing vocations will also offer some insight into the nature of gender's role in moral development in the next section.

The vocations suggested by the archetypes of the feminine are basically unalterable, not as a means of minimizing the involvement of woman in society, but rather as a means of exalting her status. When a woman adopts a role corresponding to masculinity, she threatens the meaning and value of herself as a person. "A woman who takes the place of a man does not add anything special to the role; on the contrary, she loses the sense of her own femininity, of her own vocation."⁶⁹ Evdokimov makes this statement in reference to "modern women" concerned about adopting the same purposeless pursuits of position and empty experience (e.g., sexual experience) as men. He says: "The need for equality makes woman aggressive, and it sets her up as a rival. Woman becomes the equal of man, but the potential of her specifically feminine affectivity exhausts itself, and she is in danger of losing her essence as a result."⁷⁰ "Equality" in this passage does not refer to a genuine equality on the level of persons, but rather to a purely social understanding of equality as equal access to all social spheres. According to Evdokimov's exposition, an equal and just society will not be structured on equality of opportunities necessarily, but rather on the basis of equal but very different dignity. The actual practical vision of what such a society might look like remains, as I have already argued, unclear.

At this point, a number of statements can be made about the differences between men and women and, more pointedly, the decidedly superior status of women in Evdokimov's account. Most striking is the notion that there is no such thing as natural human paternity and that human spirituality, for both men and women, is inherently feminine. Evdokimov states this unequivocally.

⁶⁸ Phan, *Culture and Eschatology* 202. Evdokimov covers this in greater detail in *Woman and the Salvation* 249–70.

⁶⁹ Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 163.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* 183.

[A] man does not possess the paternal instinct in the same way as a woman possesses the maternal instinct. Though he may be conqueror, adventurer, builder, a man is not paternal in his essence. It means that there is nothing immediate in a man's nature that corresponds *directly* to the religious category of fatherhood. This also means that *among human beings the religious principle is expressed by the woman. . . .*⁷¹

The paternal instinct in man is not natural, but merely a reflection of the divine paternity of the Father. Furthermore, considering the last sentence of this passage, this means that woman is the stronger sex when viewed from the spiritual realm.⁷² In another place, Evdokimov implies that, in the Russian monastic tradition, sanctity and spiritual maturity were the realm of the feminine alone.⁷³ He does not shy away from the potential problematic of casting the relationship between God and humanity in distinct male and female terms, with humanity clearly assuming the feminine role. Evdokimov seems unbothered by the implication that the unique charisms of men are of secondary, even ephemeral, value.⁷⁴

The effects of this sacred being called woman in the communities of humanity are profound but often subtle. On the surface, the structure of the *superego* enforces the subordination of woman to man.⁷⁵ Despite these oppressive social conditions, woman, in her role as mother, still provokes change in the community. As a symbol of the Spirit: "while [she] reflects the condition of her social environment, she simultaneously shapes it by the emanations of her personality."⁷⁶ Evdokimov provides several examples from non-Christian cultures to demonstrate this idea in action. He notes that in Asian cultures, a man of power would not make a major decision without first consulting his mother. In India, motherhood is held as a sacred role. In Western Christianity, however, this sense has been largely lost. These examples demonstrate that even in inhospitable social structures, woman spiritually is at ease in the world. Contrary to appearances, the same cannot be said for men.

[W]oman is completely at ease within the limits of her being and develops it into a clear, limpid symphony. She fills the world with her being, with her radiant pres-

⁷¹ Ibid. 152. Emphasis in original.

⁷² Ibid. 157.

⁷³ Ibid. 266.

⁷⁴ This can be seen in his many passages on monasticism. Evdokimov sees the male monastic as fulfilling the masculine charism of witness, but more importantly, living a vocation that responds to the inherent femininity of humanity. See, for example, Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 264–66. A summary of Evdokimov's relevant ideas on the ordained priesthood can be found in Roman Ginn, O.C.S.O., "Paul Evdokimov on the Question of Women's Ordination," *The Priest* 41 (April 1985) 40–45, at 45.

⁷⁵ Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 179.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 167.

ence. Man, on the other hand, overreaches his being; more outside himself, his charism of expansion makes him look outward. He fills the world with his creative energies by asserting himself as master and lord. He accepts at his side the woman, his help . . . she helps man understand himself and realize the meaning of his own existence.⁷⁷

The salvation of society will come through the woman. From the perspective of Evdokimov's theology, this is not just an eschatological statement referring to the future, but also a fact of the present.

Finally, as a category of moral development, one must consider Evdokimov's thought on the differences in the virtues of the man and the woman. Here one finds a sort of inconsistency with what has been said so far. Evdokimov's indirect thought on virtue is based on material drawn from the Fathers.

Clement of Alexandria says: "The virtue of man and of woman is one and the same virtue . . . their conduct is of the same nature." Theodoret of Cyrus commemorates women "whose struggles were not less, but greater than those of men. They are worthy of greater praise: being of a weaker nature they have shown the same courage as men and have freed their race from the ancestral dishonor."⁷⁸

Amidst this backhanded praise is the idea that virtue in itself is the same for men and women, though women evidently are worthy of more praise for their virtue because of the weakness of their "nature." In slightly more praiseworthy terms, Evdokimov notes that: "Basil's *Rules* presuppose that the virtues of the monks will not be wanting in the nature of women."⁷⁹ This notion of virtue seems to be contrary to the exaltation of woman's spiritual nature in Evdokimov's thought, though he makes no effort to rectify the apparent contradiction in this passage.

It is interesting that Evdokimov would draw upon such statements from the Fathers to discuss virtue in terms of men and women. When discussing the lies and truths of feminism, he credits the identification of virtue with masculinity within "human reality" as a result of the oversimplification of language.

Human reality is so closely identified with the masculine that even the basic moral concept, that of virtue, is masculine in the classical languages: *arete* (goodness, excellence) is derived from *aner*, a man, as opposed to woman; and the Latin *virtus* (virtue, worth, moral perfection) comes from *vir*, a man.⁸⁰

Despite this observation, however, woman is capable of developing "virtue" provided that (a) she either loses herself in a false masculinity or (b) she fulfills her vocation as mother and/or virgin. Growth in virtue entails

⁷⁷ Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love* 32–33.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 36.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 37.

⁸⁰ Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 180.

the development of a certain excellence of character, but the specific term “virtue” is not used.

In summary, the masculine secularizes society, while the presence of the feminine sanctifies it. Maternity is the natural religious state of humanity, while paternity can only ape the divine paternity. Culture may be structured along the patterns of men, but its soul is shaped by the influence of women.⁸¹ Evdokimov is consistent in these assertions. Some of these points will now be further refined through an examination of the ascetical structure of moral development found in Evdokimov’s thought.

GENDER AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN EVDOKIMOV

Evdokimov believes that the connection between morality and spirituality must not be severed.⁸² This thought is clearly present in what he has to say about asceticism. Asceticism is the starting point for articulating an account of moral development for Evdokimov because it is the necessary starting point for the spiritual development of all people. Spiritual development, in turn, provides a sort of account of virtue, though not in the traditional Western understanding of this term. These ideas will be combined in this section with all that has been said about masculinity and femininity in the previous section to arrive at some conclusions.

Marriage

Though much has already been said about gender, some additional notes can be made here about marriage, which exists as a special relationship between the man and the woman, a symbol of the relationship between God and humanity, and as a special school for the full human development of the individual.⁸³ A few specific points can be made about each of these aspects of the sacrament.

Evdokimov posits the sexual reintegration of male and female as one of the primary purposes of marriage. Within marriage, a couple practices chastity, a form of *ascesis*, to humanize the animalistic energies of sex. The transformed “sexual energy” becomes the spiritual “energy of sex.”⁸⁴ The passion of sex turns into the passion of love, which is a participation in the

⁸¹ An excellent brief summary of many of these points can be found in Phan, “Gender Roles” 59 (see n. 43 above).

⁸² This same emphasis can also be found in the work of Servais Pinckaers, O.P. See his *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Sr. Mary Thomas Noble, O.P. (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1995).

⁸³ Marriage as a form of asceticism is also discussed at some length in “Le sacerdoce conjugal” 97–103.

⁸⁴ Phan, “Gender Roles” 170–71. This is also specifically referred to in “Le sacerdoce conjugal” 99.

divine. As the energies of humanity are sacralized, the imagination is likewise purified, thus contributing to the individual's overall growth.⁸⁵ The process of integration is aided by grace given through the sacrament. Hardly an impediment to the individual, the sacramental grace of marriage enables one to utilize the power of sexual energy without any impediment to one's spiritual growth.

Marriage is also an image of creation itself. Evdokimov draws upon a series of images relating the two to one another.

The mutual interchange of the man and the woman according to the plan of God is from the very first the image of the relationship between Jesus Christ and the Church. That relationship is the inner foundation of creation, which is why the relationship between Yahweh and Israel is described in the image of a marriage. . . . It is in the image of the divine that we must seek the key to all human relationships.⁸⁶

As marriage reflects the same relationship between God and the world present at creation, the structure of human relationships should follow the model. The pattern of this subsequent human relationship is unusual, in that the man merely models Christ: "the head," while the woman actually embodies the Church.⁸⁷ This goes back to the idea that humanity, in relation to God, is essentially feminine in its spiritual composition. As such, the man cannot do more than "model" the divine head, while the woman simply fulfills that which she is: the church. It seems that the concessionary application of "headship" to the man exists as a way to balance the relationship between man and the spiritually superior woman.

Finally, marriage also exists as a special school of moral and spiritual development, especially for the man. In all interactions between men and women, women are capable of answering men's existential longings.

Man is called to "subdue the earth," "to cultivate the garden," to show the creative, inventive power of his mind. . . . [Woman] has the spontaneous, immediate ability to grasp the intangible in the human person. Through this ability, she helps man to understand himself and actualize the meaning of his own being. She completes him by deciphering his destiny. It is through woman that man more easily becomes what he is.⁸⁸

Though Evdokimov does not explicitly make reference to marriage in this passage, if this is the character of the male-female dynamic, then the benefits that woman offers to man would be more readily available and effective in the context of marriage. In all these reflections on marriage, it

⁸⁵ See Evdokimov, *Sacrement de l'amour: Le mystère conjugal à la lumière de la tradition orthodoxe* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1980) 161. This is also described in Phan, *Culture and Eschatology* 204–5.

⁸⁶ Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 151.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid. 258–59.

appears that the woman has a curious role. She is spiritually greater than the man, while accepting his headship, able to provide meaning to the man's existence, while not receiving the same from him. More will be said of this in the conclusion.

Asceticism

Asceticism is the basis for a moral-spiritual life in the thought of Evdokimov. A working definition of asceticism, especially as it influences the thought of Evdokimov, would be an appropriate starting point. He describes it thusly:

Asceticism is not a system of merely moral rules, but a system of exercises implying spiritual gifts that is offered to every Christian life, as Cyril of Jerusalem explains. In his Rules, St. Basil compares the monks to the "violent ones" of the Gospel who "lay hold of the Kingdom," and thereby give expression to the maximalism of the Christian way of life.⁸⁹

Thus, asceticism encompasses morality, but also includes a whole approach to living that makes possible the Christification of the individual.⁹⁰ Though some are called to this task in a unique way (monks), the gifts offered by ascetical efforts are available to all Christians and it is the Christian vocation to accept them through what Evdokimov calls "interiorized monasticism."⁹¹

Inasmuch as Evdokimov took issue with the limitations of modern psychology, he applies that critique to any sort of comparison to the "monastic psychology" of asceticism. Both seek a sort of transfiguration of the individual; however:

While psychiatrists search for the "beautiful image," the ascetics look for the restoration of the original form—the image of God (*imago Dei*) reaching toward God. But the most difficult problem for psychiatrists is knowing how to restore someone's confidence in life and in one's own destiny, and how to interpret the concrete meaning of a given life.⁹²

The difference lies in the ability of one to succeed only in part, while the other has the capacity of fulfilling the desires of the human heart. Such is

⁸⁹ Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love*, 81.

⁹⁰ This is an important distinction. Evdokimov is very clear: "Asceticism has nothing to do with moralism." See his *The Struggle with God*, trans. Sister Gertrude, S.P. (New York: Paulist, 1966) 139. The idea of spirituality as something one lives rather than something one pursues is described in Michael Plekon, "'Interiorized Monasticism: A Reconsideration of Paul Evdokimov on the Spiritual Life,'" *American Benedictine Review* 48 (Spring 1997) 237–40.

⁹¹ Evdokimov uses this phrase in several texts. He describes the idea in some depth in *Struggle with God* 111–30.

⁹² Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 82.

the power of asceticism and one of the reasons why Evdokimov recommends it for all.

Perhaps “recommend,” however, is not a strong enough word. The transfiguration brought about by asceticism is, in fact, a necessary part of the only assured way that the individual can achieve the *theosis* discussed above in the consideration of Evdokimov’s anthropology. Asceticism, along with sacramental participation, can effect the change of “man” into “man-god”; failing to pursue this course results in a choice for nothingness over the only possible order in creation. Drawing again upon the wisdom of the Fathers, Evdokimov paints the existential choices of the individual in no uncertain terms.

[T]o exist is to participate in being or in nothingness. While participating, man can make of himself an “icon of God,” or he can become a demonical grimace, an ape of God. . . . In the Incarnation, God is no longer only God, He is God-man. Man, too, is no longer only man, but man-god, a deified being. Gregory of Nyssa clearly states it: “Humanity is composed of men with the face of angels and of men wearing the mask of the beast.”⁹³

The challenge of living as a human being, including but going beyond the moral, is a decision to live as either God or demon. There is no middle ground. This certainly colors the perspective of the course of moral development. By coloring the process with such existential weight, it seems that one cannot choose to delay or retard one’s own moral development for any reason, or even take a particularly reflective approach to it. The stakes are simply too high. Framing the idea in these terms is emotionally powerful and perhaps psychologically motivating. On the other hand, it may also be seen as oppressive or overstated, to the point of being an ineffective appeal to the believer.

Moral Development

At this point, some speculation can be offered as to how these ideas on gender and anthropology affect the question of moral development. Though their roles are very different, both man and woman achieve the fullness of maturity through the two paths of sacramental participation and *ascesis*. “The soul only reaches full maturity by ceaselessly transcending itself toward the Other, when it no longer belongs to self.”⁹⁴ By following the guides of the two christological archetypes of Mary and John the Baptist, man and woman can succeed in this task and be transformed into the divine image, to become what they should be. The path each will take,

⁹³ Evdokimov, *Sacrament of Love* 57–58.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 82.

however, and the character traits that each would possess will differ between man and woman.

Peter Phan summarizes Evdokimov's material on asceticism to provide some description of how one might participate in the transcendence of self toward the Other mentioned above. The first point is that asceticism is not moralism. Rather than attention paid to principles of activity, the ascetic instead wishes to see the fulfillment of God's plan above all else.⁹⁵

The second insight is that asceticism is not an isolated practice. The ascetic seeks a greater integration between the physical, psychological, and spiritual aspects of him- or herself, as well as a greater integration into the culture in which he or she exists.⁹⁶ The individual is a microcosm of the universe as a whole and one must strive to further integrate oneself into this whole through reflection on oneself.

The third point is that the practice of asceticism begins with a commitment to the practice of discernment. This is an honest evaluation of oneself and the appraisal of all of the evil that one possesses at the outset of one's quest.⁹⁷ Once progress is actually made by the ascetic, he or she must rely on humility as the "unshakeable foundation of the human spirit."⁹⁸ Humility constantly reminds the ascetic of what he or she still is not.

Finally, the greatest challenge to the ascetic will come in the form of the passions. Here Evdokimov uses the general understanding, along with the monastic tradition, of the passions as spiritual stumbling blocks, rather than as essential and at least neutral characteristics of the human person.⁹⁹ Evdokimov describes the tools necessary for the regulation of the passions. These are sacramental confession and "the cultivation of spiritual attention or vigilance."¹⁰⁰ All of these tools combined are necessary for the beginning of ascetic practice.¹⁰¹ The challenging conclusion to Evdokimov's theory of spiritual and moral development is that these tools are simply the beginning of the spiritual life. From this point, one must develop a solid prayer life, centered on contemplative prayer.¹⁰² In this process, the person makes a transition from the moral life to what he calls the "mystical life."¹⁰³ This transformation is marked by an intimacy with God that transcends the

⁹⁵ Evdokimov, *Les âges de la vie spirituelle: Des Pères du Désert à nos jours* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1964) 151.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 148.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 152.

⁹⁸ Phan, *Culture and Eschatology* 178.

⁹⁹ Evdokimov, *L'Orthodoxie* 104.

¹⁰⁰ Phan, *Culture and Eschatology* 176.

¹⁰¹ The pattern of ascetic growth can also be found in Evdokimov, *Struggle with God* 139–44. Intriguing is the treatment given of the "development" of temptation in the same text (*ibid.* 149).

¹⁰² Evdokimov, *Les âges de la vie spirituelle* 180.

¹⁰³ Evdokimov, *L'amour fou de Dieu* (Paris: Seuil, 1973) 43.

individual's own understanding of him- or herself as creature. The goal of this life is to finally become what Evdokimov calls the "new man."¹⁰⁴ The new man, by his very presence in the world, announces the coming of the Kingdom and the ultimate transitoriness of the world. At this point, concern for the coming of the Kingdom is the sole concern of the individual. Such is the destination of "moral development" in the theology of Evdokimov.

EVALUATION AND CRITIQUE

There is no doubt that the thought of Evdokimov stands in marked contrast to much traditional Western theological thought. Its use of unfamiliar terms and ideas is striking to the reader and challenging in its spiritual ramifications. However, in spite of its rhetorical power and the passion of Evdokimov's convictions, there are some potential difficulties with his theories as they apply to the topics under consideration here. There are areas in which it seems that he is simply unclear or incomplete in his ideas. This section will bring some larger issues to light. They can be summarized in two main areas. The first is Evdokimov's view of history, while the latter concerns his view of women.

In various places, Evdokimov conveys a view of history that is thoroughly mythical. This approach has value for the articulation of his theological method, which relies more on mystical emphases and apophatic understandings of the divine. Unfortunately, appeal to myth also damages the credibility of his theology. If the actual historical (as opposed to mythological) basis for some of his ideas cannot be established, it calls into question the subsequent development of those ideas in his thought. The most explicit example of this comes from his use of the idea of the primordial matriarchy. Using both the mythological basis of the cult of the Earth Mother and the research of Malinowski on matrilineal descent,¹⁰⁵ Evdokimov seems to be making an appeal to the idea of an original social structure based on the woman.¹⁰⁶ It would be in part, then, the loss of this social structure that has created the present difficulties in both spirituality

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 78. While Evdokimov clearly meant this transformation to apply to both men and women, I have retained the original non-inclusive language of his text.

¹⁰⁵ Bronislaw Malinowski, "Mother Right: An Investigation of the Religious and Juridical Character of Matriarchy in the Ancient World," in *Myth, Religion and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J. J. Bachofen*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University, 1967) 97, 113. Opposition to Bachofen's ideas, particularly the idea of matrilineal descent, is found in Davis, *Goddess Unmasked* 259–80.

¹⁰⁶ Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 159.

and the relationships between men and women. Unfortunately, the idea of matrilineal descent is historically questionable at best.¹⁰⁷

Turning to the other end of the historical spectrum, Evdokimov's use of certain gnostic sources in his eschatology also calls into question the conclusions of his eschatological speculation. Rather than using texts or even ideas that one might find speculative, perhaps provocative, he would seem to be using texts that are clearly outside the bounds of fundamental Christian teaching. Gnosticism, a continual problem for the Church and consistently denounced by it, seems to be a poor source from which to develop "Orthodox" Christian thought. Evdokimov's idea that masculinity and femininity are transcended in the person of Christ is not at issue here; instead, the problem stems from the apparent idea that masculinity and femininity will cease to exist in the end.¹⁰⁸ This runs counter to the notion that the human person is perfected in Christ, but does not cease to be a unique individual. This is problematic if one accounts the male-female distinction to be constitutive of the human person.¹⁰⁹

The other critique against Evdokimov's thought is found in his portrayal of women. He is apparently extolling women to the highest degree, though one can hardly imagine a "feminist" author seeing the situation in the same way.¹¹⁰ What he has done is placed women on a pedestal, holding them up as worthy of admiration and trapping them in that same station. From the feminist's perspective, such treatment does not recognize the humanity of

¹⁰⁷ There are many authors who have argued against this idea on the basis of a lack of evidence, including some who, in theory, could benefit from it (i.e., some feminist authors). A partial list would include Susanne Heine, *Christianity and the Goddesses: Systematic Criticism of a Feminist Theology*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1988) 74–103; Mary Jo Weaver, *New Catholic Women: A Contemporary Challenge to Traditional Religious Authority* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985) 182–85; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Women, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: Seabury, 1975) 6. A particularly strong critique against this theory, albeit not from a feminist point of view, can be found in Davis, *Goddess Unmasked* 53–85.

¹⁰⁸ Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 137–49. In Evdokimov's defense, he can appeal to Fathers such as Gregory of Nyssa for support here. However, this view of gender as something accidental to the person, a characteristic that could be deleted or changed without affecting the person essentially, appeals more to a Platonic account of the person than to a Christian account.

¹⁰⁹ This is not a problem for Evdokimov, but it becomes a difficulty when utilizing his theology in a Western framework. See Ginn, "Women's Ordination" 41.

¹¹⁰ "Feminism" is here being defined according to Anne E. Patrick's definition in 1990, one who takes up "(1) a solid conviction of the equality of women and men, and (2) a commitment to reform society, including religious society, so that the full equality of women is respected, which requires also reforming the thought systems that legitimate present unjust social order." This definition is quoted by Lisa Sowle Cahill in "Feminist Ethics," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990) 49–64, at 50.

women. By maintaining her status as profoundly “other,” even if that is a glorified “other,” women are still prevented from exercising their full freedom in society, to choose how they will define themselves and what effect they might have on that society. Evdokimov’s imagery of the feminine dwells on reception, domesticity, and generation in particular.¹¹¹ He even seems to suggest a biological determinism in his thought, even though he supposedly is referring more properly to a “spiritual determinism:” “A woman is not maternal because her body is able to give birth: it is from her maternal spirit that the corresponding physiological and anatomical capabilities are derived.”¹¹² Evdokimov’s spiritual defense of women’s inherent vocation to motherhood can still appear to be a case of biological determinism; only the origin of the idea differs. In his attempt to glorify women, he has irrevocably confined them to a lesser station in economic society due to the demands of childbearing. Evdokimov’s position tells women to be content with this, as this is where they are capable of finding their greatest fulfillment. The issue goes beyond whether or not women find completeness in maternity or whether women are deserving of such high spiritual praise, however, as Evdokimov claims. The deeper issue is whether or not the present social structure should be condoned and whether it is the most conducive to the appreciation of women’s particular charisms.¹¹³

These are serious charges against the validity of Evdokimov’s thought in the light of the challenge of contemporary feminism. One of the reasons for his failure to respond as thoroughly as he should to these issues is his own place in history. Evdokimov’s thought, as curiously bold as it is in places, also remains a product of his cultural milieu, which did not necessarily foresee the current development of feminist thought. This serves as an explanation, but not an absolution. Contemporary authors wishing to advance the work begun by Evdokimov must wrestle with the issue of making his appraisal of history and his account of women better coincide with more recent thought. This may not necessarily involve a fundamental change in Evdokimov’s ideas, but at least his thought would need to be expanded in response to differing accounts of the meaning of womanhood.

Aside from these critiques, though, there is much to appreciate in Evdokimov’s account of moral development. His anthropology provides unique roles for men and women in the moral realm, which have implications for society as a whole. Specifically, his emphasis on woman as the salvation of

¹¹¹ For a summary of some of these images, see Phan, “Gender Roles” 58. She is “receptive, intuitive, and preservative,” and the exaltation of woman is offered as a parallel to that found in “the Victorian cult of true womanhood” in which the woman is the “goddess/priestess of the home/shrine.”

¹¹² Evdokimov, *Woman and the Salvation* 16.

¹¹³ Phan offers some additional insights into these issues in “Gender Roles” 61–62.

the world can be used as a fertile starting point for new conversations about the role of women in the Church and the world and perhaps provide a firm basis for recognizing and appreciating the unique charisms of women in society. Furthermore, his emphasis on asceticism is sorely needed, today more than ever, in congregations that take a minimalist approach to living the faith and among clergy and laity who maintain two-tiered structures of moral expectation. Evdokimov invites us to take seriously the words of St. Athanasius that “He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, trans. a religious of C.S.M.V. with an introduction by C. S. Lewis (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1989) chap. 54.