

Preface

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The *Lexicon* reviews a range of possibilities as its full title suggests.

By setting forth the content and the truth which must guide correct applications, our authors seek to enlighten people on some ambiguous or confusing terms and jargon difficult to assess. In this area, there is a cultural inclination that makes it difficult to give a correct interpretation.

To deal with this, one has to track the invention, development and spread of the terms. Cases often arise in which one notices that terms are coined that do not completely hide an intention in an effort to tone down expressions to avoid causing shock and an instinctive rejection. This is the case with the clever phrases: “voluntary interruption of pregnancy” or “pro-choice”.

Many expressions are used in parliaments and world forums with concealment of their true content and meaning, even for the politicians and members of parliament who use them, due to their weak background in philosophy, theology, law, anthropology, etc. This represents the greatest obstacle for a correct understanding of certain terms. The purpose of the *Lexicon* is to assist in such cases and to awaken interest in order to promote serious and objective information, and stimulate the desire for a deeper formation in this field where several sciences and critical disciplines converge.

Juridical positivism worsens the problem since a law's quality is no longer determined by the human person as a whole, but by the accepted procedure by which a law is formulated in accord with the will of the majority. This leads to a concept of “political truth” and of democracy that will not escape from the concept of law as what is imposed by the strongest.

There are many obscure concepts which are hard to understand because their content requires calm and patient investigation. This is of course complicated by those who refuse to accept natural law and to give law an ethical foundation. Obviously, we cannot marginalize the riches of faith that confirm and deepen what reason understands.

The teaching of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is timely: “The intimate community of life and love which constitutes the married state has been established by the Creator and endowed by him with its own proper laws.... God himself is the author of marriage’ (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 48). The vocation to marriage is written in the very nature of man and woman as they came from the hand of the Creator.

Marriage is not a purely human institution despite the changes it has undergone through the centuries in different cultures, social structures and spiritual attitudes. These differences should not cause us to forget its common and permanent features. Although the dignity of this institution does not appear everywhere with the same clarity, a certain sense of the greatness of the matrimonial union exists in all cultures because ‘The well-being of the individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of conjugal and family life’ (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 47)” (n. 1603).

It is not the intention of this project to combat or oppose institutions or persons or even less to impose upon them. Rather we want to propose, to persuade lovingly, directing people towards the truth with respect, in the hope of beginning and reinforcing a fruitful dialogue. We cannot escape the truth to which human beings have a right in order to live with genuine freedom.

Certain expressions exploit the uninformed people who use them and, since they are deceived by their ambiguity, they are not aware of the deception. In this way, one tries to manipulate public opinion by concealing the unpleasant or shocking aspects of reality and of the truth. Since the terms that have been made up are not really innocent, their authors seek to promote their methods as a way to reach their goals by changing the meaning of the terms. They do this to avoid rejection, which they see as a possible risk.

The cunning use of ambiguous terms has reached worrisome levels. People are beginning to speak of an Orwellian language. In his book “1984”, the famous writer George Orwell criticized the totalitarian usage in which, for the sake of propaganda, certain words, repeated to create conditioned reflexes, eluded the ability of the intelligence to grasp their meaning and ended by having exactly the opposite meaning: for example, “slavery” means “freedom”, “evil” is identified with “good”, and “falsehood” with “truth”.

One must note that one of the most disturbing symptoms of a weakening of morality is the confusion of terms which lead to degrading levels when they are used with cold calculation to obtain a semantic change, changing the meaning of words in a deliberately perverted way.

This incredible ability for semantic change that demonstrates the emptiness of an anthropology, appears in the concepts of “rights”, that has become selective and capricious.

The universality of rights is not always consistently recognized, indeed, “exceptions” are made which deny the quality and comprehensiveness of rights, especially with regard to what is stated in Article 3 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person”. The

striking spread of the massacre of abortion shows how some make relative a right that should be universal. John Paul II wrote: "All human rights are in fact closely connected, being the expression of different dimensions of a single subject, the human person.... Defence of the universality and indivisibility of human rights is essential for the construction of a peaceful society and for the overall development of individuals, peoples and nations" (*Message for World Day of Peace*, 1 January 1999, n. 3; *ORE*, 23 December 1998, p.10).

With the escalation of ambiguity, *new* rights have even been proposed, not as victories for previously unrecognized issues that deserve serious consideration, but as new forms of manipulation. Allow me to quote a valid reflection. Fr Lobato wrote explaining the term "new rights": "Taken individually these concepts seem fascinating; however it is not a question of *newness* but more precisely of a true *difference* of language, that aims at removing certain *human rights* from every ethical norm, to relegate them to the realm of *privacy* by means of ambivalent language which advances ideas and practices that contradict their immediate meaning. A term is manipulated and camouflaged in order to penetrate all sectors through the powerful means of communication. An ever greater separation exists between thought, reality, and the word that expresses it, which is the subject of manipulation. In the end, the three concepts that the words seemed to convey are denied: *newness*, *rights*, and the '*humanum*'. In order not to offend the ear, alternative words or phrases are used to replace them, for example: *the voluntary interruption of pregnancy* for abortion, *euthanasia* for induced death, *the morning-after pill* for an abortifacient".

The Church is often presented as an obstacle to freedom, discouraging and intolerant. Hegel's affirmations are quite fitting: "But that man should be free in himself and for himself, by virtue of his very substance, that he should be born free as man was unknown to Plato, Aristotle, Cicero or to the Roman jurists, although the source of human rights lies in this concept alone. Only in the Christian principle does the individual personal spirit essentially assume an infinite, absolute value; God wants us to give help to all human beings. In the Christian religion, the doctrine that all men are equal before God because Christ has called them to Christian freedom has made headway". He says further: "These assertions ensured that freedom became independent of birth, social class, education, etc.... The purport of this principle, has acted like leaven down the centuries and millenniums, producing the most gigantic revolutions" (cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Lessons on the History of Philosophy 1*, Italian edition, 1998, p. 61).

Certain commonplace terms give rise to special difficulty. This is the case with the concept "*discrimination*".

Ambiguity is particularly dangerous since at first it arouses a sympathetic reaction: who is not opposed to all forms of discrimination? This seems to derive from respect for human rights. However, the first concrete favourable reaction changes once the concrete content is more closely examined. In parliaments, in the name of non-discrimination, bills are introduced for *de facto* unions and for those between homosexuals and lesbians even with the possibility of adopting children.

A recent case that can illustrate this problem (and which is a case in point) is that of the CEDAW. These letters stand for "*Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women*". This turns out to be evidently hostile to the family which is presented as a place of modern slavery. Consequently, it is claimed that being a wife and mother is equivalent to being discriminated against by those who uphold the moral principles that are anchored in true human rights. Although the "right" to abortion is not mentioned directly, in a subtle way this option is not excluded. Discretely, without making a fuss, the possibility will be taken up in other ways, either through the interpretation of the definitely ambiguous meaning of the phrase "reproductive health", or with recourse to the instruments of abortion, or with the introduction of a new definition of abortion, confined to the later stages of pregnancy and not from the moment of conception to the implantation of the embryo. We are faced with a conceptual storm.

In some cases the equivocations are actually crude and broader. In the name of women's rights and as one of them, not only is abortion presented as if the embryo were the mother's property and indeed an appendage, but people have even come to the point of fighting pregnancy as though it were some kind of disease, and the "unborn" child an unjust assailant. For some time there has been talk of an "anti-baby vaccine". We are in the eye of the storm that began with secularization and ethical relativism.

Heidegger's thoughts on the ambiguity and truth of language are well known. Equivocation does not help authenticity (for Heidegger, in his complex language and his original thought man is "the shepherd of being"; the truth is not the conformity of judgement with being, but a way in which reality reveals itself [it is the *a-lethe-ia*] which is not concealed and has in language "the home of being". Truth is an unveiling. Gossip, curiosity and equivocation attack the authenticity of this unveiling [cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*]).

The Holy Father has described "*a society which is sick*" from many points of view, since "our society has broken away from the full truth about man, from the truth about what man and woman really are as persons" (Letter to Families *Gratissimam sane*, n. 20). He then refers to the falsification produced by certain modern instruments of the mass media that "are tempted to manipulate the message,

thereby falsifying the truth about man" (*ibid.*). Public opinion is under systematic pressure: "At times it appears that concerted efforts are being made to present as 'normal' and attractive, and even to glamourize, situations which are in fact 'irregular'" (*ibid.*, n. 5).

A typical example is the case of "*free love*". Suggestive words that imply a universe of freedom when in fact, instead of freedom, a true and proper slavery prevails. John Paul II says, without mincing his words: "*Opposed to the civilization of love* is certainly the phenomenon of so-called '*free love*'.... To follow in every instance a 'real' emotional impulse by invoking a love 'liberated' from all conditionings, means nothing more than to make the individual a slave to those human instincts which St Thomas calls 'passions of the soul'. 'Free love' exploits human weaknesses; it gives them a certain 'vener' of respectability with the help of seduction and the blessing of public opinion. In this way there is an attempt to 'soothe' consciences by creating a 'moral alibi'.... *A freedom without responsibilities* is the opposite of love" (*ibid.*, n. 14).

The Holy Father has also denounced such widely used expressions as "pro-choice", which is camouflaged as the real exercise of freedom: "In the context of a civilization of pleasure, woman can become an object for man, children a hindrance to parents, the family an institution obstructing the freedom of its members. To be convinced that this is the case, one need only look at *certain sexual education programmes* introduced into the schools, often notwithstanding the disagreement and even the protests of many parents; or *pro-abortion tendencies* which vainly try to hide behind the so-called 'right to choose' (*pro-choice*) on the part of both spouses, and in particular on the part of the woman. These are only two examples; many more could be mentioned" (*ibid.*, n. 13).

In the United States, a semantic battle is being fought: to react to "*pro-choice*", pro-lifers say that the best "*pro-choice*" is "*pro-life*".

In *Evangelium vitae* (Gospel of Life), the Pope, with prophetic vigour, has denounced the systematic malice of changing the word "*delitto*" (crime) into the word "*diritto*" (right). "We shall concentrate particular attention on *another category of attacks*, affecting life in its earliest and in its final stages, attacks which present *new characteristics with respect to the past and which raise questions of extraordinary seriousness*. It is not only that in generalized opinion these attacks tend no longer to be considered as "crimes"; paradoxically they assume the nature of "rights", to the point that the *State* is called upon to give them *legal recognition and to make them available through the free services of health-care personnel*. Such attacks strike human life at the time of its greatest frailty, when it lacks any means of self-defence. Even more serious is the fact that, most often, those attacks are carried out in the very

heart of and with the complicity of the family — the family which by its nature is called to be the “sanctuary of life” (*Evangelium vitae*, n. 11).

The Pope recently expressed his concern in an address to a group of Bishops from Brazil: “A pastoral proposal for the family in crisis presupposes, as a preliminary requirement, doctrinal clarity, effectively taught in moral theology about sexuality and the respect for life.... At the root of the crisis one can perceive the rupture between anthropology and ethics, marked by a moral relativism according to which the human act is not evaluated with reference to the permanent, objective principles proper to nature created by God, but in conformity with a merely subjective reflection on what is the greatest benefit for the individual’s life project. Thus a semantic evolution is produced in which homicide is called *induced death*, infanticide, *therapeutic abortion*, and adultery becomes a mere *extra-marital adventure*. No longer possessing absolute certainty in moral matters, the divine law becomes an option among the latest variety of opinions in vogue” (*Address to the Brazilian Bishops from the East II Region on their ad limina visit*, 16 November 2002, n. 6; *ORE*, 27 November 2002, p. 3).

Curiously, a great many *ambiguous expressions* originate in the idea that changes are called for by “modernity”, itself a term that needs to be explained. This is how Thomas Mann describes “modernity”: “One of the features of our time is the way a problem is made of everything, even of eternal things, sacrosanct, indispensable and primordial which, today, have become apparently impossible, apparently obsolete, and irreversibly so.... Freedom, individualism, a stronger sense of the personality ... and the idea of the ‘right to happiness’, stir up discontent and the desire for liberation” (Thomas Mann, *Letter on Matrimony*).

For some years now, the Pontifical Council for the Family has been observing the escalation of this process that gives rise to confusion. In France recourse to the term “interruption of pregnancy” has already become a current euphemism for “abortion”.

A few years ago, during the celebration of the International Year of the Family, the coordinating agency of the United Nations began to apply the word “families” only in its plural form, and with reluctance used the word “family” in the singular in order to impose a painful veto on the model of family as desired by God in his project of Creation: the family based on marriage, the patrimony of humanity. Thus, under the umbrella of the term “*families*”, all kinds of unions could safely shelter, like the family “clubs” to which Louis Roussel referred in his book *La famille incertaine* (cf. Ed. Odile Jacob, 1 March 1989), where the natural institution of the family was rejected and reduced to mere agreements or elastic pacts in a perspective of “privatization”. He was an active ideologist of the International Year

of the Family. The *logo* for that occasion, as people will remember, showed a roof beneath which two hearts were joined with an arrow shooting towards the infinite. In this way the uncertain future of the family was depicted and its disappearance in the future, often foretold, although it is no more founded in reality than it is in the predictions. Even anti-family ideologies have had to admit this fact.

It was obvious, precisely regarding the International Year of the Family, that there was a deliberate intention to circulate ambiguous slogans and expressions to exploit the many who were poorly informed and frequently also badly formed, at least in the area of an integral humanism, as Paul VI pointed out in his Encyclical *Populorum progressio* on social doctrine, and, particularly, in an anthropology that has ethical substance: "What must be aimed at is complete humanism. And what is that if not the fully-rounded development of the whole man and of all men? A humanism closed in on itself, and not open to the values of the spirit and to God who is their source, could achieve apparent success. True, man can organize the world apart from God, but 'without God he can organize it in the end only against man. An exclusive humanism is an inhuman humanism'. There is no true humanism but that which is open to the Absolute and is conscious of a vocation which gives human life its true meaning. Far from being the ultimate measure of all things, man can only realize himself by reaching beyond himself. As Pascal has said so well: 'Man infinitely surpasses man'" (*Populorum progressio*, n. 42).

At the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994, an attempt was made to exploit a concentrated, ideological functionally organized cargo which, in addition to setting in motion mechanisms that would turn out to be inconsistent myths such as that of "a revolution or population explosion", aimed at sounding the alarm concerning population growth, resorting to such expressions as "sexual rights" and "reproductive rights" (just as, previously, the phrase "Family Planning" had served to encourage contraception and to make people reject the natural methods as ineffectual).

By these expressions, however, indeed there was a strategy to remove adolescents and young people from their family and from the education and upbringing of their parents by saturating them with information on "free" choices in order to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, and by disseminating, without other further "pressures", every type of contraceptive. Naturally, at the Cairo Conference, no one excluded recourse to abortion as a right. The Messages the Holy Father sent to Heads of State and to Mrs Nafis Sadik were necessary, to call attention to the "life style" that was to be imposed upon young people, and remind governments of their responsibility for youth (cf. *Message to Heads of State*, 19 March 1994; *ORE*, 20 April 1994, p. 1; cf. *Message to Mrs Nafis Sadik, Executive*

Director of the United Nations Population Fund and Secretary General of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, 18 March 1994; ORE, 23 March 1994, p. 1).

Later on, an interesting case with regard to the term “gender” was the preparation and the actual event of the Beijing Conference on Women. The Pontifical Council for the Family drew attention to the ambiguous and ideologized use of it that was being introduced, despite the fact that the Holy See Delegation had been assured of the intention to use this term with its “traditional” meaning. It did not take long for people to realize the serious implications of this issue and the great need for clarification. The family and life are inseparable poles of the same reality, the same truth that is a Good News, a Gospel: “Christians also have the mission of *proclaiming with joy and conviction the Good News about the family*, for the family absolutely needs to hear ever anew and to understand ever more deeply the authentic words that reveal its identity, its inner resources and the importance of its mission in the City of God and in that of man” (*Familiaris consortio*, n. 86). The family and life are being literally bombarded by a deceptive language that does not encourage but complicates dialogue between individuals and peoples. Without the pursuit of the truth, the universe of freedom is contaminated and in serious danger. There is no freedom without truth.

Thus we have listed 78 terms. The majority were addressed by qualified authorities which can be seen at first glance, and by other experts, who are less famous but know well the topic entrusted to them.

When on the occasion of the Extraordinary Consistory celebrated in May 2001, I told the Cardinals present about the *Lexicon* project, they welcomed the idea enthusiastically, and so later on did the journalists. Since we received offers from publishing houses of different languages and nations, it is our intention to publish the volume in various languages. We decided to begin with the Italian version, and entrusted it to the Dehonian Publishing House, with which we have had the positive experience of the promotion of our *Enchiridion*, that very soon went to a second edition.

The approval of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which has fully supported our ideas gave us great pleasure. The text, edited by competent professionals, gathers the contributions into a single volume, published in accord with technical and lexicographical criteria, such as the alphabetical order of the terms, a brief introduction to the content of each article (set off from the text by a different typeface) and a brief biographical note on each author.

We hope that the *Lexicon* will be a useful tool for the noble and urgent cause of the family and life. We are conscious that the creation of ambiguities is great and

that a later edition might need to be updated with new entries. In this attempt to shed light on the ambiguities through a prolonged pursuit of the truth, guided by reason and illumined by faith and in total obedience to the Magisterium, we hope that the reader will discover the genuine content and objectives which are part of the Gospel proclamation “sine glossa”.

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