

Who AM I? Right Questions, Wrong Answers?
*Speaking the Truth in Love to the Experiences which Influence
the Development- and Persistence- of SSA*
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Introduction

I invite everyone to look into the face of the other and to see that he (or she) has a soul, a story and a life: He (or she) is a person and God loves him (or her) as He loves me. (B 16)

The paradox at the heart of every human life -- Catholic or otherwise -- is that we are both ordinary and extraordinary at one and the same time. We have so much in common with each other and yet we are all special, we are all unique. We are all of the genus homo, and yet we are all individuals.

(Joseph Pearce, biographer of *The Unmasking of Oscar Wilde*)

I'm speaking to and about everyone- and to and about no one!

- In some ways, *everyone* is alike.
- In some ways, *some* people are alike.
- In some ways, *each* person is unique.

How Gender Identity and Self-Worth Develop: Self-Identification Q & A Process

Re: Both Inter-Personal and Intra-Personal Experiences and Responses

Do you see what I see? Do I see what you see? Who do you say that I am?

(The face and voice of our caregiver(s) *mirror* the Answers).

- **Who *am* I?**
- **Who do others say that I am?**
- **Who do I say that I am?**
- **How do/will I let my self “identity/labeling” affect:**
 - *what I do?*
 - *how I choose to live?*

Is anybody there? Does anybody see what I see? Does anybody care?

(John Adams, 1776)

“If I speak, I am condemned. If I stay silent, I am damned!”

Dilemma of Jean Valjean (*Les Miserables*)

Self ID & Worth Q & A:

- How- and how well- do Dad and Mom treat me?
- How- and how well- does Mom treat Dad, and does Dad treat Mom?
- How- and how well- do Dad and Mom treat other boys or men- including my and their own brothers and fathers?
- How- and how well- do Dad and Mom treat other girls or women- including my and their own sisters and mothers?
- How- and how well- do Dad and Mom treat these others...*compared with me?*
- *Is it good how I and others are treated?*

Key Q's:

- *Do I deserve love?*
- *Am I loveable?*
- *Do others deserve my love?*
- *How well do I know how to be loved and to love?*

“Caught” *and* “Taught”: Identity and Worth are “Caught”- by experience and example- as well as “Taught” with words

Self Q & A:

- Am I loved? (*Five Love Languages* by Chapman)
- Am I “adorable”?
- Is it *good* that I am?
- What *is* a boy or a girl?
- Am I a boy or a girl? Is that *good*? Am I *good enough* as I am?
- How do boys/girls act? How am I *supposed* to act? How *well (good)* do I act as a boy/girl?
- What do men/women do? How do they act? How *well (good)* do I act as a man/ woman?

What Influences the Development and Persistence of SSA?

1. Genetic, Biological Influences:

- Born That Way?”
 - No Scientific Evidence to Support This “Theory”
- Possibly “Inherited” Characteristics
 - Temperament
 - Emotional Arousability (especially Anxiety, Depression)
- Gender *Atypical* Aptitudes/Attributes/ Weaknesses/illnesses
 - “Sports Wound”
 - Peer incompatibility/rejection/harrassment

2. Risk Factor Model: Experienced/Perceived Influences

- Neglect or Mistreatment by same gender parent.
- Neglect or Mistreatment by same gender siblings and or peers.
- Neglect, Abuse or Over-involvement by opposite gender parent.
- Neglect or Mistreatment by opposite gender siblings and or peers.
- Sexual Abuse (emotional, verbal and/or physical) – opposite or same-sex for females.

3. Possible Consequences of *perceived/experienced* mistreatment:

- *Emotional Sunburn*
- Weak same gender identification: “Compared with (significant persons of the same gender) I’m not very good at being like (or one of) him/her, a boy/girl, man/woman.”
- ...or dis-identification: “I don’t admire- or it’s not safe- so I don’t want to be like him/her, etc.”
- Insecurity with Male and/or Female “Love”
- Atypical opposite gender identification: “I’m more like- or more comfortable being like or with- a person of the (safer, more admirable) opposite gender.”
- *Emotional/Relational Over-Dependence (vs. Inter-Dependence)*
- Becoming “...orphans of living parents”: “Some children, are so deprived of a father or mother that they are condemned to be in fact orphans of living parents.”
(JP II- Letter to Families)

4. Risk Factor “Un-Coda”:

- *Unmet needs*
- *Unhealed hurts*
- *Unprocessed feelings*
- *Unresolved relationships*
- *Unclear boundaries*
- *Unrealistic hopes and fears*
- *Unmanaged co-occurring (co-morbid) difficulties- including compulsions & addictions*
- **E.G.: Unmet needs** (3 A’s: Attention, Affection, Affirmation; also Admiration, Approval)- to be “Cherished. **Unhealed hurts** (pain of rejection, abandonment, not being good enough). **Unprocessed feelings** (anger, sadness, sorrow, shame). **Unresolved relationships** (with parent(s), other adults, sibs, peers, past or present “love objects”, need to forgive? perhaps, reconcile: **iff** possible and

wise!) **Unrealistic hopes and fears** (*expecting self and/or others to be perfect/ideal; idolizing/idealizing, then demonizing others; expecting the worst- e.g., rejection, and cooperating with its happening -self-fulfilling*). **Unmanaged Co-occurring difficulties** (*anxiety, personality, compulsions and addictions; preexisting/coexisting with and/or consequential to SSA*).

5. SSA “Hints” at need for relational resolution, forgiveness, healing, growth

1. SSA to older persons may imply (→) “Father/Mother Hunger”
2. SSA to younger persons may → Self empathy/pity for “idealized younger self”
3. SSA to “hyper”-masculine/feminine person → weak body image, “peer hunger,” perceived inadequacy
4. Lack of OSA may → Insecure with “OS love”
5. Habitual/compulsive/addictive sexual and/or other behaviors may → “self-medicating” **ASPHALTED** issues
6. Attraction to repetitive, “abusive” SS relationships may → abuse (emotional, physical, sexual) in one’s youth

Have I been ASPHALTED?

- Anxious
- Sad/Sorrowful
- Pained (physical/emotional)
- Hungry
- Angry
- Lonely
- Tired
- Elated/Energetic
- Deflated/Depressed/Discouraged

Am I (a) WUHHSS?

- Worthless
- Useless
- Helpless
- Hopeless
- Shameful
- So(a)lo(ne)

Miserable one that I am! Who will deliver me from this mortal body? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ Our Lord! (Romans 7: 24-25)

*What do we do **Here and Now**: We need to live our lives and deal with leftovers from the past as we are in the present- not as we were when our unfortunate experiences happened.*

Guidelines for Achieving Affective (Psycho-Sexual) Maturity and Freedom**

- 1) Two experiential certainties make a person *affectively free and mature* :
 - *Having already been loved.*
 - *Knowing how to love.*
- 2) Having “*reconciled*” with difficulties with past experiences and significant persons.
- 3) Realistic *recognition* of one’s past as a *grace*, and a reason for *gratitude* not just *lament*.

** Pontifical Work for Ecclesiastical Vocations (1997): *New Vocations for a New Europe*
- 4) Awareness of any weaknesses, problems, or “*inconsistencies* in the affective-sexual area” and their “resolution” →
 - *Conscious of the (emotional) roots of the problem*
 - *Perceives weakness as extraneous, unwanted, and unacceptable (i.e., committed to persistent, struggle against its influence)*
 - *Inclinations happen less and less and/or are less and less preoccupying or life-disturbing*

How do we ease the pain of our *emotional sunburn*?

Speak the Truth in Love: especially to ourselves - and God!

Clean out the *Leftovers*:

Q: Is what I’m feeling (more) about my *young(-er)* or my *present self*?

4 Question Challenge:

1. What am I feeling /doing? (What else am I feeling/doing?)
2. (Why?) What leads me to feel/ act this way?
3. What can I do about it?
4. What will I do about it?

Learn to *say* what we mean and *mean* what we say!

- Use *I Statements*- *i.e.*, what I think, feel, want, hear, see, sense, imagine, etc.:
- Use *I Statements* with ourselves: “I’m a *WUHHSS*”

- ➔ *“When I act unchastely, I think I’m worthless and I feel ashamed.”*
- ➔ *“When I lose my temper, I withdraw, am alone- and feel lonely.”*

– Use *I Statements* with God: E.G. *“I believe/know that You love me, but I don’t experience your love!”*

- *“Martha: “Lord if you had been here, Lazarus would not have died!”*
- *“If you really loved me then/now...you would (not) have...!”*
- *“Since this happened, I have difficulty believing that you love me/him/her/us/ them!”*
- *“I believe (have heard) that you love me, but I don’t feel/experience your love?”*

Speak the Truth in Love: “I am awesomely, wonderfully made! (Ps 139: 14)

Hear the Love in the Truth:

- *“I do not condemn you! Go and...

 - *Sin no more!*”
 - *Cease doing evil and learn to do good!*”
 - *Do good and avoid evil!*”*
- *“I forgive you! Go and...”*
- *“I love you! Go and...

 - *Love Me, your neighbors, and your self!*”*

Will you allow your difficulties to be Stumbling Blocks or Stepping Stones?

“Lord, I’m not who I want to be. I’m not who I need to be. But I thank you that I’m not just who I used to be!”

(Fr. Benedic Groeschel, CFR)

Who am I ? What do I want? Who do I want to become?

*“We Have the Gift and Task of Living As Sons (and Daughters) of God” –B16
...and of living as Brothers and Sisters of Christ- and each other!*

“Be(come) what you are!” (JP II-Familiaris Consortio, # 86)

“Be what you are and be that well!” (St. Francis de Sales)

“We are called upon not to be successful, but to be faithful!” (Mother Teresa)

A Prayer for Serenity

Lord Jesus Christ, Wonderful Counselor, and Healer of Body, Soul, Mind and Heart. Grant me the humility to accept what I cannot do, or ought not do, the courage to do what I can and ought to do, and the wisdom to know the difference. Help me learn to live one day at a time, take one step at a time, enjoy each moment at a time, and embrace any necessary or unavoidable suffering as my path to your peace. Help me learn to let go of the good that I once had, or that I want to have, and to accept the good that You are offering me here and now. Help me learn to love, as You do, each person and myself as we are, and as You call us to be. And help me learn to trust that You will make all things work together for our good, if I keep trying to do Your will. May I experience a measure of Your peace and joy in this life, and the fullness of Your love, when I am finally at home, with You, forever. AMEN