

Nature vs. Fertility, God vs. Science

Philippe Sollers

Translated from French by Armine Kotin Mortimer

On simple request, the *Nature and Fertility Association*—green light for our times, gynecology of the future!—serves women who are candidates for insemination. The president is called Dufretin (Smallfry—and I’m not making this up). The dosage, three sperm straws, costs three hundred fifty francs, reimbursable by health insurance. Which gives rise to this wonderful letter from Anne-Marie, a biologist, director of the Schuh Laboratory (*shoe!* Shoe for the mischievous foot! Slipper of satin! Transvaginal satan!): “We have a small stock of sperm straws in storage and can answer to your needs, either for complete sperm straws for intra-cervical inseminations or for thawed sperm for intra-uterine or intra-peritoneal inseminations. Of course we check for the HIV-AIDS antibody directly in each sample.” The Center for the Study of the Conservation of Sperm and Oocytes has expressed some reservations about this sale to the public.

But this is just the latest incident in the intense rivalry between public and private agencies. The public agencies cull the sperm from married men who are fathers, a kitchen-table technique that considerably lengthens the waiting list for clients. *Nature and Fertility*, on the other hand, as Anne-Marie Schuh explains, recruits donors “among young university students, which is an indicator of quality when you realize that sperm is more active in men of twenty-five to thirty years.” So there! Our stallions are the best! More dynamic, less inhibited, more quivering-available, more diploma-ed, *more academic!* And the need for scholarships gets settled at the same time! The selection of these young men (yum!), who used to be turbulent, unstable, even sometimes frankly revolutionary, answers to the obligation for social and democratic integration. Oh, this would be good for Nancy.

How are they identified? During classes? When they leave? According to their gymnastic qualities? Their spelling? Their political ideas? (I hope they are all fraternal and anti-racist, lovers of nature and flowers, but also with a sense for authority and enterprise, even a hint of a desire to defend national identity that doesn’t prevent them from being dedicated, globalist, cosmopolitan Europeans.) Are their philosophical capacities examined (“In three minutes, give me your interpretation of Plato’s *Symposium*”)? Do they take care to avoid any religious or especially atheistic contagion (not to mention the old Marxist garbage)? Do they haphazardly transmit (I pray it is not the case) Catholic, protestant, Jewish, orthodox, Muslim, Buddhist, lay-mystical, or even sero-negative homosexual qualities? Are the noted perverts, the hardened obsessives, the latent paranoiacs, the definitive manic-depressives conscientiously eliminated (I hope so)? Isn’t there a second-chance drawing for the subscribers to *Lesbia*? Are the duration and assurance of the ejaculation taken into consideration? Its febrility? Its abundance? Do they classify the straws as “spontaneous masturbation, aptitude for fantasy” or “assisted massage, pornographic gadgets needed”? If I were a client of MAP (Medically Assisted Procreation, on the model of SME, Small and Medium Enterprises, or UPM, Urban Pari Mutuel), I would insist on the most monotheistic substance arising from the deepest layer of the individual, without visual pollution. But the image repertoire? Is it inventoried? Classified? Hierarchicized? Do these boys reach the spasm that liberates and produces their liquid merchandise by a simple cerebral invocation to Nature, to Fertility? Alas, isn’t an impure, dubious, bizarre, often frankly abject thought almost always mixed in? One would like to think not. Are the donors at least educated about this? It would be more PC, politically correct, popularly conforming. Help us, Anne-Marie, saint twice over! The fruit of your sperm straws is blessed! Long live private enterprise, youth, rapidity, quantity, quality! Long live life, and damn the pope!

Scene à la Molière in a chic clinic in the heart of the eighth arrondissement in Paris, Elyséesperm. The client who is going for an abortion meets, in the elevator, the woman who is going to be inseminated: “Good morning, Madame Delovule!” “Good morning, Madame Destrompes!”

Frénard, stiffly: “It seems he really likes the sarcastic tone of your reports. He thinks you have talent and you make him laugh. But don’t overdo it.”

Nancy: “Do you think the nurses masturbate them?”

“I suppose it could happen. Rarely.”

“Like this?”

“Maybe a little faster. It probably depends on the guy.”

“Like this?”

“It’s possible.”

“Do the women give them money at the same time?”

“Maybe.”

“They wave the bills under their noses? Their *wages*? Like a treat given to Duke, their doggie-woggie?”

“Sure.”

“Do you think the women do it in pairs? One with a *Nature* t-shirt? The other with *Fertility* panties?”

“Maybe.”

“You think they keep a little for themselves when they like the guy? For their girlfriends? Sell the best on the black market? With a leaflet?”

“Word of mouth.”

“And if they were cheating? Selling a turkey for an eagle?”

“Funnier and funnier.”

“I saved you a treat? Nice, cute, timid, well built, not at all stupid, very good at financial operations?”

“Future director of generalized transfusions, obstetrician or gynecologist, better yet. Circularity, more vicious.”

“*The medical body.*”

“There you go!”

It’s hard to imagine an association called *Culture and Sterility*. Although... I ought to write up the bylaws for the benefit of the Holy See, whose vocation it is, in sum... The ecclesiastical bodies and the religious orders would perhaps be interested... Except that we are constantly returned to the control of a God as unique creator and fertilizer, necessarily confused with Nature... No getting out of it, except by the attempt to infinitely short-circuit God himself in three persons, so badly misunderstood, the Incarnation being in reality nothing but a formidable and inadmissible Contraception. Hence the flood of misconceptions and animosity that masks its declared intention. Major scandal! Horrifying blasphemy! Isn’t it the devil’s own purpose to counteract the design of divine genality in the human tide? The loyal Christ is always being called a super-Devil by the religious people in his clan, and it’s understandable... “Before Abraham was, I am...” Ooh! He claims to have *been* before the father of us all! Shame! Stones! Convulsion! Rejection!... “They hated me without cause...” Are you kidding? Because of the Cause.

Oh, it’s complicated. I artificially fabricate nature, I develop fertilization, I interrupt the so-called course of nature if I wish, I dominate nature, I dig my grave in it, I go down into the cellar to bury the fetuses I engendered in the attic, but these thousands of grains invested for nothing or,

worse yet, able to resuscitate, tend to give me migraines. All the more so since it seems I came from there myself. I'd better question Mother a little more than I have so far, but now it's impossible, she is very sick, poor thing, and besides, she won't be able to tell me anything exactly. No more than Father, long since departed, discreetly, without explanations about these things... Children remain answerless and fabricate children themselves to pass the question on to them... The parent: "Don't you know? Well, I know." The child: "But *what* do you know, actually?" The parent: "I know I look like someone who knows. As for the rest, it can't be said in words." The child: "So everything is just appearances?" The parent: "Perhaps." The child: "You gave me life because you wanted to reproduce an illusion?" The parent: "Oh no. Look, we have Love, God, the Messiah, History, Society, Science, the Ideal, Knowledge, Progress, Growth." The child: "And Money?" The parent: "You've cost me plenty! Maybe you would rather die of hunger in Africa, India, South America? Work in the mines starting at age seven, with rickets? Be sold for a slave? Be fattened in the forest and then butchered and inserted into the high-rent district?" The child: "No! No!" The parent: "Give me a kiss." The child: "Later."

To whom do I owe my life, then, and is it really correct to speak of a debt? Are they trying to persuade me, along with that enormous novel of the divine family, that I owe my modest but irrefutable existence to Technique, the rather special sister of Science? Technique, which brought me forth, gave rise to me, planted me, or let me subsist? God and the Mother have become a single calculating Womb? The great unpredictable He hidden behind Her was really She?

As long as I could imagine myself the result of passion, misunderstanding, chance, drunkenness, conflict, or even hatred, in short as an error arising out of equivocation, double entendres, or approximations, it seems to me my freedom, though difficult, to be sure, and harsh, inaccessible, was guaranteed. On the other hand, if I am the technical result from a clearly expressed desire, my passions have no right to be, however living and feeling I may be. If I am a consequence of passions (or, why not, of Sin, of Evil), my reason can function as my own. If reason gave birth to me coldly, without malice, not even examining the possibility of malice, but because it wanted to, because it's done and it's like that, my reason has a Master and I will never be capable of the act that cast me into respiration and perception. I cannot conceive myself the way I was conceived, with a syringe, even less can I forgive my hygienic Demiurge, who, pocketing his honorarium, couldn't care less about the later events of my life.

I have no choice but to think that I have been desired by the Dealer in Death, just as the very ugliest of the least of the believers can always tell herself, with satisfaction, that God so wished it. Death, as a result, becomes my natural and social contract, instead of being a tragedy, an ignominy, or an injustice. My birth certificate coincides with my death certificate, and it would not be reasonable for me, a little drop in the immense human tide, to raise the slightest objection about it. "But we won't say anything, everything will remain confidential and secret." Worse and worse! Before, at least, there were two versions, though contrasting, dubious, and confused—Mother's and Father's. Now there will be only one, the version of the card file. My becoming an embryo resonates like an executioner's blade.

You claim it was always like that? No, not at all; not the same outlook. You eliminate the lie: you are forbidding the truth. You attach truth to this point: you are generalizing the lie. No more evading the issue, alibis, excuses, giddiness, poetic surpluses, metaphors, approximations, fate, or else it's yackety-yak reserved for simpletons on show. The new existant has only to idolize his chemical version. He is sent back eternally to this wall: clack! Substance produced substance. All the rest: Spectacle. No effects without causes! Technical causes! Talk all you want, 'cause...! The great Goddess is here among us again, this time without mystery, and her humble daughter and servant hastens toward the neighborhood laboratory holding to her chest her bag containing the sperm straw coupon duly numbered, approved, stamped, certified (at least, so she thinks), which is going to

avenge her for this permanent sensation of emptiness, unreality, nothingness, lack of being, lumps in her throat, nausea...

Poor hunched silhouette! Genes! Stable! Bethlehem Welcome Center! As an editorialist recently said, in a knowing move: "On all these matters, Rome has said too much." Quite right. It would be better to keep quiet, or rather to speak properly. But then, what a mushroom cloud! What a crime against humanity! The Good News in person! Alleluia! No need to continue! The kingdom of heaven is open! Drop everything! Live the way birds sing! Alas, alas! What about production? The stock exchange? Profit margins? Publicity? The big jobs? Research? Work? Social life? And our vast fin-de-siècle program, Worldwide Bébé-Plus?

So the *Nature and Fertility Association* has been closed? Never mind, it will reappear under other names. Maturation and Conscience; Matter and Memory; Being and Time; Being and Nothingness; Dissemination; Words and Things; The Straw and the Grain; The Bee and the Architect; The Abyss; The Human-Faced Test Tube; Birth on the Installment Plan; The Raw and the Cooked... There will be a Yalta for sperm straws, just as there was one for mega-supermarkets (people protested less about the Ravensbrück supermarket than about the Carmelites at Auschwitz), but the one responsible for the ravages by virus-proxy will once again be the pope, his moral responsibility just asking to be confirmed. Condemning abortion, against all compassion, he blocks the opening in the communicating vessels, delays exchanges, ties up the future, imprisons women, forbids them uterine compensation, appropriates the monopoly of the Womb against Industry, in short, wants nothing to do with the new Era. Most of the faithful, thank goodness, are undisciplined on this point (nine hundred six million Catholics in the process of evolving, but still eight hundred million problematic Muslims).

Aha, graffiti have just appeared on walls in Belgrade: "Vatican, satanic State." Well said. The Italian minister of Foreign Affairs, a socialist, is a man who's into various projects, each more modern and more expensive than the last (which makes the underside of the séance tables extremely profitable). His latest idea: a metro under Venice, a funicular above Saint Marks Square. Annoyed by apostolic reticence, he denounces the "pro-Croatian lobby of the Holy See." To which *Famiglia Cristiana*—a popular magazine, sacristy-syrupy—answers that five out of seven ministers in the European Community are Freemasons with designs on the East. Boom! And off we go! The latest really big show is an evening television program against the Mafia organized by the Mafia itself, in Palermo. How tense their faces are! Serious! Intent! The story was especially demonstrative: it was full of terrorized folks closing their doors and refusing to talk, arrogant little people behind their counters, while the commentators never stopped talking at top speed to muddy the waters that in any case were never clear. Want a strictly authentic news item? A thirteen-year-old girl throws the baby she has just given birth to in secret out of the window of her parents' apartment. He's smashed to pieces on the pavement ten meters below, his umbilical cord still wrapped around him. He has lived for ten minutes. For ordinary murders, open your newspaper, page three.

"Are you for freedom in such and such a country?"

"Yes, in principle, but that depends on the number of deaths covered by the information services."

"Chaos, crisis, crash?"

"Excellent."

"However, publicity is slow in starting up again."

"An optical effect. Everything is publicity. Do you remember the day before yesterday's tragedy?"

"Barely."

"You see, things aren't so bad."

Inseminated of the future, let not your hearts be hardened against us... Euthanize us gently... Dinosaurs we are, agreed. Conceived in the promiscuity of a banal coitus, not necessarily desired, badly shared, oblique, obtuse, stuttering, stammering, or, on the contrary, too fast, explosive, abused. In the olden style, what? In the primitive cave! O, mutant robots of the labs, realize that it might have been exhilarating to think in the first person singular not yet collectivized. I owe my life to myself? It's mine? Mine alone? It doesn't belong to God, or to the universal Mother, or the Cosmos, or Chemistry, or my Employer, or my Family, or my Friends, or Television? How interesting to have come so far, to have forged an improbable passage for nothing through the obscure forest! What intoxicating luck! What a poker hand!

"The inseminated of the future, as you call us, demand a real novel."

"About family? And with good reason! The permanent best-seller of the future: *In Search of the Lost Family*. Watchword: families I love you! Talk to us about old things from the past! We want to be loved as if we were not *induced*! As if we came from another world! Papa! Mama! Their encounter! Their flash! Their romance! Everything! Their worries! Their anxieties about Me! Brought with the wind! My narcissistic fiber in God! Hurry!"

"Regression?"

"Massive!"

The newspapers: "The Bible tells how Sarah, Abraham's wife, had her first child at more than ninety years old. The incredulity evoked by this story should however be reconsidered in the light of the exploits of science. In Italy, a woman of sixty-one, Liliana Cantadori, gave birth to her first child, a little boy weighing three kilos. The pregnancy was obtained thanks to a fertilized oocyte from a woman donor. Professor Jean Cohen explains: 'Implanting a fertilized egg only requires a receptive uterine mucus membrane. To achieve that with a woman after menopause, a hormone treatment is needed, first estrogens, then progesterone for several days. Any uterus of sufficient volume with a prepared mucus membrane can receive a fertilized egg.'"

"I like children, I like being pregnant, and I like to give birth. That's why I decided to become a surrogate mother," says Amy Bishop, thirty-one, five feet ten and a half inches, thin, blond, blue-eyed. She lives in Redford, Michigan, near Detroit, with her husband Scott. She became a surrogate mother because she and her husband had difficulty making ends meet. She is working now for Noel Keane in New York. Keane is an energetic, stocky man with a square jaw; he can show you the four hundred thirty babies already produced, thanks to his efforts, in France, Japan, Germany, Italy, England, Australia, Argentina, Canada, Greece, Israel, Switzerland, Norway, the Netherlands, and, of course, the United States. His fee is ninety-six thousand francs. The surrogate mother's fee is sixty thousand to one hundred twenty thousand francs. On top of which there are various costs. In all, a child costs between one hundred forty thousand and three hundred thousand francs. Everything is included: selection of the surrogate mother (from photos and psychological and genetic profiles), signature of the contract, medical examination of the parents, removal of the sperm from the father, fertilization of the surrogate mother, blood test of the surrogate mother during the pregnancy to verify that she is carrying the child of the man whose sperm she received, and finally, the birth of the baby, filing of the adoption papers, and a possible supplement for the delivery of the baby to the house. Noel Keane told us with a cheery wink: "I saw a white woman give birth to black triplets. Nature had perfectly accomplished its mission."

"Would nature have accomplished her mission in the same way if a black women was to give birth to white triplets?"

Our question seems to surprise Noel Keane. He doesn't answer, he gets up, the interview is over. In his luxurious waiting room, we see his very latest clients, a timid young couple coming from Hong Kong.

Jeff is playing with his airplanes on the lawn. Never enough cars, never enough planes. Take-off roll, take-off, then again take-off roll, take-off. But here on earth, in this life, he'll have to make his way like everybody else, step by step, labyrinth of false doors and false mirrors. He takes his run up, turns, gallops, revs up, lifts off, glides using his arms, attacks, swoops down, lands, falls on the grass, gets up, laughs. A simple game of air, of volume, of expending energy, of overcoming sound, of eliminating competitors...

"Can we buy a new plane?"

"Did you finish your reading?"

"Yes."

"Your additions and your divisions?"

"Half." The miniature planes have to make noise, get warm, twinkle like the ones that fly through the night, white and red lights, slow satellites. "Where are they going?"

"To Rome."

"Can we go to Rome?"

"One of these days."

"My favorites are the planes in New York."

"They're the same as the ones here."

"There are more over there."

The strange solicitude of adults toward children is pure cruelty, obliging someone who depends on them, just as they themselves depended on their parents, to redo the hurdles, to run into the same barriers, to struggle with the same problems, all of that, naturally, out of love. Mothers are the guardians and the specialists of this legal torture. It is their revenge: recognized and irrefutable, highly appreciated, valorized, sacred. Society: an enterprise for secret maternal enjoyment, guaranteed with a radiant smile, whatever the regime. Unconsciously, of course, or rather in filigree. Envy and the spirit of revenge move the sun, the stars, atoms, cells, impulses of the heart. Any serious physicist will tell you: matter is constantly fleeing, devouring itself, hating itself. Fulminating and furious, gigantic or microscopic, torrential or crawling, its movements mean nothing else. Repose, grace, pleasure, harmony, thought, music? Miracles! Not at all provided for in the program! Senseless! Baseless! The hypothesis of the divine is supported only by the miraculous.

Hatred older than love... If God created the world, if he is the God of the universe, it follows that he can only in effect sacrifice his Son to pacify his own unshackled creation. If God is Creator, he is criminal and cruel, he provokes our infinite indignation, without which he would hold sway among us (but this rendezvous, as we all know, is put off till later because of our blamable weakness). If God is neither Creator nor Procreator, it is correct to maintain that nothing is impossible for God, since he does not exist, whereas, if he existed, he would be fantastically evil, implicated in illnesses, agonies, infirmities, deformities, massacres. Beatrice did not think it wise to reveal the fiber of cosmic hell to Dante. "But God died in his human form only to buy back our sins, and anyway all's well that ends well because he resuscitates!" Fine. So you are making babies with the unstated intention that they should resuscitate? Go tell that to a Mother.

"Oh no, I just wanted an animated doll, in the garden, in the sun; a little thing all for me, wiggling, consoling, loving, so I can tuck him into his bed at night!"

"You've never thought about the decay, the bones, the ashes to come?"

"Of course not! You're sick! Only Love!"

"And you are sure that you didn't wish for Death through Love?"

"Oh maybe, after all... But what else can we do?"

Good question. And off we go with the usual preaching. Arise, orators of the centuries! And a return to circumcision or baptism to reawaken in people's minds the dubious and miserable calculation of the flesh. You can't keep yourself from reproducing yourself? Okay, we'll transmute

that into unction.

“But circumcision and baptism have nothing to do with it! We are supposed to live to the end of time in our own flesh, Promised Land, New Temple, coming of the Messiah, New Jerusalem!”

“Heavenly, heavenly.”

“Horrid Christian! Deceitful Pagan!”

“Calm down, I beg of you.”

“Not in the least! God *is* fecundity!”

“Come, come.”

“A child if I want it, when I want it, with God, which is to say Myself!”

“You are deforming the Biblical message!”

“So what? Plenitude, multiplication, diffusion, augmentation of the drawing, new editions, *tubes!*”

“But for what purpose?”

“It’s obligatory!”

“Then Death is obligatory?”

“For more money, certainly!”

“Money, Death?”

“Both! Love! Reconciliation of God and Science!”

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