

## On Fashions and Morals

Why a religious movement, which wants to pass on its religious beliefs through its cult, should in its pastoral care emphasize especially culture.

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The issue of fashions and morals is a long burning issue in conservative Catholic milieus. I've never made a secret about my position in regard to this almost always stalled, partially grotesque, often revolting discussion. Consequently, I directly answered the questions that Matthias asked for "The Cathwalk". I am still surprised about the waves I caused by it; this topic obviously touches many people deeply, raises questions and creates problems. Therefore, what I said in the format of an interview in a necessarily short, concise and controversial way, I would now like to explicate, justify and develop further.

Whoever decides to invest a part of his fortune in shares and embarks on the adventure of the stock market, would do well to first decide on a course by which he will get back out - for once someone has entered, he will lose the rationality he had when he had not yet invested. Whether hope on a change of course or craving for higher profits - there are many reasons for losing one's clear sightedness. The same applies when one embarks on the Catholic adventure. One should first define what is not negotiable. For in our secular society, the religious milieu is a peculiar world, and there is a risk that one keeps orientating oneself according to its coordinates, and that one thus loses sight of the broader standards.

I have defined for myself three limits: my friends are not negotiable, my political convictions are not debatable, and my dressing style, as well as that of my family, is of no concern to anyone. On all three points there have been conflicts with religious zealots : the mistrust towards my Jewish friends caused a global Shitstorm for me in 2010/11 under the ridiculous name of "Krahgate". My political opinion - socio-politically I am a classical continental-European conservative, economically an Anglo-Saxon neo-classicalist, and a realist in the sense of Henry Kissinger - was of use to the numerous supporters of the various, outrageous and mutually contradictory conspiracy theories, and, at least in this they were unique, made me a suspicious left-wing. And in terms of clothing, style, and taste, my dissent can be noticed the first glance.

It is of course most of all the clothing of women that is of interest here. And this being the expression of the prevailing image of woman. It starts with the prayer "Ave Maria". Today, "in mulieribus" is in German translated as "among ladies", and not "among woman", because, while in Latin "mulier" is not pejorative, in German "woman" is very much so. That may have been different for 1800 years, but since at least 100 years now it is so, and given that the German language is a living language, the translation "among woman" is not only false, but also a debasement of all woman, including the virgin Mary.

This hostility towards woman has, as far as I can see, two causes : an intellectual one and a sexual one. Intellectually, the development of gender roles is simply not understood. Until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, economic value was mainly determined by physical labor. And since men have simply more muscles than woman, they would earn more money than them, while woman could only just barely earn their upkeep. From this economic imbalance arose a hierarchical imbalance. Today however, economic success is a result of intelligence, creativity and communication. And in this woman are on average better than men, a fact which on an economic basis lacks a corresponding hierarchical relationship. Therefore, one cannot justify this on religious grounds, because religion, at least the Catholic religion, is not opposed to reality but builds upon it : grace builds on nature.

The problems in dealing with women - self-confident, intelligent, overall attractive - also have a sexual cause. The religious milieu suffers from an overemphasis on the Sixth Commandment. This is being justified theologically by the "Materias-gravis" teaching, according to which all violations of the sixth commandment are serious sins, and according to which therefore the sixth commandment takes a special place in the Decalogue. This theory has already been refuted in the 1950s; it is false and turns the Christian message into its opposite. From this, however, flows an unhealthy prudishness, which makes any unprejudiced dealings with sexuality impossible and which produces uncertain, repressed and horny men. In front of woman, they try to compensate for their weakness by machismo, and their demand for female subordination is more like a call in the forest than an expression of true strength and sovereignty. And that there are always ugly, disappointed and embittered women, who on top of that jeer when weak men work it out on their attractive, optimistic and joyful fellow females, is unfortunately nothing new.

Both shortcomings accumulate in the discussion of fashions. Because fashion is, as the name suggests, time-dependent. On the macro level, it is the expression of social trends, visions and hierarchies. On the micro level, it is a means of expressing one's own character as well as one's belonging to a group. The change in gender roles is reflected in the fashion of women, and this since the 1920s, which is why for so long there have been absurd church positions on this topic. We also see the victory over an exaggerated repressive sexual morality in the length of skirts. The attempt to undo the developments of the last eleven decades by imposing dress rules is clearly not appropriate. It turns a religious movement into a folk costume club. It also ignores the individuality of the faithful, by creating a kind of uniform. Thus they confirm the criticism of their opponents and exposes their own religious matters of concerns.

The theological justifications presented as helpful arguments do not make it any better. Against women's pants it is objected that these are "men's clothing", and women should wear only "women's clothing". Where does theology get its realization that trousers are "men's clothing"? Certainly not from revelation, for that does not deal with such questions. Theology is not able to define what are men's clothing, and what are women's clothing, but it must accept this from other sciences. And here, only social research needs to be considered. For this works empirically. And the quantified experience is clear : we produce and sell more women's pants than skirts. Thus, the statement that trousers are "men's clothing" does not hold.

The "moral" arguments, which are always eagerly forthcoming, don't lead us any further either. Of course, in the 1920s, an exposed shoulder was an outrage. But that is different today. In the fifteenth century the mother of God was happily shown in paintings "without a top" – which was unthinkable in the 19th century. What is morally considered appropriate and what is not open to change. As a Catholic one should reject extremes, but otherwise one should go with the times. Freezing your own standards at an arbitrary time is intellectually poor and by no means a religious commandment.

Christianity is not a religion of law. The Council of Trent canonized the proposition that all Old Testament food related regulations lost their validity upon Christ's death and that the Church does not have the power to issue new ones - and what applies to food also applies to clothing. Whoever, then thinks himself able to extract dress rules from his faith, practices with great zeal a religion which he does not understand.

However, the remarkable interest in this fashion topic cannot solely be explained based on a theological misunderstanding. No "traditionalist" Internet forum comes without several relevant threads. I remember the German "Kreuzforum.net", in which a family father from lower Austria had a real go against ladies pantyhoses. These were not only morally out of the question, but also to be rejected because of hygiene, because of a strong sweat formation in the female genital area – which

goes to show what sexual fantasies these moralists are up to. Discussing fashion is, it cannot be otherwise explained, the valve through which many sexually unfulfilled and repressed men articulate their dreams and impulses - and their sexual hunger emerges when some girl somewhere can be "rebuked"; one should really point out to this type of men how embarrassing, how pathetic, yes, how perverse that is.

That is the point. I don't criticize those who simply don't put much value on elegance. I attack those who condemn people who do not dress themselves according to their dress code and those who put themselves morally above them. Whoever thinks of being able to use Catholicism in order to come up with a dress code is stupid, repressed and embittered. And it is necessary that those who are not like that speak up, and that they don't remain silent and just comply in order to keep the false peace.

Fashion is a complex phenomenon. Fashion is art, culture, it is an individual expression, confession to one's own social origin, but also an existential protection. Whether one emphasizes the practical, the aesthetic or the social is an individual decision. Personally, I think that a religious movement that wants to promote its faith through cult should emphasize culture in its pastoral work. Reason, beauty, charity are characteristics of properly understood Christianity. At least with regards to fashion, there is not much of this to be seen among traditional Catholics. The sack-like leg-covers, happily combined with some hiking boots and a raincoat, betrays their religious ugliness. Who wants to join the club of ugly people? The church needs fresh, cheerful and courageous women, well-dressed, pretty to look at, self-confident and sexy – then men would grow stronger by themselves.