

Married Couples' Perception of Unfaithfulness

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ABSTRACT: The postmodern society finds itself now more than ever, under the sign of sexuality, people becoming more and more "open" to everything that implies "sex". Temptations are more and more explicit both on the level of fashion, makeup, music, and on the level of leisure and holidays. Sex has become so present in our culture that it became a part of the air we breathe in (Weeks 1986, 4). Moral and legal constraints that once made unfaithfulness a sin, shameful or a felony, are now gone. Today's society almost does not constrain you to be faithful, only the love for the spouse being able to do so.

KEY WORDS: marital couple, faithfulness, unfaithfulness, sexuality, typologies of unfaithfulness, explanatory theories

Introduction

Although today we decide when, where, and most importantly, whom we want to get married to, the extramarital relations have become more numerous than ever, contemporary unfaithfulness producing an unsuspected power. The postmodern couple gives an increasingly greater importance to sexual performances, the main talk, now more than ever, being "sexual satisfaction" or "sexual appetite". In general, when talking about the life partner, unfaithfulness is seen as an especially important and very serious matter, but when talking about our own self, the postmodern individual is more permissive.

This article's main intent is not to prejudge, stating if the love affairs are good or bad, nor to discuss people who are affected by unfaithfulness as

“betrayed” or “betrayed.” Nor do we want to give suggestions about remaining together or divorcing after discovering unfaithfulness. We have intended to explore some typologies that capture the problem of unfaithfulness from the perspective of a dysfunctional couple, accentuating some explanatory theories from a bio-psycho-social perspective.

1. Typologies of unfaithfulness

Sexual unfaithfulness appears when the intimacy and/or sexual needs of one or both spouses are not satisfied in the said relationship and when the constraints on unfaithfulness are either weak or missing (Rasmusen, Kilborne 2007, 11).

1.1. *Typologies focused on the individual*

From the **individual's** point of view, Tordjman has outlined a micro typology of people “prone” to unfaithfulness from the perspective of unconscious mechanism of the self and his “Oedipus” fixations.

“**The Neurotic**” cannot detach himself from his past, the infantile pleasure demanding for a repetition, and the unsatisfied desires demanding for satisfaction (Stekel 1997, 82). Such people cannot accept a stable relationship being unable to differentiate lust from satisfaction. So, for them, unfaithfulness is just a mere desperate try to find the childhood emotional climate, which explains their complacency in platonic relationships. Neurotics avoid sexual situations that seem difficult to them, because they cannot withstand these.

“**The Bovarist**” reveals herself as an unfaithful typology by engaging in numerous love affairs, hoping that the illusion will correspond to reality (Mitrofan 1989, 126-128).

Feeling over neglected by the spouse, “**the narcissist**” wants to find in the extramarital partner the mirror that amplifies the facets of his personality. Such people do not search for a sexual act that much, but more of an impermanent love, the compliments and the partner's libido being essential, thus helping to reinforce the self-value. When a narcissistic personality falls in love, the idealization of the subject of their love may focus on physical beauty, power, wealth, or fame (Kernberg 2009, 239).

“The Masochist” (as psychological structure not as a sexual abnormality) is constantly unhappy with herself and with the other, cultivating the inferiority complex and the culpability feelings in adulterous experiences, without a future. Falling in love, as a teenager, with an idealized but unavailable man, shall influence the entire love life of the woman. Thus, the masochist enters, with predilection, in relationships with married man, situation that satisfies her need to suffer – by sharing the “object of her love” with another woman. Other times just offers herself to any wanting man, being a sure prey for seducers (Kernberg 2009, 224).

The exacerbated manifestation of sexuality may be the expression of an attempt to overpass an inferiority or inadequacy feeling, this taking the shape of the **“Don Juan”** complex (Cristea 2001, 417). „Don Juan” is often a tragic character, that frantically looks for the divided maternal image, and, as none corresponds to his ideal image, he despises all the “successors” whom he abandons. His feminine correspondent searches, in her successive partners, for the inaccessible ideal of the paternal image. Although she manifests tenderness towards her husband, this type of a woman reaches climax only in an adulterous relationship.

1.2. Typologies depending on the type of affair

Following the pattern of the affair, John Cuber has pointed out three types of such relationships. **The unfaithful relationships with a “compensating” character** are those that appear because of a conflictual marriage, frequent misunderstandings, and incompatibilities between partners. Relationships as such, most often imply, emotional involvement and may become the starting point for a divorce and, respectively, entering a new marriage with the new sexual partner. **The unfaithful relationships with a “replacing” character** develop as a result of a long period separation between spouses (imprisonment of one of the spouses, military service, extended travelling), without emotional involvement, being only on short term. Last but not least, **the “polygamic” unfaithful relationships** (“open” marriage) appear as a result of the satisfactory companionship between spouses but are due to one or the other’s inclinations to go beyond the strict frame of marital sexuality. Often, such relationships presume an agreement between spouses who are free to choose the sexual partners they want, provided that they keep the unity of

the marriage (Rădulescu 1999, 314 – 316). From O’Neills viewpoint, the “open” couple means “an earnest and open relationship between two people, based on a freedom and identity equal for both partners”, involving a verbal, intellectual and emotional agreement from both partners (1972, 41). Their research has indicated that a major problem of modern marital couples is the incapacity to reach intimacy and grow in a marital environment. In conclusion, the solution is the “open couple,” a relationship characterized by realistic expectations, seizing the moment, respecting personal intimacy, the flexibility of roles, open and honest communication, equality, and trust (O’Neill & O’Neill 1972, 76).

“The one who opens the door” affair is another typology focused on the type of affair that, usually, appears when a relationship reaches the end. Since one spouse does not feel emotionally attached anymore to the partner, the spouse looks towards ending the initial relationship and lays the grounds for the new one. Sometimes, the betrayed partner is relieved that the relationship has ended, other times one may consider that the relationship was normally functioning and is shocked by the fact that the partner wants to end the marriage. The unfaithful have this type of affairs as they find it difficult to tell the partner they want to end the relationship. Sometimes the drive to escape a relationship, without facing the problems, is the one pushing a person to start an affair (Cole, Relate 2005, 83-84).

“The three-legged chair” affair is a long-term affair. In general, most relationships can be compared to a two-legged chair. If the burden in a couple becomes too large, one of the spouses may look for an affair that acts as “a third leg”, that stabilizes the situation. It is even possible that both partners know about the other’s unfaithfulness, but remain together, usually complaining about the other’s unfaithfulness. In fact, the couple needs the affair, as this relieves the pressure of solving problems (Cole, Relate 2005, 87-88).

“The revenge” affair is a short term one, and, in general, is not kept secret. It is associated with gross dishonesty and betrayal (Glass, Wright 1997), the unfaithfulness of one of the spouses may, unconsciously, push the faithful partner towards extramarital relationships for revenge, revenge generated by the unfaithful partner being one of the most frequent reasons for adultery (Rădulescu 1999, 314). The main condition for such an affair is that one of the partners to have already had one and the other to desire to get back what was his. Usually, the affairs come to be regretted, as the betrayed

one realizes that he is doing what he hated in his spouse. Occasionally it is kept secret becoming “a warm coat, emotionally charged, wore to keep away the coolness of an unhappy partnership” (Cole, Relate 2005, 93).

In the case of **“notice me” affair**, adultery becomes a way of communication, being the emotional equivalent of a shouting in a loudspeaker, after the normal tone conversation seems to not have been heard. It is a one-night stand, sometimes not even being a sexual affair. It usually occurs in relationships where partners do not notice the important issues or have tried to solve them and failed. It may also occur when there are problems related to the sexual side of the relationship, the unfaithful giving clues so that the affair be discovered. However, the extramarital relationship might not be sexual, the other person just being used to perform an emotional threatening (Cole, Relate 2005, 96 – 97).

The couple who deals with **“the avoidance” affair** is caught in a situation in which the affairs repeat themselves, the cause being the lack of intimacy and involvement. Those who have such affairs fear attachment or emotional connection to their spouses. The unfaithful ones feel trapped, the affair being described as a “vice”: they know they should not have an affair, but they are incapable to stop (Cole, Relate 2005, 99 – 100).

The **“experimental” affair** is the most connected to sex and it takes place in the couples in which the sexual experience is limited. The unfaithful usually searches to experience sex with someone else. For a man, such an affair may signify nothing more than sex. For a woman, in return, this might signify the intention of having a more profound relationship (Cole, Relate 2005, 103). When talking about unfaithful relationships, Lawson uses the term “adultery” to limit the discussion to heterosexual extramarital relationships. She identified three types of adulterous relationships: **parallel**, **traditional**, and **recreational**, arguing that each of these types may be a support relationship, a dangerous and transitional relationship from one existing marriage to another (1988, 27). The differences between these types of adultery refer to, on the one hand, the degree of knowing a partner as opposed to the other, and on the other hand, to the significance the spouses give to relationships. Thus, traditional adultery is a secret relationship without the spouse’s knowledge, while parallel adultery is more open. The recreational adultery is a short “hit”, the accent being put on immediate pleasure and risk.

1.3. Typologies depending on the temporal factor

Considering the temporal factor, Gagnon and Greenblat differentiated several types of adulterous relations. “**The accidental**” relations occur only once, during some tangential, unexpected, and unplanned meetings and do not involve emotional attachment. “**The temporary**” relations have a longer life, also involving some emotional attachment, these are, in general, secret, clandestine, and may affect the marriage the more so because any long-term satisfactory sexual relation may determine some attachment and involvement feelings towards the new sexual partner. Such relations may be abruptly interrupted, because of the intervention of the spouse or because of a conflict between the two sexual partners. **The strong relations** are of a different quality and a longer life, due to a certain view of the future (a possible marriage). Such relations may carry on for years, enhanced by a long illness or disability of the spouse, as well as the spouse’s long absence from the family (Rădulescu 1999, 317-318).

A particular sexual relation is **the relation with prostitutes**, the most frequent clients being middle aged married men, seeking sexual practices (oral and/or anal sex) which cannot be performed with their wives. Prostitution thus becomes a sexual socialization institution, but also a compensating means for the absence of erotic satisfaction in the family. There are also men who are potent only when with prostitutes (Stekel 1997, 149).

2. The Couple and the response to unfaithful relations

In general, most people react to unfaithfulness according to their **gender**, both men and women give different meaning to the spouse’s affair. Women tend to rebuild their relationship and keep it alive, although this sometimes happens with depression and self-blaming. Women justify the affair by considering they are unworthy; this is why they need more time to recover. On the opposite side are men who tend to end a relationship and find someone else when finding out that their wife was unfaithful. Although angry and accusing the others around them, men justify the affair by their sexual inadequacy (Spring 2009, 58).

Moreover, the way in which a **couple** reacts to marital unfaithfulness unveiling, depends on the way in which they have confronted, in the past, the

difficult moments; most couples create a sort of a response pattern which they tend to follow each time they face something difficult in their relationship. **“Volcano eruption” couple** faces difficult situations in a loud and visible manner. Following an affair, the violence of arguing may be so big so that the spouses themselves get scared of the emotions they unleash. Explosive scandals occur because the two spouses express their annoyance instead of trying to let it cool and discuss afterward. Some couples have scandals around the same problems; these couples may be described as **“circular contradicting” couples**. In the case of unfaithfulness, trying to discuss about it may prove to be not only painful but also difficult to approach. The couple shall not solve its problems, but the spouses shall wait to dig them up on the next session of fighting and arguing (Cole, Relate 2005, 144 -147). **The “hide problems under the rug” couple** finds itself, in general, in difficult situations as the partners avoid addressing the issues. When a problem appears, the couple stops communicating and focuses on other subjects. In the case of a sexual extramarital relation, partners not only find it difficult to communicate about it, but the lack of communication may lead to some unrealistic assumptions regarding the consequences of such an affair (Cole, Relate 2005, 148-149).

3. Explanatory theories for unfaithfulness

Marital unfaithfulness raises numerous questions, from the attempt to discover what happened in the relationship to finding the guilty one. Moreover, the explanations given by the betrayers are of great variety, from “conquests” and “rebellion” to the desire to make the other one jealous and drawing his/her attention.

3.1. *The inter systemic perspective*

From an inter systemic viewpoint (Weeks 1989), the factors which contribute to unfaithfulness may be grouped around three areas of vulnerability: the issues of individuals that form the system, the relational disagreement, and the intergenerational impact. Some of the most frequent vulnerabilities include:

- ✦ The inability to have intimacy in the couple relationship;
- ✦ Issues with the commitment in marriage;
- ✦ Lack of passion in the marital relationship;
- ✦ The inability to manage anger and conflict;
- ✦ Sexual addiction;
- ✦ The transitions in the life cycle;
- ✦ Mental illnesses;
- ✦ Fears of intimacy, addiction and trust;
- ✦ A system of values that gives priority to pleasure and fun at the expense of loyalty and faithfulness (Fife, Weeks, Gambrescia 2007, 86).

3.2. *Biologic reasons*

Starting from evolutionist premises, some specialists claim that the basis for unfaithfulness lies within **the distant “hereditary” reasons**. In the animal kingdom, free love occurs, males having multiple female partners, and the female accept multiple males as partners. They claim that this biologic imperative lingers in the man.

There are also reasons that come from **human nature**, every person keeping, deep down, a tendency to explore, tendency which may push them to get close to their peers, touch them and want to know them even with the risk of dying (the possibility to get HIV/AIDS, the risk of being executed). This is due not just to the organic needs, but also to **the sexual restlessness** specific to every person. Furthermore, as we are the sum of our **own contrasts**, we may become unsteady, wishing for a thing but also its opposite. Consequently, depending on the direction given by the personal forces of cohesion or dispersion, an individual shall be faithful or not. Moreover, people have multiple **facets**, each one carrying a certain sensitivity, desires, and personal capabilities. Virtually, every facet awaits for the right person that will know to discover it, but as it is seen only from one angle, it may not be visible for one partner but discovered by another. Our mental life is **“a river”**, the flow of thoughts, feelings and preferences happens in time. Hence the idea that what connected and bonded us with our partner may change. The lack of permanence is, therefore, a reason for unfaithfulness, being more often the

philosophic alibi for giving up the responsibilities (Leleu 2003, 75 – 79). When talking about men, some sexologists see **the polygamous sexual instinct** as the cause of unfaithfulness. For women, on the other hand, the extramarital relations do not concern just the sexual aspect, but love itself, women having the ability and tendency to love two men at the same time (Rădulescu 1999, 306, 319). **The everyday life** may also impact, fraying feelings, wearing out the desire (sexual routine) and even demythologizing the partner (you know everything about him/her), marriage becoming the routine which drains the desire and reduces the pleasure to nothing (Bataille 2005, 123). Love fades, the relationship gets stuck and happiness dies. This transition, from the ideal to routine is often accompanied by a shock. So, unfaithfulness comes as a mutiny against monotony, as a desire for new, for regeneration.

3.3. *Psychological reasons*

The occurrence of unfaithfulness in a couple may also be caused by **elements connected to childhood**. As the child is born as a sexual being, his first sexual objects are the persons who take care of him. From pampering to kissing, all may create an erotic atmosphere which the child will later long for. So, by only seeking the wellbeing of the children, many parents make them unfit for life, as they cling to their parents for the rest of their lives (Stekel 1997, 86 – 88). Also, the discoveries made in childhood about our parents' sexual lives contributes to the creations of the sexual scenario of the future adult (Haavio – Mannila, Kontula, Rotkirck 2002, 26). Also linked to childhood, **“the great absence”** forces to a continuous search for a partner who knows to fill in for the missing parent. When the spouse is no longer enough, a search begins, of course, outside the couple. There are also situations in which unfaithfulness is nothing more than a program directed by the figure three: **“the Oedipus” trio**. The childhood experience when the child “desires” the opposite gender parent, leaves an indelible mark in the subconscious, confronting this, at maturity, with a couple, may induce to some a tendency to enter a triangular relationship (Leleu 2003, 82-83). There are also specialists who consider the idea that, in theory, there are always six persons in bed: the couple, their “oedipal” rivals, and the “oedipal” unconscious (Kernberg 2009, 153). Moreover, through the **dialectics virgin-tramp**, unconsciously, the husband associates the image of his wife with the untouchable image of his

mother. By giving him children, she is even more sacralized. Out of duty he shall make love to her, but for refinements, positions, excesses, or records, he shall look elsewhere. But, when lust pushes men towards their wives, they destroy the respectability, and transform their wife into a prostitute and treat her as such (Leleu 2003, 84). It may also happen that the wife offers the lover what she refuses the husband, behaving, with the lover, as a prostitute, being thus happy to be able to set aside culture and ethics. Therefore, sometimes the respect for the marital partner is the one that pushes to unfaithfulness. At the same time, **the immatures** are fundamentally unstable, their emotional routing being chaotic, they accumulate separations and divorces, and they collect unfaithfulness. Also, when **choosing a partner**, a great deal of people start from a parental pattern, while others choose a negative partner, thinking they can transform him/her.

It is also worth mentioning the **reasons that are linked to the unsatisfied emotional needs**. The **dissatisfaction** generated by the routine represents a factor that explains adultery. On the one hand, either the needs of the unfaithful are normal and the spouse's response is not enough, or the unfaithful's needs are extreme and the spouse's answer relatively insufficient (Mitrofan, Ciupercă 2003, 68). In some couples, there are partners with **excessive needs**, huge, insatiable, who must be fervently and permanently loved. No matter how much the spouse might strive, in the end the crisis shall come amid breakdown, the "insatiable" feeling abandoned. On the other hand, there are people less sentimental, and less expansive by nature, **being cheap on giving affection**. Thus, partners who invest feelings in the relationship come to hide their needs for affection, up to the point they find someone willing to give them love. The shock or **the loss of someone dear**, may determine a person to look for support to overcome the crisis, and the person may grab the hand that is extended for help (Cole, Relate 2005, 107-108).

Unfaithfulness may also be generated by **reasons connected to the lack of sexual satisfaction**, entering an extramarital relationship is much more probable if the frequency and quality of a couple's sexual life is poor. Without being pathological, some people have **considerable sexual needs**, they are some sexual "gourmands". Even if the partner has desire for pleasure, one may not always match the expectations. So, these persons turn to other partners. To the other extreme, there are persons whose **sexual capabilities**

are obstructed, due to temperament, illness, or even wear of desire. Partners whose sexuality is normal, might feel frustrated. That is why some give up the sexual life, choosing a life of sacrifice, while others discharge of their sexual tension in extramarital relations (Leleu 2003, 98 – 99).

From the perspective of the two sexes, adultery takes on different nuances, and numerous studies indicate that the unfaithful husbands' mistresses are usually unmarried women. Psychologically speaking, these women can accept to be "courted" by a married man, either because they have low self-esteem ("It's good enough to have half of a man"), or because they have an exacerbated sense of their own superiority ("I'm entitled to any man"), or as they want to have a carrier this is the easiest choice. When looking at this from the unfaithful wives' viewpoint, most partners are married men, preferring those, especially from precaution (as he also has a family, he shall be discreet) (Mitrofan, Ciupercă 2003, 70-71). To the profile of unfaithful wives, we can add age, both young wives and middle-aged wives have extramarital relationships (Rădulescu 1999, 308-309). Women who have a carrier have high rates of extramarital relations by comparison to the wives in the traditional couples (Collins 1988, 342). Although they suffer more than men, women also look for love when having an affair, considering that unfaithfulness is justifiable if love is involved. According to studies, married men are excessively valorized as lovers, which feeds their ego and oversize their image of self. The main cause for which men have more extramarital relationships than women, is the "double standard", according to which they have more sexual privileges than women (Rădulescu 1999, 312). In case of men, adultery is easier to forgive than in the case of women, them being severely sanctioned in case of unfaithfulness (Buunk, Dijkstra 2004, 106). Although they suffer less, men are pleased with a sexual relationship if love is not involved.

It is also worth mentioning the **reasons due to the lack of satisfaction of the needs of growing**. The need to grow and develop is specific to humans. Growing means reaching adulthood and wisdom. Feeling accomplished means developing your talents and skills. Developing means offering yourself a transcending that gives a superior purpose to your existence. If, unfortunately, the spouse is rigid, the spouse in evolution shall seek refuge outside the marriage (Leleu 2003, 103).

3.4. *Psychosocial/ sociological reasons*

Social status is an important variable, which seem to condition the marital sexuality. In general, the tendency to sexual liberty is more specific to higher social classes, such as the ones in the artistic environments (Rădulescu 1999, 313). Nevertheless, irrespective of the social class, men have adulterous relations, those from the lower classes starting immediately after marriage. Simultaneously, the working women are more prone to extramarital relations (Collins 1988, 341).

There are also **reasons linked to the financial possibilities**, as to have mistresses or lovers, one needs time and money. Those who cannot afford the luxury of an adultery, throw themselves in short term loves, settling with short and frustrating sexual intercourses (Raoul-Duval 2000, 106).

The extramarital sexuality is tightly connected to **man-woman relationship**, research showing that, if someone experiences **premarital sexual relations**, shall be more prone to do so afterwards as well, finding applicable more to women. Those who have premarital relations may also be wrong, as they get married, based on sexual premises, with the wrong person, thus the premarital relations lacking objectivity (Băran-Pescaru 2004, 97). **Forced marriage** is also one of the main reasons for adultery. Predominantly, in the pre-modern age, what mattered for the public opinion was just being married and not the quality of the marital life, extramarital relations sweetening the banality of conventional sex. As long as marriage was based on gift or theft, or financial interests, as long as the two did not know each other before the wedding, physical and psychological differences being frequent, unfaithfulness was a **necessity**, something normal. Sexual extramarital relations became “emotional solutions to emotional problems” (Moultrup 1990, 15).

Although the woman needs, faithfulness, dedication, she often uses **unfaithfulness** to send a **message** (Gray 1998, 107). She wants her partner to listen to her, to be affectionate, to have sexual relations in a different manner and to understand her. If the husband does not fulfill his role, she turns to a lover to make him reflect and give access to her desires, this could be a test (“Do you still love me?”), a punishment (“I will teach you a lesson!”), or a way to self-evaluate (“Am I still attractive?”). When men are dissatisfied, they acknowledge this clearly and faster look outside the marriage for

what they lack. Yet another typically feminine attitude is **unfaithfulness to assert herself**; in this case, the woman, probably after years of routine and submission to the husband and family, pushed by the feelings of dissolution and being stuck, decides to have an affair to discover all dimensions of her personality (Leleu 2003, 89 – 90). According to some other research, there were highlighted the feelings of validation and enthusiasm the affair generates in the life of the unfaithful. Clandestine dates, illicitly going out to the restaurant or to the movies, being involved in a romantic relationship, makes them feel special, interesting, and sexually attractive. This is mostly true for women, the extramarital relation adding an intriguing element and a new dimension to their lives (Graham 2004, 130). The affairs may also come after **an important change in the lifestyle**, as a result of changing house, loosing or getting a job, recovering after an illness, in fact anything that may induce a form of stress, the unfaithful wanting to see himself in new and strange situation (Cole, Relate 2005, 111-112). Although it looks like a contemporaneous cliché, around the **midlife age** people make significant changes. Around 45 years old, both men and women, evaluate their lives and the result of these reflections might be that they want to give up some old clichés and experiment something new. An affair is the symbol of the desire to have a new lifestyle.

Not in the least, we mention the **reasons linked to the current civilization**. Never before sex has been so forefront. Under thousands of shapes, sex dominates literature, theater, cinema, advertisements, and the entire contemporary life. We live during a real **sexual revolution**, when sexual pleasure has become a right, everyone benefits from his own body to their liking, and unfaithfulness is no longer seen as a felony, the religious interdictions are applied only on paper most of the times (Leleu 2003, 92 – 93). To this adds the **diversification and enrichment of the interpersonal relations network**. Post modernism has facilitated the interaction between individuals, and the probability for them to meet at least one person to feel attracted to is very high. Clearly, since the marriage is no longer subject to religious leading, it has been **emptied of its meaning**, the disappearance of this cohesion factor weakens the marriages even more. **Nonconformism** has taught us that we have nothing to lose if we are blunt and tell people around us we want a “non-strings attached relationship”, the “hints” gaining coherence

(Mitrofan, Ciupercă 2002, 67-68). The only important faithfulness is the one towards oneself and personal needs. The increasing number of extramarital relationships, becoming comfortable with the idea of being betrayed, the ease in obtaining forgiveness in case of adultery, all these are indicators for the modern **autonomy and individualism**. Our society transposed its **consumerism mindset** to the sexual-emotional plan: we “consume” human beings. It is not enough to have one partner, but the more, the better (Leleu 2003, 94-95). Thus, in the published literature, has appeared the phrase “human poaching”, by this expressing “a behavior meant to attract someone already involved in a romantic relationship (Schmitt, Buss 2001, 894). So, those who are “taken from their stable relationships” have received the label “poached” and the others who force persons out of their relationships were labeled “poachers” (Schmitt, Buss 2001, 895). Last but not least, **cinema** has created, through films, the myth of the ideal man, lover, and friend, who puts his life and faith in the hands of that who makes his heart beat faster. “A century of cinema has created maybe more adulterous romances than many more centuries of literature” (Raoul-Duval 2000, 27-28).

Conclusions

No matter the circumstances that often justify the violation of the marital vow, unfaithfulness is always wrong. It is one of the most painful things for most people to discover that their spouse is unfaithful. Unfaithfulness produces a series of distortions, mostly on the marital socio-emotional level, the most frequent being the jealousy crises, hostility, grudge, or reciprocal teasing. The spouse who remained faithful to the marital oath, often develops depressed moods, which prevent him/her from fulfilling the daily family chores, or lives under a continuous stress, and this nourishes his/her aggressivity. The betrayed one may also plan to revenge, to follow and check and interpret the elements which, most often, amplifies the experience, this being seen as an offence or even a threat to oneself.

Deep down, all people entering a marriage swear love and complete faithfulness for eternity. Even today, when we are aware of the precarity of marriages, this hope resides deep down in our souls. Unfaithfulness is the search for means to heal our wounds and to assert that we have not worked

enough to find it in ourselves. We may be looking for satisfaction outside the marital couple because we have not tried hard enough to support the relationship so that we may feel accomplished. Faithfulness is a desire carved in human's hearts, at least as deep as the desire to have extramarital affairs. Once we accept this, one realizes that true love is, in fact, a duty towards faithfulness. Even more so! True love is the only protection against unfaithfulness. True love is always monogamous, a social phenomenon which may seem to be the only solution for the problem of unfaithfulness.

When there is no faithfulness, it should be invented, and, maybe, it would be a real revolution to give it value, this is possible only if the marital relationships involve the spouses' faith in God before Whom people exchange vows of faithfulness. Thus, spirituality may be both a source of inspiration for a faithful relationship and the means to keep it alive.

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