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By Stanley Raffel

Marriage, being the main state in which two adults live together for an extended period of time, one can ask what this ability to live together requires. I propose that they must be able to live together in peace. Certainly this basic peace would not rule out some fighting and bickering but if fighting and/or bickering is really all there is, there is something very wrong. In such cases, that divorce has become so acceptable is a cause for celebration. It is pointless for two people to live together when they don't have to if they can't live together in peace.

What is key to this clearly desirable goal of being able to live together in peace? Obviously, natural compatibility is important. However, it is inevitable that disagreements will arise, even among the most compatible of couples so really the most important question from the perspective of the goal of peace is how to manage disagreements.

Probably the most obvious tactic is to call upon the notion of justice. That is, whenever they disagree, should not both parties work out what justice requires? But, besides justice being sometimes hard to calculate, there is another problem with it, best expressed by the Israeli philosopher Avishai Margalit. He suggests that, while both justice and peace are clearly highly desirable goals there 'lurks a deep tension between peace and justice.' He means that what peace requires sometimes can conflict with what justice requires. Therefore, if we really do want peace, there is a question we will sometimes or even often have to ask: 'How far can we go for peace, giving up on justice?'

What is particularly exercising Margalit is the danger posed by people who, even if correctly perceiving that they have been wronged, through 'their mad pursuit of redress for injustice done...bring about horrific destruction.' Because of the tension between justice and peace, it can be a mistake amounting to sheer 'bloody mindedness' 'to let justice prevail come what may.'

Margalit's focus is on 'the political rather than the personal realm', that is on the danger posed by the uncompromising leader hell bent on going to war whenever and wherever he thinks he has right-justice-on his side, but I suggest that being uncompromising, which I reformulate as always being intent on justice irrespective of its consequences for peace, is even more of a problem for the form of day-to-day living together that is marriage.

But, as the requirements of justice are the normal way of asserting one's rights, what sort of rights remain if one is no longer intent on justice? Margalit's answer is that, even when an interest in justice is sacrificed, what is still ruled out is 'an inhuman regime, a regime of cruelty and humiliation.' But even if this principle is sufficient protection in the political realm, the realm that, as we said, is Margalit's concern, it somehow seems laughable as all we can expect from a marriage. Surely one could expect more of a successful marriage than just that the couple treat each other like human beings.

If we do laugh it is because we expect marital partners not just to satisfy each other's *human* needs, but, more than this, the various *particular* needs that each of them has. Particular needs are needs that arise because of what Charles Taylor calls a person's identity, that sense of which one fundamentally is that goes well beyond how one is constituted merely by being human.

For example, who one is could be a concert pianist and then what one needs from one's partner is obviously to be allowed and even encouraged to perform at concerts and also of course to be allowed the space and time to practice. But one's particular needs can be a lot less obvious to the general population than a concert pianist's need to practice and so many of these can be, unlike general human needs, difficult for outsiders to accept as necessary.

In that the demands of justice tend to apply generally, another tension now surfaces, not between justice and peace but between what justice would seem to require and the particular things that person X requires in his or her marriage. The discrepancy in perspectives here appears when at the same time outsiders, using the idea of justice, are saying 'I don't know why she puts up with that', she knows that she does so because she understands that something is a need of his.

But is the she I have just invented realistic, typical, or even desirable? Certainly one can hope for this level of understanding from a partner but there is a prior issue: In that not all or even most humans are likely to have one's *particular* needs, is there any way, before inflicting them on a partner, you can consider whether they are legitimate or whether, on the other hand, insisting on them merely

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shows there is something wrong with you? A major reassurance would be if one can satisfy oneself that while these needs are particular, they are not exactly unique. While the majority does not share them, others, ideally others whom one greatly respects, very much do.

Besides confirming whether needs are not unique one would also need to work out whether they are actually *needs* in the strong sense of being essential to who one is. Perhaps the best test of this is whether you really feel you could not live in peace with someone who is unable or unwilling to support the need in question. Another way to put it is if there is an unwillingness of the partner to support the need does it constitute a crisis in the marriage? If a supposed need cannot pass *this* test it probably is not a need after all.

But, if you have satisfied yourself that a need *is* essential it is quite possible that your problems are only beginning. I have stressed that outsiders are quite unlikely to understand the need but also, if the marriage is to be sustainable one's partner must understand the need. If you are lucky, she will. If you are very lucky, merely stating that you need X will be sufficient for her to understand and accept your need for it. But if you aren't so lucky, and especially if the need requires considerable sacrifices from her, you will need to do more than state the need. You will need to *demonstrate* the need. Indicating that, while you are very reluctant to leave the marriage, yet you are prepared to do so if this need of yours cannot be understood can be formulated as a way to not just state a need but to demonstrate it.

As a final question, if one goes ahead and thus 'has the strength to force the moment to its crisis' (Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock), what issue is likely to confront the demonstrator in the future, i. e. when he gets back from going ahead and doing what he needed to do even though she could not understand the need? In the event that one's partner has not walked out after the demonstration has been completed, and assuming she is not a saint, one's act is likely to be followed by such a level of residual anger as to make living together very uncomfortable for quite a while. It is therefore actually likely still to be unclear at this point whether living together is compatible with the need of yours.

The reflection that I think needs to be undertaken in considering this admittedly non-saintly partner is: Is she envious or merely jealous.

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This is the crucial question because if she is merely jealous, there is hope that there is something one can do that, over time, can lead to harmony, namely do more to recognize and understand and support whatever particular needs she has. The diagnosis of the jealous one is that her resentment is not really caused by your needs but by her currently unfulfilled particular needs. In this instance, you will almost certainly need to make equivalent sacrifices for her as she has made for you.

On the other hand, if what is wrong with her is that she is envious of you that would mean that, unfortunately, her actual interest is not in fulfilling her own needs but in stifling yours. In this case, the marriage is in serious trouble because no level of trying to locate and satisfy her needs will make her more understanding and accepting of your needs.