



Humanum

Issues in Family, Culture & Science

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2015—ISSUE THREE

The Education of the Sexes





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The Education of the Sexes

LÉONIE CALDECOTT

In the midst of his encyclical letter on the environment, *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis speaks of “human ecology.” He defines this as “the relationship between human life and the moral law, which is inscribed in our nature and is necessary for the creation of a more dignified environment” (*Laudato Si*, 155). He quotes Pope Benedict XVI on the subject: “Man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will.” This reminded me of something that my late husband Stratford Caldecott wrote about education: “The fragmentation of education into disciplines teaches us that the world is made of bits we can use and consume as we choose. This fragmentation is a denial of ultimate meaning. Contemporary education therefore tends to the elimination of meaning—except in the sense of a meaning that we impose by force upon the world.”[\[1\]](#)

Herein lies the link between education and the issue of sexuality. For denying the ultimate meaning of our aboriginal state as human beings—that we were, from the beginning, created male and female—is going to have a profound effect on how we educate our children. Sexual difference is an essential part of the eco-system that is human society. While there is much talk of diversity in the contemporary debate about sexual orientation, insufficient attention is paid to the fact that if this “diversity” flattens the core dynamic of the family, if it imposes itself by force on the family, it affects the functioning of the societal environment. While scientists speak of the necessity of bio-diversity in complex eco-systems such as the rainforest, social liberals translate the concept of diversity into an argument for sexual self-determination in the human race. What is overlooked is that there are natural laws inherent in the very bio-diversity that creates a properly functioning eco-system. As we become increasingly aware of how these systems work, we are impelled to respect those laws. If this is the case with a rainforest, why would the human environment be any different?

In Christian tradition, the fundamental dynamic powering human society is Trinitarian. Another way of putting this is that, for millennia, the encounter between man and woman has had the potential to bring a third person into play. This is why the Catholic Church teaches that the unitive and the procreative aspects of the sexual act cannot be sundered. The causal flow witnessed to by this teaching goes both ways. Just as the unitive drive is incomplete without openness to life, so the procreative sphere is incomplete without a profoundly ‘unitive’ motivation which endures throughout the process of parenthood. One reason why the message of *Humanae Vitae* has not

been deeply received by many may be the fact that everything surrounding the couple—from economic factors to the ‘nuclear’ model of the family—militates against this honouring of parenthood.

In any case, the principle does not only apply to sexuality: it extends (as our present Pope, and his immediate predecessors, have constantly emphasized) to human culture as a whole. We strive for unity—community, in fact—in order to find our place in society. And human self-consciousness finds the deepest meaning of its existence through being creative. For the Christian, aware of a source that goes beyond the human dimension, bringing children into the world is the highest expression of this creativity: it is pro-creative. “I have brought a man into the world, with the help of God.” (Genesis 4:1) The immense mystery inherent in this process elicits a sense of awe in the human heart. No wonder then, that the opponents of Christianity wish to lay claim to it. The ferocity of the battle over marriage and parenthood may be a paradoxical compliment from a post-Christian society.

The gratuitous coming into being of that third person in the mysterious union of the couple is at the heart of what HUMANUM is exploring this year. For a human child is not a puppy, to be weaned along with the rest of the litter and sent on its way. He or she will demand an engagement that will last for several decades: the engagement to educate, to “lead out” the fullness of his or her humanity into a mature adult life. For that life to be well-founded, we need to respect the objective reality of the child’s needs, rather than projecting our own agendas onto them. This is where educators must ask themselves what assumptions about sexual ‘liberation’ might be doing to the young. For the instrumentalisation of sexuality impacts directly on the enterprise of education. We are in danger of turning out young people who because they have an uncertain psycho-sexual compass, also lack the emotional grounding which makes for genuine intellectual growth.

If the reigning liberal consensus of our time has, to use a term from Coleman and Walker’s insightful essay in *Communio* (“The Saving Difference”[\[2\]](#)), a “homogenizing” effect on both sexual politics and education, it is surely equally true that a crude kind of conservatism will not adequately address the problem. To put it another way, it may be that one kind of oppressive of sexual politics has given rise to another kind: an oppressive reaction that seeks to destroy what the previous model inadequately represented in the first place. In the pedagogical sphere, I have witnessed both ends of this spectrum: parents who cannot establish any boundary whatsoever for their children, thus making it impossible for those children to root themselves in the familial identity which is necessary for individual development. At the other end, I know of parents who are convinced that their daughters need not be educated to the same level as their sons, since their “role” is going to be that of home-makers only. While Elizabeth Kantor is correct in reminding female high school graduates of the dignity and importance of their potential roles as wives and

mothers, educating them to the highest level they are capable of is a sure pledge of how much importance we accord to that very sphere. It is in the home that both members of a couple will engage with all the resources of their humanity, since bringing up children takes priority over any economic activity, however necessary to the physical maintenance of that home.

It is worth noting that Edith Stein, one of the most prophetic voices of the 20th century on questions about both education and gender (the volume of her writings on this subject is reviewed in this issue), did not make a crude inference between biology and social role. Whilst emphasizing the complementarity of the sexes, and the creative difference between men and women, she also believed that “a common creativity in all areas was assigned in the original order,” and noted that “wherever the circle of domestic duties is too narrow for the wife to attain the full formation of her powers, both nature and reason concur that she reach out beyond this circle.” Stein could assert this precisely because she did not make a dichotomy between the life of home and the wider life of society.

Likewise Pope Francis puts the “facts of life” (as sexual issues used to be called in more coy times) into their wider context:

The acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation. Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology. Also, valuing one’s body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different. In this way we can joyfully accept the specific gift of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator, and find mutual enrichment. (Laudato Si, 155)

The language of encounter and mutual enrichment must surely be at the root of any adequate critique we might make of current trends in the education of the sexes. From inappropriate sex-ed programs aimed at younger and younger children, to the elevation of an individual’s pleasure to the status of a “human right,” it is only a profound anthropological analysis which is capable of responding to the growing crisis. Fr. José Granados’ analysis of how St. John Paul’s Theology of the Body responds fully to the unique historical situation we are facing is essential reading. His book, *Called to Love*, written with Carl Anderson, which is also reviewed in this issue, is still the best introduction to the subject in the English language. [It is perhaps worth mentioning that my late husband, with Ruth Ashfield, wrote a study guide to this excellent book.]

In a time of crisis we need not only prophets and thinkers, but leaders with a clear vision. “We have gone back to paganism, in which the child had no rights. He was merely an object at someone

else's disposal." While Cardinal Carlo Caffarra's recent interview, reprinted in our Re-Source section, makes for disturbing reading, it is essential that we be disturbed. Whilst we must always have compassion on individuals whose life experience does not enable them to relate to the Church's profound anthropological vision, there is a difference between sympathy and patience with those who struggle, and simply letting a short-sighted bus driver run over hundreds of children waiting by the road-side, as a British catechist put it to me recently.

Indeed short-sightedness is the principal hallmark of our current situation. The Pope hit the nail on the head when he said last April (and he repeats his own words in *Laudato Si*) that contemporary secular culture seeks "to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it." We certainly seem to have lost the plot when it comes to understanding what healthy sexual development might be. Yet we can be thankful for those who tirelessly remind this "culture of death" that, in the end, life and sanity can prevail. J. Budziszewski, in his book *On the Meaning of Sex* (reviewed in this issue), reminds us that "the supernatural purpose of mortal love...is to awaken in us the longing for that greater love which alone can give us all that we long for."

It is this longing that we need to keep in mind at all times—a longing that in truth every child needs to be surrounded by and to feel in their turn. Then we can confront the difficult issues that our current hyper-sexualized culture gives rise to: not from fearful or moralistic motives, but rather from the insurmountable hope we have in a God incarnate, who is a Person, coherent and whole, a reminder of what our humanity really means. And if we seek to be 'alter Christi', we must keep in mind that there are countless people around us whose perspective is compromised by being formed in an ethos which was beyond their control. For we are coping with a cultural crisis of monumental proportions, and it is not one which will be resolved easily. In the meantime, we need to recognize that people struggle, that they suffer, and we need to go out, as the Pope says, to the 'peripheries' where those struggles and sufferings take place. You don't criticize the housekeeping failures of people who live in a slum. You do try to something about the conditions which oblige them to live like that.

"Proclamation in a missionary style," our Jesuit Pope has said, "focuses on the essentials, on the necessary things: this is also what fascinates and attracts more, what makes the heart burn, as it did for the disciples at Emmaus. We have to find a new balance; otherwise even the moral edifice of the church is likely to fall like a house of cards, losing the freshness and fragrance of the Gospel. The proposal of the Gospel must be more simple, profound, radiant. It is from this proposition that the moral consequences then flow."[\[3\]](#)

[1] Stratford Caldecott, *Beauty for Truth's Sake* (Brazos Press, 2009), 17.

[2] Adrian J. Walker and Rachel M. Coleman, "The Saving Difference," *Communio: International Catholic Review* XLIII, no. 2 (2015), 184-91.

[3] Interview in America: *The National Catholic Review*, 30 September 2013. Accessed at <http://www.americamagazine.org/pope-interview>.

Léonie Caldecott is the UK editor of both Humanum and Magnificat. With her late husband Stratford she founded the Center for Faith and Culture in Oxford, its summer schools and its journal Second Spring. Her eldest daughter Teresa, along with other colleagues, now works with her to take Strat's contribution forward into the future.

A Voice Crying in the Wilderness... from Bologna

CARLO CARDINAL CAFFARRA

This interview with Cardinal Caffarra was originally published in [Tempi](#) (19 July 2015) as part of a series “Reason, Truth, Friendship,” the motto of Tempi’s twentieth anniversary of the Fondazione Tempi. It is reprinted here with permission. Reporter Luigi Amicone introduces the interview and poses the questions.

Two years ago Caffarra submitted to Pope Francis his resignation from the pastoral government of the Archdiocese of Bologna because he had reached the age limit. The Pope replied through the good offices of the Apostolic Nunciature in Italy that “it is the Holy Father’s will that you continue your episcopal ministry in Bologna for another two years.” Now, after having led the diocese for twelve years, the Cardinal is about to leave Bologna. But what a fine person this seventy-something-year-old is, in his final days of governing the See of Saint Petronius. He challenges the contemporary mindset with prophecy. And in his heart he implores: “How long, O Lord?”

*After the **vote by the European Parliament** that recommends the legal recognition of unions and marriages between persons of the same sex (and the subtext is: full speed ahead with the implementation of gender education), we went to visit him. “Gay unions and gender. If they were theories, the dialogue would be easier,” the Cardinal tells us. “Since theories are hypotheses that are not afraid to be subjected to the test of falsification. But instead they are ideologies. Therefore they yearn only to be imposed and are unwilling to dialogue with anyone at all.”*

The Decline of a Civilization

“I had several thoughts about the motion voted on at the European Parliament. The first thought is this: we’ve reached the end. Europe is dying. And maybe it no longer even has a will to live. Because there has been no civilization that ever survived the attempt to dignify [nobilettazione della] homosexuality. I am not saying the practice of homosexuality. I am saying: the attempt to dignify homosexuality. Let me make an aside: someone might remark that no civilization has ever gone so far as to affirm same-sex marriage. And yet we need to remember that the attempt to dignify it is something more than marriage. In several nations homosexuality was a sacred act. In fact the adjective used in Leviticus to condemn the attempt to dignify homosexuality through

sacred ritual is: ‘abominable.’ It was endowed with a sacral character in pagan temples and rituals.”

“This is so true that the only two civil institutions, if we may call them that, the only two peoples that resisted over the millennia—and right now I am thinking above all of the Jewish people—were those two peoples who alone condemned homosexuality: the Hebrew people and Christianity. Where are the Assyrians today? Where are the Babylonians today? And the Hebrew people was a tribe, it seemed to be nothing in comparison with other political and religious institutions. But the regulation of the practice of one’s sexuality, as we find for example in the Book of Leviticus, became a pre-eminent [altissimo] factor in civilization. This was my first thought: We’ve reached the end.”

Satan Against the Obvious

“My second thought is clearly faith-related. When faced with events of this sort I always ask myself: how can it be that such basic, obvious facts should be obscured in a human mind; how is it possible? And the answer that I arrived at is as follows: all this is the devil’s work. In the strict sense. It is the final gauntlet that Satan throws down to God the Creator, telling him: ‘I’ll show you: I am constructing an alternative creation to yours. You’ll see: people will say, we are better off this way. You promise them freedom; I propose license instead. You give them love; I offer them emotions. You want justice; I want perfect equality that cancels out all difference.’”

“Allow me an aside. Why do I say ‘alternative creation’? Because if we turn, as Jesus asks us, to the Beginning, to the original plan, to the way in which God designed creation, we see that this great edifice that is creation is erected on two columns: the man-woman relationship—the couple—and human work. We are talking now about the first column, but the second is being destroyed, too. We see, for example, how difficult it is nowadays to be able to talk about the primacy of work in economic systems. But I’ll stop here because this is not the topic of our conversation. So, we are facing a diabolic attempt to erect an alternative creation, challenging God in the sense that man will end up thinking that he is better off in this alternative creation. Do you remember the Parable of the Grand Inquisitor [in Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*]?”

“How Long, O Lord?”

“The third thought occurred to me in the form of a question: ‘How long, O Lord?’ And then the answer that the Lord gives in the Book of Revelation always resounds in my heart. The book relates that at the foot of the heavenly altar stand those who were slain for justice’ sake: the martyrs, who continually say, ‘how long, O Lord, before you avenge our blood?’ (cf. Rev 6:9-10). And so it occurs to me to say: How long, O Lord, until you defend your creation? And again the

answer from Revelation resounds within me: ‘They were told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants should be complete.’ What a great mystery God’s patience is! I think about the wound in His Heart, which became visible, historic, when a soldier pierced the side of Christ. For about every creature and created thing the Bible says: ‘and God saw that it was good.’ Finally, at the climax of creation, after the creation of man and woman, we read: ‘and God saw that it was all very good.’ The joy of a great artist! Now this great work of art has been totally defaced. Yet he is patient and merciful. And he tells those who ask him, ‘how long?’ to wait. ‘Until the number of the elect is fulfilled.’”

The Power of the Redeemer

“And here is my final thought. One day, when I was Archbishop of Ferrara, I found myself in one of the most remote villages, in the Po delta. A place that seemed to be at the end of the Earth, in the middle of one of those obstacle courses that the big river makes as it goes almost anywhere it wants before flowing into the sea. For the purpose of catechesis I met there a group of fishermen, people who literally spend most of their life at sea. One of them asked me this question: ‘Think of the world as one of these cylindrical containers in which we put the fish we have just caught: so the world is this sort of barrel and we are like the fish that have just been caught. My question is: how do we refer to the bottom of this barrel, what is its name?’ Imagine: a fisherman who asks the question that is at the beginning of all philosophy: what do we call the bottom of all things? And then I, quite struck by this question, answered him: ‘The bottom is not called chance; it is called gratuitousness, the undeserved goodness and tenderness of someone who holds us all in his embrace.’ In recent days I thought again about the question and the answer that I gave to that old fisherman, because I wonder: does this whole attempt to deface and destroy creation have so much strength that it will win in the end? No. I think that there is a more powerful force, which is the redemptive act of Christ, Redemptor Hominis Christus, Christ the Redeemer of mankind.”

The Task of Pastors and of Spouses

“Here is another reflection, prompted precisely by my thoughts in recent days. But what about me as a pastor: what shall I do to help my folks, my people, to keep the original vision in mind and in their moral awareness? What can I do to prevent their hearts from being darkened? I think about the young people, those who still have the courage to get married, and about their children. And then I think about what is normally done in the world when it is necessary to deal with a pandemic. There are public organizations responsible for the health of the citizenry: what do they do? They always act according to two guidelines. The first: for now, they treat those who are sick and try to save them. The second is no less important, indeed decisive: they seek to understand what the causes of the pandemic are, so as to develop a winning strategy. So now the pandemic is

here. And as a pastor I have the responsibility for healing and for preventing people from getting sick. But at the same time I have the serious duty to start a process, that is, a program of intervention that will demand patience, commitment and time. And the battle will get more and more difficult. This is so true that I sometimes tell my priests: I am sure that I will die in my bed. I am less sure about my successor. He will probably die in the Dozza [the prison in Bologna – Editor’s note]. Therefore we are talking about a long process that will involve us in a difficult battle. But after all, we are called to do both things: prompt intervention and long-term battle, an emergency strategy and a long process of education.”

“This is what the pastors of the Church are for. They have received a consecration designed for this purpose; Christ’s power is in them. ‘For two thousand years now in Europe the bishop has been one of the vital nerve centers, not only of eternal life, but of civilization’ (Giuseppe De Luca). And a civilization is also the humble, magnificent everyday life of the people born of the Gospel that the bishop preaches. And then [this is what] the spouses [are for]. Because rational discourse comes after the perception of something beautiful, of a good that you see before your eyes, Christian marriage.”

Q. And what about the emergency intervention?

“I must admit that I myself have difficulty here. This is because not infrequently I happen to lack the ally that is the human heart. I am thinking of the situation among the youth. They come and ask me: ‘Why do we have to commit ourselves definitively, when we are not even sure that we will manage to love each other until evening?’” Now, when faced with this question I have only one answer: Recollect yourself and think of what you experienced when you told a girl or a guy, ‘I love you, I really love you.’ Did you perhaps think in your heart: ‘I will give myself totally to another person, but only for a quarter of an hour or at most until evening’? This is not part of the experience of a love, which is a gift. It is more like a loan, which is a calculation.”

“Now if you succeed also in guiding the person to this interior listening (Augustine), you have saved him. Because the heart does not deceive. This is the great dogmatic thesis of the Catholic Church: sin did not radically corrupt man. The Church has always taught this. Man has caused enormous disasters, but the image of God has remained. I see today that young people are less and less capable of this return into themselves. Augustine experienced the same drama when he was their age. What, basically, prompted Augustine at last? The sight of a bishop, Ambrose; the sight of a community that sang with its heart more than with its lips the beauty of creation, Deus creator omnium, the very beautiful hymn by Ambrose.”

“Today this is very difficult with young people, but in my opinion this is the emergency intervention. There is no other. If we lose this ally, which is the human heart—the human heart is the ally of the Gospel, because the human heart was created in Christ and in accordance with Christ—if we lose this ally, I say, I see no other path.”

“I would like to say one final thing. The further along I have come in life, the more I have discovered the importance of civil laws in man’s life, in order to have a good life. I have understood what Heraclitus says: “The people need to fight for the law as though for the city walls.” The older I get, the more I have realized the importance of the law in the life of a people. Today it seems that the State has abdicated its legislative duty, that it has abdicated its dignity, reducing itself to being a tape recorder of the desires of individuals. The result is that we are creating a society of conflicting egotisms, or else of fragile agreements of contrary interests. Tacitus says: *Corruptissima re publica, plurimae leges*. There are many, many laws when the State is corrupt. When the State is corrupt, laws multiply. This is the situation today.”

“It is a vicious circle, because on the one hand the laws seem to be reduced to a tape recorder of desires. This inevitably results in social issues marked by conflict, struggle, the supremacy of the more powerful over the weaker, in other words, the corruption of the very idea of the common good, of the *res publica*. Then they try to remedy this with laws, forgetting that there will never be laws so perfect as to make the practice of the virtues unnecessary. That will never happen. Here, in my opinion, we pastors have much to answer for, that we have allowed the Catholics in society to become culturally irrelevant. We have allowed it, if not justified it. When has the Church ever done that? When have the great pastors of the Church ever done that?”

One final question: your thoughts about the event in Rome on June 20, when Catholics and non-Catholics will demonstrate in favor of preserving intact at the legislative level the principle that marriage is between one man and one woman and that the right of every child to have a father and a mother, to be educated and not manipulated by gender ideology, should be safeguarded by every desire of adults and by all State instruction.

“I have no doubt in saying that this is a positive demonstration because, I as said, we cannot remain silent. Woe to us if the Lord were to rebuke us in the words of the prophet: dogs that did not bark. We know that in democratic systems political deliberation is conducted according to the principle of majority rule. And I like that, because it is better to count witnesses than to cut them down. However, in view of these developments there is no majority that could silence me. Otherwise I would be a dog that did not bark. Above all I am impressed by the fact that this day was organized around the defense of children, and I appreciated this very much. Pope Francis said that **a child cannot be treated like a guinea pig**. Pseudo-pedagogical experiments are being

performed on children. But what right do we have to do that? The most dreadful thing, the most severe saying ever spoken by Jesus, concerns the defense of children.”

“Therefore in my opinion the Roman initiative [demonstration] is something that absolutely had to be done. The next day, probably, Parliament will pass this law recognizing same-sex unions. It is drafting it now. But let it know that this is profoundly unjust. And we must tell them so on that afternoon in Rome. When the Lord says to the prophet Ezekiel, ‘You must rebuke them,’ it seems that the prophet says, ‘Yes, but they do not listen to me.’ Just rebuke them, and those whom you rebuke will be responsible, not you, because you rebuked them. But if you do not rebuke them, you will be responsible. If we remain silent about such a thing, we will share in the responsibility for this serious injustice toward children, who are subjects of rights like any other human person but are being turned into objects of the desires of adult persons. We have gone back to paganism, in which the child had no right. He was merely an object “at someone else’s disposal.” Therefore, I repeat, in my opinion this is an initiative worth supporting; we cannot remain silent.”

Translated by Michael J. Miller

Cardinal Carlo Caffarra is the Archbishop of Bologna.

Theology of the Body in the United States

FR. JOSÉ GRANADOS

From 1979 to 1984, John Paul II gave us his catechesis on “Human Love in the Divine Plan,” also known as the “Theology of the Body.”^[1] This theology has been widely received in the United States and offers the hope of fruit in the future. What cultural and theological implications does the spread of this catechesis have in America? In order to answer this question, we will need to examine, first of all, the cultural situation of the country during the 20th Century, especially with regard to sexuality and the body. We will then move on to analyze the main points of the Pope’s teachings and their cultural and theological influence. Finally, we will review some of the criticism raised with regard to the Theology of the Body and open some perspectives for the future.

1. America and the Sexual Revolution: The Context for the Reception of the Theology of the Body

What form did the sexual revolution take in the United States? The process that led to it is a long one, and must be described in several steps.^[2]

The first step involves the Puritan heritage, which is at the root of the formation of this country. We should avoid caricatures of Puritans as obsessed repressors of sexuality.^[3] A more balanced judgment affirms that the Puritans valued sexuality as part of God’s creation and an important part of family life.^[4]

It is true, however, that the Puritans had great suspicions regarding sexual desire as such, which they considered as intrinsically and unavoidably disordered because of concupiscence, an evil force that God’s grace does not heal from within. For the Puritan, concupiscence remained an accursed part of being, a force that made the Christian simultaneously a just man and a sinner. The only way of ordering the lustful desires of the heart was the external control of the law: both the law of man and the Law of God. In the words of a historian, the remedy for the sins of the flesh enumerated and condemned in Puritan sermons was unambiguously a matter of increased control. Control was, first, to be imposed by parental authority. . . . Control was also imposed by

the magistracy. . . . Most significantly, control was to be enforced from within, against the nature that struggled for expression.[5]

Thus, Puritan society was characterized by the importance accorded to the Law. Both morality and religion consisted of obedience to the rules given by God to man. All of this was of singular concern to the family, because the latter was precisely the structure provided to keep sexual desire in order.

The situation did not change much with the coming of the Enlightenment. It is true that the thinkers of the time held a more positive view of human nature, in whose goodness they believed. On the other hand, with its exclusive focus on reason, the Enlightenment contributed little to understanding the world of passions and affections. It thus offered a model of submission to the rule of reason that was very close to the Puritan model of control by the Law. Moreover, the Enlightenment completed the secularization of sexuality and the family, cutting its connection with God and the divine mystery, a process the Protestant reform—with its denial of the sacramentality of marriage—had already initiated in some form, maybe without foreseeing the ultimate consequences.

The Enlightenment also brought with it an individualistic vision of the human person, thought of as an autonomous subject of rights. This individualism, of course, was linked in America to a special “art of association”[6] and to the birth of a democracy that proclaimed the equality of all under the law. But this communitarian “corrective” risked remaining on the surface of the understanding of man, without deeply modifying the vision of the person as an autonomous individual.[7]

The Romantic movement arrived in the United States later than it did in Europe. It brought with it a new consideration of love as a passion: romantic love focused on the realm of the emotions, in contrast to the Puritan conception and the cold approach of the Enlightenment. Romanticism’s effect was positive in that it rediscovered the topic of love and insisted on its place in human life; as a result, the relational aspect of marriage was strengthened. The Romantics’ excessive focus on the emotions, however, made of sentiment an invincible force that imposed itself on the lovers, thus prolonging the opposition between reason and love that had been characteristic of the Enlightenment.

The 20th century saw the fall of Victorian society, which had exaggerated many traits of the Puritan approach. In this regard, the influence of Sigmund Freud is very important. It grew in the United States after 1909, when Freud took part in a conference at Clark University in Wooster, Massachusetts. Freud’s theories were very critical towards the Puritan ethos, which he held

responsible for repressing the sexual drives of individuals. Even if Freud did not want his discoveries to be used as an endorsement of free love, the popularized version of his teachings in America tended to do just that. In the United States, Freudianism took the form of interpreting the sexual urge as an irrepressible force.[\[8\]](#) It was easy to jump to the conclusion that sexuality needed to be freed from the inhibiting rules of society, in particular the family, the basic structure that in Puritan society had regulated the sexual urge.

Throughout the 20th century there emerged a new way of living and expressing sexuality, manifested especially in a change of behavioral standards among young people, and an increasing interest in sexual expression and pleasure within marriage.[\[9\]](#) This process was aided by the appearance of contraception, which during this period saw a rapid rise in demand. This is the period of “sexual liberation”: sexuality is promoted as a source of pleasure and enjoyment, but an effort is made to confine its exercise to marriage.

This process was indeed a preparation for the crisis that came in the 1960s. For once sexuality was severed from reproduction by contraception, and the value of sexual pleasure tended to become an absolute, it was difficult to contain it within the limits of the family. The structure of “sexual liberation” broke down with the sexual revolution, which brought about a sudden rise in promiscuity.

It is important to notice that this process also had an economic side. The industry of pornography and the exploitation of sex by television and marketing companies is part of the history of America during the 20th century. Hugh Hefner built an economic empire around Playboy magazine. The desire for sex was conceived as a market opportunity that the business genius of America was eager to exploit. The focus on pleasure ended up being a focus on performance, for which the industry continually provided the means of improvement, thus increasing the needs that it claimed to satisfy.

All these cultural shifts took place along with the suburbanization of America in the post-World War II era, which brought about a greater separation between the private realm of the family and the public realm of work, thus making the family less influential in society and stressing the separation between the private life of the individual and the public square.[\[10\]](#)

Within this process, the focus shifted from a conception of sexuality as something to be controlled and repressed or contained within marriage, to a vision of sexuality as an impulse vital for the flourishing of the human person, and whose unlimited expression was both an inalienable right and an irrepressible need of the individual. These are the roots of the Pansexualism that grew with the sexual revolution.[\[11\]](#)

Some historians talk of the “other sexual revolutions” referring to the gay movement and feminism. These movements stressed the view that sexuality is not only a source of pleasure to be liberated, but also a place for the free expression of subjectivity, a realm open for transformation according to the personal project of each individual. As the sociologist Anthony Giddens has argued, sexuality now has become plastic, to be lived out according to the model of “pure relations,” that is, relations in which what is central is the autonomous will of each citizen, freed from any constraints of nature or tradition. In his view, the gay rights movement has the distinction of having pioneered this enterprise.[\[12\]](#)

It is necessary to highlight the countermovement that followed in the United States during the 80s and 90s, as the realization of the damage caused by the sexual revolution grew. This countermovement placed a great emphasis on family values and appealed to a large sector of the population, thus playing an important role in politics.[\[13\]](#) This reaction reveals an important difference between American and European society. Among the reasons that provoked it, one can surely point to a resurgence of Puritan ideas, which were more deeply rooted in American soil, but also to the capacity of American society to react to the devastation that followed the years of sexual revolution, a capacity that seemed to be absent in many European countries.[\[14\]](#) Maybe this concern for the family can also account for the success of John Paul II’s proposal in the United States, for the Pope’s catechesis emerges precisely as a response to this situation, as a coherent vision of human sexuality.

However, in order to be effective, the catechesis cannot be read in a superficial way, as merely an appeal to an adequate moral response to the problems of our time. The teaching needs to be addressed in all its anthropological and ontological depth. For the cultural process we have described is the forging of a new vision of man, together with a new perspective on love and the body. What we have at its end is the image of a person as someone who drives forward the realization of his own life, a man liberated from a repressive superstructure (God and society, and especially the family) and is finally free—meaning radically autonomous. Paradoxically, this autonomy is linked to a vision of nature as a force that imposes itself upon the subject: man is obliged to satisfy the sexual urge and its dictates. And so, the freedom that man seems to achieve is contradicted by the dictatorships of the impulses, which annul this very freedom. This internal contradiction of a broken subject, who is at the same time self-sufficient and fully dependent on sentiments and impulses, can only result in anxiety as its fruit. What response can the Theology of the Body offer to this situation?

2. John Paul II's Theology of the Body

The cultural context of the sexual revolution helps us understand the depth of John Paul II's proposal. To be sure, John Paul II's catechesis expresses his desire to strengthen the vocation to the family—in the context of the effects brought about by the sexual revolution—yet it does so by addressing the deeper problems that underlie these cultural changes, problems that are anthropological in nature. The greater scope of the catechesis is shown in the fact that John Paul II's interest in the Theology of the Body was not limited to the beginning of his Pontificate, but was in fact a project he pursued throughout his life, as is laid out in other documents such as *Familiaris Consortio*, *Evangelium Vitae*, and his *Letter to Families*. An interesting example of this continued concern is the book of poems *Roman Triptych*, one of the last things he wrote, in which he returns to topics developed in the Wednesday catecheses.

Three factors are crucial for interpreting John Paul II's contribution: a) a renewed theological vision, at the core of the Second Vatican Council, that places Christ and the Incarnation at the center of the interpretation of man and society (cf. GS 22); b) a vision of the human body that allows one to recover for theology the concept of experience and to describe human life in the overall context of love, and; c) a corresponding anthropology of love, centered in the family, as a privileged place in the world where God reveals himself, thus opening up the possibility of understanding, in this light, the Christian vision of God, man, and the world.[\[15\]](#)

a. The Centrality of Christ's Revelation

The *Catecheses on Human Love in the Divine Plan* are a theological text, inspired by Christian revelation; they deal with the meaning of human love in the divine plan and with the sacrament of marriage. Thus, the Pope bases his reflection on biblical texts (mainly Genesis, the Gospels, and the Epistles of Paul, but also references to the Prophets, the Wisdom tradition, the Song of Songs, the book of Tobit, the Gospel and Epistles of John).

Crucial for John Paul II's teaching is a paragraph from *Gaudium et spes*, 22: "Christ, the final Adam by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear." This text provides for John Paul II the key to interpreting the Second Vatican Council: the Church can in fact talk to the modern world only when she is grounded in her own center, and this center is Christ. It is from the mystery of Christ, who has assumed human life in all its depth, that any dialogue with the world becomes possible and fruitful. In Christ, because of the Incarnation, it is possible for the Church to stand in the place of the world, so as to look at it, not from the outside, but from within. This also makes it possible to elevate the world towards God, not by denying its reality, but by bringing it to fulfillment.

In the light of Christ, a new interpretation of the human person can be put forward: the human being is seen now in the light of love, the love of the Father that surrounds him from the beginning of his existence and calls him to communion with God and men. Being based on the Incarnation and life of Christ, this vision of the human being gives pride of place to the body, as the realm where God's love, his mystery, becomes manifest. To see the importance of the body, it suffices to think of any of the Christian mysteries: the Incarnation, the Resurrection of the Body, the Eucharist, or the Ecclesiology of the Body of Christ.

In this regard, the Theology of the Body can claim deep roots in tradition. First, it has been the constant teaching of the Church that love is placed at the center of Christianity. As Maximus the Confessor puts it, the Disciples of Christ are those who can talk best about love, because they have as their Master "Charity himself."[\[16\]](#) The focus on the body is also justified by tradition: the Church Fathers promoted a vision of the human person based on the Incarnation and Resurrection of Jesus, which shed new light on their understanding of man.[\[17\]](#) Recent studies highlight the importance given to the body by key Fathers and Doctors of the Church: Irenaeus, Augustine, Maximus the Confessor, Thomas Aquinas, etc.[\[18\]](#)

A vision of man that starts from Christ will understand the person as someone loved by the Father and called to love in return, and will reveal the centrality of the body in carrying forward this call to love. The Theology of the Body is an exploration of the way the following three dimensions interrelate: a) Christ's revelation of himself and the Father's love, b) the meaning of the body in light of the Incarnation, c) love as the key to understanding the link between God, man, the world.

This link leads us to point out a crucial methodological point: the circularity between the revelation of Christ's love and the experience of man. The connecting point that allows Wojtyła to articulate human experience and divine revelation is the reflection on love and the body. We have, on the one hand, the revelation of Christ, who shows us the path of love, and on the other hand, the analysis of human experience, in which the encounter of love, made possible through man's corporeality, takes on crucial importance. This circularity is such that each of the poles is related from within itself towards the other. First, the experience of love is open towards the coming of God's revelation. Second, only the revelation of Christ shows us the final horizon and primordial origin of man's call to love. Thus, the analysis of love is crucial for the presentation of Christianity, for love is this point in human experience in which the divine can make itself present and manifest.

We will now analyze these two dimensions opened up by the revelation of Christ to man: the importance of the body and the centrality of love.

b. A Theology of the Body

The body has become important in contemporary reflection precisely as the way to rethink the vision of man and to break the isolation proper to modern individualism. Reflection on the body is seen as crucial in the new cultural situation, not only to understand the private life of individuals, but the very building of society. In some authors we see a vision of the body as plastic material for man to give form to (cf. the Sociology of the Body initiated by A. Giddens). In this way the new understanding of the body could serve the project of modernity towards a democratic understanding of human life that enters finally into the private sphere of individuals. Others, such as M. Foucault, see the body as a social construct, as a way in which society exerts power over the individual. Inasmuch as the body reveals the sexual difference of man and woman, the study of the body is linked to the concerns raised by the sexual revolution.

Why did the body become so important in our time and what is the right way of understanding it as an element of man's constitution? The topic of the body as a philosophical and theological theme acquired weight during the second half of the 20th century. Whereas the phenomenology of Husserl and the existentialism of Heidegger paved the way for the appearance of this reflection, both philosophers failed to develop it in all its richness.^[19] In their wake, thinkers such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gabriel Marcel, Emanuel Lévinas and Hans Jonas issued a rich philosophical reflection on the body.^[20]

Merleau-Ponty makes the body the center of his "Phenomenology of perception," by describing corporeality as man's form of having a world. Lévinas, who accepts Merleau-Ponty's analysis, sees in the body the place where the presence of alterity, of the Other, is revealed to consciousness. Hans Jonas, a disciple of Heidegger, insists also on the body as the point that allows one to overcome modern dualism by being the point of connection between man and his environment; Jonas' disciples have continued his reflections, especially in studying the link between medicine and philosophy.^[21] Finally, Gabriel Marcel connects reflection on the body with a philosophy of the family. Man's incarnate condition, for Marcel, is deeply connected to man's belonging to a family, by which one's identity is constituted.^[22]

John Paul II's contribution was to present the body in its connection with love, an operation from which both reflection on the body and reflection on love came out enriched. The body, being at the same time objective and subjective, belonging both to the external world and to man's interiority, makes man's presence to and participation in the world possible. At the same time, it opens up man's life to the encounter with the other and towards the horizon of transcendence. The great question that man is for himself, if placed concretely in the body, that is, taking into account that man is an incarnate being, becomes answerable only in terms of relationship with the world,

others, and God. Thus, reflection on the body prevents love from becoming an accidental ingredient in man's life, rendering it instead an intrinsic part of his constitution.

Concretely, this bodily presence of man in the world opens up towards the two dimensions in which John Paul II develops his anthropology: man's relationship to God (called by John Paul II original solitude) and the relationship between man and woman that gives birth to the family (original unity, in John Paul II's language). In and through the body, John Paul II develops an anthropology of love, that is, a vision of man intrinsically constituted by love (human and divine).[23] Let us focus now on this important point.

c. An Anthropology of Love

John Paul II's catechesis refers directly in its title to the meaning of human love and the sacrament of marriage. The original title of these reflections is not *The Theology of the Body*, but *Man and Woman He Created Them*. John Paul II says also that this teaching can be grasped under the title: Human Love in the Divine Plan.[24] What this reveals is that the center and focus of the catechesis is not the body in itself, but the truth of human love in the context of the divine plan. It is because it is intrinsic to this truth of love, in which John Paul II sees the way to fulfillment of the human being, that the body is of crucial interest.

As we have said, the body reveals man's participation in the world and, in this way, defines him as a being constituted by relationality. The Theology of the Body insists that this corporeal relationality is, from the beginning of man's journey in life, the way in which he opens himself to transcendence and thus relates to God. God does not appear, then, as someone in front of whom man is placed, in a subject-object relationship; nor primarily as the totally Other who always lies beyond the horizon of comprehension or reach; but first of all as the all-embracing background in which man lives and moves. He appears as the ultimate origin which first surrounds man when he comes into the world, and which then calls man to communion with him. God appears both as the origin and the destiny of human life, which takes the form of a path in time towards fulfillment.

John Paul II refers to this fundamental coordinate of man's experience as original solitude, in connection with God's statement in Genesis: "It is not good for man to be alone" (Gen 2:18). This solitude before God is, then, from the beginning, a matter of relationship with him, both as the Creator and as the fulfillment of man's aspirations. The fact that this transcendence is rooted in the body is crucial to understanding the form God's presence takes in the life of man. Contrary to what the spiritualistic conception may be, God is not to be found by transcending the body, but rather by increasing the level of incarnation: that is, of man's relationship to reality and the world. Man's incarnate condition allows for God to appear as the true and living God, as the Creator, origin and

end of the world. He is not the God of the idols, who can be manipulated as an object, nor the Gnostic God, an unattainable being always beyond man's reach.

The possibility of God appearing as a Giver, and not as an oppressive Master who always demands too much from man, is opened up by God's connection with a decisive experience in human life: the encounter of love between man and woman. Adam's encounter with Eve, as a help-meet for him, bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh (cf. Gen 2:23), is called by John Paul II the experience of original unity. In original unity the human body (in its masculinity and femininity) reveals that man is called to love. This unity is to be connected with the experience of original solitude (man's relationship to God), for it is this encounter between Adam and Eve that finally reveals the face of God as a Father, who has entrusted Eve to Adam and vice versa. In the gift of Eve, in fact, God is infinitely exceeding his previous bestowals upon the first man, entrusting him with a being who, like Adam, is called to transcend this world and is loved by God for her own sake (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 24). Thus, the possibility of the body revealing God is linked, for John Paul II, with its capacity to reveal the other person in his or her dignity. It is in the bodily encounter of love between man and woman that God reveals himself to man as a Father, as the loving origin and destiny of man's journey.

The coming of a child is the seal of unity between Adam and Eve (who, in the child, are forever one flesh) and the final proof of God's presence in their love (cf. Gen 4:1: "I have conceived a child with the help of the Lord"). The fecundity of the union witnesses in a singular way to God's presence in the love of the couple, and to the ultimate divine mystery manifested in their union.

At this point, the Theology of the Body becomes a theology of the family, according to what John Paul II calls the "genealogy of the person."^[25] God's revelation takes place, not only in the relationship between Adam and Eve, but in all the family relationships, especially in the link between parents and children. The way of love that the person is called to walk can be described in three steps: accepting one's being as a child, who proceeds ultimately from the Father (original solitude); thus being able to give oneself as a spouse, rooted in the love received from the Father (original unity); and finally becoming a father or mother, with the fecundity that comes from the union. The fact that all these relationships are inscribed in the body allows us to speak of a triple meaning of the body: filial (the body reveals to man that he is a child), spousal (the body tells him that he is called to give himself), procreative (or paternal /maternal: the body attests to the human being's capacity to become a father or a mother).

The Christological perspective of all of the above is present, even if not always explicitly, in John Paul II's vision. Christ is the Son of the Father who gives himself up for the Church, his Spouse, in order to generate the new life of Christians. The history of Christ's life in the flesh, as a history of

filiation, spousality and paternity, becomes the pattern that explains in its fullness the way of man, and brings the human family to communion with the Father.

In this brief description there are some important topics that we do not have the space to develop. One of them relates to the effect of concupiscence, man's refusal to accept God's logic of love. Because of concupiscence the body loses the clarity and transparency of the language of gift, substituting instead a logic of domination and possession. A second, crucial topic is the eschatological perspective John Paul II gives to his catechesis by including the topic of the resurrection of the body and connecting this with the virginal state of life.

As is clear from this presentation of John Paul II's thought, a theology of the body is not concerned only with the topic of sexuality.^[26] It includes many other areas, which are only developed in a small part by the Pope in his catechesis. Some of these are addressed in other writings, such as, for example, the issue of work in *Laborem Exercens* or the "suffering body" in *Salvifici Doloris*. The consequences of the Theology of the Body apply transversely to all of theology and they affect the way we understand all theological themes. As an example we can think of the theology of the liturgy, ecclesiology or sacramentology, as areas that could profit from this vision of the body.^[27]

After having summarized the understanding of John Paul II's Theology of the Body, we will examine some of the objections raised against it in the Anglo-Saxon realm.

3. Review of Some Criticism on the Theology of the Body and Perspectives for the Future

The Theology of the Body constitutes one of the main heritages of John Paul II's Pontificate. Prompted by the cultural crisis of the sexual revolution, and written in support of *Humanae Vitae*, his analysis develops a solid anthropology of love. Scholars have not failed to acknowledge the importance of his proposal.^[28] George Weigel, in his well-known biography of John Paul II, praises its theological potential for the future of theology and society.^[29] Fergus Kerr, in his review of 20th century Catholic Theology, counts it among the two most significant initiatives of John Paul II's Pontificate: the first regards "the future of the papal ministry, when he invited interested parties to help reshape the office, and the other, even more remarkable, in theological anthropology, when he made nuptial mysticism the center of his teaching."^[30]

We shall divide our comments on the evaluation of the Theology of the Body into three sections. The first one regards the method; the second, the anthropological consequences of the Theology of the Body in the framework of a theology of love; the third deals with the capacity of this approach to explain the whole Christian vision of God, man and the world. Alongside the presentation we will offer some remarks on the aspects that need to be developed for the Theology of the Body to continue being fruitful.

a. Methodological Questions

In his *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism*, Fergus Kerr describes the novelty of the method John Paul II uses to defend the conclusions held by *Humane Vitae*. According to his description, the new line of argument does not follow the path of natural law (which had been customary in arguing against contraception), but is based on a commentary of biblical texts and revelation: “John Paul II’s faith-based doctrine of nuptiality seems to render non-theological natural law thinking in sexual ethics quite redundant. Putting this another way, we may say that it looks as if Catholic Christian ethics, in regard to marriage, depends entirely on the nuptial meaning of the body as revealed in the opening chapters of the book of Genesis.”^[31] Kerr notes that many a scholar remained puzzled by this change.^[32]

It is true that John Paul II develops an argument based not only on natural law premises but also on biblical revelation, thus providing a larger context for his presentation. This framework better serves to highlight the connection between love and procreation, understood as an intrinsic element of truth about love, and as a token that reveals God’s presence within the union of love. But it is worth emphasizing that this reasoning does not entail a rupture concerning the doctrine of natural law, as if the latter were no longer necessary. On the contrary, John Paul II bases his method on a correlation between human experience (thus including in itself arguments from natural law) and Christian revelation.^[33] Both are connected because both are interpreted in terms of the (corporeal) encounter of love, as we have explained above. While human experience finds its summit in love, divine revelation shows us the fullness of God’s love in Christ’s life and death in the flesh.

From this point of view, the defense of natural law is made from the perspective of the acting person (with its focus on experience), and not from a purely naturalistic point of view (cf. *Veritatis Splendor*, 78). It is also connected with the meaning inscribed in the body, as having a language proper to itself (cf. *Veritatis Splendor*, 48). But this was always the perspective of authentic Catholic tradition in the first place.

The method developed by John Paul II in his catechesis is the one indicated in *Fides et Ratio*, 73, which explains the circularity between faith and reason, while the Theology of the Body catechesis prefers to speak from a phenomenological perspective of a circular link between human experience and divine revelation. It is important to note that John Paul II, in speaking of experience, avoids the risk of subjectivism, for his point of departure is the experience of love, which implies an openness to otherness and towards transcendence. In this perspective the body plays a crucial role as the locus of encounter with the world, others, and God. Divine revelation, on the other hand, is understood not as a mere communication of knowledge, but as the personal

revelation of love's fullness (cf. 1 John 4:9-12; 16) in Christ's body, and is thus not alien to human experience, but intimately connected with it.

Some criticism has been raised against John Paul II's way of interpreting the Scriptures. He has been accused of jumping too quickly to conclusions that are out of the perspective of the biblical text.^[34] To this criticism we could respond that John Paul II's reading of Scripture witnesses to the richness of scriptural interpretation, a richness not exhausted by one perspective alone. Proper to his method is the search for unity, which does not despise critical analysis but offers a broader perspective to integrate the results of this analysis. This unity is provided by placing the Bible in dialogue with human experience and by reading it in the unity of the two Testaments, which includes the light of its fulfillment in Christ.^[35] This method allows for a nuptial interpretation of the Bible to emerge, following what John Paul II calls the "Great Analogy" of God's love towards his People, as to a Bride. There is no lack of new proposals in biblical hermeneutics that allow for this comprehensive reading of the Bible.^[36]

b. Anthropological Significance of the Theology of the Body

Let us now consider the criticisms referred to the anthropological significance of the Theology of the Body, especially regarding moral theology and the family. The merit of John Paul II's contribution has been acknowledged; the Pope offers a deep and renewed reflection on the meaning of sexuality and human love based on a personalistic perspective. Many argue, however, that he develops his theology of the body in too narrow a frame.^[37]

First, some see in the Pope's approach an excessive focus on the gift of self that neglects other dimensions of sexuality, such as its beauty, passion, and spontaneity.^[38] It is true that the idea of gift of self can lead to oversimplifications when it is read in a merely moralistic sense, as if it were the result of a voluntaristic desire to forget oneself in favor of others. For John Paul II, however, the gift of self does not come out of the sole self-determination of the subject, but is rooted in a previous acceptance of one's self as issuing from the hands of God, mediated by others (in the first place, one's parents). This means that the gift of self to the other always recognizes the prior goodness of one's identity, recognized in the love by which a person is surrounded when he comes into existence. Self-dominion, as a consequence, is not just a stoic virtue of control, but is rooted in man's receptivity: he possesses himself when he has received himself from the hands of another. It is the reception of the gift, and the gratitude that comes from it, that moves us to love in our turn. This love is in fact the only way to keep the gift alive: one possesses oneself only inasmuch as one gives oneself out to others. It is only in this context that a true spontaneity can be obtained: not the spontaneity of "anything goes," but a spontaneity analogous to that of the consummated artist who

expresses beauty, a spontaneity which the Christian tradition has associated with the concept of virtue. [39]

Secondly, a more radical objection is that the Theology of the Body has a flawed understanding of sexual complementarity and its significance for Christian life. Such an emphasis leads allegedly to the conclusion that men and women who are not married are not complete and their humanity is lacking something. [40] But this conclusion does not follow from the way John Paul II reads sexual complementarity. Each Christian vocation develops in the body, is connected with corporeality, and takes into account the person's concrete sexuality. What is common to all is the vocation (call) to love, and the pattern of filiation, sponsality and parenthood (the pattern of the family) inscribed in our bodies. What is crucial to all walks of life is that love has to be received (as children), given away (as spouses) and become fruitful (as parents). This pattern is common to marriage and virginity, and does not exclude anyone from the common vocation to love. Virginity, let us note, is for John Paul II not a denial of bodiliness, but a participation in the fullness that Christ himself, virgin and son of a virgin, brought to the body by his Incarnation, bodily death and bodily Resurrection.

Some have accepted the notion of complementarity, but have redefined it by distinguishing its different levels: heterogenital, reproductive, communional, affective, and parental, to which an orientation complementarity is added in order to include homosexual persons. [41] Heterogenital complementarity is considered then relevant for some people, according to their orientation. The argument, however, does not take into account that the body is—already in its physical aspect—the primordial connection between the person and the world, as John Paul II argues in his Theology of the Body. An essential element of my own being, and of my gift to the other person, is this bodiliness I have not created, a bodiliness that witnesses to my coming from another. Not to integrate genital complementarity is to leave out an essential element of experience, preventing it of its wholeness and truth.

This criticism suggests two important areas of development of the Theology of the Body. The first refers to the connection between the body and nature and how the natural dynamism of the body is integrated into human action as a necessary part of it. Biology, in the human being, is never mere biology. In this sense, the structures of nature convey a meaning that is needed in order to understand how love takes into account the wholeness of experience.

Secondly, it is necessary further to develop the meaning of the sexual difference between man and woman by better clarifying the meaning of masculinity and femininity. The problem is only hinted at in the Theology of the Body and deserves more study. In any event, in John Paul II's vision, complementarity is not to be seen as the relationship of two halves that, when put together,

constitute the whole (theories of polarity, in Prudence Allen's terminology).[42] Thus, stereotypes of the understanding of masculinity and femininity, such as, for example, in terms of activity and passivity, are to be avoided. In fact, John Paul II conceives of the union as an encounter of two solitudes that refer towards God and only find fulfillment in him. This means, first of all, that the two persons remain a whole in their union (Prudence Allen speaks in this regard of integral complementarity), and also that both are open towards transcendence. Masculinity and femininity represent two incarnations of the same original solitude before God and, in this sense, two ways in which the divine becomes present in the world. This openness of complementarity towards transcendence allows us better to understand its fulfillment in consecrated virginity.

Finally, it has also been said that John Paul II has too narrow a vision of bodiliness, as if the body referred only to the sexual body. This concern is indeed a valid one. However, one can argue that John Paul II was already aware of this limitation of his catechesis. He did not want to offer a complete Theology of the Body, but limited his reflections to marriage and family. At one point in his catechesis he notes, for example, that a theology of suffering would need to be developed as an essential part of theological reflection on the body.[43] What is essential here is not how much ground the catechesis covers, but the greatness of the horizon it opens up.

c. On the Theology of the Body as a Viewpoint for Understanding the Whole of Theology

Other studies have seen the Papal text as an occasion to develop a complete theological synthesis. The Theology of the Body becomes a way to interpret the whole of Christianity, taking as its point of departure the Incarnation of the Son of God.

The most basic approach for such a synthesis is the development of the intuition expressed by Tertullian: *caro salutis est cardo* (the flesh is the hinge of salvation).[44] The body—body of Christ, body of the Church, body of the Eucharist—is in the New Testament the place where God has revealed himself and his love: it is the place of the manifestation of God as love. From the point of view of this connection between body and love, proper both to human experience and divine revelation, a presentation of the different aspects of the faith can be offered.

The link between body and love allows us also to introduce, in the context of a theology of the body, the nuptial perspective.[45] Fergus Kerr has summarized the path of 20th century Catholic theology with this subtitle: From Neo-scholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism.[46] Kerr reviews the change engaged in by theology during the 20th century as a surprising growth of the nuptial interpretation, tracing it back to de Lubac's reading of Origen, followed by Von Balthasar's and continued by Karol Wojtyła and Joseph Ratzinger. Kerr's judgment regarding the future of John Paul II's Theology of the Body remains suspended: "Whether his distinctive theology of nuptiality

will pass into the common teaching of the Catholic Church, as he obviously hoped, it is surely too early even to guess.”[\[47\]](#)

With regard to this, it is important to note that the possibility of developing a Theology of the Body is not rooted mainly upon a particular interpretation of Origen. Understood, first of all, as a theology that places at its center the connection between body and love, branches of the tradition such as the one represented by Irenaeus of Lyons and Tertullian—centered in the *salus carnis*, the salvation of the flesh—offer a solid grounding. The nuptial image was used by these Fathers to express the union between the Spirit (as God’s love) and the flesh, in which they saw a summary of the history of salvation.[\[48\]](#)

In any event, if it is to offer the key for an entire theological synthesis, the focus on nuptiality is to be broadened to embrace the whole path of the family, thus including the entire set of family relationships: parents and children, husband and wife, brothers and sisters.... In other words, the characterization of this theology as nuptial must not forget that nuptiality is first of all rooted in filiation, and open always towards a relationship with God, present in the love between man and woman.[\[49\]](#) Only in this way does Scripture offer a solid ground from which to build up this synthesis, both in the Old and New Testament, where family relationships appear as a key image for reading the covenant between God and man. Only in this way can a proper analogy of love be developed, an analogy that recognizes the differences between filial, nuptial and paternal/maternal love. Precisely the fact that these relationships extend in time and cannot be grasped in a simultaneous way, prevents a clear correspondence between the members of the family and the divine persons of the Trinity, thus preserving the *maior dissimilitudo* of the Fourth Lateran Council.

This suffices for an evaluation of the cultural and theological potential of John Paul II’s catechesis in the United States. When one studies the causes that led to the sexual revolution in this country, one sees how deep the roots are. Thus, the response, in which different fields each contribute their approach, needs to address the deepest anthropological problems. The development of a Theology of the Body is now a necessity for the Church, as well as an opportunity to present the core of her message, centered on the Incarnation and the Resurrection of the Body. Once again, in her effort to defend herself and the Gospel, the Church has the means not only to respond to her critics, but also to make these responses a greater presentation of the beauty of the truth from which she draws her life.

[1]For the text, cf. the translation by Michael Waldstein: John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006) which greatly improves the previous edition.

[2]For the following presentation, cf. John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters : A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997) and Juan José Pérez-Soba, *El corazón de la familia, Presencia y diálogo* (Madrid: Publicaciones de la Facultad de Teología San Dámaso, 2006).

[3]Cf. Edmund S. Morgan, “The Puritans and Sex,” *The New England Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (1942): 591–607.

[4] Cf. Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

[5]Cf. Kathleen Verduin, “‘Our Cursed Natures’: Sexuality and the Puritan Conscience,” *The New England Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (1983): 220–37, here 231–32; cf. p. 226: “Though officially approved and accommodated by marriage, sexuality to the Puritan conscience must have remained the sign of a dangerously stubborn self-will whose indulgence challenged the power and authority of God.”

[6]Cf. Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, part II, chapter XXVII.

[7] Cf. D. L. Schindler, “Is America Bourgeois?” *Communio: International Catholic Review* 14 (1987): 264–90.

[8]Cf. D’Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, 223–24: “Above all, Americans absorbed a version of Freudianism that presented the sexual impulse as an insistent force demanding expression. ‘The urge is there,’ wrote an American analyst, A. A. Brill, ‘and whether the individual desires or no, it always manifests itself.’”

[9]Cf. *Ibid.*

[10]On this regard, cf. Allan C. Carlson, *The Family in America: Searching for Social Harmony in the Industrial Age* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003).

[11]For a vision of some of the consequences of the sexual revolution, cf. Laura Sessions Stepp, *Unhooked : How Young Women Pursue Sex, Delay Love and Lose at Both* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2007); Elizabeth Marquardt, *Between Two Worlds: The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce* (New York: Crown, 2005); Allan David Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind : How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students* (New York:

Simon and Schuster, 1987); Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community: Eight Essays* (New York: Pantheon, 1993).

[12] Cf. Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992).

[13] Cf. Francis Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order* (New York: Free Press, 1999); Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Really Are: Coming to Terms with America's Changing Families* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997).

[14] Cf. Julián Marías, *America in the Fifties and Sixties: Julián Marías on the United States* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972).

[15] For studies on the Theology of the Body that deepen its different perspectives, cf. Mary Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love: A New Vision of Marriage in the Light of John Paul II's Anthropology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999); Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996); Avery Robert Dulles, John M. McDermott, and John Gavin, *Pope John Paul II on the Body: Human, Eucharistic, Ecclesial: Festschrift Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ* (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2007).

[16] Cf. Capitulum de caritate, IV, 100 (Patrologia Graeca 90, 1073 A).

[17] For the Fathers, cf. chapter three of Adam G. Cooper, *Life in the Flesh: An Anti-Gnostic Spiritual Philosophy* (Oxford–New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); for Aquinas, cf. Benedict M. Ashley, *Theologies of the Body: Humanist and Christian* (Braintree, MA: Pope John Center, 1995); M.-D. Chenu, “Pour une anthropologie sacramentelle,” *La Maison-Dieu. Revue de pastorale liturgique* 119 (1974): 85–100.

[18] Cf. Antonio Orbe, *Antropología de San Ireneo* (Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid: 1969); Margaret Ruth Miles, *Augustine on the Body* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979); Adam G. Cooper, *The Body in St. Maximus the Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); G. J. McAleer, *Ecstatic Morality and Sexual Politics : A Catholic and Antitotalitarian Theory of the Body* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005). Cf. also: Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336*, Lectures on the History of Religions (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

[19] Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: 1992).

[20] Cf. Gabriel Marcel, “L'être incarné, repère central de la réflexion métaphysique,” in *Du refus à l'invocation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1940); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception*,

Bibliothèque des idées (Paris: Gallimard, 1945); Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Evanston, IL: 2001).

[21] Cf. Stuart F. Spicker, *The Philosophy of the Body: Rejections of Cartesian Dualism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970).

[22] Cf. Gabriel Marcel, *Homo viator : prolégomènes à une métaphysique de l'espérance* (Paris: Aubier, 1963).

[23] Cf. Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993).

[24] Cf. John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 659.

[25] Cf. *Letter to Families Gratissimam Sane* 9 (AAS 86 [1994] 878).

[26] Cf. José Granados, "Toward a Theology of the Suffering Body," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 33 (2006): 540–63.

[27] On the liturgy and the body, cf. Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute : Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man, Perspectives in Continental Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004). On the sacraments, cf. Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments : The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001).

[28] For a bibliography of publications in the United States, cf. L. A. Mitchell, "A Bibliography for the Theology of the Body," *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (2003): 69–77.

[29] Cf. George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (New York: Cliff Street Books, 1999).

[30] Cf. Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: from Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2007), 176.

[31] Cf. *Ibid.*, 179.

[32] Cf., for example, Charles E. Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 178: "One coming out of the Catholic tradition is also surprised by the lack of explicit development of natural law that continues to be the basis even for John Paul II's position on norms governing sexuality."

[33] In fact, some have criticized part of John Paul II's argument, precisely on account of his reflection on human experience; cf. Christopher Chenault Roberts, *Creation and Covenant: The*

Significance of Sexual Difference in the Moral Theology of Marriage (New York: T&T Clark International, 2007), 181, who nonetheless offers an overall positive appraisal of John Paul II's contribution.

[34] Cf. Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 177–79.

[35] Cf. John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 143–44.

[36] Cf., as an example, the work of Paul Beauchamp: Paul Beauchamp, *L'un et l'autre testament: essai de lecture* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977).

[37] Part of this refusal to accept the Theology of the Body is connected with the rejection of the Catholic Church's sexual morality. Some think of the Theology of the Body as just an enormous apparatus to justify *Humanae Vitae* which, in their opinion, is flawed in its argument and wrong in its conclusions.

[38] Cf. Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 170: "... there is no in-depth or systematic discussion of human love. . . . The opposite of love is treating the other as an object or as a means of sexual self-gratification. The contrast is between disinterested giving and selfish enjoyment (TOB 130). A more complete picture should recognize that the gift of self also involves some human fulfillment and sexual enjoyment."

[39] Cf. L. T. Johnson, "A Disembodied Theology of the Body: John Paul II on Love, Sex and Pleasure," *Commonweal* 128, no. 2 (2001): 11–17.

[40] Cf. Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 168: "The theology of the body as developed by John Paul II, however, cannot serve as a theology for all bodies. In other words, there are different theologies of the body. What the pope develops in terms of the nuptial meaning of the body really does not apply to people who are single or those who are widows or widowers."

[41] Cf. Michael G. Lawler, "Catholic Sexual Ethics: Complementarity and the Truly Human," *Theological Studies* 67 (2006): 625–52.

[42] Cf. Prudence Allen, "Man-Woman Complementarity: The Catholic Inspiration," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 9, no. 3 (2006): 87–108.

[43] Cf. John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 660.

[44] Cf., for an attempt of a theological synthesis based on the body: Adolphe Gesché, "L'invention chrétienne du corps," *Revue théologique de Louvain* 35 (2004): 166–202.

[45] Cf. Angelo Scola, “The Nuptial Mystery: A Perspective for Systematic Theology,” in *The Nuptial Mystery* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

[46] Cf. Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians*.

[47] Cf. *Ibid.*, 182.

[48] Cf. José Granados, “The Family, the Body, and Communio Ecclesiology: The Mission of the Family in the Midst of the Church as Communio,” *Anthropotes* 23, no. 2 (2007): 175–214.

[49] Cf. Angelo Scola, “Il Mistero nuziale: Originarietà e fecondità,” *Anthropotes* 23, no. 2 (2007): 57–70.

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Reaching for the Feminine Genius: A Commencement Address

ELIZABETH KANTOR

This commencement address was given at the May 30, 2015 graduation ceremony at Brookewood, an independent Catholic school for girls in Kensington, Maryland.

Class of 2015, it's a privilege and a pleasure to be here to help you celebrate your achievements and wish you well as you embark on your next adventures.

I'm going to dare to give you some advice for your future that's out of step with the spirit of our age—but in step with the words of Pope Francis, who has said that “the feminine genius is needed in all expressions in the life of society.”

When my son played football in high school, his coach used to tell the guys on the team that there was nothing more important they could do in life than become great husbands and fathers. This always used to make me think that you could *never* get away with saying the equivalent thing to girls. If your field hockey coach was always saying that there was nothing more important in your future than being a good wife and mother, it would be a scandal. And yet—though I myself would not give precisely that advice to either boys or girls—it's certainly no *less* true for young women than it is for young men that families are more important than careers. But it would be shocking to put it to girls quite that way. Now why is that?

It's out of fear, I think—fear that as women we'll be confined to the domestic sphere, locked out of opportunities in the wider world, limited by some kind of glass ceiling—because for so long women didn't have the opportunities that are open to us today.

We twenty-first-century women have a lot to be grateful for. Women haven't always been able to go to college and have careers—though sometimes that was for different reasons than we tend to assume.

The last woman I can think of in my family who never got a chance to go to college was a great-great-aunt of mine who—according to the family story—was actually on her way from Tunica, Mississippi, to Wellesley College in Massachusetts along with her grandmother in what must have been about 1910—a long and arduous journey in those days, mostly by train. They had gotten as far as Baltimore when they stopped so that the grandmother could see a doctor at Johns Hopkins about a little spot on her nose that was bothering her. When the doctor told the grandmother that the bump on her face was cancer, she was terrified, immediately had a heart attack, and died—leaving my great-great-aunt, approximately age eighteen, with the problem of how to get her grandmother’s body a thousand miles back home for burial. She managed it, but she never got to Wellesley. My great-great-aunt, who lived into the 1980s, managed to handle a great many extraordinary challenges in the course of her long life—beginning with the fact that she was a posthumous baby, and for that reason had been named by her heartbroken widowed mother after her father, despite the fact that she was a girl! (We called her Biwie, short for her given name William.) Biwie herself was widowed relatively early in life, left to raise three children—and help take care of three more, her brother’s children, after *his* wife died—and to run a cotton plantation on her own. She served on the levee board, playing her part in the struggle to keep the mighty Mississippi River from rebelling against its chains and taking back the rich Delta farmland it had created in the first place. And she saw her only son leave home to serve in World War II. He was a lieutenant on one of those Higgins boats that took soldiers to the beaches on D-Day. And despite the enormous mortality rate of junior officers with that job, he came home safe—only to die young of leukemia after the war.

Family stories like my great-great-aunt’s remind us that women in the past—college-educated or not—did run businesses and serve in offices of public trust and responsibility, and that the most significant limitations on women’s lives have always been the ones we still face today: from the heartbreak of the human condition, from what Gerard Manley Hopkins calls “the blight man was born for,” from the fact that we are limited, mortal human beings—and so are the people we love.

It’s those limitations that make it crucial for us to spend our resources—our naturally scarce energy, and time, and commitment—on the things that really matter. You’re at a time in life when, for just a little while longer, it still may seem that you have *too* much time to fill, and no lack of energy, if only you could find the right thing to pour it into. But, believe me, your time and energy will not seem boundless for long. And what you spend them on in the next few years, what you give yourself to—by putting your limited time and energy into it—will become what your life is about. So choose wisely!

So what really matters most? What’s worthy of that gift of yourself?

Here’s where I want to turn to Jane Austen for the answer and the right advice for you.

Nobody can say that Jane Austen didn't have an impressive career! Making it into the very top rank of great world literature beats anything on our resumes. But Jane Austen didn't think about it that way. Here's what she wrote to her brother Frank about being known as the author of *Pride and Prejudice*: "After all, what a trifle it is in all its Bearings, to the really important points of one's existence even in this World!"

If being the author of one of the greatest novels ever penned is just "a trifle," then what, in Jane Austen's opinion, were the "the really important points of one's existence?"

Well, with the phrase "even in this World," she was gesturing at the most important thing, which is *not* in this world—the pearl of great price that it's worth selling everything you have, so you can buy it.

That's the most important point of our existence—our relationship to the God who made us, gave us everything we have, and left His throne in Heaven to offer Himself for our rescue, when we had made a mess of it all. Maybe someone in your class will go for that pearl of great price in a more or less direct way—becoming, say, a cloistered nun, leaving behind every other good, even family and friends, for a life of contemplative prayer. Or a theologian or pure research scientist who sequesters herself in a library or a research lab to contemplate the truths of God's nature, or of His creation. But probably most of you, like most Christians—including Jane Austen herself—will be trying to make your way to Heaven the other way, through a life lived in the world.

So in your life in the world—which, in a certain sense, is commencing today—how do you decide on your priorities? Where can you bestow the gift of yourself, without waste and without regrets? The one word answer, I think, is love. For Jane Austen, the people she loved were certainly the most important thing in this world. What tips us off to her priorities is the way she fit her astonishing literary career into the interstices of a life devoted to her beloved family and friends. She managed to become one of the most accomplished writers in the English language, all the while living the life of a typical English spinster, making herself available to the people she loved.

Jane Austen put her relationships first. She did her writing in a room with a squeaky door, so she could put it away quickly and give all her attention to friends if they came to call. She was the aunt her nephews adored, the one her niece turned to for advice about whether to marry a man she was dubious about. Jane Austen wasn't impatient with them if they interrupted her work, or prickly about her reputation as a novelist. She was not just kind about but deeply interested in their writing, which certainly wasn't on a level with her own. And also, in becoming a novelist Jane Austen picked a career—as it were—that, like a lot of traditionally female careers, played to her deepest interest—which was other human beings.

So here's my revised and updated version of that football coach's advice: What will matter most in your life is the people you love and give yourselves to, not the possessions, achievements, status, and accomplishments you collect. Those people may be the man you love and marry and the children you raise with him. They may be your patients, if you become a doctor. Or your readers, if you're a novelist. Or your students, if you're a teacher. But in any path in life that's worthy of you, your life will be a gift, back to God and to what Jane Austen calls your "fellow creatures."

So how does that translate into practical advice for you in this next stage of your life? As you leave home and head off to college, I hope you'll put a lot of deliberate care into making friends and being a good friend, and that you'll also be careful, and smart, and have integrity when you're dealing with guys, remembering that getting your relationships right—your "relationships," but also your friendships and the way you treat your family—is at least as important as doing well in school. And I hope you'll see the education and training you're undertaking less as something you're acquiring, and more as something that you're pouring yourself into—a way of preparing to spend your life, the only life you have, on the only things that matter.

Charles Ryder in *Brideshead Revisited* says that "to know and love one other human being is the root of all wisdom." Building your life on love can seem foolhardy. It puts your happiness out of your own control. It means giving "hostages to fortune" as the calculating Sir Francis Bacon warned. That's why it's so tempting to compartmentalize, to put all your serious efforts and your hopes for future happiness into the things that you have more control over—school and career and achievements—and to make what back in the 1970s we started calling your "love life" into a side hobby or a recreation that you keep from ever being important enough to really hurt you. Because love gone wrong can break your heart and ruin your life. Jane Austen knew that. But she had a different solution for that problem. Don't give up on love because it's so painful when it goes wrong. Instead, get love right. Easier said than done! But if, like Dante, you make the decision to let your will and your deepest desires to be caught up in the motion of "the love that moves the sun and the other stars," your life will be something great.

God bless you all.

Elizabeth Kantor is the author of The Jane Austen Guide to Happily Ever After and The Politically Incorrect Guide to English and American Literature.

Hedging One's Bets: Courting Divorce

MARGARET HARPER MCCARTHY

This is an excerpt from *Torn Asunder: Children, the Myth of the Good Divorce, and the Recovery of Origins* (Margaret Harper McCarthy, ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, forthcoming]). Adapted and republished by permission of the publisher; all rights reserved.

In *The Divorce Culture*, Barbara Dafoe Whitehead masterfully describes the new environment which no-fault divorce has generated.^[1] A whole generation has now been raised in the “school of divorce,” learning its chief lessons—that families break up, relationships end, and love is not forever. As a result, they have assumed a “comparison shopper’s” stance towards the opposite sex with all of the typical “calculation and guardedness that works against commitment and even against the ability to fall in love.”^[2] But Whitehead also began to look at the question from the opposite point of view. What got us into the divorce culture in the first place? Looking at the social milieu of her own unmarried daughters and their friends, Whitehead turned to the question of courtship. The result was her book *Why There Are No Good Men Left* ^[3] which documented the radical shift in the 20th century from a highly formal and universally understood “courtship system,” aiming at the goal of marriage, to the amorphous, open-ended, and cyclical “relationship system,” which has now habituated young adults to serial marriage-like “commitments”—without the commitment—together with serial divorce-like “break-up management.” What Whitehead put her finger on—perhaps without meaning to—was that, underlying the shift in practice, there was a shift in the very idea of what it meant to grow up—especially with respect to the opposite sex—a shift which could not but make the marriages young people had started to wander into, haphazardly, the precarious unions they in fact became. Courtship embodied one idea, and the new mix that was filling its absence, another. These cultural patterns would not leave marriage untouched nor, more fundamentally, those who entered it.

What then is “courtship”; and what exactly has replaced it? Then too, what understanding of the human being do these presuppose? Most importantly, what is at stake in the choice of courtship over its replacement, especially as it bears on the capacity to marry and stay married? These are the questions we ask here, noting that we are neither attached nostalgically to things antique nor

wed to the presumption that the way we do things now is the inevitable and unquestionable product of progress. As Leon Kass put it:

New arrangements can perhaps be fashioned. As Raskolnikov put it—and he should know—“Man gets used to everything, the beast!” But it is simply wrong that nothing important will be lost; indeed, many things of great importance have already been lost, and, as I have indicated, at tremendous cost in personal happiness, child welfare, and civic peace There may be no going back to the earlier forms of courtship, but no one should be rejoicing over this fact. Anyone serious about “designing” new cultural forms to replace those now defunct must bear the burden of finding some alternative means of serving all these necessary goals.[4]

In looking at the key features of courtship and its modern replacement, then, we are ultimately looking for what serves the “necessary goals” of the human being especially where marriage is concerned.

Rootedness vs. Rootlessness

Perhaps one of the first things that come to mind when one thinks of “courtship” is that the young couple is never alone. In courtship a young man “came calling,” which meant he went to a girl’s home, and made himself present not only to her but to everyone therein. Then, the “call” was never simply a private matter. There were front porches with swings and chairs in front of transparent windows; and, in the darker hours, there were candles lit and set at certain lengths by parents in colonial times, to signal the length of a visit! There were walks, too, as in the *Godfather* scene, with the couple walking ahead of the whole town following behind at a slight distance. But these and other similar practices pointed to something deeper. A young couple was not left alone, because the one visiting and the one visited were themselves not alone. Everyone belonged to the equivalent of the “Port William” in Wendell Berry’s famous novels.[5] What was understood in “courtship,” regardless of its many manifestations, was that a young man, or a young woman, were not “private,” deprived, that is, of relations. They were from somewhere and belonged there. They were rooted in a place, and in a home.

Being from somewhere also mattered in what a couple was doing when approaching each other. By “courting,” they were adhering to elaborated practices which had an order and a common meaning. From this point of view courtship belonged to a society which understood that one of its fundamental tasks was to help young people to meet each other in such a way that they would be led to a life-long union within which any children they might have would be born. As Whitehead says, “the task of paring off men and women for the purposes of sex, marriage, and child rearing is so important that no known society leaves mate selection and marriage up to lone individuals

roaming around on their own.”[6] Courtship, then, was the form into which a society introduced its young people to both stir up their natural attraction for each other and protect it so that it would be directed towards the good and happy end of marriage.

All of this, as we know, has become ever more a feature of the past such that we have almost no direct knowledge of it, apart from the novels we might read about other times (especially the very popular ones by Jane Austen) and the movies we might watch about other cultures (such as the exquisite *To Fill the Void*, set among the Hasidim in modern-day Israel). Nothing happens at home anymore, because we are all alone, belonging nowhere in particular.[7] We have no “Port Williams,” and no homes. Alan Bloom noted this when he described his students in his *Closing of the American Mind*:

Apart from the fact that many students have experienced the divorce of their parents and are informed by statistics that there is a strong possibility of divorce in their futures, they hardly have an expectation that they will have to care for their parents or any other blood relatives, or that they will even see much of them as they grow older. Social security, retirement funds and health insurance for old people free their children from even having to give them financial support, let alone taking them into their own homes to live. When a child goes away to college, it is really the beginning of the end of his vital connection with his family, though he scarcely realized it at the time. Parents have little authority over their children when they leave home, and the children are forced to look outward and forward.[8]

Bloom adds that the indifference young people have toward their families is not a matter of cold-heartedness; it is, rather, that the “substance of their interests ... lies elsewhere. Spiritually, the family was pretty empty anyway, and new objects fill their field of vision as the old ones fade.”[9] As for the new “relationships,” then, the fact that no one “comes calling” is not a matter of bad manners, either. It is simply a symptom of something deeper: the rootlessness of the modern self who has become effectively homeless.

We have been used to our own rootlessness for a long time now. It is indeed the fundamental building block of the modern selves that we are, and the kind of polity to which we belong. John Locke founded the new political order and its citizen precisely on a new reading of the relation between the child and his parents. It suffices to look at his interpretation of Genesis to see that the condition for the new free autonomous subject was inversely related to the relation he was born into, the one he had not chosen. Adam, said Locke, did not have the “misfortune” of being born. He was “capable from the first instant of being able to provide for his own support and preservation and govern his action.”[10] According to some, it is the overcoming of this “misfortune” which had Locke turn to the question of the education of children as “the inescapable locus of citizen

formation”[11] for the new liberal society founded as it was on self-constituting agents and contractual relations. Parents were to look to “the idyll of an earlier Eden, a land where children form themselves out of their own ribs, becoming individuals self-conceived in the primordial land of the self-made”[12] and raise their children as though they had not been born, and therefore, not as their *heirs*, but as future citizens capable of adult liberal behavior, as “putative adults,” as Locke’s descendants would put it.[13] In Locke’s wake, parents were expected to discipline *their* behavior, especially their pernicious tendency towards “parental tyranny,” so as not thwart the new ideal upbringing of the modern citizen (and self).[14]

The suspicion of fatherhood was not, of course, unique to Locke. It is a characteristic feature of modernity in its many forms.[15] In his own distinct way, Rousseau thought the same about the child with respect to his forebears. Rousseau’s ideal “pupil,” *Emile*, would have a tutor set between him and his parents early so as to protect him from their corrupting influences, chiefly, the “temptation” to become dependent on their persons.[16] His “Bible” would be *Robinson Crusoe*, the story of the orphaned child who became learned in the art of self-sufficiency.[17] *Emile* “cares no more for his father than his dog,” says Rousseau’s translator.[18] Then too, Nietzsche was no closer than his liberal counterparts to looking positively at dependence even when—especially when—he had “the child” represent the epitome of man. That “child,” he said, is a child precisely because he “starts over” from the beginning, *creating* values, having been unencumbered by those he inherited. It has been said that modernity’s ideal child—underlying all the variations—is the *prodigal* child[19]—especially in the *new world*[20]—or, using more current psychological language, the child with “attachment disorder.”[21]

The suspicion of one’s origins, especially one’s father, is not, of course, simply a modern one. It is ancient and needs no more justification than the universal experience of conflict between the generations, not to mention between men and women. The Judeo-Christian tradition takes this suspicion all the way back, just short of the beginning, to the first sin in the Garden of Eden.[22] That said, however deep-seated this animosity was understood to be, it was never considered to be the first nor the last word on our relations with each other. It would be modernity’s distinct privilege to make it so, anchoring it in “nature” itself. [23] And in time, modernity would habituate us to the idea that the common experiences of alienation that we have with our closest relations—prodigal sons and daughters, neglectful parents, divorced parents—are “natural,” and that, in the end we don’t really belong to anyone, and no one really belongs to us. In sum we have come to think that the tenuousness of these relations is as it should be.

But nature has a way of rising again, and in strange ways. The Canadian philosopher George Grant, who knew well the power of modernity’s counterfactual “state of nature,” especially in its North

American version, spoke of the “experience of deprivation” as a way back to those things we have lost sight of, or, at the very least, have not been allowed to see. “Any intimations of authentic deprivation are precious, because they are the ways through which intimations of good, unthinkable in the public terms, may yet appear to us,” said Grant. [24] In this light, it is perhaps not so ironic that now the children of divorce, on the backs of their “experience of deprivation”—and against the many attempts to convince them otherwise—are putting their fingers on something more original—more natural—than the acquired tenuousness between parents and their children. It is they who are putting their fingers on the necessary link between our identity and our origin (in our parents).[25] And in so doing, they are bringing to light a more basic experience than that of the tenuousness we all know too well: that we are what we are by virtue of the gift of being from another—from our mothers and our fathers—and through them—however inadequately—from God, our Creator.[26] And they are bringing to light a relation which Jesus associated with our very identity and its perfection: “Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same shall be the greater in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:4).[27]

On a Path vs. Aimless Wandering

The second feature of courtship is that it places the young person on a “ladder,” so to speak. In every courtship “system,” regardless of the cultural variations, it was understood by the ones who were ushered into it, that they were setting out on an adventure which *took them somewhere precise*. If courtship was an “odyssey,” marriage was its “Ithaca.” Jane Austen’s novel *Pride and Prejudice* states it boldly in its famous first lines: “It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a large fortune must be in want of a wife.”

By contrast, the “relationship system” that we have become accustomed to for some decades now is “cyclical” on account of the fact that there is no clarity about where a relationship ought to lead, if anywhere at all.[28] Above all, the idea that there is somewhere precise to go has been practically eliminated, at least with respect to one’s “personal life.” Indeed, some have called the ever prolonged period of time between adolescence and adulthood the “odyssey years,” so marked are they with a sense of adventure, and exploration, even if, unlike the classical tale, they are altogether aimless, having no homeland in sight (or in mind).[29]

On the face of it, the “child man” embodies the modern “Odysseus.” He is unwilling to grow up, aimless.[30] He can be, as Bloom describes him, “anything [he] want[s] to be ... with no particular reason to want to be anything in particular.”[31] He is the “perpetual adolescent”—the “emerging adult”[32]—shunning domesticated refinement and education, being a “jerk” towards women,[33] and generally underachieving as he “games” well into his 30s. The new Single Young Female (“SYF”) on the other hand, is the driven “overachiever,” outperforming her male

counterparts in both school and work. By all appearances she is the responsible adult.[34] Whereas *he* is wandering, *she* is in clear sight of her goals, and has the determination (and the loaded resumé) to reach them. To be fair, in other words, she is not “aimless.” Notwithstanding these apparent differences, however, there is a fundamental agreement between the two when it comes to growing up. For each, the old “entry point into adulthood and crucial vehicle for defining themselves as mature individuals”[35] has been set aside. Each will define him or herself quite independently from marriage, fatherhood and motherhood. They may look very different in the way they “grow up,” or at least age well past actual adolescence; but they are, in the end, two sides of the same coin. One has nothing to work for and the other works diligently for no one outside of herself. If they do eventually marry they will do so *at the end*, so to speak, after she has “established herself,” and at the end of his adventure, once he has given in.[36] The point is that marriage was not where they were going in the first place as they were being brought up. It was not the destination of the adventure of adolescence. Marriage, therefore, will not be the “cornerstone” of their adulthood. It will be rather a “capstone,” a “trophy” added to a life otherwise indifferent to it.[37] And it should be clear enough how difficult it is to arrive at an end which is not already in the beginning, to turn T.S. Eliot’s phrase “in my beginning is my end” on its head.[38]

As the children of divorce have already shown us, however, reality has a way of catching up with us. Even studies promoting delayed marriage, largely on account of the “benefits” it holds for women, cannot hold back the evidence that everyone is still happier married than not in their twenties, that men are not only happier, but also more successful, and that women who delay marriage are subjecting themselves to the inevitable “romantic purgatory” of their unmarried thirties while they pursue the “trade-off” of certain “benefits” (*not* including happiness). [39] It may be, then, that just as experience has a way of taking us back to a truer beginning, it also has a way of leading us to a truer end. And in doing so it might just be putting its finger on what is necessary for a real adventure, as Kierkegaard did in word—if not in deed—when he said, resisting the anti-marriage romanticism of his day: “Marriage is and remains the most important voyage of discovery a human being undertakes; compared with a married man’s knowledge of life, any other knowledge of it is superficial, for he and he alone has properly immersed himself in life.”[40]

Sexual Complementarity vs. Androgyny

We have considered the two “book-ends” of the human person which bear on matters of courtship, the questions about one’s beginning and one’s end. We must now turn more concretely to the relation that the young person is *about to (or eventually) enter into* (as the case may be). It is not enough, here, to speak about “relationships,” since the generic term is used to cover every possible conjunction of two or more people lasting from one hour to a life-time. Indeed, according to some

the term itself tends to project the newer superficial terms on every other relationship, even those that are by definition deep, at least historically.[41] The not-so-generic use of the term would indicate a shift from one way of looking at relations to another, forcing us, therefore to ask our question: How deep do these future relations go?

Implied in the courtship idea is the older kind of relation, the kind where relation to the other—be it the one from which one comes, as a son or daughter, be it the one where one is going, as a future spouse—is inscribed in one’s being. Even if the future relation entails consent as one of its essential ingredients, it is not simply “a choice.” One consents (in the case of marriage) always to that for which one has already been prepared such that when the relation to be formed is formed, it is never a matter of two grazing next to each other as members of a herd, or two together on the deck of the cruise ship, who remain as indifferent to each other when they get off and go their separate ways as they were before they met. Courtship implies a “social animal,” to use Aristotle’s term.

It is this general subcutaneous understanding of the human being-in-relation that explains why the courtship idea is so much at home with sexual difference. Sexual difference is the inscription on the body of how much one *is already* turned towards another—even more specifically another *in difference*—and of how much one is being prepared for a common enterprise with him or her, each offering their distinctive gifts for mutual benefit, and receiving back more than the sum of their parts, in the gift of something new, a “third,” a child, be it physical or spiritual.

One of the hallmarks of the “relationship system” is perhaps, most notably, the kind of relation that sexual difference implies, namely *being for another*. This is particularly the case with girls who in the past had been raised *for* marriage and motherhood, and who accordingly were taught to behave in such a way as to harness male energies *for them* and *for their eventual children*. For the last several decades girls have been put through what Whitehead calls the “Girl Project,” that “self-conscious and highly successful social project whose chief purpose was to prepare young women for adult lives of economic self-sufficiency, social independence, and sexual liberation.”[42] These girls have now graduated into the world of the new “Single Young Female” (SYF) characterized as it is by financial independence, and the sorts of careers—not jobs—that guarantee it.[43] As for marriage and motherhood, these are ideally delayed so as to solidify the independence.[44] In the meantime, they will have “relationships” which are tailored to the new terms, tentative and “safe,” and short-lived, as their incessant nervous talk about them demonstrates. (The “child men” in question will not have trouble following the new less-demanding social cues.) When they eventually do marry, they will enter “capstone” marriages, marriages that come well *after* they have defined themselves as the independent women they were brought up to be. Marriage will not, that is, define them.[45] It too will be “a relationship,” though not as short-lived as before. (They will

have learned the lessons they taught themselves in their own prolonged adolescence.) And it will be a union of two living independently on parallel lines.

None of this is changed by the fact that the ideal (capstone) marriage is a “soul mate” or “companionate” marriage.”[46] The reason is that the “higher emotional plane” on which the two meet—their “deep emotional and sexual connection”—excludes everything that used to guarantee the “connection”: the extended family, economic purposes, and the like.[47] These are now considered “external.” The companionate marriage is a “pure relation,” as the British sociologist Anthony Giddens calls it.[48] That is, the “companions” are “fully formed individuals who are financially and psychologically independent,”[49] bound by nothing other than their emotional state. They will not, in other words, be giving themselves (and their independence) over to each other, entangling themselves, economically or otherwise, in a common work. They will live in a house together, but not *make a home*, much less a neighborhood. If they approach the question of children at all they will approach it late and cautiously, with calculation.[50] And then when they are no longer on the “higher plane,” divorce will be close at hand.[51] In a certain sense this end was already in the beginning. Wendell Berry describes the modern marriage thus:

Marriage, in what is evidently its most popular version, is now on the one hand an intimate “relationship” involving (ideally) two successful careerists in the same bed, and on the other hand a sort of private political system in which rights and interests must be constantly asserted and defended. Marriage, in other words, has now taken the form of divorce: a prolonged and impassioned negotiation as to how things shall be divided. During their understandably temporary association, the “married” couple will typically consume a large quantity of merchandise and a large portion of each other.[52]

In a word, the kind of relation undergirding the new “relationship system” is one between two social solitaries, who now, with respect to each other are separate, independent, interchangeably “equal” selves, on the same commuter train, and always preparing for separation once again.[53] As Bloom says so perceptively, putting his finger on the heart of their relationship: “The problem...is that they have no common object, no common good, no natural complementarity. Selves, of course, have no relation to anything but themselves, and this is why ‘communication’ is their problem.”[54] As we saw above, the lack of any *real* communication between the new couple is deep-seated, reaching back to the beginning—to the lack of communication with their own forebears. It is only “natural,” then, that they will be tenuously united (by choice) and then, once again, easily separated. [55]

It is no coincidence then that we are now at war with sexual difference, insisting as we do that gender is a “social construct” imposed on top of it, erroneously, for those living in the past (though

correctly for those in the present, apparently). Sexual difference is merely the last bastion of the older idea of the “social animal,” the one we have already replaced. It is the (stubborn) residual evidence that we might still be *from* another and already *for* another (prior to choice), and with him or her, open to something new, surprising, and life-defining. As some have suggested, we have been *androgynous*—even *gay*—for centuries now, long before we even started thinking about our bodies and how we could make them conform “plastically” to the idea we have about ourselves.^[56] And now that we no longer see in our own bodies our readiness for entanglement with the sexual other—and with whatever might come of it—we are confined to our solitude. It is no wonder we find ourselves in a “cycle,” from cautious, half-hearted, “safe” relationships, to break-ups or divorce, back to cautious, half-hearted, “safe” relationships. One thing leads to the other. Speaking to the interconnection between our self-understanding, sexual difference and our capacity or not to enter *real* relationships, Benedict XVI said:

[T]here is the question of the human capacity to make a commitment or to avoid commitment. Can one bind oneself for a lifetime? Does this correspond to man’s nature? Does it not contradict his freedom and the scope of his self-realization? Does man become himself by living for himself alone and only entering into relationship with others when he can break them off again at any time? Is lifelong commitment antithetical to freedom? Is commitment also worth suffering for? Man’s refusal to make any commitment—which is becoming increasingly widespread as a result of a false understanding of freedom and self-realization as well as the desire to escape suffering—means that man remains closed in on himself and keeps his ‘I’ ultimately for himself, without really rising above it. When such commitment is repudiated, the key figures of human existence likewise vanish: father, mother, child—essential elements of the experience of being human are lost. ^[57]

Benedict’s evaluation is dire: “the essential elements of the experience of being human are lost.” But as with Grant’s “experience of deprivation,” the androgyny that has defined our relations with each other for so long has already led to a marked awareness of our loss, with women today less happy than they were three decades ago, notwithstanding the “benefits” (according to a recent thirty-five year study).^[58] Perhaps then, here too, in this experience we have begun to catch a glimpse of something more between us than mere “choice”: something like what John Paul II has called “original unity.”^[59] Perhaps too we are more willing to hear Benedict’s exhortation: “only in self-giving does man find himself, and only by opening himself to the other, to others, to children, to the family, only by letting himself be changed through suffering, does he discover the breadth of his humanity.”^[60]

A Loss of Eros

The question of happiness, be it in marriage, be it in everything that leads to it—more or less directly—opens us to what is perhaps the most significant factor that distinguishes between courtship and the current “system.” In courtship there is *eros*. In the “relationship system” there is not. This may seem strange to say, so filled is the latter with sex.^[61] The sexual revolution, as we know, sought to liberate sex from the “repressiveness” of the “puritanical” forces in society by lifting all of the many obstacles such a society placed in its way, including those of disease (thanks to medicine) and pregnancy (thanks to contraception). Presumably these changes were to make the sexes freer, happier and bring them closer together. It is not difficult to see now, decades later, how unfulfilled these promises are, judging by how much our talk about sex—if not the experience itself—lacks all of the excitement of the initial Bacchanalian mood, not to mention of the older *eros*. Here, again, Bloom hits the mark:

[T]he sexual talk of our times is about how to get greater bodily satisfaction (although decreasingly so) or increasingly how to protect ourselves from one another. The old view was that delicacy of language was part of the nature, the sacred nature, of *eros*, and that to speak about it in any other way would be to misunderstand it. What has disappeared is the risk and the hope of human connectedness embedded in *eros*. Ours is a language that reduces the longing for another to the need for individual, private satisfaction and safety.^[62]

Many of course celebrate the choices that are now available for liberated people, but it is difficult not to see that these choices are those of bored and lonely people.

Courtship implied sexual discipline (especially for young men) and modesty (for young women for whom it was their principle, according to Bloom^[63]) not because sexual desire was bad, but because it was being educated to serve the longing that had awakened it in the first place. Modesty did this in two ways. It protected the young woman from reductive objectification (lust), on the one hand—asking the young man to take a respectful distance; and it increased his longing for her, on the other.^[64] It is the second aspect that strikes us so much when we watch modern accounts of courtship in movies where hands don’t even touch, let alone lips (as, for example, *To Fill the Void*). There is no comparison between the intensity of desire that we witness in these accounts as compared to the loveless, joyless—even if vehement—scenes to which we are regularly treated in “relationship” movies, where eyes are spared nothing. Modesty belongs to a world of *eros*, where one finds himself caught up in the greater than himself. It belongs to the awestruck.

What Plato perceived long ago was that the human experience of love stood at the intersection of the horizontal and vertical axis. Being smitten by a “beautiful body,” one was at the same time smitten by *Beauty* itself, and drawn up into it. If one’s approach to the other was cautious, or “reigned in”—to use his metaphor of the “charioteer”—it was so in order to drink in all the depth

and mystery to which the beloved was tied, against the tendency to “trample” him or her under foot. [65] This in turn, allowed one to behold something that could be interesting for more than a moment; for without that depth who, after all, could suffice? In Karol Wojtyła’s play *The Jeweler’s Shop*, the “jeweler,” watching a young couple in love, says:

How can it be done, Teresa,
For you to stay in Andrew forever?
How can it be done, Andrew,
For you to stay in Teresa forever
Since man will not endure in man
And man will not suffice?[66]

Indeed, to be in love is more than to be caught up with the beloved. It is to be caught up with the depth of the beloved, with the desire for Eternity. Is it possible to be smitten by love (*eros*) and not ask that the beloved be *forever*? Is it possible to say “I love you” to the beloved without wanting this too to be *forever*? Indeed, said Plato, the desire lovers have for the Eternal (the “forever”) is written in their very capacity to generate a new life. The child is the fruit of a love which says “forever.” [67]

Christianity only intensified this view of human love—far from negating it, as Nietzsche had claimed.[68] For, in Christianity God was not only the object of love but the subject of it, the Lover, moving every other love, “the Love that moves the sun and the stars,” as Dante called Him.[69] With that love, He created the world and then *entered it* by uniting Himself to human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. This then made human love—especially the love between man and woman—more than “just” a signpost of the Eternal. It *invested* it with Eternity in what Christians would call a “sacrament.” It was this “in-the-world-ness” of Divine Love that Kierkegaard had in mind when he championed marriage, calling it “the fullness of time,” or “eternity in time,” and “the most important voyage of discovery” (in contrast to the Romantic love of momentary out-of-this-world—“eternal”—infatuation[70]). And it is this same “in-the world-ness” of Divine Love that allows Christians to hope that their fragile, finite human loves will be taken up into the eternity of God, as did the young couple in the great Italian novel, *The Betrothed*, when the priest blessed them with these words:

If the Church now gives you back this companion in life, she does not do so to provide you with a temporal and earthly happiness, which, even if perfect in its kind and without any admixture of bitterness, must still finish in great sorrow when the time comes for you to leave each other; she does so to set you both on the road to that happiness which has no end. Love each other as fellow-

travelers on that road, remembering that you must part someday, and hoping to be reunited later for all time.^[71]

Now it has become clear, more than ever, that—lacking *eros*' larger horizon—one can only hedge one's bets in preparation for the inevitable disappointments. Only the one who has been opened to the “fullness of time” will take the risk.

[1] Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, *The Divorce Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

[2] Dafoe Whitehead, *The Divorce Culture*, 188.

[3] *Why There are No Good Men Left—The Romantic Plight of the New Single Woman* (New York: Broadway Books, 2003).

[4] Leon R. Kass, “The End of Courtship,” in *The Public Interest* 126 (1997): 13, 15.

[5] In each of his novels, the main character is from “Port William,” the town Berry constructed as the “place in time” where each belongs to “the Port William membership.” See, e.g. *The Memory of Old Jack* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1974); *Jayber Crow* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2000); *Hannah Coulter* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2004); *Nathan Coulter* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2008); *A Place in Time* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2012).

[6] Dafoe Whitehead, *Why There Are No Good Men Left*, 7.

[7] Perhaps the most notable change in courtship practices, in recent history, is the change of *venue* (as well as the initiative and oversight). Whereas “courtship” took place in the “woman’s territory” (her home), and at the initiative of her family, “dating” takes place on the “man’s territory,” in public places, that is, where the couple would enjoy some kind of public entertainment, and at his initiative and his expense. See Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat*, 13–24.

[8] Allen Bloom, “Relationships,” in *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 86.

[9] Bloom, “Relationships,” 86.

[10] John Locke, *The Second Treatise on Government*, VI, §56.

[11] James E. Block, *The Crucible of Consent: American Child Rearing and the Growing of Liberal Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 21.

[12] Block, *The Crucible of Consent*, ix.

[13] The contemporary English sociologist Anthony Giddens, who considered the family to be the new avant-garde of the project of democratization—putting its distinct relations at the service of the “democratization of intimacy” —said the following regarding parents and their children: “Can a relationship between a parent and young child be democratic? It can, and should be, in exactly the same sense as is true of a democratic political order. It is a right of the child, in other words, to be treated as a putative equal of the adult. Actions which cannot be negotiated directly with a child, because he or she is too young to grasp what is entailed, should be capable of counterfactual justification. The presumption is that agreement could be reached, and trust sustained, if the child were sufficiently autonomous to be able to deploy arguments on an equal basis to the adult” (Anthony Giddens, *Transformation of Intimacy—Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Society* [Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1992], 191–92).

[14] For a discussion of the roots of modern educational theory indebted to Lock, see J. Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority, 1750–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 9–35.

[15] On modern suspicion of fatherhood, see M. J. Le Guillou, *Le Mystère Du Père; Foi Des Apôtres, Gnosés Actuelles*, in *Collection Le Signe* (Paris: Fayard, 1973), 156.

[16] The early intervention of the tutor is meant to prevent any disturbance to the child’s “remaining in place,” that is his being sufficient to himself, in his blissful pre-social “state of nature.” He does this by keeping the child at arm’s length from others, including especially his parents so that any disproportionate desire not be stirred up in the child and he be led to depend on him or her. See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, Or On Education*, trans. Allen Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 41; 83–84.

[17] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, Or On Education*, 184–200.

[18] See Allen Bloom’s introduction in Rousseau’s *Emile*, p. 15.

[19] This is Fliegelman’s thesis in his *Prodigals and Pilgrims*, op. cit.

[20] The famous French observer of America would notice how much the new political theories devised in the old world had taken root in the new: “In democratic peoples, new families constantly issue from nothing, others constantly fall into it and all those who stay on change face; the fabric of

time is torn at every moment and the trace of generations is effaced. You easily forget those who have preceded you, and you have no idea of those who will follow you” (Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 483).

[21] Jennifer Roback Morse, professor of economics at Yale and George Mason University, put it thus when comparing the *homo economicus* of her own libertarian theory in her *Love and Economics: Why the Laissez-Faire Family Doesn't Work* (Dallas: Spence Publishing, 2001), against her painful experience of attachment disorder, in her son, adopted from a Romanian orphanage.

[22] Speaking to the modern suspicion of the Father (and of our origin in another), John Paul II showed how deep this is in the human soul. “[I]n human history the ‘rays of fatherhood’ meet a first resistance in the obscure but real fact of original sin. *This is truly the key for interpreting reality.* Original sin is not only the violation of a positive command of God but also, and above all, a violation of *the will of God as expressed in that command. Original sin attempts, then, to abolish fatherhood*, destroying its rays which permeate the created world, placing in doubt the truth about God who is Love and leaving man only with a sense of the master-slave relationship. As a result, the Lord appears jealous of his power over the world and over man; and consequently, man feels goaded to do battle against God. No differently than in any epoch of history, the enslaved man is driven to take sides against the master who kept him enslaved” (John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994], 227).

[24] George Grant, *Technology and Empire*, in *Collected Works of George Grant*, vol. 3, ed. A. Davis and H. Roper (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 580.

[25] See especially, Elizabeth Marquardt, *Between Two Worlds—The Inner Lives of Children of Divorce* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005) and Andrew Root, *The Children of Divorce—The Loss of Family as the Loss of Being* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

[26] John Paul II called the first of the “*original experiences*” of all men and women “original solitude,” by which he meant that stance of gratitude before the fact of owing one’s being to the generous gift of life from the Father-Creator. See John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books, 2006), 5:1–7:4.

[27] It is characteristic of Christianity to notice the positivity of childhood—not, that is, as something that has to be surpassed—once God is revealed in the *Son*. On this, see H. U. von Balthasar, “Jesus as Child and His Praise of the Child,” *Communio: International Catholic Review* 22, n.4 (Winter 1995): 625–34.

[28] Whitehead refers to the current pattern as the “relationship system,” which, quite differently than the “ladder” of courtship, takes the couple on a cyclical series of relationships that form and break up, as a matter of course. See *Why There Are No Good Men Left*, 98–113.

[29] The term was used by David Brooks in *The New York Times*, October 9, 2007 and was substantiated by William Galston, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. See William Galston, “The Changing Twenties,” *The National Campaign*, October 2007, http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/pubs/changing_20s.pdf.

[30] Kay Hymowitz has described this phenomenon in her article “Child-Man in the Promised Land,” *City Journal*, Winter 2008; and in her more recent book *Manning Up: How the Rise of Women Has Turned Men Into Boys* (New York: Basic Books, 2011). See also Diana West, *The Death of the Grown Up* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2007).

[32] See, e.g., Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens Through the Twenties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) and Richard Settersten and Barbara E. Ray, *Not Quite Adults: Why 20-Somethings Are Choosing a Slower Path to Adulthood, and Why It’s Good for Everyone* (New York: Bantam, 2010).

[33] See Hymowitz’s article describing the new patterns of the “child-man”: “Love in the Time of Darwinism,” *City Journal*, Autumn 2008.

[34] See Hymowitz’s description of the new “SYF” (single young female) in her article “The New Girl Order,” *City Journal*, Autumn 2007.

[35] This is how the relation between marriage and adulthood is discussed in the recent study on delayed marriage: “Knot Yet: The Benefits and Costs of Delayed Marriage in America,” *The National Marriage Project*, 2013, <http://nationalmarriageproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/KnotYet-FinalForWeb.pdf>.

[36] See the discussion of the relation between co-habitation and marriage for men, especially apropos of “relationship inertia,” in Scott M. Stanley, Galena K. Rhoades, Howard J. Markman, “Sliding vs. Deciding: Inertia and the Premarital Cohabitation Effect,” *Family Relations* 55 (October 2006), 10–13.

[37] The shift in the idea of marriage as “capstone” instead of “cornerstone” was first described by Andrew J. Cherlin, in *The Marriage-Go-Round* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 136–43.

[38] *The Four Quartets*, II.I (London: Faber and Faber, 1944).

[39] “Knot Yet,” 20–22.

[40] Søren Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life’s Way*, ed. and trans. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 89.

[41] This is the thesis of A. Bloom’s chapter on “Relationships,” in *The Closing of the American Mind*, 82–137.

[42] Hymowitz, *Why There Are No Good Men Left*, 77.

[43] See K. Hymowitz’s description of the new Single Young Female (SYF) in her article “The New Girl Order,” in *City Journal*, Autumn 2007.

[44] The recent “Knot Yet” report figured that waiting until her thirties, a woman gained an \$18,152 difference in her annual income as compared to those who marry earlier: “Knot Yet,” 15.

[45] This is the stated “benefit” of delayed marriage (for the educated middle class woman), according to the recent report on delayed marriage: “young men and women today expect to achieve an individual autonomous identity before they become part of a bound couple” (“Knot Yet,” 25). The hegemony (and elitism) of the independence ideal is palpable when the study describes undereducated “middle American” women having children (unfortunately) before marrying because they “still turn to the traditional source of young-adult female identity-motherhood-for meaning and satisfaction”(“Knot Yet,”27).

[46]The rise of the “companionate marriage” has been described by Andrew J. Cherlin in *The Marriage-Go-Round* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 63–86.

[47] We note the central feature of the “capstone marriage,” that it is a private “soul mate” or “companionate marriage,” based entirely on affinity, attraction, desire, and therefore altogether detached from the larger public world, the extended family, and economic necessity. (This is the development that Stephanie Coontz traces and praises in her book *Marriage, a History: How Love Conquered Marriage* [New York: Penguin, 2005]). See also Barbara Dafoe Whitehead and David Popenoe, “Who Wants to Marry a Soul Mate?” in *The State of Our Unions, National Marriage Project*, 2001, www.stateofourunions.org/pdfs/SOOU2001.pdf.

[48] A. Giddens champions this relation which is “pure” because “it is not anchored in external conditions of social or economic life...[but] is sought only for what the relationship can bring to the partners involved” (*Transformation*, 89).

[49] “Knot Yet”,25.

[50] Neither the “capstone” marriage, nor its “soul mate” ideal, regard children to be intrinsic to marriage itself (See “Knot Yet”, 26). When children are desired, moreover, there is the obvious conflict between the wife’s goals (of economic independence) and her “biological clock,” which conflict must be “resolved” by the “rescheduling of

motherhood” thanks to artificial reproductive technology. This is the thesis of Sara Elizabeth Richard’s book: *Motherhood Rescheduled. The New Frontier of Egg Freezing and the Women Who Tried It* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013).

[51] We should mention here the link that has been made between the practice of co-habitation—which generally precedes the delayed marriages in question—and the *decrease in dedication* both before and after marriage and the greater likelihood of divorce. See Stanley, Rhoades, and Markman, “Sliding vs. Deciding.” But there is also a *theoretical* connection between the idea of marriage itself and divorce. Being, in essence a “pure relation,” as A. Giddens calls it, it is “reflexively organized, in an open fashion, and on a continuous basis ...[and] always open to redefinition by the partners, needing to be negotiated ever anew” (*Transformation*, 89–91).

[52] Wendell Berry, “Feminism, the Body, and the Machine,” in *The Art of the Common Place* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 2002), 67.

[53] “The possibility of separation is already the fact of separation....the more separation there is, the more there will be,” Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 117.

[54] *Ibid.*, 125.

[55] Fliegelman notes the direct connection between the “divorce” of one’s forebears and the liberal attitudes about divorce in early America. In contrast to filial relations (and piety), marriage was praised on account of its contractual nature, the very reasons, he notes, for its easy dissolution (in comparison to other countries). He cites Thomas Paine who wrote: “As soon as ever you meet you long to part; and not having this relief in your power, by way of revenge, double each other’s misery: whereas in ours, which have no other ceremony than mutual affection, and last no longer than they bestow mutual pleasures, we make it our business to oblige the heart we are afraid to lose; and being at liberty to separate, seldom or never feel the inclination. But if any should be found so wretched among us as to hate where the only commerce ought to be to love, we instantly dissolve the bond.” See Fliegelman’s *Prodigals and Pilgrims*, 124.

[56] Cf. David Crawford, “Recognizing the Roots of Society in the Family, Foundation of Justice,” *Communio: International Catholic Review* (2007): 379–412.

[57] Benedict XVI, "On the Occasion of Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia," 21 December 2012. Accessed at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict

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The Girl Project

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Whitehead, Barbara Dafoe, *Why There Are No Good Men Left: The Romantic Plight of the New Single Woman* (New York: Broadway Books, 2003).

Liebau, Carol Platt, *Prude: How the Sex-Obsessed Culture Damages Girls (and America, Too!)* (New York: Hachette Book Group USA, 2007).

Hymowitz, Kay S., *Manning Up: How the Rise of Women Has Turned Men Into Boys* (New York: Basic Books, 2011).

She's accomplished, career-driven, economically independent, athletic, and sexually empowered—in short, she has everything early feminists could have hoped for. She's today's "new single woman" and also the subject of Barbara Dafoe Whitehead's book *Why There Are No Good Men Left*. Whitehead is not the only one to take notice of the "new single woman". Others too have begun to document the phenomenon, among them Kay Hymowitz, a contributor to *City Journal*, who has dubbed the changing lifestyle of single women the "New Girl Order."^[1] In *Prude: How the Sex-Obsessed Culture Damages Girls (and America, Too!)*, another author, Carol Platt Liebau lists the limitless opportunities available to young women in America which have afforded them a plethora of advantages in education, career, and overall life success.^[2] Yet, all the while describing this New Girl Order and the progress toward freedom and equality for women which it heralds, these same authors have begun to warn that the phenomenon of the "new single woman" is not without its problems. The main thrust of Whitehead's book, for example, is concerned with understanding why the modern-day accomplished and highly successful single woman is demonstrably *unsuccessful* in her pursuit of a husband. Hymowitz points out that the New Girl Order which seems to give women everything they could possibly want is also partially responsible for a worldwide drop in fertility rates and a "worrying ambivalence toward domestic life and the men who would help create it."^[3] Liebau highlights how the "sexual liberation" experienced by new single women greatly curbs self-fulfillment and damages their romantic lives. She writes, "Today, American girls are forced to navigate a minefield more challenging, difficult, and pressure-filled than ever before when it comes to one vital topic: sex."^[4] So, while new single women are given unprecedented opportunities and experience extraordinary success as compared to their earlier counterparts, they are, at the same time, fundamentally dissatisfied with their lives. Though successful, they are unhappy.

How, then, did the New Girl Order come about? Was it the result of a consciously pursued ideal or merely the result of economic and demographic shifts? And why are highly educated, successful women unable to find men to marry? These questions can only be adequately understood within the context of the feminist movement as a whole. In other words, the experiences and frustrations of the new single woman will only make sense when viewed as the next step in the conscientious movement for women's liberation.

This essay seeks to understand the nature and purpose of the "Girl Project" (the term coined by Whitehead for the education of the new single woman) in light of and in organic connection with the feminist movement in America. To this end, we will draw a brief but detailed sketch of the "new single woman" and then discuss the problems which she finds herself facing. This will be followed by the history and goals of the "Girl Project" as understood primarily by Whitehead and, then, so that we can understand the project even better, a look at the complex movement of feminism as a whole. In light of this examination, we will attempt to elucidate the errors underlying the Girl Project in order to understand why it has engendered intractable problems. Lastly, we will turn to one of the Girl Project's unintended consequences: the "child-man" phenomenon.

Who is the "new single woman"?

Who is the new single woman that has drawn so much attention? Whitehead claims that this woman does not fit any of the old stereotypes. She is not the "middle-aged secretary" or the "chaste old maid" whom everyone turns to for advice. [5] She doesn't pursue a career in the city just to find a wealthy husband, or an underemployed woman who eventually leaves her job to get married. On the contrary, what attracts this young woman to the city is that "she shares its metabolism" because "both run on energy, excitement, novelty, talk, and espresso highs." [6] Whitehead maintains that this woman is easy to spot because she is "the stylish young woman in black, a tote bag slung over her shoulder and a cell phone pressed to her ear, talking and gesturing as she makes her way down Wall Street or K Street or Newbury Street or any other major urban thoroughfare." [7] She always appears to be on the move. She works long hard hours, works out to stay fit through regular exercise, and spends her evenings at clubs and bars hoping to meet attractive men. Hymowitz adds to this a more colorful illustration of the new single woman as "spending [her] hours working [her] abs and [her] careers, sipping cocktails, dancing at clubs, and talking about relationships." [8]

Whitehead lists several defining features which shape the iconic image of the new single woman. Firstly, she is not defined by her "social rebellion" as were the Flappers of the 1920's, or her "non-traditional work" as would be Rosie the riveter. On the contrary, the new single woman "embodies a new model of success based on educational and professional achievement." [9] While old models distinguished women in terms of the absence of marriage, the new single woman is defined in

terms of “the remarkable path she follows virtually from cradle to career.”^[10] Hymowitz concurs here, stating that “Today’s aspiring middle-class women are gearing up to be part of the paid labor market for most of their adult lives; unlike their ancestral singles, they’re looking for careers, not jobs.”^[11] This path guides young women’s lives and provides them with “an operating manual” for adulthood; it shapes their identity and goals.^[12] Secondly, the new single woman is able to achieve (even at a young age) an independence that rests largely or completely on her own accomplishments and resources.^[13] She has none other to thank for her achievements save herself and her own hard work.

Thirdly, the new single woman is well educated—which explains how she is able to achieve such a high degree of independence. Whitehead points out that in a relatively short period of time, women have become the majority on undergraduate college campuses. ^[14] What’s more, these women are not only seeking to obtain degrees within traditional “female” fields, but also in traditional “male” fields such as biology, business, engineering, and computer science.^[15] The increase in opportunities, however, takes place even earlier; Whitehead shows that new career paths were already opened for these young women at the high school level. In the last thirty years, the American high school has become more “girl-friendly” by allowing young women equal opportunity to pursue traditionally “male” fields.^[16] What is more, high schools have also expanded overall opportunities for girls in order for them to prepare adequately for college. Whitehead writes,

They’ve created special academic programs for the advanced, talented, and gifted, established international study opportunities, boosted school participation in math and music competitions, expanded their athletic facilities, designed programs to encourage participation in nontraditional Olympic sports, and created opportunities for advanced high school students to take courses at nearby colleges. ^[17]

While the same programs have been offered to male students, the response of female students is worth noting. For example, the college-prep program known as Advanced Placement (AP), has grown in popularity since it was instituted for male students in 1955. Whitehead observes that between 1960 and 2001, the number of students taking AP exams went from 10,531 to 800,000. ^[18] The percentage of female test takers has steadily increased from 35 percent in 1985 to 45 percent in 2001.^[19] Young women taking college preparatory classes are not only focusing on stereotypically female subjects but are also taking more and more “male” subjects.^[20] Whitehead also points out that the popularity of all-female educational institutions gives evidence of the growing emphasis on the academic “fast-track” for girls.^[21] Many of the advocates of these schools claim that they allow young women to excel in traditionally male fields without the negative

competition from their male counterparts.[22] With these statistics in mind, it is clear that the accomplishments of the new single woman are due largely to the educational opportunities she has received.

The fourth characteristic which marks the new single woman is that she is athletic. Along with focusing on keeping her physical body trim and fit, she is actively involved in a variety of sports. Whitehead writes that popular sports played by the new single woman include lacrosse, soccer, baseball, field hockey, and basketball. [23] While many of these are offered in schools, it is also the case that more and more parents are encouraging their daughters, as they once encouraged their sons, to excel in the world of athletics.

Not only is the new single woman well-educated, athletic, economically independent, and career driven, she is also sexually liberated. [24] This, in large part, is because the new single woman grew up after the sexual revolution. Pre-marital sex has been normalized for her; it is “no big deal.” She sees it plastered all over mass media: in movies, television shows, magazines, and literature.[25] Whitehead observes that by the time she has reached high school, a teenage girl has learned to be frank and open about sexual matters in coed company and to speak about her sexual needs in a matter-of-fact way.[26] Along with this normalizing of sex, the new single woman has come to expect sex as a normal part of dating relationships; as another way to express feelings of love.[27] More than likely, she had her first sexual encounter in her late teens. Carol Platt Liebau writes that the National Survey for Family Growth, taken in 2002, found that 53 percent of girls between fifteen and nineteen (and 38.7 percent of those between fifteen and seventeen) had already had intercourse.[28] What is more, this sexually liberated single woman is taught (through mass media most particularly) to be more aggressive than in times past. Liebau pays particular attention to this, calling young women the “new sexual aggressors.”[29] She offers evidence not only from personal observation of young girls and women in public settings, but also cites a piece from the 16 July 2000 edition of *The Washington Post Magazine*. This piece noted a “trend of girls who openly pursue sex, brag about sex, lie about sex, [and] boldly offer themselves as sexual objects” in a way formerly attributed to male behavior.[30] At the same time that the new single woman is growing up with a matter-of-fact attitude towards sex and taught to be sexually aggressive, it is interesting to note that she has also been educated from childhood about the inherent “dangers” of sex. Whitehead notes that concerned parents and teachers have filled her head with “advice, admonition, and formal teaching in proper touching, sexuality, contraception, condoms, STDs, sexual molestation, the risks of unprotected sex, and date rape with the goal...to be ‘healthy, safe, and in charge.’”[31] In this way, she has been taught simultaneously that sex, while normal, is also rather hazardous.

The sixth and final characteristic of the new single woman is that she is self-focused. She is educated to pursue *personal* success—excellence in academics, athletics, and in her career. What is more, the new single woman is told to put aside the sexual mores of times past and be assertive in her quest for sexual self-fulfillment.

Along with a focus on hard work and career advancement, young women's new economic independence has afforded them a greater variety of leisure opportunities. Hymowitz takes particular notice of this trend, stating that these young women spend their free time at “trendy cafés and bars...fancy boutiques, malls...gyms for toning and male-watching; ski resorts and beach hotels.” [32] She also cites *The Economist's* observation that these women spend their disposable income “on whatever is fashionable, frivolous, and fun.” [33] The new single woman, then, is most concerned with her own self-fulfillment and flourishing lifestyle.

All in all, the new single woman seems to have it all: She has the money to pursue the lifestyle she chooses, she has grown up with a plethora of educational and athletic opportunities at her disposal, and she has been taught to have no sense of shame about her sexuality. Yet, strikingly, though these advancements seem to mark a progressive step for woman's equality, they also signal new set of struggles and issues. As stated earlier, the young women of this generation are finding it difficult to maintain lasting relationships with members of the opposite sex. Although they have had many pleasurable “flings,” these women complain that the men they date do not want to marry them. Hymowitz writes that the favorite topic of conversation in the New Girl Order is “men's reluctance to commit.” [34] Whitehead notes that these women who are “accomplished, sophisticated, working singles in their 20's and 30's” and “have a surer sense of who they are and what they want in a future life mate” are simultaneously lacking the “supportive social system for their love lives” which women enjoyed in the past. [35] Because of this, the “process” by which these new single women attempt to find husbands is very often “chaotic, unintelligible, and full of unexpected twists.” [36] This is, of course, a source of much anxiety and is one of the main reasons why the lack of stable relationships is such a popular subject of conversation.

Another negative consequence of the new single woman's lifestyle is the damage she has suffered as a result of being sexually liberated. Liebau's work, *Prude*, is wholly dedicated to this thesis. She insists that the so-called liberation offered to young women needs to be re-evaluated, asking if it really is empowerment for a young girl to see her primary objective as the eliciting of lustful reactions from men. [37] Liebau observes that young women are exactly like men in a “do-me feminist's perfect world”: free to satisfy their sexual desires on their own terms. [38] Yet, she concludes that young women, in trying to be like men, are denying themselves truly satisfying lives.

Despite the media's message to the contrary, women are still more emotionally invested in relationships than men are, and they want attention, affection and connection.[39]

A third trend observed among young women is that despite being successful, they are also *stressed out*. The stress begins in childhood as parents put increasing pressure on girls to take advantage of the educational and athletic opportunities available to them and urge them to be successful both in the classroom and on the sports field. The stress continues and intensifies through high school, college, and after graduation. As young women enter the marketplace, they encounter strong pressure to specialize and advance in their careers, which means that women now have the added stress of rising to the top of the corporate ladder. In *Supergirls Speak Out: Inside the Crisis of Overachieving Girls*, author Liz Funk notes the intensity of the pressure young women face today:

Today's 'it' girl isn't *Clueless*'s flighty heroine Cher—but she has Cher's style and social calendar, with the ambition of Hilary Clinton, the sports skills of Mia Hamm, the wit of Maureen Dowd, and the fake happy endings of a Kate Hudson movie. The 'it' girl is pretty, smart, and always in control. At first glance, she's, well, perfect.[40]

Funk states further that the stereotypical Supergirl “has it all: the good grades, the blossoming career, the impressive activities résumé, the ambitions, and also the good-looking boyfriend, the perfect body, and the impressive social calendar.” [41] This image, projected by the mass media and echoed in part by parents, teachers, and peers, instills in young women the sense that they need to excel in everything, “academically, professionally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, and be in perfect balance...be a ‘perfect 10’ in every area [because] they think that perfection is not only desirable, but possible.”[42] In an article reviewing Funk's book, “Supergirl Meltdown: How Middle-class Girls Today Are Under Unprecedented Pressure to Succeed,” Sarah Hughes notes that the pressure on young women to have everything carries with it the standard that women must excel in *both male and female spheres*: “they must be good at ‘girl’ stuff—cultivating relationships and being empathetic—as well as being good at ‘guy’ stuff—competing aggressively both at college and in the workplace.”[43] Further, the many opportunities that women are told they are privileged to have only heighten the pressure to succeed. Hughes is critical of this trend because the resulting stress has led to an increase in eating disorders, depression, and anxiety.[44]

Interestingly, both Hughes and Funk point out that even as women succeed, they are convinced that their accomplishments do not amount to anything. The insecurities these single women face, in other words, have not been dispelled by what they have achieved. The upshot here is that this step forward in the struggle for women's liberation is not without serious drawbacks.

How did the new single woman come to be?

Having taken a detailed look at what defines and sets apart the “new single woman,” let us now turn to the forces that have shaped her. Whitehead contends that the new single woman is not primarily the result of a demographic or economic shift, as Hymowitz would suggest, but rather the outcome of a consciously pursued ideal. She writes, “Today’s single women are like specimen orchids. They’ve been bred to win prizes.” [45] In other words, this phenomenon is the result of what she calls the “Girl Project”—a “self-conscious and highly successful social project whose chief purpose was to prepare young women for adult lives of economic self-sufficiency, social independence, and sexual liberation.” [46] The goal of this project was to instantiate a new tradition of girl-rearing that would prepare girls for adult lives without dependence on marriage rather than for lives as wives and mothers. [47] What is important to note is that the Girl Project’s aim was not to challenge marriage as an institution or a personal choice for women, but rather to offer women an alternative path on which to embark. Formerly, the benefits of “satisfying work, a good income, sex, a nest, and a nest egg of their own” were only accorded to those who were married; the Girl Project sought to provide a way for women to achieve all of this on their own. [48] And the way to achieve it was through higher education and early career development and preparation.

The new path which the Girl Project forged diverged in many ways from the former one that led to marriage. First of all, it began earlier in life and lasted longer. Whitehead states that the intended time frame for this social project was from age two or three through the mid-twenties, and possibly even into the early thirties. [49] Secondly, according to the “old” path, singlehood was seen as a kind of stepping stone between graduation and marriage. The “new” path, however, gave an innovative meaning to a woman’s being single. Rather than singleness being seen in a negative light, the Girl Project opened up this time to be a positive and more protracted stage in which a woman could primarily focus on her own pursuits. Whitehead writes that this stage “combines some of the communal features of college life with the new responsibilities of earning a living, paying off college, and gaining some measure of financial and residential stability.” [50] The new path projected by the Girl Project is also more demanding and fast-paced than the old. The traditional path towards marriage, which gave women training in the domestic arts and educated them according to what they would need for their future lives as wives and mothers, did not require a college degree. [51] The path oriented towards economic independence stresses precocious performance and achievement, the acquisition of time management and goal-setting skills, early exposure to the world of paid professional work, an academically challenging school career, admission to a good college, a baccalaureate degree, and perhaps a graduate or professional degree as well, and then the successful launching of a professional career. [52]

The final difference between the path created by the Girl Project and the former, more traditional path was the specific training given to women to prepare them for lives in the competitive corporate world. Rather than being taught the virtues that would attract a suitable husband and aid in their future marriages (e.g., helpfulness, charm, niceness, thrift, patience, personal sacrifice and forbearance), these young women were trained to be assertive, competitive, to strive for individual excellence, and to take initiative and responsibility for their future economic lives. [53]

What was the inspiration for the development of the Girl Project? Whitehead notes two principal sources: the feminist vision of an independent life for women rooted in paid professional work and the divorce revolution. [54] As to the first, she notes that feminism in the 1960's sought to enable women to pursue opportunities in education. By the 1970's this goal expanded to include other areas such as sports.[55] The feminist vision prompted them to put their energies into ensuring that the rights of women would be expanded and protected. The second source of inspiration—the divorce revolution—was not only a social trend, but brought with it its own pedagogy. Whitehead writes that as state after state adopted no-fault divorce laws in the 1970's, the divorce rate began to rise until it reached a historic high in the 1980's.[56] It can be concluded that a good percentage of new single women have had personal experience with divorce. The pedagogy of the divorce revolution espoused by parents, teachers, girls' advocates, and youth leaders alike was that marriage is not a stable, economic partnership but rather somewhat of a “gamble” and that the women who suffered most from divorce were the ones who were economically unprepared. With the looming possibility of divorce, it no longer seemed wise to prepare women only to be wives and mothers. Instead “it seemed more practical and realistic to prepare girls for lives of economic self-sufficiency and social independence.”[57]

Whitehead marks the beginning of the Girl Project with the signing of Title IX of the Omnibus Education Amendments into law by President Richard Nixon in 1973. Title IX states: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” [58] The signing of Title IX was preceded by a statement made by President Nixon's Task Force on Women's Rights and Responsibilities in April of 1970 which linked sex discrimination in education to a denial of employment opportunity.[59] Although Title IX was originally concerned with women's education, it was eventually applied to the education of girls as well.[60] Because of this amendment, the need for women's total equality began to be more widely recognized. Statistics bear out that Title IX was extremely successful: In 1957, only 35.6 percent of women were enrolled in higher education but by the year 2000, this statistic had risen to 56.1 percent.[61] Title IX also helped to break the barrier for girls in the world of athletics. In 1970, only 7 percent of women were active in intercollegiate sports compared to 42 percent in 2000.[62]

Whitehead notes the significance of Title IX, not only in its widening of opportunities for women, but also in the way it affected parents, teachers, and those principally involved in girl-rearing. Increasingly, sports were not only emphasized as a hobby for girls to pursue, they were also viewed as a means for instilling in women the strong character traits they would need to succeed in future careers. [63] At the same time, the Girl Project did not just want to “borrow” male traits and project them onto women; rather, it wanted to synthesize these attributes with much of the “moral purity and social uplift of the girlhood tradition.”[64] The girls who were encouraged to play sports were taught to be role models and ambassadors in their competitiveness. Whitehead also observes that simultaneous with the instilling of these “strong” character traits in girls was the forming of a new physical image for girls to embrace. This image projected the message: strong is beautiful.[65] In the same way that the new “virtues” were a synthesizing of male and female traits, this new physical image “is neither traditionally feminine nor androgynously feminist [but rather] borrows elements from both and comes up with a synthesis of feminine strength.”[66]

The Historical Roots of the Girl Project

All evidence points to the fact that the Girl Project has been highly successful. Women are now excelling in the worlds of academics, athletics, and business and becoming financially independent. Further, from childhood, little girls believe they have the opportunity and ability to be anything they desire to be. A whole new world has been opened to women. They have been offered an alternative to the path of marriage and given the tools to navigate it effectively.

Unfortunately, the success of the Girl Project has not necessarily translated into a *happier* woman. Even though the new single woman is, on the whole, wealthier and leads an active life with plenty of leisure time, she still tends to be frustrated with her lot in life. Why is it that with all her success she still feels inadequate? Why is the fact that she is able to gratify her immediate sexual desires not enough to bring her true satisfaction? Finally, why is it that in all her accomplishments she can find no means to help her find a good husband?

In order to understand and respond to these questions and to more fully delve into this “failure” of the Girl Project, it is important to situate it within the feminist movement as a whole in the United States. Although Whitehead claims that the Girl Project came to be in order to provide more opportunities for women, this does not seem to account for the radicality of this phenomenon and its consequences. In other words, the Girl Project can only be understood properly as the next step in the feminist vision of a new womanhood.

In a book written for the Institute for Intercultural Dialogue Dynamics entitled *The Globalization of the Western Cultural Revolution*, Marguerite A. Peeters gives a thorough outline of the history, goals,

and specific assumptions of the feminist movement. At the beginning of the 19th century, women were excluded from much of public life; they could not vote, own property, or participate in politics or higher education.[67] In addition, the industrial revolution created a rift between the economic and domestic spheres and, consequently, stripped the home of much of its dignity.[68] With this segregation and marginalization of women both socially and politically, women began to form themselves into movements to demand change. As women's rights congresses and movements began to succeed in obtaining greater equality before the law, feminism began to pursue other objectives: it fought for socioeconomic parity and access to employment usually reserved for men; it also sought access to contraception and abortion as conditions of respect for women's rights.[69] Key leaders in the feminist movement such as Margaret Sanger (1879–1966) and Emma Goldman (1869–1940) were particularly vocal in terms of anti-conception and abortion campaigns.[70] It was these strong and charismatic leaders and the individual successes of the various congresses that fueled the growth of the feminist movement.

What were the goals of the feminist movement in the United States? While citing the various forms that feminism has taken in the course of its history—e.g., Egalitarianism, Marxism, and Eco-Feminism—Peeters states that the objective common to them all is to “eradicate from culture the causes of feminine ‘inequality’ and ‘oppression’ and to restructure society from top to bottom according to their own ideological scheme—a scheme of deconstructing the established order and the order written in nature.” [71] Key here is the feminist assumption that the oppression of women is rooted principally in their *nature*. Consequently, the feminist vision was to liberate the woman from her nature in order that she would be free to recreate herself.

One can begin to deduce the assumptions which undergird feminism from looking at its goals. A key philosophy guiding the movement was that of noted feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir who believed that the being of a woman was not a “given” but rather a social construct. [72] Beauvoir succinctly states, “One is not born a woman, but becomes a woman.”[73] Further, according to Beauvoir, the construct of woman takes various forms which depend on her attitude. If the woman is passive, she submits to the traditional ideals of femininity and becomes a spouse and mother.[74] An active woman, on the contrary, is one who “liberates herself, becomes ‘herself’ and lives for herself, [thereby being able to] *own herself* and *control her destiny*.”[75] This woman radically frees herself from any fundamental relationship to men, others, and to God.

The philosophy of Beauvoir provoked women to reject the oppression of marriage and motherhood and seek, instead, a new construction that brought liberation. A new construction meant, of course, a *deconstruction* of the traditional ideals of womanhood. If the old constructions were innate, then

they could continue to be used against women. Gender feminists therefore sought to establish a distinction between *sex*, one's biological characteristics which are unchangeable, and *gender*, feminine or masculine traits whose differences are socially constructed and therefore changeable.[76] This distinction posited a rift between one's body and social function, thereby affirming the feminist principle that "biology is not destiny." With the emancipation of women from the ideals formerly placed on them, feminists were able to "recreate" the ideal of womanhood.

It is clear from this brief discussion of the feminist movement that its primary goal was to eradicate any sense of traditional femininity in order to construct a model that was independent of any essential relation to the body, men, or God. Peeters, therefore, draws the conclusion that the feminist movement was essentially *anti-feminine*. [77] One could make the claim that feminists were not only seeking to have the same rights and opportunities as men, but, more basically, to have the right *not* to be feminine. Ironically, in this they were actually agreeing with their "male oppressors" that their femininity (as mothers and spouses) was something to disdain.

The fundamental assumptions of the feminist movement and its (negative) reaction to femininity allow us to better understand the Girl Project—and some of the problems it has engendered. The economically independent, athletically ambitious, career-driven, sexually liberated new single woman is none other than the long-awaited feminist ideal of reconstructed womanhood. It is she who has taken the place of the old ideal, who was oppressed in her role as spouse and mother. The new single woman has everything her feminist predecessors hoped for, yet, as already mentioned, she is dissatisfied with her life. She does not feel liberated, but, rather, oppressed by the pressure to excel in every arena. More than that, one can make the claim that the problems resulting from the Girl Project stem from the essentially "anti-feminine" education of women. In being trained to be independent of man, she presents no complement to him, and he, in turn, feels no impetus to unite with his "other half." So, while the feminist ideals behind the Girl Project were meant to give rise to a happier and more fulfilled self-reliant woman, they have sadly fallen short of this goal.

The New Feminine Ideal and Men

While the women in the New Girl Order were being cultivated like prize-winning specimen orchids, where were the men?

Kay Hymowitz, one of the authors previously mentioned, has devoted her most recent book to this subject. In *Manning Up, How the Rise of Women has Turned Men into Boys*, she expounds upon the parallel phenomenon of the "child-man" that has arisen alongside the "alpha-girl" of the New Girl Order.[78] She describes this child-man as the opposite of the alpha girl:

If she is ambitious, he is a slacker. If she is hyper-organized and self-directed, he tends toward passivity and vagueness. If she is preternaturally mature, he is happily not...she drinks sophisticated cocktails in mirrored bars, he burps up beer on ratty sofas...If her aspirational hero is the urbane Carrie Bradshaw [of *Sex in the City*], his is well, the potty-mouthed and -brained Adam Sandler.[79]

Hymowitz sets out to prove the existence of this “child-man” mostly through cultural anecdotes since “no one keeps data on the number of men with *Star Wars* posters in their bedrooms.”[80] Even as she acknowledges the critics of this method, Hymowitz finds it striking that these anecdotes continue to pile up and believes that they show a fundamental change in the experience of the modern man.

What is the evidence for this? Well, Adam Sandler’s movie career for one. Sandler has become famous for his films of male arrested development, and they have garnered over \$2.5 billion worldwide. [81] Something in his work is resonating with the audience. Hymowitz also notes the arrival of *Maxim* in 2007, a magazine that sought to be an “anti-*Playboy*” that would supply readers with what they say they want, rather than with any of the magazine’s own philosophies.[82] What did the editors discover? The modern single man wanted to hear simply that he did not have to grow up.[83] *Maxim* has responded in kind with a medium that provides its readers ample amounts of child-man entertainment. Other examples include shows such as the *The Simpsons*, *South Park*, and Comedy Central’s *The Man Show*, famous for featuring half-naked women, interviews with porn-stars, drinking songs, and a theme song that includes the lyrics “Quit your job and light a fart/Yank your favorite private part.”[84] Perhaps, though, the single biggest datum pointing to the existence of the child-man is the multi-billion dollar video game industry. The rise in the use of video-games by men ages 18 to 34 is striking:

A study of video game use in the last quarter of 2006 [found that] almost half—48.2 percent—of 18- to 34-year-old American men had used a console and did so on average *2 hours and 43 minutes per day*. (That’s 13 minutes more than 12- to 17-year-olds...)[85]

How did this “child-man” come to be? Was he the intentional consequence of a quest for liberation by male activists? Hymowitz poignantly describes the child-man as the “lost son of a host of economic and cultural changes.” [86] He is the result of several factors: the demographic shift she has entitled “pre-adulthood,” the *Playboy* philosophy, feminism, the new media, and a muddled cultural sense of what it means to be a husband and father.[87] For Hymowitz, the new stage in life described as “pre-adulthood” has affected both men and women and is a term that describes those who see themselves as “in transition” to adulthood.[88] While young men and women who describe themselves as “pre-adults” may be considered adults legally, they lack the social identity that

accompanies settling into an occupation, home, or marital family that has almost always been associated with adulthood.[89] Pre-adults are waiting to marry until later, seeing marriage as something that they will do once they have mastered self-definition.

As was already discussed earlier, for the modern woman (or the “new single woman”) the stage of pre-adulthood is the fulfillment of the feminist goal of giving women the opportunity to define themselves in new ways. Without the pressure to marry and the newfound freedom of self-exploration, women are able to put off marriage indefinitely in order to pursue their careers. Instead, they find themselves in a world which caters to them. As Hymowitz sees it, the fundamental truth of this new stage is that “girls rule.” [90]

If “girls rule” in pre-adulthood, where do the boys fit in? Enter the child-man. As the culture was giving women new and unprecedented opportunities to succeed, it was telling men that not much was expected of them. Hymowitz notes that in times past, adult manhood was almost universally associated with marriage and fatherhood. [91] While there are exceptions to this, it is noted by anthropologist David Gilmore that manhood was a “critical threshold for boys to pass through.”[92] In other words, cultures have consistently provided boys with expectations of what they must do in order to become men. Most often, this meant marriage and fatherhood, and even despite any exceptions, these expectations still held fast. Hymowitz does take into consideration earlier cultural attitudes that evince men’s frustration and distaste for their duties and responsibilities; yet, despite these, there remained considerable social and economic pressure for men to be grown-ups.[93]

Today, men find themselves in a culture that does not give them this impetus. While the child-man’s father and grandfather knew that adult manhood would likely entail marriage and fatherhood (even if this was after some youthful years of a bachelor lifestyle), the modern man finds himself in a culture that does not expect much from him. The women in the New Girl Order are not interested in him as a husband or a father (at least not yet), and certainly not as a provider. Hymowitz notes that “women are quick to remind people that although they like the idea of getting married, they don’t actually *need* a husband or even want one very much.”[94] Further, the media supplies the child-man with endless opportunities to fill his life with entertainment as well as reinforcing the expectation that he do so.

As previously stated, the frustrations of the alpha-girls, or new single women, of the New Girl Order are better understood when placed within the context of the feminist movement as a whole. The same can be said for the child-man. If the alpha-girl was a culturally pursued ideal of feminism, then the child-man was an *unintended consequence*. As modern women freed themselves from the “oppressive” feminine ideals of marriage and motherhood, modern men were no longer defined by

an expectation to be a husband or a father, or even to pursue any new ideal of manhood. While the alpha-girl defines herself by her career, athleticism, and sexual empowerment, the child-man finds that there are no expectations for him; he does not have to grow up. He is free to pursue the career of his choice or no career at all—and whatever his income, it is purely at his disposal. The child-man is also free in his sexual pursuits of women. Liberated alpha-girls provide him with the perfect opportunity to find sexual pleasure without the pressure to marry them.^[95]

Kay Hymowitz's book, then, helps to give a more adequate understanding of the plight of the new single woman in her frustrated search for a "good man." As the above review concludes, "In being trained to be independent of man [the new single woman of today] presents no complement to him." Thus, while the alpha-girl complains that "there are no good men left," the child-man responds, "Why does it matter? You don't need me."

^[1] Kay S. Hymowitz, "The New Girl Order," *City Journal* (Autumn 2007).

^[2] Carol Platt Liebau, *Prude: How the Sex-Obsessed Culture Damages Girls (and America, Too!)* (New York: Hachette Book Group USA, 2007), 2–3.

^[3] Hymowitz, "The New Girl Order," 5.

^[4] Liebau, *Prude*, 3.

^[5] Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, *Why There Are No Good Men Left: The Romantic Plight of the New Single Woman* (New York: Broadway Books, 2003), 62.

^[6] Ibid.

^[7] Ibid.

^[8] Hymowitz, 1.

^[9] Whitehead, 62.

^[10] Ibid, 63.

^[11] Hymowitz,1.

^[12] Whitehead, 63.

^[13] Ibid, 64–65.

[14] Ibid, 65.

[15] Ibid, 65–66.

[16] Ibid, 67.

[17] Ibid, 68.

[18] Ibid, 69.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid. For example, in 2001, females made up 44 percent of AP chemistry test-takers, compared to 31 percent in the mid-1980's.

[21] Ibid. For example, nationally, since 1991, the average number of applications to girls' schools has increased 32 percent. Applications to Manhattan's private girls' schools have increased 69 percent since 1991. Along with this trend is the establishment of new girls' schools: between 1995 and 1998, 14 new girls' schools were founded. Ibid, 70.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid, 71.

[24] In using this term, I speak in terms of a modern understanding of liberty being that which is without limits.

[25] For example, 70 percent of all television shows were found to include some sexual content, with either portrayals of sex or discussion of sexual themes. This percentage was higher during prime time. This was not only the case in programs for adults; programs with teenagers have an even higher number of scenes with sexual content (at 6.7 per hour) than general programs (Liebau, 90). Liebau also has several striking statistics on the prevalence of sexual messages in music and advertisements. Cf. Liebau, 133–149.

[26] Whitehead, 74.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Liebau, 20.

[29] Ibid, 181.

[30] Ibid, 182.

[31] Ibid, 73.

[32] Hymowitz, 2.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Whitehead, 97.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Liebau, 184.

[38] Ibid, 187.

[39] Ibid, 187-188.

[40] Cited in a book review from [The Today Show's website](#), "Stressed Out! The Life of a 'Supergirl.'" Original work is published as follows: Liz Funk, *Supergirls Speak Out: Inside the Secret Crisis of Overachieving Girls* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009).

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Sarah Hughes, "Supergirl Meltdown: How Middle-class Girls Today Are Under Unprecedented Pressure to Succeed," [Daily Mail Online](#) (October 2009).

[44] Ibid, 3.

[45] Whitehead, 76.

[46] Ibid, 77.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid, 78.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid, 79. A recent article from a website dedicated to educating parents on how to raise teenagers makes reference to Girls Incorporated, a national youth organization with the goal of “inspiring all girls to become strong, smart, and bold” in order to encourage them to pursue careers in math, science, and engineering. Cf. Tara Swords, “Girl Power: Raising Smart Bold Girls,” [Preteen and Teen Channel](#).

[54] Ibid, 78.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid. 79.

[57] Ibid, 80.

[58] Dorothy McBride-Stetson, *Women’s Rights in the U.S.A: Policy Debates and Gender Roles, Third Edition* (New York, Routledge, 2004), 153.

[59] Ibid. The official statement was: “Discrimination in education is one of the most damaging injustices women suffer. It denies them equal education and equal employment opportunity, contributing to a second-class self-image.”

[60] Whitehead, 81.

[61] Dorothy McBride-Stetson, 156.

[62] Ibid., 161.

[63] Whitehead, 88.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Ibid., 92.

[66] Ibid., 93.

[67] Marguerite A. Peeters, *The Globalization of the Western Cultural Revolution: Key Concepts, Operational Mechanisms*, trans. Benedict Kobus (Institute for Intercultural Dialogue Dynamics, 2007), 8.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid, 9.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid, 11.

[72] Ibid, 13.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid, 71.

[77] Ibid, 77.

[78] Kay S. Hymowitz, *Manning Up: How the Rise of Women Has Turned Men Into Boys* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 72. It should be noted that other authors have begun to notice the plight of men today. See Leonard Sax, *Boys Adrift: The Five Factors Driving the Growing Epidemic of Unmotivated Boys and Underachieving Young Men* (New York, Basic Books, 2007), Kathleen Parker, *Save the Males: Why Men Matter, Why Women Should Care* (New York, Random House, 2008), Christina Hoff Sommers, *The War Against Boys: How Misguided Policies are Harming Our Young Men* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2013), and Helen Smith, *Men on Strike: Why Men Are Boycotting Marriage, Fatherhood, and the American Dream—and Why It Matters* (New York: Encounter Books, 2013).

[79] Ibid, 110.

[80] Ibid, xii

[81] Ibid, 110.

[82] Ibid, 112. Hymowitz notes that *Playboy* sought to project an image of an intelligent and cultured man, who emulated Hugh Hefner's famous quote that his ideal reader "enjoyed inviting a female acquaintance in for a quiet discussion of Picasso, Nietzsche, jazz, sex."

[83] Ibid, 113.

[84] Ibid, 115–116.

[85] Ibid, 118.

[86] Ibid, 135

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid, 23.

[89] Ibid, 24.

[90] Ibid, 50.

[91] Ibid, 127.

[92] Ibid, 128.

[93] Ibid, 132

[94] Ibid, 72.

[95] And, notably, the rise in the use of hormonal contraceptives freed these men from the worry over unexpected fatherhood. Hymowitz devotes part of her chapter, “The New Girl Order” to exploring this cultural dimension. Cf. 60–63.

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Allowing the Body to Speak: The Power of Fertility Education

SR. HANNA KLAUS

St. John Paul II had it right.

When John Paul II began his pontificate one of his first tasks was to address the harm which the rejection of *Humanae Vitae* had caused. He responded with his catechesis on the *Theology of the Body*. As a phenomenologist he knew the importance of experience in forming judgments, attitudes and character. While his role as pope limited his direct teaching to speaking and writing, he encouraged experiential learning of the signs of the body's fertility by natural family planners and teachers of youth. In this he followed Pope Paul VI who encouraged physicians to find effective methods for the regulation of births which were consistent with Church teaching (*Humanae Vitae*, 27). When seven of us—Margaret McGauley, Mary Fran Reid, Merrilee Underhill, Ann O'Donnell, Sisters Ursula Fagan MMS, Natalie Elder, CM, and I—began the *Aware Center* in St. Louis, Missouri in 1973 to teach the Billings Ovulation Method, our theological “underpinnings” were minimal, but we knew that fertility was not a disease and did not need to be isolated from the body to achieve marital harmony. We began with women/couples “where they were.” Most who sought a natural method came from a combination of obedience to Church teaching and a dislike or fear of the pill which had been available since the mid 1960's.

Because we learned that our clients were coming to the class for such a variety of motives, we invited them to a group meeting to explore and discuss their reasons for seeking to learn the Ovulation Method. The majority of reasons were ecological and religious, but many women also expressed fear of failure of the method, or fear of a negative effect on their spousal relationship. Women who feared that the method would fail were often uncertain about their observations or how they interpreted them, or about their husband's responses to being told that they were now fertile and needed to abstain if they did not want to have another child. We were able to relieve their uncertainty in follow-up sessions during which we reviewed the women's charting and either affirmed or corrected it. Most women required no more than two additional meetings, while one

woman came monthly for one year. With the women's consent we made copies of their charts that included notations of the days of intercourse, and analyzed the outcomes.

At the end of our first year, the young director of St. Louis University's Data Center reported that "all the women who became pregnant had intercourse." I thanked him but added that the only couple about which this was in doubt was not included in our series. (This was prior to Louise Brown, the first *IVF* baby.) Our youthful helper did not understand, but was happy to reanalyze the data set to find out when in the cycle the conceptions occurred and to correlate the outcomes with the couple's desire to achieve or avoid conception. We found that the women who learned the method correctly and followed it consistently had no pregnancies while those who misunderstood or "took chances" conceived. Larger studies later found that unplanned pregnancies due to a failure of the method were indeed few, ranging from 0–2%, while user-related pregnancies varied depending upon how much a couple wanted to avoid an unplanned pregnancy: 0.52% in a large study in China to 12–14% in Kenya, Korea and USA.

Women's fears that husbands would not cooperate were dispelled when husbands learned to understand their combined fertility as a couple. Most women who anticipated difficulties had made untested assumptions. One young wife told the group that she had assumed that her husband would be angry if she refused intercourse because she was in her fertile phase and they had not planned to have another child. She was pleasantly surprised that he was more than happy to cooperate with her; all he needed was an explanation. Another woman was afraid that her husband would ridicule her for talking about mucus at all. Once the husband understood, he became a partner in decision making, much to his wife's relief. Unfortunately there were, and are, men who, rather than admit their ignorance, belittle their wives. Teaching the husbands first, as during a *cursillo*, and inviting them to teach or bring their wives to class has proved to be proactive to ensure couple cooperation. Learning to understand and value their combined fertility changed many aspects of the marital dynamics.

Not long after helping to introduce the Billings Method in several Midwestern cities, Sister Joan Devane—a fellow Medical Mission Sister who was the Medical Secretary of the Kenyan (Catholic) Episcopal Conference—was in St. Louis on furlough, and saw the work we were doing. She obtained support from Misereor (the German Catholic Bishops' Organization for Development Cooperation) and invited me to introduce the method in Kenya. The Billings method resonated with the Kenyan and other sub-Saharan women because it confirmed what their grandmothers had taught them. The method caught on so well that a formal evaluation was begun by CORAT-AFRICA and KEC, funded by USAID via the Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health. There were four sections to the entire program, and I was the "overseas consultant" to the Billings section. We were able to evaluate the effects of the Billings method in the special program in the parish of

Nyahururu, Kenya. Leaders of 63 of the parish centers had been trained to teach the method. Couples who enrolled were pleased with their success.[\[1\]](#)

But we also wondered what intentional use of the Billings Method did to the couples' relationship. We invited Dr. Violet Kimani, an anthropologist at the University of Nairobi, herself a Kikuyu, to interview a sample of couples. She and a team of Kikuyu medical students interviewed Billings method users to learn their views about the use of the method. The most significant change was the women's view of the role of sexual intercourse in marriage. Prior to the program the most important function of coitus was to have children. A year later, it was the sharing of love. Not coincidentally, the women's lives had significantly changed. The Kikuyu tribe is highly patriarchal, but after a year of Billings method use the women were sharing in all the domestic decisions: where to send the children to school, how to spend the money, etc. While most couples had indeed achieved their family planning goals, the most important achievement of the Billings method was not so much successful child spacing, but raising the status of the wife to one of full equality with her husband. This came about without external input: when a man learns to respect his wife's body, he learns to respect her person, since, as John Paul II said "the body is a sign of the person."

The Kikuyu men of Nyahururu were proud of their mastery of the practice of natural family planning, as were others who had been taught in the program. One Turkhana husband told us, "I used to be afraid to sleep in the same hut with my wife unless we wanted another baby. Now I can sleep in the same bed with her." That's power!

During the second meeting of Billings teachers in Melbourne, Australia in 1978, Dr. John Billings asked me to concentrate on teenagers, as there was considerable increase in premarital sex, contraceptive use and abortion since the advent of the pill. In 1980 the U.S. teen pregnancy rate was 12/1000. With support from the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation we began a research project to teach fertility awareness to girls 15–17 years of age. We identified the sites, and did not invite participants until we had met with their parents and explained our project. As parents are the primary educators of their children in all matters including sexuality, parental permission was, and is, a legal and moral entry requirement. The church and the school can assist in this task with the permission of the parents.[\[2\]](#) More recently some states in the US and UK have chosen to provide contraception and abortion to minors without obtaining parental permission but we do not follow this practice. The parent meeting is important not only to win the parents' consent, but to clear up misunderstandings. We often encounter parents who fear that if their children learn to identify their fertile times that they will want to make use of the times of infertility to have sexual relations. Thankfully, our behavioral outcomes show that this is not the case. Many parents are using, or have used, contraception. It is not our place to challenge them, but to remind them that parents always want better things for their children than they had. So we hoped that if their child wanted to enter

Teen STAR, that they would consent. Most women are not enamored of the pill; they just did not know there were workable alternatives.

I had written an outline for our teachers, but Mary Lou Bryant, an experienced teacher in Louisville, Kentucky changed it to make it appropriate for the needs of young girls. After explaining the program and getting consent from the girls and their parents, she began the first class by asking the girls if they wanted “to talk woman talk.” They did. They were very curious. And the very first question they asked was “what’s that stuff that comes out?” The girls were invited to record their observations of their cervical mucus and learned where it came from and what caused it. We went on to teach the girls about the different hormones which dominate the different cycle phases and their effects on emotions. The girls spoke about relationships, commitment, life styles, goals and ethical frameworks and had individual interviews to discuss their observations and their activities. Generally the girls needed to observe three cycles before they felt confident. One of the things which made them confident was learning that the time from ovulation, as indicated by the last day the mucus was slippery, clear and stringy, was followed by the same number of days until the next menstrual period. Knowing exactly when to expect the period was a huge victory. Now their bodies were speaking to them and the girls understood what they were saying. As a result they expressed increased self-confidence, began to resist peer pressure and made their own decisions. Their mothers reported this at the second parent meeting three months later. Girls reported all sorts of benefits from knowing their cycles. One of two sisters who were in the class told Mrs. Bryant “when my sister and I have a fight, I just say ‘Go get your chart’ and when I see that she is close to her period I just say, ‘Forget about it, we’ll talk later.’”

Our pilot group included 200 girls in seven U.S. cities. Twenty were already sexually involved when they began the program. Half stopped activity, three girls began activity: two experimented once each, one wanted to become pregnant and succeeded. The couple left school four months prior to graduation and had a big wedding, proving that free will still operates. The pregnancy rate for our group was 0.52/1000 which compared favorably with the rate for the general population. We named the program Teen STAR. Star stands for Sexuality Teaching in the context of Adult Responsibility.

Several of the mothers asked that we have a similar program for their sons, and Rev. Donald Heet O.S.F.S. crafted the Teen STAR curriculum for young men. It is necessary to have men teach the boys, as they need to learn not only reproductive physiology but self-possession, which is better caught than taught. We monitor behavioral outcomes not only through follow-up but with anonymous exit questionnaires. The boys’ behavior parallels the girls. Most of the teens we encounter have not begun sexual activity, and do not begin during the program. Roughly half of those already active stop. We found this to be true in USA, Chile, France, Poland, Ethiopia and

Uganda. Because we had been able to show that Teen STAR supported premarital abstinence we were funded as an AIDS prevention program in Ethiopia and Uganda. Besides the thankfully excellent behavioral outcomes, the program opened up communication between teens and their parents about sexual behaviors, a topic which had been discouraged by the taboos of their culture. At one meeting in Assela in Ethiopia one of the fathers told of the change Teen STAR had effected in his son: the boy used to go to bars in the evening instead of doing his homework but now was bringing his friends home and getting the homework done. Then the father said “I am the government education officer for this district and have 22 schools and I want Teen STAR in all of them.” In time, the teachers were trained by the trainers of Teen STAR Ethiopia. The 2 and 3 year post-program behavioral outcomes from Ethiopia and Uganda showed similar outcomes as the earlier studies—excellent support for primary and secondary abstinence^[3]—giving us some assurance that what we taught the young men had resonated with them and influenced their decisions later in life. Actually, 25% of our group had stopped intercourse more than 6 months ago, another 25% had stopped more than a year earlier.

Longer effects are known only anecdotally. One teacher attended an alumni meeting of the school where she had taught freshmen boys Teen STAR more than ten years earlier. The physiologic part of the course was taught by a male teacher, but she had conducted the rest of the curriculum. Several wives of the alumni thanked her for what their husbands had learned in Teen STAR—a gratifying testimonial to long term effectiveness.

Clearly the experience of the signs and effects of fertility help to possess one’s sexuality in a way that purely “head knowledge” cannot achieve. *Gaudium et spes*, 22 teaches that Christ “reveals man to himself.” In taking a human body, Christ gave the body a dignity it did not possess before. As explained in *Laborem Exercens*, the body is the sign, the quasi-sacrament of the person. Perhaps an additional reason Our Lord became man, beyond redeeming us, was to teach us that our bodies also have their own truth which must be respected and not manipulated to fulfill desires which contradict it.

^[1] Labbok, M., Klaus, H., and Perez, A., „Efficacy studies in NFP: Issues and management implications illustrated with data from five studies,” *Amer J Obstet Gynec* (December 1991, 165:6): 2048-2051.

^[2] Cf. *Educational Guidance in Human Love*, Sacred Congregation for Education, 1983.

^[3] The Center for Disease Control defines “primary abstinence” as never having had intercourse, and “secondary abstinence” as not having had intercourse within the last three months.

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Theology of the Body: More Than Just Sex Ed

FR. JOSÉ GRANADOS

Anderson, Carl and Rev. José Granados, *Called to Love: Approaching John Paul II's Theology of the Body* (Image, reprint edition 2012).

The family is at the center of many of the problems our society is called to address today. These problems refer first of all to the human person's search for his identity: Who am I? Is my life worth living? Does love provide an answer to my questions and open up a road to fulfillment? If so, how is one to differentiate true love from an illusory one that only leads to unhappiness? To these questions we can add others that do not refer only to the sphere of intimate relationships, but affect also the life of man in society. What is the value of the family for our society? Does the family have a mission in the building up of the common good, in the education of children, in the happiness of man and woman?

During his pontificate, John Paul II tried to illuminate these questions. His message consisted in proclaiming the Gospel of love and the Gospel of the family, the place where true love is born and fostered. The family was among Karol Wojtyła's concerns as a young priest and continued to be the main focus of activity during his pontificate.

This same approach has been pursued by John Paul's successor, Benedict XVI. Benedict declared at the beginning of his pontificate that he did not expect to write many documents; instead, he conceived an important part of his mission to be making John Paul II's own writings better known. Consonant with this work, Pope Benedict's first encyclical, *Deus caritas est*, addressed the very problem to which John Paul II had devoted the Wednesday catecheses now known as the Theology of the Body: human love in the divine plan.

In this way both pontiffs have pointed the way for the Catholic Church in the third millennium. John Paul II affirmed at the beginning of his pontificate that "man"—the human person with his hopes and joys, fears and troubles—has become "the way of the Church." The Theology of the Body further specifies this claim by saying that the way of man is the way of love: man can only find his own fulfillment if he loves in truth. Thus, the Church's mission consists in proclaiming the truth

about love so that the human being can attain fulfillment. How is this possible? How can the Church point out the way of love? The Theology of the Body shows how the family is the place where true love is attained. John Paul II invited the Church to follow the way of man, the way of love, and to help build a whole civilization of love by strengthening its most basic unit, the family.

From this perspective it becomes evident that the Theology of the Body cannot be reduced to a doctrine about sexual morals. Its scope contains the whole explanation of the Christian message in terms of love, thus providing a right understanding of God, man, and the world. Let us consider this in greater detail.

a) First of all, the Theology of the Body offers a right understanding of the human person. Man is called to love and can only be happy if he discovers true love. The Theology of the Body helps man discover the truth about his path of love. Man appears—in his bodily existence—as a being open to the world, others, and to God—a being whose vocation is realized only if he accepts himself as a gift and is able to give himself in response to this gift.

b) Secondly, the Theology of the Body is crucial for the understanding of the Church's mission in the world. This theology, indeed, offers a complete vision of Christianity: Christianity is all about the revelation of God's love for the world in the bodily life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Only if such an account is provided, does the message of the Church address the real concerns of the human person.

c) Thirdly, the teachings articulated in the Theology of the Body are crucial to grasping the meaning of man's life in society. Once man has understood that he is called to love, he realizes that he cannot keep this vocation to himself, but is called to build up a civilization of love, the society that emerges from love as articulated by John Paul II.

The book *Called to Love: Approaching the Theology of the Body* gives an account of the Theology of the Body by indicating the path along which man learns to build up his life in love. The Introduction focuses on the question of man's identity, the quest for his own self. How are we to understand man's mystery, the greatness of his dignity and vocation? John Paul II indicates that the way is not far from us. "It is not up in the sky, that you should say, 'Who will go up in the sky to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?' Nor is it across the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may carry it out?'" (Deut 30:11–12). On the contrary, it is offered to us in the simplest of everyday events: the experience of love. John Paul II refers precisely to the experience of love, understood in its fullness, as the way to answer the question of man. The book wants to help the reader find his bearings on this path of love.

The first part, “Encountering Love,” describes the original experience of love. At this point the human body is pivotal: the body, indeed, identifies the person precisely in his encounter with the world and with others. Thus, to understand the person from the point of view of the body means to avoid the danger of solipsism from the very beginning. Man, in his bodiliness—through his senses, expressions, gestures—is a being defined by his encounter with the world, with others, with God. From this point of view it is possible to grasp the meaning of the sexual difference, of masculinity and femininity. Because the human body belongs to the identity of the human person at the very deepest level, the sexual difference between men and women reveals the meaning of their identity: in their difference, they are called to unity. Inscribed in my very being, at the center of my identity, is a call to love the other person; because of this, I can only be myself if I accept this person and I give myself to her. This call, precisely because it is inscribed in our bodies, can be seen as a vocation given to us by the Creator, the original source of love. Rooted in the first gift—the gift of creation—man is able to give himself freely in return, building up communion with the other person. Only at this point can we understand the full meaning of the creation of man, male and female, in the image of God: the communion of persons is the image of the Trinity, a God who is in himself Love.

But it is not enough to encounter love and to understand its meaning. It belongs to the very essence of love that it grows in time, that it needs to be strengthened and purified. The second part of the book deals with this “Ascent of love.” We begin by describing the fragility of love and the difficulties it finds along its path. From this analysis, a question arises: is it possible to build up lasting love in our life? In answer to this question we present the figure of Christ as the one who at once purifies love and brings it to perfection. Christianity consists of the gradual revelation of this love (in the Old Testament), which attains its fulfillment in Christ. In the life of Christ, the Son of God who gives his life in order to purify the Church and receive her as His bride, we find the retrieval and the fulfillment of the original experience of love. It is in gazing at the life of Christ that we understand that he is not alien to the human experience of love, but belongs to its very foundations from the beginning. Having witnessed and received this fullness of love, man can accept the task of rebuilding love. The second part offers an account of this task, the education of love, which John Paul II also calls a “pedagogy of the body” and which consists in an integration of all the dimensions that love reveals in our life.

In the third part of the book we deal with the love that comes from the fullness of love revealed in Christ: it is the beauty of love, the splendor of the body. This splendor comes to maturity in the sacrament of marriage and also in the vocation to virginity, which allows us to speak of the heavenly destiny of the body. The last chapter deals with the openness of the family to society and the family’s mission to help to build a civilization of love.

The following are some of the areas of interest this book on the Theology of the Body deals with:

--The book will help the reader to understand man's vocation and quest for self identity. It will serve in a special way to assist engaged couples preparing for marriage, married couples who want to strengthen their family, and also consecrated people who want to live their vocation in fulfillment.

--The book will also be helpful for pastors, since it provides an account of the mission of the family within the mission of the Catholic Church.

--A right understanding of the place of a Christian in society will be fostered in the reading of this book, which shows that questions about love and the family are not just private ones but crucial for the flourishing of the whole community.

--The book also examines John Paul II's understanding of Christian faith in its entirety. A theology of the body appears as the root of Christian theology, because it provides a Christian interpretation of the world in the light of love.

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Faux Facts, Free Love, and Pretending Not to Care

CAIT DUGGAN

Freitas, Donna, *The End of Sex: How Hookup Culture Is Leaving a Generation Unhappy, Sexually Unfulfilled, and Confused About Intimacy* (Basic Books, 2013).

Grossman, Miriam, *Unprotected: A Campus Psychiatrist Reveals How Political Correctness in Her Profession Endangers Every Student* (Sentinel HC, 2006).

On a university campus, the ethos of the place is a teacher of its own. From the ways in which students habitually interact with one another, and more subtly, from the opportunities and resources that a school provides its students, students learn what passes for acceptable and good. If, for example, a university puts recycling bins in all the classrooms and dorms or gives students free access to gyms open from dawn to midnight, it communicates that recycling and exercising are good practices. Universities “teach” about men and women and sex, too, according to books authored by Dr. Donna Freitas and Dr. Miriam Grossman. Among their many observations, both authors contend that the “sex as recreation” narrative has overtaken the campus social scene, and that such a culture has made it harder for students to recognize and appreciate the authentic differences between the sexes.

In *The End of Sex: How Hookup Culture Is Leaving a Generation Unhappy, Sexually Unfulfilled, and Confused About Intimacy*, Dr. Freitas discusses trends in college students’ attitudes towards sex, romance, hookup culture, and dating. Freitas discovered these by conducting interviews with more than 2,500 students at seven colleges and universities in 2006. She concludes that students today are learning how to relate to one another romantically (or unromantically, as the case may be) amidst a hookup culture. By this she means a culture where casual, no-strings-attached sex, otherwise known as “hooking up,” is the norm, and where dating, to all appearances, has disappeared. Freitas writes early on that “[hookup culture] is the defining aspect of social life on many campuses; to reject it is to relegate oneself to the sidelines of college experience” (5).

What does such an environment teach students about masculinity, femininity and relationships? Freitas devotes two chapters to this question. She observes that the ubiquity of college theme parties—such as, “Maids and Millionaires” or “CEOs and Secretaries” (81)—encourages women to objectify themselves and to make themselves “powerless, submissive, and, most of all, dependent on [a man] for something” (77). Men feel pressured to exude machismo, scorn any interest in commitment or romance, and demonstrate a single-minded interest in hooking up (104–06). However, despite this campus culture, in their interviews with Freitas many students expressed misgivings about casual sex, as well as the narrow and absurd conceptions of masculinity and femininity that were integral to hookup culture. The men knew there was far more to their female peers than their short skirts revealed, and women understood that men had a far greater capacity for thoughtfulness and compassion than the latter thought they were permitted to show. Still, there is a discrepancy between what students think and what they do. Freitas notes that female students embrace parodies of femininity thinking they will bring them freedom (92). In this way, their beliefs and actions contradict the conclusions of earlier feminists (91). Similarly, men come to understand that they should resist giving signals that they want a steady relationship. Freitas describes a pervasive notion on college campuses that “[r]elationships restrict freedom—they require more care, upkeep, and time than anyone can afford to give during this exciting period between adolescence and adulthood . . . Hookups allow students to get sex onto the college CV without adding any additional burdens, ensuring that they don’t miss out on the all-American, crazy college experience they feel they must have. They can always settle down later” (1–2). In other words, in a hookup culture, freedom means freedom *from* relationships; as Freitas writes, students are “‘free’ to forget about love, meaning, and commitment, and ‘liberated’ to have sex without any strings, ‘keeping [themselves] at a distance’ from partners, and turning to friends for a reality check if they think they might be ‘getting too attached’” (62). Students are thus burdened with the task of finding fulfillment outside of age-old means of giving life its richness—love, relationships, and communion with others.

The hookup scene is troubling to Freitas not only because of the way it distorts notions of masculinity and femininity, but also because it diminishes the respect students have for themselves and for one another, and because it encourages the separation of love, intimacy, and sacrifice. Freitas noticed that the students who talked the most about their sexual experiences “were the students who also sounded like they were discussing household chores” (12). However, many students were not so detached: when Freitas asked her interview participants to reflect on their hookups, she noted that, “. . . the most common of all among the respondents were the 41 percent of students who expressed sadness and even despair about hooking up . . . hooking up made students feel ‘miserable’ and ‘abused’ . . .” (12). These students felt used and had difficulty learning how to separate their emotions from sex in order to treat it like an exercise routine or

pastime rather than the gifting of their whole self to another person. Freitas submits that “[m]en and women learn to shut down emotionally in order to ‘safely’ turn on physically . . . Participants train themselves to erase (or at least try to erase) any trace of emotional intimacy, so that they can prevent attachment arising from a sexual encounter” (30).

Freitas captures well the quandary that students are in: they are rightfully opposed to a campus culture that encourages women to subjugate themselves and men to suppress their sensitivity, but they still give in to hookup culture because it is efficient and ubiquitous. Freitas is also nuanced in her portrayal of college students, something that should be noted given the prevalence of analyses of hookup culture which portray the majority of college students as mindless drones looking for sex. She introduces readers to the students who enjoy hooking up, the ones who feel conflicted about it, and the ones who, looking for love, are sorely disappointed and hurt by it.

While Freitas focuses on what passes for “normal” in student culture, Dr. Miriam Grossman—a former member of UCLA’s Student Counseling Services and author of *Unprotected*—denounces the health myths that circulate at college counseling offices. Dr. Grossman writes, “In their efforts to educate students, campus health and counseling centers lump men and women together. This is inaccurate in the extreme” (28). She notes how students are inundated with information about the importance of healthy eating, exercise, and avoiding tobacco and alcohol, but are deprived of basic information when it comes to questions about sex, STDs, abortion, and fertility. She maintains that campus counselors withhold information that students need because it flies in the face of a “sex as recreation” narrative. These practices are particularly harmful to female students.

Dr. Grossman dedicates individual chapters to exploring the false ideas she claims that counselors tell students and supports her arguments with scientific research as well as stories of students she has counseled. Among these “facts” she lists: that sex is “[o]ne of the many ways in which humans interact with one another” (23); that HPV is something any college student should get used to and learn to treat, as opposed to something he or she could prevent; that “anyone can get HIV” (63); that abortion doesn’t take a toll on a woman, or a man; and that a woman’s fertility can be delayed with little consequence, thanks to artificial reproductive technologies. She laments that women are not informed that they are more likely than men to feel attached to a partner after a hookup (11) and are more vulnerable to STDs than men (26). She also asks why, given that the majority of abortions are performed on college-age women, “if [a female student] is seen in the future at the campus counseling center, will she surely be asked whether she was ever beaten or neglected by her parents, but not if she ever had an abortion” (83). To her dismay, Dr. Grossman noticed that women who shared with her their hopes of one day having children or expressed concern about

their difficulties getting pregnant were unaware that their history of STDs could interfere with their fertility, and that ARTs are no guarantee of motherhood.

After working for twelve years as a counselor at UCLA, Dr. Grossman came to believe that false messages about sex, STDs, abortion, and pregnancy were far from harmless. Towards the beginning of her book, Grossman writes, “I see firsthand how the politicization of these centers is hazardous and wrong. Hazardous, because our kids are deprived of facts they need to make informed decisions, while risky behaviors are sanctioned. Wrong, because it is unethical to promote a particular social agenda while providing medical or mental health services” (Introduction, xx). The selectivity that characterizes student health education minimizes the biological differences between the sexes, which is part of a greater effort to blur the distinctions between the sexes, to view them as more similar than dissimilar. This is not to say that universities provide no health information that is specific to either men or women; it is rather to say that students, particularly women, are insufficiently informed about their own health when it comes to crucial issues such as sex, abortion, STDs, and fertility. Students get health education suitable for individuals, but not tailored to their distinct needs as women or as men.

Dr. Grossman’s interviews with patients indicate that men and women want to use their masculine and feminine gifts to unite themselves to another person or to bring about new life, but that these desires are ignored and men and women are implicitly told they should want to live for themselves. Grossman points out that counselors don’t talk about young women’s and men’s desires to be in committed relationships; rather, they tell students that they need to do what makes them personally comfortable and never to make another person uncomfortable. This leaves a great deal unsaid. Post-abortive suffering and the longing to have children are discussed only when patients themselves touch on these topics. Students are left to flounder between what they are told they should want, and what they find themselves actually wanting.

Freitas and Grossman reveal that on college and university campuses, there are at least two ways in which students learn about the value of sex and receive an education in the sexual difference: from their peers and from health educators. Both ways, they say, are currently insufficient: students are either fed unsophisticated stereotypes of men and women, or are given to believe that sex differences do not amount to much. Still, both Freitas’s and Grossman’s interviews with students offer hope that is not frequently seen elsewhere, because both reveal that students know better than to think that sex is meaningless. Grossman’s patients and Freitas’s students want the same thing: to make a gift of themselves to another person, however hard it has become to do just that.

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The Role of Gender in the Education of the Child

MOLLY POWER

Sax, Leonard, *Boys Adrift: The Five Factors Driving the Growing Epidemic of Unmotivated Boys and Underachieving Young Men* (Basic Books, 2009).

Sax, Leonard, *Girls on the Edge: The Four Factors Driving the New Crisis for Girls—Sexual Identity, the Cyberbubble, Obsessions, Environmental Toxins* (Basic Books, 2011).

Dr. Leonard Sax MD, PhD is striving to make sense out of the phenomenon he sees in his clinical practice and in schools: boys who have lost their passion and girls who cannot find their identity. In his books, *Boys Adrift* and *Girls on the Edge*, Sax offers several reasons for the difficulties that children face including teaching methods, technology and even environmental toxins. He believes we need to consider how a student's gender impacts his learning and gives a very detailed account of biological and psychological differences between the sexes that play a role in education but are often overlooked or neglected. Refreshingly, it seems at first that Sax affirms the reality of sexual difference and gender—indeed, given his medical/biological background, he cannot help but acknowledge the difference that is self-evident to us all. However, as Sax attempts to explain the origins of gender itself he removes it from its place in the body and ultimately weakens not only his acute observations but also the entire point of writing these books at all. Still, it is worth looking at the books not only to take his observations into consideration, but also to try and understand why and how his gender theory goes so wrong. Many of the gender differences he sees can be discussed in the context of three broader areas: curriculum, environment, and the teacher. Let us take a look at each in turn.

Curriculum

Early in *Boys Adrift* Sax provides an explanation of how the school curriculum has changed over the last 30 years. Specifically, he reflects on the kindergarten curriculum, which he demonstrates is not developmentally appropriate for boys: “Asking five-year-old boys to learn to read—when they'd rather be running around or playing games—may be the worst possible introduction to

school, at least for some boys” (18). This is not because boys have changed but rather because the curriculum now expects much more of a child who is, especially if a boy, developmentally unprepared for reading and writing. To demonstrate this point Sax cites studies of brain development that clearly distinguish between the genders. He explains, “It now appears that the language areas of the brain in many five-year-old boys look like the language areas of the brain of the average three-and-a-half-year-old girl” (18). The girls in the modern kindergarten classroom may be better suited to reading and writing but the boys may not be developmentally capable. He later describes how this often leads to teachers explaining to parents that their son is unable to sit still and focus on tasks and could have ADHD, but in reality the child is simply a normal boy (86).

Along with new benchmarks for learning, Sax also cites changes in the kind of learning that is expected of children. He explains the difference between knowing something experientially (*Kenntnis*) and book knowledge (*Wissenschaft*) and the way that these different types of learning have been valued throughout history and across cultures. He suggests that our lack of experiential learning in the curriculum is a reason why boys disengage from the classroom while girls are more likely to be successful with a curriculum that focuses more on *Wissenschaft* because they feel rewarded by pleasing the teacher (cf. 28–32). He relates:

If you ask a boy to read about the life cycle of a tadpole metamorphosing into a frog, but that boy has never touched a frog, never had the experience of jumping around in a stream in his bare feet chasing after a tadpole, he may not see the point. The shift in the curriculum away from *Kenntnis* toward *Wissenschaft* has had the unintended consequence of diminishing the motivation of boys to study what they’re asked to learn. (32)

He explains that boys are very interested in learning through (and about) movement and action while girls are more interested in understanding what something is and why something is (*Girls on the Edge*, 136–40). Sax falls a bit short here: a deeper explanation as to exactly how these different types of learning are rooted in the gender difference is missing. It may be that he truly does not know, though given his attentiveness to the body (and his medical background) it seems strange that he does not go a bit further, drawing out the fact that the male body relates to the world in a more outward way and the female body relates to the world in a more inward way, and that this relationship of the body to the world may also play a role in learning.

Environment

Sax very strongly advocates single-sex education. He cites numerous studies that show how single-sex education is beneficial to both boys and girls. One of the more interesting studies to which he appeals describes how a team atmosphere in the classroom or school could motivate boys to

learn—most boys thrive on competition where there are clear winners and losers and the results are uncertain (*Boys Adrift*, 45–47). In one example, Sax describes a class competition and a boy that may not care about the subject or his grade, “but he doesn’t want to let his teammates down. He doesn’t want to risk being the one who got the wrong answer, whose one wrong answer cost the whole team the prize” (47). Girls, on the other hand, “value friendship above team affiliation” and would have difficulty competing against a close friend (47). An all-boys’ school, in his view, allows for the possibility of the kind of competition that truly engages boys. Sax also explains that he has seen many cases of boys who were on medication for ADHD in a co-ed school, “who were able to stop those medications after switching to a boys school, and who blossomed into well-rounded students and athletes after making the transition” (96).

Girls, according to his research, focus more on *who* they are rather than how they *look* if they are enrolled in an all-girls’ school (*Girls on the Edge*, 142). To demonstrate this point Sax cites a study by Johns Hopkins sociologist James Coleman who “found that girls at co-ed schools were often more concerned with being pretty and wearing fashionable clothes, as well as having what he called ‘an enticing manner’” (141). The benefits of the school environment go beyond grades, but those are important too. Sax notes that girls perform better academically in an all-girls environment compared to that of a co-ed school (140). As with the interplay between gender and curriculum noted above, it would be most helpful to know more precisely why and how a child’s gender disposes him to interact with his environment. For example, what is it about being a girl in a co-ed school that makes her more focused on how she looks? What is it about being a boy in a co-ed school that makes him more likely to disengage from school? That is to say, why does the gender difference actually make a difference?

The Teacher, Coach or Mentor

According to Sax, boys and girls need slightly different things from their teachers. Boys need strong role models, whereas girls are interested in a teacher who cares about them as a person (*Girls on the Edge*, 154). He explains:

If the teacher cares about each girl as a person and truly wants to listen to what’s going on in each girl’s life, the girls will know it. Girls will work harder for such a teacher, even if they don’t much like algebra or geometry, because they don’t want to disappoint the teacher. If a boy finds a subject boring and doesn’t care about getting a good grade, then he’s not likely to worry much about disappointing the teacher, even if the teacher is kind and caring. But for a girl, knowing that a teacher really cares about her is a powerful motivator. (154)

The rewards of grades and adult approval motivate a girl to learn and do well (128). Girls are more

likely to follow rules and care about what grown-ups think, and they place a high value on self-esteem (*Boys Adrift*, 26, 50). To again push Sax further, what about her nature makes a girl care about her relationship to the teacher or performing well?

In both books Dr. Sax laments that our culture no longer provides adolescents with help in transitioning into adulthood, the kind of help that traditionally came from adults in the community. He notes:

We ignore the importance of these traditions at our peril. Manhood isn't something that simply happens to boys as they get older. It's an achievement—something a boy accomplishes, something that can easily go awry. If we ignore the importance of this transition, and fail in our duty as parents to guide boys through it, then we will learn the hard way why traditional cultures invest this transition with so much importance. (171)

He describes the need of young boys and girls to have models whom they can imitate and laments that as a culture, “[W]e no longer make any collective effort to provide such models” (167). The result, Sax laments, is that young people will construct their own models and that this contributes to social problems such as violence.

Sax does not believe that gender is a social or cultural construct and briefly discusses the idea that the understanding of masculinity and femininity is not universal. He says:

Each culture differs somewhat, then, in terms of what is considered masculine behavior. But these variations in cultural attitudes should not confuse us. There are certain constants. There is no enduring culture in which cowardly men are esteemed, or in which brave men are held in contempt. There is no enduring culture in which lazy men are celebrated while hardworking men are despised. (168)

He points out that cultures that have lasted for hundreds or thousands of years have one thing in common: they “pass this information one generation to the next in gender-separate communities. Women teach girls what is expected of adult women in their community. Men teach boys” (169). This leads us to the all-important question: if we are going to talk about how gender matters for education, we need to have a clear understanding of gender.

What is gender?

I have thus far pointed out only a couple of weaknesses I see in these generally helpful books by Sax, but even these few criticisms might seem unfair. One might ask, did he simply intend to provide observations rather than a theory of gender? But, in fact, Sax does provide a theory of

gender—one which undercuts almost all of his previous observations. Sax’s view of the gender difference is not ultimately deep enough to hold all of his examples and advice together: despite explaining many biological and psychological differences in detail, he loses his grounding in the last chapter of *Girls on the Edge*, entitled “Spirit,” when he explains his understanding of gender:

All of us, as human beings, have both feminine and masculine dimensions. Fifty years ago, the conventional wisdom was that masculine and feminine are opposites; and in popular culture, that notion is still prevalent. According to that notion, the more feminine you are, the less masculine you are. It’s a one-dimensional either or.

Today we have a more informed understanding of the importance of gender in the way we construct ourselves. For three decades now, scholars in the field of gender studies have recognized that masculine and feminine are two independent dimensions. Any individual may be very feminine; or very masculine; or both feminine and masculine, *androgynous*; or neither feminine or masculine, *undifferentiated*. It’s a two-dimensional both/and. Masculine and feminine are not exclusive. (185–86)

With the above definition of gender how does one determine his category of belonging? How does one discover his identity? Is gender based on actions? Is gender, then, simply a behavior? How could a person be neither gender?

Dr. Sax’s view of gender here excludes the body which was the very focus of much of his earlier research. He goes on to further divide gender from the body when he says:

...femininity and masculinity are independent of one another, and different from the biological female and male. A particular girl might be more masculine than she is feminine, while a particular boy might be more feminine than he is masculine. (186)

How can Sax account for so many differences biologically if gender is “different from the biological”? What is the body after all? Would it not be easier to account for these differences if masculine and feminine were two separate continuums, with their basis in the *body*, upon which there could be an infinite variation?

While Sax ultimately falls short in his definition of gender and therefore fails to see the body and its deepest meaning, his research and affirmation of the body go further than he does, as it were. His observations make clear that gender and sexual difference are indeed self-evident and for that reason it must be true that keeping gender in mind is important for educating the child.

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Calling for a Sex Ed U-Turn

VALERIE HUBER

Grossman, Miriam, *You're Teaching My Child What? A Physician Exposes the Lies of Sex Ed and How They Harm Your Child* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2009).

Although written more than five years ago, Dr. Miriam Grossman's *You're Teaching My Child What?* is as relevant today as it was on the day of its release. Chapter one of the book sends this ominous warning to parents: "Parents beware: the people teaching your child are activists, promoting radical agendas at odds with your values" (15). It was true in 2009; it is even more true in 2015. Case in point: a July 2015 CDC report informed America that more teens are waiting for sex. In fact, teen sex has decreased 14% for girls and 22% for boys over the past 25 years. Great news, particularly when one considers the increasingly sexualized culture in which they are growing up. One would expect a corporate affirmation for this good news! But such was not the case among the pro-teen-sex ideologues that Dr. Grossman so accurately describes in her book. Instead, the [principal research scientist at the Guttmacher Institute](#), a research arm for the pro-sex lobby said this in reaction to the news: "It's normal for teenagers by the time they enter young adulthood to be having sex, so I don't want to problematize that." Most teens are not having sex, yet this researcher is unable to choke out a "well done" to these young people. Instead, she insists that teen sex is not a problem. Out of touch with what most parents want for their children? Yes, indeed. A 2012 national survey reiterated that most parents want their children to wait until marriage before engaging in sex. And the percentages didn't waver much when broken down by political leaning, ethnicity or geographic locale. Parents want what is best for their children. But a host of ideologues disguising themselves as educators, reproductive researchers, and concerned activists have a different view. And they are the ones who are driving sex education policy in many communities.

Grossman accurately describes them in her book: "And they believe they know better than you do what's best for your kids, so you should trust them, the 'experts,' and ignore your gut feelings. Wake up, America: this is one giant hoax. I know these groups, their values and curricula. They are steeped in ideology, permeated with extremism. Non-judgmental? Sure, until they're challenged with scientific facts. Point to the science that discredits their beliefs, and well, you know the names

you'll be called" (11). But Grossman's purpose in writing the book is not to change the minds of these ideologues. That would be a hopeless task. Her goal is to warn and inform parents of the nefarious agenda for the hearts, minds, and health of their children—and to equip them to defend their children's futures in school board meetings and public gatherings across the country.

The book exposes and discredits the common set of closely held beliefs among the pro-teen-sex lobby. She devotes a chapter to each of the larger topics. Don't expect difficult-to-read academic prose in this book, however. Dr. Grossman summarizes research in an easy-to-read format that is effortlessly consumed and easily repeated. And there are pages and pages of citations for the reader who wants the academic research details of each study. This book is an essential resource for parents who are concerned about the sex education being thrust upon their children, but it is also important for parents who don't currently have such concerns.

Grossman unpacks some of the topics presently being debated on the front pages of newspapers across the country. She often draws upon personal experiences she has had with students at the university level to contextualize research on a given topic. Her pithy retorts and reasoned responses add tremendously to our understanding and ability to communicate with confidence on often-difficult themes. She doesn't shy away from controversy and admonishes parents to follow suit. When groups like SIECUS or Advocates for Youth spout head-scratching "facts" about teens and sexuality, she validates parents' reluctance to take the extremist bait. She debunks these mainstays of the pro-teen-sex lobby:

- Male and female differences are artificial constructs of a repressive society.
- Healthy teens should explore and experiment with their sexuality as a matter of course in their adolescent development.
- Sex is disconnected from the holistic nature of a person and casual sex can be enjoyed without strings, attachment, or negative consequences.
- Gender identity, transgenderism and gender questioning are required components of school sex education curricula.

Dr. Grossman concludes the book with practical tips for parents in communicating the beauty of sex to their children while also emphasizing the healthiest context for sex. But she also equips parents to become activists for their children and issues a call to arms in the concluding chapter: "Don't allow [these harmful philosophies] to go unchallenged, permitting the sex crusaders to commandeer your authority...Grab the wheel, Mom and Dad. It's time for a U-turn" (183). This book helps parents take that wheel so they can steer their children and our society to safer and healthier roads ahead.

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What Your Students Need to Know

CHRIS WILSON

Sri, Edward, *Men, Women and the Mystery of Love: Practical Insights from John Paul II's Love and Responsibility* (St. Anthony Messenger Press, Servant Books, 2011).

In various ways John Paul II has challenged us in a beautiful fashion to realize that love is a task to be lived up to. Unpacking for young adults the meaning behind our late pope's ground-breaking teachings on marriage and family is also a challenging task which only few have taken up—and Edward Sri, in his book *Men, Women, and the Mystery of Love: Practical Insights from John Paul II's Love and Responsibility*, offers us an example of what it looks like to successfully take up the challenge. His book should prove especially useful to anyone leading discussions with young adults related to either *Love and Responsibility* or *Theology of the Body*. Let us explore three reasons why Sri's book succeeds at unpacking the pope's complex teachings. First he clearly explains his practical insights from *Love and Responsibility* by using examples that young adults readily understand. Secondly, he does not reduce John Paul's teachings on love to a "chastity talk." And finally, the testimony of numerous teens spontaneously offering their appreciation of his book is a clear indication of the superior quality of Sri's work.

Asking older teens who have been skillfully taught the art of reading and thinking from an early age to read *Love and Responsibility* might not be unreasonable. The question most teachers of this text face however is how to make the pope's teachings accessible to students who have never been taught the art of fishing for truth. As indicated by the subtitle, Sri's book offers students practical insights from *Love and Responsibility*. These practical insights are illuminated through clear examples that provide rich opportunities for teachers and students alike to ponder and dialogue about the pope's challenging vision of the nature of love between a man and a woman.

Quite helpfully, Sri provides a chart outlining the differences between mature and immature love based on descriptions found in *Love and Responsibility*. In this chart Sri highlights for the students what it means to say that mature love has the nature of being a gift. Just for students to hear that the experience of mature love must include total self-giving and mutual responsibility for the good

of your beloved exposes them to a vision of love and life that goes well beyond the immature portrayal of love that they have likely grown accustomed to. Self-giving love is not usually difficult for students to imagine, but they do have difficulty in understanding that receiving love involves more than just being passive. However, earlier in this same chapter Sri illustrates what is meant by receptivity by breaking open what John Paul II meant by the word “responsibility.” Here he quotes what he calls one of the pope’s most countercultural insights: “The greater the feeling of responsibility for the person the more true love there is” (70). Love is so wondrously complex that totally giving oneself to one’s beloved is not the fullest expression of love: rather, the truest measure of love lies in totally receiving him or her and taking responsibility for their good. Sri leads the students well beyond the shallow belief that love only includes what is experienced by me physically and emotionally.

As society unravels due to the absence of mothers and fathers who are able to inculcate the ability to love in the souls of their children, books like *Men, Women, and the Mystery of Love* serve as a beacon for young people for what they long for. Another way in which Sri’s book succeeds is that he does not reduce the complex nature of what it takes to be in a loving relationship to one simple solution, namely, being chaste. All too often the Pope’s teachings are transformed into a morality tale about how to overcome lust. It has always to be remembered that chastity is for the sake of love: therefore the greatest emphasis has to be placed on the question of what it means to love. As Sri himself acknowledges, John Paul II taught that chastity is resented more than any of the other virtues, meaning that the majority of young people refuse to allow this virtue into their soul, will, and heart. Sri faithfully follows John Paul II’s prescription for overcoming this resentment by striving to elevate young people’s view of love.

Love has to be woven into the soul in a way that corresponds to all of the complexities of the interior life. A great strength of *Men, Women, and the Mystery of Love* is that Sri follows the same logical progression that John Paul II uses in *Love and Responsibility*. The first question addressed in both texts is what is meant by the value of the person. Knowing who the person is enables one to have an adequate understanding of how the person ought to be treated. That one’s beloved ought to be treated with tenderness is an example of a new practical insight for most young people. Notably, Sri’s chapter on tenderness should be considered one of the most important chapters in the book. The danger in emphasizing the value of chastity whilst neglecting a value such as tenderness is that students fail to perceive that to live according to one value, they must also strive for the other value. People are often frustrated when they are shown an ideal but are not given all the tools necessary to better achieve this ideal.

Some teachers have wisely pointed out that the best way to kill a student’s interest in a book is to

make it required reading for class. This is perhaps why I was so surprised when student after student commented on how much they were getting out of reading and discussing *Men, Women, and the Mystery of Love*. Students from various backgrounds even offered anecdotes for how the book was having a positive influence on the relationships they were in with members of the opposite sex. No greater evidence than this could be offered for why this book should be used by anyone engaged in teaching young people about their call to love.

The reader of this essay may be wondering whether there are important ideas from *Love and Responsibility* that Sri does not discuss. The answer is yes, of course, but as Sri states in the introduction, his goal was not to offer an academic analysis or comprehensive treatment of the text. What a teacher using *Men, Women, and the Mystery of Love* has to consider is which of the most essential teachings on the mystery of love offered by the pope is not developed by Sri. Then it needs to be decided whether or not these should be included in the learning experience of one's students. If a teacher decides to offer his or her own practical insights from *Love and Responsibility* then he or she should follow Dr. Sri's example by offering clear examples that young adults can easily understand. In my opinion, teachers should provide students with a deeper analysis of the receptive nature of love as a gift. Sri focuses much more attention on the giving aspect of love as a gift than on the receiving aspect. John Paul II taught that the quality of one's love must be based on affirming the person's value. To affirm the person's value, one must receive this value into the depths of one's soul. What example can be provided to elucidate students' understanding of the receptive nature of love? It is here that the teacher would be better served not to point to the philosophy found in the pope's book but rather the witness found in his life through his deep devotion to Mary. Mary is the perfect embodiment of the receptive nature of love which she expresses in her response: "Let it be done unto me according to thy word."

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Edith Stein on the Vocation of Women

PAIGE S. SANCHEZ

Stein, Edith, *Essays on Woman, Second Edition* (Trans. by Freda Mary Oben [Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1996]).

Our world is going through a crisis of dehumanization, breakup of family life, a general loss of moral values. Needed as healing is the spiritual formation of the person stressed by Edith Stein. Her educational insights are more important now than ever. There is no better coverage than hers available concerning human sexuality, personal formation, and the relationship between persons and that of persons to God (vii).

So begins the translator's preface of this selection of papers given by Edith Stein on the theme of woman that makes up the fifth volume in the authorized edition of *The Works of Edith Stein*. For Stein, the question of the genuine nature of the feminine is a deep and abiding concern that is always related to the question of education. There are three areas of concern which come into relief in the *Essays*: the nature and vocation of woman, education of women and the educator as witness.

Nature & Vocation of Woman

“Woman's nature is determined by her original vocation of spouse and mother. One depends on the other” (132). This corresponds to the deepest longing of a woman's heart which “is to give herself lovingly, to belong to another, and to possess this other completely. This longing is revealed in her outlook, personal and all-embracing, which appears to us as specifically feminine” (53). The archetype of woman is of course found in the Virgin Mary says Stein: “every woman who wants to fulfill her destiny must look to Mary as ideal” (119). Any defect in a woman's nature is rooted in a perverted relationship to God. This is why over and over again, Stein emphasizes the importance of a true anthropology rooted in a woman's capacity for God because “this need is based on woman's nature itself” (16).

To understand nature, Stein offers an analysis of the accounts of creation in Genesis, noting that there the difference between male and female is immediately proclaimed; and therefore, the

nature of man and woman is manifested through their differences. While Stein strongly believes that man and woman have different natures, they are both mutually given a threefold vocation: to be the image of God, to be fruitful and multiply, and to be masters of the earth. It is the vocation of every Christian to belong to God in love and service of Him. Christ embodies human perfection: in Him all are one. Despite the distinction between the natures of women and men, the more Christ-like a person becomes, the more “we see in holy men a womanly tenderness and a truly maternal solicitude for the souls entrusted to them”. Whilst “in holy women there is manly boldness, proficiency, and determination” (84). For both women and men, humble submission to the God-given order through imitation of Christ is the surest path to the development of the original human vocation. The distinction of the sexes is what makes the grace of unity possible, a grace expressed in the transcendence over natural limitations.

Education of Women

As a result, Stein understands education to include at its core the development of the human being as a woman or a man, and this in view of the total humanity of Christ and Mary. It follows then that “the dissimilarity of the sexes must be emphasized in order that the feminine nature be freely developed and properly formed”(166-167). Whilst men and women share some universally human characteristics, they have separate and distinct natures. Stein says this in full view of the tendency, already at work in her time, to think in terms of a “struggle between sexes, one pitted against the other, as they fight for their rights . . . [where they] no longer appear to hear the voices of nature and of God” (76).

Earnestly aware that this struggle is the direct fruit of original sin, Stein proposes as the antidote to this reduced understanding of human sexuality the person of Mary. She it is who educates women, not through moralism, but through “her battle against the serpent . . . fulfilled by the victory over evil won for all humanity” (78). It is this victory which recovers an adequate anthropology for us. Education develops the humanity of a man or a woman: it calls us to the total humanity of Christ and Mary. Human sexuality is the sign by which men and women participate in the *imago Dei* through the ongoing exchange of gift that expresses their nature, rooted in the distinct vocations of woman and man.

Reading Edith Stein’s emphatic call for women to find their own femininity in the likeness of Mary, I personally feel myself to be no more than a pale shadow in comparison with the Immaculata—and frankly, more dominated by my inheritance from Eve. Yet Stein indicates to women like myself a sure path to the discipleship of Christ through His Mother: “The life of an authentic Catholic woman is also a liturgical life”. It is through the liturgical life that God transforms his people, enabling them to participate in divine life (57). A Eucharistic life reminds woman that “her

being and becoming and acting in time is ordered from eternity, has a meaning for eternity, and only becomes clear” when looked at in this light (88). Through the witness of Mary, woman realizes that she is not doomed to the inheritance of Eve, but to that of Mary’s Son. Stein confirms that in the very contours of her nature, which is turned toward God, woman’s being is already from, and is always destined for, the Eternal.

The most delightful pages of this collection of essays must surely be the treatment of the soul of woman (89-94). “Since it is through poetry that the soul is most adequately described,” Stein analyzes types of women taken from literary works. She draws on the women of Sigrid Undset’s *Olaf Audenssohn*, Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, and Goethe’s *Iphigenie*. All these female characters “share one common characteristic: a longing to give love and to receive love, and in this respect a yearning to be raised above a narrow, day-to-day existence into the realm of a higher being” (93). Stein is unambiguous that a woman’s life beyond the apparent banality of family life, where it also includes a professional life, does not violate the order of nature and grace: for a woman does not receive her identity from what she does but from something prior to this. The order of nature and grace is her inheritance, and is therefore ever present, informing a woman’s being. The totality of a woman’s life thus has the possibility to serve that “redeeming love which is her true destiny” (94).

Thus for Stein, going beyond the sphere of the family does not violate the order of nature and grace in a woman’s life. “A common creativity in all areas was assigned in the original order . . . and wherever the circle of domestic duties is too narrow for the wife to attain the full formation of her powers, both nature and reason concur that she reach out beyond this circle” (79-80). For both man and woman, the relationship between professional and family life should respond to and reflect the divine order. Both the husband and the wife should take care that professional life does not cut them off from the life of their family and home. However, according to Stein, women have a keener sense of the proper order of professional and domestic obligations because for woman, “the soul’s union with the body is naturally more intimately linked” (95):

Woman’s soul is present and lives more intensely in all parts of the body, and it is inwardly affected by that which happens to the body; whereas in men, the body has more pronouncedly the character of an instrument which serves them in their work and which is accompanied by a certain detachment (95).

Motherhood expresses this unity of body and soul, of family life and the order of nature and grace, most aptly because in woman a new creature can be formed, taking life within her very body. This “represents such an intimate unity of the physical and spiritual that one is well able to understand that this unity imposes itself on the entire nature of woman” (95). Woman can therefore never not

be a woman, given all that her nature and vocation implies.

The Educator as Witness

For Stein, the educator “must never forget that, above all, the primary and most essential Educator is not the human being but God Himself (107). As a result, given the educator’s witness of life lived in relationship with Christ, “children in school . . . do not need merely what we have but rather what we are” (6). The method of a true education depends on this witness: “The most effective educational method is not the word of instruction but the living example without which all words remain useless” (6). Only a witness has the capacity to break through the encrustation of the human heart. Life lived according to one’s nature in the embrace of the Church is more fulfilling than any human reductiveness or doubt about the greatness of God’s call to existence. A life lived according to this nature and vocation incarnates the Truth that has loved man and woman into existence in the first place.

Finally, Stein notes that “for women to be shaped in accordance with their authentic nature and destiny, they must be educated by authentic women” (107). As spouse and mother, women are called to live an awareness that others have been entrusted to them as gifts, towards whom they have a holy duty to give witness to the beauty of the feminine nature. This precious resource is reborn in every generation, something for which all women, in concert with Edith Stein, can utter a heartfelt Magnificat.

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The Art of Remembrance

MATTHEW AND MICHELLE KUHNER

Budziszewski, J., *On the Meaning of Sex* (Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 2014).

In his book, *On the Meaning of Sex*, J. Budziszewski offers an adept philosophical portrait of human sexuality that will prove worthwhile for a wide range of readers, from teenagers to seasoned professors. Written with a style and wit reminiscent of the defenses of Christianity authored by C. S. Lewis and G. K. Chesterton, Budziszewski's defense of sexuality's inherent intelligibility is both timely and profound. The text might be fittingly approached as a germane (albeit less epochal) accompaniment to St. John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*: while the TOB is a commentary on the theological anthropology of *Humanae Vitae*, *On the Meaning of Sex* is a commentary on its philosophical anthropology. The former approaches the encyclical from the perspective of revelation, the latter from the perspective of philosophy. The theses of the two texts converge, of course, both because John Paul's theological anthropology draws amply upon philosophy, and because Budziszewski's philosophy is practiced in the light of divine revelation. The differences of approach are nevertheless helpful, and each profitably illuminates the other.

Budziszewski's philosophical assessment is firmly rooted in the natural law tradition. The main stream of this tradition seeks to discover the law inscribed in man's heart from the moment of Creation (see Romans 2:15), by which he can understand what must be done and what must be avoided (see *Veritatis Splendor*, §12). Happily, the author's application of this tradition's principles bears noticeable similarities with the benchmark teachings of *Veritatis Splendor* on natural law. On the one hand, Budziszewski sidesteps the reduction of natural law to merely biological norms (21). On the other, he offers a ringing defense of the correspondence of freedom and nature (8) and the non-opposition of person and nature: "natural function and personal meaning are not alien to each other" (22). Furthermore, the very structure of the book manifests the intrinsic reference of natural law beyond itself to its source, thereby reflecting the encyclical's teaching that natural law is the rational creature's participation in the eternal law (see VS, §§43-44). It should be noted nevertheless that while Budziszewski's text does contain arguments about natural law, the reader who wishes to grapple with rigorous assessments and explanations of the classical positions of natural law on sexuality would do better looking to more scholarly texts. Budziszewski's work often presupposes or omits such assessments.

On the Meaning of Sex attempts to stir up a kind of ‘anamnesis,’ or remembering, of the law written upon the human heart with regard to the most important and most controversial aspects of human sexuality. Budziszewski’s various excursions into the matter are spent seeking the form of the nature of human sexuality, in the hope of reawakening or uncovering the oft-veiled knowledge that each of us has always possessed. It is the conviction of the author that only this balm of understanding will heal the hearts of those wounded by our forlorn culture. In order to accomplish this, Budziszewski climbs a “ladder of misunderstandings” (136) throughout his seven chapters, taking the reader on a pursuit of the true meaning and beauty of sexuality. While the first and last chapters provide a kind of introduction and conclusion respectively, the five chapters in between concern the meaning of the sexual powers, sexual differences, sexual love, sexual beauty, and sexual purity. The author’s particular rationale for the selection of these obviously important topics is that, amongst the misunderstandings of our age regarding sex, these topics contain “the biggest of those topsy-turvy things” that presently obstruct the understanding of sexuality. The recovery of the true meaning of these topics is the goal of each chapter. The arrival point of the study is marked by the concluding chapter, in which Budziszewski makes clear at last that “the supernatural purpose of mortal love...is to awaken in us the longing for that greater love which alone can give us all that we long for” (142).

A brief overview of the book’s chapters will provide a concrete sense of how Budziszewski attempts to recover the philosophy of the body and thereby awaken the reader to the true knowledge of human sexuality. From the very outset of the first chapter, he cuts to the heart of the matter by calling into question the prevailing cultural conviction that sex does not necessarily have meaning in itself, aside from the investment of meaning provided by the person. For the author, it seems that this conviction – as often presupposed as it is left unexpressed – is the root of our misunderstandings, and perhaps the origin of several others addressed later in the text. Budziszewski wishes to argue that sex does have inherent meaning, and that the discovery of this meaning is the beginning of human freedom and flourishing. Chapter Two begins to address the content of sex’s inherent meaning when it argues – in lockstep with *Humanae Vitae* – that “the natural meanings and purposes of the sexual powers” are procreation and union (24). For Budziszewski these meanings are not arbitrarily joined; rather, “union...characterizes the distinctly human mode of procreation” (25), and “the procreative and unitive meanings of sexuality...cannot be severed without distorting or diminishing them both” (33).

Attempting to recover the meaning of sexual differences, Chapter Three mounts a compelling argument for locating the fundamental difference between men and women in their potentialities for fatherhood and motherhood respectively (54-60). On Budziszewski’s reading, it is this specific difference that makes sense out of all the other differing characteristics of men and women.

Chapter Four, on the meaning of sexual love, asserts that marriage is the most nourishing climate for love – especially romantic, sexual love – and that “vows are love’s native language” (68). The author proceeds to offer a helpful ‘map’ of love’s aspects, which plots out an account of the appropriate roles played by the emotions, on the one hand, and the will, on the other, within the love between a man and a woman. Considering the meaning of sexual beauty, Chapter Five attempts to recover a rich sense of physical, sexual beauty by way of redeeming the term ‘sexiness’ and purging it of its “dehumanizing” intonations. Budziszewski argues that true, “humanized sexiness” is “an outward sign of the inward reality of the beauty of womanliness itself.... [T]he qualities that make her sexually beautiful simply are those that make her a nice person to marry, make love, and have children with” (101, 102).

Striving to steer the reader away from a wholly negative conception of purity – i.e., simply not engaging in sexual acts – he suggests in Chapter Six that purity is the positive precondition to “the goods of beauty and integrity that impurity undermines and sullies” (111). Accordingly, purity is “a complex virtue” with inherent “component virtues” (119), three of which the author highlights: decorum, modesty, and temperance. The closing chapter on ‘transcendence’ gathers up the many prior allusions to the transcendent throughout the text, and does a fine job articulating the non-competitive relationship between divine and human love: “human love means so much, because divine love means still more” (139). Importantly, Budziszewski argues that divine love is so important not simply because human love is imperfect, but also because – even in its success – it remains insufficient. He writes, “as candle lights candle, [the lovers’] desire for each other kindles a desire for the Love of which their love is but a reflection. For [this] second part of their double-longing, the fulfillment is neither in each other nor in any created thing” (144).

While Budziszewski’s book is very successful in guiding the reader through these weighty topics, one criticism of the author’s approach may nevertheless be worth mentioning. In the first chapter, the author states quite perspicaciously that the ‘inescapable relevancy’ of divine grace will necessitate that allusions to God will accompany his writing, even though his overall argument “will sustain itself in reference to human realities that anyone might be able to know” (11). At certain points in the text, however, the author seemed almost apologetic for the presence of these allusions. The criticism, then, is simply that the author does not follow his original intuition more consistently, as the uncertain treatment of such allusions seemed to draw more attention to them than necessary; such attention may result in the distraction of the reader from the otherwise fine content of the argument at hand.

On the Meaning of Sex is an exercise in the art of anamnesis, and a depiction of the Creator’s beautiful plan for human sexuality. Budziszewski’s search for the truth of sexuality flusters the

most commonplace of our culture's dubious convictions, calling us once again to recognize "the imprint on us of divine light" (VS §42, quoting St. Thomas Aquinas). In its attempt to set aright 'the topsy-turvy things,' this work helps us to remember something that we have never fully forgotten – a truth engraved more deeply upon our hearts than the pain and sadness etched by the errors so common in our age.

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