



# Humanum

ISSUES IN FAMILY, CULTURE & SCIENCE

2016 - ISSUE FOUR

## Human Ecology: Body and Home





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# Human Ecology: Body and Home

MARGARET HARPER MCCARTHY

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It was Pope Benedict XVI who, in *Caritas in veritate* (2009) turned our attention to “human ecology” when he said: “The book of nature is one and indivisible: it takes in not only the environment but also life, sexuality, marriage, the family, social relations: in a word, integral human development” (51).

In its first three issues on ecology, *Humanum* has probed the question of man’s relation to the natural environment. It did this with an eye to what Pope Francis called the “dominant technocratic paradigm” (*Laudato Si’*, 101) where it is as if “the subject were to find itself in the presence of something formless, completely open to manipulation” (106). (There is also the “biocentric” reaction to this “anthropocentrism,” which puts into question the unique role that man plays as a steward of the natural world.)

Now we turn to the environment that man is and the one in which he dwells—the body and the home—the environments in which he was first welcomed and into which he, in turn, will welcome others. We do this with a certain urgency, because, as is plain for all to see, the dominant paradigm has been turned on the very subject using it. It is as if the new image of action, material and product had redounded back on the actor, in keeping with the Scholastic axiom (if not the Scholastic conception): *omne agens agit sibi simile* (every agent causes something similar to itself). We have heard the warnings, most memorably, from C.S. Lewis:

The final stage is come when Man by eugenics, by pre-natal conditioning, and by an education and propaganda based on a perfect applied psychology, has obtained full control over himself. Human nature will be the last part of Nature to surrender to Man. The battle will then be won. We shall have “taken the thread of life out of the hand of Clotho” and be henceforth free to make our species whatever we wish it to be. The battle will indeed be won. But who, precisely, will have won it? (*Abolition of Man*, 72)

And there is no lack of similar concern for the mechanization of the human being

today. Take for example the book (and more recent film) *The Giver*, reviewed [here](#). The idea of a human world deprived of memory and emotion, of children conceived, selected, distributed, and disposed of in sterile white laboratories—“rationally”—horrifies us.

And yet, we hurtle on as we march for “reproductive rights,” the euphemism for that same “rational” conception, selection, distribution and disposal of children in those same sterile white laboratories—not to mention the arresting of female health itself. And while we are at it . . . the health of children whose perfectly healthy bodies are being subjected to puberty blockers, surgical castration and other such subtractions, additions and re-arrangements. In short, talk about the respect of the environment “inside us” has not only not caught up with all the talk of respect for the natural environment “outside us”; it is very quickly losing ground.

What we are witnessing, and complicit in, then, is a sort of environmental inconsistency. As Pope Benedict XVI put it: “[the manipulation of nature, which we deplore today where our environment is concerned, now becomes man’s fundamental choice where he himself is concerned.](#)”

Perhaps, though, this environmental inconsistency with respect to ourselves is no mere oversight. As Pope Francis has suggested, it may come down to the fact that we “no longer know how to confront [sexual difference].”<sup>[1]</sup> Putting it more bluntly, we don’t want to confront it. It is one thing to confront a tree; it is quite another to confront all the relations your body puts you in!

The environmental “inconsistency” is one of our central concerns in this issue. To help us to understand it we have invited a professional environmentalist to take up the issue of population control (contraception and abortion), especially insofar as the case made for it is ecological in nature (the reason for which many would-be ecologically minded people simply aren’t). Then too we have invited the Irish author, one-time rock 'n' roll writer, and former newspaper columnist to make the case he made in Ireland two years ago, and for which he paid a hefty professional price. It is that many of the ecologically-minded aren’t ecological enough, turning a blind eye as they do to the real toxic spill that has occurred—inevitably—in the wake of changes in marriage laws: the redefinition of the parent-child relationship in terms of “guardianship” contractually dispensed (and withheld) by the State, while turning the natural bond between mothers, fathers and their children into a legal non-entity. Discussing the place of sexual difference in evolutionary theory, and in evolution itself, our featured “theo-biologist,” confirms how much the latest attempt to override sexual difference is

indeed an ecological disaster of the first order.

Naturally, facing the “inconsistency” requires us (always) to ask the “what is question” about the human being, especially as concerns the unity of body and soul. That unity was, of course, re-thought in modernity when it re-described the body, and its worldly “image,” as formless, and the soul as immaterial and un-animal, making the former available for the latter’s new “paradigm.” In view of this, then, we re-propose two modern classics: Leon Kass’ *The Hungry Soul* and MacIntyre’s *Dependent Rational Animals*. Each of these attempt to recover the lost unity. One shows how such a lowly thing as ordinary human hunger is “an open window to the contemplation of a world of form, civilization, and humanity inscribed into our very animal nature and which stretches, through its ordered longing, toward union with God” (as the reviewer, Michael Hanby writes). The other shows how that same lowly animal nature is found in the uppermost regions of human reason: in the form of “virtues of dependence” involving of reception, gratitude, and vulnerability.

Finally, in an attempt to resolve the contraction, *Humanum* enters into the specifics of what it means to confront our own ecology, especially insofar as it is an “environment” for others. We are therefore featuring a new program to promote women’s health based on fertility awareness (overturning the current contraceptive cure-all approach) written by the founder of World Youth Alliance (an NGO present at the U.N., the European Union and the Organization of American States). There is also a review of books on breastfeeding presenting the recent conversion to breast milk, and all the expected (feminist) reservations about actual breastfeeding.

And, since the home where we live is an extension of the home that we are—especially for the woman—there is a beautiful piece on the lost art of homemaking. You will also enjoy reviews of two books on one of the privileged activities that take place in the home: eating and drinking and feasting with guests: the new “cocktail-manual,” *Drinking with the Saints*, and an older classic by Josef Pieper on festivity, *In Tune with the World*. Finally, looking at another essential activity in the home—the education of children—the review of Rachel Carson’s eco-classic *The Sense of Wonder* returns us, through the eyes of the child, to the vision that animates our entire ecology year: keeping our sense of wonder alive in the face of the great community of beings to which we belong.

Buon appetito!

[1] [General Audience](#) from April 15, 2015 (later cited in *Laudato Si'*, 155 and *Amoris*

Laetitia, 285).

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# The Book of Nature: One and Indivisible

POPE BENEDICT XVI

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This is an excerpt (par. 51) of His Holiness Benedict XVI's third and final encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, promulgated on June 29, 2009. The emphases are all found in the original.

The way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself, and vice versa. This invites contemporary society to a serious review of its life-style, which, in many parts of the world, is prone to hedonism and consumerism, regardless of their harmful consequences.<sup>[1]</sup> What is needed is an effective shift in mentality which can lead to the adoption of new life-styles “in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of common growth are the factors which determine consumer choices, savings and investments.”<sup>[2]</sup> Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment, just as environmental deterioration in turn upsets relations in society. Nature, especially in our time, is so integrated into the dynamics of society and culture that by now it hardly constitutes an independent variable. Desertification and the decline in productivity in some agricultural areas are also the result of impoverishment and underdevelopment among their inhabitants. When incentives are offered for their economic and cultural development, nature itself is protected. Moreover, how many natural resources are squandered by wars! Peace in and among peoples would also provide greater protection for nature. The hoarding of resources, especially water, can generate serious conflicts among the peoples involved. Peaceful agreement about the use of resources can protect nature and, at the same time, the well-being of the societies concerned.

The Church has a responsibility towards creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere. In so doing, she must defend not only earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone. She must above all protect mankind from self-destruction. There is need for what might be called a human

ecology, correctly understood. The deterioration of nature is in fact closely connected to the culture that shapes human coexistence: when “human ecology” [3] is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits. Just as human virtues are interrelated, such that the weakening of one places others at risk, so the ecological system is based on respect for a plan that affects both the health of society and its good relationship with nature.

In order to protect nature, it is not enough to intervene with economic incentives or deterrents; not even an apposite education is sufficient. These are important steps, but the decisive issue is the overall moral tenor of society. If there is a lack of respect for the right to life and to a natural death, if human conception, gestation and birth are made artificial, if human embryos are sacrificed to research, the conscience of society ends up losing the concept of human ecology and, along with it, that of environmental ecology. It is contradictory to insist that future generations respect the natural environment when our educational systems and laws do not help them to respect themselves. The book of nature is one and indivisible: it takes in not only the environment but also life, sexuality, marriage, the family, social relations: in a word, integral human development. Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other. Herein lies a grave contradiction in our mentality and practice today: one which demeans the person, disrupts the environment and damages society.

[1] Cf. John Paul II, *Message for the 1990 World Day of Peace*, 13: loc. cit., 154-155.

[2] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus Annus*, 36: loc. cit., 838-840.

[3] *Ibid.*, 38: loc. cit., 840-841; Benedict XVI, *Message for the 2007 World Day of Peace*, 8: loc. cit., 779.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI served as pope from 2005 to 2013.



# The Ecological Disaster of Same-Sex Parenting

JOHN WATERS

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Speaking in September 2011, in the Bundestag in Berlin, Pope Benedict XVI summoned up the concept of “the ecology of man” as a counterpoint to the more familiar concept of ecology of the natural world. The two elements must go together, he declared, if human freedom is fully to be realized: “Man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will”, the Pope elaborated. “Man is not merely self-creating freedom. Man does not create himself. He is intellect and will, but he is also nature, and his will is rightly ordered if he listens to his nature, respects it and accepts himself for who he is, as one who did not create himself. In this way, and in no other, is true human freedom fulfilled.”

The ecology of the human is defined by limits and consequences which become the blue lines in the notebook of existence—unerring and constant laws in which the human is defined against reality. In the modern world, we try to forget this, to imagine that limits are placed arbitrarily by tradition or tyranny, in which consequences can be pathologized or reattributed and new vistas carved out as though the “dead” God had overlooked them.

I have noticed a remarkable consistency in the patterns of concern expressed by human beings in regard to the two ecological categories. Rather than a harmony, we tend to see a divergence: those who express concern for the ecology of the natural world tend to be the same people who are least exercised by threats to the ecology of the human, or even to recognize this as a real phenomenon. It is not quite accurate to say that the obverse is also true, but there is somewhere a truth about it: those who concern themselves with the condition of humanity tend to place the natural environment somewhat down their scale of priorities, Pope Benedict being an interesting but rare exception.

In recent times, the most ominous threats to the ecology of the human have come from movements to promote abortion, gender theory, and initiatives to redefine marriage in the interest of so-called “marriage equality.” In these phenomena we can observe a globalized, determined attempt to defy the limits which define the human,

and deny that consequences will follow from man arrogating to himself the redefinition and remaking of his own nature. It is to insinuate a new metaphysics in which man becomes not merely his own master but, in effect, his own creator. In denying the sanctity of every human life from conception to death, or the difference and complementarity between men and women, man turns upon himself, attacking both his own humanity and the very basis of human organization.

Two years ago, in my country, Ireland, we introduced into our Constitution by way of referendum a provision which not merely provides for gay people to marry, but actually implicitly asserts that there is no legal or constitutional difference between a couple comprising two men or two women and a couple comprising one man and one woman.

On the face of it, the wording of the amendment appeared relatively innocuous. It read: “Marriage may be contracted in accordance with law by two persons without distinction as to their sex.” This low-key formulation was in harmony with the tactic of the gay lobby to present the matter as a simple “human rights” issue—identical, it was claimed, to the historical campaign for equal citizenship of black and colored people in the United States. It is perhaps unnecessary to state that this comparison is completely bogus. The extension of full citizenship to the black population of the United States was a matter of genuine “equality”, because it could be effected without any diminution of the rights of other people, not to mention the even more basic fact that it reflected the truth regarding the universality of human dignity that American positive law had violated. There was therefore no good or just reason why equality here should not be so defined and extended, and this, in turn, confirmed that there had indeed been a gratuitous and egregious denial of human rights.

The same circumstances did not obtain in respect of the LGBT demand for gay marriage, which really amounted to a sleight-of-hand—the usurpation of an institution which had belonged exclusively to couples who, in principle could procreate. Moreover, it was not the case that gay marriage, when accompanied by adoption rights and the authentication of potential claims over other people’s children, could be regarded as having no consequences for other categories of citizen. By extending full constitutional parenting rights to gay couples, Irish society would be acquiescing in a radical dilution of the parenting rights available to normative couples. This became inevitable because the amendment was placed in the article of our Constitution which provides not merely for marriage but for family and parenting rights. The net outcome—a constitutional time-bomb waiting to go off at some future point—was that there could no longer be any constitutional protection for the

complementary procreative functions of men and women, or any special regard for their biological connections with their own children.

This radical reformulation of marriage was not the effect of a spontaneous eruption of interest in an overlooked “human right” or “civil right.” If it were either of these, one could expect to find a long history of campaigning, reasoned argument going back several decades as those in favour of the proposition sought to make their case. If you take the time to go through the archives of any of the “progressive” newspapers, which in recent times have been most vociferous in favour of this “right” (and equally so in condemnation of those who do not concur), you will find hardly any articles on the subject up until about five years ago. You will find a similar pattern in the speeches of politicians who have only recently been vocal on the topic and likewise condemnatory of anyone who does not agree with their new-found “enlightenment.”

This pattern provides a clue to the true nature of what has been happening. The push for gay marriage is part of an entirely new phenomenon: a remorseless ideological onslaught on public values and norms, which brooks no dissent or even meaningful conversation concerning what is demanded. And what is under attack is the very essence of human reality, which is being attacked at the very unit of its molecular structure, the normative human family.

Throughout the campaign, the government claimed that the amendment was simply an add-on to the existing form of marriage, and that it had no ramifications for children or the constitutional definition of Family. This was dishonest nonsense. The inclusion of the wording into Article 41 of the Constitution, headed “The Family”, was bound to impact the meanings of other clauses within that section, so that the potential impact on both explicit and un-enumerated rights was likely to be unpredictable even for experienced lawyers, since any individual change in the constitutional treatment of marriage and family was likely to have profound implications for the future interpretation of all related provisions. The word “rights” implies something fundamental, irreducible, inalienable, but these “rights” were not in fact derived from any natural basis, but amounted instead to the carving up of the natural, pre-existing and fundamental rights of others.

Article 41, headed “The Family”, begins: “The State recognizes the Family as the primary natural and fundamental unit group of society and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law.” Did anyone seriously imagine that a Yes vote would not change the constitutional meanings of the words “natural”, “primary”, “fundamental”, “moral”,

“antecedent” and “superior”? The Yes lobby and the government dismissed such claims out of hand, and yet refused to answer any specific question raised concerning this obvious danger.

The word “natural” in that context obviously referred to the fact that a family up to that point had in the main been defined as a mother, father and child/children, the children having been born as a result of the complementary biological functions of the mother and father. It was obvious that if you diluted this concept with the idea that a man and a man, or a woman and a woman, must be treated the same under the Constitution, you could not avoid abolishing the legal status of the biological connection between parent and child among the criteria for parenthood. Parents who were the natural parents of their children would have no special rights over same-sex couples, and, in the event of disputes, would not be able to plead such a special right on the basis of biology. There was, in other words, an unquantifiable, invisible constituency whose rights were greatly threatened by the amendment, but this constituency was being denied the right to a proper discussion on these vital issues by dishonest politicians and ideologically corrupted journalists. Voters were told that they had a duty to extend “equality” to gay couples, “reminded” of past intolerance towards homosexuals and asked to consider how they might feel if one of their own children turned out to be gay. They were not being invited to consider the amendment in the context of its overall constitutional ecology, or hear discussion of how it might play out in practice.

Those who promote the radical changes being pushed through in this context have also succeeded in characterizing all opposition in a particular way, insinuating that those who question the concept of same-sex marriage are invariably motivated by, at best, religious beliefs (which of course are simplified and caricatured out of all recognition) which are at the same time insinuated as being coloured by hatred and bigotry.

My own issues with the same-sex marriage campaign take primarily an anthropological shape. They derive from my experience and observations of matters relating to parenthood and family law over two decades as a journalist and a father, and to my own experience of the ecology of parenthood and related matters. Of course, they reflect also positions expressed in religious contexts, for example in Catholic teaching, but this is because the Church, likewise, has harvested the experience and observation of centuries of human ecology and arrived at conclusions which, unsurprisingly, are not dissimilar from the individual experience of observing reality

and speaking about it truthfully.

What has happened to Ireland is actually beyond belief. For two years up to the referendum on May 2015, my country was subjected to cultural rape by propaganda, with the aid of foreign monies, with the objective of conducting a smash and grab raid on our Constitutional definitions of marriage, family and parenting. We were subjected to mugging by emotive bullying, scapegoating and moral blackmail—part cajoling, part coercing us to introduce a form of gay marriage which amounts to the most extreme in the world. Because it used to be a strongly Catholic country, Ireland was targeted by the international gay lobby as a “trophy country” whose acquiescence could be trumpeted around the world as “moral” leverage against larger, less ostensibly pious nations. Those within Ireland who threatened to present any obstacle to the agenda were targeted to ensure that the trophy could be carried off with a minimum of complication. The Irish model of gay marriage is now the Gold Standard by which every other country in the world will be measured in terms of its “tolerance” and “progressiveness”.

The net effect in actual cultural terms will be to achieve over time the shifting of legal protections from natural parents to a newly-defined concept of parenthood defined not by biology but by a legal instrument—guardianship. Guardianship would be entirely a gift of the State and could be withheld from a parent—and by extension the correlative right to be brought up by his natural parents from that parent’s child—for no clear reason in a process occurring in a secret court. Thus, parenthood will move inexorably towards becoming a matter for dispensation by the State, which will in due course arrogate to itself the function of “ratifying” each parent/child relationship as entitled to legal status before the parties may be deemed parent and child. Among the collateral effects of this change will be to place what is called “psychological parenting” — i.e. the role of nurturing, caring for, daily contact and interaction, companionship, on a par with biological parenting, and, indeed, rendering a biological nonentity capable of trumping the claims of a natural parent simply by virtue of having gained proximity to a child due to circumstances, such as, for example, having entered a relationship with one of the child’s natural parents.

And there is a more fundamental consequence: that the “marriage act”—the coming together of a man and a woman in sexual unity—can no longer have any legal significance whatsoever. The idea that there is a core category of marriage, defined as an exclusive commitment between one man and one woman, built around the idea of their conjugal union, open to new life and committed to the nurture and protection of their own children, has been banished to a legal graveyard—forever.

It is important to stress that this is actually the ultimate objective of the LGBT lobby. Although they may appear, in certain circumstances and contexts to settle for less than this outright transformation of family law, this is always simply an interim tactic, the use of the “salami method” (one slice at a time) to make whatever incremental gains can be made in the first swipe. Once these gains have been made, they are capitalized upon and extended, ultimately to include adoption rights. The LGBT lobby will always come back for more, until it has achieved total victory.

In the dying days of our campaign, an eagle-eyed citizen drew my attention to a quite astonishing document hidden away on the website of “Yes, Equality”, the umbrella group established to coordinate the campaign in favour of the amendment. Not only did this document confirm all our worst fears as to the true intentions of the same-sex marriage lobby—it went much further than we ourselves had dared to go in spelling out the implications of what was being sought, and what was soon to be achieved. The document was a paper written in 2009 by an academic feminist and lesbian, entitled “Feminism and the Same-sex Marriage Debate”. Essentially the document amounted to an argument directed at extreme feminists who remained opposed to the very existence of the institution of marriage, telling them that the time had come to embrace gay marriage for the sake of “equality”.

The document proclaimed: “Same-sex marriage turns on its head the biologicistic and ‘natural’ cultural assumptions surrounding reproduction and the family; it carries the potential to subvert and overthrow the historical conception and implications of marriage. By so doing, the ideology and romantic myth of marriage that has long been critiqued by feminists is uprooted from its traditions.”

Here, finally, we had confirmation of the hidden intentions of at least the most militant and vocal elements within the LGBT lobby and their caravan—those actors who had taken the gay marriage issue from nowhere to the centre of the public square. Gay marriage, far from being part of some revolutionary programme of freedom, was really the Trojan Horse by which an entirely new concept of family life would be transported into the heart of modern civilization. It involved not so much a valorization of homosexuality for the sake of homosexuals, but a pretense of concern for “equality” for the sake of repudiating and dismantling the concepts and structures which had allowed human societies to cohere since humans first began to move upon the face of the earth. The objective of achieving same-sex marriage was not merely “equality” but subversion of the normative model of reproduction and family life, the overturning of the natural order (notice the way the word “natural” is given

quotation marks in the quotation above) and the destruction of the “romantic myth” of marriage.

Had anyone on the anti-amendment side made a claim along these lines as to the intentions of the gay lobby, it is likely that the media would have placed their statement as the main headline on their front pages and at the top of their news bulletins, together with trenchant denials from the Yes side and the usual accusations of “homophobia”. Instead, although I personally read the passage out in the course of several debates with opponents on TV, not one word was uttered or written about it otherwise in the mainstream Irish media. Journalists simply looked the other way, and in doing so announced, finally, that they were no longer journalists, but ideological stooges in the service of a radical agenda to alter the very meaning of the most central and sacred human institution and to redefine the meaning of man’s place in his relationship with nature.

John Waters is a Thinker, Talker, and Writer. From the real source of religion to the infinite reach of rock ‘n’ roll; from the puzzle of the human ‘I’ to the true meaning of money, John Waters speaks and writes about his exhilarating, totally original reflections on the meaning of life in the modern world. He began part-time work as a journalist in 1981, with Hot Press, Ireland’s leading rock ‘n’ roll magazine and went full-time in 1984, when he moved to Dublin. As a journalist, magazine editor and columnist, he has specialized in raising unpopular issues of public importance, including the repression of Famine memories and the denial of rights to fathers.

# Sexual Reproduction Is Not a Cosmic Accident

SUSAN WALDSTEIN

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At first glance, sexual reproduction does not make much sense to Darwinism. Asexual reproduction or cloning is much more efficient than sexual reproduction, since the entire genome is transmitted to the next generation without alteration. In asexual reproduction like budding in yeast or some forms of parthenogenesis (where the unfertilized egg develops into an embryo) as in some insects, reptiles, and amphibians, the offspring are genetically equivalent to the parent organism. If the genes are truly the unit of selection and organisms are merely their “survival machines,”<sup>[1]</sup> as Richard Dawkins argues in *The Selfish Gene*, then their interest is best served by asexual propagation or parthenogenesis. No time or energy is lost in finding and competing for a mate and every individual can transmit all of its genes rather than half to every one of its offspring. Furthermore, the reproductive rate of the species is dramatically increased since every individual can produce offspring instead of only half of the individuals of the species.

When considering the greater efficiency of asexual reproduction compared to sexual reproduction, the puzzled Darwinist authors of a standard college textbook write, “Despite these disadvantages, most eukaryotic organisms reproduce sexually. It would seem that the production of genetic diversity is an evolutionary advantage that overwhelms ‘the cost of sex.’”<sup>[2]</sup> The argument is not very compelling: Since nothing happens in living beings that is not the result of random mutations and natural selection, sexual reproduction must be more advantageous than it first appears.

Darwinians suggest that the principal advantage to sex is the generation of genetic variation, which provides the material for natural selection to act on. Sex generates variation in several ways. Of course, there is a new mix of genes when half the male and half the female chromosomes are united in the zygote. However, there is a prior mixing in the production of eggs and sperm of the parent organisms. In the first step of meiosis (the cell division that results in four haploid cells, having only one set of chromosomes), the homologous chromosomes from the father and mother are distributed randomly. In the second step, the chromosomes can be divided in parts and



recombined in new ways so that not all of a male or female chromosome ends up together. Each of the eggs or sperm produced in meiosis has a unique mix of genes from the male and female parents. No new genes are produced in these ways, but new combinations of genes are produced. This can produce new phenotypes (physical characteristics in the organism), which might be advantageous.

Some forms of parthenogenesis in diploid organisms, which have two sets of chromosomes, also provide genetic mixing. There is no influx of new genetic material from a male; however, in certain forms of automixis, the germ cell also undergoes meiosis and the progeny are only half clones of the mother. The chromosome number may be restored to diploid in a number of ways. The unfertilized egg may develop into an embryo by doubling its chromosomes and initiating mitosis. Alternatively, the egg can fuse with another of the four haploid products formed in meiosis. In both cases, the sister chromosomes are randomly mixed in the first step of meiosis as in sexual reproduction. In the second step of meiosis, the same recombination of chromosomes can occur as in sexual reproduction.

There is even an advantage to parthenogenesis in preserving novel genes. If a major chromosomal change occurs in meiosis, such as the fusing of two chromosomes into one or the doubling of a chromosome, it can be passed on without the problem of finding a mate with a similar anomaly. If the organism with the genetic anomaly lives and succeeds in reproducing, it may pass on the anomaly to many offspring. Sexual reproduction thus provides more opportunity for variation within a species, but less opportunity for generating a new species than half-cloning parthenogenesis. This form of parthenogenesis does not carry the advantage of transmitting the complete genome, but it still carries the advantage of not needing to spend energy to find a mate as well as the advantage of a greater reproductive rate per individual. If parthenogenesis is so much more efficient than sexual reproduction and can still provide a mechanism for genetic variation, it remains a mystery why sexual reproduction developed and spread so diffusely.

Nevertheless, there seems to be a clear trend toward sexual reproduction. Plants and animals have developed sexual reproduction in most phyla. Doris Bachtrog and colleagues point out that bisexual reproduction developed independently in various phyla of plants as well as in insects, reptiles, birds and mammals. A sign of this is the different sex chromosome systems in various groups of organisms. Besides the familiar XX female/XY male system used by humans and most other mammals, there is the opposite ZW female/ZZ male system in birds, snakes and butterflies as well as several other systems.[3] Sexual reproduction is clearly evolutionarily convergent

(developing independently) rather than homologous (inherited from the same ancestor). It developed multiple times in multiple articulations.

In heterosexual organisms, there is a division into male and female with different reproductive organs and activities. Both male and female contribute a part of themselves in generation. Their gametes unite to form what becomes the body of their offspring. In many genera of animals male and female unite in the sexual act to form one body temporarily. One of the more expressive unions is that of dragonflies who fly united together in a closed circle. In dimorphic organisms, male and female animals also look quite different. Male birds may have bright-colored feathers and characteristic tails like the peacock or crests like the cardinal as well as mating rituals of dances or song. Male mammals may have antlers, tusks or manes. Much time and energy is expended in growing secondary sexual characteristics as well as in mating behaviors. Sex is altogether a puzzling phenomenon.

Perhaps there is a more profound way to understand the development of sexual reproduction if we step out of the Darwinian straitjacket. Natural selection (survival and reproduction of the fittest individuals or genes) may not be the only cause of evolution. There may be goals toward which evolution is directed. Fossils show several clear trends in evolution.[4] Organisms have grown larger. They have become warm-blooded. They have developed more and better sense organs with bigger and more complex brains where all the information from the senses is brought together and appreciated. Sensitive organisms have evolved in a world that is sensible. The last organism to evolve is not only sensitive but also rational; humans can not only sense but also enjoy the beauty of what they see and hear. They can comprehend nature's order.

Simon Conway Morris sums up the many examples of convergent evolution at the end of his monumental work, *Life's Solution*:

Neither is progress a question of the sheer number of species, nor the supposed number of body plans. What we do see through geological time is the emergence of more complex worlds...Yet, when within the animals we see the emergence of larger and more complex brains, sophisticated vocalizations, echolocation, electrical perception, advanced social systems including eusociality, viviparity, warm-bloodedness, and agriculture—all of which are convergent—then to me that sounds like progress.[5]

Trends seem to imply purpose and an intelligence directing the trends. This is especially true when the trends are leading towards “the emergence of more complex worlds.”[6] It is difficult to accept that a mindless random process could produce a mindful being that has purposes and searches for meaning. It seems fitting that the cosmos produce an organism through which it can become conscious and know itself. The conclusion that there is an intelligence directing the process of evolution is inevitable if it is admitted that there are trends leading to higher beings with richer ways of life, i.e., progress. But if evolution is a teleological process directed and powered by the Creator, why should bisexual reproduction be a goal?

The Book of Genesis indicates that the Cosmos was brought to completion by the creation of humans. After the creation of man and woman, God gave them the earth to fill and every living thing to be in their care. God gave them plants to be their food and the sun and moon to be their light. He gave them the Earth to be their home. Only after the creation of mankind did God see that everything was “very good” (Gen 1:26-31). Man completes the universe because he is rational and free. Without him there would be no one who could look at the world and see traces of the Creator. He alone can receive his life and the whole cosmos as a gift and thank the Giver. In praying, humans complete the cosmos by giving it a voice so that it becomes capable of praising God. “Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars!” (Ps 148:3).

Humans are not only in the image of God because of their reason and will but also because they are male and female. “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply...’” (Gen 1:27-28).

God, who is Truth and Love, creates humans out of love and for love. John Paul II provides a profound theological interpretation of human sexuality in his *Theology of the Body*. God creates man and woman as a gift to enter into a communion of covenantal love with him. To be male and female is to be made for communion with another. The sexual organs are physical signs of being made to be a gift. The marriage union reflects the mystery of God, who is Love. “The sacrament, as a visible sign, is constituted with man, inasmuch as he is a body and through his ‘visible’ masculinity and femininity. The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine.”[7] God creates the visible cosmos to make present in a new way, in a visible way, his love.

Sexuality does not have the same significance of gift and communion in lower animals and plants because they are not persons. Sexuality in beasts is driven by

appetite and instinct. However, there is an attenuated aspect of gift in all sexuality. The male must give his seed to the female to produce offspring. The female must receive the male's seed and give herself as a receptacle or womb for their mutual production of progeny. Both male and female give something of themselves, a gamete, to the offspring. They give the specific life that they received as a gift to their offspring. They feed and protect the offspring in higher species. They may even give their life to protect their young. There is a dim foreshadowing of the gift-of-self that is present in human sexuality, as there is a dim foreshadowing of rationality in animal instinct and estimative power.

God reveals himself in the Old Testament as the God of creation and the Covenant. He creates a cosmos out of gratuitous love and calls forth rational creatures that can receive the cosmos as a gift. From these, he chooses a people for himself and binds himself to them in a covenant. The most adequate sign of God's covenantal love is the faithful spousal love of a bridegroom for his bride. God tells the people of Israel about his spousal love for them through the prophets. "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her... I will espouse you in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord" (Hos 14□15,19□20). God, the Giver, is reflected in male and female, shaped to be gifts to each other. God who binds himself with faithful covenantal love to his people is made visible in the marriage act, which consummates the covenant.

Christ revealed another dimension of God. He is love and gift-of-self within because he is a Trinity. God is a communion of persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father gives his divine nature to the Son. "The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand" (Jn 3:35). The Father and Son give the divine nature to the Holy Spirit.

St. Thomas speaks about two kinds of unity in the Trinity in the *Lectura Romana* when he comments on the passage "that they may be one; even as we are one" (Jn 17:11). The first is essential unity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one God. The second is affective unity: "the harmony of love."<sup>[8]</sup> Man and woman can imitate the Trinity in this "harmony of love." This is the communion of love that is physically expressed in the marriage union. Other human friendships imitate the Trinity in an affective unity, but only the marriage union imitates it in a second respect also, in reproductive fruitfulness. Because of the fruitfulness of the marriage union, humans are a more perfect divine image than angels in this respect, according to St. Thomas. "There is man from man as there is God from God."<sup>[9]</sup> However, he warns that this does not belong to the "divine image in man, unless we presuppose the first likeness, which is in the intellectual nature; otherwise even brute animals would be to God's image."<sup>[10]</sup> Male and female, wherever they are found in the biological kingdoms, are a trace of

the Trinity; only in humans, because they are persons, are they a divine image and their union a sacrament of divine love. This leads to many moral consequences.

## Ethical Consequences

Faithfulness, fruitfulness, and sacrificial love for spouse and children are the fitting response to living a sacrament of Trinitarian love. But if reductive Darwinism is correct, then lust, fornication, polygamy, adultery and rape are all adaptive because they enable a man to pass on his genes more successfully. As Richard Dawkins says in *The Selfish Gene*, “Individuals of either sex ‘want’ to maximize their total reproductive output during their lives. ... Males are in general likely to be biased towards promiscuity and lack of paternal care.”<sup>[11]</sup> Human genes are no exception to the selfish impulse to reproduce at all cost.

Sociobiologists write articles explaining how various forms of sexual behavior have evolved through natural selection.<sup>[12]</sup> They have no principles that could allow them to judge one behavior better than another. They believe humans are not essentially different from other animals and animals have no natures for which certain behaviors could be good or bad. They can only suggest that a certain behavior is better adapted than another behavior in a certain society at a certain time in order to transmit the most genes.

If, however, the cosmos was created to make God’s glory visible in physical bodies, then the cosmos is sacramental, “charged with the grandeur of God.”<sup>[13]</sup> Everything has meaning and points beyond itself to the transcendent. Male and female are cosmic signs. The Greeks and Romans saw the Sky Father as masculine and Mother Earth, of course, as feminine. Likewise Nordic, Germanic, Indian, Chinese and Native American myths have a Father Sky God and a Mother Earth Goddess. “In the act of love,” C.S. Lewis tells us, “we are not merely ourselves. We are representatives. It is here no impoverishment but an enrichment to be aware that forces older and less personal than we work through us. In us all the masculinity and femininity in the world...are momentarily focused.”<sup>[14]</sup> We might borrow from John of Damascus, who calls man a “microcosm.”<sup>[15]</sup> Together man and woman are a microcosm because they sum up the meaning of the cosmos in their bodies.

Man and woman are sacramental in their complementarity. Their lifelong gift-of-self in marriage mirrors the Creator, who is the Giver of Life and the Lord of the Covenant. Most profoundly, their lifelong union makes visible the communion of persons in the Trinity. Faithfulness, total gift-of-self, and fruitfulness in a lifelong marriage between

a man and a woman mirror the Trinity in a way that other friendships cannot. Parent and child, friends at school, or colleagues at work cannot reflect the Trinity in the same bodily manner as a husband and wife who become the common origin of personal life. The division of the sexes did not develop by chance. No, “God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27).

[1] Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 35. “Individuals are not stable things, they are fleeting.... The genes are not destroyed by crossing-over, they merely change partners and march on. ... They are the replicators and we are their survival machines. When we have served our purpose we are cast aside. But genes are denizens of geological time: genes are forever.”

[2] David Sadava, David M. Hillis, H. Craig Heller, and May R. Berenbaum, *Life: The Science of Biology*, 9th ed. (Gordonsville, VA: W.H. Freeman, 2011), 902.

[3] Doris Bachtrog, Judith E. Mank, Catherine L. Peichel, Mark Kirkpatrick, Sarah P. Otto, Tia-Lynn Ashman, Matthew W. Hahn, Jun Kitano, Itay Mayrose, Ray Ming, Nicolas Perrin, Laura Ross, Nicole Valenzuela, Jana C. Vamosi, “Sex Determination: Why So Many Ways of Doing It?” *PLoS Biol* 12(7): e1001899.  
doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.1001899

[4] Simon Conway Morris, *Life’s Solution: Inevitable Humans in a Lonely Universe*, printing (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 304–307.

[5] *Ibid.*, 307.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), 19:4.

[8] Thomas Aquinas, *Lectura romana in primum sententiarum Petri Lombardi*, d. 10, q. 3 ad 3. “consonantia amoris.”

[9] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 93, a.3.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] Dawkins, *Selfish Gene*, 161.

[12] E.O. Wilson, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*, 25th anniversary ed. (Harvard:

Harvard University Press, 2000). Wilson led the way in explaining every human behavior and ethical law as an evolutionary adaptation.

[13] Gerard Manley Hopkins, *God's Grandeur*.

[14] C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960), 145.

[15] John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, II, 12.

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# Population, Resources, Environment, Family: Convergence in a Catholic Zone?

GLENN P. JUDAY

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Introduction to the realities we face

Four sets of empirical propositions about the human prospect in the contemporary world have abundant evidence behind them.

Earth's environmental support systems are under serious threat. Destruction of nature and extinctions have accelerated. At the same time, human knowledge of the survival requirements for natural systems and biodiversity is unprecedented and continues to grow. Examples of successful environmental replenishment continue to multiply.

Human greed for resources has been destructive, historically. Human consumption or destruction of natural resources has reached a critical level across much of the planet. Simultaneously, careful resource practices have emerged or been recovered, and technological change renders some former key resources unnecessary or valueless.

Total human population is at an all-time high and is almost certain to increase further. These additional people will have basic resource consumption needs. A significant part of the recent human population increase, especially of the past couple of centuries, is due to great success in reducing death rates and extending healthy life spans.

Human fertility rates are decreasing globally. Many, if not most, human societies are failing to reproduce themselves and have done so for more than a generation. All the conditions necessary for dramatic population contractions of many parts of the human family are now in place.

Human families are social-cultural-spiritual ecosystems, proving hardy and resilient under the proper conditions, and fragile with tragic consequences when subjected to abuses, whether old or new. New assaults on the integrity of the family, and even the concept of the family, continue to appear. The natural human family, and particularly the Christian family with its intrinsic logic of self-sacrificing love, is socially de-valued in many aspects of the dominant Western culture. The self-confident and effective citizens (those who will build the environmentally sustainable societies) of tomorrow will come



disproportionally from generous families open to life.

Superficially, and certainly as popular cultural “wisdom,” one or several of these propositions appears to be in contradiction to others. Population is increasing but reproduction failing? Large, pro-life families are saving the environment? Those things can’t be true simultaneously, can they?

The Catholic Church appears to be the main, or perhaps the only, candidate as a norm-setting institution that believes in the accuracy of the four sets of propositions, which, after all, are supported by the weight of available evidence. Further, the Church is the only global institution that, at least to some degree, acts as if it believes these things by what it teaches and what it does—of course allowing for the normal failings and contradictions of the human condition. So the Catholic Church, in this sense, is a crucially important, reality-based organization. This is in stark contrast to the vulgar taunts the Church has always faced about the implausibility of spiritual realities it definitively defends. It is also probably safe to say that a large number of environmentalists are unaware of the Catholic commitment to meeting environmental challenges. But perhaps there is room to believe that may change.

The Catholic Church, as a result of recent reflection on timeless principles now codified as part of the Magisterium, including in the encyclical *Laudato Si'* (built solidly upon papal teachings of St. John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI), has developed a mature and penetrating body of teaching about the human person, the family, and our relationship to the created environment we inhabit. None of it is revolutionary in the sense of introducing novel moral principles, despite what some enthusiastic, but fringe, elements within the Church may wish. Rather, this emerging subject area of the Magisterium simply reflects an application of Divinely-revealed moral wisdom to an evolving world. The Church has done this a number of times in its long history.

As the industrial revolution emerged in the 19th century, the Church reflected on the new realities, culminating in Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical *Rerum novarum* (literally meaning new things; idiomatically meaning political innovations or revolution). Today, the Church is bridging moral issues and realms of thought that are usually not regarded or treated as related, especially in the areas of environmental stewardship and protection, the appropriation of natural resources, human demography and the family, and man’s relationship to the Divine. This is not a strained interpretation. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis stresses the need to seamlessly deal with these issues:

If the present ecological crisis is one small sign of the [ethical, cultural and](#)

spiritual crisis of modernity, we cannot presume to heal our relationship with nature and the environment without healing all fundamental human relationships. Christian thought sees human beings as possessing a particular dignity above other creatures; it thus inculcates esteem for each person and respect for others. ... A correct relationship with the created world demands that we not weaken this social dimension of openness to others, much less the transcendent dimension of our openness to the “Thou” of God. Our relationship with the environment can never be isolated from our relationship with others and with God. Otherwise, it would be nothing more than romantic individualism dressed up in ecological garb, locking us into a stifling immanence. (LS, 119; emphasis added)

But, if there is more depth, especially spiritual, to the Catholic perspective than environmentalists are willing to credit, that very fact makes Catholic teaching relating to the environment less superficial and dispensable than others may wish. If regard for the environment is not merely a nod to popular political opinion among elites, but is part of an entire integral relationship between the human person and all reality—physical and spiritual—then such regard is a constituent part of essential Catholic and Christian belief, properly understood. To assert this is not to provide a mandate that all Catholics must endorse a set of radical environmental actions. But it does not represent an excuse for indifference or callousness toward the condition of our common environment either.

As with so many other controversial issues or dilemmas facing the human person, the distinctive Catholic “both/and” approach offers a way out of the sterile “either/or” stalemate. The fact that abortion is the unjust taking of innocent human life and can never be morally justified (LS, 120), especially not for abstract notions of population control to theoretically benefit the “environment,” is uncomfortable to many environmentalists. Analogously, the fact that humans have received a Divine injunction to exercise responsible care for creation (Gen 1:21–33) [1] or that the three most recent popes were personally persuaded that climate change is partly caused by human actions and thus requires an appropriate social response (LS, 23), makes some conservatives, including Catholics, uncomfortable. This very specific characteristic of “a sign of contradiction”—a manifestation of holiness generating intense opposition (Luke 2:34, Acts 28:22)—according to St. John Paul II can be taken as “... a distinctive definition of Christ and of his Church.”[2]

Who is in charge here?

An important question is whether the Catholic Church brings something unique to the intersecting issues of population, environment, and family. Of course, it is still early, but there are already a few signs of awareness that, in fact, the Catholic Church has developed a unique contribution to these issues. Whether her contribution is rightly understood is another question. Some seem to perceive the Church's role in merely strategic secular terms: the Church's role primarily is that of a big and potentially powerful global institution that might be useful in pushing a few political measures over some hurdles and into adoption if it just signed on to make a really big coalition. Most of the newfound enthusiasm for the Church by environmentalists, such as it is, is based on a belief that with the promulgation of *Laudato Si'* the Church has merely signed on to a political/social project that is largely their own. Conservative and traditionalist Catholics fear and complain that that is so, perhaps taking their cue from some of their adversaries.

The concern of conservatives is reasonable enough, particularly because of the longer perspective that the Church takes on these matters. Having the Church serve as a cheerleader for a secular project is trivial, and worse, potentially a dangerous detour from its spiritual and sacramental mission. Jesus himself taught that the realm of the civil government and the Church were distinct (Mk 12:17, Mt 22:21). Yet the Church has always held that as it pursues its mission, individuals, peoples, cultures, and entire nations will be transformed (Mt 28:19). As that transformation reaches a critical point, it will inevitably take on a public, social, and ultimately political character. As is usually the case, clarity on the most profound issues can be found in the writings of Pope Benedict XVI—arguably the greatest theologian-pope ever. A particularly instructive reflection on these points can be found in [Pope Benedict's address at Westminster Hall](#) during his 2010 visit to the UK.

The central question at issue, then, is this: where is the ethical foundation for political choices to be found? The Catholic tradition maintains that the objective norms governing right action are accessible to reason, prescinding [separate] from the content of revelation. According to this understanding, the role of religion in political debate is not so much to supply these norms, as if they could not be known by non-believers—still less to propose concrete political solutions, which would lie altogether outside the competence of religion—but rather to help purify and shed light upon the application of reason to the discovery of objective moral principles. This “corrective” role of religion vis-à-vis reason is not always welcomed, though, partly because distorted forms of religion, such as sectarianism and fundamentalism, can be seen to create serious social problems

themselves. It is a two-way process. Without the corrective supplied by religion, though, reason too can fall prey to distortions, as when it is manipulated by ideology, or applied in a partial way that fails to take full account of the dignity of the human person. Such misuse of reason, after all, was what gave rise ...to many other social evils, not least the totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century. This is why I would suggest that the world of reason and the world of faith—the world of secular rationality and the world of religious belief—need one another and should not be afraid to enter into a profound and ongoing dialogue, for the good of our civilization. (emphasis added)

So the Church, on matters of secular knowledge such as the development of effective environmental policies, defers to those with expertise in that area. Lay men and women whose vocation is in the world are responsible for freely thinking, debating, and governing in the secular realm.

On the other hand, a law or policy that unjustly and deliberately harms the innocent or the structure of the family is a matter that directly concerns the Church's mission. Especially when a cold rationality inflicts unjust harm in the name of a greater good, the Church's role is to purify the reasoning and support the dignity of the human person. To serve as a brake on the popular passion for ethical shortcuts requires an institution that is more or less a permanent sign of contradiction, always scorned and seen as dangerous by somebody. For nearly a century, numbers of people, often in influential positions, have believed strongly that the environment would gain and the poor (or the unpopular) themselves would be better off if abortion were widely and easily available. Now numerous international organizations or programs work diligently to implement this "vision." The mission of the Church includes countering this kind of thinking directly, as it involves a glaring exception to the principle of concern for vulnerable life that supposedly undergirds environmental protection (LS, 120).

### Starting at the Beginning

Secular environmentalists have an affinity for nature. When pressed for an explanation of why others should as well, the typical response usually amounts to "enlightened self interest." Recent Church documents recognize environmental stewardship as a weightier moral question than simple prudence. The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), for instance, treats environmental issues in part as issues of justice, falling under the rubric of the Seventh Commandment, "Thou shalt not steal" (CCC, 2415-18). Degrading the environment literally steals from future generations,

without means of redress.

The rationale the Catholic Church offers for humans to be in right relation with creation stems from the notion of covenant. Covenant theology is deep and multifaceted, well beyond the scope of this article. But the basic outline is apprehensible enough. The Church regards herself as the most recent body created through a series of covenants. Covenants are not mere contracts—the exchange of property or promises. A covenant involves the exchange of persons. The covenant exchange is so complete and definitive that a new reality emerges. The covenants proceed from the covenant of creation by God (and procreation between Adam and Eve), to the covenant between God and Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and the new (renewed) and everlasting covenant through Jesus—the Church from the Eucharist. As St. John Paul II put it in the opening of his encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*:

The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates the heart of the mystery of the Church. In a variety of ways she joyfully experiences the constant fulfilment of the promise: “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Mt 28:20), but in the Holy Eucharist, through the changing of bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord, she rejoices in this presence with unique intensity. Ever since Pentecost, when the Church, the People of the New Covenant, began her pilgrim journey towards her heavenly homeland, the Divine Sacrament has continued to mark the passing of her days, filling them with confident hope. (emphasis in original)

At each new stage of the unfolding of salvation history, the Divine/human covenant family is enlarged. Starting with the primordial couple it expands to a household, a tribe, a national collection of 12 tribes, a kingdom nation, and finally the family becomes *catha holos* (of or relating to the whole, entire)—the Catholic covenant family of God. To a secular environmentalist this would seem like a tangent, but it has immediate, and dramatic, application in answering the question of what humanity’s relationship is to the created order. Scott Hahn describes the clear and stark answer to that question in quoting Pope Benedict:

He expresses the meaning of the creation account in a series of statements: “Creation is oriented to the sabbath, which is the sign of the covenant between God and humankind. . . . Creation is designed in such a way that it is oriented to worship. It fulfills its purpose and assumes its significance when it is lived, ever

new, with a view to worship. Creation exists for the sake of worship.” [3]  
(emphasis added)

You do it your way, and I’ll do it mine

Again, a secular environmentalist could conceivably make a less-than-fully enthusiastic nod toward this creation-covenant-worship premise as simply a data point, the cultic belief of a rather large group of religious believers affected by a catholicos self-concept. Fine as far as it goes, but so what? The relevance of it all would seem to be lost on secular observers. In their view, the environment is being destroyed by unrestrained human greed (recognized in LS, 204). So, the pressing need is for effective action, strong political organization, and cultural transformation—to the degree it can be accomplished—on behalf of environmental protection measures. This analysis is not necessarily at odds with the Church’s perspective. But it is not the heart of the matter for the Church.

The grounding of concern for the environment in the spiritual is the premise at the very opening of [Pope Benedict’s 2010 World Day of Peace message](#):

Respect for creation is of immense consequence, not least because “creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God’s works,” and its preservation has now become essential for the pacific coexistence of mankind. Man’s inhumanity to man has given rise to numerous threats to peace and to authentic and integral human development—wars, international and regional conflicts, acts of terrorism, and violations of human rights. Yet no less troubling are the threats arising from the neglect—if not downright misuse—of the earth and the natural goods that God has given us. For this reason, it is imperative that mankind renew and strengthen “that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God; from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying.” (emphasis added)

Of course, there are a number of spiritualities on offer in the world today, and new forms emerge regularly. A popular formulation, especially among the younger generation, is that they self-identify as “spiritual but not religious.” The Church regularly finds common interest with those who are spiritually seeking, as well as those who have no interest at all in the spiritual. But *Laudato Si’* makes a pointed observation about Catholic and Christian covenant spirituality: It is the only secure basis for building an ethic of environmental responsibility in society.

A spirituality which forgets God as all-powerful and Creator is not acceptable. That is how we end up worshipping earthly powers, or ourselves usurping the place of God, even to the point of claiming an unlimited right to trample his creation underfoot. The best way to restore men and women to their rightful place, putting an end to their claim to absolute dominion over the earth, is to speak once more of the figure of a Father who creates and who alone owns the world. Otherwise, human beings will always try to impose their own laws and interests on reality. (LS, 75; emphasis added)

Even if this claim in *Laudato Si'* is not accepted at face value, or rejected on a personal basis, it might well prompt a least a second thought from the bemused secular environmentalist observer. The accusation that Christianity is a uniquely destructive influence on treatment of the environment has been a sub-theme of the sociology of environmental protection for a long time,<sup>[4]</sup> however fanciful. But that accusation avoids the question—what actually is a firm and durable basis within human societies for responsibly using and caring for the created order that they exist within?

Social fads that seem to support environmental protection measures rise and fall over time. They are compelling within a society for a time, and then they aren't. The temptations of short-sighted carelessness or greed toward the environment are permanent. Establishing environmental protection on the basis of social popularity renders it vulnerable to the shifting winds of public opinion; no authority is left to challenge environmental exploitation. Responsibly caring for the environment while meeting human needs, on the face of it, seems to demand an ethic grounded in an all-powerful, un-appealable, permanent authority that seeks human good, but is above short-term human interests. Enlightened self-interest and coercive power and propaganda fall short of the mark, because ultimately they are subject to overthrow.

While Christians can and do fail in putting their responsibilities into practice, they cannot overthrow the One to whom they are ultimately responsible while claiming to remain Christians. If we cannot philosophize our way out of our responsibilities, sooner or later we must face them. To paraphrase **Chesterton**, "A man who won't believe in God will believe in anything." So, the Church's potential cooperators in the environmental arena have good reason to acknowledge, at the least, that the Catholic Church's moral/spiritual system represents a "useful" approach. It may be only grudging and partial respect, but it can be a start.

It's easy enough to get carried away with concern for the environment. The young are especially prone to do so. But how is a responsible balance to be achieved? Some have

even suggested conferring legal rights (in the tradition of Western legal systems) on nature. Inevitably this would set up a situation pitting objects of nature against actual persons. In reality it would be human persons claiming to represent objects of nature versus other human persons. The Catholic perspective offers a basis for refraining from doing so.

Only humans have moral and legally enforceable duties. No animal, plant, landscape, or river can ever be morally accountable for anything. The basis of this reasoning is beautifully captured in John Paul II's [statement to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on Evolution](#).

The conciliar constitution *Gaudium et spes* has given us a magnificent exposition of this doctrine, which is one of the essential elements of Christian thought. The Council recalled that “man is the only creature on earth that God wanted for its own sake.” In other words, the human person cannot be subordinated as a means to an end, or as an instrument of either the species or the society; he has a value of his own. He is a person. By this intelligence and his will, he is capable of entering into relationship, of communion, of solidarity, of the gift of himself to others like himself. St. Thomas observed that man’s resemblance to God resides especially in his speculative intellect, because his relationship with the object of his knowledge is like God’s relationship with his creation (*Summa theologiae* I-II, q. 3, a. 5, ad 1). But even beyond that, man is called to enter into a loving relationship with God himself, a relationship which will find its full expression at the end of time, in eternity. (par. 5)

Can’t we all just get along?

Following the thread of theological and spiritual logic by which the Catholic Church confronts the issue of the environment can seem puzzling to people formed within the modern Western, secular culture.

The Church, rather than setting (and continually re-setting) an exact and always-expanding and changing secular agenda of measures to be implemented, provides moral guidance within its comprehensive spiritual/theological framework. The lay members of the Church, in their diverse stations in life and their particular God-given talents, have the vocation of providing solutions to environmental challenges; these are prudential matters. The engineer or corporate team members who will provide practical breakthroughs in renewable energy may just now be nurtured in a family. The farmer, miner, fisherman, or scientist who will develop and implement better



ways to provide basic resources are today grappling with and appropriating to themselves an understanding of human purpose and the call of the Divine. The Church supports the family and forms its members so that they understand their responsibilities. The Church provides the “purification” of moral clarity in how they will go about their work. This perspective is explicit in *Laudato Si’*, but is clearly not offered as an excuse for complacency.

On many concrete questions, the Church has no reason to offer a definitive opinion; she knows that honest debate must be encouraged among experts, while respecting divergent views. But we need only take a frank look at the facts to see that our common home is falling into serious disrepair... (LS, 61)

As is often said these days, politics is downstream from culture. And, as contemporary society increasingly needs to be reminded these days, culture is downstream from religion—or its absence. A society governs in ways that echo how it worships. A provident God who has entered into a relationship of loving communion with humanity calls for a different relationship to the created world than a bleak, cold, random universe devoid of purpose or love.

In an important sense, those concerned about sustaining, protecting, or restoring the environment, whether secular or indeterminately spiritual, arrive at a goal that is at least broadly compatible with Catholic teaching. Certainly, they are likely to do so by a different route and possibly with different motivations and priorities. Acknowledging that the teachings of the Catholic Church are derived as a matter of consistent logic from its basic premises is reasonable. Doing so does not require acceptance of the faith proposition—that the premises are real and the Church is correct. Still, this provides ample grounds for cooperation with the Catholic Church in achieving important environmental goals for the common good. An entire section of *Laudato Si’* is devoted to the principle of the common good.

Underlying the principle of the common good is respect for the human person as such, endowed with basic and inalienable rights ordered to his or her integral development. It has also to do with the overall welfare of society and the development of a variety of intermediate groups, applying the principle of subsidiarity. Outstanding among those groups is the family, as the basic cell of society. (LS, 157)

But, as can be inferred from the overshadowing character of the cited section of

Laudato Si' (157), there are important qualifications on what the Catholic Church can morally do in environmental collaboration. Most potential partners with the Church do not have the same (or any) compunctions about measures that the Church finds morally objectionable, especially across the spectrum of pro-life and family issues. In a coalition, resources are fungible. An understanding is easily reached that the resources of the coalition can be allocated so that what one partner "can't" do, another will "take care of." This would be morally compromising. Direct cooperation with moral evil is not permissible.

It seems that the Church will need to maintain clearly identifiable, and in many cases separate, activity in a number of its environmental projects where such issues arise. It will require both moral clarity and courage to resist the social pressure and, as is increasingly being experienced in democratic societies, the coercive power of civil authorities, to fall in with the spirit of the times. Maintaining integrity is, in a real sense, a witness to the "sign of contradiction." The anti-Catholic direction of events on such morally tinged matters is no surprise, and the wonder is that the Church has not done more to prepare for the opposition and oppression to come.

### The population prospect

To many, the most significant irritant in a potentially budding rapprochement between the Catholic Church and the mainstream of environmentally minded individuals is the fact that generosity and openness to life in marriage that the Church determinedly promotes appears to exacerbate the perceived problem of "overpopulation" and its environmental effects. In some ways, the issue is largely resolved, and increasingly is the opposite of what popular opinion holds. The great increase in human population came in three stages. High birth rates and high death rates were the universal lot of early humanity. When knowledge and social capacity brought the benefits of increased and secure food production, specialized labor, and basic medical care/sanitation, birth rates remained high while death rates plunged and standing populations increased dramatically. As death rates declined, social feedback signaled that lifespans were more secure and birth rates declined. The latter was supposed to be the final stage.

But now most humans live in societies where completed fertility rates (average number of surviving children per woman at completion of reproductive life) are well below replacement levels and have been for more than a generation. Fertility rates have fallen globally and consistently, even in societies with above replacement-level

fertility. One could (and certain individuals clearly should) go into great detail in tracking the continuing evolution of human fertility, health, and mortality, both regionally and globally. The number of new children born per year is nearly stable now, well below replacement level except for sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. So a reasonable prospect is for an increase in total human population of a few billion over the next several decades (as the success of health measures lengthens life spans for the first time in many societies), but with a marked tendency toward aging in most places. Many societies are already struggling with the challenges of supporting unprecedentedly old populations by relatively few young people, and in-migration of young from elsewhere. We can expect an intensification of these trends. After two generations of low fertility, the shrinkage in the number of women of child-bearing age makes the prospect of rapid rebound to population replacement-level fertility quite difficult and even unlikely. That is the population challenge in much of the world.

For some reason, academic ecologists, a key source of expertise driving popular perceptions and attitudes about the environment, largely have not been diligent about keeping up with the changing demographic situation. More expertise is available than ever before on the condition of particular species, important ecosystems, and even global environmental monitoring. Much of the news from these studies is not good, and some is alarming (guaranteeing prominent media coverage). But the favored explanation remains that human population increase is the threat.

To be fair, in some places expanding human numbers will put pressure on the capacity of ecosystems or resources such as water. But in many cases those issues are aggravated mainly by population shifts and changes in ways of life, to say nothing of social disorganization. In reality, the needs of a substantial share of the (largely older) people who will increase the human population can and will be accommodated from existing human infrastructure. The challenge increasingly will be to find a floor or end to the exceptionally low fertility in many societies. Those societies that are successful in doing so will be renewed, if they are under fair and just economic and political systems. They are likely to become sources of vigorous innovation, wealth production, and commitment to the future that are the key to sustaining environmental progress.

It may seem a bold prediction, but at some point social thinkers and opinion leaders are going to highlight the need for an effective institution to promote formation of adequate numbers of stable, responsible families generously committed to raising up children who are deeply connected to their society and attuned to concern for the poor and the future. Even ecologists and environmental activists are going to be affected

with concern about how to perpetuate their academic, professional, and social institutions. And when they do, they will find a ready ally in the Catholic Church.

Summing up, a potential reconciliation between the Catholic Church and some of its sharpest critics is possible. Of course, human pride and stubbornness will interfere. But the Church has considered the signs of the times, and faithful to her charism and tradition, she has reached deep into the storehouse of perennial Divine wisdom entrusted to her care (not “wisdom” produced on demand), and responded to *rerum novarum*. Starting with an openness to living in right relation to God and creation, she is forming her members to be the solution to the challenges of life—environmental or otherwise—in the created order. This vocation is strengthened and sustained by communion with Christ, who has redeemed the world from futility. As lay members of the Church reproduce themselves through the family (the most God-like thing they can do) they ensure that the Faith remains living. Broad areas of cooperation in secular projects with a variety of actors are possible, but the Church must sometimes act under a distinctive identity so as to avoid moral compromise.

There are challenges to many in this cooperation. Conservative Catholics must exercise their distinctive charism in constructively engaging environmental issues. They have much to offer in guarding against the pitfalls of nature worship, relativism, abandonment of Christ, the abortion trap, anti-family attitudes and others. Environmental activists are challenged to acknowledge the genuine strengths of the Catholic cosmological and theological view as a contributor to the common good in the environmental arena, even if they do not embrace it personally. Genuine diversity sometimes means working together when it is important and possible, and sometimes maintaining the integrity of honest and respectful difference.

Given the gravity of the challenges our common home faces, perhaps it is not too much to hope for, if not complete harmony between the Catholic Church and the environmental movement, some level of convergence with the Catholic vision.

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# Is Contraception Synonymous with Women's Health? Following the Science to a Human Eco-system

ANNA HALPINE

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Pope Francis has called for a human ecology that places the person at the center. This human ecology includes many things; respect for the dignity of the person, an understanding of the common good, and an appropriate stewardship of the earth and all creation. The language and concept of human ecology has been particularly developed under Popes Benedict and Francis and this makes sense, since it mirrors the global shift away from the language of “population control,” and “reproductive health.”

The magisterial focus on the development of a human ecology reveals the Papal understanding that modern man needs a new vocabulary with which to engage eternal truths, and highlights their awareness that the great problem confronting modernity is the Incarnation. The bodily reality of God-made-man confounds an Enlightenment and neo-rationalist world, which increasingly seeks to understand itself on its own terms, “[defining] one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe and of the mystery of human life,” as Justice Kennedy so memorably wrote.

The Church has always engaged the great debates of each age with language, imagery and reason suited to it. Thomas Aquinas argued with the neo-Manichaeans of his day (the Albigenses), stretching and developing new theological and philosophical capacities to do so. He understood that the heretic sets the debate; in love he went to them, to answer their objections on their own terms. In our own time, Pope John Paul II brought the modern language of Personalism into the Magisterium to expand the understanding of the human person to a world caught up in the lie of communism.

Just as language needs to change, so does the location of the fight. The early 90’s saw a clear and concerted attempt to impose population control standards on the world through a series of global conferences hosted by the United Nations. The 1994

International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, convened by the UN through its population agency UNFPA (the UN Fund for Population Activities), served as the key inflection point in John Paul II's confrontation with these global political forces. Cairo proposed a global agenda predicated on contraception, sexual education and abortion targets embraced by nation states; John Paul II, and his diplomatic corps, forcefully fought back, and won miraculously.

The Holy See victory at Cairo, which is undoubtedly John Paul II's victory given his direct and immediate intervention at every stage, cannot be outlined in this brief space. What is important to note, though, is John Paul II's recognition that the human person must be defended philosophically/theologically, as well as practically.

John Paul II's victory at the international conference in Cairo in 1994 was preceded by the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Hard fought work paid off; the first victory of the 90's was the Holy See's insertion of language recognizing the person as the center of development. In the face of the idea that more population control was necessary to save the environment, this one statement reset the whole Rio agenda.

The battle moved on to Cairo where the International Conference on Population and Development became a debate about population control. Abortion, contraception and sexual education were promoted as the way forward, rather than economic development. And in the midst of this, the language shifted. With developing nations no longer willing to accept population control targets as a focus of development, a new term arose: reproductive health. And with this new term the Holy See's great victory at Cairo was to keep abortion out of its definition.

Twenty years later it has seemed to some as though the victory over ideas (and definitions) had become empty, since the foreign aid allocations for reproductive health have uniformly funded contraception and abortion programs.

To fight a conception of reproductive health that reduces women and their health to contraception and abortion, alternate reproductive health programs had to be provided. Sadly, they were not. Looking at women's health now, in both developed and developing nations, the pill is prescribed to 2/3 women for management of health concerns, ranging from acne to depression, PMS, irregular bleeding, pain and migraines. Contraception has become identical with women's health. Leaving aside the question about whether this approach is good medicine in the first place, until we can better treat the myriad of health conditions for which the pill is currently prescribed, women will continue to be on contraception for the management of their

health and fertility.

Fertility Education & Medical Management (FEMM) is a new reproductive health program developed to fit this need. It teaches women (and girls) how their bodies work, enabling real informed consent. It provides support to women to understand and look at options for their health that will diagnose and treat the underlying condition, not just manage the symptoms (with the pill). What, for example, is the cause of that acne or depression? We need to find out. Only then can we diagnose and treat. Researching this information and providing it to doctors in clinical format is the work of FEMM and its sister organization, the Reproductive Health Research Institute.

Not surprisingly, it turns out that women prefer healthcare to contraception, and are eager to have the information they need to make healthier and better long-term choices. Once contraception is not synonymous with health care, the space of moral responsibility is re-opened, so that there can be a more human way of living sexuality towards “a more human way of living sexuality.” With FEMM, women are now free to consider other options for the management of their fertility as well as their health.

Investing in science, research and education through FEMM, is moving the understanding of women’s health forward. It is also changing the debate. Once women know that their underlying problems can be diagnosed and treated, they are eager and willing to make the required lifestyle changes. Emphasis on our obligation to be stewards of the environment is important, of course. But an understanding of human ecology as it pertains to the human person is a much greater impetus for moral change than a mere appeal to duty. FEMM does just that. It promotes the human ecosystem as an intrinsic element of who we are, and what it means to live lives of freedom in view of real human flourishing.

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# Domesticity and Disorder

MOLLY MEYER

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“Like the sun rising in the Lord’s heavens, the beauty of a virtuous wife is the radiance of her home.” Sirach 26:16

As my husband and I traveled across the United States to spend Christmas with his family in Montana this year, I had the privilege of being a guest in several homes full of life and love. Families welcomed us with warm, home-cooked meals, entertained us with stories or games, invited us to share in their traditions, and delighted in our presence as guests. While these homes are the norm in my experience, I do realize that they are a rare gift. The holidays can be a poignant reminder of the vulnerability and the work that it takes to welcome another into our home (or even to be a guest in the home of another). Whether it is a result of the vulnerability or the work required, it certainly seems to be the case that more often people invite friends out to an event rather than into their own homes for a casual dinner or visit. As my husband and I began to think about the kind of home we want to cultivate together, we asked ourselves exactly how to prepare our home in order to share our life with others. What is necessary in order to infuse a home with life and love?

My childhood home was very much a lived-in place, it was ordered around family meals and time spent playing or working—mostly outside. Each thing in our home had its own place, but was more often found out and about in use. The busyness of life fostered an accumulation of things: school papers, toys, books, half-completed projects, puzzles or games out in the open. Cleaning and chores were kicked into high gear when a guest was invited to the house. Prior to arrival, everything was returned to its rightful place (or at least in a room out of sight) and surfaces were immaculately polished. As a child I could appreciate the beauty of a clean room and recognize that somehow this was an important way of welcoming someone into our home. As I have grown older, I see how much more went into making a house a home: traditions, forms of entertainment, preparation of food, laundry, and artwork just to name a few.

I am constantly reminded in my work with the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd that a properly prepared environment is what makes real work, life and prayer possible. An environment that is improperly prepared always brings with it some kind of

breakdown in work, life, and prayer while an environment that has been properly prepared creates space for all of these. It is the responsibility of the Catechist to prepare the materials needed for work and to foresee the needs of the children so that their work can be fruitful. There is a domestic parallel to this: a similar “preparation of the environment” is what transforms an ordinary house into a home. As I watched my mother-in-law this Christmas, I realized that she is the Catechist of the home. Friends and neighbors were constantly popping by without warning just to say hello and she was always ready to receive them. This is because her home is full of life and as life happens it is received and cared for—the mail is put away, the laundry is folded, the pantry is stocked, and the Christmas presents are wrapped. In preparation for our first Christmas as newlyweds, she thoughtfully gathered all of my husband’s Christmas ornaments, a traditional gift in their family, and boxed them up so that he can incorporate them into our Christmas celebrations at home. With years of experience, she has developed habits that inform the environment of the home and make it a place that is truly inviting to those who visit.

Regarding my own home, I see that I have a long way to go. Traveling for work and to spend time with family has left things more “placeless” than I would like. It is undeniable that this lack of order takes away from the relaxing nature of home life, since all you notice as you look around is that something needs to be fixed or put away. For the first five months in our house our walls were bare. What was our encouragement to finally tend to this? Someone was coming to visit! Pictures and artwork were hung a few days before her arrival and the place immediately began to feel more like a home. I can’t help but reflect why, in the grand scheme of things, I care about all of this: Why do I want a beautiful home? I think one of the biggest reasons is because I want to invite friends and family to share in our life in a profound way and the beauty of an environment gives everyone a glimpse into our life but also invites them to a greater openness.

Fourteen years ago, I lived in a Carthusian monastery for a month. The quiet, disciplined and sparse existence of the cloister taught me that the order (or disorder!) of your environment directly impacts your interior life. If the bed is made, you are able to enter into prayer and the work of the day in a more complete way. Through her work to order the home, a woman in particular identifies herself with her home. Our home is an expression of who we are as individuals and as a couple, of what we love and what we find beautiful or inspiring. To welcome someone into the home is also a very intimate invitation to share in our life. It takes time to prepare a home in such a way that it can be open to others—thinking through their needs for food, comfort, and

enjoyment. To create order in the home so that it can be hospitable to life, work, and prayer also requires order within the person. Developing habits that give life to the family within the home and those that visit are both practical (cleaning, preparing meals, caring for the structure of the home, etc.) and formative (growing in patience, sacrificing for the good of others, etc.). I have to come recognize that this process takes years to learn and to grow into as a family. Ultimately, it is our family life that I want to share when I invite someone into our home, and I want our life to be a place of respite and joy for others.

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# Have a Drink: Spiritual Advice

CONOR B. DUGAN

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Foley, Michael P., *Drinking with the Saints: The Sinner's Guide to a Holy Happy Hour* (Regnery History, 2015).

Chesterton aptly observed that the “Catholic Church is like a thick steak, a glass of red wine, and a good cigar.” He meant to convey the sacramentality of the Church, which both valorizes the good creation and makes it the bearer of a newness from “on high.”

It is precisely in its liturgical calendar, with its feasts and fasts, that we can see this, or rather taste it; since it is through these that we experience the world with its rich fare taken up as it is into the history of salvation. It is to that feasting (not so much fasting) that Professor Michael P. Foley turns with his handsome and well-crafted book *Drinking with the Saints: The Sinner's Guide to a Holy Happy Hour*.

Foley wrote the book because like Belloc, he has found that “[w]herever the Catholic sun doth shine, / There's always laughter and good red wine.” Foley begins by regaling the reader with the “Catholic contribution to the spirits world” which “is almost as impressive as its contribution to the spirit world” (viii). For instance, Foley tells us that Chartreuse, “the world's most magical liqueur, was perfected by Carthusian monks and is still made by them” (viii). Indeed, only two Carthusians “at any time know the recipe” (viii).

Behind the book is the intent to help “celebrate with friends and family one of the great jewels of Catholic life, the liturgical year” (x). As Foley observes, “Even a generic weekday on which a special feast day does not fall is called in Church Latin a feria, or ‘feast’” (x). So this book is about feasting, about the “refined and temperate art of drinking,” (x) and helping its readers to “be not sad but glad of heart” (xi).

Within its pages Foley provides “spiritual advice” for the entire liturgical year, its feasts and saints' days. This includes: classic cocktails, historic beers, wines, and spirits crafted in centuries-old monasteries throughout the world; but it also includes not a few recipes of the author's own crafting. And all of this is mixed with a good dose of history about the spirits themselves and the saints who made them (or for whom they

are imbibed), together with advice about toasts and anything else that will add conviviality to a party.

The invitation to review this *Drinking with the Saints* was an invitation to follow Saint Thomas Aquinas and drink *usque ad hilaritatem* (to the point of hilarity). Thus, it was only appropriate that the first of the drinks I sampled in the arduous process of doing quality control on Professor Foley's recipes was the "Fat Friar" (48). That drink is delicious mix of Benedictine, apple brandy, triple sec, and lemon juice. It warmed the cockles of my heart. Surprisingly, after sipping on the Fat Friar I found myself desiring to partake of more of Professor Foley's recipes.

Among the other offerings sampled and in which I delighted was the "St. Lawrence No. 2" (210). While the drink takes its ingredients more from the Gulf of St. Lawrence than the man himself, it still was a fitting way to raise a glass to that gridiron saint. While I wasn't quite roasted, I was certainly toasty after sampling the mix of bourbon, maple syrup, and lemon juice.

A few days later I invoked the Holy Ghost, by mixing up a "Green Ghost" (419) : a combination of gin, green Chartreuse, and lime juice. Its potency was enough to drive out any bad spirits that might have been prowling about seeking the ruin of souls. My guests did their part to banish bad spirits by imbibing "Vesper Martinis" (102) (a combination of gin, vodka, and white Lillet with a lemon peel garnish). With spirits this strong, no exorcism needed!

Guests—both here and in Heaven—are an important part of *Drinking with the Saints*. Indeed, Foley's book wishes to remind us that when we feast here on Earth we are not alone; we feast with those already in Heaven, as a foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet. "Drinking with the faithful departed . . . affirms . . . that death, that silly stingless thing, has no dominion over the Mystical Body of Christ" (xi). Indeed, one's "departed holy brother or sister in Christ is as alive" as one's "pewmate" (xi). Thus, when we raise a glass to Thomas Aquinas, we are quite literally raising a glass with him. So pick up a copy of *Drinking with the Saints*, buy some top-shelf liquor, break out the shaker, and drink with the saints. Christ's victory calls us to celebrate; and there is hardly a better way to do so than with Foley's holy concoctions.

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# Hunger, Conviviality and the Appetite for God

MICHAEL HANBY

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Leon Kass, *The Hungry Soul: Eating and the Perfecting of Our Nature* (University of Chicago Press, 1999).

The *Hungry Soul* by Leon Kass merits the exalted status of a classic, and not simply because it is now approaching twenty years since its original publication. Though many disappointed epicures were apparently numbered among its first readers, there should be no mistake. This is a work of creative and deeply humanistic philosophy, “a wisdom-seeking inquiry into human nature and its perfection,” sustained by a penetrating and often rigorous reflection on the significance of the “higher meanings of eating” (xi). A book with such ambitions will undoubtedly be many things. Indeed, *The Hungry Soul* is an introduction to the philosophy of Aristotle’s *De Anima*, updated with insights both from modern biology and from modern thinkers such as Erwin Strauss, Hans Jonas, and Adolph Portmann. It is a trenchant critique of the abstract and objectifying character of contemporary biological science. It is a profound reflection on the differences between the animate and the inanimate and between the human being and the rest of the animal kingdom. It is a journey of ascent from the metabolic activities of soul shared by all living things to the uniquely human capacity for contemplation of the divine. It is an exploration of the deeper meanings of civility. But most of all it is beautiful, and marked at every turn by the erudition and profound humanism for which Leon Kass is justly known.

The animating assumption—and the truly creative development of the Aristotelian insights which give the book its structure—is that the human relation to food discloses something essential about all of these things. Ordinary human hunger thus becomes an open window to the contemplation of a world otherwise hidden in plain sight, a world of form, civilization, and humanity inscribed into our very animal nature and reflected in our physiological structure, and stretching, through its ordered longing, toward union with God.

The chapters of the book follow this path of ascent. Chapter 1, which along with chapter 2 are the densest (and arguably the richest) chapters of the book, introduces the ancient concepts of form and soul (psyche) through reflection on that metabolic activity which for Aristotle characterized the nutritive powers of soul common to all living things. Even in its most primitive form, these powers indicate an appetitive relation to the world beyond the organism's own borders and thus an organismic wholeness irreducible to mere mechanism. In both of these ways, then, the primitive, appetitive relationship to food is already an intimation of a self-transcendence, an other-directedness, which increases in proportion to the other powers of soul possessed by the organism. Chapter 2 explores the peculiar powers of the human soul, at once animal and more than animal, and the way in which the highest of these powers, the capacity for *theoria*, is already implicit in the human frame. Included here is a profound meditation on the meaning of man's upright posture, and how it prizes sight and thus the beholding of stable forms, over the other senses. Kass explores how the omnipotent jaw and the unspecialized arm and hand, both closely related to man's omnivorous nature, enlarge his "action space," his capacity to project his intentions over great spatial and temporal distances. These powers are the precondition both for genuine social and political life and for the apprehension of eternity.

Chapter 3 continues the ascent by contemplating the humanizing transition from *fressen* to *essen*, from feeding to eating, through which man's animal nature is properly humanized. The human relation to the edible, with all the violence and ambiguity that attends it, thus becomes a source for reflecting upon the genesis of the ethical. Here Kass launches into a truly fascinating consideration of two facts of enormous significance to the ancients but which are largely forgotten to us moderns. The first is the near universal prohibition against cannibalism and the corresponding codes of hospitality which often required the feeding of strangers even before inquiring into their identity. We see this, for instance, in Homer's *Odyssey*. The second is the identification of man as the "eater of bread," announced along with the curse in Genesis 2 but found also in Homer, where man the bread-eater is juxtaposed with the bestial Cyclops. These ancient insights reveal a profound truth. "Man becomes human with eating of bread" (122); for the advent of bread, like the fermentation of the grape, marks a comprehensive transformation in his social and political life so astonishing as to have once been regarded as a divine gift.

Chapter 4 considers the meaning of "the meal" and the introduction of codes of civility as enhancing the distinctively human capacities implicit in our upright posture.

Chapter 5 continues along this upward trajectory by considering the transition from eating to dining, and how the latter becomes the occasion for conviviality, true friendship, and even enlightenment. Though these chapters are to my mind slightly less compelling than those which precede them, they nevertheless contain many thoughtful insights, including a beautiful interpretation of “Babette’s Feast” by Isak Dinesen.

The ascent reaches its apex in the sixth and final chapter. Here Kass seeks to show “how the activity of eating can not only be ennobled but even sanctified” such that certain exemplary customs regarding eating “would manifest a more or less true understanding of the world, including the place of man within the whole” (196). He chooses the dietary laws articulated in the eleventh chapter of the Book of Leviticus to illustrate this point. The exegesis is rich and truly fascinating, as Kass shows in great detail how the prescriptions and prohibitions of Jewish dietary laws mirror the divine action of dividing and separating which characterize the creation accounts of Genesis. And yet it is here that Catholics and other Christians will likely find the account incomplete and find themselves longing to go beyond Kass. One suspects, first of all, that Kass’s interpretation of Genesis may be overly indebted to the “progressive” interpretation of Kant, who regards the story of Adam in the Garden with a bit too much *felix* and not enough *culpa*, not as a fall from prelapsarian wisdom but as the beginning of enlightenment tout court. But more deeply, a Catholic cannot help but think that an account of “sanctified eating” must ultimately find its end in the Eucharist, the divine self-offering. And he cannot help but think that this end would somehow also alter various steps along the way, whether by deepening the metaphysical foundations at the beginning, or by transforming the negative conception of law as restraint which seems to haunt the book.

It would be unfair, of course, to expect this from Kass or to burden an already great work with these hopes and expectations. And Kass himself, with characteristic magnanimity, acknowledges this “incompleteness” and invites some future reader to supply the missing seventh chapter. This would be a worthy project, but anyone who undertakes to supplement this work should be warned that he faces a daunting task in creating a complement worthy of the beauty, grace, and profundity of the original.

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# Rejoicing in the Good: True Festivity

CAITLIN JOLLY

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Pieper, Josef, *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity* (trans. Richard and Clara Winston, South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 1999).

Pope Francis recently remarked, “The mystery of Christmas, which is light and joy, challenges and unsettles us, because it is at once a mystery of hope and of sadness,” the latter “inasmuch as love is not accepted, and life discarded.”<sup>[1]</sup> Nietzsche observed a similar symptom: nowadays, “the trick is not to arrange a festival, but to find people who can enjoy it” (Pieper, 13). Troubled by the specifically modern rejection of festivity and the ever-present phenomenon of the sham festival, Josef Pieper aims to articulate a theory of festivity: what are its necessary conditions, essence, and true object? How can men of our time “preserve or regain the capacity to celebrate real festivals festively?” (13–14). Nietzsche, both a foil and frequent contributor to Pieper’s reflections, also provides the rudiments of an answer to these questions: “To have joy in anything, one must approve everything” (25–26). Pieper’s central idea in this brief but rich book is that there is no true festival without “an absolutely universal affirmation extending to the world as a whole, to the reality of things and the existence of man himself” (26). To be festive, then, is to celebrate reality in recognition of its inalienable goodness, and this assent is given most radically as praise of the creator God through ritual worship, whose fruit is the communication to man of a “superhuman abundance of life” (31–32, 38–39). The truly festive occasion is nothing that man can produce or give to himself; it can only be received as a gift freely offered, to which the appropriate response is joyful praise (39–40).

Pieper develops this idea by exploring various realms of human life and ways in which festivity has been instituted and even displaced by the “antifestival.” He reflects first on the relationship between festivity and work. The festival, while being an exceptional interruption of daily labor, is “not just a day without work” but carries a positive significance (3, 7). Whereas work implies utilitarian activities (*artes serviles*), the festival resides only “in the realm of activity that is meaningful in itself” (*ars*

liberalis) (8□9). Our capacity to celebrate thus depends on our capacity to conceive and engage in free activity. If this is not simply play, which Pieper classifies as a “mere modus of action” but not its defining object, then what constitutes intrinsically meaningful activity? (10□12).

In order to answer this question, we cannot avoid having a conception of man and his fulfillment (14□15). Tradition expresses man’s end primarily in terms of the visio beatifica, a “seeing awareness of the divine ground of the universe” (15). Pieper thus draws a direct line between contemplation and festivity: “Whenever anyone succeeds in bringing before his mind’s eye the hidden ground of everything that is, he succeeds to the same degree in performing an act that is meaningful in itself, and has a ‘good time’” (16□17). Whether this contemplation is the philosopher’s consideration of the whole, the artist’s search for prototypical images, or prayer, it involves a “relaxation of the strenuous fixation of the eye on the given frame of reference” necessary for any utilitarian activity, allowing the soul to perceive the “illimitable horizon of reality as a whole” (16□17). Another essential element of festivity is the sacrifice that renders it, paradoxically, a “phenomenon of [existential] wealth” (19). Renunciation of, for example, the potential yield of the Sabbath day is only rational in light of the comprehensive affirmation that Pieper identifies as love. Because it escapes “the principle of calculating utility,” giving oneself out of love generates an “area of free surplus” even in the greatest material poverty (19□20).

Pieper also includes rejoicing among the essential attributes of festivity. Joy, however, never exists for its own sake, but follows upon the reception of something beloved: “Joy is the response of a lover receiving what he loves” (22□23). Chrysostom expresses the “inner structure of real festivity” most concisely: “Ubi caritas gaudet, ibi est festivitas” (Where love rejoices, there is festivity) (23). Man cannot experience receiving what is loved, however, “unless the world and existence as a whole represent something good and therefore beloved to him” (26). For this reason, affirmation is not simply a condition of festivity but its very substance. “To celebrate a festival means: to live out, for some special occasion and in an uncommon manner, the universal assent to the world as a whole” (30, *emph. orig.*). Fundamentally connecting festivity and affirmation, Pieper is led to the conclusion that “there can be no more radical assent to the world than the praise of God,” its Creator and that “ritual festival is the most festive form that festivity can possible take.” To refuse ritual praise is to destroy festivity (31□32).

The necessity of ritual praise does not, however, preclude the secular festival. We can

speak of the latter because “real festivity cannot be restricted to any one particular sphere of life”; it “permeates all dimensions of existence” (33). In contrast, the profane festival “is a non-concept” because true festivity entails an exchange between human and divine (34). Man offers his sacrifice of praise in ritual worship, which “is essentially an expression of the same affirmation that lies at the heart of festivity” (36–37). Here, Pieper focuses on the Mass as eucharistia, which celebrates nothing less than the “salvation of the world and of life as a whole” (38). What we see especially in the Mass is the hope of every festival, namely, that men will be given a share in divine life, renewed and lifted out of the spatio-temporal bounds of earthly life (38–43). This “fruit” of festivity, its true *raison d’être*, is “pure gift” and can never be produced by man (39–40). If he does attempt to produce his own entry into this “other” world by fending off reality rather than affirming it (through, e.g., sheer entertainment) he achieves only “pseudo-festivity” (58–59).

Pieper’s final three chapters help us discern true festivity from its falsifications. At the heart of his cultural critique is the insistence that festivity is only possible when man “accepts it as pure gift” rather than “imagining himself self-sufficient” and thus refusing “to recognize that Goodness of things which goes far beyond any conceivable utility” (71). Through vivid depictions of the French Revolution’s “bombastic,” state-instituted festivals—e.g., the “philosophical festival” in which the mayor of Paris held the Constitution “out to his fellow citizens like a monstrosity” (66)—we learn that festive affirmation is not excessive optimism with regard to achieving human happiness through social or political means (70). Nor is affirmation the exertion of human power. Whereas Revolutionary festivals suffered the “infinite boredom of utter unreality,” they had not yet achieved the “purest form of rationally calculated utility” characteristic of totalitarian governments’ festivals of human labor (65, 72). Pieper recalls the Bolshevik regime’s transformation of May 1st labor strikes into “festivals” of voluntary work (75–76). The coercive character of this “celebration”—ultimately of state power—reappears in Nazi Germany’s “striking displays of weapons of destruction” (77–79). When “festivity” becomes a mandated display of human power and self-sufficiency, what results is “the total subjection of human beings to work” and, finally, to the effort of destruction. “The artificial holiday . . . borders so dangerously on counterfestivity that it can abruptly be reversed into ‘antifestival’” (78–79).

The destruction that is antifestivity manifests itself not only in war—which Pieper considers but ultimately rejects as the modern equivalent of festivity—but also in the “will to nothingness” present, especially after Nietzsche, in the modern attitude

towards life (80–83). Pieper looks boldly upon this “affirmation of negation,” concluding that in the face of evil, only the “conviction that there is a divinely guaranteed Goodness of being” can forestall despair (82–83). Even so, seeds of true festivity remain for man in poetry and art, love uncorrupted by “delusions of sensuality,” death “accepted with . . . an unarmored heart,” and philosophy in awe before the mystery of being (85–86). The book concludes hopefully: “Because the festive occasion pure and simple, the divine guarantee of the world and of human salvation, exists and remains true continuously, we may say that in essence one single everlasting festival is being celebrated” (86).

Basing festivity on the affirmation of creation, Pieper’s book accords with magisterial teaching on integral ecology. Both festivity and concern for “our common home” are grounded in receiving creation “as a gift from the outstretched hand of the Father of all and as a reality illuminated by . . . love” (*Laudato Si’*, 76). There is a great deal of overlap between Pieper’s call to festivity and Pope Francis’s spirituality of praise inspired by each creature’s “singing the hymn of its existence” (LS, 85; cf. 69, 87). In fact, if the pope defines ecology as the study of the relation between living beings and their environment (LS, 138), Pieper’s study of festivity could perhaps be considered a “creaturely ecology”: a study of living beings joyfully affirming their world as gift. Moreover, the pope’s treatment of sacramental worship harmonizes with Pieper’s: the Sabbath rest, “centered on the Eucharist,” includes the “pledge of the final transfiguration of all created reality”—and hence God’s affirmation of creation by bringing it to eternal rest in himself (LS, 237). In this way, “Christian spirituality incorporates the value of relaxation and festivity” (LS, 237).

Pieper makes a strong case for festivity as praise of God and his creation even while proffering evidence of its susceptibility to corruption. It seems that the greatest difficulty for Pieper’s notion of festivity is that of affirmation itself: what is the final justification for saying yes to all in the face of evil, in a world where goodness is so often rejected? Pieper gives us the principles with which to answer this question but leaves us with the “intellectually and existentially extremely demanding task of facing naked reality” (82–83). Yet our affirmation is not unprecedented, for it always follows upon the “divine assent to Creation. . . . We cannot conceive a more radical . . . justification of the essential goodness of all reality than this, that God Himself, in bringing things into being, affirms and loves these very same things” (47). Here, Pieper’s “underlying assumption” of all things’ being made whole in Christ seems essential (38). Through the Incarnation, God permits us to seek him in unexpected places and thus enables us to hope: we can realistically expect to find the true cause of

festivity in every corner of creation. Festivity, then, is possible not because of a blanket affirmation that overlooks reality but because of the real communication of divine goodness, the light that shines in the darkness.[2]

[1] Francis, *Homily at Midnight Mass for the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord*, December 24, 2016.

[2] “It is in the Eucharist that all that has been created finds its greatest exaltation. . . . The Lord, in the culmination of the mystery of the Incarnation, chose to reach our intimate depths through a fragment of matter. He comes, not from above, but from within, he comes that we might find him in this world of ours. In the Eucharist, fullness is already achieved; it is the living center of the universe, the overflowing core of love and of inexhaustible life” (LS, 236).

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# I Am My Animal Body

APOLONIO LATAR

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MacIntyre, Alasdair, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Open Court, 1999).

A picture of a human being that our modern moral language and modern institutions presuppose, a picture that goes back to Descartes, Kant, and Adam Smith, has held us captive: that of an autonomous rational individual. It is rationality, we are told, that makes a human being different from other animals. Heavy emphasis on this distinguishing factor allowed rationality to be thought of as separate from a human person's animality. What we are left with is a picture of a human being detached from one's bodily existence and therefore forgetful of how one's dependency and animality are essential to being rational. It is this picture that Alasdair MacIntyre, a well-known critic of modernity, criticizes in *Dependent Rational Animals*, developing and correcting his thoughts from his earlier writings to provide an ethics grounded in the metaphysical biology of the human person. What MacIntyre tries to undermine is "the cultural influence of a picture of human nature according to which we are animals and in addition something else. We have, on this view, a first animal nature and in addition a second distinctively human nature" (49–50). He provides a picture of a human being that allows us to think of rationality in a way that is not separated from animal nature.

One reason why philosophers detach the human person from her animality is because exaggerated attention has been paid to what distinguishes human beings and nonhuman animals, namely, language (12). This exaggeration partly comes from a misunderstanding of nonhuman animals, especially intelligent nonhuman animals. MacIntyre counters such an exaggeration by relying on modern scientific animal research, especially of dolphins, to show the resemblance between humans and nonhuman intelligent animals. The extensive studies done about dolphins reveal the numerous similarities between them and humans, making them the perfect example for his proposal. So what do we find in dolphins? They "live together in groups and herds with well-defined social structures," "they excel at vocal learning and

communicate with one another in a variety of ways,” “they are subject to fear and stress,” “they are purposive, they are playful, and they engage purposefully in play,” not to mention that they hunt together and even interact with other animals such as humans (21–22). Furthermore, those who had the privilege of interacting with dolphins have concluded that they possess abilities such as “perception, perceptual attention, recognition, identification and reidentification,” as well as “having and exhibiting desire and emotion, of making judgments, of intending this and that, of directing their actions towards ends that constitute their specific goods and so having reasons for acting as they do” (27). This leads MacIntyre to conclude that dolphins, like many other intelligent animals, have thoughts, beliefs, and reasons for their actions.

Such a conclusion is controversial since many philosophers, especially from the analytic tradition, do not ascribe thoughts, beliefs, and practical reasons to animals because they do not possess language. Yet, the lack of linguistic capabilities is not sufficient for MacIntyre to conclude that intelligent nonhuman animals do not have thoughts, beliefs, or practical reasons. Take John Searle’s example of a dog barking at a cat in a tree. The dog stops barking at the tree and then runs towards the neighbor’s yard. The reason is because the dog saw and smelled the cat run into the neighbor’s yard. This is an example of a dog changing its beliefs because of what it perceived. In this example, it seems that language is unnecessary to ascribe belief to the dog. It seems that there is an elementary capacity that a dog has: the ability to distinguish between truth and falsity based on perception (36). MacIntyre calls such a capacity “prelinguistic,” a capacity that he finds in human infants before they can linguistically articulate their beliefs. It is better, MacIntyre contends, to think of other nonhuman intelligent animals as prelinguistic rather than nonlinguistic. Prelinguistic capacities are sufficient to ascribe thoughts, beliefs, and reasons for actions to animals just as they are sufficient to ascribe thoughts, beliefs, and reasons for actions to human infants. These capacities, such as being able to recognize, distinguish, classify, identify, etc., are what humans share with other intelligent animals, and humans never outgrow these capacities but depend on them constantly even when they are able to use language. To reflect linguistically about reasons for a human action, for example, is to reflect on prelinguistic reasons for such an action. “It is because,” as MacIntyre contends, “any exercise of the power to reflect on our reasons for action presupposes that we already have such reasons about which we can reflect, prior to our reflection” (56). These reasons that are reflected on emerge from prelinguistic or animal capacities and there is never a time in this present life when a human person can detach herself from them. Rather, these animal capacities are the precondition of human rationality. Human rationality, then, is conceived as being dependent on

prelinguistic or animal capacities; animal intelligence is intrinsic to human rationality.

To admit the intrinsic relationship between human rationality and animality does not mean that there are no differences between humans and other intelligent animals. Human beings are able to, through language, reflect on their reasons for their actions (56), detach themselves from immediate desires (68), and imagine alternative possible futures (74–75). These are what MacIntyre calls the capacities of independent practical reasoners (83); and the exercise of these capacities is essential to human flourishing. Yet, humans do not lose their animal condition even with these specific human capacities. The development of just such unique capacities, therefore, requires understanding human beings in the condition that they share with other intelligent animals. Dolphins, for example, are vulnerable to sickness, injury, danger, and other disabilities; they are not, therefore, able to flourish without the help of other dolphins. Humans are no less different in that they too are vulnerable to disability and require the help of others to flourish as humans.

Moral philosophers too often conceive of the human person as an independent adult related to other independent adults. Childhood and old age seem to be neglected, as if these are moments when humans are less human because they do not exercise middle-aged capacities. Any kind of disability, a disability that ruins the image of an independent self-sufficient adult, seems to be thought of as secondary to human nature. However, disability, according to MacIntyre, is not a property of an unfortunate class of people that simply requires the sympathy of those who are healthy and self-reliant. Disability is what humans share with other intelligent animals and with each other insofar as they are embodied beings. He says, “Disability is a matter of more or less, both in respect of degree of disability and in respect of the time periods in which we are disabled. And at different periods of our lives we find ourselves, often unpredictably, at very different points on that scale” (73). A proper understanding of a human being (including at its highest levels) and her flourishing requires acknowledging her vulnerability, those that she shares with other nonhuman intelligent animals and those that are specific to being human such as “autism, anxiety-engendering insecurity, conditions that render a child unable to control its aggression, too much fear, insufficient hopefulness” (72). When we acknowledge these disabilities, we begin to see that becoming a practical independent reasoner depends largely on others who help her exercise human specific capacities in the disabled condition she finds herself.

Take the example of the growth of a child. A child, like other intelligent nonhuman



animals, receives care from the network of relationships she finds herself in. She, like other intelligent animals, has immediate bodily needs such as food, warmth and security, and sleep. But in order for her to become an independent practical reasoner, it is essential that she is able to (linguistically) evaluate the reasons for her actions, distancing herself from her immediate desires so as to evaluate what good is to be done in a particular situation. Even the development of this specific human capacity requires the help of others, indeed even more so. What the child needs is someone who is able to teach her that there are goods beyond the satisfaction of immediate desires. For example, she will need to be taught to give up her immediate desire to eat chocolate every time she sees it because she recognizes the good of her health. What is necessary to redirect and transform a child's desire, according to MacIntyre, is the development of intellectual and moral virtues. And to develop these virtues, the child's parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, teachers, etc., will need to possess those virtues if they are to educate her in practicing them. To be able to teach a child temperance, for example, requires the possession of that virtue. So what we see in this example is how the development of specifically human capacities, such as being able to distance oneself from one's immediate desires, depends on others who exercise those same capacities. As MacIntyre says, "There is no point then in our development towards and in our exercise of independent practical reasoning at which we cease altogether to be dependent on particular others" (97). Rationality, the ability to reflect on reasons, is intermingled with animality (immediate desires, prelinguistic capacities, vulnerability) and dependency on others. It is what one receives from and gives to another.

What is also developed from the understanding of the vulnerability of the human person is an account of virtues that gives justice to such a condition. A proper understanding of one's vulnerability means that one can reasonably expect to receive attentive care from others (108). Along with the traditional intellectual and moral virtues, MacIntyre adds virtues of "exhibiting gratitude, courtesy towards the graceless giver, and forbearance towards the inadequate giver" (126). It is an account of virtues that does not fall into the mistake of Aristotle's idea that one who receives benefits from others is inferior to the one that gives them. Both virtues of giving and receiving are important to sustain the relationships that allow humans to develop and flourish. Acknowledgement of the human person's animal/vulnerable condition, then, allows MacIntyre to reconceive the network of relationships that is necessary for human flourishing and the virtues needed within those relationships.

The alternative picture of a human being that Alasdair MacIntyre presents is a

vulnerable rational animal whose flourishing is dependent upon receiving care and education from other vulnerable rational animals and upon giving care and education to other vulnerable rational animals. What he has provided us with, through his understanding of nonhuman intelligent animals, is an image of a human person as a creature in need. It is a conception of the human person undetached from her evolutionary and bodily history, and embedded in relationships that helps her to think of herself as being bound to her history of relationships. It reconceives human rationality as intrinsic to animality and dependency. To be a rational human being, then, is to be at home in one's animal body and in one's need of others.

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# Nature as a School of Wonder

MARIA ÁNGELES MARTÍN AND CONNIE LASHER

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Carson, Rachel, *The Sense of Wonder* (Harper and Row, 1965; reprint HarperCollins, 1998).

Rachel Carson is widely known as a seminal voice in the development of grassroots environmental movements and an inspiration for environmental activism. The 1962 publication of her ground-breaking book, *Silent Spring*, changed the course of sociological and environmental history not only in America and Europe, but indeed, throughout the world, through its translation into nearly 30 languages. In *Silent Spring*, Carson pointed out the harmful consequences for public health and the environment of the indiscriminate use of DDT. The success of the book was based upon a meticulously researched compilation of evidence documenting the danger of its use, conveyed in a compelling literary style that rendered scientific language accessible to a general public. In *Silent Spring*, Carson questioned the limits of technology, exposed the risks of DDT due to a lack of normative precaution, and urged her readers to recover the deep relation between man and nature as an urgent, if unrealized, social issue. As an early biographer of Carson has put it, “Eight years after its publication, an editorial writer remarked: ‘A few thousand words from her, and the world took a new direction.’”<sup>[1]</sup>

But it was another book, a comparatively “little” essay—“the wonder book,” as Carson once called it—which was dearest to her heart, a personal credo. Taking its place alongside *Silent Spring* as among Carson’s most recognized texts, *The Sense of Wonder* has inspired environmental educators and conservationists, scientists and ecologically-concerned citizens, for decades; however, its importance for religious communities, its consonance with the Church’s teachings on the integral development of the person—indeed, an integral ecology—is what the authors of this review wish to emphasize. It is our hope that, upon reading “the wonder book,” the profound significance of this quiet woman’s legacy to all people of goodwill will become evident.

In a 1954 address to the Sorority of Women Journalists, Carson offered a statement of the “creed” underlying the “preoccupation with the wonder and beauty of the earth

[that] has strongly influenced the course of my life.”[2]

I am not afraid of being thought a sentimentalist when I stand here tonight and tell you that I believe natural beauty has a necessary place in the spiritual development of any individual or any society. I believe that whenever we destroy beauty, or whenever we substitute something man-made and artificial for a natural feature of the earth, we have retarded some part of man’s spiritual growth.... [T]here is in us a deeply seated response to the natural universe, which is part of our humanity.

The book *The Sense of Wonder* was originally an article commissioned by the magazine *Woman's Home Companion* entitled “Help Your Child to Wonder” (1956), and was published posthumously in 1965 by Harper & Row. Carson ardently hoped to expand this essay into a book before her death, considering it the heart of her legacy. But she did not live to develop the essay as she wished, her health rapidly weakening, and her remaining time and energy under unrelenting assault by the controversy aroused by the publication of *Silent Spring* (aggressively spearheaded by the petrochemical industry). She died of metastatic breast cancer at age 56, an intensely private and humble woman thrust into the very public storm of *Silent Spring*’s advent, but this, ultimately, in service to the beauty and wonder that had sustained her life.

*The Sense of Wonder* is a book of reflections and experiences inspired by Carson’s own devotion to sharing nature with children. Upon the death of her sister, she adopted her young nephew, Roger. Rachel, who never married or had children, delighted in sharing what she loved most with the little boy, the birdsong-filled forests and the rocky beaches of her beloved home in Maine. When Roger was only 20 months old, they began their adventures together. The simple and enthusiastic “welcome” of the experience of nature by the baby captivated Carson. The force of the waves, the noise of the wind, the smell of the sea, the darkness of the night, produced not fear in the child, but quite the opposite:

One stormy autumn night when my nephew Roger was about twenty months old I wrapped him in a blanket and carried him down to the beach in the rainy darkness. Out there, just at the edge of where-we-couldn’t-see, big waves were thundering in, dimly seen white shapes that boomed and shouted and threw great handfuls of froth at us. Together we laughed for pure joy—he a baby meeting for the first time the wild tumult of Oceanus, I with the salt of half a lifetime of sea love in me. But I think we felt the same spine-tingling response to

the vast, roaring ocean and the wild night around us.

The ability to be amazed, Carson reminds us, is a sense that we all possess. Any of us who have been with a baby or toddler have witnessed the natural-ness of this sense. Wonder, in its innocence, draws forth curiosity, and desire to discover a world that is perceived not as foreign, but as companion. Carson recognized this early wonder as a central feature of the original developmental state through which a child must be helped to approach the world—through the loving companionship of an adult. The early experience with Roger instilled in Carson the certainty that once astonishment awakens, it becomes integral to a child’s capacity to encounter the ever-greater mystery of life itself.

It may be salutary at this point to recall that the Swiss Catholic theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar wrote at length about the way in which a child’s exposure to the natural world, represents a kind of existential tutorial in the structure of reality, and a formation in learning to see, and learning to love. The Christian, he says, must become “cosmoform”—attuned to the mystery and beauty of nature’s forms, keeping nature as an irreplaceable “touchstone,” a source of wonder which confronts us with the glory and abundance of Being, not comprehended abstractly, but through concrete experience, as he says, of “beetles and butterflies” and the miraculous variety of nature’s forms, beginning, though, first with the mother, as Balthasar insists:

If [a child] can only become truly himself when awakened by the love of someone else, then he will become a knowing, self-comprehending, and reflecting spirit insofar as he gives himself, in love and trust, i.e. in faith, to the other person. And the more profoundly he learns through this act of surrender what existence and Being itself are, then the more [this] can create a new surrender, which is now a venturing forward in trust on the basis of experiential knowledge.... Whoever grasps this can also open himself receptively to subhuman nature and, thus, learn things from natural beings—from landscapes, plants, animals, stars—which a purely cognitive [abstract] attitude never discovers. The depth of the significant shapes of nature, the meaning of its language, the extent of its words of revelation, can only reveal themselves to one who has opened himself up receptively to them.[3]

The spiritual, developmental, and moral significance of the childhood experience of the natural world, so central to Balthasar, goes to the very heart of Carson’s life and legacy, both as writer and scientist.

A sense of the beautiful, the excitement of the new and the unknown, a feeling of sympathy, pity, admiration or love—then we wish for knowledge about the object of our emotional response. Once found, it has lasting meaning.... (56)

It is possible to compile extensive lists of creatures seen and identified without ever once having caught a breath-taking glimpse of the wonder of life. If a child asked me a question that suggested even a faint awareness of the mystery behind the arrival of a migrant sandpiper on the beach of an August morning, I would be far more pleased than by the mere fact that he knew it was a sandpiper and not a plover.(94)

Wonder is not a mere sentiment; it is the beginning of recognition. For Carson, only wonder knows. The world, that is, is known through the humble receptivity wrought by wonder. Without this, science devolves into domination. Carson's "wonder book" carries with it, in nuce, what she warned of elsewhere: that individualistic, relativistic and technocratic thinking that transforms nature into a mere possession. For Carson, the stakes are high, for the loss of a "piety of nature" not only extinguishes the "meaning behind the mystery" we intuit in the annual arrival of a lone sandpiper traversing the shoreline on a misty evening; it threatens the theological integrity of Christianity itself and the credibility of its witness to non-believers who abide in wonder, in existential resistance to the "logic" of contemporary culture's deformations.[4]

For Rachel Carson it was ultimately the family that was to guarantee a "piety of nature" and with it the full development of our humanity.[5] It is the mother and the father who are to help their children to wonder.

A child's world is fresh and new, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring is dimmed or even lost before we reach adulthood. If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life as an unailing antidote against the boredom and the disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength. If a child is to keep alive his inborn sense of wonder without any such gift from the fairies, he needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with him the joy and excitement and mystery of the world we live in. (54-55)

In 2003, Pope Saint John Paul II said: “The drama of contemporary culture is the lack of interiority, the absence of contemplation.”[6] That was the visionary point of Rachel Carson, expressed in *The Sense of Wonder* five decades ago. That work has inspired persons of goodwill worldwide, for generations, and it is a worthy addition to the library of any Catholic who comprehends the significance of Balthasar’s warning, that “[t]he supernatural is not there in order to supply that part of our natural capacities we have failed to develop.”[7] In this regard, Rachel Carson’s “little” “wonder book” invites Catholic families to reconsider cultivating in their children a “piety of nature” through concrete experiences of nature so as to foster in children the “resilience” required in striving toward a civilization of love.

[1] Paul Brooks, *Speaking for Nature: How Literary Naturalists from Henry Thoreau to Rachel Carson Have Shaped America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980), xvi.

[2] Rachel Carson, “The Real World Around Us,” in *Lost Woods*, 160, 162.

[3] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Man in History: A Theological Study* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1968), 93–94.

[4] Here we recall Benedict XVI’s [discussion with priests from the Diocese of Bolzano-Bressanone](#), August 6, 2008.

[5] “Only as a child’s awareness and reverence for the wholeness of life are developed can his humanity to his own kind reach its full development” (Carson, *Lost Woods*, 194).

[6] John Paul II, “Meeting with Young People,” [Air Base of Cuatro Vientos in Madrid](#), Saturday 3, May 2003.

[7] *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1, *Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 29.

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# The Sustaining Gaze: Mother's Milk

MARY SHIVANANDAN

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Palmer, Gabrielle, *The Politics of Breastfeeding* (London, UK: Pandora Press, 1993).

Martucci, Jessica, *Back to the Breast: Natural Motherhood and Breastfeeding in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

Kippley, Sheila M., *Breastfeeding and Catholic Motherhood: God's Plan for You and Your Baby* (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 2005).

## Breastfeeding and the Environment

Both Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis have made strong statements on the threat to the environment as well as to human society from a consumerist mentality, from the politics of waste to the degradation of the human condition. Both refer to a “human ecology” which is a necessary counterpoint to concern for the natural environment. So Pope Francis affirms: “If everything is related, then the health of a society’s institutions has consequences for the environment and the quality of human life” (*Laudato Si'*, 142). For as Pope Benedict says, quoted by Pope Francis, “man too has a nature that he must respect and cannot manipulate” (LS, 155). This nature is expressed in our bodies. “Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its full meaning is an essential element of a genuine human ecology” (LS, 155). In *Caritas in veritate*, Pope Benedict refers especially to issues of conception, gestation and birth.

The book of nature is one and indivisible: it takes in not only the environment but also life, sexuality, marriage, the family, social relations, in a word integral human development. Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. (CV, 51)

What is surprising, then, is that neither in *Caritas in veritate* nor in *Laudato Si'* is there mention of breastfeeding with its contributions on the material level to the



prevention of waste from plastic bottles, and on the human level to the bonding of mother and child at the heart of the family.

Fortunately, there are voices who address this lacuna. They are the recent *The Politics of Breastfeeding* by Gabrielle Palmer,<sup>[1]</sup> *Back to the Breast: Natural Motherhood and Breastfeeding in America* by Jessica Martucci, and the classic *Breastfeeding and Catholic Motherhood: God's Plan for You and Your Baby* by Sheila M. Kippley.

## Gabrielle Palmer

Palmer ends her book on a pessimistic note:

The hardest thing about writing this book has been coping with my own despair as I confront the facts of human 'progress.' It is not simply breastfeeding that is destroyed before it has even begun to flow, but oxygen-giving, climate-maintaining forests, the food abundant sea and the fertile earth. All the wealth, beauty and resilience that nature has provided for so long is being damaged irretrievably. (302)

What is Palmer's evidence for this state of affairs? She asserts that 3,000 babies die daily from bottle feeding. From the mid-19th century when milk substitutes were discovered, bottle feeding gradually came into its own. It was fueled by the industrial revolution, which saw many rural families migrate to the cities to work in factories. It was also advanced by technological innovation, which created a surplus of cow's milk and its pasteurization. The wealthier classes had always resorted to wet nurses, but this was the first time breast milk even of wet nurses became unnecessary. Palmer devotes a section to profits from bottle feeding. In 1991, it was estimated that "US \$7 billion worth of baby milk is sold each year, which is around US \$19 million or 380,000 tins a day" (24). That was expected to reach US \$20.2 billion by 2010. Four hundred and fifty million tins of formula are needed to feed 3 million babies bottled formula, resulting in 70,000 tons of metal, which are not adequately recycled in developing countries. While commercial entities are the main beneficiaries of the profits, Palmer charges that doctors and nutritionists are also investors. "A baby milk market was created in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and was conceived through the mutual attraction of the manufacturers and the doctors" (199). It followed the move from home to hospital births. As we shall see in reviewing Martucci's book, bottle feeding provides nurses, doctors and hospitals much more control.

Palmer gives the case for breastfeeding forcefully. Not only does breastfeeding, which provides a period of amenorrhea after birth,

prevent more births worldwide than all other forms of contraception . . . what is clear is that the West's export and promotion of artificial baby foods, together with the grosser errors in infant feeding techniques disseminated by health workers, have had a serious effect on birth spacing, which is a key factor in both demographic trends and in the well-being of individual women. (106)

Breastmilk, furthermore, provides all the nutrients necessary for infant growth and health. It contains anti-infective properties and changes according to the needs of the infant. In fact, no supplemental foods are necessary for six months. Breastfeeding also provides psychological and emotional benefits. It is the act of breastfeeding not the breast milk per se that provides the closeness between mother and baby.

Why then did women give up what was best for both mother and child? With the advent of bottle feeding and the medicalization of birth, women lost confidence in their own bodies. Palmer views such abandonment as not truly serving women's freedom and links it to relations between men and women. Men have been known to forbid their wives to breastfeed. Palmer writes that "A lot of honest men admit they are jealous of breastfeeding babies and their mothers; it is something that men cannot do and it makes them feel excluded" (84). At the same time, work became separated from the home with industrialization and women reacted to this apartheid. Palmer calls this separation "abnormal" and points out that it has not always been so in the West and neither is it in much of the developing world.

Palmer's book touches on many of the vital links between breastfeeding and a human ecology: the waste of a valuable resource, the pollution of the environment when plastic bottles and tins are not adequately recycled, the reduction of the mother-child bond, the loss of women's confidence in their bodies, the separation of work and motherhood and the aggravation of demographic issues by the loss of amenorrhea due to breastfeeding. It remains for Jessica Martucci to show how the compromise that has been reached in the United States—that is, a return to breastfeeding and, at the same time, widespread resort to breast pumping—is not truly a human ecology. This is because breastfeeding (vs. pumping) is holistic and a split between the material aspect of breast milk and bonding is no real solution.

Jessica Martucci

Right at the beginning, Jessica Martucci lays out her perspective: “The history behind breastfeeding’s return reveals the important intersection between the experiential knowledge of mothers and the scientific expertise of professionals in the medical and human sciences” (3). She then refers to an “ideology” of natural motherhood which is constructed around “a new understanding of nature, one built around a science of instinct, evolutionary principles and a revolving consciousness of the relationship between the natural world and that of humans, particularly women” (3). In other words we are talking about an Enlightenment anthropology, in which nature is malleable and not the creation of a loving God ordered to communion. Martucci, who subscribes to this anthropology, notes that this “ideology” of motherhood is linked with the burgeoning environmentalist and feminist movements (including its lesbian strains). She recalls the return to breastfeeding as both the path to female pride and its Achilles’ heel since the rise in breastfeeding coincided with a conservative critique of women’s place outside the home. The breast pump was promoted to working women so that “‘I’m breastfeeding’ came to mean ‘I’m breast pumping’” (5). In fact, she charges that “feminist ambivalence over how to deal with breastfeeding ironically helped entrench natural motherhood with conservative arguments in favor of ‘traditional’ family values” (8).

In the late 1930s and 1940s bottle feeding was the norm. It was only in 1956 that a group of middle class Catholic mothers in a suburb of Chicago founded La Leche League in support of breastfeeding. In the 1970s, breastfeeding caught the attention of feminists and the “ideology” of “natural motherhood” was born. The next chapter title refers to “The Death of the Moral Mother and the Rise of the Biological ‘Mom’” (17). As Martucci chronicles, natural biological motherhood is in direct conflict with feminist ideals such as promoting women’s work outside the home, childcare and reproductive rights. Postwar research by Bowlby underscored the importance of having a loving consistent female caregiver, preferably the mother, looking after the child. There was much discussion of maternal deprivation, not just in orphanages. The initiation of breastfeeding rose from 22% in the 1970s to 60% in 1984. Women found they enjoyed breastfeeding. In fact, research by Niles Newton showed that the same pleasure is activated in breastfeeding as in conjugal intercourse. Added to this was the growing interest in ecology; although the disputed charge of contamination of breast milk from toxins in the environment favored homogenized cow’s milk that harbored fewer toxins. Yet “Despite its faltering start, “[B]reastfeeding would emerge again as a central, if not highly contested, component of maternal identity by the turn of the century” (138–39).

The return to breastfeeding meant that power relations within the family were affected. Breastfeeding encouraged a particular kind of family. Although it was traditional with the mother at home, husbands were called upon to help out. In the postwar U.S., Martucci notes, the husband/wife relation gradually came to have an overemphasis on conjugal intercourse such that the breast was eroticized more than in other eras. Putting the baby to the breast upset this postwar order.

An important part of Martucci's book is her discussion of the emergence of "scientific motherhood" which began to flourish at the mid-point of the last century. Martucci describes "scientific motherhood" as encompassing "an interventionist, medical and technology driven model of maternal and childcare that rested upon the expertise of scientifically trained professionals as authorities and guides" (59). In that context, doctors who favored breastfeeding were up against the reality that it required individualized care, which scientific medicine was ill-equipped to provide.

Pediatricians and general practitioners were more comfortable with the control bottle feeding provided; mixing formulas was considered a science while breastfeeding was an art requiring "tactile knowledge and the cultivation of bodily intuition" (80). The La Leche League had a major goal of winning over the medical and nursing profession. The League actively campaigned to overcome the resistance of doctors and especially nurses, whose routine was interrupted by the nursing mother. Eventually many nurses, who had breastfed their own children, tried to influence their own profession by encouraging rooming-in practices in hospitals.

Personal experience was an important factor in affecting how nurses responded to the breastfeeding mother. Indeed, as Martucci notes, "breastfeeding offered nurses the opportunity for greater professional authority" (128), this could be, for example, by becoming a lactation consultant. This new authority, however, eventually came at the expense of the mother-baby bond. By the 1980s, the new profession of lactation consultant relied heavily on breast pumps. Lactation consultants formed their own organization, the International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA). At first relations between this new group and the older La Leche League were friendly and cooperative, but "territorialism quickly acted to distance ILCA's professionals from LLL's lay people" (190), who thought that "the baby is the very best 'pump'" (188). The ILCA rejected the "traditional motherhood" philosophy of LLLI, which they considered "rigid," opting instead for "cultural motherhood." Eventually the lactation consultant came to view the breast pump as "the most natural alternative to breastfeeding" (195). This created a new market for breast pumps. The lactation consultant became identified with breast pump technology.

In 1984 the US Surgeon General C. Everett Koop promoted research on the benefits of breastfeeding, which drew in the American Association of Pediatrics and other medical associations. Since that time, breastfeeding has become increasingly acceptable among both mothers and members of the medical profession. However, coupled with “scientific motherhood,” this new acceptance was focused almost exclusively on the nutritional benefits of breastfeeding and not the bonding benefits. As one commentator, who remarked on the plethora of articles on lactation appearing in professional journals, noted: “If one categorizes these articles by topic, it is clear that the larger group focuses on breastmilk as a product” (196–97). Palmer “overtly linked the use of breastfeeding technologies with a process of medicalization and ‘the destruction of knowledge that was common to all’” (197). This brings us to the book by Sheila Kippley, *Breastfeeding and Catholic Motherhood: God’s Plan for You and Your Baby*.

## Sheila Kippley

In the introduction of her book, Sheila Kippley says that it is addressed to Catholics and that she hopes “to show how breastfeeding is an integral part of the vocation of Christian motherhood” (xi). She goes on: “the mother makes a covenant with, or unspoken commitment to her baby through the devoted task of breastfeeding him over a period of time” (xii). The book begins with the emphasis on the health benefits of breastfeeding for both mother and baby following from three key principles: on-demand, exclusive breastfeeding for six months, ecological breastfeeding for at least one year, and mother’s consistent loving care. Kippley notes that this requires a mother to be at home, which in Western industrialized nations is practically “heroic,” as John Paul II had said. But, she insists, it is during these early years that a child develops the capacity to trust. Chapter Four shows how breastfeeding is a continuation of pregnancy and in Chapter Five, Kippley compares physical and psychological aspects of breastfeeding to the marriage act: “The woman offers her body to her husband in the marriage act and to her baby in the breastfeeding act” (47). Following John Paul II, she finds in both the union of two orders, the order of nature and the order of the person. In both acts the woman is making a gift of self. Chapter Six links what she calls ecological breastfeeding (i.e., exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months) to natural conception regulation. (Kippley distinguishes between cultural breastfeeding, exclusive and ecological. Only ecological breastfeeding provides amenorrhea beyond six months.) Together with her husband John, Sheila has been a pioneer in the sympto-thermal method of natural family planning. Since ecological breastfeeding provides a period of amenorrhea, they classify it as one of the

two methods of birth spacing, with breastfeeding being the primary method.

## Concluding Thoughts

This brings us to final thoughts on the comparison between the acceptance by the medical profession of both breastfeeding and natural conception regulation. It would seem from Jessica Martucci's book that a compromise was reached endorsing breastmilk as a product which could be delivered in a technological way via breast pump, thus allowing control by the medical profession, including nurses and the new profession of lactation consultants. This compromise also solves the problem of mothers with infants who work outside the home. In contrast, the largely lay, experiential La Leche League, founded originally by Catholic mothers, favors what is seen in the secular world as an "ideology" of natural motherhood. This half-way return to breastfeeding, as outlined by Martucci, was rightly rejected by the La Leche League, which understood that breastmilk alone wasn't sufficient for infant or maternal well-being; rather, the bonding arising uniquely from breastfeeding and natural mothering was crucial to the well-being of both mother and child.

Many of the same issues spoken of here can be seen in the practice of natural family planning (NFP). In fact, as Martucci points out, the breastfeeding mother upends the modern focus on the conjugal relation. By becoming a producer not a consumer, the breastfeeding mother also gains more salience in the family. In responsible parenthood—which involves the practice of NFP, the focus also changes so that a real partnership can develop between husband and wife, with the woman affirmed as a person by her husband's willingness to forego intercourse temporarily for the good of his wife and children. Ultimately, both NFP and breastfeeding are ordered to communion. But these psychological and even spiritual benefits cannot be brought about by a strictly medical approach. If natural family planning is valued simply for being a form of family planning without drugs or devices, it is in danger of becoming a "product" with the additional use of drugs or devices during the period of abstinence. In other words it loses its value as a family and community building method.

All three books show the benefits and challenges of breastfeeding for a true human ecology, which society as well as the Church have yet to take fully into account.

[1] Pages in this article are referenced from the second edition, published by Pandora Press (London, UK) in 1993. A newer revised edition was published by Pinter and Martin (London, UK: 2009) as *The Politics of Breastfeeding: When Breasts are Bad for Business*. This revised edition gives credit to those who are seeking to remedy the

situation, particularly through various declarations and documents of support.

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