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Issues in Family, Culture & Science

HOME AND FAMILY

A Mother's Work

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HOME AND FAMILY

A Mother's Work

This issue is the first of a three-part series on the theme of "Home and the Family." Here we reflect on the meaning, challenges and joys of motherhood, examine the impact of day care on young children and take part in the recent debate on "work–life balance," as sparked by Sheryl Sandberg's Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead and Anne-Marie Slaughter's influential article on the same topic in The Atlantic.

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BOOK REVIEW

Modern Woman

MICHEALA VAN VERSENDAAL

Danielle Crittenden, *What Our Mothers Didn't Tell Us: Why Happiness Eludes the Modern Woman* (Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1999, 191 pages).

In a book that seeks to enumerate and explore the problems of the modern woman, Crittenden evaluates the basic assumptions of feminism and what she believes it has won for women of her generation, offering solutions where she thinks it has failed them. The main assumptions she criticizes are: that women are free and unhurt in open sexual relations; that women should protect their autonomy over and against the identity of being a wife and/or mother; and that women find deepest satisfaction in a career.

The author deeply believes that feminism has advanced the cause of women in all spheres of life, but also correctly sees that not everything "won" for women has increased their happiness. She argues that these now deeply ingrained assumptions given to our culture by feminism have left women in a predicament: "The modern problem with no name is, I believe, exactly the reverse of the old one: While we now recognize that women are human, we blind ourselves to the fact that we are also women. If we feel stunted and oppressed when denied the chance to realize our human potential, we suffer every bit as much when cut off from those aspects of life that are distinctly and uniquely female" (p. 22). This work frequently discusses the sexual difference and its importance in understanding what can truly be thought of as advances for women. Without recognizing the very real differences between men and women, the author argues, advancements made on behalf of women will not be, in reality, good for women as women.

Throughout the book, it often seems that the author is suggesting a middle-ground. The old ways of courtship, marriage, and parenthood are gone, but perhaps some of what they gave to women can be recaptured. Crittenden spends a significant part of her book writing about what can be summed up as a cultural emphasis on female selfishness in the name of autonomy. She writes, "We must understand the trade-off of every action we take.... If we wish to live for ourselves and think only about ourselves, we will manage to retain our independence but little else" (p. 189). The author gives significant credence to the capacity of children for calling men

and women out of mutual selfishness in the name of independence. “The moment you take children seriously, however, the entire dynamic [of the marriage] changes…. Whether the new arrangement is strictly ‘fair’ to any individual within it ceases to be important, or becomes less important than whether it is ‘best’ or ‘right’ for the family as a whole” (p. 97). The facade of complete autonomy fades in the face of doing what is good and right for the family as a whole.

Although the author courageously attempts to confront some core tenets of feminism, she starts from a feminist perspective on men, contraception, and children. She cannot step far enough back from these to gain a deep perspective on the issues of sex, marriage, and children. Crittenden does not agree with major feminist thinkers that sexual license is the key to women’s happiness, but she does not elaborate on the link between contraception and sexual license or their detrimental consequences for women. Nor does she adequately consider the relation between the sexual act and the possibility of children. While many of the results of a cultural embrace of contraception are mentioned, the issue is not confronted directly. But without addressing contraception, her critiques of overwhelming sexual license and the enshrinement of female autonomy remain at a superficial level. Without addressing cohabitation, contraception, and divorce, the author can only find partial answers. Nevertheless, she does recognize that the influence of feminism causes real problems for women, and that this has something to do with why happiness eludes her.

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BOOK REVIEW

The Mother's Mission

CARLA GALDO

Sally Clarkson, *The Mission of Motherhood: Touching Your Child's Heart for Eternity* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2004, 224 pages).

"I must choose to believe that it matters that I am choosing to be with my children and slowly build their character instead of pursuing a full time career where the results of my labor may be more immediately tangible."

Mothers who are ready to agree with this statement and who already struggle to believe this every day will find much that is helpful in Sally Clarkson's book. She outlines an intensely proactive approach to the formation of both the heart and mind of one's children, with an in-depth focus on the physical, spiritual, educational, and emotional milieu of the home environment.

While Clarkson herself maintains that her priority is and always will be her spouse and children, she is far from cocooning herself within the walls of her home. Together with her husband, she founded and still leads an active ministry to families and women in particular, which involves extensive national and international travel, speaking, and writing. The trick for her, she explains, has been to include her children in much of the ministry, as an enriching and educational experience.

There is a notably Protestant flavor to Clarkson's approach to spirituality, scripture, and evangelization. Additionally, the initial analysis of why a wife and mother should be so intensely focused on the home, rather than on an outside job, may not convince the most skeptical or career-minded women. However, Catholic and Protestant mothers who are already well-committed to the endeavor of "making home" can find many practical, down-to-earth suggestions for the formation of personal habits and methods that will improve both their personal and family life.

Of particular value are the chapters "Reaching Children's Hearts for Christ" and "Building Loving Relationships with Our Children." Vague good intentions have no place in Clarkson's home – she and her husband delineated a list of twenty-four specific goals for their children:

how to learn to relate to authority and one another, how to work, the development of proper attitudes, the dispositions to strive for, how to make choices, and so on. In day-to-day life they refer to these “ways,” as they correct and guide their children. Clarkson also suggests several “relationship principles” for mothers to keep in mind as they interact with their children. Though self-evident, they bear repeating as they can get lost in the scuffle of raising and caring for children: mothers should make time to be available to their children; they should remember to give generous amounts of affirmation and encouragement; they should strive (remembering to rely on the assistance of grace) both to accept their children for who they are, and to train them in the ways of properly relating to others.

Some mothers may struggle with the overall tone of this book. Sally Clarkson has several older children and teens, and although she always states that she has her own imperfections and bad days, she relates many anecdotes of how her children have responded well to her sacrifices and her hard work, many with explicit words of thanks to her for her presence, her care, and her time. She does relate the slight flaws of their characters, but overall the lives of her children are not in crisis and are stable. Although Clarkson is not making a guarantee that hard work produces good kids, there is a dangerous implication here that could cause some discouragement for those who have troubled children, and who are most likely already asking themselves what went wrong and what they did that made their children turn out this way. Also, mothers of small children, who as a rule tend to be less aware of the endeavors that others are pursuing on their behalf, may wonder in the absence of such explicit gratitude if the good they are doing is “making a difference” at all.

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BOOK REVIEW

Most Important Job in the World

STEPHEN MCGINLEY

Ann Crittenden, *The Price of Motherhood: Why the Most Important Job in the World is Still the Least Valued* (Picador, 2010, 322 pages).

Ann Crittenden's work *The Price of Motherhood* is an attempt to demonstrate two things: first that work in America is not compatible with motherhood and, second, how work can be "made" to "fit family life" (p. xii).

To demonstrate the former she makes the following economic observation: despite the importance within economics of human capital, the job that "produces" human capital the most, motherhood, is adversely affected by two disincentives: the mommy tax and the assumption that the husband is and ought to be the breadwinner on whom the wife is totally dependent (p. 11). The mommy tax is the "lifetime income a woman can expect [to lose] by becoming a mother" (p. xii). In economic language this is called an "opportunity" cost: the cost incurred by doing one thing rather than other. She notes that our society writes this off as proper to motherhood, which is defined as an unpaid "labor of love."

Furthermore, there is a tax on women who have minimal income because they are taxed at the husbands' upper tax bracket. Married spouses cannot file as individuals, and married filing separate is not equivalent. Woman's economic dependence on man in marriage is, she argues, one of the greatest risks for poverty. Crittenden's entire argument rests on divorce arrangements where, legally, the husband can leave without almost any sacrifice to his standard of living while the wife and children are left in squalor.

In her attempt to make work fit motherhood (and motherhood fit work as we have conceived it), Crittenden suggests that the government mandate that employees have a right to a year's paid leave by employers, and that employers provide full pay and benefits for part-time workers equal to the hourly wage of full-time employees. She also suggests that the government should include under the heading "workers" unpaid people who care for anyone, making them eligible for unemployment/workers compensation "in the event of divorce… and job related injuries" (p. 263). Additionally, the government should add unpaid housework to its measure of GDP. She thinks that universal pre-school for all three- and four-year old children

is a must, because “we have seen that quality early education is beyond the means of most parents, just as most parents cannot afford the full costs of primary or secondary education” (p. 264).

According to Crittenden, the government should allow the mother at home to deduct child-care expenses when she files her taxes independently, and the government should pay every mother a certain amount each year for each child she has (because statistically mothers are far more likely to spend money on their children than fathers, who spend it often on themselves – see pp. 110-130). Furthermore, the government should pay health care costs for all children and their primary caregivers. She also suggests that marriage be divided into two tiers: the married without kids and those with kids. Among the latter, all things are to be legally owned by the family and not the “head of household.” The spouses would split all the effects of divorce equally and not equitably. A single Federal agency in charge of post-divorce payments would allow for more efficient tracking and force “deadbeat” dads who withhold payments to pay.

Finally, the community and government should support and educate parents, and people with child-care experience should be considered with “blacks, Hispanics, Asian-Americans, and women” when it comes to diversity (p. 274).

Crittenden's conception of marriage is, from the beginning, essentially shaped by divorce. This is so much the case that the middle and final chapters are centrally concerned with divorce. Economic dependency (and any other dependency for that matter) are, and cannot but be, conceived as detrimental to the person (p. 110). This oppositional understanding of the relation between the sexes is her fundamental anthropological presupposition. Not only are man and woman essentially opposed to the full flourishing of the other (even if they may sometimes work well together), but authority is essentially arbitrary (p. 48), and freedom is not ordered to the Good. Moreover, children are seen as detrimental to “future freedom” (p. 162). Freedom is therefore conceived of in indifferent and individualistic terms from the beginning. This explains her understanding that having a baby is the choice of an individual woman (though this may be influenced by other factors), and not first of God and then the spouses.

All this being the case, Crittenden’s economic argument requires qualification, since the bulk of her studies regard not healthy marriages (that is, marriages that from the beginning assume that two become one irrevocably) but “divorced” marriages. This focus results in statistical evidence that does not address good marriages but “broken” ones. In other words, her critique of marriage is not of marriage *per se*, but of marriage understood from the beginning in terms of divorce. This implies that anthropologically man and woman are best and most human when fundamentally divorced. It is the antithesis of communion in any real sense.

Moreover, Crittenden constantly refers to Sweden, Norway, and France as manifestations of her pro-feminine policies. However, these nations are even further below the replacement rate than the United States. Their “pro-family” policies have not led to an increase in progeny. This indicates, it seems to me, that what we are dealing with is not first policies, but worldview. Those nations, like America, concede that marriage ought to be understood in a fragmented way, in terms of divorce. Additionally, those nations are not economically better off than the USA (assuming of course that wealth is measured in the normal way – an assumption I would want to challenge). But my point is, that even in terms of family life, those nations are not better in obvious ways: divorce rates are high, marriage rates are low, and birth rates are significantly below the replacement rate.

Crittenden states: “We’ve gone down the path of ‘equal’ treatment and it’s gotten us so far. But

not far enough" (p. 44). Perhaps it is because of the path of equal treatment that we have not gone far enough? Perhaps it is because in order for woman to thrive in production – and because we have conceived of everything in terms of production – there is and cannot be a place for fruitfulness, in either its masculine or its feminine form. All of the cited studies address marriage or work conceived in terms of the modern worldview, in light of divorce and contraception. I would therefore propose challenging both the modern conception of marriage *qua* divorce and motherhood, fatherhood, and work *qua* production with the ideal of irrevocable faithfulness and fruitfulness.

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BOOK REVIEW

Rule of Life

CATHERINE SIENKIEWICZ

Holly Pierlot, *A Mother's Rule of Life: How to Bring Order to Your Home and Peace to Your Soul* (Sophia Institute Press, 2004, 200 pages).

When I first read Holly Pierlot's book, I was still new to marriage and family life, with only our infant daughter at home with me. I was immediately attracted to the title (could there be a title more appealing to a mother?) and I bought and read the book very quickly. However, the problems which led Pierlot to establish her own "mother's rule" didn't resonate much with me. She was a homeschooling mother of five children who felt so overwhelmed by the demands on her that she was at a breaking point. I, on the other hand, did not have the same dilemma. I was staying home full time with my six-month-old daughter, and I had a lot of time on my hands. I was already struggling with feelings of boredom, and structuring every hour of my days, as Pierlot suggested, seemed like something that would only exacerbate that problem. With a little irritation, I put the book away and forgot about it.

It was with no small sense of irony, therefore, that I read Pierlot's book again later and realized just how in sync I now was with the frustrations she described, and also with the path it led her to follow.

In *A Mother's Rule of Life*, Pierlot takes the reader into her past, sharing her tumultuous teenage and early adult years, her return to the Catholic Church after a long separation, her marriage to her husband Phillip, and the difficulties of their early married life. She comes to the point of crisis when they have five children, whom Holly is homeschooling. She feels called to educate at home, but is ready to enroll all the children in school because of the disorder and chaos she is experiencing. There just do not seem to be enough hours in the day, and her spiritual life is suffering.

Pierlot writes as a Catholic mother, for Catholic mothers. But a casual perusal of any bookstore today would testify that her crisis experience is one that many people struggle with every day, in all walks of life. There is no shortage of books trying to help us organize our precious time, our homes, our professions, and actually "get things done," as one popular secular book promises. And Pierlot's promises are similar to the ones they advertise: if you make a rule of

life, many things will improve. Your finances will be in order, your relationships will be better, your work will get done and your anxiety will decrease.

This should motivate many women to read and consider her book, which has many things to offer. It is a little bit Dave Ramsey, a little bit FlyLady, a little bit parenting guru and marriage counselor. But, as she herself points out, a desire for order and a clean house won't be enough to keep most at-home mothers committed to a fairly strict daily schedule, and her own motivation went much deeper over time. Ultimately, it was her desire truly to understand and live out her vocation as wife and mother – and a follower of Christ on the way of perfect love – that kept her focussed not just on her daily schedule of home and parenting duties, but on her greater plan of life which includes it.

Within that plan, Pierlot highlights five areas of importance which must be examined and provided for in any mother's rule of life. In order of priority they are: Prayer, Person, Partner, Parent, Provider. Much of the book is dedicated to explaining these "Five P's," why they are necessary categories, and why they must remain in that order. Throughout this part of the book, Pierlot shares many of her own mistakes and trials in all of these aspects of her vocation, as well as the inspirations – through prayer and life experience – which helped her to align her life as wife and mother to the calling that was being revealed to her.

There is a photograph on the book's cover, depicting the arching walls which form the cloister in a monastery. The title "A Mother's Rule of Life" similarly makes the connection to the Rule followed by men and women in consecrated religious life. And although the author never refers to it directly, her explanations of what falls within the scope of a mother's rule are in many ways a description of the evangelical counsels (poverty, chastity, and obedience) which are at the core of the vows of a consecrated person, and which are all directed toward the perfection of charity.

Among those who have read and considered Pierlot's book, I have met a number of women who, despite sharing the "overwhelmed" experience the author describes, cannot move past the aversion they have toward the idea of a daily schedule. Or, perhaps, they are too overburdened with their many duties and concerns to devote more energy to examining their lives and creating a rule of life. From my own experience, I can say that this is certainly an area where mothers can use more guidance, encouragement, and assistance. As Pierlot quotes from Dom Chautard's *The Soul of the Apostolate:* "Let the following conviction become deeply impressed upon your mind: namely, that a soul cannot lead an interior life without a schedule…and without a firm resolution to keep it all the time."

If there is truth in this statement, then what an important task it is for mothers to examine their time and, through thought and prayer, create and then follow a plan or rule of life. And yet what a challenge for all mothers, (and even more so for those who are homeschooling their children), for what career or vocation provides less structured time, or less direction on how to order each day? There is every reason to believe that, with the help of Pierlot's book, many mothers will be both encouraged and relieved of some of the effort of this task.

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BOOK REVIEW

Birthright

KATE IADIPAOLO

Selma Fraiberg, *Every Child's Birthright: In Defense of Mothering* (New York: Basic Books, 1977, 189 pages).

Why review a book 36 years after its publication? Perhaps because we can look forward more clearly by first looking back: this book is doubly relevant for so many parents of young children because it speaks not only about how we ought to raise our children, but also about how we ourselves were raised. The year 1977 gave us the Census data for a Current Population Survey (CPS) called *Trends in Child Care Arrangements of Working Mothers* which "addressed the issue of *childcare as a constraint on women* seeking employment" (emphasis added). This simple statement discloses much: childcare is treated as a burden to the adult, as it still is, while women (and men) are "constrained" by the high cost, inconvenience, or lack of quality care centers available. Arguably the greatest merit of Selma Fraiberg's book is that it helps us to understand this issue from the point of view of "these little ones" (Matthew 18:6), interjecting into the discussion of parental needs this simple (though jarring) statement: "the children are not faring well" (p. 154).

Many of the forces at work in the lives of children have accelerated since this book's publication. The cultural trends are similar, though now more pronounced. Employment outside the home is the norm for both parents, with more mothers working than not – even mothers with very young children. In 2000, according to a child research data publication of the Children's Defense Fund, 61% of mothers *with children under three* were in the labor force – that means millions of children under the age of three in substitute care situations. Though very often people rue the price of childcare, we very much need to focus on a different kind of cost.

Dr Fraiberg was a practicing child psychoanalyst and director of a project which treated emotionally troubled children in Michigan. In this book, she brings her experience and training to bear on the issues and outcomes related to the rearing of young children. She covers a lot of ground in the six chapters of*Every Child's Birthright,* jumping from imagined scenarios, to animal studies, to children in institutions and foster homes, to courtrooms, to the history of welfare in the US, ending with a clarion call for child advocacy. The book is saved

from utter fragmentation by the unifying thread which is Fraiberg's basic thesis: It is every child's birthright to be in a stable relationship with a caregiver – not only for the sake of meeting material needs, but also for the sake of providing the "nutriments" of love which constitute the basis of human attachments.

A particular strength of Fraiberg's book is its exploration of the formation of these basic human attachments. She explains how researchers have decoded a certain "dialogue" between baby and parents that begins at birth and continues on through the ordinary experiences of childhood in eye language, smile language, signs and signals. She then surveys some ancient traditions which have bound baby and parents together from the first hours of life. One example is found in breastfeeding: "the breast and the embrace were one for the baby," satisfying hunger and offering comfort. When breastfeeding was the norm, mother and baby were largely bound together for the first year of life, thus guaranteeing appropriate circumstances for the formation of specific human attachment. There exists a wide-ranging scientific consensus about a certain critical period of formation: "the human qualities of enduring love and commitment to love are forged during the first two years of life" (p. 3), and yet the primary institution which has faithfully guarded proper human development, the family, is not itself well protected. Fraiberg's commentary is still eerily appropriate: "We are living in times when there are voices which denigrate the human family and even cry out for its dissolution or recomposition" (p. 4).

The animal studies referenced in chapter 2 are enlightening insofar as their results find parallels in human experience. Human primal and instinctual responses to severe deprivations look very much like reactions among certain higher-order animal species. One must be careful, however, not to be reductive – bearing in mind that our distance from the animals is not simply the evolution of a more complex mind. (A quick note on the Freudian two-drive theory she applies to understand the interplay of human love and aggression: the resultant anthropological understanding of the human person, with all the obvious caveats given such a lens, demands a more thorough exploration than can be reasonably accomplished in a book review.)

The more compelling part of chapter 2 deals with clinical studies of children robbed of ordinary family life by some tragedy. The studies (carefully carried out by distinguished scientists, with the proper experimental controls) focused on children in two groups: those in institutions (with no stable human partnerships) and those raised in a succession of foster homes (who suffered ruptures of human ties in early development). An essential finding was that "children who have been deprived of mothering, and who have formed no personal human bonds during the first two years of life, show *permanent*impairment of the capacity to make human attachments in later childhood, *even when substitute families are provided for them*." The degree of impairment, she explains, "is roughly equivalent to the degree of deprivation" (p. 59, emphasis added).

Lest we as a society should downplay the significance of such findings for the average child, Fraiberg points out that it is not only in institutions and successive foster care situations that children suffer. She also mentions children raised in homes with severely depressed, psychotic, or drug-addicted mothers who were essentially absent, as well as, notably, "a baby who is stored like a package" while his mother works, who may come to know many indifferent caretakers in his critical early years. This is a very bold indictment of the largely unquestioned institution we call "day care." Child-care centers need to be examined, and even though a few might be found to be acceptable, nevertheless a child under the age of three is not well-served by them. Human attachment is not formed in a single moment or act, but by constant and repeated demonstrations of a parent's love – by prolonged intimacy with a

nurturing person. Even if one does not always correctly guess the child's need, the important thing is that a constant person is consistently responding to the child's expressive signs in some way. Children whose expressive signs are not read, due to institutional limitations or other absences, will lose the motivation to communicate their needs. If such needs are chronically unmet, the child can suffer permanent psychological damage.

An *un*attached child forms subsequent relationships on the basis of need satisfaction in which "one 'need-satisfying person' can substitute for another, quite independently of his personal qualities" (p. 60). Children unable to form attachments very often become unattached adults whose lives are also marked by transient partnerships "[s]ince no partner is valued, any one partner can be exchanged for any other" (p. 53). Long-term studies of unattached children reveal they suffer deficits in their ability to form attachments, in their conceptual thinking and language, and in their impulse control (especially as related to aggression). Sufferers of non-attachment conditions also exhibit an impoverished emotional range (no joy, grief, guilt, or remorse).

Fraiberg describes the effects such persons have on society: "These bondless men, women, and children constitute one of the largest aberrant populations in the world today, contributing far beyond their numbers to social disease and disorder. These are the people who are unable to fulfill the most ordinary human obligations in work, in friendship, in marriage, and in child-rearing" (p. 70). Indeed, in the sexual promiscuity and violent tendencies of society, isn't it possible to see the shadow of the child who was never adequately affirmed in his tender years?

Fraiberg devotes a chapter to government policy as it affects the most vulnerable families. She advises a shift in budget priorities to compensate for assaults on family life, especially on the poorest families. She decries policies that incentivize fatherless households and encourage the mothers of small children to put their own children in day care in order to work. She knows there is a role for the wider community to play, but acknowledges that the destiny of our children is forged primarily in a mother's arms. Her book serves as a review of the state of affairs then and as a comparative tool now, but it is also a cautionary tale. Children deprived of their birthright – their right to conditions which foster their growth in love – may require "the whole colossal apparatus of psychiatric clinics and remedial education" in an attempt to help them to heal and to learn and to love. This is a very great cost indeed.

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BOOK REVIEW

Needs of Children

JULIANA WEBER

T. B. and Greenspan Brazelton, *The Irreducible Needs of Children: What Every Child Must Have to Grow, Learn and Flourish* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2000, 228 pages).

The authors, a psychiatrist and a pediatrician, aim to influence public policy by defining exactly what it is that children need. Legislators cannot encourage and support what is vague and undefined, so the goal is a sensible one. Admittedly, the needs of children cover such wide territory that deciding on new public policies will often require dialogue with specialists in other fields and, probably, a grassroots movement from families after they've decided for themselves how best to meet these needs. Consequently, I would recommend the book to the general interested public on the merits of its research in human development, which can assist us to make informed choices.

The authors identify seven irreducible needs of children: (1) continuous and nurturing relationships; (2) basic physical safety, including nutrition and so forth; (3) experiences tailored to the individual child's sensitivities and interests; (4) experiences tailored to the developmental stage of the child; (5) firm and appropriate rules and expectations; (6) a community that is secure and safe enough to be reflective and collaborative in its support of children and families; and, finally, (7) a serious commitment to children internationally, since the development of, for example, our defence systems, mass communication, and interdependent economies mean that we are closely interconnected on many levels. Each need is discussed, often insightfully, in a separate chapter. Much of the text discusses areas of possible improvement for the average American family, including day-care, school, and a patchwork of services. The proposed solutions are not always well-conceived, but the research summary still has merit.

Continuous and nurturing relationships are difficult in families pressured to be over-scheduled. Dual-income households, the authors point out, and day-care centers often pay minimum wages to workers, who are burdened with the maximum number of children allowable by law. The authors do not offer suggestions on where optimal higher wages for day-care workers (or wages for more workers) might come from, but they do helpfully mention

that employers might consider more flexible work hours. The authors focus on choice and empowering families to make their own choices from a greater range of possibilities; consequently, they do not reflect on the possibility that the proliferation of choices might be part of the problem for the over-scheduled, dual-income household that is the latch-key child's crisis.

Despite this lack of reflection, there are helpful recommendations on the kind and quantity of time children need at various ages, even though the choices presented assume at the outset that most families have unalterably two working parents with only spare hours available for parenting during weekdays. The authors make important recommendations about how to reform systems like foster care and family courts and the public education system. Still, despite the limitations of the text on the research offered here, there is much food here for further thought.

There are already some noteworthy public policies which help to ensure that children avoid toxic substances like DDT and lead, the authors note (pp. 62-3). However, the rise in autism (p. 55) and other developmental problems (p. 58) indicates that other toxins or perhaps the over-use of television and video games are slowing or stunting the development of untold numbers of children. The authors' experiences lead them to recommend, in addition to further research on toxins and the possible causes of developmental difficulties, an entire public curriculum on human development, a curriculum just as important as math and science (pp. 66-7). A lifelong curriculum with hands-on experience would allow people in their 20s to have intuitive competence with their own children, helping them face parenting without fleeing to their careers for protection.

That the need for such a curriculum exists at all, now as never before, does not seem to lead the authors to question why this should be. What sounds like a sweeping revolution, a whole new public curriculum, is actually an attempt to leave intact a much larger phenomenon of small, mobile families with little intergenerational contact. Perhaps their tacit acceptance of this phenomenon is the only prudent course of action, but again, I wished for deeper reflection on the part of the authors.

In-depth examination of tailoring experiences to the individual and of development-appropriate experiences cannot be comprehensively treated in a brief and general work like this. The two chapters concerning these areas were, for me, the most insightful of the book, however. Implicitly regarding relationality as the basis of intelligence, the authors find IQ tests to be far less useful than observing how a child relates to others (p. 111). Education of a person, in their view, should result primarily in persons who relate well with others, but our current system bothers to observe only the pathologically bad cases of relationality. The authors bemoan a system that waits for not just difficulty, but for deep failure to arise before intervening (p. 101).

Since relationality is a primary goal, television as a cheap babysitter loses all credibility. As an alternative, the authors suggest minimum numbers of play dates per week for various age levels; maximum amounts of screen time; family time versus homework; and a new way of relating and prioritizing our lives. The authors also make some profound offhand comments about how a particular kind of environment might be toxic for one personality but perfect for another. I wish they had written a whole work on that.

In the chapter on the need for rules, the authors note that morality is based on either admiration or fear (p. 146), but fear-based morality remains situation specific, while admiration and respect-based morality is more stable across situations (p. 147). Children need

firm limits and empathy at all times, a need which does not require that a child's wishes always be fulfilled (p. 153). In fact, the authors maintain that maturity is about dealing with disappointments in a constructive way (p. 154). Parents can help their children with this task only within the context of a respectful, empathetic relationship, which takes much time to develop and maintain. The authors suggest two hours per night, evenly dividing the time between setting limits and bonding, which can flow naturally in and out of one another. There is no need for a rigid timer, but every day, children need time to build up the relationship and to reestablish limits (p. 155).

The sixth and seventh goals are so broad, and frankly beyond the expertise of the authors, that I didn't find these chapters very useful. For example, the authors opine that teaching the causes of war is more important than covering the facts of many wars (p. 161). From this, it would seem that the authors see value in reintroducing philosophy, perhaps ethics in public schools, but they would like to collapse it into history and make it a kind of sociology. They treat religion similarly, as something merely sociologically or psychologically important. If a religion were to limit creativity, one of the pillars of personal development for the authors, the religion would be at fault in their logic, even though the authors have elsewhere noted the need for rules and boundaries, at least for children (pp. 171-3).

Both authors helpfully append their own child development charts to the book. If only the rest of the book were so easy to read and reference. Instead, the authors include lengthy interviews between themselves, sometimes accounting for half the pages in a chapter, all in the name of sharing their "flavor of collaboration" (p. xi), whatever that means. It is doubtful whether any concerned parent or policymaker will trouble to analyze the group dynamics or thought processes of the authors. Nonetheless, they do present useful information that will help families decide what is best for their children. Obviously compassionate and informed within their fields, the authors present a valuable contribution to the field of childhood development.

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Issues in Family, Culture & Science

BOOK REVIEW

Feminism and the Market

DANIEL BLACKMAN

Neil Gilbert, *A Mother's Work: How Feminism, the Market, and Policy Shape Family Life* (Yale University Press, 2008, 228 pages).

Professor Neil Gilbert asserts three things: that the culture of capitalism undervalues the economic worth of child-rearing activities and domestic production; that prevailing feminist expectations overestimate the social and emotional benefits of labor-force participation; and that the so-called "family-friendly" policies of the welfare state create incentives that reinforce the norms and values of capitalism and feminism. Gilbert wants to "restore a sense of social admiration for motherhood," whilst not intending to denigrate mothers who raise children and work full-time.

Gilbert frames the social context of recent decades as one of revolution surrounding motherhood and women in the workplace. In 2002, almost one in five American women in their early forties was childless, almost double that of 1976. Numerous European countries find themselves in a demographic winter with below the 2.1 children per couple replacement birthrate. Italy, Spain, Austria, and Germany have total fertility rates of only 1.4 or so, while Poland and Russia struggle at 1.32 and 1.44 respectively (based on UN world population prospects report 2011) However, basing himself on recent data, Gilbert argues that there is also a small but growing "opt-out revolution" with slight declines in women entering the workplace and an increase among those choosing the homestead.

Parenting has become a market in which the role of parents is outsourced to childminders and day care centers whilst parents serve capitalist markets. Between 1991 and 2001 the proportion of three- to five-year-olds being looked after by non-parent caregivers reached 74 per cent. For Gilbert, these revolutions erode the bonds of family: "the triumph of materialism in modern times feeds the market and leaves childrearing and family life under-nourished." Where traditionalists see moral decline and the exaltation of selfishness and individualism, the revolutionary postmoderns see human liberation and the advance of freedom.

Gilbert divides women and mothers into traditional, neo-traditional, modern, and postmodern contrasexual (preferring to remain unmarried, focused on careers and personal pursuits)

categories, based on number of children or childlessness, time spent at home raising children, and time spent in the workforce. Again, Gilbert argues that modern, neo-traditional, and postmodern women who have fewer or no children, and are more focused on career and leisure, provide fertile ground for market expansion – mortgages, holidays, insurance, childcare centers, and so on. Gilbert also notes the difference in parenting between middle-class intensive parenting (more structured activities like sports and music lessons) and working-class natural growth parenting (less structured, reliant more on initiative, slower paced) traditional mothers, and the effects that non-parental childcare is having upon the educational and emotional development of children. Helpfully, Gilbert recognizes that some women are single, childless, or both, through force of circumstance rather than because of a freely made decision to embrace the contrasexual life.

Joseph Schumpeter's theory of creative destruction, first coined in his book *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, argues that the inner dynamism of capitalism pushes industries, technologies, and methods forward with newer and better products. However, with capitalist progress comes the destruction of older prior products, methods, industries and even societal institutional supports (e.g. families) and market drivers. Finally, the newer and better products, methods, and industries bring about their own demise, together with that of further societal institutions and partners, as market competitors produce ever newer, improved, and cheaper rival versions, and thus the process of creation and destruction continues.

Gilbert utilizes this theory to shape his presentation on the outsourcing of parenting and family life (though he notes a pure cost-benefit analysis is not sufficient; the emotional and psychic "income" of motherhood having an important yet difficult-to-quantify influence). Everything from caring for children and preparing meals, to commercial sperm banks, trading in ovaries, and wombs for hire, indicates that "the capitalist process of creative destruction has moved into the productive and reproductive functions of motherhood." In this way capitalist culture subverts domesticity – but so does the socialist doctrine propounded by Marx and Engels. Some of communism's first fruits included liberal laws on abortion and divorce. Gilbert claims that several modern governments have embraced communism's quest for egalitarianism through certain family-friendly policies, which in his view indicates the subversion of socialism by feminism, although ironically the same feminism ends up advancing capitalist culture.

Recently in the UK a media furore broke when the government announced plans to show financial favor to working mothers who choose day care centers for their children, enabling them to return to the workplace. This policy largely ignores mothers who choose to stay at home and care for their children. Soon after, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development published a report revealing that the average family in the UK with one worker and two children loses 27.9 per cent of its wages in tax, compared with 26.2 per cent before David Cameron's ("conservative") government was elected.

When examining the feminist expectations that permeate the modern psyche of women, Gilbert hammers home a clear point: the assumptions, expectations, vision, and experience of modern feminism reflect the concerns of white, middle-class, well-educated, high-earning women, rather than the real-life experience of the majority of women. Modern feminist expectations undermine the value and fulfilment of domestic work done by mothers and wives, and overrate the freedom and fulfilment promised by paid employment in the workforce. For many, membership of the workforce means repetition, lack of fulfilment, restriction of freedom of time and work pattern preference, office politics, bullying, and the continual threat of redundancy. Ironically, the work pattern advocated by feminists is very much the masculine model of continuous labor-force participation from young adulthood until

retirement.

Gilbert's solution seems twofold: first, give attention, value, and appreciation to mothers who choose to be homemakers and care for their children full-time; second, advocate more flexible patterns of work (part-time, working from home, flexitime, and gradual transition practices for mothers returning to work after raising children). Gilbert points out the oddness of a situation in which feminists deride unpaid work and care in the home, yet applaud men who take on these domestic tasks, whilst looking down on women who choose to stay home and do them. Gilbert makes a distinction between narrow economic independence via the workforce, which is the promise offered by elite feminists, and a much richer and broader idea of self-sufficiency which can lead to a variety of work-related decisions and human relationships, a sort of expanded and healthy freedom *for*, rather than a mere freedom *from*. From here, Gilbert ties in the possibilities and experiences of happiness and fulfilment from domesticity and stay-at-home parenting.

Gilbert concludes by drawing our attention to Scandinavian practices, often considered the pinnacle of enlightened family policy. He explains the considerable differences between his preferred traditional models of Finland and Norway with their various home-care benefits for mothers raising young children, and the revolutionary example of Sweden and Denmark which seek to eliminate all gender differences between men and women, something propounded by radical feminists and critiqued by Pope Benedict XVI in his 2012 "Christmas Address to the Roman Curia." Along with flexible working patterns, Gilbert also calls for home-care allowances and credit-sharing arrangements for pensions and property – that is, based precisely on the marriage of husband and wife.

No book can cover everything. In this case, although Gilbert acknowledges the availability of divorce, contraception, and abortion, their significance is understated, when really they play a huge determining role – something acknowledged by economist Gary Becker in his own work. Likewise, it is difficult to produce a comprehensive book on the choices women make as mothers without a serious examination of the influence of men (boyfriends, husbands, and fathers) on those choices. The absence of fathers and husbands in this book might unknowingly be perpetuating the narrative of the absent father, manifest in the sad epidemic of fatherless families. A restoration of social admiration for fatherhood is vital.

Gilbert's conclusions at the end of book clearly emphasize the vital importance of marriage and the family based on marriage, which would have been a much appreciated and important theme for the whole book. Perhaps the UN's *Doha Declaration on the Family* and the Vatican's *Charter of the Rights of the Family* could provide an exciting and inspirational framework for Gilbert's suggestions. Finally, though Gilbert does examine the role of state welfare, fundamental questions about the relation between the family, the state, and the principle of subsidiarity are not part of his equation on this occasion.

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BOOK REVIEW

Medicine and Culture

MARY SHIVANANDAN

Rebecca Kukla, *Mass Hysteria: Medicine, Culture, and Mothers' Bodies* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005, 264 pages).

I would characterize Rebecca Kukla's approach in this book to the topic of work/life balance as "soft feminist." A Senior Research Scholar at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics and Professor of Philosophy at Georgetown University, as well as outgoing co-ordinator of the Feminist Approaches to Bioethics Network, she seeks to present a reasonable alternative to radical feminism, post-modern feminism, and to the traditional feminine role. As such, her book,*Mass Hysteria*, affirms both woman's autonomous subjectivity/agency and her maternal role.

Could the book then serve as a guide to how to navigate the work/life balance? While it provides valuable insight, my answer is "no" by reason of its deficient anthropology. Ironically, the author points up the nihilism implicit in Enlightenment democratic ideals crafted after the French Revolution, but falls into a relativism that risks the same nihilism from an anthropology still grounded in Enlightenment dualism. (The Enlightenment privileged human reason over God and Christian Revelation.) At the outset it must be said that Kukla does not propose to offer a complete anthropology. Rather she claims simply to show how contemporary attitudes towards the female body find their roots in Enlightenment ideals.

This review will, first of all, briefly give Kukla's assessment of what was new in Enlightenment political philosophy, medicine, and culture related to the female body. It will explore her ideas on the function of practices and images for shaping women's responses to their bodies. It will then examine in more detail the seemingly opposite, but in Kukla's view, mutually intertwining roles of the "Fetishist Mother" and the "Unruly Mother" in relation to work/life balance for the new mother. It will conclude with brief reflections on her anthropology in dialogue with a Christian anthropology to show where it both contributes and falls short.

There are two parts to the first section: (1) the influence of the democratic idea crafted after the French Revolution by the Enlightenment and Rousseau, and (2) the changing attitude of medicine towards the female body. Kukla argues that "the medical and cultural status of mothers' bodies went through a profound transformation during the second half of the

eighteenth century – a transformation intimately linked to the triumph of the Enlightenment ideology, modern science, and the formation of modern humanist democracy" (p. 6). She notes, however, that throughout Western history the integrity and boundaries of the body have been constituted by the boundaries of the self best represented by the self-contained masculine body. Women's bodies with their more "permeable" or "penetrable" nature had been considered unstable and dangerous, but by that fact able to bridge the gap between two bodies. Going back to Hippocrates, a notion of the womb had prevailed as a "wandering" and unstable part of a woman's body, giving rise to all the diseases of women both physical and psychological, and labeled hysteria. Hence the title of Kukla's book, *Mass Hysteria.*

The section of Kukla's book devoted to the influence of the Enlightenment is one of the clearest available expositions of the inconsistencies in the political ideology undergirding modern Western democracy. The following account of Kukla's critique is necessarily in summary form.

Autonomous individual and contractual relations form the bedrock of modern democratic institutions. While this view of the citizen and society seems to promise freedom from all "oppressive" entanglements, subjecting everything to individual choice without regard to any given human nature, it leads ultimately to nihilism. Twice Kukla names the Marquis de Sade as the epitome of this nihilism, citing his *Philosophie dans le Boudoir* in which he argues that no restrictions can be put on the way a person wishes to treat his body, and there can be no normative tribunal policing human impulses. To smuggle God back in as the author of nature would simply be religious imposition. His "state" demands only self-legislation from its citizens (p. 36). De Sade spent most of his adult life in jail and ultimately in an asylum for the insane, convicted of pornography, prostitution, and various homosexual acts.

Rousseau's philosophy of first and second nature served to "rescue" Enlightenment democracy from such a descent into nihilism. Rousseau fabricated the idea of the General Will through which well-formed citizens would put aside the brute passions of a lawless "state of nature" (first nature) and make laws contributing to the common good. But how were such well-formed citizens to arise? The burden was put solely on women to bear and nurture future citizens. Believing in the perfectibility of human nature, in his novel *Emile* he enjoined on women the duty of nursing their children to ensure the proper development of what he called "second nature." It was in this way that women's bodies entered the public domain, ceasing to be private and becoming the direct concern of the new democratic state. To quote Kukla, "Rousseau places mothers at the 'beginning' and 'first point' in moral remaking and transformation of the state and its citizens – indeed, mothers' nursing practices 'alone' will play this founding role…. the *whole* moral order stands or falls on whether or not mothers nurse their children" (p. 31, italics in text).

The nursing mother and child became the symbol of the republic itself. Kukla identifies three ways in which this representation took place: symbolic, spectacular, and literal. A bare-breasted woman, given the name Marianne, became a familiar figure in Enlightenment iconography. Images were also designed to mold citizens even to the extent of holding breastfeeding festivals. To breastfeed became a political act (before the Revolution only five percent of Parisian women of all social classes breastfed their own children). The maternal breast perfects nature and induces love of a particular country so that second nature becomes normative. In one Rousseauian representation of Nature a woman is pictured nursing both a black and a white child, illustrating that "true, legitimate natural law is a feat of human engineering" (p. 40).

There was another development that brought the woman's body, especially her womb, into the public gaze. Up to the seventeenth century midwifery had been a female profession but now a

spate of tracts on gynecology and obstetrics began to appear. By the end of the nineteenth century, the idea was entrenched that a physician should monitor the whole process of childrearing. Before moving into a discussion of contemporary medical management of pregnancy and childbearing, Kukla introduces the idea of the "Fetishist Mother" and the "Unruly Mother." The former is the ideal mother, who, during pregnancy, eschews any outside toxic substances and influences arising from the cravings of her appetite. As a new mother she also guards against any desires for professional or other fulfillment that would take her away from her infant. The opposite is the Unruly Mother, who refuses to be bound by such strictures and thereby endangers her child and the body politic.

In Part II of *Mass Hysteria* Kukla moves to the last half of the twentieth century, seeing continuities with the Enlightenment especially in the above concepts of the Fetishist Mother and the Unruly Mother. Her thesis is that pregnant bodies are considered unruly and new mothers are fetishized. There is great concern with what pregnant women ingest, leading Kukla to see a "strong ideological and mystical component" of "innocent" fetuses and "guilty" mothers (p. 107). Medical science increasingly exposes the internal space of the womb, especially by prenatal testing. She is particularly concerned with the bonding that is being encouraged with the ultrasound image as early as the twelfth week of pregnancy. There is a change of language from "fetus" to "baby." Abnormal results can also lead to moral issues. Furthermore, increasingly illustrations are made of the developing fetus within a headless, armless woman, so that the personified fetus replaces the image of the woman herself, casting doubt on her identity and agency.

Kukla would seem to have some legitimate issues here but her concerns may also be driven by ambivalence about abortion, which such ultrasound testing tends to discourage. (Early in the book Kukla prescinds from the question of when the fetus becomes a person, and asserts she is leaving the problem of abortion aside.) Here she says that it is hard to come up with "an ethical account that resists demanding unlimited self-sacrifice and discipline from mothers and at the same time resists turning a blind eye to any moral claims that interrupt a mother's bodily liberty" (p. 136). Once a decision has been made to carry the pregnancy to term, she considers that such medical information does make a claim on mothers. At the same time it is necessary both to examine any ideological meanings inappropriately attached to it and recognize the way pregnancy forces a woman to renegotiate her social, economic, personal, and public identity when "her bodily self is changing at breakneck speed" (p. 138). Kukla calls this state of "abnormality" of pregnancy "lived*uncanniness.*" It is a time when a woman's sense of self can be most easily co-opted.

While pregnancy begins the process of what Kukla calls a state of "abnormality" – because it changes the woman's body away from the self-contained boundaries of the masculine model of agency – breastfeeding continues the process through forming mother and child into a single unit. The burden of this chapter is that the breastfeeding mother has been fetishized. She defines a fetish as "an object that is granted indefeasible, ahistorical, intrinsic value" (p. 148). This is where Kukla's ambivalence is most evident. While she acknowledges for the most part, along with medical and scientific literature, that breast milk is best for the infant, she is concerned about the conflation of the proximity of mother and child with the physical benefits of breastfeeding. She charges that the mother's contribution is reduced to a mere physical relationship which ignores the many other psychological and spiritual ways of caring, thereby excluding adoptive mothers and other caregivers. In fact, "maternal proximity is elevated to a moral principle and symbol, while the ethical structure of mothering is demoted to a mute material arrangement" (p. 149).

The crux of the matter is not bottled formula *vs* breastmilk – the latter can be pumped for later

use. Her concern is rather the festishization of maternal proximity through breastfeeding. In her view, “the spatial bond between mother and infant serves as a mythological and over-determined locus of our lost nostalgic history, of virtue, of health, and of proper mothering” (p. 168). She refers to this requirement of exclusive mother-infant care through breastfeeding as an *ideology* which significantly limits a mother’s entitlement to engage in outside activities and saddles her with shame and guilt for even minor absences from her baby.

Where that occurs in our society, an ideology may, indeed, be at work, but in seeking to downplay the importance of the mother’s presence (nearness is her term), which is assured by breastfeeding, it seems to me that Kukla risks going too far in the other direction. Noting that “our separation anxieties” are not specifically tied to our present era of bottle-feeding, having been a concern in the age of wet-nursing, she does tend to ignore the large body of scientific studies supporting those anxieties.

The next chapter reveals Kukla’s discomfort even more clearly between what she sees as the fetishization of motherhood through breastfeeding and the risk to a woman’s independent agency. She frames the issue between the requirement that women give their bodies to the “unfettered consumptive demands of our infants” (p. 190) and the training they receive from childhood to protect their bodies from such unfettered use. She asks if “breast is best,” why do only 12 per cent of American women continue to the one-year mark? She goes on to give a catalogue of negative breastfeeding experiences from physical to psychological. Running through the chapter is the concern that a woman’s agency is compromised by regularly insisting another’s interests must be privileged. Her conclusion is that “safe places in which we can negotiate our *separateness* from our children are at least as necessary as safe places in which we can celebrate and give joys to the oneness” (p. 211).

In the final chapter Kukla recognizes that the binary distinction between the Fetishized and Unruly Mother arising from the Enlightenment is unsustainable. She critiques the traditionally liberal view that the boundaries of the self make it not only independent of, but antagonistic towards others. She sees the ontology of the liberal self set up by Rousseau as either “conflicting” or “unified,” and rejects the idea that the only options are assimilation to or abandonment of our children. For women are deeply invested in their children but they also need to maintain a separate identity, because only such a separate self can empower women to act on behalf of themselves and their children in the social and medical spheres.

Reviewing this book has been both a hopeful and a sad experience. It is hopeful because Kukla is struggling to recognize as real, not simply constructed, the woman’s bodily relationship to her infant. She holds that it needs to be taken into account in both the public and private spheres. It is sad because she remains locked in an Enlightenment dualism and relativism in the name of “freedom.” Engineered for the most part now by technology, it risks the nihilism epitomized by the Marquis de Sade, which she deplores. While she seeks to get out of a binary distinction by according some objective reality to nature, she is constrained by commitment to an anthropology that has no reference to an Other/other, God, or true sexual difference. In other words, she has a deficient anthropology of the person and above all of the communion of persons.

First, let’s look at her emphasis on “fixing the boundaries” of the woman’s body. The language of boundaries stresses closure rather than openness to the Other/other. The person in a Christian anthropology, by reason of being a spiritual entity and a unity of body and soul, is by nature oriented to an Other/other. The body is not just permeable, and the woman’s more so, as Kukla points out, but ordered to union/communion in spousal and maternal/paternal relationships. But this communion, to be a true communion, must affirm the unique nature of

the person, whether masculine or feminine, with all that implies of subjectivity and bodily integrity.

What Kukla leaves out is the inter-subjectivity between masculine and feminine. Karol Wojytla has coined the term “participation,” as opposed to alienation. Participation is when the person in a community/communion is fully affirmed as a unity of body and soul. In the family, that means that each must be affirmed as subjects and in their respective roles as husband/wife, mother and father. So Kukla is right in asking for the woman’s agency to be affirmed, but nowhere does she speak of the masculine role, except as taking over the role of bottle-feeding the infant. Rather than downplaying the importance of nearness or presence of the mother to the child, it would be more appropriate to encourage the presence of others to the mother, particularly the husband.

With regard to agency, it is primarily a question of our relationship to God. The early Christian state of vowed virginity affirmed in a radical way the agency of the woman to dedicate herself totally to God, sometimes in direct opposition to the wishes of her parents. In a similar way the development of the theology of marriage in the Middle Ages established consent, not sexual intercourse, as the primary requirement. The canon lawyers were much influenced by the Holy Family, in which Mary’s *fiat* (her yes) affirmed her separate agency within her true marriage to Joseph. Certainly I am not talking here about forgoing conjugal intercourse in marriage, but of respecting God’s plans for any particular marriage and for each member of the family.

Agency then, is not something I chose by and for myself alone, but something I do in light of my prior relationship with God, the very source of my being, and together with my spouse or another. It takes place in, affirms, and manifests a communion of love. According to Christian Revelation, which gives a fuller account, the human person is made in the image of God not so much as the solitary ruler of the universe but as a communion of persons in the Trinity, because God is Love. Freedom is necessary for communion, the freedom of self-mastery acquired by the virtues. The freedom of license leads to nihilism, as Kukla has demonstrated.

Kukla makes a point of privileging the Unruly Mother over the Fetishist Mother, the supposed ideal. In this she would be in line with Christian anthropology, which acknowledges that human nature is weak and fallen but not in binary opposition with the ideal. The saint is held out as a model. The saint has often struggled with interior conflicts and destructive social structures (which must always be challenged) but has overcome them with the help of grace. Examples are the recently beatified parents of St Thérèse of Lisieux, particularly her mother.

Zélie Martin was a true child of nineteenth-century France. She ran a lace business out of her home and sent her children to wet nurses, losing all her infant sons from incompetent nursing. She died prematurely of breast cancer, probably brought about in part by not nursing her own children. (Incidentally, her husband, Louis, sold his watch business to support her lace-making.) Therese suffered from severe separation anxiety. Nature was unforgiving but grace transformed. Father, mother, and daughter are recognized for their holiness (wholeness) and Thérèse, in addition, has been declared a Doctor of the Church for her doctrine of divine love.

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BOOK REVIEW

Pressure for Day-Care

KATHLEEN CURRAN SWEENEY

Brian C. Robertson, *Day-Care Deception* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003, 214 pages).
Family Policy Review, *The Child-Care "Crisis" and Its Remedies* (Washington, DC: Family Research Council, Fall 2003, 139 pages).

In *Day-Care Deception,* Brian Robertson presents a well-documented review of institutional day care for young children, its promotion and its problems. One frequently hears that there is an urgent need for more quality child-care centers. Robertson's study challenges this. He points out that child psychiatrists and pediatricians have consistently testified for years that healthy child development depends crucially on the amount of time and attention that the child receives from parents during the first three or four years. Social research has reported poor and unhealthy environments in most day-care centers that correlate with behavioral and relational problems in many children.

There is a serious question about whether even "quality" day-care centers are appropriate for young children. Polling among parents reveals that most prefer to care for young children themselves if they can, or to choose relatives, friends or neighbors to care for their child when necessary. Most would avoid institutional day-care centers if they could. Yet the loudest voices are those claiming that more such centers are desperately needed. Clearly this is not resulting from a demand by a large majority of parents. So whose are the voices raising this cry?

Day Care Advocates

A disturbing body of evidence has been collected by Robertson revealing that a coalition of feminist groups, a professional day-care industry, and large corporations have been lobbying for an increase in the number and quality of day-care centers, even though this "lacked any substantial grass root support." Robertson provides a history of this debate, beginning with early twentieth-century "maternal feminists" who maintained that aid to poor women should not force mothers to work outside the home, right down to the social engineering of the 1970s which called for day-care provision from "6 months to 6 years to teach the child values, fears, beliefs and behaviors," and was continued by the welfare reform of the 1990s which made mothers work outside the home, while marriage, which would provide some support for

mothers, was left an uneconomical choice.

Early on in the 60s, big business realized that it would benefit from more women in the labor force, and supported the addition of women's rights to civil rights legislation. Radical feminists allied themselves to this encroaching capitalism to replace family bonds with loyalty to the workplace and a pay-check. As some said, "marriage and parenting get in the way of the most efficient allocation of labor." So the corporate world and government family policy joined in what some describe as "national social progress" toward a "brave new world." Now paternalistic corporations are attempting to provide everything for their employees, including day-care centers and family counseling. However, these "family friendly" provisions are actually replacing family loyalty with company loyalty. So "patriarchy" is now practiced by corporations instead of husbands, according to Robertson's analysis.

Tax Credits for Use of Institutional Day Care

A particular focus of Robertson's study is the federal tax credit for parents using commercial day care: an incentive to move families from home care to impersonal institutional care, which was begun in the 70s and expanded in 1984 and 1990. The irony is that the majority using this tax credit are well-off, college-educated, two-income couples, while low and middle-income families, who most often prefer to either care for their children themselves or have relatives or friends provide care, end up with a greater tax burden. Thus the tax credit appears to be a subsidy for the wealthy and a tax cost for parents who are spending their own time and money in raising children.

President George W. Bush did propose a $1,000 per child tax credit to let families decide themselves how to care for a child, but this failed to get support. This seems like an obvious inequity from an objective point of view, but the political pressures on this issue are anything but objective. The historical record is revealing. In 1948, three per cent of income tax was paid by a family with children; in 2003 it was 25 per cent and, if state and local tax is included, it was 46 per cent. If policy makers were convinced of the political and economic benefits, they could move back toward a better kind of tax adjustment for raising children. Most parents would support this. If children could vote, they would ask for the right to be cared for by their parents. But the part of the population that is most affected does not have a powerful lobby to counteract the day care lobby.

Children's Psychological Development

What is happening to so many children growing up in institutional care? There has been a steep increase in child pathologies over the same period in which the use of day-care has risen sharply. Various studies have related the mental illnesses in children to lack of parental attention. Dr Edward Zigler, a specialist in child development, asserted that "the years children spend in low-quality day-care is a major cause of the biggest increase in the rate of child violence and depression that our country has ever witnessed." Further research confirmed that long hours spent in care, whatever the quality, resulted in increased problem behavior and signs of physiological stress in children. Only 10 to 15 per cent of day-care is "even adequate quality," while good quality care is less available than this.

Another child development expert, Dr Stanley Greenspan, notes that the essential needs of babies and young children depend on a kind of emotional interaction that is impossible in a day-care setting but is "almost automatic" in families. Commercial day-care centers have a high turnover of workers and a high ratio of children per worker, which cannot provide what young children need.

Social research has revealed that young children in these centers are frequently insecurely attached to their parents, become less competent than peers when they are toddlers, become withdrawn and/or aggressive in preschool, and have more problems as first graders. Young children who have experienced long hours in centers are less likely to develop a strong sense of selfhood and independence later in life, and exhibit a failure to trust relationships with others.

Psychologists who have measured “infant attachment” have found that the factor of secure attachment *vs* anxious or insecure attachment is an accurate predictor of “school performance, behavior, self-esteem, social competence, and ability to form relationships.” It is also correlated with the risk of mental illness, antisocial personality disorders and psychopathic behavior, with symptoms such as emotional detachment and inner rage, which psychologists say have roots in disrupted early relationships and lack of care-giver consistency. Several studies document a deterioration in the mother-child bond in the children left in full-time care.

One large study found that almost 50 per cent of the children in day-care had an insecure attachment to their mothers, and another that 45 per cent of infants of mothers employed full-time were insecurely attached. Day-care workers observed that mothers picking up their children seemed less and less connected with them and tended to consider the center as having primary responsibility for their child’s well-being. In contrast, children securely attached to parents were “more ego resilient, independent, empathetic, and socially competent” than those who were poorly attached. Advocates of day care have claimed that these centers provided an advantage in socialization; however, researchers found that “the only significant predictor of pro-social behavior was a lack of day-care experience.”

The other advantage day-care advocates propose is greater cognitive development. But the research shows that this only occurs when a caregiver talks directly to a child in a frequent one-on-one relationship. However, this is more descriptive of a child’s experience at home with parents, and is not a reality in most day care. For many years studies have found that the most important influence on academic achievement is family background and influence of parents.

Health Risks to Children

Day-care centers also involve a risk to the physical health of children. Physicians report that children in day-care are 18 per cent more likely to become ill than other children. Infants in care have twice the rate of inner ear infections and a 100 per cent higher rate of respiratory illness. Influenza, diarrhea, dysentery, bacterial meningitis, and hepatitis A are also much more prevalent among children in centers. Some children develop chronic inner ear infections and may suffer mild hearing loss – something that can hinder social, psychological, and educational development. One epidemiologist called day-care centers “the open sewers of the twentieth century,” because illnesses there are reminiscent of the seventeenth century before sanitation practices developed. Pediatric researchers have warned that a major health issue is the massive over-prescription of antibiotics, “due in part to widespread day-care attendance,” since parents are mostly concerned with getting the child back into care as quickly as possible.

Another concern physicians have is that day-care early in a child’s life may discourage breastfeeding which is important for immune systems, as well as psychological development. Pediatricians recommend that infants be breastfed at least for the first year of life. One statistic indicated that only 21 per cent of mothers were nursing at six months – and this rate is undoubtedly even lower for infants in care.

Public Discussion

Despite all these risks, there is apparently very little public discussion about these problems. News media avoid publicizing anything critical of day-care centers for various reasons. Belief in day-care is a “tenet of faith” for feminists, so public criticism of day-care is taboo, and few in the media want to challenge this feminist view. Feminists want women in careers, not at home taking care of children. They will even assert that maternal love is a myth to keep women “imprisoned at home.” Actually, many who would be reporting this are working mothers themselves using day-care, with a vested interest in defending themselves. Often they *are* the media. These reporters are most concerned with avoiding “gut wrench and guilt sweats,” for women using day-care. They have a “no-bad-news mindset” about day-care information, so there is a specific blackout or control of accurate research about day-care problems. This means that parents do not have access to crucial information they need to make good judgments about care for their children.

Conflicts of Interest

Media prejudice is also a problem for science. Even though 90 per cent of child-care professionals agree that full-time substitute care is not good for children under three years, they are timid about saying so publicly because they would come under strong attack – and anecdotal evidence suggests that some have been blackballed for simply reporting research findings accurately. Rebuttals by day-care advocates are used to debunk results of scientifically-conducted studies. Academia is particularly guilty of cover-up: journals have chosen to use political rather than scientific criteria in accepting or rejecting a study for publication. For science, giving in to politically correct pressures is a major problem, contradicting principles of objectivity.

Robertson also points out that there is a conflict of interest in reports about day-care. For example, Sandra Scare – a recognized child development research expert who has written four books and 200 articles on the subject – has been since 1990 on the board of directors of KinderCare Inc., the largest chain of day-care centers in the country. Her publications are propaganda for day-care, yet few seem to remark on this. Another example is Ellen Galinsky of the Families and Work Institute, which is funded by big corporate donors to do studies of day-care and promote business investment in day-care centers. There are many other examples of these kinds of connections in Robertson’s book. The corporate world supports institutional day care because it is more economical for them to have women in the labor force than men, and because working mothers are a market for many convenience products. The day-care lobby raises a cry about a “crisis” of insufficent “affordable high-quality day care,” but for-profit day care centers work against “quality” because their profit margin for shareholders requires a high ratio of child-care givers and skimping on funding.

What Parents Think

In the meantime, a survey by Public Agenda revealed that 70 per cent of parents prefer having one parent stay home over “quality” day-care; 78 per cent prefer a grandparent or relative for child-care; and 79 per cent said “no one can do as good a job of raising a child as the parents.” Among low-income parents, 80 per cent “desire to have the mother stay home.” A University of Connecticut survey found that low-income parents were more likely to say it was “lack of trust,” not expense, that was the reason they did not use day-care centers. Sometimes it is husbands that are interested in day-care because they like the idea of a second income. But this has proved to be short-sighted, because over time men’s income has declined and prices have risen in response to two-income families.

The pressures on families are as much cultural as financial. Feminists have given women a romantic notion of the job reality and have demeaned the work of a mother raising children, as though education and intelligence were wasted in such an endeavor. Even in the best of jobs, women (like men) are often obeying someone else's orders or policies, whereas at home they have the power of being in charge of a household and family. Robertson (p. 134) quotes from Jennifer Roback Morse: "Instead of introducing their own children to great literature and world history, bright women are sequestered in university offices, grading piles of illegible midterms written by other people's children. How did we forget that guiding our offspring requires knowledge far more subtle, and pays bounties far richer than most jobs?"

Some General Observations

How does this issue relate to broader culture and foundational values? Day-care advocates present a narrow idea of education and seem to have no understanding of character development. They often seem to be oriented to a "training for the workplace" approach. Robertson has a quote from the late cultural critic Christopher Lasch (pp. 150, 152):

Instead of building our economy around the needs of families, we have allowed economic imperatives to govern the structure of the family, the school, and every other agency of cultural transmission.... [The true result] has been to weaken the ties between the generations, to reduce the emotional intensity of the parent-child connection, to deprive children of direct access to adult experience, and to produce a generation of young people who are morally and emotionally at sea, lacking any sense of participation in their culture's tradition or in its ongoing development.

Day-care's effect on character and personality has a cumulative impact which is "altering the cultural fabric." Some of the effects that have been observed include: a stultifying standardization; little individual development; little critical thinking or creativity; conformism; a defective sense of self; incapacity for commitment; increased self-centeredness; polarized thinking rather than subtle or reflective thinking; a manipulative type of character; lack of internalization of rules of conduct that transcend the environment; pragmatism that does what is fashionable or expedient rather than developing a sense of right and wrong.

When discipline is separated from the consistent love of a close relationship, some adolescents can develop a mood either of nihilistic rage, or anomie: that is, they lack in moral character, are uninterested in ideas and values, and focus only on success. A Smithsonian Institution project looking for the sources of human creativity and leadership found that the most important influence was a "consistently close parental connection, minimal time spent with peers, and many opportunities to explore the world freely with parental encouragement." None of these realities exist in institutional day-care.

Current economic analysis rarely, if ever, considers the contributions families make to the economy and general well-being by raising stable children capable of contributing their talents to a prosperous and peaceful society. Some have described this as "the stork theory of economics," assuming individuals are delivered to society as full-grown well-developed adults, never asking where such stable, productive individuals come from and at what cost. A household of mother and father makes a huge investment to raise children who contribute positively to society. At-home moms are looked upon as useless economically, which is far from the reality.

Contemporary feminists see women's interests as separate from husbands and family. This affects values by stressing individualistic self-interest over self-giving love, their main goal being equal power between the sexes in public life. This ignores the fact that women have a lot

of power in private life. Feminists also overlook the fact that it is mostly women who are being asked to take care of other women's children, often for unimpressive salaries, and who sometimes have to pay for someone else to take care of their own children. This is an absurd situation. Moreover, day-care employees usually are not your highly educated women who could provide a child with an educationally enriched input. This betrays a feminist bias toward certain kinds of career-minded women, which does not include all women.

Some Suggestions

Robertson proposes ending subsidies to commercial day-care centers as a first step. Other options are: employers allowing more work-at-home options, tele-commuting, flexitime, or part-time work, and perhaps giving tax benefits for employers who offer these options; and raising the tax exemption for parents with young children. Culturally there needs to be a movement to restore public acknowledgment that married parents raising children make a critical contribution to positive economic and social order, and that a society that makes an investment in "human capital" helps future growth and stability in a society. Above all there needs to be a focus on the needs of children, rather than adults. The big question must be asked: Why are we doing this to our children?

A complement to Robertson's book is the series of articles in the *Family Policy Review*. There are nine articles on topics related to the issue of institutional day-care. In the first, Allan Carlson reviews the history of "social parenting" or "collective child care," from the eras of the Bolsheviks, industrial progressives, Swedish experiments, and American feminists and progressives. These experiments have been largely failures, dehumanizing and generally harmful for children's psychological health and development. Moreover, Carlson asserts, institutionalized day-care in the United States in practice depends on class exploitation, in which wealthy two-income parents get tax subsidies for use of child-care centers staffed by low-wage women, "commonly the poorest of the poor who distort their own lives to serve their betters." Nevertheless, despite economic and political pressures, many low and middle-income families choose to give their children full-time care. Carlson perceives an enduring American resistance to social engineering.

Professor Jay Belsky, a social scientist now at the University of London, has had a long career of research in child development and day-care centers. In the second article of this issue, Belsky relates how his earliest research in the 1980s, which reported positive aspects of child care, was well received, but that he was lambasted when he reported emerging evidence that revealed disturbing risks in extensive day-care for children in their first year of life. When in 2003 a large study by the US National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), conducted by Belsky and several other investigators confirmed some of the risks reported earlier, Belsky took the brunt of criticism, even though the validity of the conclusions were affirmed by the other researchers involved. He found that both his own colleagues as well as reporters criticized him, even though he was only conveying what a scientifically conducted investigation revealed. Professor Belsky could only conclude that a politically correct bias was at work blocking information with anything negative about day-care centers. Social policy and politics, he sadly observed, was corrupting the process of science. The discovery of factual evidence should be guiding social policy rather than the other way around.

Heidi Brennan, who founded the Family and Home Network, focuses her article on the tax burden on families raising children. She makes suggestions for changing tax policy to support rather than burden these families who are already making sacrifices to raise children well. She provides several examples of ways taxes bear more heavily on families with children than

on single persons or couples without children. She quotes the testimony of respected child psychiatrists and of social research that asserts the need of children for on-going, consistently nurturing relationships and for communication of spiritual/moral meaning, which are not found in institutional child-care. Her suggestions for action include: a Family-Friendly Tax Task Force; universalization of the child-care tax credit to include at-home care, simpler regulations for home-based businesses, and the importance of listening to parents.

Senator Lisa Murkowski in her article, “Eliminating the Parenthood Penalty,” also takes up the theme of tax pressures on parents of young children. “The basis of a healthy community is a healthy family,” she states at the beginning. She introduced legislation in the Senate establishing a universal tax credit for all parents with children up to age six. She reviews the financial realities for families raising children and summarizes the currently existing tax credits. The main question we must ask ourselves, she suggests, is “what is best for our children. Children are our future. When we put them first, we must also change our tax code to reflect our priorities.” Senator Murkowski also insists that “government should not dictate the choices parents make about who to have care for their children. That decision remains with the parents.”

Tuve Skanberg, a Christian Democrat member of Parliament in Sweden, contributed a short article on the Child Maintenance Allowance of 1994 which was promoted and passed under the leadership of the Christian Democratic Party. Unfortunately, it was only implemented for half a year because of resistance by the Liberal Party, and overturned by the Social Democrats in January of 1995. Skanberg explains that “the socialist movement has rejected the concept of the family, that it is the family’s responsibility to raise and foster the children, and derides this concept as bourgeois.” This ideology has been the reigning philosophy since the 1930s, with the goal of abolishing the concepts of “housewife” and “husband.” It considers parents as being too “uneducated” to raise their own children. The ideology has been opposed by the non-socialist parties, but they have had difficulty maintaining a voting majority. Yet in the brief period in which the Child Maintenance Allowance existed, 70 per cent of eligible parents used the subsidy and the cost of day-care operated by municipalities dropped “dramatically,” while the quality of child-care improved, and this was accomplished at a lower cost to taxpayers. Another effect of the subsidy was lower unemployment and an increase in temporary jobs.

Charmaine Yoest reports on a national study of paid parental leave in the United States which was carried out at the University of Virginia. The question was raised about whether the assumptions made about the effectiveness of paid parental leave were based on empirical data. Two concerns are voiced: equal opportunity for women, and a child’s development needs. Are these concerns in competition? The study focused on parents in academia with children under two, judging this as representative of parents in other professions. It collected data about how many of the parents used this leave, how much external child care parents used, how much time these parents spent with their child, and what effect a parental leave policy had on the mother’s career plans.

Some of Yoest’s findings included the following: (1) most women used paid leave but only 12 per cent of men did; (2) those using parental leave tended to spend more time with their child than those not taking leave; (3) women taking paid leave were much more likely to say they would work part-time or drop out of the work force. It was apparent that first-time parents do not anticipate how hard it is to leave their baby. The majority of mothers of very young children do not choose to work full-time. Yoest raises the question of whether paid leave is a social construct used to provide an incentive to mothers to remain in the labor force full-time. Some possible negatives she observes in paid parental leave are: (1) it may not be used widely; (2) it may maximize the time very young children spend in child-care which can negatively

affect child development; and (3) it could prejudice women in favor of full-time work when they might have chosen to care for their child full-time, or part-time.

"Is the workplace becoming a surrogate home?" questions David Wagner in his article on corporate child-care policies. As government faces the costs of subsidizing "quality" child-care, the focus is shifting from government raising children to businesses doing it. The workplace now sponsors various "family friendly" programs to retain employees who are mothers. Wagner raises three questions regarding this: (1) is day-care good for children? (2) whom does it benefit? (3) what are its effects? To answer the first question, Wagner refers to two studies. The Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) reported that extensive time spent by young children in child-care correlates with aggressiveness, disobedience, and difficulty in getting along with others. A University of Minnesota Institute of Child Development study found that "in children younger than three… stress rose in the afternoon at day-care, but fell as the hours passed on days they spent at home."

On the second question, Wagner found that corporations had been sold the idea that day-care is an investment in "the future workforce." More immediately, businesses realized that female employees usually cost less than male employees, so they would benefit by recruiting and retaining women. Since it has become a noticeable trend to offer workplace child-care, businesses feel they need to keep up with competitors. As regards the third question, the effects Wagner observed were that family was no longer a "haven in a heartless world" but was becoming simply a way-station for busy adults and children whose main center was outside the home. He considers some solutions such as a family wage or a head-of-household wage, but notes that these are not feasible in the current cultural and political realities. Wagner concludes that a cultural change needs to occur to restore in women the desire for husband, children, and home, and to restore to businesses the idea that it is worthy to be a source of support to families but not as "surrogate family."

Hidden Agendas

Dr Bryce Christensen observes a "hidden ideological agenda" in day-care activists which he relates to Thomas Hobbes' political philosophy. Hobbes, he says, "dismissed family ties as irrelevant in advocating an omnipotent state." Day-care advocates may not be consciously Hobbesian, but some do intend to radically renew society by weakening attachment of children to parents and home – in this way advancing a different "social pattern," and infusing "new values into the young" through day-care, so that parental values are no longer "imposed" on the developing child.

Christensen thinks the guiding logic of institutional day-care is based on the idea that state institutions should shape the future, and that the family is largely an irrelevant obstruction to this project. Hobbes described society as "a human war of each against all" in order to justify a powerful central government. He considered family, Church, the guilds, and other intermediary organizations as impediments to the absolute identification of state with individuals. Limited government, on the other hand, depends on strong family ties, which ensure harmony through social and moral principles and emotional bonds. When families disintegrate into combative individuals, a strong government must intervene.

Christensen, therefore, sees as Hobbesian logic the call of day-care proponents for "increase in centralized planning and quality control" in the nation's day-care institutions. There are many in the professions of social science and journalism, he points out, that lean toward socialist politics. Some advocates of day-care, for example, praise communist countries such as China

and Cuba for their child-care policies. Survey research has indicated that many young Americans with no strong family ties are "shifting their allegiance increasingly to themselves and to the State." Is the use of day-care shrinking the capacity to sacrifice for one's family? Some sociologists have observed a disappearance of the "language of sacrifice and love," which is being replaced with utilitarian individualism, precisely the extreme individualism that, for Hobbes, justifies the centralization of the modern state.

"A Parental Bill of Rights" is suggested by economist Richard Gill and his son T. Grandon Gill in order to help young parents who want to care for their child themselves. Richard Gill first presents the view that our society cannot and should not choose between "quality" day-care and parental care regarding their effects on children, therefore we should not subsidize one pattern of care as opposed to the other, as the current child-care tax credit does. Gill, however, makes the point that there is a very deep reason to prefer parental care over non-parental care. Our present society is increasingly dominated by a short-term outlook, immediate gratification, and self-centeredness, without concern for posterity and the future. The closely-bonded family is what provides long-term continuity and a view that looks to the future; children who grow up in such families are more likely to adopt similar attitudes. Day-care centers, on the other hand, subject the child to a succession of impermanent, changing care-givers with no permanent relationship to the child.

The concern of mothers who want to stay home with their child is that they risk not being able later to enter or re-enter the job market or career path they would like. To address this concern, Richard and T. Grandon Gill have proposed a Parental Bill of Rights, modeled on the G.I. Bill of Rights that has helped so many soldiers leaving service to retrain, obtain degrees, and have successful careers. Young parents are a group that has no program of assistance as do students, retirees, welfare recipients, and disabled people, yet this group makes a critical contribution to society. Such a program would benefit parents, children, future productivity, and social well-being in general. Gill sees this as a critically important constituency that needs support.

These two publications provide helpful research on a sensitive issue in our society. What do these studies reveal about this society – a culture that views the woman as an isolated economic individual that has nothing important to do with her child? Just as secular culture separates body and spirit in sexual acts, making them less than human, it wants to separate the child from the bodily presence of the mother and father and treat them as isolated individuals. The organic connection of child and parents includes their whole spiritual and historical being and their eternal future. The child inherits a particular biology, historical past, and relationships that are unique and irreplaceable. He needs *this* mother and *this* father to nurture and teach him. There are tragic circumstances in which these have to be replaced and the best alternative sought. But this should not be the norm that a society upholds. Ideologies or policies that treat these relationships as irrelevant or obstacles are insidious, inhuman, and destructive. The many who through ignorance or manipulation are drawn into cooperating with these policies are being betrayed. It is important to articulate this concern at the deepest level, and widen the discussion to help people see more clearly and fully a danger which most already instinctively recognize. A child pulled out of his family is vulnerable and at risk.

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BOOK REVIEW

Almost Beyond Feminism

KATRINA BIELER

Suzanne Venker and Phyllis Schlafly, *The Flipside of Feminism: What Conservative Women Know – and Men Can't Say* (WND Books, 2011).
Daphne de Marneffe, *Maternal Desire: On Children, Love, and the Inner Self* (Back Bay Books, 2005).

At issue in the two books is the question of the relationship between women and work. The authors approach it from opposite sides, so to speak; Venker and Schlafly are self-described "conservative women" who want no place in the feminist movement, while de Marneffe is a self-proclaimed feminist who is seeking to delve further into what best serves women. However, both books are pursuing a topic that, despite nearly a century of feminism, remains a point of tension, if not contention. And the tension, as all of the authors recognize, is suffered most keenly by working mothers.

Venker and Schlafly set out to show that the situation and history of women as presented by feminism is little more than a mythology that has its source in the unhappy lives of a few women (Betty Friedan, for one). Not intending to deny real oppression suffered by any woman, they do reject the narrative that feminism is the force that has single-handedly reversed the fortunes of women. Rather, the two authors argue that the feminist movement has crafted an ideology that, now fully permeating the atmosphere of our society, has become a roadblock to any constructive thinking about women's equality and is even detrimental to women's happiness. Venker and Schlafly borrow Jessica Valenti's definition of feminism: "Feminism is a structural analysis of a world that oppresses women, an ideology based on the notion that patriarchy exists and that it needs to end." Feminism presumes that the family has oppressed women by keeping women subservient in the home and away from self-actualizing careers that grant financial independence.

The core of the argument is found in the second chapter of the book, "Feminism 101: Uncensored," along with a brief overview of some of the beginnings of the modern feminist movement, the so-called second-wave feminists, which are distinguished from the early suffragettes, who, outside of seeking the vote for women, shared very few ideals with the

second-wave feminists and those who have followed. The rest of the book draws out this argument as it focuses on the various areas influenced by feminism: dating and sexual relationships, marriage, women and work, politics and law, and the sidelining and deprecation of men's role in culture. In the final chapter, the two authors rehash the toll feminism has taken on culture, and offer a their vision of a better path for women.

Venker and Schlafly argue that the feminist movement has created something of a mythology that is now accepted as historical fact. Beginning with works like Betty Friedan's book *Feminine Mystique*, a social problem was "manufactured," namely that "society is to blame for the plight of the American housewife," who is bored, depressed and wasting away in "comfortable concentration camp" (p. 29). According to Friedan, and many feminists since, a woman who chooses to do the menial tasks of caring for the domestic concerns of her husband and children has forfeited any real contribution she could make to her society, wasted her intellectual resources, and failed to thrive both as a woman and as a productive member of society. So long as the housewife was not paid for her work, the feminist movement, at least the more radical side of it, could see nothing more than slavery. Similarly, radical feminist bemoaned pregnancy, and the humiliation and servitude to which it consigned women. In this way, a history of oppression was fabricated, when in fact American women are some of the most privileged people on the planet. Venker and Schlafly suggest that the typical American housewife was far from feeling oppressed, as was much more engaged in her society than the feminists ever allow. Furthermore, the social forces that would bring women more into the workplace were already in motion before feminism arrived on the scene.

Central to the feminist movement's idea of liberation, and moreover what has become "politically correct" thinking in general, is that every dimension of a woman's life ought to be under her control: whether she works, has children, and does or does not remain at home to raise them. They saw the housewife as determined by structures more powerful than her, and wished to secure the freedom of self-determination of the sort they presumed that men enjoyed. Feminists interpreted equality for women to mean that women should be treated as men are treated; in fact, for all practical purposes, considered *as* men. Differences in her psychology, physiology, and biology were ignored for the sake of securing her equality on masculine terms. And this is exactly what Venker and Schlafly take issue with: the feminist understanding of who a woman is, when taken to its ultimate conclusion, will radically alter society by displacing the family as the governing social form. This leads to radical social instability, the effects of which we are already seeing.

The biggest impact is on young women and the American family. No longer are marriage and family the aims that govern a woman's choices, even if they are still the goals that she holds most dear. Thus a young woman pursues a career, dates (or what passes for dating in a hook-up culture), and generally prepares for adult life as though she will never marry and bear children. This might entail an expensive education, various sexual relationships, moving far away from her family and support network, working long hours in a demanding profession, and spending no time learning about tasks related to the home or child care, let alone understanding her own fertility. Hence, when marriage and children do come, the woman finds that family life conflicts with the path she has been traversing.

Juggling a demanding career alongside marriage and family is not only difficult, it can often bring unhappiness to women, their children, and their husbands. Working mothers suffer extreme tension and guilt as they divide themselves between caring for their children and home and the demands of work. This in turn places stress on marriages, which too frequently end in divorce. Indeed, one of the slogans of the feminist movement is that *women no longer need men*. No wonder that men are not sure what to expect from a liberated woman or how to

relate to her. In a situation where all difference is denied, and each individual is considered to be autonomous, it is difficult to find a form that could reunite the family. The remedy often proposed by feminists is better child-care services, funded by the government. In the final account feminism costs a great deal: women conceive of themselves as victims, children are raised in day-care centers, men have become superfluous to the family, women are unhappy and often burdened by guilt, divorce has skyrocketed, government (the caretaker of the oppressed) has become bigger and more intrusive, and the unique value of motherhood is denigrated. Feminism contributed massively to social instability.

Clearly, Venker and Schlafly cast doubt the feminist movement's claim to have brought progress for women. They point out that they term "progress" simply means that feminists have succeeded in gaining public and government support for their agenda, not that women are happier, healthier, or better contributors to culture. In fact, insofar as feminists reject any concept of nature, they also reject any standard by which one could measure progress. Thus, what progress has come to mean is that the family, moral norms, and "nature" have been deconstructed, and that women are earning more money, have more access to power, and can take (technological) control over their reproduction. But what is systematically overlooked is the question of happiness, and the fact that many women, perhaps even most women, when it comes to the way in which they live their own lives, simple do not want the life of a liberated women – divided between work and children, and relying on the government to fill in the gaps.

Venker and Schlafly argue that the famous "glass ceiling" simply does not exist. Rather, most women simply do not want to invest the number of hours that positions at the top require (and most men who do are supported by a wife who is caring for the economy of the home). Rather, many women find the home and childraising to be interesting, full of joys along with the struggles, and even to be a realm in which they feel fulfilled. Despite feminism, women still want marriage, and are willing to sacrifice work and independence to have it. For these women, the progress of feminism runs counter to their own aspirations.

Venker and Schlafly expose a deep cynicism at the heart of feminism, a fear of dependence, of sacrifice, and of any binding relation to another that asks of a woman to give herself freely. Unfortunately, however, this critique is couched in a polemical, dialectical style that simply falls short of an adequate critique of feminism. Feminists are depicted as self-serving conspirators out to destroy society, as though none of them were genuinely seeking true freedom. The authors advocate a return to conservatism, which they define as believing in a given moral order, human nature, and fundamental differences between men and women. However, they fail to offer a robust definition of any of these, nor do they seek to reflect on what true femininity might be. They leave unquestioned whether the socio-economic forms that preceded the feminist revolution truly valued women, the family, or even men. They acknowledged that the past century has seen a dramatic change in socio-economic forms (which they credit for much of women's advancement in the workplace), due to two world wars and numerous technological developments, without ever questioning what these changes have meant for the family, or whether they might have set the stage for the success of the feminist rhetoric. They seem to suggest that a return to a modified version of the 1950s would serve culture well.

Venker and Schlafly fail to explain why feminism was able to convince a generation. If the early, more conservative decades of the last century were so satisfactory, why have we had the immense cultural upheaval of the past sixty years? They champion the conservative value of sacrifice, arguing that women cannot "have it all" as the feminists promised, but can have a good deal of it over time, if they make the appropriate sacrifices at the appropriate times.

However, the exhortation to sacrifice does not really engage the central question: how is one's own "self-fulfillment" related to serving the life of another? In their lack of nuance and failure to give more than a moralistic exhortation, Venker and Schlafly leave themselves open to the critique that they are just as unreflective as the women of the second wave.

On the final page of their book, Venker and Schlafly invoke Abraham Lincoln who, apparently, once said that "most folks are only as happy as the make up their minds to be." The authors' final, and unconvincing, conclusion is: "For women, the answer lies in our decision to be satisfied" (p. 183). In this strangely stoical conclusion, Venker and Schlafly seem to suggest that the answer to what ails women is to shut down her desire for "more," her desire for self-determination, and, instead, to satisfy herself with the limitations that nature, biology, and the moral order lay upon her. However, it is precisely this desire – a very natural desire – that the feminists have cherished and wished to unfetter from artificial limitations so that it might bloom in freedom. In fact, the desire for self-determination and for freedom is part of that which opens the human person up to the world, that sets the will into motion, that gives the possibility of making responsible choices. It would seem to be an essential part of what it means to be human.

Is it really enough to critique feminism without showing that the very thing feminists cherished most is answered more profoundly by obeying the limitations of nature than by restructuring society according to a blueprint that denies any idea of nature or feminine difference? Venker and Schlafly would like to have accomplished just that; but without a deeper reflection on nature, freedom, and desire they do not have the tools for the task.

Ironically, Daphne de Marneffe's book goes much further in critiquing feminism, simply because she takes the concerns of feminism seriously while at the same time paying attention to what she found to be common among women: the desire to mother their children, which she labels as "maternal desire." What sets de Marneffe's book apart is that she allows her experience of maternal desire, which contradicted much of what she believed about women and work, to lead her to explore the many questions around this topic. Her book has something of contemplative style about it. She has pondered, studied, researched, and evaluated her own experiences as well as many of the current claims being made about women and work in light of the discovery of this desire to mother her children. She weaves together in her book personal experience, psychological theory and studies, philosophy, and works of fiction as she seeks to understand the meaning of this desire.

In many ways, de Marneffe, along with the countless examples of women she invokes, serves to exemplify the picture of modern women influenced by feminism that Venker and Schlafly painted. She is an ivy-league educated psychologist who embarked on a successful career only to discover that she could not balance work and children because her immense desire to mother her children continually interfered with doing her job. She shows exactly the way in which the technological and sociological changes of the past century have made "mothering" a choice and not a fate. However, once it became a choice, women bear the burden of the choice as never before. There is pressure on women both to have and not to have children, pressure to keep her children from affecting her work, pressure to be a good mother; she is responsible to plan her fertility and her career in a perfect harmony, and is left without support to deal with the pain of failing to do so.

The women of today, de Marneffe observes, are not dealing with overcoming a model of womanhood that pressured women to remain in the home; rather, she is stuck in a model that overtaxes her by demanding that she do it all: career, marriage, and mothering her children. And while women's career interests and desire to have children is affirmed, what is not

affirmed, what is not spoken of is that some women, nay *many* women, desire to stay at home with their children.

De Marneffe sees that the desire is difficult to speak about precisely because it does not fit neatly into the societal ideas about progress and self-growth in identity. Discovering who one is, according to dominant ideas, is a matter of progressing in one's education and career, learning about what one likes to do, what one is good at, and playing that role within society. Motherhood, on the other hand, cannot be measured in the same terms of progress, but rather has to do with "becoming" (p. 16). Motherhood no longer fits into our cultural framework because of the "sense that preserving one's selfhood depends on shutting out an interest in children" (p. 17). But this means that mothers are caught in a vicious place. Society affords no space to motherhood, little support for mothers, and no public dialogue about it.

De Marneffe's critiques of feminism resonate with Venker and Schlafly, without however reaching to the same conclusions. She values feminism for aiding women, although it has failed to account for maternal desire, and is perhaps responsible for the current stopgap measures on any public discussion about or acknowledgment of the public value of motherhood. De Marneffe accounts for the forgetting of motherhood by the fact that it, more than anything else, distinguishes woman from man and can become the basis for treating women differently than men. De Marneffe is not unaware of the many forces that altered the economy, and with it life in the home and our understanding of motherhood. When the center for producing goods (cloth, soap, candles, etc.) moved from the home to the factory, the mother's role underwent a reduction. Previously, she had shared in her husband's work; now their work devolved into separate spheres. De Marneffe treats the historical changes that radically impacted the family with more nuance than Venker and Schlafly, and thereby indicates the possibility for a critique of the both the feminine sphere/motherhood and the masculine sphere/fatherhood. De Marneffe also faults feminism for failing to attend to the complex history of motherhood, tending instead to collapse childcare with housework (drudgery), and a recent type of sentimental femininity with motherhood, facilely rejecting the entire lot in crafting a new sphere for women.

By focusing on maternal desire de Marneffe wishes to restore some of the complexity and nuance to the way in which we speak about women. She firmly believes that feminism deconstructed a model of femininity that was inadequate. She sees feminism as championing and securing for women the dignity of determining their own lives. However, it failed women in painting motherhood as inimical to self-development. She writes, "the challenge is to formulate a way of thinking about the self that does justice to mothers' *range* of goals; the particular facet of that challenge that concerns me is understanding mothers' desire to care for their children as a feature of their self-development and self-expression, rather than as its negation" (p. 25).

What emerges in de Marneffe's account of maternal desire is the fact that mothering a child does not undermine a woman's development. Her chapter "Pleasure" is given over to examining the many ways in which mothering children is pleasurable for women precisely because it is the discovery of meaning in relationship to another. De Marneffe describes motherhood as an *integrating* experience, one that is capable of "knitting together our physicality, our unconscious wellsprings of desire and need, and our conscious intention and awareness" (p. 94). Motherhood calls upon the whole of a woman, which is precisely why *coerced* motherhood is so detrimental to the mother and the child. Although society rarely tends to value the skills that motherhood requires, de Marneffe points out that "What many mothers find satisfying in mothering is precisely such an exercise of skills, and the contribution that exercising those skills makes to the complexity and richness of oneself and

one's child" (p. 114). De Marneffe is adamant – motherhood at its best is the discovery and development of one's self in being with one's child. Moreover, it is essential for a culture to flourish, and hence must be protected; women must be supported in their decision to mother.

However, as de Marneffe points out in the very next chapter, there remains a strange and difficult ambivalence surrounding motherhood. It exists in the fact that the same mothers who delight in their children can also feel as though their children are keeping them from another, richer life. It is also found in the messages that women should not be too affected by their children, or the embarrassment a women feels in admitting to a desire to have children. Perhaps it emerges in women's feelings about their perception of their own mother. De Marneffe has her finger on two realities in this chapter. One is the tension that exists between a culture that ascribes little meaning to motherhood and the rich experience of being a mother. The other is the simple fact that motherhood alone cannot and does not fulfill a woman. Her desires extend beyond motherhood, like a wound that cannot be healed, even by all the beauty she discovers in her children and her motherhood.

De Marneffe's work is in fact too large and too vast to give sufficient treatment in a short review. Her research is thorough and her discussions of each topic are thought out and often full of insight. She is to be admired for her attention and patience with a topic that our society makes very difficult to think about. However, I would like to venture two critiques of her work. The first is what I perceive to be a contradiction between her experience and her manner of speaking about women. As de Marneffe beautifully shows, a woman fully experiences motherhood when she no longer tries to control *how* she will become herself, but grants another being a determinative power over her. She shows how the mother becomes more than she could have expected in becoming a mother. The experience of being a mother surpasses her desire to become one. In a certain sense, in choosing to become a mother, a woman chooses more than she is aware of; she chooses to receive a superabundant reality. The experience of motherhood seems to suggest that human fulfillment is more than a matter of self-determination; rather, that it has to do with freely choosing to welcome the presence of another and be changed accordingly. Fulfillment is more than self-determination and determination by another, freedom is more than autonomy.

However, the standard definition of person that we as a society have adopted is that of a self-determining individual. De Marneffe herself employs this definition everywhere: women are responsible for determining their lives, and must be given full space to do so. This is best summed up by a woman's procreative rights, which, for de Marneffe, should be expanded from the right to abortion and birth control to the specific rights in the work force that affirm a woman's choice to have children (sufficient maternity leave, flexible work hours, funded child care, etc.). Thus, she herself tends to reduce motherhood to one decision among a host of decisions that a woman can make to determine herself.

This comes out most clearly in her chapters on abortion and women in adolescence. De Marneffe describes pregnancy as a relation to another, about which a woman must decide whether to "involve" herself further or not (p. 245). (Notably, de Marneffe recognizes her position would be barbaric if personhood were ascribed to the fetus, an ascription she rejects). She describes adolescence as a time of learning the management and control of one's body, and laments that most teenage girls exercise this control in a shallow concern with physical appearance instead of the richer possibilities now available to her.

If, as de Marneffe recognizes, the reality of motherhood is not allowed to enter public consciousness, it is precisely because motherhood exceeds the categories we have accepted for speaking about persons and society. It is not accidental that maternal desire is disregarded in

our society; this disregard has everything to do with the inadequate vision of the human person as a self-defining, autonomous individual. We cannot think about motherhood without allowing it to revise our understanding of what a woman, a man, a child, and so on really are – and ultimately our understanding of reality itself. Maternal desire, both in de Marneffe's book and in our society, is very much in danger of simply being reduced to one more element we must manage in our attempt to make ourselves whatever we choose.

This leads to the second criticism. De Marneffe fails to spend adequate time examining the wondrous fact that maternal *desire* exists at all. She certainly goes a long way in showing its persistent nature, and that even the most radical feminists felt it keenly (often realizing their desire too late, bitterly regretting their barren wombs in their later years). This desire, which opens a woman to welcoming and cherishing the existence of one who is irreducibly other to herself, is something that should make us stop and ponder. Despite the dominance of technological thinking that attends only to how to manipulate the other for the greatest effect, and sees everything as available matter for use, there exists in women (and men) the desire to receive and welcome another who cannot be controlled. Motherhood, as de Marneffe acknowledges – when it becomes a matter of manipulating children for the mother's self-fulfillment – is destructive of both the child and the mother.

At its best, maternal desire is the desire to welcome another being who is free, and to nurture that life into its full freedom. This openness to the freedom of the other and the presence of the desire that makes it possible is striking. However, de Marneffe tends to make it into something that must be managed and controlled, which once again is inadequate to what we see in the desire itself. Openness to another cannot be managed, organized, and placed within an effective plan, precisely because this openness implies allowing something greater than the self to enter in. If desire means openness, and maternal desire means an openness that is characterized by a welcoming love, then this desire is profoundly contradicted by a society that is filled with technological managers pursuing maximal efficiency.

De Marneffe has hit upon the theme that has the possibility of revising all of our thinking about work and economy, but it is precisely here that she does not go. Ultimately, maternal desire is for her something that mainly concerns women, and not the cornerstone upon which all of culture could be built; it is not, as it should be, the source for a constructive criticism, a feminine criticism, of our technological society. It should open for us the need for a maternity not only as an option for self-fulfillment for some, but as a condition for the fulfillment of the human person. It is remarkable that de Marneffe has seen so far, and lamentable that she refused to allow herself to see the ultimate meaning for all of culture implied in the universal experience of motherhood: "When I saw him and heard him cry, I was overwhelmed with emotion, and when the nurse placed him in my arms I felt that I had *knowledge* of something very powerful that made life completely comprehensible" (pp. 93-4).

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WITNESS

Witness: Motherhood – All Is Grace

NICKY ROWDON

Recently I accompanied my daughter to her first ever pregnancy scan. The nurse placed the ultrasound device on her abdomen, and immediately an image appeared onscreen. A tiny human child, with legs, arms, vertebrae, skull and face. And an even tinier heart, pulsing away in a body barely 5 cm long. But the thing that struck me most was the space around that body. A perfectly formed, dark space, sheltering this child in the midst of my daughter's own flesh.

Perhaps motherhood is, first and foremost, about space. There are no accidents in biology, and I think that this first fact, that a woman's body automatically makes space for a child, without her planning or choosing or necessarily wishing it, is the paradigm for the "work" which a mother will do. Because if a human being never has a protective space in which to develop, they will not develop well. We know that if we cause fear and mistrust in a child, they will carry that damage well into adult life. Probably until death.

This was my own experience. My mother was not able, because of her own childhood traumas, to give me the consistently nurturing space I needed. I began life with a skull deformed by a high forceps delivery. The rest of my life has felt like an extension of that clumsy entree: I loathe being pulled or pushed or manipulated in any way. I have trust issues. Sometimes my mother would rise above her own damage and we would have times of communion. Times when the umbilical link did not feel toxic. But any act of trust made by me in those moments was apt to be abused at a later date. Anything I said or did was taken down to be used as evidence against me.

I don't want to dwell on that except as the baseline against which I discovered my own ability to be a mother. Sometimes, those who know me well (and who include my own children) say, goodness, how did you manage not to perpetuate that damage? Where did you find the resources to be a mother yourself? And I genuinely puzzle over this. Until I realize that this is an epiphany. A showing forth of God. Because my resources are not human ones. All is grace, as St Thérèse (the epitome of a spiritual mother) would say.

I am not a perfect mother. But I have been consumed by the desire to give my children what I wish I had received myself. Friendly attention. A participation in the wonder of life. A listening and discreet ear. And above all: time and trust. Just as we need to make time for prayer if we are to know God, we need to make time for our children if they are to know him through us.

This is the central, and principal work of a mother. To cooperate in the creative genius of the Creator. To behold our children and see (and say) that "it is good." This does not mean never criticizing them. But it does mean establishing a context of optimism and trust, rather than detraction and manipulation, so that any corrections can be made against that context, which respects the divine purpose of their development and thus motivates them to strive to do better.

As a consequence of my own childhood, there are things I am not good at. But to my amazement my children have been quite capable of learning those things from other sources. However, there are things I do know how to do, and those I have been able to bequeath to them. How to cook a simple meal without ruining the ingredients. How to take responsibility for your actions, to ask for forgiveness and thus be ever ready to give it. How to be a good friend. And as a consequence some of my children's friends have called on my motherhood too. It has never ceased to amaze me that I, who so longed for compassion from others, actually manage to find an eternal fount of the stuff within myself. Because I don't – I can't – rely on that self.

All of this makes me sound like something I am not. I am not one of those barefoot earth-mothers, oozing serene subservience. I have had to fight to keep doing work that strictly speaking is not part of my maternal vocation. Except that, in those rare forays where economic necessity has forced me to work outside of the home (and I am always working within it, whether on its physical infrastructure, or on the mental infrastructure of writing), I have found myself laughably, irresistibly, extending my maternal vocation. A young Muslim colleague once gravitated towards me, and began plying me with questions about love and marriage, faith and culture. Shocked by a news report about the stoning of a woman in Saudi Arabia, she asked me if Christians believed in stoning too. So I told her the story of Our Lord and the adulterous woman. When I got to the end, she gave me a huge smile. "That was *so clever of Jesus*…." I thought so too.

One of my favorite childhood fairy-tales was about a princess who left trails of flowers growing wherever she walked. I think mothers can be like that princess. Whether we are caring for our families or contributing to the wider community, we can follow a "way of beauty" all our own. We can give that extra quality of attention, that smile, that attempt at integrity and the nurturance of trust, without which society eventually breaks down.

I wonder about the two young men who are supposed to have placed the bombs that killed two women and a child at the Boston marathon. Did anyone ever sit with them and listen to their frustrations, their mental impasse? Did anyone demonstrate to them what com-passion really is? I know this sounds naïve (and strikingly, their actual mother expressed total disbelief about their involvement), but I can't help wondering whether in the boxing-ring of life, sometimes the very space designed for the work of a mother gets crushed, to the point where the mother abdicates, somehow. Then love yields to hate, which yields to anger, which yields to… Death. Two young women not yet mothers, one from the West and one from the East. And an eight-year-old Catholic boy who had just made his first communion.

It makes you think. About the culture of death, so pointedly referred to by Cardinal O'Malley after the attack. About righteous anger, whether in grim presidential statements, or at the finger-tips of blogging berserkers. Our indignation is meaningless if we aren't committed to protecting all vulnerable people, from conception to natural death. And right now, across the world, mothers are some of the most vulnerable people there are, because their work is not respected. It is not economically quantifiable. It is not speedily delivered. It is by definition invisible, unaccountable, like that tiny womb forming inside my once tiny girl, like the seed

that germinates under the ground (to borrow a simile from Caryll Houselander) that must at all costs not be disturbed or dug up for information or a progress report.

It is not enough for the Church to say she values mothers. Everyone, from priests to people who know nothing about family life, have to step up to the plate and enable, rather than crush, the space needed by and created by the maternal vocation. For in the end, the only view worth having is the one that was, and is, created in a woman's womb.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

A Mother's Work Is Never Done!

MARGARET HARPER MCCARTHY

Anne-Marie Slaughter, *"Why Women Still Can't Have It All"* (The Atlantic, July 2012).
Elisabeth Badinter, *The Conflict: How Modern Motherhood Undermines the Status of Women* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012).
Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013).
Christopher Lasch, *Women and the Common Life: Love, Marriage and Feminism* (W.W. Norton, 1997).
G.K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong with the World* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009).

I. What Women Want

As it goes with a mother's work, so goes it with the discussion about women and work – or the "work-family balance," as it is now called… genderlessly. Anne-Marie Slaughter, tenured professor of economics at Princeton, recently explained – to the horror of her fellow Alpha female sisters – why "women still can't have it all" in her explosive *Atlantic Monthly* article of July 2012.

Slaughter's two teenage sons were the catalysts – or culprits, as her critics might say – of this outing, causing her to step down from her prestigious role in the first term of the Obama presidency as Director of Policy Planning at the State Department. With great frankness about her desire to be with her teen-age sons, Slaughter committed the unforgiveable sin and admitted to a few *real* – not "socially constructed" – gender differences, chief among which is the fact that women *don't feel the same way as men do about being away from their children*, notwithstanding the availability of around-the-clock nannies (for women like Slaughter, obviously) or day-care, for the less privileged. "Deep down I *wanted* to go home….[It was not just that] I *needed* to go home," she says.

Citing a recent study which found that women are *less happy* now than they were in 1972, and not only that, but *relative to men*, Slaughter makes a sort of missionary appeal to women to join her on the "happiness project." "Let us rediscover the pursuit of happiness, and let us start

at home," she cries, rallying her new sisters. Really it is she who is joining the millions of women who have labored tirelessly under the burden of the unspoken expectation of others to be "superwomen," and "failed," only to think themselves "slothful" and "lacking commitment" to the cause. But now with her in their ranks they have some authorized relief from all that "fatuous talk" (their words) and "airbrushing of reality" (her words) associated with "having it all." But not for long!

Slaughter makes an appeal for the "full range of women's choices" in reverse, so to speak, where the "choices" in question are things like being home for dinner – even making it! – nursing an infant, pushing a child on a swing, watching a baseball game, or sitting down with a troubled teenager – things that involve *being with* one's children, not just *managing* them. And she does so with a kind of argument, rather than just appealing to the need for "choice" *per se*. Women are different when it comes to their children, and so are children when it comes to their mothers.

You see this especially in the kinds of solutions Slaughter offers to her own plight and that of her younger sisters, those who are "giving up in advance": flexible schedules, extensions on tenure clocks, recognition of family hours (dinner time, weekends), and the long-overdue challenge to the idolatry of work (for everyone, men included). This all seems reasonable. Leaving aside for the moment that *mothers are already working* when they are "just" mothers and homemakers, women are different when it comes to their relation to (outside) work and family. Why not, then, Slaughter argues, make changes in the world of work so that they can contribute to it while not having to "give up on things that define them as women" (her words).

Slaughter may just as well have even been reading the document from the former Cardinal Ratzinger's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "On the Collaboration of Men and Women" (2004):

"It cannot be forgotten that the interrelationship between these two activities – family and work – has for women characteristics different from those in the case of men. The harmonization of the organization of work and laws governing work with the demands stemming from the mission of women within the family is a challenge. The question is not only legal, economic, and organizational; it is above all a question of mentality, culture, and respect. Indeed, a just valuing of the work of women within the family is required. In this way, women who freely desire will be able to devote the totality of their time to the work of the household without being stigmatized by society or penalized financially, while those who wish also to engage in other work may be able to do with an appropriate work schedule and not have to choose between relinquishing their family life or enduring continual stress, with negative consequences for one's own equilibrium and the harmony of the family"

Here, however, is where the relief is short-lived, as well as the "choice." It makes no difference how many decades girls have been educated in the curriculum of the "girl project" – donning its obligatory uniform of soccer cleats and shin guards – and how much all reference to differences between the sexes has been washed out of our mouths and our minds, as we have brought them up genderlessly. If they themselves decide not even to get on the famous "ladder," knowing full well that they could climb to the top; or if they should decide to step down from it, like Slaughter (if you call going back to a full-time position at Princeton "stepping down"), it's simply *not allowed* to think that there is anything to this except "stereotypes" perpetuated by malevolent forces in society – by "the man," so to speak.

This is particularly clear in a recent book written by the French feminist Elisabeth Badinter,

The Conflict: How Modern Motherhood Undermines the Status of Women. The "conflict" to which Badinter refers is that between the many recent trends in mothering – especially in that new-world backwater! – and the "goals of women" which for her are practical (not necessarily affective) independence from men and the "tyranny of motherhood," marked finally by the elimination of any salary gap. The trends in question – largely promoted by women, it might be added – are of the "return to nature" kind, such as natural childbirth, use of cloth diapers, "attachment parenting," "co-sleeping," "baby-wearing," and the worst of all, breast-feeding (promoted largely by the book's chief villain, the *La Leche League*)!

Each of these new trends is taken on by the author, who cites studies to counter or, at the very least, minimize the force of the arguments (and studies) underlying the claims made by the "naturalists" (e.g., that mother's milk is better than formula). But behind the illusion of seriousness about "what studies show," and therefore, in some small way, with *the way things are*, what is clear is that none of that matters. If it could be imagined that there had been no study to counter the claims that "children and their mothers are better off when…," it would make no difference. The "conflict" is not between two arguments and their reasons. It is rather between an attempt to ask a serious question on the one hand – "What is better for children and their mothers (and marriages and families)?"– and the refusal even to ask it on the other. Never mind that the answers given by the only ones asking the question may be a bit exaggerated. The point is that the infant (or teenager) is *not allowed* to be better off with his mother close at hand; and the mother is *not allowed* to feel restlessly torn between work and family. All of that is inadmissible evidence. It gets in the way of "choice," which is clearly of one kind and one kind only.

Facebook's Sheryl Sandberg made that (one) choice perfectly clear in her book that was rushed to the presses in the wake of the Slaughter article. *Lean In*enjoins women to resist all those internal obstacles which cause women to "lean out" when they have children or start thinking about having them: the "ambition gap," "self-doubt," "leaving before they leave." These obstacles really do seem to be there, as the salary gap continues to suggest – hence Sandburg's book and the social movement it announces: the "lean in communities." On the other hand, she "argues," there is nothing really in them but the stubborn psychological effects of those all-pervasive stereotypes. (Haven't you noticed them?).

There is nothing really in the care of infants, babies, and young children that places any specific responsibilities on a mother that can't be borne by any other interchangeable adult, she asserts. (After all, she grew up free to roam all over the neighborhood with her siblings and friends without a mother always "hovering about.") Not even breast-feeding offers her evidence to the contrary. That fact just gets tossed into the realm of the "biological imperative," which does nothing but offer obstacles to be overcome (through all the various kinds of gadgets that can now do the job virtually, with as little skin contact as possible).

Sandberg doesn't ask why it might be that this "was simply not something my husband was equipped to do." Like Badinter, in the face of these kinds of "obstacles" there really aren't any questions. Just a lot of leaning away from what is staring one right in the face. And all of this is to encourage women to lean into the (one) "choice" of the (one) "dream": a future (for women) without limits, which for Sandberg means holding a power job, unhindered by children and any remaining un-cooperative fathers.

The limitations of the "choice" and the "dream" it serves are made even more clear by the kinds of policy changes that the Badinters and the Sandbergs want (and don't want) in order to address the problems of women and work. Badinter is annoyed by the younger generation of women who are nostalgic for the quantity time they missed from their own (feminist) mothers

and talk too much about "work-family balance." And she is even more annoyed by their family-friendly solutions, such as flexible schedules and extended maternity leaves – the kind that exist in Scandinavian countries and in Germany – because these solutions go in the direction of women opting (sic!) to stay at home more rather than less. She is in step with the NOW which has a history of countering such measures and, going back further, with the equity feminists who made their beds with the industrialists by helping them oppose laws against child labor and the protection of women from industrial abuse, thereby giving them a whole new pool of unencumbered, efficient workers.

Since family-friendly measures give rise to an even greater salary gap, and since overcoming that gap is the (one and only) measure of the success of the "dream," the only acceptable solutions are those that make it advantageous for women to make the one (good) choice, solutions such as publically – or corporately – funded day care (starting at infancy), longer-school days and years, "innovative summer camps," and tax codes weighted in their favor. In that way all the obstacles are cleared out of the way (excepting, for the moment, those un-predictable snow days!)

We presume that this is what President Obama meant when he said at the inauguration of his *Council on Women*: "It is up to us…to ensure that our daughters and granddaughters have no limits on their dreams." And if there were any doubt about what he meant, his recent historic visit to Planned Parenthood has made things perfectly clear.

It is important to see that for all the talk about "choice," there is always only one real acceptable choice for these authors. By way of flipping the terms of the debate around (as well as the burden), the issue isn't really about whether it's "OK" for women to work (and not feel guilty about it) – putting aside, once again, the fact that a mother is always already working *as a mother*. It is rather whether or not she is *allowed not to work* – especially at a "power job" – and thereby contribute to those dreadfully uneven job statistics. Obviously, no one would be caught dead saying she couldn't. We each have to "chart our own course," after all; so why shouldn't *that* be included too?

The question, however, is whether or not setting out on that course, for reasons other than pure (empty) "choice" – such as, for example, the more powerful leaning of women and children towards spending more time with each other, tied to the unique capacity of women to conceive, bear, and nurse children – can be read as motivated by anything other than that ever-suspicious "subjection of the woman," (as Mill put it) thanks to that "inequality of biology and reproduction" to which the equally suspicious "man" can never respond quickly enough. At the very least, any social and political encouragement of homemaking and discouragement of full-time employment, such as lighter tax burdens for families, and lack of publically funded day-care, should be eliminated, just to "make sure" (as John Rawls said).

That question, however, in the end is tied to the bigger one, which is whether or not there is any real legitimate and respectable choice other than to make common cause with the dominant idea of equality – *equality of sameness* – and serve the corresponding ideal household: a two full-time career household, in thrall to the corporate economy for most of its meals and consumer goods, and to the State and its institutions for welfare (child- and elder-care and all of its education). Noting the affinity of "equity feminism" with the industrialized work place, especially as regards the hegemony of "choice," Christopher Lasch wrote in one of his essays included in a recent collection put together with his daughter in his last days (*Women and the Common Life*):

"The [feminist] movement recognizes only one choice – the family in which adults work full-

time in the [industrialized] marketplace. Its demand for state-supported programs of day-care discriminates against parents who choose to raise their own children and forces everyone to conform to the dominant pattern as the irresistible product of social developments analogous to the development of technology, which automatically renders old ways obsolete. The two-career family represents 'progress,' and laggards have to fall in line. Such is the logic feminists have borrowed from the marketplace" (p. 118).

II. Nobody Home

Turning to the substance of the (one) legitimate choice, it is important to see that, notwithstanding all the talk about "having it all," family *and* work, one has very little of the former (if not also, perhaps, of the latter). While one of the currents in early feminism tied a more active entry of women into public life to "social housekeeping," namely the *domestication of the public arena* – plagued as it was by the abuse of power in the form of slavery, drunkenness, immorality, etc. – what seems to be more in view in the recent discussion is a workplace that will *un-domesticate the home*. As Lasch said, institutions "have a life of their own"; and women are unlikely to make the workplace as we know it more family-friendly (as some, like Slaughter, understandably want). Indeed they are more likely to make it less so. This is clear especially when women like Sandberg identify what change they want for women when exactly one-half of the board rooms are populated by women like them, and they have the power to effect it: more day-care, longer school days and school years.

There is not, then, much *balance* when it comes to the "work-life balance" question, especially when it is treated to the (one) official answer. And it is not the workplace that gets short shrift. It does not take much to imagine what becomes of the home when there are two full-time power-job careerists sleeping in the master bedroom. To put it in a nutshell, it becomes a home with nobody home, where very little happens among those who sleep there, much less with their friends and neighbors. There is no nursing a baby (in the well-appointed nursery), no taking walks to the park, no witnessing first steps (which happen at the "wrong time"), no informal neighborhood clubs after school, no gathering of teenage friends under watchful eyes, no real cooking (in the gourmet kitchen), no dinners with friends (in the non-existent dining rooms), no neighborly charity for sick friends or new mothers. In short there is no time together. And there are definitely no un-organized and un-institutionalized children roaming around neighborhoods freely on bicycles; because there is no longer what Sandberg takes for granted when she did just that: an invisible maternal presence in the background. You really *can't* have it all. And neither, apparently, can the children who are now in "safe environments" and "enrichment programs," cared for, for the most part, by "qualified" professionals, but rarely by the ones to whom they belong.

But this un-domestication of the home, implied in the imbalance of the "work-life" discussion, is only an expression of something deeper. It is an expression of a deep suspicion of the relations between parents and their children, one that reaches way back to the founding of modern liberal democracies and the "social solitaries" they presuppose. Given the unnatural, suspicious, and even "tyrannical" nature of family relations, these relations were to remain relaxed, tentative, conditional, and always in sight of the "exit," even ahead of the game. De Tocqueville saw this in the newly founded America where "you easily forget those who have precede you, and you have no idea of those who will follow you" (*Democracy in America*). Paraphrasing the French visitor two centuries later, Alan Bloom wrote: "one cannot risk interdependence. Imagination compels everyone to look forward to the day of separation in order to see how he will do" (*The Closing of the American Mind,* p. 62).

The preparation for separation, of course, goes in both directions. The full-time-away-from-

the-home-all-day-long (power) career job does this for the mother of young children. And the early institutionalization of her very young children does it for the children themselves. Indeed it was the current French Minister *of the Family*, Dominique Bertinotti, who said as much when arguing for the institutionalization of children as early as two years old: "it wrests from them every possible social, philosophical, familial, and religious determinism"!

Then too there is the relaxed and tentative relation between the very two who bring children into the world. Wendell Berry described this perfectly:

"Marriage… is now on the one hand an intimate 'relationship' involving (ideally) two successful careerists in the same bed, and on the other hand a sort of private political system in which rights and interest must be constantly asserted and defended. Marriage, in other words, has now taken the form of divorce: a prolonged and impassioned negotiation as to how things shall be divided" (*The Art of the Commonplace,* Shoemaker and Hoard, 2002, p. 67).

The married couple is "on parallel lines," as it were, with each of its members pursuing his or her own individual "goals" and "dreams." They do not, in other words, view themselves as serving a *common* enterprise to which all of their work is ordered. No wonder that the very idea of children is supposed to come late in the game, after the terms of independence have been secured by two well-established and independent career paths. (Egg freezing, of course, is the necessary companion to this independence, as Sarah Elizabeth Richards has just suggested in her new book *Motherhood Rescheduled.*)

But really, is it even clear why this couple should want children in the first place? Badinter, whose real interest seems to be "ethical childlessness," suggests that such a desire might even be *selfish*. And, given whatever reasons there might be left for having children – satisfying affective needs, even solidifying the waning affection of the already tenuous marriage – she may just be right. No wonder the home is empty. And no wonder it has been so easily absorbed by work in the contemporary work-life imbalance.

But, if the home is effectively empty, what is it that we are working for? And for whom, we might add, are we working, other than for ourselves? What is striking in Sandberg's book is how she thinks about her work, her career. It is tautological. The reason to have a career is to have a career, or, at the very most, to "effect change" so that other women can have a career to have a career. Nothing is said substantively about the *reason* for work – about what, or whom, it serves. There's no mention even of just making a living for one's own family. Work isn't in *relation* to anything. Even within the workplace itself, it is her hope that one day women won't have to play by the "archaic rules" of negotiating from the point of view of the common good (using "we" language), and will be able instead just to look out for themselves ("as men do").

Now that the world of work has absorbed the home, Sandberg would take one of the initial feminist projects of domesticating the world to its polar opposite: every woman for herself.

III. Opening up the Horizon

Naturally, women have always worked and always will. The question then is not about whether or not they work, but whether or not the work specific to them counts for work, and whether or not that work has any relation to whatever work they do beyond that. This is the crucial question. It is clear enough that the Badinters, the Sandbergs, and their like answer the question in the negative. Is the discussion over, then? Perhaps the thousands of visceral reactions to *Lean In* by ex-feminist ladder climbers enjoying life with their children (finally!) suggests otherwise.

One of the greatest friends of women in the last century was the Slavic pope, John Paul II, who spoke frequently of the "genius of women." With that term he pointed to the work specific to women, that of "being entrusted with the human being in a special way." By virtue of her concrete femininity, the woman, he said, has "a sensitivity for what is essentially human" (*Mulieris Dignitatem,* n. 30). She welcomes the child, gives it room, enables it to grow, *lets it be*. She is a "humanizing force" (*Letter to Women,* n. 4); she is a "guardian," as it were, of that most basic activity – that *work* – of recognizing what is essentially human, especially in a world which tends to see only things that are useful. This is why he urged societies not to stigmatize or penalize financially women who do have children, if they spend most of their time caring for them, and to ensure that women who do engage in other work have a work schedule that doesn't force them to choose between "relinquishing their family life or enduring continual stress, with negative consequences for one's own equilibrium and the harmony of the family" (*On the Collaboration of Men and Women*).

The "genius of women," moreover, said John Paul II, was true for women whether or not they were physical mothers. It belonged to women *as such*, and gave form to all of their activity. For this reason he urged women who engaged in other work to do so *from the point of their motherhood* (physical or spiritual) and "humanize structures" (*Letter to Women,* n. 2).

We might call to mind here the many women of the "maternalist movement" – all in the Democrat party – many of whom entered public life and assumed positions of responsibility in the government of FDR. These women promoted things that had as their horizon, not androgynous individuals, but men and women as actual or potential fathers and mothers, together in a home with children. Pushing back against the industrialist tendencies to flatten these distinctions in the meat-grinder of "equality" (of sameness), they saw in the distinct needs and responsibilities of men and woman *a bond to be strengthened,* not relaxed. To *that* end they proposed changes to tax and labor law – including the family wage and "mother's pensions" for widows – and established countless institutions and campaigns that promoted motherhood and home life.

Indeed it was the emergence of the new kind of workplace that industrialism generated that prompted the very need to affirm the value of motherhood in the first place (though there were many antecedent reasons for this in the ideas of modernity itself). G.K. Chesterton – another friend of women – thought that industrialism not only threatened to suffocate motherhood (and childhood) with its inhuman and menial labor conditions, but that it did so first by convincing women of the triviality of the work specific to them, especially against the backdrop of the glamour of "professional" (and reimbursed) work. Chesterton thought that time spent with one's children in their formative years was what *kept women broad not narrow*.

"To be Queen Elizabeth within a definite area, deciding sales, banquets, labors and holidays; to be Whiteley within a certain area, providing toys, boots, sheets, cakes and books; to be Aristotle within a certain area, teaching morals, manners, theology, and hygiene; I can understand how this might exhaust the mind, but I cannot imagine how it could narrow it. How can it be a large career to tell other people's children about the Rule of Three, and a small career to tell one's own children about the universe? How can it be broad to be the same thing to everyone, and narrow to be everything to someone? No. A woman's function is laborious, but because it is gigantic, not because it is minute. I will pity Mrs Jones for the hugeness of her task; I will never pity hers for its smallness" (*What's Wrong with the World*, Feather Trail Press, p. 43).

Chesterton saw a century ago what many women are beginning to see now on the backs of

their own experience. Now women serving in the State Department, even women in the White House – far from the factory floor or the homogenizing office cubical – can see this. Writing about her decision to step down from her job as President Bush's assistant and Vice President Cheney's counselor in her memoir *Midlife Crisis at 30*, Mary Matalin wrote: "I finally asked myself, 'Who needs me more?' And that's when I realized, it's somebody else's turn to do this job. I'm indispensable to my kids, but I'm not even close to indispensable to the White House." The rediscovery of the "feminine genius," championed by Chesterton, the "Maternalists," and Pope John Paul II is refreshing to many women, for many reasons, not the least of which is that it puts the finger on something deeper than mere (empty) "choice." It names what they feel, even when – especially when – they are exerting so much energy to stifle it, by *leaning in.*

Still the rediscovery of the "feminine genius" has to go hand in hand with other rediscoveries. Writing about the sexual division of labor in *Women and the Common Life,* Christopher Lasch points to the real problem that set up the contemporary devaluing of the feminine genius at home, on the one hand, and the jettisoning of it altogether in the work place, on the other. Actually, he credits Betty Friedan for putting her finger on it in her *Feminine Mystique*(which he seems to have *actually read*.) Friedan's point, says Lasch, is not the one everyone thinks it was, namely to tell women to get out of the house and get a job. It was deeper than that. It was a critique of the situation women now found themselves in for the first time – in the new version of the "stay-at-home mother."

When the suburbs were created, said Friedan, the "traditional family" came into being as an entity now fully cut off from the world of culture and work; and it dwelt in a home that was now the full expression of the "haven in the heartless world" it had become at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. As for that home, not only did it stand at a distance from the centers of culture and work, it was not itself centered around any other meaningful hub – churches, town halls, greens – other than the shopping mall. (This was indeed the original *appeal* of the suburbs, since in them no one had to run into and rely upon his or her relations and neighbors as before). Add to that the fact that the house itself had little land on which to grow food, and no work spaces in which to can and store it, or make anything else for that matter that was truly needful, much less to operate a cottage industry of any sort, and you had the recipe for the "comfortable concentration camp," and the *ennui,* loneliness, and "nameless dissatisfaction" that so often filled it.

Lasch connects the problem in the home to the general problem of the new economy which had "no other object than to keep people at work and thus to sustain the national 'capacity to consume'… all without reference to the intrinsic quality of the goods and services produced or the intrinsic satisfaction of the work that went into them" (p. 110), nor, for that matter, the true satisfaction of those *for whom* one worked. The problem, according to Lasch, was that what was going on in the workplace was affecting the home even if this was thought (mistakenly, in his view) to be an island of domesticity far from the rat-race of the new consumer economy. The work that was going on in the home was as unreal as the work going on outside of it, especially now that it was the prime target of all the new ready-to-use convenience items and appliances, not to mention the disposable and programmed-for-obsolescence products. This was what Friedan was getting at, said Lasch, when she described the excessive housewifery (in the now "spotless" houses) and obsessive attention to children that had all the telltale signs of make-work for bored women.

In addition to the fact that work in the home didn't seem to be very real, it was also cut off from any larger common purpose. This became particularly clear in childrearing, surprisingly enough, thanks to the fathers of the fifties, who, as a result of their disenchantment with the "heartless world" were embracing the "new fatherhood," as a "second but real career." But just

as the work they escaped from at the end of the day had become purposeless – devoid as it was of workmanship and real usefulness – so too would childrearing… eventually. What was one bringing up a child into? Says Lasch: "when adults devoted themselves exclusively to the child's world, there isn't much world for the child to grow up into in the next stage. In order for a father to guide his growing son, it was necessary for him to have a community of his own and be more of a man" (p. 112). As with work, if childrearing wasn't connected to anything else, it couldn't justify itself and be satisfying. All the more so, as Friedan had suggested, for the one whose specific "genius" was tied so directly to the child.

Conclusion

The rediscovery of the "genius of women" then, is tied to a series of rediscoveries. In the first place, it is tied to the rediscovery of what none of the self-help books about super-women "leaning in" can ever explain: *why it is worth working*. It is tied to the discovery of the meaning of work, that of making the world a more human and hospitable place for us and for our children (even if the work serves no other purpose than to put food on the table).

But it is also tied to the rediscovery of *why it is worth having children* in the first place. To have a special sensitivity for what is essentially human is also to have a special sensitivity for the intrinsic worth and goodness of the world – its basic positivity – notwithstanding its many "defects."

This worldly "feminine genius" is itself tied to another "genius," the "genius of the father." It is thanks to the mother's relation to the father that she can see what she is not (and what he only represents). At the origin of the life she bears – indeed at the origin of the whole world – stands a generous gift that lets the world be, and be *good.*

As it goes with motherhood, then, so it goes with the world and the work that is really useful to it. It really is true, then, that "a mother's work is never done," in the broadest sense.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

The Real Trouble with Day Care

MARY EBERSTADT

Re-published by permission of Mary Eberstadt and Sentinel, a member of Penguin Group, from Mary Eberstadt, *Home Alone America: Why Today's Kids Are Overmedicated, Overweight, and More Troubled Than Ever Before* (New York: Sentinel, 2004), chapter 1 (pp. 1-21).

Not too long ago – ironically, on a day I had spent buried under just a little of the vast literature on what is called "early child development" – our ten-year-old daughter skipped home from school with some unexpectedly apt news. Her class would soon be volunteering some time at a local day-care center – and not just any day-care center, but the snazziest of several in our Washington, DC, neighborhood: a cheerful and inviting high-end sort of place much prized by the parents whose infants and small children spend their weekdays there.

Like most girls her age, this one adores babies and toddlers, so she was elated at the idea. It was all the more surprising then when she returned home on the day of her visit with a long face. As things turned out, the day-care center had not been the fun she had expected, and the reason was this: "There was a boy, a little boy, who was really sick and cried the whole time. His ear was all red, and he shrieked if they even touched it. The day-care ladies were nice and everything, but he wouldn't stop. It was just so sad. All he did was keep screaming the same thing over and over: *Mommy! Mommy! Mommy!*"

In this way a distressed ten-year-old, empathizing with an even more distressed two-year-old, captured something I had been struggling to formulate for weeks – namely, exactly *what* our long-running national controversy over institutional child-care is *not* about. It is not about that screaming toddler. It is not in fact about the immediate emotional experience of any toddlers or babies who spend most of their waking hours out of their homes and in nonfamily care. That is to say, for all the many things our discussion *is* about, it is not about this perhaps most prosaic of facts: institutional care as it is experienced by real, live, very small children.

No, our ongoing national child-care debate – and it is a real enough debate, among the most heavily documented controversies of our time – is a more sanitized, abstract, at times even a fastidious thing. It is told of, by, and for educated adults, and its vernacular is that of scholarly social science. Does day-care affect long-term "personality development"? "Cognitive ability"? "Educational readiness"? Is "attachment theory" out and "early socialization" in? Where are the "longitudinal data" in all this, and just how "statistically significant" are those sample

sizes? These are the sorts of things that we talk about when we talk about day-care, whether we ourselves are "for" it or not.

And just as the argument over institutional care is dominated by talk of outcomes and effects, so also is it advocated on the same basis: *results*. "My kids got dropped off at day-care," as a feminist put it one Mother's Day in the *New York Times,* "and one is now finishing up at Brown, and the other went through Harvard and Oxford." "Our son," bragged another in the *Washington Post,* also that Mother's Day, "got a 3.6 grade point average in grad school and was the valedictorian of his class" – and in addition, "Our daughter [is a] Shakespearean actress." The day-care proof, as advocates see it, is in the achievement pudding. In a 1997 book called *When Mothers Work: Loving Our Children Without Sacrificing Ourselves*, Joan K. Peters summarizes some of the research behind such boosterism: this British study argues that children of employed mothers read better than those of at-home ones; that American study claims that children left in day-care from one month on develop higher cognitive and language abilities; and Alison Clarke-Stewart's work argues that day-care children are more confident and "socially skilled" than others.[1]

It is not only advocates who think that institutional care rises or falls by the standard of outcomes, but also, for different reasons, the critics of institutional care. For the most part these writers make the opposite empirical point – either that data does not suggest the rosy outcomes advocates believe in or that the "good" data on cognitive and language skills are outweighed by the "bad" data on a variety of behavioral problems. The work of Jay Belsky, perhaps the best-known authority to raise questions about day-care's possible negative impact on some children, exhibits both lines of empirical criticism. So does researcher Brian C. Robertson's 2003 book, *Day-Care Deception: What the Child-Care Establishment Isn't Telling Us*, which uses the "bad" data to argue that if parents knew more about the real facts of day-care, they would try harder to avoid it.[2] Moreover, even critics who have made nonempirical arguments against institutional care tend to invoke the long run – that is, the imagined effect on such protocitizens down the road. One particularly interesting recent example is a 2003 essay called "A Schoolhouse Built by Hobbes" by Bryce Christensen, which argues against day-care on the grounds that it weakens the attachment to family necessary for later character formation, thus contributing to the over-individuation of American society.[3]

Generally speaking, then, both the critics and the advocates of institutional care agree about one thing: It is the effects, whether behavioral or cognitive or other, that make or break the case for day-care. This emphasis on the long run is only natural, of course; parents do indeed care very much about results of all kinds. In fact, as the ones most likely to have the long-term interests of the child at heart, parents by definition must care about such things; it would be perverse if they did not.

Yet this focus on the long term, natural as it may be, has also obscured one important related point: To say that day-care should be judged on the long-term results is not to say that those results are the only measure by which to judge this experiment. Here, as in other serious arguments, ends aren't everything; the question of what happens in the here and now also needs to be factored in.

Let us momentarily grant for the sake of argument that most children who grow up in institutional care turn out fine. To advocates this is where the controversy over day-care begins and ends; case closed. But they are wrong. The notion that "most kids will turn out fine anyway" does not end the question of whether institutional care is good or bad; actually, it should be only the beginning. That other question, about immediate effects, demands to be answered, too. It is not about whether day-care might keep your child out of Harvard ten or

twenty years from now or launch him into it, but, rather, about the independent right or wrong of what happens to him day to day during the years that he is most vulnerable and unknowing. Reduced to its simplest form, that inquiry goes something like this: *What about the way this radical change in care is experienced by babies and young children? Do we know anything about that, and, if so, does that knowledge deserve any moral weight at all?*

This chapter is an attempt to answer that question about contemporaneous as opposed to long-term harm. It argues that institutional care is a bad idea for parents who do have a choice because it raises the quotient of *immediate* unhappiness in various forms among significant numbers of children, and the continuing ideological promotion of such separation causes the related harm of desensitizing adults to what babies and children actually need. Yes, many parents have to use day-care. But there is a difference between having to use it and celebrating the institution full-throttle. What follows is an argument about why that difference matters.

Day-Care as Germ Factory

The reason for beginning with institutional care, as opposed to other forms of substitute care, is simple: That is the chosen battleground of advocates who have argued over the years that such care is as good as or even better than maternal care or non-maternal care in other forms – an older sibling or grandparent, a babysitter in the home, a turn-taking arrangement with the mother next door, and so on.

This ideological defense of mother-child separation is not new, of course. As Allan Carlson showed recently in an interesting essay on the history of such attempts, its pedigree stretches all the way back to Plato and includes many other thinkers through the centuries.[4] In our own time such advocates generally have been dubbed “feminists.” I will refer to their ideology instead as “separationism” and to its advocates as “separationists,” for that is what they are – thinkers who urge institutional care not as an inevitable practical choice for some, but as a theoretical choice that allegedly advances higher personal and social goals. This is how institutional care has come to be rationalized and promoted.

One immediate harm of such care – or at least what some people would regard as harm – is familiar to all pediatricians and many parents. Day-care centers literally make children sick, and they do so a lot more efficiently than care at home. The screaming toddler with whom I opened this chapter is not the exception but the norm; he is perhaps on the extreme end of pain (of course, not all children in day-care spend their days this way), but it is the norm nonetheless. He represents the truth that just being in day-care increases the likelihood of physical distress. That is because infections are more likely among babies or toddlers tended to in an institutional setting – for three rather obvious reasons. First, infants in full-time care are almost certainly not being breast-fed, or not much at any rate, so the immunological benefits of human milk are not being supplied to them. This raises the risks of their contracting ailments no matter where they are. Second, certain specific things about babies and toddlers, such as diaper-wearing and constant hand-to-mouth contact, make them germ carriers beyond compare, especially germs transmitted by saliva or feces. Third, the sheer number of children encountered every day in such institutions – which is far higher than for children at home even in large families – further and dramatically raises the likelihood of infection. It is like playing pathogen roulette with five bullets instead of two.

In a medical nutshell, and as parents who use day-care already know, children in it tend to be sick more often than others. Consider the example of *otitis media*, commonly known as an ear infection and the single most common complaint that brings children to the doctor. *Otitis media* itself is not contagious but is caused by upper respiratory ailments (URAs) that are. Over

the past couple of decades, as any pediatrician can tell you – to say nothing of those millions of parents still harboring a sticky pink bottle of antibiotic somewhere in the refrigerator – ear infections in children, especially young children, have risen dramatically. Why? For the same reason that Dr Charles Bluestone, an otolaryngologist (ear, nose, and throat specialist), told one newspaper: “Virtually every study ever done on the increase in otitis media has shown that day-care is the most important difference.”[5]

And *otitis media* is only the beginning. One current American Academy of Pediatrics fact sheet on “Controlling Illness in Child Care Programs” – the title is suggestive in itself – enumerates a number of other infections that are spread more easily in day-care, from the common cold to gastrointestinal problems to any number of skin and eye infections (impetigo, lice, ringworm, scabies, cold sores, and conjunctivitis, or pinkeye). In fact, hepatitis A, which can be transmitted by contact with feces and is actually more serious for adults than for children, is such an issue in center-based care that this paper further recommends vaccines for “high-risk occupations” – that is, day-care workers.

Medically speaking, the story of day-care as germ central is relatively old news; it has been more than ten years since *Pediatric Annals*, an authoritative source for pediatricians, devoted a special issue to the subject and titled its editorial “Day-care, Day-care: Mayday! Mayday!”[6] But what has lagged in the popular understanding, at least to judge by the relative absence of writing on the subject, is what might be called the phenomenological face of all this – that is, what numbers like these mean in real life for people, including babies and toddlers.

Something like that need has lately been supplied by Harvard professor Jody Heymann, who devotes considerable space to examining real-life case studies of contemporary family life in her 2000 book on inequality, *The Widening Gap*. (It was based on extended interviews with more than eight hundred individuals, including workers in the child-care industry as well as parents.) The day-care employees repeatedly emphasize the problems of having to work not only around sick babies and children, but also around desperate parents who drop off those babies and children at day-care rather than miss a day of work. One center worker even coined the term “Tylenol signs” to describe what is evidently common practice: dosing a child with fever-lowering medicine at home or in the car just before drop-off, with the result that the caregivers do not realize the child has a fever until several hours later when the effects wear off and the child’s temperature goes back up. Of course this is contrary to the rules of most centers; since fevers usually mean that kids are contagious, they are supposed to stay home when they have them – but this apparently is a rule parents frequently breach. In fact, on account of this “Tylenol” practice, some caregivers also routinely interrogate children about what happened at home – specifically, whether at not they have had any “pink medicine.”

As anyone who has attended even one sick child can attest, the physical and emotional demands of several at once can strain many a “caregiver ratio” to the breaking point. “[M]any of the child-care providers we spoke with,” Heymann summarizes, “described having received children whose acute health problems *made it impossible to provide adequate care either for them or for the well children under the child-care providers’ supervision*” [emphasis added]. Problems arose, for example, because the child-care providers could not keep clean and well hydrated the sick children who were vomiting or had diarrhea, give sufficient attention to the sick children’s other needs, and curb the spread of infectious diseases while also trying to care for the healthy children.”[7] Moreover, many parents further confirmed these negative findings to the research team. “Overall,” Heymann reports, “41 per cent of the parents we interviewed extensively… said their working conditions had negatively affected their children’s health in ways that ranged from children being unable to make needed doctors’ appointments to children receiving inadequate early care, which resulted in their condition

worsening."[8]

Heymann's account, sad and all too real, is one of several in recent years to have drawn attention to the poor quality of care in many centers and to infer the need for some national "solution" (paradoxically, more and also better day-care). Like most other such advocacy, Heymann's emphasizes how emotionally difficult it can be for the parents who must manage all these competing claims at once. And who cannot feel for a stressed-out mother torn between an unforgiving workplace on the one hand and a sick baby on the other? To avoid that, as discussed by Arlie Russell Hochschild in her book *The Time Bind*, increasing numbers of corporations have devised ways to keep parents at their desks, including flex time and other leave arrangements as well as in-house care centers.[9]

Yet like most of the day-care literature, Heymann's explains the sick child problem from the adult point of view – that is, the stress that a sick child adds to an already hectic schedule. As such, it is of limited moral utility. To get the full measure of the harm possibly transpiring, one must look at it from the point of view of the miserable ailing child in institutional care who is not only being deprived of the familiar people and things that might take the edge off his discomfort, but is also too young to understand where everyone else is and why he feels so bad. Shouldn't his unhappiness and confusion and lack of fulfillment count for something in the day-care calculus, too? Life is indeed hard and misery abundant for all of us, and as some separationist literature reminds us, kids do have to get used to it. But why don't advocates answer this question: What age, if any, is too young for induction into the school of hard knocks?

How Do You Spell "Aggression"?

Another immediate harm caused by institutional care, well documented if still bitterly resisted, is that day-care makes some children more belligerent and aggressive – and we are talking not only about the longer term here, but also about the here and now.

The latest evidence to back this claim, well publicized by all sides during the last two years, comes from lengthy investigations by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), one subset of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Beginning in 1989, a team of researchers began tracking children at ten different sites to determine what effects, if any, day-care was having on them. Over the years various adverse findings have been thrashed out in the media and elsewhere – for example, that babies and toddlers at various ages appeared less attached to their mothers depending on the amount of time spent in non-maternal care.[10] Even so, perhaps nothing about the NICHD project has proved quite as incendiary as the lead article published in the July/August 2003 issue of *Child Development* that asked, "Does Amount of Time Spent in Child Care Predict Socioemotional Adjustment During the Transition to Kindergarten?"

Yes, said the research, and not in a good way, at least for some. "The more time children spent in any of a variety of non-maternal care arrangements across the first 4.5 years of life, the more externalizing problems and conflict with adults they manifested at 54 months of age and in kindergarten, as reported by mothers, caregivers, and teachers" are perhaps the most quoted words of their report. "More time in care not only predicted problem behavior measured on a continuous scale in a dose-response pattern but also predicted at-risk (though not clinical) levels of problem behavior, as well as assertiveness, disobedience, and aggression."[11]

As Jay Belsky, one of the lead researchers, explained elsewhere, the criteria for these problem behaviors were quite specific: aggression meant "cruelty to others, destroys own things, gets in

many fights, threatens others, and hits others"; noncompliance/disobedience meant "defiant, uncooperative, fails to carry out assigned tasks, temper tantrums, and disrupts class discipline"; and assertiveness meant "bragging/boasting, talks too much, demands/wants attention, and argues a lot." All three behaviors increased alongside the amount of time in non-maternal care. The effect did not hold for most of the children; Belsky stressed repeatedly that it was "modest."

He also stressed, however, that even modest negative findings are important for this reason: "In the US more and more children are spending more and more time in non-maternal care than ever before." Thus, something that has "a small effect on lots of children" can have a large impact on a given setting – such as school. As Belsky wrote, "Consider the consequences of being a teacher in a kindergarten classroom in which many children have a lot of early, extensive, and continuous child-care experience versus being a teacher in a classroom in which many fewer children have extensive child-care experience." Given the aggression findings, to put his point rhetorically, in which room would you rather teach?

For daring to draw attention to these findings, Belsky has been excoriated by numerous colleagues as well as by many separationist writers – all the more so because the link between day-care and aggression was only the latest in a series of negative effects turned up by his research. His personal story, a fascinating example of the professional perils of ideological heresy, is told in detail in several places, among them Brian C. Robertson's book, a chapter in Robert Karen's thorough 1998 work, *Becoming Attached*, and a recent essay by Belsky himself titled "The Politicized Science of Day-Care."[12] Yet as Robertson also documents, Belsky's report on child aggression is only the latest to suggest that at least some children become more belligerent in day-care than elsewhere. "As far as aggressive behavior goes," Robertson summarizes, "here too the recent studies simply underscore a long history of findings" – including those from a 1974 report in *Developmental Psychology* that found higher levels of verbal and physical abuse among day-care children to numerous more recent studies which showed, as Belsky did, that at least some children institutionalized from infancy appear more likely to hit, kick, push, and otherwise behave badly than do children in noninstitutional care.[13]

This same idea – that institutionalized children might become more aggressive on account of their surroundings – also received strong independent support from a very different kind of study published in *Child Development* in 1998.[14] Here, researchers measured not behavior – which is intrinsically subjective – but, rather, levels of cortisol, a stress-related chemical, in day-care children. And what they found was suggestive in the extreme – or, as the researchers put it, "remarkable and unexpected." While most humans apparently exhibit the same daily pattern in which cortisol is highest in the morning and falls in the afternoon, the day-care children tested showed exactly the *opposite* pattern: their cortisol levels were higher in the afternoon than in the morning. In other words, their internal stress, unlike that of other people, had apparently been mounting through their institutionalized day.

There is much more that one could relay in this social science vein about the connection between institutional care and aggression for at least some kids. Then again, just how many studies do we need to get the point? I have an independent, quite non-expert source for the same connection, a mental picture worth a hundred research bulletins: biting. Yes, *biting*. Sitting next to me is a stack of advisory literature written for people who run day-care centers or preschools, and apparently one of the most important things they must prepare for, to judge by the amount of attention it receives, is coping with the inevitable occasional outbreak of human biting. According to any number of authoritative sources, as one preschool publication puts it, the biting of one baby or toddler by another is "the earliest and most troublesome

unacceptable behavior in the preschool," one that "can sweep through a preschool like the measles." Biting is one of the chief reasons that children are expelled from day-care and preschool. An astonishing range of "strategies" have been devised for handling the problem, a range that of course also speaks to its ubiquity. To browse the literature is to learn that many babies and toddlers in institutional care bite and bite a lot. They bite themselves, one another, and, of course, teachers and adults, too.

Why is this fact so remarkable? Because it doesn't happen elsewhere the way it does in day-care. On *scholasric.com*, for example, a resource for teachers, parents, and students, one parent invited to "ask the experts" about parental concerns put the point plaintively: "My two-year-old has been biting other kids at day-care; however, she does not do this at home or at my friend's house. Why would she bite only at day-care and play well everywhere else she goes?" Of course the "expert" answer is what one would expect – that the toddler may be lonely, in need of affection, frustrated, and so on. But the real point remains that day-care, at least as ordinary experience suggests, makes biting and the feelings associated with it more likely.

This is something some readers will know not only from reading expert literature, but also from their own experience. Of course, as the experts stress, biting is a natural thing. A baby or toddler might do it in fun or because he is teething or simply because he is curious about what will happen. Many of us have seen that kind of biting (and felt it, too). But chronic biting? Contagious biting? No, that is something else altogether, and it is not the way children, even very small children, ordinarily behave. And why does this difference matter? Because if randomly assembled children of the same ages do not spontaneously start using their teeth as weapons, whereas the same kinds of children assembled in a day-care situation do, this strongly suggests that the institutionalized ones are biting at least in part because something about their situation has them especially agitated. In other words, the attention given to biting in the literature on institutional care is itself a sign of what boosters deny – clear evidence that day-care is causing aggressive behavior.

Our skeptical reader might say, "So what? Maybe biting isn't the best habit, but all of them will outgrow it. Besides, do any longitudinal studies show that recidivist biting of other children at the age of two predicts psychological or academic trouble down the road? No? Well, then, the problem is solved."

But of course the problem is not solved at all, because our skeptical reader has asked what for our purposes is the wrong question – the one about ends, not means. The right question, the one addressing the overlooked moral dimension of all this, is: *What, after all, is the mental state of a bunch of babies and toddlers who take up biting as a habit?* And we can all figure out the answer to that without reaching for the social science bookshelf: *Those kids aren't happy.* They are exhibiting a self-protective animal instinct, which suggests that they feel unprotected. It is something we would all understand readily enough if, say, zoo animals were to attack each other more frequently in their quarters than in the wild. (And if they did, we would, of course, deplore it and blame the zoo.) Doesn't that apparent internal turmoil say something undesirable about how institutional care is experienced by at least some small children?

"Sick" Plus "Bad" Equals "Good"?

For parents who do not have options apart from institutional care, the increased likelihood that day-care children will be sick and unhappy are facts of life. They are necessary evils, regrettable but far better than the alternative, which is no care at all. And yet the most curious fact in all our day-care debate, one that brings us to a third and very interesting sort of harm being caused in all this, is that these problems are not seen that way by certain other adults –

namely, the separationists dominant in the day-care debate.

These advocates do not see institutional care as a "necessary evil." They do not write of mother-baby separation with the ambivalence most mothers feel. They refuse to acknowledge that day-care might cause damage of any kind to any child – unlike the many parents who must use it and who worry about just that. The least analyzed and perhaps also the weirdest dimension of our day-care wars so far is the insistence by such advocates that what most people think is bad news – more sick kids and worse-behaved ones – is actually good and maybe even great. And this brings us to a third kind of harm in our experiment in separation: *the ideological defense of separationism is further coarsening adult moral sensibility*.

For example, anyone actually charged with the care of little children knows that a sick baby or toddler is a uniquely pitiful thing, in part because such a child is too young to understand why. Yet such natural empathy is not the prism through which the sick child problem in day-care is viewed by our advocates. Generally speaking, their response to the sick kids problem has run one of two ways: Either ignore it altogether or rewrite the script so that sicker is actually better.

Thus, in *A Mother's Place: Choosing Work and Family Without Guilt or Blame*, Susan Chira acknowledges "several studies have also shown that children in day-care suffer from more ear infections and illnesses in general," and then brushes it off with "[but] they are hardier when they are older."[15] Susan Paludi in *Backlash* sounds the same note: "They soon build up immunities."[16] Similarly, when a well-publicized 2002 study showed that babies and toddlers in day-care get sick more often than those at home – about twice as many colds, for example – the advocate cheer going up around the country was notably creepy. As one lead researcher explained, this finding "lifts a heavy stone off the backs of guilt-ridden parents who put their children in large day-care centers. The benefit to having colds in the toddler years is that kids miss less school later when it counts."[17]

Now step back from this discussion for a moment and ask yourself: if we were talking about anything but day-care here, would anyone be caught cheering for the idea that some little children get sick twice as often as others? I think we all know the answer to that one. And that dissonance raises the question of what exactly is going on with this sort of callousness about small children. It is very hard to spend even a day in charge of a sick baby or toddler and be able to accept the Nietzschean line that what does not kill him will make him stronger – in other words, that being sick is good for him. But what if you are not around it, if it has been made someone else's problem? Might you then be a little less tuned in to just how much a sick baby or toddler needs?

And just as some people have managed to find "good news" in the increase in sick kids, so, too, has there been no lack of advocates who give a thumbs-up to the documented increase in aggression and other behavioral trouble. Belsky antagonist Allison Clarke-Stewart, for example, rationalized the aggression problem in 1989 this way: "Children who have been in day-care think for themselves and want their own way" and "are not willing to comply with adults' arbitrary rules." Others have gone further. A University of Chicago psychologist offered the particularly Orwellian response to the 2001 NICHD study that "aggression" was actually "self-assertion" and that day-care babies and toddlers were simply "much more sturdy little interactors" than tots at home. A writer for *Salon* similarly opined that it is "better to be smart and cheeky than dim and placid." It was elsewhere suggested that the traits being measured by NICHD are the same alpha qualities of future corporate titans. As with the advocates who have no trouble finding a silver lining in sick kids, so has there been no shortage of those who have translated bad behavior into diapered rugged individualism.

And here again the moral sensibility of our separationists seems to be a different order from that of most people – including most parents, whether they use day-care or not. Anyone who has ever done playground duty with small children knows exactly the difference between an "assertive" little boy playing loudly with a truck and another little boy who just used the same truck to hit another child over the head. Just about anyone who has spent time around small children knows the difference between real aggression and childish high spirits. Bur what about parents who *aren't* around to learn this much in the first place? Might they not have a dimmer understanding of that distinction than other people do?

And here is the point in the argument where we leave the narrow matter of institutional care and look more widely at what is said about babies and children more generally in the service of the separationist experiment. Here, too, interestingly enough, the same sort of callousness implicit and explicit in the day-care literature makes routine appearances. Consider a recent example from the letters page of the *Atlantic*. Writer Caitlin Flanagan had recently penned a largely favorable review of a book by Laura Schlessinger, a review that angered some readers, including one named Nancy, who chided Flanagan for worrying overmuch about middle-class children of divorce. Flanagan aptly replied, "Since writing my review of Laura Schlessinger's new book, I have had countless people tell me that they can't stand her because she's 'mean.' But Laura says you'll hurt a child if you divorce; don't do it. Nancy says she can't work up much compassion for a nine-year-old from a broken home. So who's mean?"[18]

What Flanagan did not go on to say in her short space, but what anyone reading the cable traffic on separationism will know, is that this bitter letter writer to the *Atlantic* is not alone. She represents a robust tradition of advocates and ideologues who have spent decades doing just what she did: getting very worked up over what mothers ought to have freedom to do and, simultaneously, becoming very dismissive of the possible fallout for children.[19] And once again it seems fair to ask whether practicing what one preaches has had the effect of numbing our separationist advocates just a little as to what babies and children actually need.

Look, for example, at what counts as the moral limbo bar in the day-care debate – the lowest one imaginable. Essentially, advocates have settled for this position: If it doesn't lead to Columbine, bring it on. But that is obviously a very low perch from which to judge day-care or anything else. Commenting on the NICHD study linking time spent in day-care to aggression, scholar Stanley Kurtz observed something important that ought also to have been obvious to other readers: that the adverse implications were hardly limited to the kids bullying and hitting and that things were likely quite a bit worse than the numbers on aggression alone might suggest. Rather, "Chances are, if a significant percentage of children in day-care evidence clear behavioral problems, or show up as insecurely attached to their mothers, then there are plenty of other children in less obvious, but still significant trouble. If some kids are responding to chronic separation from their mothers with anger, surely others are feeling depressed. Low-level depression is a lot harder to find and verify observationally than obvious classroom bullying, but that doesn't mean it's not there."[20] *Less obvious, but still significant trouble.* For advocates hardened by the demands of separationism, this kind of moral nuance does not exist.

Similarly, the insistence on the equality of "good" institutional care simply erases from the equation something important and also subjective: how very young humans see the world. Routine and familiarity are everything for small children. Yes, everything. I am no absolutist about non-maternal care – with four children that would be a physically and intellectually untenable position. Very often some warm body – an older sibling, a babysitter, my husband, assorted grandparents – stays with my youngest so that I can do any one of the many things that small children make difficult or impossible. But the separationist insistence that it doesn't

matter whether a baby or toddler is in the house or not simply rings ignorant of what the first two or three years of life are all about. Just being at home carries with it all those non-parental things so comforting to little children – from a familiar bump in the wall to the presence of a pet or sibling to a ripped-up book that must be found this minute.

Even the recent boomlet of lifestyle pieces about mostly well-off career women who have decided to stay home with their small children exhibits an inadvertently revealing one-sidedness of feeling – again, one obviously connected to the influence of separationist thought. One of the more discussed *New York Times Magazine* articles in 2003, for example, was "The Opt-Out Revolution" by Lisa Belkin. It argued about the "glass ceiling" problem that more women aren't hitting because they just don't want to, and one reason they don't want to is that they want to enjoy the company of their children. Similarly,*Time* magazine's cover story in March 2004, "The Case for Staying Home," cited dropping out of the rat race and enjoying the children as two lures that are perhaps more powerful than yesterday's generation of mothers understood. Even mothers who are vigorously pro-separation speak of the same unbidden pull they feel toward their children. Joan K. Peters, as staunch a defender of day-care as any, has herself related, "Once, when I was late [getting home from work], I arrived nearly hysterical with worry that I had passed some absolute point of emotional safety for my infant – that in divine retribution for my absence, something awful might have happened. I was so upset that I snatched my daughter from my babysitter's arms and sank with her on the couch, holding my coat around us both."[21]

What could be more natural than that? Of course women and men want to enjoy their children; children are enormously enjoyable. But in that one-sided focus on what women want, a hidden but very real insensitivity betrays itself once more. If mother-child separation is so hard on mothers that even pro-separation feminists see it feelingly, then how much worse is that separation for a baby or toddler who does not understand time or distance?[22] Once more, doesn't that added confusion and distress, all the harder for a being unable to grasp what is happening, carry moral weight of its own?

A third body of evidence that suggests how far our separationist experiment has dulled our thinkers to real babies and children is this: virtually every sophisticated school of thought now ascendant has participated one way or another in the rationalization of hands-off parenting. In an important book published in 1999, Kay S. Hymowitz broke particularly crucial theoretical ground explaining just this. She examined the state of American childhood, not from the bottom up but from the top, at the level of the numerous contemporary theories that have served to justify parental disengagement. *Ready or Not: Why Treating Children as Small Adults Endangers Their Future – and Ours* outlined in field after field (law, education, and psychology both popular and academic) how the past thirty years have seen a transformation in the way children are perceived – one that de-emphasizes adult guidance and authority while ultra-emphasizing the intrinsic capacities of the child in the absence of such guidance.[23] Uniting all these apparently disparate theories, she demonstrated, is "the idea of children as capable, rational, and autonomous, as beings endowed with all the qualities necessary for their entrance into the adult world – qualities such as talents, interests, values, conscience and a conscious sense of themselves."

The same insistence that Hymowitz discerned in elite fields of thought is true also of popular child-rearing advice books, which take their direction from a medical establishment profoundly reluctant to roil the political waters over day-care. Almost all leading cultural authorities, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, have now managed a good word for the putative benefits of "early socialization," which is to say non-parental child-rearing; and though some are careful about the issue of institutional care, almost all glow with the

putative benefits of having mothers out of the house. The country's leading popular child care experts have all revised downward over the years their estimations of just how much young children need their mothers, with every single one concluding that children need less of their mother's time and presence than was previously thought.[24]

Then there is the telling literature of a different sort: the kind for children themselves. This literature emphasizes parental needs and resolutely draws a happy face over children's longings; pamphlets exhort those too young to tie their shoes to be "independent," and stories, articles, and self-help columns share the message that the happy and fulfilled (that is, less encumbered) parent is also the better parent.[25] Has anyone strolled the children's aisles of the bookstore lately? Have you seen a copy of *Carl Goes to Day-Care* or any of the many other books for children who are years away from reading – who, indeed, don't even have all their baby teeth yet – but are targeted for the theme that separating from Mommy every morning isn't all that bad? Do we really think the new get-tough approach reflected in these texts for tots is in any way an improvement on the at-home adventures of Dick and Jane?

Those texts are also only one manifestation of the desensitization that proceeds apace. Not only ideologically but also practically, the signs of other envelope-pushing are out there – including round-the-clock day-care, or night-care, a trend already established in Scandinavia and now beginning to appear in the United States in response to parental demand.[26] Though only a dozen or so centers currently exist, every reporter mentioning the trend predicts robust growth; "some people have to be available [for work] at all hours," as one trend analyst puts it.[27] And what is it like for these children who are not even allowed the familiarity of their own beds? Not to worry. After all, "each child brings something special to his or her cot: a pillow, a well-worn blanket, a favorite toy."

Similarly, during 2003 alone, several stories sprang up around the country about parents using public libraries – yes, libraries – as emergency day-care centers, including depositing children there for the day who are far too young to read.[28] In short, from real-life stories to expert literature of all sorts, there is one and only one prevailing cultural answer to the question of just how much babies and toddlers need, and it's this: *They need less than previously thought.*

Shrinking the Need Down to Size

Laura Schlessinger once asked members of an audience to stand up "if you could… come back as an infant… raised by a day-care worker, a nanny, or a babysitter." No one did, and Schlessinger went on to ask why anyone who could choose otherwise would prefer this for their children. In effect, she was asking a question not about outcomes, but about the immediate moral content of the experiment. Of course she was excoriated in the usual places. But should she have been? How many readers thinking of their own childhoods would answer her question any other way?

In sum, the real trouble with day-care is twofold. One, it increases the likelihood that kids will be unhappy; and two, the chronic rationalization of that unhappiness renders adults less sensitive to children's needs and demands in any form. Of course, as advocates often say, most children not in home-care are likely to turn out fine (they *are* resilient). Of course, many adults have to work, and some absolutely have to use out-of-home care. Of course, no one can have his mother all the time, and likely no one should. Of course also, by extension, children are only one of several actors in any given drama, even if they are also the most vulnerable; in other words, their immediate emotional needs cannot and do not always trump.

But can they, should they, *ever* trump? That is the question advocates will not answer. Single parents, frantic parents, infants being packed off to hospital-style rows of cribs called "school,"

toddlers who go for institutionalized walks roped together like members of a miniature chain gang – this is what the experiment means day to day. But our separationists manage to worry instead about the *opposite*: an alleged excess of maternalism, of "over-parenting" (Joan K. Peters), an oppressive "mommy myth" (Susan J. Douglas and Meredith W. Michaels), and all the other phantoms said to be haunting and impeding – who else? – the modern mother.

Their own rhetoric and that of the long-running day-care wars proves overwhelmingly otherwise, and so do the plain facts. The 2000 census clinched the point that more and more mothers continue to opt out. Between 1975 and 1993 the percentage of children under age six with employed mothers rose from 33 to 55 per cent. By 2000 it had climbed to 70 per cent. Of course not all those women are working full-time and out of the house, but the trend away from home and toward the workplace is very clear. And so is what it represents: the near-total cultural about-face in the way society views working mothers. Once, as has been widely noted, staying home with one's children was judged the right thing to do, both intrinsically and for reasons of the greater good, by mothers, fathers, and most of the rest of society. Today, the social expectations are exactly reversed.

Before we start worrying ourselves about the alleged perils of too much mothering, we might first look at how much energy and sophisticated thought continues to go into rationalizing too little mothering and what exactly that says about us. We have collectively become one of Shakespeare's most unattractive characters – wicked daughter Regan who, when faced with an old father demanding his prerogatives of age, diminishes those wants of his over and over. However many horses and knights King Lear demands, she allows fewer; whatever he agrees to, she reduces further still. Just so, contrary to the bitter complaints of our separationists, has our social standard governing exactly what babies and children can demand of us veered in the direction of *less*.

Once upon a time, after all, parents and experts worried about whether five-year-olds needed a mother in the house; now, when kindergarten has become full days in many or even most districts, and before- and after-school programs abound, that worry has apparently gone the way of the buggy whip. Not so long ago, parents and experts wondered whether two- and three-year-olds could thrive if they were out of their homes and away from their families at preschools or day-care all day, but when packing them off became routine rather than rare, and subjecting them to a rotating set of strangers became thought of as a head start, a good many adults with other things to do decided that that problem had been pretty much solved, too. Having so efficiently shrunk the pool of children we might need to worry about by quite a lot, we now reduce ourselves to scholastic nitpicking over the few who are left: infants and toddlers.

Well, how about it? What real need does a five-year-old have of his mother or home? What need does a three-year-old have? A babe in arms?

King Lear has a pretty famous answer to questions like those: Oh, *reason not the need*. What the ideological devotion to day-care finally amounts to is just that – reasoning the need, ruthlessly trying to square what for the youngest children will always be a circle with many orbits but only one center.

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[1] Joan K. Peters, *When Mothers Work: Loving Our Children Without Sacrificing Ourselves* (Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1998), pp. 3–4.

[2] Brian C. Robertson, *Day-Care Deception: What the Child-Care Establishment Isn't Telling Us* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2003).

[3] Bryce Christensen, “A Schoolhouse Built by Hobbes,” in *The Child-Care “Crisis” and Its Remedies, Family Policy Review* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2003).

[4] See, for example, Allan Carlson, “The Fractured Dream of Social Parenting,” *ibid*.

[5] Quoted in Kathleen Curry, “Children’s Ear Infections Rampant Across Country,” *Lexington Herald-Leader*, November 2, 1993.

[6] Robert A. Hoekelman, “Day-care, Day-care: May Day, May Day!” *Pediatric Annals* 20 (1991), p. 403. As the editorial further pointed out, it is not only the children in such centers but also their pregnant mothers and their pregnant day-care providers who are at risk – in the case of pregnant women, for fetal infections and for stillbirths.

[7] Jody Heymann, *The Widening Gap: Why America’s Working Families Are in Jeopardy – and What Can Be Done About It* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), p. 61.

[8] *Ibid*., p. 62.

[9]Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1997).

[10] NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, “Child Care and Mother-Child Interaction in the First Three Years of Life,” *Developmental Psychology*35 (1999), pp. 1399-1413. See also Jay Belsky’s discussion of this study in “The Politicized Science of Day-Care,” *Family Policy Review* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2003), pp. 23-40.

[11] National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Early Child Care Research Network, “Does Amount of Time Spent in Child Care Predict Socioemotional Adjustment During the Transition to Kindergarten?” *Child Development* 74, no. 4 (July/August 2003), pp. 976–1005.

[12] Robert Karen, *Becoming Attached: First Relationships and How They Shape Our Capacity to Love* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), chapter 22, “A Rage in the Nursery: The Infant Day-Care Wars.” See also Jay Belsky, “The Politicized Science of Day-care,” in *The Child-Care “Crisis” and Its Remedies, Family Policy Review* 1, no. 2 (Fall 2003).

[13] Robertson, *Day-care Deception,* p. 79.

[14] Kathy Tour et al., “Social Behavior Correlates of Cortisol Activity in Child Care: Gender Differences and Time-of-Day Effects,” *Child Development* 69 (1998), pp. 1247-62.

[15] Susan Chira, *A Mother’s Place: Choosing Work and Family Without Guilt or Blame* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1998), p. 117.

[16] Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Random House, 1991), p. 43.

[17] “Colds with a Silver Lining,” Abraham B. Bergman, *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine* 156 (2002), p. 104.

[18] Caitlin Flanagan, *Atlantic*, April 2004. In her previous cover story in the same pages, Flanagan also shrewdly observed another interesting fact of our day-care wars – that some of the most passionate advocates do not use institutional care themselves. Many have instead in-the-house, one-on-one paid help.

[19] For examples of how this callousness permeates so-called Third Wave Feminism, see my "Feminism's Children," *The Weekly Standard* (November 5, 2001).

[20] Stanley Kurtz, "The Guilt Game," nationalreview.com (April 26, 2001).

[21] Peters, *When Mothers Work*, p. 73.

[22] Thanks to Stanley Kurtz for the observation about Belkin's essay. E-mail communication, October, 2003.

[23] Kay S. Hymowitz, *Ready or Not: Why Treating Children As Small Adults Endangers Their Future – and Ours* (New York: Free Press, 1999). According to the progressive and neo-progressive theories dominant in education, children are self-motivated, inherently cooperative learners who will invent their own strategies on impulse. The idea of the self-sufficient child – even the self-sufficient baby and toddler – is also ingrained in current psychology. Experts from Piaget onward have stressed the rational, competent information-processing of the child, writing off any friction with this happy scenario to "developmental stages." Influenced partly by such theories, forward-looking legal theorists – Hillary Rodham Clinton, among many others – have also stressed the autonomy and rights of the child against those of the parents (a movement driven particularly, as Hymowitz argued, by the political desire to allow minors easy access to abortion).

[24] See my "Putting Children Last," *Commentary* (May 1995).

[25] For a representative list, see Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Time Bind*, pp. 226-28.

[26] See, for example, Skip Thurman, "Day-care Becomes Night Care in Era of Busy Work Schedules," *Christian Science Monitor* (October 23, 1997), and "A 24-Hour Day-care Trend?" CBSNews.com, November 13, 2003.

[27] Skip Thurman, "Day-Care Becomes Night-Care in Era of Busy Work Schedules," *Christian Science Monitor* (October 23, 1997).

[28] See Leet Smith and Elaine Rivera, "Turning Librarians into Babysitters," *Washington Post*, February 2, 2004. See also Kellie Patrick, "Libraries: Public Safety Isn't Assured," Philly.com (February 10, 2004).

Humanum
Issues in Family, Culture & Science

EDITORIAL

Editorial: A Mother's Work

STRATFORD CALDECOTT

After our initial issue on "The Child," the first series of four issues of *Humanum* was dedicated to the theme RECOVERY OF ORIGINS, since we regarded this *recovery* as a vital step in understanding and healing our culture. To become who we are meant to be – or who we are, when we are at our most authentic and most fulfilled – we need to look back to what we were, to our point of origin. The word that seems most apt is *anamnesis*, a recalling or remembering that connects us with the meaning of the past.

We looked at the various threats to that "recovery of origins" – such as divorce, reproductive technology, same-sex unions, and absent fathers. Each of these, in a different way, contradicts or obscures our memory of the child we used to be, a child whose very existence is the fruit of love between a mother and a father, and (within that) a gift from the Source of Being. These various threats help to draw a thick veil over the face of Being. They leave us isolated as if in a thick fog – in a world driven by human acts of will and at the disposal of desire and calculation.

Having examined this fundamental problem from several angles, both in a series of major articles by faculty of the John Paul II Institute and in the book reviews featured in every issue, we now move on to the theme of "HOME AND FAMILY." The implications of our culture's forgetfulness of Being and the Child are inevitably played out in the first society any of us know. The family is that organic unit in which the child is normally born and brought up – the smallest and most fundamental unit of civil society, prior to both State and Market. The nourishment we receive, the principles we learn, the examples we are given, and the wounds that are inflicted here will most likely stay with us and help to define the tasks and struggles of our lives.

In the coming series of four issues, beginning today, we are trying to understand the family and the threats to its existence from several angles. Having discussed the problem of "absent fathers" and the nature of fatherhood in the previous issue, we are looking first at motherhood and the work of mothers, before we examine the impact of modern technology on the home, and then look beyond the so-called nuclear family to the neighborhood and the extended family, including the elderly.

A Mother's Work

Mothering, if we can call it that, is always needed, although it takes a myriad forms, from giving birth to waving goodbye, from teaching to learning, from leading to following. It is the most obvious and yet the most subtle work in the world, celebrated on sentimental greeting cards in every shopping mall, yet hidden like a secret at the heart of the world. The mother's smile awakens us to our own unique existence in relationship to others – and if that smile never comes we spend our lives looking for it. The mother's womb is our first home, and she may spend the rest of her life trying to build something like it for her children. But the home she builds is more than a nest. It is a kingdom of the imagination, a crucible in which souls are melted and reshaped; it can be a base camp, a reservoir, a castle, a launch pad. Civilization starts there and ends there.

Such talk can be problematic, because it is associated with the attempt to keep women in the home as if in a prison, against their will. In a culture that values only power and money as expressions of a limitless freedom to choose, the very different values of family are denigrated or ignored, and home is the last place anyone wants to be. Mothers who are strong enough to make their own value judgments are not deceived by this, which is not to say that question of how women balance their work in the home and beyond it is entirely resolved by the recognition that the former is crucial to the welfare of the family and society.

The work of a mother in the home is as important as anything she could achieve outside it – and yet a woman is more than a mother, and she may be called to other work. Also a woman who wants children may never have them. The praise of motherhood should never lead to the denigration of women who are not mothers. In order to avoid this, it is not necessary, however, to downgrade mothering, but rather to recognize that the childless woman can be a spiritual mother – that mothering is part of what every woman can do, even outside the home. Perhaps we need to enrich our notion of what mothering is, at this level, in order for society to understand and value this crucial contribution that women can and do make.

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