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# Hedging One's Bets: Courting Divorce

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

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

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

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

## Rootedness vs. Rootlessness

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

Being from somewhere also mattered in what a couple was doing when approaching each other. By “courting,” they were adhering to elaborated practices which had an order and a common meaning. From this point of view courtship belonged to a society which understood that one of its fundamental tasks was to help young people to meet each other in such a way that they would be led to a life-long union within which any children they might have would be born. As Whitehead says, “the task of paring off men and women for the purposes of sex, marriage, and child rearing is so important that no known society leaves mate selection and marriage up to lone individuals roaming around on their own.”[6] Courtship, then, was the form into which a society introduced its young people to both stir up their natural attraction for each other and protect it so that it would be directed towards the good and happy end of marriage.

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

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

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

We have been used to our own rootlessness for a long time now. It is indeed the fundamental building block of the modern selves that we are, and the kind of polity to which we belong. John Locke founded the new political order and its citizen precisely on a new reading of the relation between the child and his parents. It suffices to look at his interpretation of Genesis to see that the condition for the new free autonomous subject was inversely related to the relation he was born into, the one he had not chosen. Adam, said Locke, did not have the “misfortune” of being born. He was “capable from the first instant of being able to provide for his own support and preservation and govern his action.”[10] According to some, it is the overcoming of this “misfortune” which had Locke turn to the question of the education of children as “the inescapable locus of citizen formation”[11] for the new liberal society founded as it was on self-constituting agents and contractual relations. Parents were to look to “the idyll of an earlier Eden, a land where children form themselves out of their own ribs, becoming individuals self-conceived in the primordial land of the self-made”[12] and raise their children as though they had not been born, and therefore, not as their *heirs*, but as future citizens capable of adult liberal behavior, as “putative adults,” as Locke’s descendants would put it.[13] In Locke’s wake, parents were expected to discipline *their* behavior, especially their pernicious tendency towards “parental tyranny,” so as not thwart the new ideal upbringing of the modern citizen (and self).[14]

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

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

But nature has a way of rising again, and in strange ways. The Canadian philosopher George Grant, who knew well the power of modernity’s counterfactual “state of nature,” especially in its North American version, spoke of the “experience of deprivation” as a way back to those things we have lost sight of, or, at the very least, have not been allowed to see. “Any intimations of authentic deprivation are precious, because they are the ways through which intimations of good, unthinkable in the public terms, may yet appear to us,” said Grant. [24] In this light, it is perhaps not so ironic that now the children of divorce, on the backs of their “experience of deprivation”—and against the many attempts

to convince them otherwise—are putting their fingers on something more original—more natural—than the acquired tenuousness between parents and their children. It is they who are putting their fingers on the necessary link between our identity and our origin (in our parents).[25] And in so doing, they are bringing to light a more basic experience than that of the tenuousness we all know too well: that we are what we are by virtue of the gift of being from another—from our mothers and our fathers—and through them—however inadequately—from God, our Creator.[26] And they are bringing to light a relation which Jesus associated with our very identity and its perfection: “Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same shall be the greater in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:4).[27]

### On a Path vs. Aimless Wandering

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

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

On the face of it, the “child man” embodies the modern “Odysseus.” He is unwilling to grow up, aimless.[30] He can be, as Bloom describes him, “anything [he] want[s] to be ... with no particular reason to want to be anything in particular.”[31] He is the “perpetual adolescent”—the “emerging adult”[32]—shunning domesticated refinement and education, being a “jerk” towards women,[33] and generally underachieving as he “games” well into his 30s. The new Single Young Female (“SYF”) on the other hand, is the driven “overachiever,” outperforming her male counterparts in both school and work. By all appearances she is the responsible adult.[34] Whereas *he* is wandering, *she* is in clear sight of her goals, and has the determination (and the loaded resumé) to reach them. To be fair, in other words, she is not “aimless.” Notwithstanding these apparent differences, however, there is a fundamental agreement between the two when it comes to growing up. For each, the old “entry point into adulthood and crucial vehicle for defining themselves as mature individuals”[35] has been set aside. Each will define him or herself quite independently from marriage, fatherhood and motherhood. They may look very different in the way they “grow up,” or at least age well past actual adolescence; but they are, in the end, two sides of the same coin. One has nothing to work for and the other works diligently for no one outside of herself. If they do eventually marry they will do so *at the end*, so to speak, after she has “established herself,” and at the end of his adventure, once he has given in.[36] The point is that marriage was not where they were going in the first place as they were being brought up. It was not the destination of the adventure of adolescence. Marriage, therefore, will not be the “cornerstone” of their adulthood. It will be rather a “capstone,” a “trophy” added to a life otherwise indifferent to it.[37] And it should be clear enough how difficult it is to arrive at an end which is not

already in the beginning, to turn T.S. Eliot's phrase "in my beginning is my end" on its head.[38]

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

### Sexual Complementarity vs. Androgyny

We have considered the two "book-ends" of the human person which bear on matters of courtship, the questions about one's beginning and one's end. We must now turn more concretely to the relation that the young person is *about to (or eventually) enter into* (as the case may be). It is not enough, here, to speak about "relationships," since the generic term is used to cover every possible conjunction of two or more people lasting from one hour to a life-time. Indeed, according to some the term itself tends to project the newer superficial terms on every other relationship, even those that are by definition deep, at least historically.[41] The not-so-generic use of the term would indicate a shift from one way of looking at relations to another, forcing us, therefore to ask our question: How deep do these future relations go?

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

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

One of the hallmarks of the "relationship system" is perhaps, most notably, the kind of relation that sexual difference implies, namely *being for another*. This is particularly the case with girls who in the past had been raised *for* marriage and motherhood, and who accordingly were taught to behave in such a way as to harness male energies *for them* and *for their eventual children*. For the last several decades girls have been put through what Whitehead calls the "Girl Project," that "self-conscious and

highly successful social project whose chief purpose was to prepare young women for adult lives of economic self-sufficiency, social independence, and sexual liberation.”[42] These girls have now graduated into the world of the new “Single Young Female” (SYF) characterized as it is by financial independence, and the sorts of careers—not jobs—that guarantee it.[43] As for marriage and motherhood, these are ideally delayed so as to solidify the independence.[44] In the meantime, they will have “relationships” which are tailored to the new terms, tentative and “safe,” and short-lived, as their incessant nervous talk about them demonstrates. (The “child men” in question will not have trouble following the new less-demanding social cues.) When they eventually do marry, they will enter “capstone” marriages, marriages that come well *after* they have defined themselves as the independent women they were brought up to be. Marriage will not, that is, define them.[45] It too will be “a relationship,” though not as short-lived as before. (They will have learned the lessons they taught themselves in their own prolonged adolescence.) And it will be a union of two living independently on parallel lines.

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

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

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

It is no coincidence then that we are now at war with sexual difference, insisting as we do that gender is a “social construct” imposed on top of it, erroneously, for those living in the past (though correctly for those in the present, apparently). Sexual difference is merely the last bastion of the older idea of the

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

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

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

## A Loss of Eros

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

[T]he sexual talk of our times is about how to get greater bodily satisfaction (although decreasingly so) or increasingly how to protect ourselves from one another. The old view was that delicacy of

language was part of the nature, the sacred nature, of *eros*, and that to speak about it in any other way would be to misunderstand it. What has disappeared is the risk and the hope of human connectedness embedded in *eros*. Ours is a language that reduces the longing for another to the need for individual, private satisfaction and safety.[62]

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

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

What Plato perceived long ago was that the human experience of love stood at the intersection of the horizontal and vertical axis. Being smitten by a “beautiful body,” one was at the same time smitten by *Beauty* itself, and drawn up into it. If one's approach to the other was cautious, or “reigned in”—to use his metaphor of the “charioteer”—it was so in order to drink in all the depth and mystery to which the beloved was tied, against the tendency to “trample” him or her under foot. [65] This in turn, allowed one to behold something that could be interesting for more than a moment; for without that depth who, after all, could suffice? In Karol Wojtyła's play *The Jeweler's Shop*, the “jeweler,” watching a young couple in love, says:

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

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

Christianity only intensified this view of human love—far from negating it, as Nietzsche had claimed.[68] For, in Christianity God was not only the object of love but the subject of it, the Lover, moving every other love, “the Love that moves the sun and the stars,” as Dante called Him.[69] With that love, He created the world and then *entered it* by uniting Himself to human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. This then made human love—especially the love between man and woman—more than “just” a signpost of the Eternal. It *invested* it with Eternity in what Christians would call a “sacrament.” It was this “in-the-world-ness” of Divine Love that Kierkegaard had in mind when he championed marriage, calling it “the fullness of time,” or “eternity in time,” and “the most important voyage of

discovery” (in contrast to the Romantic love of momentary out-of-this-world—“eternal”—infatuation[70]). And it is this same “in-the-world-ness” of Divine Love that allows Christians to hope that their fragile, finite human loves will be taken up into the eternity of God, as did the young couple in the great Italian novel, *The Betrothed*, when the priest blessed them with these words:

If the Church now gives you back this companion in life, she does not do so to provide you with a temporal and earthly happiness, which, even if perfect in its kind and without any admixture of bitterness, must still finish in great sorrow when the time comes for you to leave each other; she does so to set you both on the road to that happiness which has no end. Love each other as fellow-travelers on that road, remembering that you must part someday, and hoping to be reunited later for all time.[71]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[9] Bloom, “Relationships,” 86.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[20] The famous French observer of America would notice how much the new political theories devised in the old world had taken root in the new: “In democratic peoples, new families constantly issue from nothing, others constantly fall into it and all those who stay on change face; the fabric of time is torn at every moment and the trace of generations is effaced. You easily forget those who have preceded you, and you have no idea of those who will follow you” (Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000], 483).

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

[22] Speaking to the modern suspicion of the Father (and of our origin in another), John Paul II showed how deep this is in the human soul. “[I]n human history the ‘rays of fatherhood’ meet a first resistance in the obscure but real fact of original sin. *This is truly the key for interpreting reality.* Original sin is not only the violation of a positive command of God but also, and above all, a violation of *the will of God as expressed in that command. Original sin attempts, then, to abolish fatherhood*, destroying its rays which permeate the created world, placing in doubt the truth about God who is Love and leaving man only with a sense of the master-slave relationship. As a result, the Lord appears jealous of his power over the

world and over man; and consequently, man feels goaded to do battle against God. No differently than in any epoch of history, the enslaved man is driven to take sides against the master who kept him enslaved” (John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994], 227).

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

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

[26] John Paul II called the first of the “*original experiences*” of all men and women “original solitude,” by which he meant that stance of gratitude before the fact of owing one’s being to the generous gift of life from the Father-Creator. See John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books, 2006), 5:17:4.

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

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

[29] The term was used by David Brooks in *The New York Times*, October 9, 2007 and was substantiated by William Galston, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. See William Galston, “The Changing Twenties,” *The National Campaign*, October 2007, [http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/pubs/changing\\_20s.pdf](http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/resources/pdf/pubs/changing_20s.pdf).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[39] “Knot Yet,” 20–22.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

[49] “Knot Yet,” 25.

[50] Neither the “capstone” marriage, nor its “soul mate” ideal, regard children to be intrinsic to

marriage itself (See “Knot Yet”, 26). When children are desired, moreover, there is the obvious conflict between the wife’s goals (of economic independence) and her “biological clock,” which conflict must be “resolved” by the “rescheduling of

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

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

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

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

[54] *Ibid.*, 125.

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

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

[57] Benedict XVI, “On the Occasion of Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia,” 21 December 2012. Accessed at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict)

[58] See Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, “The Paradox of Declining Female Happiness,” *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 1, n. 2 (2009): 190–225.

[59] See John Paul II’s discussion of the original *constitutive* relation between man and woman in his commentary on Genesis: John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, trans. M. Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books) 8:1–10:5.

[60] Benedict XVI, “On the Occasion of Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia.”

[61] The phenomenon of the “sexless modern marriage” is discussed by Kay Hymowitz, in *Adam and*

*Eve After the Pill* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 44–45.

[62] Alan Bloom, *Love and Friendship* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 13–14.

[63] *The Closing of the American Mind*, 101.

[64] See W. Shalit, *A Return to Modesty: Discovering the Lost Virtue* (New York: Touchstone, 1999), 171–93.

[65] Plato, *The Phaedrus*, 251–54.

[66] Karol Wojtyła, *The Jeweler's Shop* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), II, V, 11.

[67] The penultimate speech, by Diotima, in Plato's *Symposium*, identifies *eros* with “generating in the Beautiful” (206B–212A).

[68] F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, IV, 168. Trans. R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 104–105.

[69] “*L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*,” (*Paradiso*, XXXIII, v. 145).

[70] Søren Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life's Way*, Trans. Howard and Edna Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 117.

[71] Alessandro Manzoni, *The Betrothed* (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), 683.

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