

2018 - Issue Three

The Inescapable Reality of Sex

MARGARET HARPER MCCARTHY

According to the late Italian political philosopher Augusto Del Noce in this issue's Re-Source section: "Sexual liberation is not desired *per se*, but rather as a tool to break down the family." The family, for its part, is fought against because it is the organ through which "a meta-empirical order of truth" is communicated. Indeed, the sexual revolution was considered to be the most revolutionary because it is "not only against civilization and values but also against the very principle of reality." The fruits of this are now evident to all. Indeed, things have gone even further.

"Gender," the topic of our last issue, seems to have come out of nowhere, like a tsunami, flooding everything in its wake, from curricula, to corporate standards, to public bathroom policy. And yet the sexual revolution has been preparing this ground for decades, chiefly by putting into the question the reality of the sexual act: its innate meaning and *telos*. By separating the "inseparable meanings"—as *Humanae vitae* puts it—mother was separated from child, woman from man and, finally, children from their mothers and fathers and with them the Creator.

This issue is about the inescapable *reality* of sex and the inseparable link between unity and children which always reasserts itself, even as we try to escape it. Addressing the question of contraception head-on, we republish here one of Mary Eberstadt's most piquant essays on the topic, "Is Food the New Sex?," where she observes how much food has taken the place of sex, in terms of importance (with its rules, regulations, moral opprobrium, universal expectations) and sex the place food had decades ago when it was just a matter of personal taste. We also review two re-issued classics by Dietrich von Hildebrand, who, in the era leading up to *Humanae vitae*, was influential in showing that openness to children was not *next* to love, but an essential *ingredient* of love. We also review the controversial apologist Patrick Coffin, someone who has a gift of communicating a deep argument to a wide public.

Realism, of course, is needed on both sides of the "inseparable" coin, for those whose cup seems to overflow (too much), and those whose cup (achingly) remains dry. This is what Simcha Fisher provides in her frank and humorous *The Sinner's Guide to Natural Family Planning*, as does our emotionally honest feature on the silent cross of infertility.

The issue of contraception, of course, does not just play out in the privacy of the bedroom. Others, too, are affected, above all children—and not just those not conceived. This argument is made most powerfully by Helen Alvaré in her new book describing the development in recent American legal culture that has sidelined children with the adoption and promotion of "sexual expressionism," which, being silent on the connection between sex and children, is by extension silent on the benefits of marriage where children are concerned.

Then, too, there are the "relationships." The sheer volume of literature dealing with this issue is surely evidence for how deeply these have been undermined. We review some of the best exemplars of this literature, for example by sociologist Mark Regnerus, offering a sobering *status quaestionis*. We also

review Timothy O'Malley's alternative proposal to a generation trying to climb out of the rabbit hole of hook-up culture and on the other side, the influential *Sex at Dawn* by Christopher Ryan, who would like to keep them there.

Sexual mores affect more than just the social environment. They have ecological implications as well. Anthony Jay's new book, *Estrogenation*, shows that the chosen infertility of some (many) is fast becoming the default for everyone, with all the dumping of estrogen from the Pill (among other things) in the environment. Returning to the cultural environment, we offer the stunningly honest though discreet witness of a married couple who experienced deliverance from pornography and have since dedicated their lives to helping others caught up in the same toxic trap.

But there is more to talk about than just sex. We stand in need of a renewed *culture* of embodiment, if we are to see and accept our sexual bodies and their inseparable meanings. To this end we review Emily Stimpson's *These Beautiful Bones*: a much-needed Theology of the Body which deals with other aspects of the incarnate life, such as eating together, dancing, courtship, and the common life of the home.

Margaret Harper McCarthy is an Assistant Professor of Theology at the John Paul II Institute and the US editor for Humanum. She is married and a mother of three.

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