



Humanum

Issues in Family, Culture & Science



THE BODY

The Vulnerable Body



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To be embodied is to be vulnerable. Vulnerability strikes us as negative and with reason, rooted as it is in the word “wound.” But the ability to be wounded is also the capacity to be *affected—moved*—by another. To be vulnerable is to be *in need* of help, in attaining something, in growing up, or just in being. “I am wounded with love,” says the Bride of her Bridegroom. Our bodies open us to the world and to God, even though that openness also makes us susceptible to a host of wounds in the more obvious, negative, sense. This issue takes up the full range of that vulnerability in man.

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WITNESS

Rooted in the Body: Growing a *Theology of the Body* Curriculum

MOLLY MEYER

The question of how children learn has always been close to my heart. Since graduating college, I've taught pretty much every grade from kindergarten through high school in some capacity or another, and I've seen things that work: challenging instruction, teaching a child to contemplate, Socratic instruction, seeking the truth, comparing and contrasting, and so on. I've also seen many things that don't work: facts as the content of education, absent authority, teaching to the test, standards-driven curricula, adding Christ on top of a modern research-based teaching method. I knew that in order to understand *why* certain approaches work and others do not, I needed to know more about the human person. And so, several years into my teaching career, I enrolled at the John Paul II Institute in order to obtain my Master's in Theological Studies.

In learning more about John Paul II's vision of the world, I saw that the answer to the question of how children learn is rooted in man's experience of himself, his experience of the world, and his experience of his own desires. Our desire is always for what is beautiful, and this is no less true for children. Education often treats children as though they were machines—take in this piece of information and spit it back out again—but of course, they are not; nor are the adults they grow into. Teaching them can and should be aimed at nothing other than their personal development: as teachers our hope is to form them in such a way that they can both recognize what is beautiful and good and true, and also freely manifest that beauty in the world. Children, just like adults, desire to be free.

How to answer this desire as an educator? In some ways it seems impossible to allow our children to be free, especially given that we live in what seems like a very broken culture. Perhaps it is safer to force a child to memorize rules, to regurgitate only the facts that I permit him to know, to disallow an encounter with the world and the culture, in order to protect him. We all have this impulse: learn x, y, and z, and then you will be safe. But that kind of safety is illusory: it enables children only to know what to do within certain parameters, rather than encountering the generous beauty that the world offers because it is created by God. It does not enable them to be free.

When John Paul II was a young man in Poland, his culture was being systematically attacked:

his response to this was not to run away from the world, but to plunge more deeply into it through the experience of beauty. The beauty he found in and through the theater and the natural world. So, when I was asked to write a Theology of the Body curriculum for grades K–5, this is also where I started. We are free in the face of beauty: and so to answer the child's desire to be free, we must educate him into beauty.

In writing the K-5 Rooted Curriculum I selected stories for each age group that are well known, beautiful or from the classics. Literature has the power to make abstract concepts more concrete to a child, in a way that the child is particularly adapted to understand. Through stories we more readily see the connection of moral lessons to our personal life: this makes the embodiment or imitation of these truths possible. With the story as the entry point, a teacher can guide his class through a theme in the Theology of the Body in a manner consistent with what is already happening in the classroom. Activities are also suggested, in order for the children to learn in a hands-on manner.

Perhaps more unique to the curriculum are its nature walks; an activity suggested for every grade level. Nature walks are not always seen as an intrinsic component to the content of a curriculum. However, as I spent more time writing and observing classrooms it became clear that an adequate understanding of reality is crucial to understanding the Theology of the Body. The goal of these walks is to immerse the child in something greater than himself, so that he begins to understand experientially that all of creation is a gift from God, who reveals himself in all that he makes.

I had made the decision to incorporate nature walks into the curriculum long before having my first child. This practice helped me be more attuned to my son's interaction with the created world from an early age. From about the age of 4 months, my son John has loved to watch trees blowing in the wind. He made this discovery on his own lying underneath a mobile near a window in our home. I would give him some time on his own, lying on the floor looking at this mobile but as I watched from a distance I found that he was actually staring out of the window, his whole body shaking with excitement, cooing happily whenever the wind picked up. On our walks in the stroller, or sitting in the backyard, he would be entertained for quite some time by trees. This became something we would do together, pausing on our walk or lying in the backyard in order to watch the trees blow in the wind. Through my presence I communicate to him that I love him, and by sharing in his delight, I foster my relationship with him. I know that other children have also experienced this love of trees moving in the wind.

How is this a sign of God's love and an invitation into relationship with him? In part because simple delight in creation shows us that creation is a gift. But the delight of my child in these specific trees also has to do with me, and with my particular experience and history: that is to say, my child's delight feeds back to me; it points me at a better understanding of my own path. Our home is one block from my childhood elementary school. As I watched my son responding to the tree, it struck me: this tree has been growing since before I was born, planted by some former owner of our home.

Every day I was going to school, this tree was silently growing; I would have walked by it many times, yet it did not seem significant to me. Why would I pay attention to a tree in my schoolmate's yard? But God was paying attention to that tree. He was filling it with life, shaping its branches, giving color to its leaves, etching a memory of the seasons into its rings, preparing it to be a home for birds, all the while knowing that one day, through the interaction of thousands of seemingly casual accidents, it would be the tree in *my* yard, in which *my* son would take such delight. He had been growing this tree before my lifetime—all in order that

my son's eyes might behold it. Just as the author of a great story is aware of the end even in the beginning, so too is God aware of his creation.

This tree is a witness of God's fidelity: God was present year after year, day in and day out as I was going to school, he was planning something significant for me even in something I took for granted as part of the landscape, the background. He remained and continued his preparation even when I moved away. He anticipated my return and the delight of my son in his creation. This tree that carries in its rings the memories of the spring growth and the summer heat of my childhood will now also carry the memory of the seasons of my son's life. The beauty of creation provokes wonder which is evident in John's response to the tree. This same process of wonder and delight applies to the whole created world. Wonder is the beginning and foundation for appreciating the human body as made in the image of God. The Father who prepared this tree is also preparing countless other gifts. He waits for me to meet him fully, in his glory, and he draws me to him as he weaves together the experiences of my life into the fabric of his one great story.

Molly Meyer taught in Catholic schools for ten years. She is currently a curriculum writer for Ruah Woods in Cincinnati, Ohio. She resides in Illinois with her husband and son.

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WITNESS

This Is My Body: Anorexic Reflections

SUZANNE M. WOLFE

I have a black and white photograph taken in 1967 that I found among my grandmother's things after she died. In the foreground, my grandmother sits on a blanket, smiling self-consciously for the camera. To her left my brother stands in a seven-year-old boy's macho pose with hands on hips, his smooth, hairless chest thrust out, with a half-grin, half-grimace on his face because he is looking directly into the sun. I cannot specifically remember this day but I recall Sunday afternoons like it—those rare, warm days in August when we piled into my mother's second-hand Morris Minor and drove up from the crowded suburbs of Manchester into the hills of Derbyshire.

Behind my brother and grandmother, set back a little way and sitting on the brow of a hill overlooking a body of water, are my grandfather and me. We are both facing away from the camera. He is leaning on one arm, semi-reclining; I sit close up against his chest, the top of my head appearing just above his shoulder. We are looking at the lake beneath us as it stretches away into the distance, a sheet of shimmering metal overtopped by the cloudless, endless sky of childhood. I hear skylarks swooping and twittering among the grasses and the indolent *basso continuo* of bees nuzzling clover. The heather flowers purple and white at my feet as the daisies modestly offer their pink-tipped centers to the sun. My fingers are yellowed with buttercup pollen, fingernails greened with their juicy stems as I fashion a Lord Mayor's chain of gold to hang around my grandfather's neck. In the pockets of my shorts are the stones I have collected, mica-veined granite, blue-green slate, and snail shells—humble, exquisite, and infinitely fragile, a hoard of happiness to be set out on my windowsill before I go to bed that night.

I am resting now in my grandfather's embrace, lulled by the tremor of his heart, unaware that a more lasting record is being taken, a thumbnail of celluloid that will survive for forty years, a perfect snapshot of my childhood after my treasures have long been broken, lost, or discarded.

My mother, brother and I lived with my grandparents for eight years after my own father abandoned us when I was a baby. Until he retired when I was five, my grandfather was a typesetter at one of the major Manchester newspapers and was gone during the day. Each evening I would wait at the gate for him to return, running down the street to greet him when he crossed the road, a tall man with a long stride which he accommodated to my three-year-

old legs as we walked back to the house, hand in hand.

Parting from my grandfather five years later was my first experience of the hunger I have since come to recognize as loss.

Until then, I remember a time spent among growing things, things wet and loamy, green-tasting, new, my infant senses moving like feelers over the surface of a pristine world, hesitantly and full of wonder. My earliest memories are of my grandfather digging in the allotment he rented from the township, the crunch of the spade biting into the ground, his foot on the blade, bearing down; the dry sift of bone meal scooped from burlap sacks, dust lazy in sunlight. And then, at the end of the day, the trundle and bump of the wheelbarrow over pavement when I was too tired to walk home, my grandfather's face the sky that bounded the horizon of my childhood.

In his greenhouse he grew tomatoes, fragile shoots he planted in humus, then puddled and pressed down, his fingers—nicotine-stained and rimed with dirt—moving delicately and deliberately. Those same hands smoothed the covers up to my chin each night, planting me in a bed of warmth and darkness, his love for me the water that fed my roots, the heat that drew me upwards, all five-foot, seven-inches of me, a suddenly gangly seventh grader.

The taste and scent of baby tomatoes picked from the vine is, for me, the taste of paradise long foregone. Store-bought tomatoes are the ultimate postlapsarian tease—perfectly round, polished to a jeweled sheen, but scentless, tasteless, and inclined to soften. My grandfather used to pray before each meal: “For what we are about to receive, Lord, make us truly thankful.” But like Adam and Eve before the fall, I could not be thankful for what I did not know would end. I did not dream of famine or drought, bad husbandry, disease, blight, waste, or mediocrity. I did not think the crops could fail.

Food was the outward and visible sign of my grandfather's love, and I received it as matter-of-factly as a lifelong communicant receives the host. The high priest of my childhood, his robes smelled of earth and cigarettes, the tweed of his jackets scratchy against my cheek. He taught me World War II songs, checkers, the card game “Patience,” and how to pray. At meals I sat at his right hand and ate blithely, without conscious gratitude but with careless and innocent joy. My first joke was: “Gramp, how come your string beans are all string and no bean?”

Once a year, on Father's Day, I would walk down the street to the sweet shop on the corner and buy a pound of my grandfather's favorite candies. Sugar-encrusted, fruit-flavored jellies called jujubes, they tumbled from the scoop in a pulse of color, bulging the white paper bag that I carried home under my coat as carefully and furtively as if they were the Crown Jewels.

On Fridays—fish days in our pre-Vatican II Catholic household—he and I would walk to the local fish and chip shop. On the way there, I would hold his hand but on the way back I would cradle the hot newspaper bundle under my sweater to keep the food warm for the table. My grandmother would complain that the stink of salt and vinegar was impossible to remove from my clothes, but to me it was the smell of happiness—sharp, pervasive, and, I thought, indelible.

I was seven when my grandfather had his first stroke and was bedridden for a time. I stopped coming to table and, instead, hid in the laundry basket in his bedroom, fasting and keeping vigil until I was discovered and hauled out.

At about the same time, I began to have episodes of vomiting, and foods that I had previously eaten without complaint suddenly nauseated me. For the first time, I became aware of the sounds my stomach made after eating and learned that this was called digestion, that the

gurgling was the dirty water going down the drain after a bath, that my mouth was the hole in the tub and my body a series of pipes.

Without my grandfather's presence, food was no longer a miracle winging down in the beak of a raven or an angel appearing to Ezekiel saying, "Eat. Drink." Food had become a thing, a dead weight in the pit of my stomach, the heft of nothingness.

When we moved from my grandparents' house to our own home, the gulf between sign and signifier grew, the object becoming more lifeless, more inert. As if to prove it, I began to consume the inedible. In the course of a single term I ate the leather strap of the purse that I kept my lunch money in at school, the texture of the strap paradoxical in its inner toughness and the outer slipperiness of the leather softened by saliva. I ate the wood of pencils down to the nub and consumed paper tissues pellet by pellet, then started on the inside of my cheek, self-cannibalizing until I bled, oddly comforted that my food of choice was always available, something of my own and not dependent on the largesse of others.

Cut adrift, I was already cutting myself off. Later, I would call such solipsism independence.

My mother worked days as well as nights, and my brother and I took turns preparing the evening meal by peeling and boiling vegetables while my mother grilled the meat. I remember my mother's fatigue and hopelessness leaching into the silence like carbon monoxide—odorless and colorless.

In my teens my grandfather suffered a series of increasingly debilitating strokes, and every day after school I would cycle to my grandparents' house to visit him. I would read his favorite Psalm aloud to him—"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...." But when I looked at his garden, now infested with weeds, his greenhouse empty and opaque like a closed eye, his allotment sold off, all things passing away, I did not believe in a Good Shepherd.

At mass I would help him to Communion, his arm brittle and sticklike beneath my hand, his shoulders rounded, stooped, the nicks and cuts on his neck telling me that his hands shook too much for shaving. He insisted on fasting for twelve hours before taking the host, even though his illness made him exempt from such mortification and the fast had been reduced to one hour after Vatican II. Only when he was dying would he consent to allow the priest to bring him the host at home. "McEntee stubbornness," my grandmother said, the Irish cognomen carrying the full weight of her Anglo-Saxon disapproval, as if it were a synonym for mule.

At the very end of his life, he became unable to feed himself, and my grandmother became enraged by his inability to swallow and the way the food dribbled down his chin. I would feed him, spoon by careful spoon, and talk of my day and my studies and the books we loved as if words could stanch his humiliation and shame.

I was out of the country when he died. When I returned, my grandmother had removed every trace of him from the house. When I opened the closet, only the memory of his scent remained, like the barely heard whisper of my name in the dark.

I too began to fast, not with the holy asceticism of my grandfather preparing to receive the bread of life, but with the vaunting *non serviam* of the apostate. Instead of food, I digested rage; instead of flesh, I glutted on words; instead of God, Nietzsche. His *Triumph of the Will* was my manifesto, the credo of a believer in nothing, the faithful communicant of the sacrament of antimatter.

Or that is what I told myself. In reality I was abandoning God as he had abandoned me—starvation as preemptive-strike theology—in order to avoid saying the unthinkable: *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*

From the depths of her body's malnutrition and her soul's plenitude, Simone Weil warned: "The danger is not lest the soul should doubt whether there is bread, but lest, by a lie, it should persuade itself it is not hungry."

When I lost my appetite for bread, I stopped going to mass. But my hunger did not diminish; it grew. I began to mistake the physical effects of starvation for spiritual purity: eating became a sin; starvation, a virtue. My body appeared gross and bestial and its incessant clamor tormented me, but unlike the desert fathers or the great saints who denied themselves in order to affirm the goodness of what they denied, my fasting nullified the world. Simone Weil said: "All sins are attempts to fill voids."

I was a suicide posing as a hunger-striker.

My teens were spent in an orgy of self-destruction and the annihilation of my mother's happiness. I refused food but submitted my body to the more insidious fruits of drugs and the dark sexual tutelage of a much older man until, one night, traveling on a bus between Paris and Calais, I saw in my hollowed and ravaged reflection the darkness I had become, with pinpoints of light showing randomly and seldom. It was an epiphany of sorts.

At Oxford University I returned to the church of my childhood, where I encountered my grandfather in the curve of an old woman's back as she knelt at prayer and in the knock of knuckle on breastbone, the murmur "*Mea culpa....*" In the breaking of bread, that audible crack when the host yields to the force of human flesh, I heard the breaking of my heart and saw it lifted up in the service of something other than unredeemable loss.

When I became a mother I was able to revel in abundance, cradling my unborn children the way I had clasped the fish and chips beneath my sweater—my belly warm and bulky, the heat of it alive and life-giving, the mystery of me and of another. Then I would remember what I had forgotten, that the flesh is the outward sign of inner grace.

"This is my body."

Watching my toddlers in their highchairs taught me that food is miraculous, its myriad colors and shapes, its glorious textures, an invitation to play. Squishing peas or squeezing fistfuls of mashed potatoes, my children were Adams and Eves discovering the wonder of creation for the first time, reaffirming the gift of this world and offering it back. Called to tend the vigorous growth of their bodies, I adored every crease, concavity, and roundness, observing the dewy sheen of lips parted in sleep, caressing the cool pearlescent flesh faintly tinged with blood. With their eyes, they drank the world entire and did not disdain to bring it to their mouths and taste. Hands that clutched, held, kneaded, and stroked, also blessed, and as I obeyed their infant commands to name the things of this world, the world was made holy.

Now, a low table and two chairs sit beneath a plum tree. On the table are a pot with purple flowers, a verdigris statue of a sparrow. There is a bench under the apple tree and a dripping stone birdbath. In my house, leaves and bits of grass litter the floor as if the garden had moved indoors. On the windowsill sit gifts my children have given me over the years: shells, rocks, pinecones, treasures to replace the ones I lost from that summer's afternoon long ago. Now all but one of my children are grown and the three oldest have moved out of the house. I tend my flowers, herbs, and tomatoes and find myself returned to the place I first knew, where the

boundary between those who sow and those who reap forever blurs. At dusk the house rides like a light-bedizened ship on a darkening sea waiting, like my heart, for my children to return.

I would like to say that my hunger has been satisfied, but this is not the case. When I am lonely, exhausted, and discouraged, the temptation to deny returns. I still find it difficult to go to restaurants, to eat in front of strangers. Often when I attend mass and file slowly up the aisle to Communion, I feel like a gate-crasher at the heavenly banquet and take the host like a beggar pocketing a dinner roll. I tell myself that if I were good enough, I would live on the Eucharist alone and it would not burn my conscience or dissolve like air. If I were good enough, I would whisper: “Father, I am hungry; for the Love of God give this soul her food....” But I am not a holy anorexic like Saint Catherine of Siena. I am just a child greedy for love.

Since my self-expulsion from Eden when I was fifteen, I have sought the voice of my grandfather calling me back to Communion. I know now what I knew in the paradise of my childhood when he and I walked together in the cool of the evening, when we sat looking at the still-life of an idyllic summer afternoon long ago—that all my life I have been seeking what I had already found.

Suzanne M. Wolfe is an award-winning novelist who grew up in the UK but now lives in the Pacific Northwest. Her latest novel, A Murder by Any Name (Crooked Lane Books, 2018), is the first in an Elizabethan spy mystery series. The second in the series, The Course of All Treasons, is forthcoming in December, 2019.

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EDITORIAL

The Vulnerability and Openness of the Embodied

MARGARET HARPER MCCARTHY

To be embodied is to be vulnerable. Vulnerability strikes us as negative and with good reason, rooted as it is in the word “wound.” But the ability to be wounded is in the first instance the capacity to be *affected—moved*—by another. To be vulnerable is to be *in need* of help, in attaining something, in growing up, or just in being. “I am wounded with love,” says the Bride of her Bridegroom (Song of Solomon 2:5). Our bodies open us to the world.

Indeed, it is in the embodied-ness of human beings where this positive vulnerability is most on display. The human infant is at once the most awake to the surrounding world and the least capable of facing it on its own, as compared to other higher mammals who “flee the nest” almost immediately. In her essay, Susan Waldstein introduces us to the prominent biologist, *Adolf Portmann*, who suggests that the reason for our “premature birth” and need of the “social womb” of the family, is the human being’s greater openness to the world, and his need to be taught about the truth of the world...and the truth about its Maker, as Jean Vanier, founder of the *L’Arche* community, reminds us:

This is the glory and the tragedy of humankind. St Augustine’s words, “My heart is restless until it rests in God,” apply to each and every human being. The wounded heart of every child, with its fears and selfishness, comes from an awareness—more or less conscious—of this emptiness deep within our being which we desperately try to fill, but which we find nothing can totally satisfy.

Of course, all of this openness, beginning with the openness to those who introduce us to the world, makes us susceptible to a host of wounds in the more obvious, negative, sense. This issue takes up the full range of that bodily vulnerability, from the kind suffered by the unborn to the that suffered by the dying, even the dead.

Beginning with the “cradle,” Michael Hanby confronts the darker roots of the early contraceptive movement, bringing forward the lesser-known fusion between eugenics and progressive-era Christianity, where prominent Protestant ministers would compete in sermon contests sponsored by the American Eugenics Society which resulted in families “dramatically reducing their family sizes within a generation, anxiously measuring their children by the new standards of ‘scientific parenting,’ and parading their families about like livestock at the county fair in ‘fitter family’ competitions around the country.”

Looking to the life of the unborn, Daniel Moody, author of *The Flesh Made Word*, argues for a direct link in law between the person-less body in the womb that legalized abortion gave us, and the body-less person outside of it that “gender” is giving us now. Molly Meyer, author of one of the most exciting and beautiful new *Theology of the Body* curricula for school children, offers a path forward for parents bringing up children, who are now doubly vulnerable amidst this legally sanctioned dis-embodied culture, and who need more than ever to reconnect with the wonder of nature.

Adults are vulnerable too, of course. By virtue of their natural beauty, women are vulnerable in a very specific way to objectification, be it in its “voluntary” or coerced form (human trafficking). Eleanor Gaetan, senior legislative advisor for the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, disabuses us of this fraught distinction in her expert exposé of the lobby that works to normalize and legalize the buying and selling of human beings, rationalizing the denial of human dignity to others with its obsession with sexual libertinism (its ultimate yardstick of personal freedom). Judith Reisman and Mary McAlister, in their turn, offer a comprehensive account of the genealogy of this obsession by way of Alfred Kinsey.

And, for their own want of love, women can inflict violence on themselves, through anorexia, which ultimately feeds on the nihilism of our age by negating all the distinctive weightiness of the feminine body, as theologian Angela Franks says. The award-winning novelist Suzanne Wolfe offers an exquisitely wrought reminiscence of her return to the world of her youth—its goodness and abundance at the family table and the altar of the Lord—after wandering in the wilderness of anorexia, “fasting,” and “nullifying the world.”

And since violence can be suffered by all, men and women alike, we review two books on trauma which show the crucial connection between the body, soul and mind for understanding all trauma, and the special role of the awareness of the body in the work of restoring mental health.

Finally, our bodily vulnerability is most evident in the universal inevitability of sickness, aging, and finally death. Addressing the question of aging, a brilliant emerging bio-ethicist reviews for us *Being Mortal*, written by surgeon Atul Gawande who, as the son of immigrant parents from India, is caught between two cultures. The one that gave his American in-laws a dis-embedded autonomy and then put them in a sterile nursing home when they finally lost it, and that of his Indian grandparents, who were deeply embedded in a rich network of family relations and activity until the very end. We also review *About Bioethics*, by Nicholas Tonti-Filippini, a bio-ethicist who, because of his own serious illness, knew first-hand the difficulties faced by those on the brink of death.

Even after death, the body is vulnerable, especially now that we, in the Christian West, are increasingly incinerating what had always been placed in the grave. We began our year with a magnificent article by Patricia Snow on what is at stake in the perennial Christian advice to *bury* the body. And we end it with a speech on the importance of this, given by American Catholic philanthropist Sean Fieler, who after reading that article, is now working with Snow to promote a return to the Christian practice which, combined with our marriage practices, would offer a more consistent picture of what we think is at stake with the body.

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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FEATURE ARTICLE

Reverence for the Body: A Witness

SEAN FIELER

The following talk was given at the 2018 annual Catholic Information Center Gala where the author received the John Paul II Award for the New Evangelization.

When I think of contemporary evangelization, I think of FOCUS missionaries, I think of Dominicans; and I think of Geoff Quinn, my college roommate and best man at my wedding. After graduating from Williams College and an ill-advised stint as an investment banker and consultant, Geoff became a missionary. He traveled to Myanmar to preach to the animists, and then traveled home to preach in the secular North East. I don't know how it went with the animists, but it didn't always go all that well here at home. During one of Geoff's more memorable attempts to evangelize one of our mostly secular, but definitely Jewish friends, at the outset of a five-hour car ride from Boston to New York City, I thought: This is not going to work. And then I thought to myself that I wasn't even trying.

So I did eventually try, and in trying, I immediately gravitated towards the easiest way to evangelize. I gave money to others to evangelize. And, to be very frank, that is the vast majority of my involvement in what might be loosely called "The New Evangelization" until I met Cecilia and we had a family.

What I found is that in the context of family life, even I could figure out how to evangelize. All the small talk of life—like to which school are you sending your kids? Or, better yet, how many kids are you going to have?—logically leads to questions of faith and conversations about God. And the more secular the environment, the more curiosity the family inspires.

But what surprised me the most about family life is that the person who was really evangelized by my wife and children *was me*. The Church teaches that marriage is an ecclesial order that can perfect us in holiness. To be honest, as a young man I missed that teaching: and I don't think I'm the only one. I have yet to have a conversation with a twenty-something-year-old guy considering marrying a girl who gives as one of his reasons for wanting to marry her that the institution of marriage will help perfect him in holiness. Nevertheless, the crucible of family life will help convert him, just as it has helped convert me. Independent of our intentions, what we *physically* do with our lives, shapes who we are, what we believe and the intensity with which we believe it. If you do the right thing, for not quite the right reason, your action may still have a surprisingly positive effect on you.

This, I think, is not too controversial. What is controversial is when the Church becomes specific about what She means by marriage. Here I'm thinking of Saint Paul VI's admonition that if we artificially sterilize our marriages, we are not just sterilizing our bodies; but we risk sterilizing the sacrament of marriage more generally as well as the role of the family in the New Evangelization. It is to this logic in particular that such a broad swath of Catholics objected. *Humane vitae* was deemed unacceptable because it made clear that, regardless of why we contracepted, the practice itself shaped what we individually and society more broadly believe about family, marriage, and God. What we wanted to hear instead is that we could contracept: just not for the wrong reasons. We wanted to be trusted to separate our faith from our practice, and, as we all know, we collectively effected this separation, despite the Church's teaching. Worse still, even though the past fifty years clearly demonstrate that we were wrong, and the Church was right, we persist in our error.

To be fair to the laity, with the notable exception of Saint John Paul II, the Church has not been eager to advance Her teaching on human sexuality. And, it is no great mystery why.

Church teaching about sex can repel as well as attract people. When a college friend of mine informed me that she was going to pursue a commercial conception, I made the best case I could, and I lost a friend. When a high school buddy stopped by New York with his wife on their way to interview a surrogate in Texas, I tried my best to change their mind: I lost a friend and really upset his wife.

The Church's hesitancy to bring up such difficult teachings is understandable. But, this hesitancy fails to recognize the fundamental link between our current crisis of faith and our failure to form families. While we are all deeply concerned about the Church, we should be equally concerned about marriage. Consider this: Half of all Americans conceived this year will begin life with an unmarried mother. Because abortion disproportionately affects the children of the unmarried, that number at birth is 40%.[1] Given that awful starting point, the good news, to quote Scott Hahn's recent book, *The First Society*, is that: "If Catholics would simply live the Sacrament of Matrimony for one generation, we would witness a transformation of society and have a Christian culture." [2]

We, of course, should not be surprised that Church teaching entailing such physical specificity would prove a particular challenge for us. When Jesus taught that what God has joined no man shall separate, the disciples' response was: "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry" (Mt 19:10). And, upon hearing Jesus' discourse on his own Body and Blood, many disciples said, "This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?" (Jn 6:60). With respect to the physical resurrection of the body, according to Saint Augustine: "On no point, does the Christian faith encounter more opposition." [3]

The Church's very specific *teachings* about our bodies, which are at the core of our faith, have always been difficult for us to accept.

But in recent years, as these teachings have come under sustained attack, we, the lay faithful, have seriously faltered in our practice. Over the past fifty years, American Catholics have fully participated in the collapse of the family, shown an insufficient reverence for the True Presence, and passively gone along with the dramatic spike in cremation rates.[4]

We are struggling with the very physical practices of our faith as they have come under assault by a false ideology best described as Gnosticism. Let me sum up the moment this way: By the time the government has decided that guys who claim to be girls should have access to the girls' locker room because they are really girls, you can be pretty certain that the gnostic heresy is well advanced. We, the co-conspirators in the New Evangelization, are kidding

ourselves if we think that we can boldly proclaim what we believe and sidestep the dominant heresy of our time. But, we must not give into despair at this very dramatic moment in the history of the Universal Church. Despite our many internal divisions, we should take great solace in the unity of belief our Church actively shows in the Eucharist.

Second, while the culture war, or “uncivil war” as it has aptly been called, strongly discourages us from making the case for the Church’s teaching on sex and marriage in the public square, we must nevertheless publicly affirm what we believe.

And, finally—a point on which I want to focus particularly—we must restore a uniform burial practice that better reflects our belief in the resurrection of the body. We Catholics confess the truth of the resurrection of the body, yet we treat the rapid change in our burial practices as if it were totally tangential to our faith. That cremations rates in America have gone from 5% to 50% since the early sixties [5] and that Catholic burial practices are broadly indistinguishable from the rest of society strikes many as a non-issue.[6],>

In fact, when I raise this point with the other Catholics, I typically get two responses. The first response is that there are many important things to focus on and this is not one of them, followed by a visceral emotional response that totally contradicts their first point.

Now, I’m not claiming that our society is organized around an unconscious effort to deny and transcend death, as the sociologist Ernest Becker claimed.[7] I’m only making the modest points that our reflections about death have a profound effect on what we believe and how we behave. Our physical burial practice not only reflects, but also informs our belief about death. This is particularly true in a society like ours in which death is increasingly hidden from view and rarely discussed in public.

All of which brings me to a less well-known instruction formalized during Saint Paul VI’s papacy that is the opposite, in many respects, of *Humanae vitae: Piam et constantem*. Just as the first taught that what we did with our bodies mattered regardless of why we did it, the second conceded the opposite with respect to burial practice. To be clear, *Piam et constantem* was not so much a change in Church teaching as a relaxation that allowed Catholics to be cremated so long as we did not choose cremation as a way of rejecting Church teaching. To quote: “The procedure is clearly being advocated today, not out of hatred of the Church or Christian customs, but rather for reasons of health, economics, or other reasons involving private or public order.” [8]

While not endorsing the practice of cremation, the Church made the important concession that practice and belief could be kept separated so long as the practice was not animated by a theological disagreement with the Church. Thus, for practical reasons, the Church created a great space between Her teaching about the body when it came to passing life on to the next generation and when it came to passing on to the next life. With the passage of time, this exception has sterilized our burial practice in much the same way as our attachment to artificial contraception has sterilized our marriages.

The Church’s equivocation on the point of burial is particularly regrettable given the aggressive Gnostic challenge we face today. The way we treat our bodies in both marriage and death are the two fundamental ways in which we physically reject the Gnostic heresy. The one flesh that God unites in marriage has clearly been the cultural focal point of the Gnostic heresy, but the unity of body and soul in our life eternal is the most explicit possible rejection of the very core of Gnosticism.

Moreover, it is no coincidence that the two practices have gone hand in hand since the earliest

days of the Church. The Corinthians famously struggled with both, and Saint Paul forcefully rebuked them on both counts. But, he made the strongest theological point when it came not to marriage, but to the resurrection of the body. To quote his first letter to the Corinthians: “For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is in vain” (1 Cor 15:13–14).

Interestingly, our law also connects the body in marriage and in death. In 2015, when we redefined marriage from the unitive sacrament that God created to a legal recognition of a romantic partnership, we did it by allowing a physical claim on the dead. That is the setup the Human Rights Campaign used in the Obergefell case: the husband claimed the dead body of his “spouse,” though their “marriage” was not recognized in the state in which they lived. So, in a very literal sense, we allowed possession of the body in death to destroy the legal definition of marriage. Destroying marriage is a direct attack on the Church but doing so with a physical claim on the body in death reveals literally what the devil is after.

The Church’s exception with respect to cremation thus strikes me as ripe for debate, because the Church appears not to have anticipated the situation in which we find ourselves today. To quote Patricia Snow, “many who cremate do in fact hold positions that are contrary to Church teaching on the resurrection of the body, but without realizing it.” There is good reason to believe that a confident reaffirmation of the Church’s teaching against cremation would result in an actual change in Catholic burial practice. If there is any aspect of our faith on which the Church has unique credibility, it is resurrection of the body.

I realize that a confident reaffirmation of Church teaching would be anything but abstract. For me personally, this possibility makes me think again of my old college roommate and best man at my wedding. After a lengthy battle with brain cancer, Geoff died in 2013. A baptized Catholic, he had left the Church as an adult to become an evangelical. Not only was I unable to convince him to come back to the Catholic Church before he died, I didn’t even try: and he didn’t ask. I didn’t have the words to make the case and the Church didn’t have a sufficiently distinct funerary practice to inspire his curiosity. What I needed in that moment is what we as a Church need today: a uniformity of practice in death that better reflects our collective belief that the whole of man is immortal, that there is a continuity between the body that dies and the body that is raised. That *this mystery* is not just something we say we believe, but something we act on.

If we Catholics collectively adopted this sign of contradiction in a society that desperately holds on to life as if though there was no other and increasingly attempts to assert control over the body in death, I am confident that we would generate an overflowing curiosity about our faith in service of the New Evangelization.

Sean Fieler is the president of Equinox Partners, a New York City-based hedge fund. He is chairman of the American Principles Project and the Chiaroscuro Foundation. He serves as a board member of the Witherspoon Institute, the Dominican Foundation, the Committee for Monetary and Research & Education, and the Susan B. Anthony List. Mr. Fieler lives in Stamford, Connecticut, with his wife and five children.

[1] National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) Data Brief Number 136, published December 2013, Figure 5, and accompanying data tables. Research done by the Chiaroscuro Foundation, based on NCHS estimates of the birth rate and abortion rate to married and unmarried women

of reproductive age. Estimates currently only available through 2009.

[2] Scott Hahn, quoting Fr. Donald J. Keefe, *The First Society* (2017), p. xiv.

[3] Patricia Snow, "The Body and Christian Burial: The Question of Cremation," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 39.3 (Fall 2012).

[4] National Funeral Directors Association, *NFDA Cremation and Burial Report: Research, Statistics and Projections* & Cremationpedia, *Cremation Association of North America*.

[5] David Sloane, *Is the Cemetery Dead?* (2018).

[6] National Funeral Directors Association, *NFDA Cremation and Burial Report: Research, Statistics and Projections* & Cremationpedia, *Cremation Association of North America*.

[7] Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (1973).

[8] *Piam et constantem*, 3366.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

The Starved Body: Anorexia and the Fracture Within the Self

ANGELA FRANKS

Anorexia seems to inspire comparisons with the realms of the mythical and mystical. Maura Kelly describes her apotheosis this way: “Dieting became a way for me to be my own god and my own creation—Pygmalion and Galatea in the same human body.”^[1] Likewise, the novelist and anorexic Sigrid Nunez rhapsodizes her transfiguration: “To be light as a feather, light as a soul—a feather on the breath of God.”^[2]

Such discourse fascinates the reader, drawn to the considerable agony of the suffering anorexic. The suffering of the disease is so spectacular, and its dangers so significant, that dwelling on them can be as far as most analyses get.^[3] This approach comes at a cost, however, because it risks romanticizing the disease. When romanticize something, we get more of it.

Can we understand the disease more deeply? Neglect and trauma, which may be at the root of many cases of anorexia, have been with us since the Fall, but a culture of eating disorders is a relatively recent phenomenon. Why?^[4]

To answer this, let us turn to the first-person accounts of anorexics. In perusing them, one sees quickly that anorexics are seriously sick. But they are sick not so much as cancer patients are sick but rather as alcoholics are. The alcoholic members of *Alcoholics Anonymous* state frankly of themselves that they are “extreme examples” of “self-will run riot,” and presumably they are in a position to know. But anorexics, too, suffer under the lash of “self-will run riot.”

In fact, the comparison between alcoholism and anorexia has justification. Anorexic memoirs are full of the language of addiction, while anorexics talk about being addicted to the high of starvation and to the control they experience.^[5] As one anorexic puts it on a “pro-ana” message board, “idk you just feel light and empty and dizzy and just so freaking happy not to have eaten anything. it is a high and i crave it.” The medical basis of this is not fully understood, but it appears that starvation can activate the same reward centers in the brain as drugs such as *ecstasy* do.

So perhaps when the alcoholics warn, out of their own personal experience, about the deadly

nature of self-will run riot, it is relevant for eating disorders as well. I am not trying to moralize either disease. Neither is Alcoholics Anonymous, which popularized the “disease” concept of alcoholism. No one is claiming that a trip to the confessional is somehow a sufficient healing program. But, at the very least, we can say this: regardless of what the causes or cure of the disease might be, anorexia, once contracted, causes radical self-enclosure. The disease reduces a person’s horizons to the shrinking confines of her flesh, while her mind’s expanses become shriveled to an obsessive loop calculating calories and pounds.

Kelsey Osgood’s remarkable, unsparing memoir *How to Disappear Completely* details this painful self-enclosure. When she relapses as an adult, she becomes “self-obsessed” and “cold,” “ruthless and manipulative” with the people who love her.[6] She badgers her dying former therapist, unable to see what another person is suffering. Through it all, the world outside her own skin becomes hazy, while she knows with painful exactitude what she puts inside her mouth.

As Osgood indicates, anorexia is a somewhat socially acceptable addiction, even idealized in young-adult novels. There one finds, former anorexic Alice Gregory complains, “passages that read like demented ads for diamonds or bottled water: ‘I will be thin and pure like a glass cup. Empty. Pure as light. Music.’”[7] Osgood’s youthful admiration for anorexics explains some of this anorexia-chic. Anorexics exhibited “pure defiance” in their pursuit of an impossible goal.[8] To live this way requires, one might think, superhuman powers of control.

Indeed, one of the most common words appearing in the self-descriptions of anorexics is “control.” Helen says, “My problems seemed out of my control but what I ate and what I weighed was within my control.”[9] Kate explains how anorexia reduced her many problems to one manageable one: this hunger, this body.[10] Jackie says, “However much people try and make you eat, no one can control *that*. ... It’s *me* doing what I want.”[11] Lisa calls the eating disorder “control that is so controlled it is out of control.”[12] These accounts reveal, surprisingly, that many of the anorexics also struggle with bulimia and binge-eating, as if being in and out of control are flip sides of the same reality.

But the control comes at a price. The anorexic serves her disease, which exhibits an unerring sense for how to browbeat into submission. One anorexic describes the inner voices: they “will tell you that someone so horrible does not deserve that food. If you do eat, they are screaming at you to get rid of it. They tell you that you are weak for eating and that if you do not get rid of it, you will surely become fat. They will tell you that no one will love you if you gain weight.”[13]

Why does this inner dictator register such urgency? Why does anorexia seem like a life-or-death matter to the anorexic—“I didn’t see food as life-sustaining. I saw it as life-threatening”—but for all the wrong reasons?[14] The best explanation seems to be that nothing less than one’s very identity is at stake. Anorexic Katy Waldman argues that “anorexia is an inveterate liar whose grand theme is your identity.” Anorexia is a performance in which the protagonist is also the stage on which the play is set.[15]

But it is the performance of a disappearance. In anorexia, “role-playing thus attempts to altogether replace who one is,” philosopher Tzachi Zamir contends. “The liberation and pleasure of performance is ... linked with self-violence: an attempt to altogether erase one’s previous sense of self.”[16] The anorexic, in other words, forcibly creates an identity out of nothingness. Layla says that being thin means “having no tummies [and] no great bottoms,” while Tricia confesses, “I remember feeling so up really *out* of my body that I remember looking in a mirror and being actually surprised that I saw a form in the mirror and not just a

nothingness.”[17] Waldman compares anorexia to a performance that enslaves. “The choreography becomes so absorbing that you can no longer access your own will or desires. You may require an external party to confirm for you that you exist.”[18] Nicki says, “If I didn’t have it [anorexia], if I wasn’t thin, then I wouldn’t have an identity. I’d just be this big bad blob.”[19] When Tricia was told by a doctor that he wanted to hear about her, not about her anorexia, she thought, “But I am the anorexia. This is my identity.”[20]

This pursuit of identity helps to explain the phenomenon Osgood describes and suffered under, that of “wannarexia.” Wannarexics are usually girls who scour “pro-ana” websites and read anorexic memoirs like how-to manuals. They *want to be* anorexic. They often succeed in making themselves quite sick. Anorexia provides women with a ready-made identity, one that is simultaneously glamorous and tragic—an elaborately-staged, slow-motion suicide that irresistibly draws the gaze like a car wreck.

Why anorexia afflicts women disproportionately is a question not answered to anybody’s satisfaction, but I will hazard two observations. First: anorexia is gendered Prometheanism. Our media-saturated society reduces women to the value of their decorative appearances.[21] Hence, anorexia both plays by society’s rules while simultaneously overturning them. It follows the rule book in reducing the anorexic’s value to her exterior appearance. Yet the defiance is found in the disorder’s limit point, a skeletal extremity that no one actually finds attractive.

This defiant compliance with societal expectations goes a long way toward explaining anorexia-chic. Osgood and Waldman rail against the irresponsible narcissism that saturates anorexic memoirs, in which the putatively recovered author lovingly describes her jutting collarbones and gives careful descriptions of her diet regimen, like a reformed jihadist detailing how he built his bombs. The anorexic receives a voyeuristic attention not given to her awkward cousin, the bulimic, and even less to her ugly step-sister, the obese overeater, who truly defies Instagram-ready feminine stereotypes. Always the overachiever, the anorexic’s defiance consists in seeing that stereotype and raising it.

And yet, Feminist commentary on anorexia emphasizes that “fat is a feminist issue” for these reasons, and it is partly correct. But it is also partly wrong. The dictates of the fallen male gaze are unreasonable enough, but they do not tend toward skeletal women. They are rather perfectly expressed by the bodies specifically produced for male consumption, namely, the bodies of porn stars and sexbots. “Voluptuous” might be a polite descriptor for such bodies; “anorexic” would not be. The ordinary male is baffled by the drive of his female partner toward thinness. Anorexia is gendered Prometheanism in large part because women themselves are the pace-setters in the body-image race.

But why in the world would women choose this particular body image? Here a second observation is crucial: the romanticization of sexual expressionism roughly correlates with the spread of eating disorders such as anorexia. As noted, although instances of anorexia have existed for centuries, it is incontestable that the twentieth century and beyond have seen the vast majority of them. Thinness as a widespread cultural ideal is evident in the 1920s, which was also the era of a proto-sexual revolution, and becomes firmly sedimented by the 1960s.

Let me be clear. I am not claiming a causation but rather a correlation. We can, I think, regard both sexual expressionism and a valorization of female thinness as symptoms of something deeper, namely, what John Paul II calls the “fracture” within the person’s interior.[22] This fracture originates in the Fall, which split the previously harmonious unity between body and soul into an antagonistic unrest. This inner fracture has taken on specific contours in late

modernity.

Many thinkers have by now explained why the mind-body split is intrinsic to sexual expressionism, in which the body becomes a useful pleasure-tool of the “real self,” the mind. But we see the same dynamic at play in the anorexic, whose person is deeply fractured. Osgood experienced this: for her, anorexia is an abusive relationship, one in which abuser and abused are the same person.[23]

Consider also the astonishing but little-observed similarity between the language used by anorexics and that of female sexual revolutionaries. Margaret Sanger promoted the word “birth control” deliberately, because “control” over the chaotic female body was the essence of her program—something with which an anorexic can sympathize. The body is viewed as alien and unstable, requiring control. Likewise, the anorexic Nicki states, “I sort of saw my body as a separate thing, like it wasn’t me ... and I wanted to sort of distance myself from it. ... All of a sudden [with menses] it was doing something that was out of my control and I saw it as being not me and I couldn’t relate to it and I wanted to sort of get rid of it.”[24] Emma says, “It’s just, it’s just the fat. I just hate it. It just doesn’t feel like it should be part of me. It feels all wrong.”[25]

But fat makes baby-gestation possible. Unsurprisingly, anorexics often express disgust at the maternal orientation of their bodies. Teresa alludes to the figure of Dodo Conway in *The Bell Jar* as “just a cow without a brain who’s just massively fat and unattractive. Her whole motive in life is just to have mindlessly more children and breed more, more and more and more. ... And that is I suppose an image of horror for me.”[26]

A woman’s body anchors her in place and time and points to future fruitfulness, to “more and more and more.” The deeper project of feminist sexual revolution has been to untrammel oneself from the weight of the female body. As Dorothy Day observes, “Women’s bodies, heavy with children, dragged down by children, are a weight like a cross to be carried about.” [27] Female bodies are tied to the potency for pregnancy and nursing, and feminist sexual liberation aims to cut those ties. Simone de Beauvoir’s chapter on biology in *The Second Sex* is one long complaint about the “more and more and more” to which women are lashed by their fertile bodies: “The male finds more and more ways to use the forces of which he is master; the female feels her subjugation more and more; the conflict between her own interests and those of the generating forces that inhabit her exasperates her.”[28]

The man seems light and liquid, the woman heavy and tied down. Likewise, the anorexic strives for the light and airy. Rather than sinking into the earth, the anorexic who dies is said to have “escaped gravity.”[29] She escapes the gravity not only of her body but also of need.[30] Maura Kelly’s self-apotheosis demonstrates the anorexic counter-strategy to dependency: “I kept chiseling away at myself, trying to purify myself more, and to need less.”[31]

Ultimately, both sexual revolution and eating disorders rebel against the given, against what is inescapable. Sex creates babies. Bodies require food. But who says? The rules don’t apply to me. Modernity valorizes the independent, self-sufficient man, as he strides rationally and freely into the well-managed future of his own creation. But the cheerleaders of secularism do not seem to have reckoned with the innately destructive quality of the self that has been unleashed from any transcendent orientation.

Beholden to the disease inside her head, the anorexic exemplifies what all fallen persons must reckon with, namely, the abusive relationship that results with the surrender to a will—one’s own—that is not infinitely loving. Waldman describes her anorexic decline: “The fatigue sets

in. You feel like a torn net through which the thoughts pass, hazily. You cannot speak or write or do. Starving doesn't transform your life into one glorious act of self-expression. Starving silences who you really are." Anorexia is a contemporary testimony to the ancient truth that "self-will run riot," if not healed, does not lead to the aggrandizement of the self but to self-consumption. It leads, quite literally, to nothing at all.

Angela Franks, Ph.D., is a theologian, speaker, writer, and mother of six. She serves as Professor of Theology at the Theological Institute for the New Evangelization at St. John's Seminary in Boston.

[1] Maura Kelly, "Hunger Striking," in *Going Hungry: Writers on Desire, Self-Denial, and Overcoming Anorexia*, ed. Kate Taylor (New York: Anchor Books, 2008), 3–29, here 9.

[2] Quoted in Kate Taylor, "Introduction," in *Going Hungry*, xi–xliv, here xxxviii.

[3] Anorexia has the highest death rate of any mental illness, and it is estimated that less than half of the survivors recover (H. C. Steinhausen, "The Outcome of Anorexia Nervosa in the 20th Century," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 159, no. 8 [2002]: 1284–93, cited [here](#)).

[4] This essay will not pursue other essential questions, such as how to find help or to support loved ones stricken with eating disorders. The [National Eating Disorder Association](#) offers many resources on its website, and a Catholic resource is [Made in His Image](#).

[5] *Anorexics on Anorexia*, ed. Rosemary Shelley (Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers Ltd., 1997), 6. Cf. Kelly: "I was addicted to losing" (Kelly, "Hunger Striking," 9).

[6] Kelsey Osgood, *How to Disappear Completely: On Modern Anorexia* (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2013), 149.

[7] Alice Gregory, quoting author Francesca Lia Block, in "Anorexia: The Impossible Subject," in *The New Yorker*, Dec. 11, 2013.

[8] Osgood, *How to Disappear Completely*, 50.

[9] Shelley, *Anorexics on Anorexia*, 6.

[10] *Ibid.*, 13.

[11] Helen Malson, *The Thin Woman: Feminism, Post-Structuralism, and the Social Psychology of Anorexia Nervosa*, Women and Psychology series, ed. Jane Ussher (New York: Routledge, 1998), 122.

[12] Shelley, *Anorexics on Anorexia*, 134.

[13] Colleen Thompson, "Voices of an Eating Disorder," 1996.

[14] Penny, quoted in Malson, *The Thin Woman*, 126.

[15] Philosopher Tzachi Zamir, in his philosophy of dramatic acting, proposes that anorexia is "a prolonged unfolding of a theatrical suicidal gesture." He cites Grace Bowman's memoir *Thin*: "Like nineteenth-century hunger artists who starved themselves and then displayed themselves as living skeletons, gawped at by people who paid to see these miraculous figures on show, I made my body into a performance" (in *Acts: Theater, Philosophy, and the Performing Self*, Theater: Theory/Text/Performance [Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2014],

193, quoting Grace Bowman, *Thin* [New York: Penguin, 2007], 73.)

[16] Zamir, *Acts*, 170.

[17] Malson, *The Thin Woman*, 133, 134.

[18] Waldman, “There Once Was a Girl.”

[19] Malson, *The Thin Woman*, 134.

[20] Malson, *The Thin Woman*, 147.

[21] This point is nicely captured by the fact that women tend to speak only around a quarter of the dialogue in Hollywood movies, while they are about five times more likely than male characters to appear in skimpy clothing or just nude (Amber Thomas, “Women only said 27% of the words in 2016’s biggest Movies,” Jan. 12, 2017; Christina Cauterucci, “Somehow Women Still Make Up Less Than a Third of Speaking Characters in Top U.S. Movies,” *Slate*, Aug. 1, 2017).

[22] John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006), audience 28:2–3, 244.

[23] Osgood, *How to Disappear Completely*, 149.

[24] Malson, *The Thin Woman*, 118.

[25] *Ibid.*, 129.

[26] *Ibid.*, 139–40.

[27] Dorothy Day, *On Pilgrimage* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 76.

[28] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage Books E-books, 2011), 60.

[29] Osgood, quoting Naomi Wolf, in *How to Disappear Completely*, 49.

[30] Poet and former anorexic Louise Glück observes, “Out of terror at its incompleteness and ravenous need, anorexia constructs a physical sign calculated to manifest disdain for need, for hunger designed to appear entirely free of all forms of dependency, to appear complete, self-contained” (Louise Glück, “Education of the Poet,” in *Going Hungry*, 111–28, here 120).

[31] Kelly, “Hunger Striking,” 16.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Prostituted People are the Walking Dead: So Why Does Amnesty International Advocate for the Sex Industry?

ELEANOR K. GAETAN

Few public policy issues have been as quickly and as universally acknowledged as the criminal phenomenon of human trafficking. Twenty years ago, there was no international legal definition of the problem. Then in 2000, the United Nations (UN) and the United States (US) adopted, respectively, a comprehensive convention and a landmark law against sexual exploitation, forced labor, and contemporary slavery. Harrowing accounts of abuse reported by faith-based and feminist organizations were the main motivation compelling these new rules in both the UN and the US.

An insane twist has entered the politics of human trafficking, though: Despite massive education on its harm and criminality, prostitution, which openly commodifies women, is today promoted by organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other groups within the United Nations System. The emergence of a lobby to normalize and legalize the buying and selling of human beings—the basic transaction at work in prostitution—demonstrates how the Left's obsession with sexual libertinism (its ultimate yardstick of personal freedom) rationalizes the denial of human dignity to others, including the poor, homeless, displaced, addicted, coerced, vulnerable majority who comprise the greater part of prostituted people.

Background

It's important to remember what historical event compelled the identification of human trafficking as a major issue requiring remedy. With the collapse of Communism, advocates witnessed a pipeline of poor people, *mostly women*, lured mainly to Western Europe and the Middle East under false pretenses. They were promised jobs as caregivers or waitresses, for example, but once they were abroad, their passports were typically confiscated, and a new reality presented: Be prostituted in the commercial sex industry, that is, raped for profit, or we will harm you and your family back home. This was no idle threat since local recruiters typically knew each victim's personal story.

Plying on ignorance, naïveté, and wishful thinking, criminal networks liquidated young

women from villages in countries such as Moldova and Ukraine to satisfy (male) demand for female flesh in Amsterdam, Vienna, Munich, and Istanbul, to name a few cities where the sex trade continues to flourish. What fueled sex trafficking was a basic Econ 101 supply problem: Where prostitution was tolerated and normalized, local women were generally unwilling to be sold for sexual access, creating a pull factor for a foreign supply of poor, vulnerable bodies from the East.

UN Approves Comprehensive Anti-trafficking Protocol

In the 1990s, the phenomenon of human trafficking was brought to the attention of numerous UN offices including the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Labor Organization (ILO), and the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). In 2000, the UNODC adopted the *Palermo Protocol*, whose cumbersome title is the *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children*, supplementing the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime. It describes human trafficking as including sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery, servitude, and the removal of organs. Importantly, the protocol recognizes the "abuse of vulnerability" as constituting human trafficking—meaning that anyone who uses a person's poverty or lack of housing or drug addiction as leverage to coerce that person into commercial sex acts is committing the crime of human trafficking.

The Palermo Protocol wasn't the first international law pertaining to the physical vulnerability of women and girls, linking human trafficking and prostitution as two versions of the same crime. In 1949, the UN General Assembly approved the *Convention for the Suppression of the Trafficking in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others*. In its *preamble*, the resolution identified the core problem with these offenses: sexual exploitation is "incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person." Article 1 explicitly states that consent of the person selling her body is irrelevant considering this violation of human dignity.

The Palermo Protocol updated the 1949 insight by conceptualizing the government's role in confronting human trafficking. It offered "three Ps" as an appropriate action model: protecting victims, prosecuting criminals, and preventing the crime. By late December 2003, 117 countries had signed the international instrument; it *entered into force 90 days later*.

US Passes Tough Anti-trafficking Law

While debate unfolded over human trafficking at the UN, the US Congress considered *bipartisan legislation* to confront the trafficking of human beings. Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) and Senator Paul Wellstone (D-MN) were the main sponsors of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000. Its focus was originally on sex trafficking, with labor trafficking added as a later consideration. The law was enacted in October 2000.

The TVPA includes the same "three P" model adopted by the UN. It also asserted US leadership by creating a new office at the U.S. State Department dedicated to eradicating human trafficking worldwide. One of the tools used by this office is an annual report which ranks each country's efforts to confront the problem.

Sweden vs. the Netherlands: Clashing Models

Meanwhile, two European countries adopted diametrically opposite solutions to the increasingly obvious problem of sexual exploitation and human trafficking in the commercial sex industry, which kept growing throughout the 1990s, in part, swelling with the entry of women from Eastern Europe.

In 2000, a new regulatory regime legalizing the sex trade came into force in the Netherlands, legitimizing Amsterdam's infamous Red Light District, De Wallen, which soon became an international destination for sex tourism. A ban on brothels was lifted. Prostituting women were identified as "*independent entrepreneurs*" required to register with the police, pay income tax, and submit to regular medical exams in order to be certified as disease-free. The stated purpose of the new approach was to eliminate exploitation by regulating prostitution like any industry, displacing organized crime, improving "working conditions," and removing stigma that prevented women from reporting abuse to law enforcement.

Sweden, on the other hand, looked at the system of prostitution and made several *distinctly different assumptions*: Swedish policy makers saw prostitution as premised on inherent physical vulnerability and a power differential. Since the vast majority of sellers are women and the buyers are men, Swedish lawmakers also concluded that the nation's goal of equality between men and women would be undermined by normalizing or legalizing prostitution.

Sweden's *Law that Prohibits the Purchase of Sexual Services* became effective in January 1999. It criminalizes purchasing sex, owning or operating brothels, and facilitating prostitution. The Swedish law decriminalizes the act of prostituting oneself, concluding that if the law eliminates demand, supply will disappear. The law was based on extensive research, including interviews with prostituted persons who are frequently victims of childhood neglect and sexual abuse. Researchers also found that prostitution typically requires psychological disassociation to cope with the trauma of being repeatedly violated, mainly by strangers.

Cecilie Høigård, a leading Swedish criminologist who helped conceptualize the path-breaking law, *explained* what her team found through interviews with prostituted women:

They told us what it was like to use their bodies and vaginas as rental apartments for unknown men to invade, and how this made it necessary to separate their body from their self.

The women had numerous strategies to maintain this separation. To be agents in their own lives they showed great ingenuity and vigor within the little space for maneuver they had. However, over time it became more difficult for them to maintain the separation between their body and self. After the punter was done, it became increasingly difficult to bring the self back. Eventually the women came to feel worthless, dirty and disgusting.

These stories were very similar to accounts we'd heard from victims of other sexual violence, such as incest, rape and domestic violence.

The Nordic Model Works

Twenty years later, the results of this fascinating side-by-side prostitution experiment are clear. In the Netherlands, the sex industry exploded (both legal and illegal markets), human trafficking is rampant, and organized crime dominates the recruitment pipeline. Seeing that the experiment was not working, just eight years after it passed, Dutch officials began searching for ways to shrink the Red Light zone as the only way to eliminate exploitation. Fed up with the **disastrous policy** of legalization, citizens began to protest prostitution openly.

In Sweden, on the other hand, human trafficking has decreased significantly. In 2015, police investigated over ten times more sex trafficking cases in the Netherlands compared to Sweden: 623 versus 58 cases. In Germany, where prostitution is legal, pimps or sex buyers murdered **70 women** in 2015; no one in prostitution was killed in Sweden that year.

As Sweden discovered, the only effective way to prevent sex trafficking is to criminalize the demand for commercial sex, thereby shrinking the market for vulnerable bodies. Other countries started adopting this public policy approach, known as the Nordic Model. In 2008, Iceland became the first country to follow Sweden. Since, seven more countries have criminalized the demand for prostitution (while directing law enforcement *not* to arrest the people, mainly women, selling their bodies): Norway (2009), Northern Ireland (2014), Canada (2014), France (2016), Ireland (2017) and, **most recently**, on December 31, 2018, Israel.

Data in. Model tested. Spread effect begins. Tolerance and normalization of prostitution can be consigned to the dustbin of history because it violates human dignity and manipulates the vulnerability of people experiencing some form of duress. Right? Wrong. A new factor emerged in the early 2010s, an ideologically-driven defense of the commercial sex industry that can only be described as a “post-truth” response to the Nordic Model and its momentum.

Amnesty International Endorses Sex Trade

On May 26, 2016, Amnesty International announced a **new policy** to advance the “human rights of sex workers,” calling on governments worldwide to decriminalize the commercial sex industry, including activities that facilitate prostitution: pimping, brothel owning, and paying for sex. According to the organization’s **press release**, “We are outlining how governments can best protect people engaged in sex work from violence and discrimination.”

Although the organization claims the purpose of adopting the policy is to protect “sex workers,” the main beneficiaries are “the men—the consumers and organizers of sex who will benefit the most,” explains attorney Darren Geist in a **devastating critique**, “Amnesty International’s Empty Promises: Decriminalization, Prostituted Women, and Sex Trafficking.” He continues:

Amnesty’s proposal would establish the legal right of men to buy or rent women’s bodies for sexual acts, and the legal right of men to sell or rent women’s bodies to other men for sexual acts.

In fact, this will be the primary effect of Amnesty’s proposal, for the vast majority of the people in the sex industry are the consumers, the johns.

Geist and others, including **Irish activist Rachel Moran**, author of the most trenchant exploitation memoir, *Paid For: My Journey Through Prostitution*, and **Taina Bien-Aimé**,

executive director of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), point to myriad gaps in the logic and research employed by Amnesty International for its misguided position, which was first leaked to British journalist Julie Bindel in 2014.

First, Amnesty's position paper highlights law enforcement brutality against prostituted people as a major reason for supporting decriminalization—a designation which effectively amounts to the legalization of the sex trade without regulation. This focus completely ignores the most prevalent forms of violence committed by pimps and sex buyers. For example, in a landmark nine-country study published in the *Journal of Trauma Practice*, Dr. Melissa Farley and her team interviewed 854 prostituted women. They found the sex trade to be multi-traumatic: 63% of participants had been raped, 68% met the criteria for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), 71% had been physically assaulted, 75% had been homeless, and 89% said they wanted to escape but had no other options for survival.

Numerous other studies find high incidence of illness, injury, and psychological harm associated with prostitution and sex trafficking. Among those in prostitution, 65% have tried to commit suicide once and 38% have attempted suicide more than one time. In research on health consequences of sex trafficking in the US, a study published in the *Annals of Health Law* found that pimps frequently force prostituted women into unwanted abortions—55% of the women and girls interviewed by the researchers had been forced to abort a baby at least once while being trafficked, making them vulnerable to health complications including infection, besides psychological and spiritual trauma.

Calling such misery “sex work” is a gross misrepresentation of reality, especially grotesque because it sanitizes the harm and serves to lure more people into “the Life,” as survivors refer to the sex trade.

Throughout its documentation and discussion, Amnesty International assumes that prostitution is separate and easily distinguished from sex trafficking, but the two are intrinsically related. Every victim of sex trafficking is coerced into the commercial sex trade; to eliminate one, you have to target both forms of exploitation. In late 2002, George W. Bush signed a national presidential security directive (NSPD 22) that states:

[T]he United States Government opposes prostitution and any related activities, including pimping, pandering, or maintaining brothels, as contributing to the phenomenon of trafficking in persons. These activities are inherently harmful and dehumanizing. The United States Government's position is that these activities should not be regulated as a legitimate form of work for any human being.

As well, legions of exited survivors testify that sexual abuse, especially in childhood, grooms a person for the commercial sex trade by causing them to denigrate their own bodies and associate sex acts with pain and humiliation. This factor evokes a second set of research results ignored by Amnesty International: the high correlation between childhood trauma and abuse, entry into prostitution, and the weak systems for detecting or assisting child victims of sex trafficking. A 2000 study published in *Women and Criminal Justice* found that 98% of prostitution survivors reported being emotionally abused as children, 90% were abused physically, 85% were incest victims, and 60% were sexually abused as children. As Darren Geist cogently summarizes, “Amnesty's recommendations would only make worse a prostitution industry already defined by physical and sexual violence.”

Under federal law, all minors who are trading commercial sex are considered victims of sex

trafficking, by definition. A nearly 500-page study funded by the Department of Justice in 2011, *Confronting Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking of Minors in the United States*, concludes that among the highest national priorities should be reducing the demand for commercial sex by educating those buying sex about the harm they are causing—harm to vulnerable young women and men, commodified instead of being cherished. But the Amnesty endorsement of decriminalization would, instead, expand the market for vulnerable human beings: Several macro-economic assessments, including a rigorous academic study in which the London School of Economics participated, conclude that in countries where commercial sex is legalized, the market expands and sex trafficking increases.

Finally, Amnesty claimed its policy was developed based on research it conducted through its national chapters. However, a detailed paper examining this research found it to be highly flawed, misleading, and non-conforming to standard, neutral procedures for conducting social science research.

But...Why?

So much evidence can be arrayed *against* Amnesty International's support for the wholesale decriminalization of the buying and selling of bodies for sexual access, that one's mind rushes to the question: But why? Was it bad thinking or bad faith that led this once highly respected human rights trailblazer down a perverse path, in a direction sure to ruin lives as it damages bodies? At least two explanations can be quickly discerned: funding from one of the world's best known globalists, George Soros, and an ideology that sanctifies sexual expression as the highest form of self-realization. These two major factors, combined with a distinct medical enabling environment, an approach known as "harm reduction," developed as part of the protocol for confronting the HIV/AIDS epidemic, go some distance in explaining Amnesty International's dangerous and cynical mistake.

It needs to be pointed out that Amnesty International is *not* the only transnational organization dedicated to human rights that has taken this pro-legalization position. Human Rights Watch (HRW) is another group that quickly expressed support for Amnesty on this. In fact, while Amnesty's decision was in the headlines in 2015, HRW president Ken Roth tweeted, "All want to end poverty, but in meantime, why deny women the option of sex work?" A stance that, again, ignores the multiple forms of physical, emotional, and spiritual harm prostitution causes. As Julie Bindel, author of *The Pimping of Prostitution: Abolishing the Sex Work Myth*, has pointed out, Roth's attitude is analogous to saying, "If a poor person wants to sell her kidney for cash, it's her choice, so let her," rather than outlawing exploitation and searching for alternative sources of income or aid.

What Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have in common is George Soros, the billionaire arbitrage artist whose non-profit entity, the Open Society Foundation (OSF), both funded Amnesty and openly applauded its "sex work" policy position. In "Decriminalization of Prostitution: The Soros Effect," Jody Raphael provides a detailed analysis of Soros' support for this extremist "free market" policy, which ignores physical vulnerability and human dignity in favor of a business model in which all things, including human beings, are turned into items for sale. OSF considers the defense of sex work to be a top funding priority and as one of the world's largest philanthropies, that's saying a lot.

Raphael confirms OSF is a major Amnesty backer, providing over \$2 million in 2015, the year Amnesty pressed hardest to get national chapters to approve decriminalization at a meeting in Dublin. (It's worth noting: Sweden, France, and Israel—three Nordic Model countries—were among the strongest opponents of this policy.) What she points out most valuably, though, is

how Soros' money, through OSF, creates various levels of advocacy which all reinforce the same message which is then amplified internationally, especially through entities associated with the UN.

Harm Reduction Ignores Exploitation

Amnesty International considers itself one of an increasing number of organizations “calling for decriminalization of consensual sex work in order to protect human rights and public health,” that is, normalizing a soulless system of torture by absolving exploiters of any crime. It enlists as support for its worldview UN-affiliated entities such as the Global Commission on HIV and the Law, UNAIDS, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, and UN Women, all of which chose the harm reduction model of public health in their HIV/AIDS prevention work. The mantra of that model is “Do Not Judge”—that is, do not judge the existence of market-based sexual transactions *and* don't even look at the human beings destroyed by the commodification underway. On the ground, that means that US Government programs centered on condom distribution require “non-judgmental” deals cut with brothel owners. In brothels in India, for example, sex trafficked minors might be in plain sight, but the harm reduction paradigm will generally ignore their presence in favor of fulfilling the condom distribution plan. What this approach ignores are the multiple risks of illness and injury to the sexually exploited and thoroughly commodified persons being sold.

The “do not judge” harm reduction paradigm has been implemented worldwide by Western governments and charities, with the US and European Union in the lead, working independently as well as through the United Nations. The US government has spent some \$80 billion implementing this paradigm in the last 15 years—marrying two ideologies: intemperate capitalism willing to sell anything, to anyone, for a price, and the libertine rejection of any limits on sexual expression, and valuing of sexual deviance as a form of freedom. In this marketplace, the vulnerable body is the walking dead.

Eleanor Kennelly Gaetan, Ph.D. is senior legislative advisor for the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women. She spent five years at the U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, managing legislation and editing the annual TIP report. Her Ph.D. is from University of Maryland; more importantly, she has five children.

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Issues in Family, Culture & Science

FEATURE ARTICLE

Technocracy and the Body

MICHAEL HANBY

Of the many revolutionary developments of the twentieth century, Paul VI wrote in *Humanae vitae*, the “most remarkable of all is to be seen in man’s stupendous progress in the domination and rational organization of the forces of nature, to the point that he is endeavoring to extend this control over every aspect of his own life—over his body, over his mind and emotions, over his social life, and even over the laws that regulate the transmission of life.” This was not a novel assessment. *Gaudium et spes* had already declared that “the human race is involved in a new stage of history . . . triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of man.”^[1] These energies “recoil upon him, upon his decisions and desires, both individual and collective, and upon his manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and people.”^[2] The “spiritual agitation and changing conditions of life” in this new era spring from modern science and technology, which have transformed both the theoretical and the practical orders.^[3]

This ambivalence toward technological society would mark the remainder of Paul VI’s pontificate. He worried that the opening which the 1960s seemed to offer to Christian transcendence might in reality be the “more accentuated sliding towards a new positivism: universalized technology as the dominant form of activity, as the overwhelming pattern of existence, even as a language, without the question of its meaning being really asked.”^[4] John Paul II would soon echo this worry, observing in *Redemptor hominis*, that “the man of today seems ever to be under threat from what he produces.” “This seems to make up the main chapter of the drama of present-day human existence in its broadest and universal dimension,” the pope says.^[5] Benedict XVI, taking up the theme, would later explain that “technology is never merely technology.”^[6] Because it objectifies man’s subjectivity, “it tends to become an ideological power that threatens to confine us within an *a priori* that holds us back from encountering being and truth. Were that to happen, we would all know, evaluate, and make decisions about our life situations from within a technocratic cultural perspective to which we would belong structurally, without ever being able to discover a meaning not of our own making.”^[7]

Pope Francis seems convinced that this technological confinement has already come to pass, at least judging from *Laudato si’*.^[8] He laments “the way that humanity has taken up technology and its development according to an undifferentiated and one-dimensional paradigm. This paradigm exalts the concept of a subject who approaches and gains control over an external

object. This subject makes every effort to establish the scientific and experimental method, *which in itself is already a technique of possession, mastery and transformation.*”^[9] He calls this the “technocratic paradigm,” which “sees nature as an insensate order, as a cold body of facts, as a mere ‘given,’ as an object of utility, as raw material to be hammered into a useful shape.”^[10] So powerful is it that “the idea of promoting a different cultural paradigm and employing technology as a mere instrument is nowadays inconceivable. The technocratic paradigm has become so dominant that it would be difficult to do without its resources and even more difficult to utilize them without being dominated by their internal logic.”^[11]

It is amazing in retrospect how the question occasioned by chemical contraception was from the very first embedded within the question concerning technology, and it is equally amazing how oblivious proponents of a change in church teaching were to this fact, both in the late 60s and now. This is even more striking given the history of the twentieth century. Man’s endeavor “to extend this control over every aspect of his own life” did not begin when the contraceptive pill dropped miraculously from the sky.

The ambition to exert this kind of control is latent in modern conceptions of nature and science. It acquired a new and urgent impetus with the 1871 publication of Darwin’s *The Descent of Man*, with its proto-eugenical anxiety that our evolved benevolence permitted the Irish to breed like rabbits and thereby thwarted the favoritism of Natural Selection toward the English. Darwin’s cousin Francis Galton would soon coin the very term ‘eugenics’ for the endeavor to set things right. It found political expression in the progressive era of the 1920s and 30s, with its dream of a society collectively organized for the pursuit of scientific progress. And it proceeded unabated until the atrocities of the Second World War forced a change of names, if not of intent. The Galton Chair of Eugenics at University College London, for example, became the Galton Chair of Genetics. Genetic hygiene became genetic counseling. And so on.

The forced sterilization laws that prevailed on both sides of the Atlantic are a well-known artifact of this era, as was the international birth control movement. Less well-known perhaps, but even more remarkable, is the fusion of progressive-era Christianity and the eugenic ideal—it is unlikely that eugenics could have flourished so otherwise—to the point that prominent Protestant ministers in the US would compete with one another in sermon contests sponsored by the American Eugenics Society^[12]: “The Christian asks: how many, how healthy?”, according to the prominent Episcopal clergyman Phillips Osgood. Christine Rosen has documented this remarkable story in her *Preaching Eugenics*, while Amy Laura Hall has shown how deeply American Christians internalized the eugenical ideal: dramatically reducing their family sizes within a generation, anxiously measuring their children by the new standards of ‘scientific parenting,’ and parading their families about like livestock at the county fair in “fitter family” competitions around the country. All the while, trusted household brands like Lysol subtly marketed themselves as “feminine hygiene products,” that is, abortifacients, to women of my grandmother’s generation.^[13]

Catholics, otherwise the staunchest opponents of eugenics, were not invulnerable to the eugenical temptation, despite the fact that they were more likely to be the objects of it. But, according to Christine Rosen, among all faiths

the evidence yields a clear pattern about who elected to support eugenic-style reforms and who did not. Religious leaders pursued eugenics precisely when they moved away from traditional religious tenets. The liberals and modernists in their respective faiths—those who challenged their churches to conform to modern circumstances—became the eugenics movement’s most enthusiastic

supporters.[14]

The mindset forged during the eugenics era formed the cultural backdrop to the notorious decision of the Lambeth Conference in 1930 and for the promulgation of *Casti connubii* that same year, and its expectations formed part of the calculation in the first use of the phrase “responsible parenthood” that I have so far been able to find: in a 1963 policy statement of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the US.[15]

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. Some fifty years later, we find ourselves increasingly confronting a new eugenics, more powerful if less obviously authoritarian than the old.[16] The continuity between them is concealed by the fact that the new eugenics is no longer a program controlled by the state in the service of a master race fantasy, but a biotechnocratic system controlled by no one in particular at the service of economic exigencies, the expectations of bureaucratic and industrialized medicine, and rapidly changing human archetypes and consumer preferences. And by the fact that its victims are mostly children who are invisible and without voice. As it was with the old eugenics, so it is with the new, as progressive clerics hasten to champion these new archetypes in the name, if not quite of freedom and progress, then of “respect, compassion, and sensitivity.” Yet the sexual revolution does not exist outside of the technological revolution, which is its condition of possibility and the very point at which man’s technology “recoils upon him.” The new “liberals and modernists” owe us an explanation of how they can abstract and affirm one element of this system—say, the LGBT identity—without simultaneously affirming the radical redefinition of man, woman, and child, the technological reduction of human nature, and the technological manipulation of the human body necessary to bring it about. They form a seamless garment.

Michael Hanby is the Associate Professor of Religion and Philosophy of Science at the John Paul II Institute at the Catholic University of America. He is the author of Augustine and Modernity and No God, No Science? Theology, Cosmology, Biology, as well as numerous articles.

[1] John Paul II, *Gaudium et spes*, 4.

[2] *Ibid.*, 4.

[3] *Ibid.*, 4–5.

[4] Paul VI, *Octogesima adveniens*, 29.

[5] John Paul II, *Redemptor hominis*, 15.

[6] Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, 14, 69.

[7] *Ibid.*, 70.

[8] For a more extended engagement with this encyclical, see Michael Hanby, “The Gospel of Creation and the Technocratic Paradigm: Reflections on a Central Teaching of *Laudato Si'*,” in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 42.4 (Winter 2015): 724–47.

[9] Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, 106, emphasis mine.

[10] *Laudato si'*, 115, citing Romano Guardini, *The End of the Modern World* (Wilmington: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1998), 55.

[11] *Laudato si'*, 108.

[12] See Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[13] Amy Laura Hall, *Conceiving Parenthood: American Protestantism and the Spirit of Reproduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 21–290.

[14] Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics*, 184.

[15] See “Responsible Parenthood,” *The Family Life Coordinator*, Vol. 12, No. 3/4 (Jul.–Oct., 1963), 111–13.

[16] Evelyn Fox Keller comments on the distinction: “Whereas the eugenics programs of the earlier part of the century had to rely on massive social programs, and hence were subject to social control, molecular genetics seemed to enable what Robert Sinsheimer called a ‘new eugenics’”—a eugenics that “could, at least in principle, be implemented on a quite individual basis.” Sinsheimer added,

The old eugenics was limited to a numerical enhancement of the best of our existing gene pool. The new eugenics would permit in principle the conversion of the unfit to the highest genetic level.

Sinsheimer, “The Prospect of Designed Genetic Change,” *Engineering and Science* 32 (1969): 8–13; cited in Keller, “Nature, Nurture, and the Human Genome Project,” in Daniel Kevles and Leroy Hood (eds), *The Code of Codes: Scientific and Social Issues in the Human Genome Project* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 289.

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FEATURE ARTICLE

Gender: Law's Allergic Reaction to the Body

DANIEL MOODY

Besides being our era's dominant word, "gender" is also its most peculiar, with language, biology, psychology, sociology and feminism all staking a claim to ownership. This essay contends that the multifaceted word has a sixth claimant. The new gender is a consequence of abortion laws: with abortion the body is without personhood, and with legal gender the "person" is without a body.

The womb is a kind of city, designed as it is to be inhabited by a single person at a time and to cater to its occupant's every need—food, shelter, warmth and so on. But the helpless, innocent child emerges alive from the tiny city thanks largely to the goodwill of those persons who live beyond the city limits. The womb is a safe space, kept so not only by the mother-to-be but also by laws.

As we are heart-breakingly aware, however, legal regimes around the world have withdrawn their support, thereby rendering womb-dwellers vulnerable to the inclinations of those closest to them. But our interest here lies beyond the womb. It lies with you and me, since abortion requires us to think less of *ourselves*. Indeed, it demands that we think of ourselves as *no-body*. Each of us is tied to the plight of the child. We are our brother's keeper. We are co-implicated.

By sanctioning abortion, law extracts personhood from the child in the womb, who is undoubtedly somebody. But it also does the opposite. It extracts embodiment from the person. Neither feat is possible in material reality, of course, but both are achievable in law, because law itself is immaterial. All told, abortion institutes a new and body-free legal use of the word "person."

McGill University professor Douglas Farrow concurs, positing that a potent force of *autonomy* is "busy evacuating the law not only of morality and of fundamental freedoms such as conscience and religion, but of the body itself." Drawing on my own work, Farrow observes that "the process of eliminating the body from law takes its main impetus from the practice of abortion." "Having refused to identify some humans as persons," notes Farrow, "we have been forced to advance ever more restrictive theories of personhood and personal dignity." So restrictive that they are reduced to "the capacity to plan, to purpose, and to act autonomously, such that human nature itself—insofar as it concerns the body—is removed from our calculations." To take a page out of some queer theory manual, we are in the realm of the

performative—doing, not being.

Were we to approach the average man in the street and ask him to name a prefix of the word “gender,” it is a safe bet his reply would be the ubiquitous “trans.” Transgender, we are told, denotes a difference between one’s sex and one’s gender. Though queer theorists themselves struggle to articulate what gender is, they nevertheless insist that it is *unrelated* to sex and *superior* to it.

Yet the primary reference point for legal identity must be consistent throughout society. If it is not sex for everybody, it can only be sex for nobody. And since the transgendered individual is armed with legal documentation that does not correspond with his or her embodied identity, our legal status no longer reflects our embodied identity. Nobody can *be* a male (sex) or a female (sex) in law. Instead, everybody *identifies as* male (gender) or female (gender).

Michael Hanby spells this out in his “The Whole World Groans”: “[I]f ‘gender,’ like ‘orientation,’ is merely a function of a self-appropriated identity distinct from one’s sexually differentiated body (now relegated to the realm of ‘mere biology’), then in fact there is no longer any such thing as man or woman as heretofore understood.” “We are *all* transgender now,” writes Hanby, “even if gender and sexual identity accidentally coincide in the great majority of instances.”

Accidentally. Aye, there’s the rub. The old norm is downgraded to a mere coincidence. Individuals *just so happen* to be embodied. All of this makes perfect sense once we have divorced the personal from the physical.

In sum, supporters of queer theory affirm the *personhood* of the gendered while denying the relevance of their *bodies*. Conversely, backers of abortion accept that each human fetus is *some body* (even to the point of harvesting *body parts*) while denying that he or she is *some person*.

During a fascinating Podcast interview, “We’re Not in Kansas Anymore,” Carl Trueman puts it to Archbishop Charles J. Chaput that “the question of transgenderism raises in a very powerful way the question of human personhood.” In agreement, Chaput responds: “If we can change ourselves from male to female, what does it mean to be a human person?” Well, exactly. But abortion raised the question of personhood long before. Thus, we can turn the question around and ask: “If we can change the child in the womb from person to non-person, what does it mean to be male and female?” If law is at liberty to pronounce on *personhood*, it is absurd to assume that *any* aspect of *personal identity*—above all the *body*—remains beyond law’s pernicious reach.

A thorough investigation of identity, language and law provides a vantage point from which to observe a coherent and internally consistent two-stage account of our present disembodied legal status. Firstly, abortion begets a body-shaped hole at the heart of law. Secondly, the new gender masks that hole, primarily by utilizing sex-derived words, such as “female” and “he.” (Hence, the advent of self-selected but enforceable pronouns.)

Gender dons the language of the body for the purpose of passing itself off as something, but beneath the disguise there is nothing but words defined in terms of the mind. The phantom gender project revolves around the ancient art of making an absence of one thing appear to be the presence of another. (Think shadows dancing on the walls of a cave.) Seen as such, gender can only be defined as the *negation of sex*. It is “not sex.”

Valid law respects and reflects the truth of human identity as found in nature, where personhood is established at conception. By declaring that humans *become* persons, the

sanction of abortion effectively abolishes nature, transforming the child in the womb into a non-person, and everybody else into a legal “person” who *just so happens* also to be a natural person. If nature abhors a vacuum, an abhorrence of nature demands the creation of a vacuum.

On the surface, it may seem that abortion affects law in only one place. But since abortion concerns the status of personhood, and since all laws exist to govern persons-as-persons, abortion shreds the integrity of law *as such*. (See in particular Jeff Shafer’s “[Supreme Incoherence: Transgender Ideology and the End of Law](#).”) Physical abortion severs life from the body with a snip of the spine; legal abortion separates law from reality, rendering *all of us* vulnerable to the tyrannical whims of a regime that bypasses natural identities.

Did not Saint John Paul II warn us, in *Evangelium vitae*, that when law denies an individual the dignity of a defence of his or her right to life, exposing him to lethal-and-legal violence, “the process leading to the breakdown of a genuinely human co-existence and the disintegration of the state itself has already begun”? The post-abortion legal environment suffers from a catastrophic allergy to bodies, and as a result we are all in the grip of a well-orchestrated nihilism. Saint Teresa of Calcutta’s prescient description is vindicated. Abortion is “the greatest destroyer of love and peace.”

Daniel Moody is a philosopher who specializes in the relationships between bodies, minds, words and law. He lives in Dorset, England, and is the author of [The Flesh Made Word](#).

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Issues in Family, Culture & Science

FEATURE ARTICLE

Deconstructing Dignity by Eradicating Shame: The Pernicious Heritage of Alfred Kinsey

JUDITH REISMAN AND MARY MCALISTER

Introduction

Original shame, known already from the first chapters of the Bible, is a permanent element of culture and morality. It belongs to the very origins of the ethos of the human body.... A person of developed sensibility crosses the limit of that shame only with difficulty and inner resistance. —John Paul II

Is there not charms / By which the property of youth and maidhood / May be abused? Have you not read, Roderigo, / Of some such thing? —Shakespeare, *Othello, the Moor of Venice*, Act I, Scene I

Forty years before Pope Saint John Paul II articulated the spousal meaning of the body, establishing a framework for a renewed culture of life, an Indiana University zoologist named Alfred Kinsey infamously laid the framework for the emergence of the culture of death to which John Paul II was responding. John Paul II's claim in his famous General Audience catecheses through the 1980s was that the dignity of the human person, male and female, was gracefully expressed in the personal significance of the body. Kinsey's claim in the 1940s was that the most degrading, abusive, and exploitative sexual behavior imaginable was normal and natural for men and women. John Paul II's appeal was to truth, "the splendor of truth" which lifted human reason to the threshold of transcendence. Kinsey's appeal, as we will show below, was to a body of carefully manipulated lies packaged as scientific discoveries.

The direct aim of Kinsey's work was to destigmatize pornography. From the Greek *pornográph(os)*, literally "writing about harlots," pornography is defined as "sexually explicit videos, photographs, writings, or the like, whose purpose is to elicit sexual arousal." [1] With John Paul II (and Shakespeare) as cited above, we argue that pornography violates human instinctual feelings of shame, of violation, which are based on the reasonable fear of exposure

to unknown, potentially dangerous persons and situations. But how does one measure the ethos of shame to which John Paul II refers, or at what point does one cross the limits of shame?

In the modern era such questions are posed as matters of science, whose findings inform the application of law and development of general moral norms. In 1998 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that law must be based “almost entirely” on “scientific subject matter.” The “scientific subject matter” upon which law has judged human sexuality since the 1950s has been based, not on genuine science, but on Kinsey’s pseudo-scientific attack on the sexual shame instinct, which created the intellectual scaffolding for the dismantling of legal norms proscribing non-marital sex and establishing the so-called “sexual revolution.” This article, very briefly, traces the elements of that scaffolding in Kinsey’s deceptive work and its malign influence.[2]

I. Who was Alfred Kinsey, and what did he do?

To understand the origin of the cultural attack on shame manifested in the global contagion of pornography, we must return to 1948 and Dr. Alfred Kinsey, whom the *New York Times* has called “the father of the sexual revolution.” Portrayed throughout the media and academic scholarship as a conservative, husband and father, Kinsey was in reality an obsessive bi/homosexual, a masturbator, adulterer, exhibitionist and pornographic “filmmaker” and addict whose research aim was to prove the normality of his many illegal obsessions. These truths are still hidden in mainstream and official scholarly publications.

Kinsey’s publications *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948 and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* in 1953 stunned the world. Homosexual author Gore Vidal once described Kinsey as the “most famous man in America, the world, for about a decade,”^{vi} while Ella Fitzgerald immortalized his study of sexual “normality” in Cole Porter’s song: “According to the Kinsey Report, ev’ry average man you know....” Kinsey’s research was summarized in 1989 by the National Research Council’s conclusion that legal and social views on human sexuality can be divided into the “pre-Kinsey” and “post-Kinsey” eras. More recently, commentators have described how Kinsey’s research turned conventional morality upside down and led to the slow collapse of Judeo-Christian foundations:

[P]erhaps we could date “the revolution” from ... *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948 and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* in 1953. Kinsey conducted hundreds of interviews and concluded from these that most Americans’ private sexual practices differed sharply from their professed beliefs about sexual morality.... Kinsey believed Americans could achieve greater happiness and fulfillment only by expressing their sexual urges without deference to arbitrary cultural and religious rules.... The second half of the 20th century in the United States is the story of the slow collapse of a broadly Christian cultural consensus on sexual morality.

That collapse, occurring over three generations, has been aided by postmodernist “change agents”:

Postmodernism is a philosophical and a cultural movement, and such movements require that a lot of groundwork be put in place, a great deal of scaffolding be erected, and that takes a lot of work by intellectuals over several generations. Movements on this scale don’t just pop up into existence, but they really are the result of long labor.... Postmodernism...has manifestations in all

aspects of culture, from law, to religion to art, to economics, [and sexuality].

Kinsey was dedicated to the elimination of sexual shame in any form. Defining Kinsey as “A Pioneer of Sex Research,” authors in the *American Journal of Public Health* wrote:

Kinsey was not only a scientist; he was a reformer who sought to rid himself of his personal sexual demons, while at the same time revolutionizing the repressive society in which he had grown up....[which] enshrouded sex in shame, heaping more than enough guilt on young people to mangle and twist them.

It often takes time to analyze what events have changed a culture. For example, did abandoning all guilt produce more or less “mangle and twist”? In 1986 former U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Everett Koop, declared pornography was a “crushing public health problem . . . a clear and present danger.” It was not understood, however, that eliminating the shame inherent in masturbation was critical to the growth, acceptance and success of pornography, becoming recognized as a public health crisis (in Utah, Florida, South Dakota, etc.). Masturbation is *the* key component of pornography acceptance, diligently covered up by and for Dr. Kinsey.^[4] Masturbation had been understood as the action of unhappy loners, thus secretive and shame-inducing. Kinsey’s “data” saw the practice as preparation for a sexually healthy marriage. A scientist waved his magic wand and turned autoerotic activity into a responsible, social good and, from there, commerce beckoned.^[5]

II. The 1948 and 1953 Kinsey “Reports”

Kinsey’s “era” stripped human sexual morality from its roots in reality, religion and family, establishing the postmodern poisoning of Western Judeo-Christian culture.^[7] Indeed, “intellectuals over several generations...erected...a great deal of scaffolding” to deform our sexual/moral culture. World War II historian Tom Brokaw thus summarized the cultural philosophy that bulldozed the sexual morality of the *Greatest Generation*:

Faith in God was...part of the lives of the WWII generation [R]esponsibility, duty, honor, and faith was the ethos of their family and community. (37)

[When] the war broke out [these were the morals of] the parents of my friends, my teachers, my coaches, my ministers.... local businessmen... reminded me...that’s not how you were raised.[8] (55)

When the *Male* (1948) and *Female* (1953) books were released, men and women who had been disciplined by their military training and sacrifices, married in record numbers. They finished school on the GI Bill and had babies—the “Baby Boomers”—to reaffirm survival, to celebrate life.

Like a bulldozer razing a historic building, Kinsey’s *Rockefeller Foundation-financed books* burst onto the scene in 1948 and 1953, purporting to be providing the “scientific truth” about the sexual morality of the “greatest generation.” He claimed to have “proven” that the “greatest generation” hypocritically portrayed themselves as sexually moral while, truth be told, they were actually amoral, libidinous men and women. Kinsey’s “scientific statistics” not only libeled adult fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, but also claimed that children were sexual from birth, capable of what he called “orgasm” and unharmed by sexual contact

with adults. “Orgasms” were catalogued as infants and children who were “fainting” had “convulsions,” weeping “hysterically” and “fighting” to escape their adult rapists. These men he called the children’s “partners.” Kinsey viewed screaming, weeping children as having “definite enjoyment” from the sexual experiences.[9]

His claims were seen in tables of data detailing the sexual abuse of infants as young as two months and boys up to age 14, one of which is shown below. All “data” were catalogued by pederasts. The acts were also filmed. Kinsey recorded the serial sexual abuse of children and he describes the children involved in his “research” as his “team” who provided the tables and films. However, upon reading Kinsey’s descriptions of the children’s harrowing reactions to their sexual abuse, one can deduce that the reporter (Kinsey) was himself a sadomasochistic pederast. Co-author Wardell Pomeroy confirmed Kinsey was collecting “early adolescent sperm” to study motility, and “had at least ten motility studies going.”[10]



Kinsey’s work was accepted by the public in large part because he and his colleagues were portrayed as conservative family men and learned scientists. In fact, it was revealed after Kinsey’s death in 1956 that he was a closeted bi/homosexual (and, as noted, a sadomasochist), who, along with colleagues and co-authors, filmed and performed in sadomasochistic pornography in the attic of his home and in soundproofed rooms at the Kinsey Institute.[11] Below are some reported statistics from Kinsey’s 1948 *Male* volume:

95% of men are sex offenders

50% are adulterers

85% are fornicators

69% use prostitutes

10% to 37% men are bi-homosexual at some point in their lives

100% of children are sexual from birth

100% of children could climax with adult “help”

50% of women fornicate

26% of wives are unfaithful

25% of wives abort

85% single pregnant women abort

We cannot overstate the fact that the mass success of Kinsey’s claims rested on his data, which “proved” adults were sexually misbehaving by WWII standards, *without* bad consequences! Hence, any repressive sexual laws and rules—“shaming”—were groundless.

In his 1953 *Female* volume, Kinsey claimed that out of 4,441 women “subjects” none were really harmed by rape, childhood sexual abuse, incest, illegitimacy or an STD. With no evidence of harm, the sexually restrictive common law was based on religious ignorance. All sex is “normal” said Kinsey, so all sexual acts and “orientations” should be legal. Soliciting masturbation was criminal, but he showed masturbation could never be addictive or harmful.[12] However, the data upon which all of these claims were based were found to be scientifically and statistically flawed. For example:

75% of the data were excluded from his reports without explanation

80% of the men interviewed were disqualified from military service

86–87% of his study “population” were aberrant—homosexuals, prisoners, sex offenders, molested boys, pimps, prostitutes, etc.

In his methodology chapters, Kinsey claimed the right to “force” the “right” answers to

his research questions

He defined “wives” as any woman who lived with a man for more than a year, therefore including prostitutes living with their pimps

When “the greatest generation’s” moral standards were replaced by the Kinsey generation’s moral standards, the postmodern view of all sexual deviants as normal would increasingly become the American legal model. It is no coincidence that the rise of their children’s generation, the baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964, saw rapid increases in the rates of sexual misconduct and deviance of all types. From 1960–1990 rates of forcible rape, statutory rape, and aggravated sexual assault increased at least fourfold,[13] with similar increases in sodomy, prostitution, pedophilia, and births out of wedlock, while simultaneously being redefined toward normalcy.[14]

III. 1953: Hefner/Playboy and sexual “rights” breed sex traffickers

In 1948, as a 22 year-old college virgin, Hugh Hefner read Kinsey’s *Male* volume and two years later wrote a college paper championing an end to female favoritism in the law. He argued against alimony and in favor of “no-fault divorce, legalizing prostitution, lighter or no sex crime penalties, etc.” Hefner said, “Kinsey was the researcher and I am his pamphleteer... *Playboy* changed some laws and helped launch a revolution or two.” Hefner’s first *Playboy* in 1953 guided young men in how to “collect” various co-eds’ virginity while avoiding marriage.

Playboy championed and paid lawyers to lobby for the legalization of marijuana, cocaine, contraception, pornography, abortion, sodomy, prostitution, school sex education, and the decriminalization or reduced punishment for sex crimes using phony “victimless crime” data. In the 1960s–1970s, millions of *Playboy* consumers were sexually conditioned, aroused by cartoons featuring children seeking sex, prostitution and incest “jokes” juxtaposed with congratulatory letters to *Playboy* from celebrities, judges, prosecutors, politicians, sex experts and writers. *Penthouse* appeared in 1968, *Hustler* in 1975 and thereafter followed the porn deluge.^[16] This is the scaffolding being erected over several generations.

I (Dr. Reisman) served as Principal Investigator for the Department of Justice, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Grant No. 84-JN-AX-K007) study of *Children, Crime and Violence in Playboy, Penthouse and Hustler* (1953–1984). The \$800,000 study found *Playboy* exploiting 4,656 children in cartoons and visuals between 1953 and 1984. Children were actors in or watching sex an average of 8.2 times per issue, with over 30% of images depicting a child and adult in a sex scene. Most cartoon children were aged 3 to 11. *Children were drawn laughing at their gang rapes by adults*. In one cartoon, a girl of about 6 years old is depicted in her middle-class bed, charging “\$50” to a man taking off his pants in preparation for sex. *Playboy*’s sexualized children were systemic, statistically significant marketing decisions. Playboy Press published photos of 10-year-old Brooke Shields nude, oiled. Jodie Foster, age 14, was also displayed fully naked and described as “mature beyond her yrs.”

Playboy published the most child images, 187 (or 16 per issue) in 1971. A November 1971 image showed a naked model, posed to appear as a pigtailed-young girl, complete with Disney-themed bedsheets, and text encouraging “Big Daddy” to come on strong because she likes “forceful father figures.” In October 1976, *Playboy* included a textbox entitled “Kid Stuff” with the following quote: “...the big news is that there is a lot more direct eroticism flowing through a small child’s body than most adults are willing to acknowledge.”

Although *Playboy* quietly stopped including child images after the release of Reisman's OJJDP report in 1985, magazines featuring the images are still available in *Playboy's* early editions and Playboy Press productions. When I (Dr. Reisman) said, and showed, that Playboy featured child pornography on a television show in the Netherlands, *Playboy* sued for libel in 1994. Pictures from my OJJDP report convinced the judge that my claims were true. I won against Playboy.

IV. Kinseyan Sexuality Enters the Mainstream

Kinsey's human sexuality model was also incorporated into academia, first in universities which developed a new "scientific" discipline of "sexology," and then to elementary and secondary schools as those trained in sexology became sex educators, as illustrated below. These sexuality grads create sexuality societies, commissions and journals. Such "sexperts" are now teachers K-12-PhD, teaching teachers, who teach our children, judges, legislators, doctors, mental health professionals, etc. "facts" about the variations of human sexuality as all "normal" and equal, based on Kinsey. *No other sexuality canon is accredited.* LGBTQ activists and pornography trafficking activists draw support and credibility from the agents and institutions shown in the chart.



The *Playboy*-financed Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) and Planned Parenthood (also grant recipients of Rockefeller monies) bring pornography masked as "sex education" into classrooms, grooming children for sex trafficking, prostitution and gender dysfunctions.

Such advocates create the legal fiction that "educative" sex stimuli are non-prurient. This eventually allows use of sexually explicit pictures, including "obscenity," legally grooming children in schoolrooms under the guise of "sex education." Pornography was/is used in "sex therapy" and in "sex surrogate [prostitution] therapy" to unleash sexual inhibitions and teach new sex acts. So too showing children such materials grooms them to accept sex acts from adults and other children and to allegedly "voluntarily" participate in sex trafficking.

Sex therapist Dr. Maurice Yaffe reported that Kinsey proposed using pornography in unmonitored "research" on schoolchildren.[21] Thirty years later IASHS launched *Sexual Attitude Restructuring* (weekends to months of pornography viewing). This was purported to develop "healthy sexual attitudes and behaviors" in IASHS students. These students became the nation's sex education curriculum developers, sex educators, sexual forensic expert witnesses, researchers, etc., fulfilling Kinsey's dream of bringing pornography into classrooms.

These "accredited sexuality" experts are a "pansexual cult" masked as a scientific field. Available from the Reisman archive are photographs from an IASHS coffee table picture book, *Meditations on the Gift of Sexuality* (1977). This book puts Biblical prayers alongside pictures of nude IASHS faculty, staff, students and friends in a sex orgy of groups, singles, couples of all kinds in every sex act. Pornographic photos of the IASHS staff secretary's small children were sold by the IASHS to *Hustler* magazine to illustrate a pro-incest article demanding an end to age of consent, authored by a senior IASHS teacher, Dr. Erwin Haeberle.

V. Conclusion

As John Paul II pointed out, “What is at issue [in pornography] is ... an *extremely important* and fundamental *sphere of values* to which man cannot remain indifferent because of the dignity of humanity, because of the personal character and eloquence of the human body” (emphasis in original). The culturally debilitating effect of Kinsey’s work illustrates by negation the deep truth of these words. In debasing sexual expression under color of science, Kinsey established an essential foundation for the full-scale denial of the dignity of the human person expressed in male and female sexual difference. Understanding clearly the falsehood and deception of his work is an important step toward recovering these “extremely important and fundamental” values in our day.

Judith A. Reisman, Ph.D. is Founder and President of The Reisman Institute and is a Research Professor at Liberty University. She has an M.A. and Ph.D. from Case Western Reserve University and is the author of five books and hundreds of articles related to the fraudulent pseudoscience of Alfred Kinsey and its effects on human sexuality, law and policy. Her latest book is Stolen Honor, Stolen Innocence (New Revolution Press, 2013).

Mary E. McAlister, Esq. is Senior Litigation Counsel at Liberty Counsel. She has a B.S. summa cum laude from California Polytechnic State University and a J.D. from the University of California Berkeley School of Law. She has co-written numerous law review and peer reviewed articles with Dr. Reisman as well as representing clients on issues related to religious liberty, sanctity of human life and the family at all levels of state and federal courts.

[1] *Random House Unabridged Dictionary*, 2019.

[2] Alfred Kinsey et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948), *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953). See Judith Reisman, *Kinsey, Crimes & Consequences* (2010), Dr. Judith Reisman, *Stolen Honor, Stolen Innocence* (2013) (henceforth cited as *SHSI*) and other resources available at drjudithreisman.com.

[3] See Reisman, *SHSI*, 276.

[4] “Kinsey received nudist magazines at the family home—certainly an interest in conflict with his public ‘conservative’ persona” (*SHSI*, 7). See Reisman’s books documenting Kinsey’s obsessive pornography use as well.

[5] Pornography is based on masturbation—viewers and performers—at most commerce in mutual masturbation.

[6] Michael Kirby, “Sexuality and Global Forces: Dr. Alfred Kinsey and the Supreme Court of the United States (Branigin Lecture)” *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 14.2 (Summer 2007): 485–508.

[7] *AIDS, Sexual Behavior and Intravenous Drug Use* (1989); “pre & post-Kinsey eras” at 79.

[8] Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998).

[9] At 160 and 161, Kinsey’s *Male* volume.

[10] See *SHSI*, 138.

[11] See the books and Youtube broadcasts listed in <http://www.drjudithreisman.com/broadcast.html>.

[12] Of Kinsey's untimely death: "A physician...labeled Kinsey's illness *orchitis*, pinpointing the testicles as the site of the infection." Orchitis is "marked by pain, swelling... usually due to gonorrhea, syphilis... [is] orchitis following trauma." "Trauma" defines Kinsey's violent masturbation habits. See Reisman, *SHSI* , 286.

[13] Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reports, "Crime in the United States 2017," with tables from the UCR Data Tool at <https://www.ucrdatatool.gov/>.

[14] Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Defining Deviancy Down," *American Scholar* 62, no. 1 (Winter 1993): 17.

[15] Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 135. (Emphasis added)

[16] Few child advocates understand how mainstream pornography legitimized and trafficked child pornography. This author's DoJ OJJDP study established that link and won a lawsuit brought by *Playboy*.

[17] North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), 1981.

[18] See the discussion of the Kinsey cover-up in my [books](#).

[19] 1950, Post-Kinsey, begins the shift to "science-based" law.

[20] 1950: Pre-Kinsey America followed the common law ideal.

[21] "Kinsey suggested using sexually explicit films for sex education 30 years before a group of Methodist ministers in San Francisco [The Institute for The Advanced Study of Human Sexuality (IASHS)] started *Sex Attitude Re-structuring* (SAR) in 1978" (M. Yaffe "Therapeutic Uses of Sexually Explicit Material," in M. Yaffe and E. C. Nelson, eds. *The Influence of Pornography on Behavior* [London: Academic Press, 1982], 119–50).

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FEATURE ARTICLE

The Second Year of Human Pregnancy: *In the Womb of the Family*

SUSAN WALDSTEIN

No, I am not advocating another twelve months of pregnancy for humans. Many women are so tired of pregnancy and all its aches and pains by the end of nine months that they are even ready to go through giving birth to end it. But I am suggesting, following the lead of Swiss zoologist Adolf Portmann and educator Maria Montessori, that humans are born a year too early. They are not at all as developed at birth as other higher mammals. Colts and calves can stand up and walk, albeit shakily, to their mothers within a few minutes of birth. They can find their mothers' nipples and begin to nurse all on their own. They are following the herd or frisking around the field and playing with the other young within a few hours. But humans are born as helpless as much lower animals like mice.[1]

Portmann discovered that mammals have two modes of infancy, corresponding to their rank or complexity. Lower mammals give birth to “nest-dwelling” babies, like mice and squirrels, while higher mammals give birth to “nest-fleeing” babies, like foals or elephants.[2]

Lower mammals such as mice, rabbits, marsupials, and many insectivores have very limited openness to the world and ability for self-direction. They have simpler brains and nervous systems and less flexible instincts than higher mammals. Many drivers have encountered the inflexibility of the rabbit's instinct for escape. They will run straight up a road in the headlight of a car for hundreds of feet without veering to the right or left, which would enable them to escape easily.

Lower mammals are born blind, naked, and helpless in large litters of 5–22 young. They are called “nest-dwelling” because their young are unable to move at birth. They depend on closeness to their mother for warmth. Their eyes and ears are sealed shut at birth and their brains need to grow to eight or ten times their birth size. At birth, they look like human embryos at twenty weeks. Nest-dwelling mammals have a very short gestation period of 20–30 days and only a few weeks of infancy. Mice are weaned at 3–4 weeks; rabbits at 4–5 weeks. They are already sexually mature at 2 to 5 months.[3]

The higher an animal, the richer its inner life and the more able it is to enter into relationships with what is outside it. Inner life grows in richness and intensity according to how many and

complex are the animal's sensations of the outer world and how elaborate a picture it can form of that world. More complex brains and nervous systems make this richer inner life possible. A powerful inner life also allows higher mammals to engage in an elaborate social life that includes such behaviors as courtship, parenting, and enforcement of a hierarchy.^[4]

Higher mammals usually have single or twin births. They are called “nest-fleeing” because their young are able to stand up, move about, and discover the world through their wide-open eyes and highly developed senses immediately after birth; their brains need to grow to only about twice their birth-size. They already have similar bodily proportions to adults and look like miniature adults. Their gestation period is much longer than nest-dwelling babies—from 11 months for horses to 22 months for elephants. They also have much longer periods of infancy before they are weaned. Horses are weaned at six months; elephants at 5–10 years. They have longer juvenile periods before they reach sexual maturity as well. Horses are two to four years old at sexual maturity; elephants are seventeen.[5]

Great apes like chimpanzees and gorillas follow the pattern of other higher mammals like horses, seals, whales, and lower primates. They are all nest-fleeing animals, as would be expected from their highly developed brains and nervous systems and their ability to learn and modify their behavior. They have long gestation periods: chimpanzees: eight-and-a-half months; and gorillas: nine months. Newborn primates are born with a great amount of independence and ability to move. Their eyes and ears are open, and they have immensely strong muscles in their arms and legs. They can cling to their mother even when she swings from branch to branch on tall trees. They can also clamber around, with great agility, often on their mothers. Their bodily proportions resemble adults; their brains are already half their adult mass.[6]

One would expect humans, because they have by far the richest inner life of animals, to follow the pattern of great apes. They should be born able to walk and speak and follow their family. They should be the most capable of nest-fleeing animals at birth; but quite the opposite is the case. They are born helpless as nest-dwelling animals like mice. Humans are a most peculiar mixture of helpless and alert, developed and undeveloped. Humans are usually born singly with open eyes and ears, eager to learn about the world like nest-fleeing babies, but unable to stand or move about or take care of themselves like nest-dwelling babies. Humans are twice as heavy at birth as great apes in order to accommodate brains that are also twice as heavy; yet the human infant's bodily proportions and tremendous rate of growth are typical of an embryo. Their heads are enormous in proportion to their tiny legs and arms and their brains still need to grow to four times the size they were at birth.[7]

One way to explain this mixture is that humans are born a year too early. At a year, human infants correspond to the stage of development of other higher mammals like foals and apes at birth. Many biologists suggest that the reason humans are born “too early” is the size of their skull compared to the woman's pelvis. Others suggest that a longer gestation would be too great a *metabolic burden on the mother*. Yet there may be profound metaphysical reasons for this “premature birth.” Humans are rational and free, the only creatures on earth that are persons. As persons, humans are made for truth and friendship. Neither of these can be learned in the womb. The second period of embryonic growth, then, takes place in the family, which Portmann calls the “social uterus.”

The peculiar first year, which we spend as helpless nest-dwellers, but with open eyes and alert senses in the community of the mother and other human beings, is in all its particulars attuned to the demands posed by the special development of our relationship to the world. The beginning of thought, the learning of language, the attainment of upright posture—all these

very special human characteristics are stamped on us in that decisive first year which, if we were merely mammals, we would have to spend in the mother's body. We can thus say that the growing human being is born out of the mother's body into a second uterus in which he traverses the second half of his embryonic life: this is the *social uterus*.

Humans need more than the nourishment and security of their mother's body to develop normally as humans. Their openness to the world, rooted in their rationality, requires more sensible stimulation; their need for loving friendship must be fed and formed through the mother-child bond; their thinking needs the help of the family to teach them language. Even the purely physical characteristic of upright posture will not develop without the encouragement of the family. The spine of the human embryo already begins its transformation to the specifically human shape necessary for upright posture in the second uterine month, yet the physical structure is not enough. The social help of the family is decisive. *Upright posture* is a spiritual as well as physical achievement just as language is. There are some documented cases of *feral children* who were raised by animals from infancy. When they were discovered, they walked on all fours and could only bark or grunt. Depending on the age when they were abandoned, they may never have learned to walk upright or speak.

Remarkably, Maria Montessori uses the same metaphor of a second embryonic period to describe the state of the human infant after birth.

Man seems to have two embryonic periods. One is pre-natal, like that of the animals; the other is post-natal and only man has this. The prolonged infancy of man separates him entirely from the animals, and this is the meaning we must give to it.[8]

Every other other animal is born with the instincts for the behavior of its species. It is the openness of man, because of his rationality, that causes him to need this second embryonic period. Every other species of animal has a fixed environment like fish in the oceans or polar bears in the frozen North to which it is suited; it has a particular type of movement such as swimming or flying or running; a particular food which it must eat to flourish; and very particular modes of courtship and social life. Only man has the ability to live and feel at home in every environment, from the Inuit in the Arctic snows to tribes in African jungles. Man can learn to eat many kinds of food and to speak many different languages. None of these are innate or given to man by his birth into a particular species.[9]

Philosopher Joseph Pieper also contrasts man's unique openness to the world with the restricted awareness of animals. Experiments show that animals cannot even notice things that do not immediately pertain to their biological life.

But not everything that an animal, as such, can perceive (because he has ears to hear and eyes to see) really belongs to the world of such an animal.... For example, ... the crow does not even recognize the *form of a resting grasshopper*, but is only prepared to sense moving things.... This selective milieu, then, to which the animal is completely suited, but in which the animal is also enclosed (so much that the boundary cannot be crossed...); this selective reality determined and bounded by the biological purpose of the individual or species is called an environment.[10]

This enclosure of every animal species in a particular environment differs from the openness to the world of humans because they have a mind. "By its nature, spirit (or intellection) is not

so much distinguished by its immateriality, as by something more primary: its ability to be in relation to the totality of being.”[11] Man’s lack of development at birth gives him a plasticity to adapt, correlating physical and mental growth to his environment. For example, there are many physical changes in the tongue and mouth to learn a particular language; there are physical skills needed to carry burdens on the head or to climb trees.

This adaptability of the child to its environment is very different from the adult’s relationship to his environment, as Montessori shows.

The child stands in a different relationship to the environment. We may admire an environment. We may remember an environment, but the child absorbs it into himself. He does not remember the things that he sees, but he forms with these things part of his psyche.[12]

The newborn child absorbs into itself and makes part of itself the language, climate, social customs, food, and religion of its family and society. French missionaries discovered a newborn infant abandoned by a stone-age tribe in Patagonia. They rescued and raised her. She became a typical contemporary French woman who spoke two European languages, studied biology at university, and was a practicing Catholic. Montessori comments, “In the space of eighteen years, she has passed in very truth from the stone age to the atomic era.”[13] The woman became an educated European Catholic rather than a primitive animist tribeswoman by her own astonishing “work” of absorption.

Children have a limited sensitive period for this absorption of language and culture. The ability of the child to fit into any place and time period and culture by absorbing it into his psyche diminishes quickly with age. The first two years of life are the most sensitive period for learning language and by the end of the sixth year children have lost much of their flexibility for absorbing a new culture.

Most human cultures have grasped the appropriate way to introduce the infant to his environment, namely to keep the infant closely bound to its mother, as she carries on her normal life. Babies should not be isolated after their first few weeks, but taken everywhere with their mother so that they will hear the language of their mother and experience her interactions with society. One of the advantages of nursing, according to Montessori, besides the strengthening of the mother-child bond, is that it almost forces the mother to take the child everywhere with her. Adults should give infants the opportunities to develop their independence step by step, the natural way, by absorption. They should be slowly and carefully introduced to the riches of their culture and taught to take care of themselves as soon as they show signs of readiness to acquire a new skill.[14]

Attachment parenting, as advocated by pediatrician William Sears and his wife Martha, as well as the *ecological breastfeeding* advocated by Sheila Kippley, fit in many ways with Portmann’s and Montessori’s idea of a postnatal embryonic period. The mother is urged to nurse her baby for at least two years, to wear him in a sling or other carrier, and to sleep with him. They argue that this special relationship with the mother is especially important not only for the first postnatal year, but for the first three years. Their deepest concern is the bonding of the mother and child, which they believe is the foundation for the child’s life-long emotional security and ability to form stable relationships. Portmann and Montessori would emphasize that it is not enough for the baby to be next to the mother all the time; the mother must be actively living her life in society and the world so that she naturally introduces her child to her language, her work, and the world.

The difference in development between higher mammals and humans continues through the whole of human life. The long childhood of humans before achieving sexual maturity, as well as the long period of old age, more than twice that of great apes, both contribute to the intellectual and moral development of the human person as well as to the passing on of culture.[15]

How long does it take for a child to develop compassion in its social relationships... to form values.... For our special kind of world experience, with its abundance of social relationships... it makes sense for the whole organism to have an extended juvenile period. The long period of childhood seems not simply a basic somatic situation but as something utterly in keeping with the world-open existence of humans.[16]

A lengthy adolescence requires wise mentors. Portmann reminds those who worry about having too many old people on earth that many of the greatest achievements of mankind have been the work of the aged. “Let us not forget that Sophocles wrote powerful plays when he was ninety years old, that Radetzky was eighty-two at the victory of Custoza...and that Titian completed his most compelling works when he was nearing one hundred.” [17] Wisdom is usually the fruit of a long, virtuous life, pondering the riches handed down to one from one’s predecessors. Human generation is not complete with producing a physical body; there must be spiritual generation as well, a passing on of human culture. Most obviously language but also art, science, and religion must be handed down from one generation to another. Here lies the importance of education, as Pope Pius XI points out:

The blessing of offspring, however, is not completed by the mere begetting of them, but something else must be added, namely the proper education of the offspring.... Now it is certain that both by the law of nature and of God this right and duty of educating their offspring belongs in the first place to those who began the work of nature by giving them birth, and they are indeed forbidden to leave unfinished this work and so expose it to certain ruin.

True human generation involves the spiritual and intellectual formation of a child as well as physical generation. Disregarding such formation leads to disaster. The first year of life is of the utmost importance in that spiritual formation. It must be a time of warmth, faithful attentive love, and a rich initiation into the language and culture of the family.

The first year of life or the second embryonic period of humans is a particularly strong sign of their unique way of being an animal. It corresponds to their rationality. “Constrained by environment and protected by instinct: simply and briefly, that is how we can describe the behavior of animals. In contrast, human behavior may be termed open to the world and possessed of freedom of choice.” Other higher mammals, as noted above, are born with highly developed bodies and instincts as soon as they are born. They are born into an environment and possess instincts for a way of life that corresponds only to that environment. They have no interest in knowledge or beauty for its own sake; they cannot even notice things before their eyes that have no bearing on their physical lives. Horses do not admire sunsets. Beasts have social instincts, but not friendship. In contrast, humans are born helpless but alert. They cannot discover the world and think about it in an ordered way or learn to behave in a truly human way—choosing what is good and beautiful, spurning what is bad and ugly—without the constant care of a family. Humans who are made for love can only learn about love in the second womb of the home.

The state of helplessness into which humans are born is a sign of our ontological dependence on God. It ensures that we begin our lives in the truth of our absolute insufficiency. We are reminded of our dependence whenever we see a baby. One of the most astonishing things about the Incarnation is that God chooses to become a helpless infant, first in the womb of his mother and then in the womb of the family. God himself depended on his parents to teach him to walk and talk in his second embryonic period. God chooses to stoop so low that He, the omnipotent, becomes powerless; He, Wisdom and Word, becomes ignorant, in his human intellect. God's act of humility is a profound act of mercy; He identifies with the objects of His mercy so powerfully that He takes on their deficiencies so that he can elevate them above what any heart could have conceived.

Susan Waldstein teaches theology at Franciscan University of Steubenville. Her area of special interest is the interface of theology and biology in such topics as evolution and hierarchy in nature.

[1] Adolf Portmann, *A Zoologist Looks at Humankind*, trans. Judith Schaeffer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 19–62. Hereafter cited as Portmann, 1990.

[2] Portmann, 1990, 20–49.

[3] *Ibid.*, 19–22.

[4] Adolf Portmann, *Animal Forms and Patterns: A Study of the Appearance of Animals* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 57–58.

[5] Portmann, 1990, 22–24.

[6] *Ibid.*, 24–31.

[7] *Ibid.*, 1990, 31–62.

[8] Maria Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, 4th ed., trans. Claude A. Claremont (Madras, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1963), 61.

[9] Maria Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, 1st ed., trans. Mario Montessori (Madras, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1949), 91–95.

[10] Joseph Pieper, “The Philosophical Act” in *Leisure the Basis of Culture* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine Press, 1998), 82–84.

[11] Joseph Pieper, “The Philosophical Act,” 85.

[12] Maria Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, 4th ed., 62–63.

[13] *Ibid.*, 59.

[14] Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, 4th ed., 105–09.

[15] Portmann, 1990, 142.

[16] *Ibid.*, 146–147.

[17] *Ibid.*, 146.

[18] *Ibid.*, 79.



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Issues in Family, Culture & Science

BOOK REVIEW

Last Days: Caring for the Terminally Ill

DAVID ALBERT JONES

Nicholas Tonti-Filippini, *About Bioethics: Volume 2—Caring for People who are Sick or Dying* (Connor Court Publishing Pty Ltd, 2013).

In the first volume of this series, which was concerned with theoretical foundations of bioethics, bioethicist Nicholas Tonti-Filippini criticised various attempts of other Catholic thinkers to present bioethics by appeal to pure reason alone within a culture in which religion is increasingly marginalised from public life. Instead, he argued, Catholics should be prepared to “participate in public debate openly as Christians rather than trying to engage in pure reason. I would suggest that we should be open about our faith because subterfuge is beneath our dignity and in any case, would only breed suspicion” (vol. 1, p. 61). Such exhortation would be vain if the author did not also attempt to show, by example, *how* a Catholic thinker might engage with specific ethical questions in a way that was both open about his or her faith perspective and which was addressed to a wider public audience and not only to his or her co-religionists.

In Volume 2 Tonti-Filippini shows how the approach he advocates can be applied to the ethics of caring for people who are sick or dying. This volume covers issues such as “Not for Resuscitation” orders (what in the United Kingdom would usually be called Do Not Attempt Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation, DNACPR); tube feeding and refusals of food and water; euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide; advanced and proxy decision making; and psychiatric interventions that alter personality.

How, in practise, does Tonti-Filippini approach these topics? The answer, at its most general, is by mixing reflection on philosophical and theological principles, attention to clinical detail and reflection on his own experience. By this is not meant the supposed raw unmediated experience and sense perceptions appealed to by philosophical empiricists. Tonti-Filippini rather mixes argument (and it is important that his approach involves appeal to reason and argument) with reflection on his own experience *as he understands it*, that is, reflection on his story which is a narrative involving others and involving faith.

Such an approach is particularly effective in Tonti-Filippini’s case because of the impressive

character of his own story. He is a man who is very ill, who has been near death many times, and who has been dependent on dialysis three times a week for the past twenty years. When he speaks of the experience of patients, he does so from the perspective of personal knowledge. This is best illustrated by example. When discussing the ways in which society often places further burdens on those who are ill and who require healthcare, Tonti-Filippini writes of how “for several years, until I objected, I received from my health insurer a letter that tells me how much it costs the fund to maintain my healthcare” (112).

Again, when discussing the issue of DNACPR, Tonti-Filippini writes of how,

recently, I suffered double pneumonia for which I was hospitalised including two days in intensive care. While there I was asked by a senior physician whether I would like not to be resuscitated in the event of a cardiac or respiratory arrest. At the time my breathing was machine-assisted, and I was in a state of acute distress and struggling to keep my oxygen saturation at a reasonable level. It was both confronting and demoralising to be asked that question, at a time of acute illness, implying as he did by his question that my plight might be hopeless... I was not really in a fit state at that time to manage his suggestion. Thankfully, I had previously completed some advice for end of life care... I referred him to that. (174)

Tonti-Filippini is aware that his experience is personal and in some respects unusual. His wife is a doctor and, due to his professional work as a bioethicist, he too is familiar with the working of a healthcare system more than many patients would be. He is also a practicing Catholic, thinking within a particular intellectual tradition and living within a particular faith community. He offers his reflective experience, therefore, not as one pretending to speak for everyone but as “an offering to be considered alongside the many other voices on these issues” (200).

It is where Tonti-Filippini draws on personal experience, together with philosophical and ethical reflection, that he is most persuasive. This is not to say that his discussion of other topics is without merit, but for this reader, at least, the greatest contribution of this book is the personal perspective the author brings to the discussion.

Tonti-Filippini’s interests shape the content of this volume. While it is ostensibly about “caring for people who are sick” and not only those who are dying (or whose sickness is life-threatening) most of the volume is in fact concerned with issues related to treatment and care at the end of life. The discussion of the ethics of mental healthcare (in chapter 4) felt like an extended digression and the volume contains very little discussion of, for example, the health needs of people with learning disabilities, or the genetic factors that cause disease and the ethical issues that are raised as it becomes possible to identify these factors. It is facile to criticise a book for what it does not contain, as it can always be said of any book that it does not cover this or that topic. My comment is intended only as a gentle forewarning for the potential reader. This volume is not about sickness in general but primarily concerned with sickness that might lead to death, though it also has a chapter about mental illness.

As there is a certain arbitrariness in the choice of topics treated in this volume so there is also

an unevenness in the way the topics are treated and the style of writing. This is not a monograph that has been conceived in advance and then written as a coherent whole. It is rather an amalgam drawn from work that Tonti-Filippini has done throughout his career in articles, talks, or reports. The chapters thus switch from philosophical analysis, to personal experience, to theological reflection, to lists of considerations as one might find in an official report or a code of practice. This material is not always well integrated and it is not transparent why items are included or neglected from various lists. Occasionally the lists even seem to contradict one another, for example, “intellectual disability” is listed as a category in the classification systems for mental illness (152) and on the next page is listed as a condition of a person who is “not to be considered as mentally ill” (153). There is no discussion of this discrepancy.

There is also unevenness in the level of the theological material so that, for example, the contrast of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas on the Holy Trinity (166) is overdrawn and would be difficult to justify from their writings.

This volume would no doubt have benefitted from a longer gestation and a more thorough reworking and restructuring of material. However, the compromises evident in its production are perhaps expressive of the situation and thus the perspective of the author, and it is this perspective that gives the volume its value. In any case, this volume is a great contribution to Catholic bioethics, one that I am sure I will use in teaching, will recommend to others, and will return to in my own reflections.

I would draw attention in particular to the excellent discussion of euthanasia and assisted suicide (95ff.) and especially the personal perspective (110–12) that completes that section. There is also a very well-balanced discussion of future care planning (140–47) which is illuminated further when Tonti-Filippini shares the instructions that he drew up to cover his own future care. Among the provisions is the following paragraph:

6. If I suffer from cognitive impairment to such an extent that I can no longer understand the purpose of haemodialysis and this is a cause of distress I would want effective, non-burdensome treatment and care that is reasonably available to be continued, but would not want haemodialysis to be persisted with, if that decision was acceptable to my senior available next of kin. (199)

What impressed me most about this provision was the subtlety of the qualifications, not only the clarity about why haemodialysis might become burdensome (which bears not a trace of lack of respect for life with cognitive impairment) but also the last qualification which shows concern for the impact of the decision on the next of kin. Thus Tonti-Filippini shows not only how one can care for people who are sick or dying but also how those who are sick or dying can care for those around them. He shows how such care *by* one who is sick involves, among other things, a determination to value one’s own life not less than it is valued by others.

David Albert Jones is Director of the Anscombe Bioethics Centre, Oxford; Research Fellow at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford; and Visiting Professor at St Mary’s University College, Twickenham.

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Issues in Family, Culture & Science

BOOK REVIEW

Trauma and the Body

LÉONIE CALDECOTT

Peter Levine, *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma* (North Atlantic Books, 1997).

Bessel Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma* (Penguin, 2014).

Trauma is a fact of life. It does not, however, have to be a life sentence. Not only can trauma be healed, but with appropriate guidance and support, it can be transformative.

With these positive words, Peter Levine, one of the most interesting somatic therapists of our time, introduced his book, *Waking the Tiger*, over twenty years ago. His method of treating trauma was originally based on animal observation. When an animal succumbs to a predator, and the fight or flight instinct has been of no avail, it goes limp. It plays dead, and the predator is lulled into a false sense of security. With a surge of energy, the prey now seizes one last chance to escape, just when the predator is least expecting it. Human beings, too, when overtaken by disaster, become immobilized. But we often remain stuck in that ‘felt sense’ (an important concept for Levine): the physical conviction of radical disempowerment. We never ‘discharge’ the energy from the experience of having been vulnerable. This tension, the experience of extreme vulnerability, may then affect us for years afterwards. Our ‘freeze’ response is never fully overcome. We are traumatised.

“Most trauma therapies,” writes Levine, “address the mind through talk, and the molecules of the mind with drugs. Both of these approaches can be of use. However trauma is not, will not, and can never be fully healed until we also address the essential role played by the body.”

Levine sees trauma in terms of physiological responses, and it is on this level that his practice, known as *Somatic Experiencing*, seeks to intervene. Rather than trying to convince the mind that you are safe, that danger is in the past, it seeks first to make you aware of what is happening in your body when it is still reacting to the trauma in the here and now. Through the body, Levine seeks to teach his clients to re-establish the calm and reassurance necessary to allow the primitive ‘reptilian’ part of the mind—which so powerfully affects the body—to

release its stranglehold.

Throughout more than five decades of trial and error, Levine has sought out what he calls the 'innate wisdom' of the body to heal the psyche and restore essential vitality to the human organism as a whole. While his theories may once have seemed far-fetched, modern neuroscience has begun to validate the intuitive approach of this early pioneer of the somatic method. Bessel van der Kolk, professor of psychiatry at the Boston University School of Medicine and founder of the Trauma Research Foundation, has described these developments in a comprehensive and readable way in his book *The Body Keeps the Score*.

Van der Kolk has been conducting research into post-traumatic stress since the 1970s, when he first worked with war veterans. He later began to work with children and young people, and thus became an expert not just in shock trauma (which is Levine's area of interest) but also developmental trauma. Van der Kolk's basic theory is that trauma symptoms are the effects of instability in the autonomic nervous system which has been disrupted. As such, stabilising the lives of patients with either PTSD or developmental affective disorders cannot be achieved through the mind alone. Just as the body exhibits symptoms of trauma—for instance, impaired heart or gut function—it likewise plays a pivotal role in breaking the cycle of stress and distress. Talking therapy has its uses (he speaks of the power of naming that which haunts us), but on its own, it can also be re-traumatising. This is because it brings before the traumatised person material which he is not equipped to deal with, precisely because his 'emotional brain' is not communicating properly with his 'reasoning brain'.

We possess two distinct forms of self-awareness: one that keeps track of the self across time and one that registers the self in the present moment. The first, our autobiographical self, creates connections among experiences and assembles them into a coherent story. This system is rooted in language. Our narratives change with the telling, as our perspective changes and as we incorporate new input.

The other system, moment-to-moment self-awareness, is based primarily in physical sensations; but if we feel safe and are not rushed, we can find words to communicate that experience as well. These two ways of knowing are localized in different parts of the brain that are largely disconnected from each other. Only the system devoted to self-awareness, which is based in the medial prefrontal cortex, can change the emotional brain. (Van der Kolk, 238)

The key to that self-awareness lies in re-educating the body, and thus 're-wiring' the brain. As someone who conducted the first studies on the effects of SSRIs—modern anti-depressant drugs, such as Prozac—on patients with PTSD, Van der Kolk is well-placed to situate the pharmacological contribution to the resources available for trauma sufferers. He believes that drugs have a role to play in rendering people more 'functional' in a crisis, but he is insistent that they cannot restore full human functionality as we would wish to see it. Drugs mask the real issues. And so he has dedicated himself to investigating alternative techniques, such as Peter Levine's. His interest is in treatments that stabilize the physiology of the trauma sufferer, increasing executive functioning and helping them to feel fully alert to the present, rather than trapped in the past. Yoga, EMDR (eye movement desensitization and re-processing) and neurofeedback all feature in the book, as do the role of sound, theatre and internal role-play as developed by family therapist Dr. Richard Schwartz.

If some or all of this strikes the reader as far-fetched or 'new-age', it is worth noting the

detailed research that Van der Kolk and his team have conducted on their effectiveness, using brain-imaging, for instance. Neurofeedback, for example, is taken seriously in the utilitarian world of sports medicine. Such therapies also acknowledge the importance of personal agency for long-term recovery. “Resilience is the product of agency: knowing that what you do can make a difference.” Or as Schwartz puts it: “If one accepts the basic idea that people have an innate drive toward nurturing their own health, this implies that, when people have chronic problems, something gets in the way of accessing inner resources. Recognizing this, the role of therapists is to collaborate rather than to teach, confront, or fill holes in your psyche” (Van der Kolk, 284).

The virtue of *The Body Keeps the Score* is that it gives a detailed picture of the new somatic approaches to trauma treatment from within the heart of the medical establishment. But there is a catch for those operating from within a Christian, or specifically Catholic, world-view: where somatic therapies touch on the spiritual realm, they tend to be overwhelmingly non-Christian. The debate about whether yoga is in some way ‘dangerous’ for Christians is not one I can engage with here, but there is a general question to be asked about how Christian therapists might approach therapies which bring the whole person, body, mind and soul, into the picture. To put it more positively: what might a Christian perspective bring to the somatically-based mix?[1]

In September 2018, the Catholic Psychotherapy Association issued a statement addressing the trauma that currently plagues the Church: our own *child abuse scandal*. In my view, there is an urgent need for Catholic mental health professionals to engage with the somatically-based therapeutic methods. We profess, after all, a deeply incarnational faith, which is based on the physical presence of God in our midst through the sacraments. It is into this very place of ‘safety’ that the appalling contradiction of clerical abuse has extended its manipulative fingers. We owe it to the victims to think deeply how to address, rather than perpetuate, this damage. It is possible that the insights of people like Van der Kolk and Levine have something to bring to the table when it comes to responding to the pope’s call to address the roots of what caused our own culture of abuse. When reading about the psychological and neurological paralysis of the trauma sufferer, I was put forcibly in mind of the healing of the paralytic: Jesus heals him not in an isolated context, but in the context of a ‘communio’ of care, as his friends literally take the roof off to access the necessary help.

It is this need for genuine community, the delicate network of trust, that perhaps needs to be addressed even within the therapeutic community. No human being has a God-like ability to heal other human beings. However much knowledge we possess, we are not omniscient, and even the best, most sensitive and insightful therapists will fail at times (Van der Kolk has had to face this himself, and in his book he shows self-awareness about, for example, the danger of voyeurism). One would hope that Christian therapists, familiar with the virtue of humility, would focus on the ultimate healer, Christ himself, in order to bring their patients into that place of genuine safety. They could take inspiration from Van der Kolk’s insistence on shifting the therapeutic ground from ‘sorting out’ a person’s trauma, back to something that is more in tune with Viktor Frankl’s logotherapeutic methods, which prioritise the dignity of the sufferer and put “the traumatic event into its proper place in the overall arc of one’s life” (Van Der Kolk, 224).

Perhaps we should see this work as part of the wider remit of Catholic social teaching. To take a more humane and holistic approach to trauma involves caring about the roots of human trauma, as well as its results. When it comes to those who carry this terrible burden in their very bodies, Van der Kolk is surely right to ask: “Who really knows them, loves them, and cares about them? Whom can they count on when they’re scared, when their babies are ill, or when

they are sick themselves?”

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

[1] A number of Christian therapists have touched on this already. For instance, the online magazine [Mind & Spirit](#), [Todd Hardin](#) and bloggers on [Mere Orthodoxy](#).

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BOOK REVIEW

Death and Dying in the Age of Autonomy

LESLEY RICE

Atul Gawande, *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014).

“For a clinician . . . nothing is more threatening to who you think you are than a patient with a problem you cannot solve” (8). Surgeon Atul Gawande places himself before *the* insoluble problem in *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*, an examination of aging and death and their transformation in the twentieth century. Adeptly weaving memoir and broad field research, Gawande explores the limits of his profession and the wider culture in the face of death and dying. The work unfolds in eight chapters whose progression conveys the paradox and the drama of aging in terms of the importance, and limits, of autonomy: “The Independent Self,” “Things Fall Apart,” “Dependence,” “Assistance,” “A Better Life,” “Letting Go,” “Hard Conversations,” and “Courage.” Chapter by chapter, Gawande chronicles his own growth as a physician and a man as he probes the inescapable end of every person from the double vantage point of a medical ethos that views death as failure and a culture that prefers not to think about it at all.

Aging and death, after all, call the independent self into question. Reviewing twentieth-century demographics, Gawande shows that this notion has never been so entrenched as it is today. As life expectancy increased in the United States, family sizes decreased, and what was formerly a demographic pyramid, with a large base of young children and a small peak of elderly people, is undergoing a “rectangularization” as medical care improves. Now 50-year-olds and five-year-olds are present in the same numbers, and in a little over a generation the over-80 set will likely roughly equal those under five. Tellingly, the residential distribution of this population has shifted significantly. In early twentieth-century America, 60% of those over 65 lived with a child; by 1975, that number was just 15%. Similar trends can be seen in Europe and even in Asia, where permitting the elderly to live alone has traditionally been regarded as a dereliction of duty. In 1945, most deaths in the U.S. happened at home; by the 1980s, only 17% did.

The son of immigrants from India, Gawande illustrates this cultural shift by way of examples from his own family, contrasting the last years of his wife’s grandmother, Alice Hobson, who died in her mid-eighties on the skilled nursing floor of a high-rise senior living facility in

suburban Virginia, with those of his own grandfather, Sitaram Gawande, a farmer in the village of Uti, three hundred miles from Mumbai. Sitaram, who lived with a son and his family, died at the age of 110 on his way to the courthouse to conduct some business. Although in the United States he, too, would likely have been confined to a nursing home at the end, Sitaram, embedded as he was in a wide network of lively family relations, maintained his habit of inspecting his fields every evening until he died. To be sure, Alice maintained a remarkably active life also, until two years before her death. But since she lived alone in her home, Alice had no immediate buffer to absorb the vagaries of a slowly failing body and mind. All her children could do was send her to the doctor and help her take the dramatic step—culturally normalized but nonetheless wrenching—of finding a new residence at the age of eighty-four. But a new residence is not the same as a new home, as Alice wistfully observed in her assisted living apartment.

Gawande takes stock of the disparity in the modern American and traditional Indian experiences of aging and death, noting, “Modernization did not demote the elderly. It demoted the family. It gave people—the young and the old—a way of life with more liberty and control, including the liberty to be less beholden to other generations” (22). In some respects, Gawande finds this praiseworthy. “There is arguably no better time in history to be old” (20), he says, when this means that an aging person can maintain his health so as to conduct his life as he sees fit, from his own home, for as long as possible. But medical advances and modern social mores aside, the human body does not support independent living forever. At the end of life as at the beginning, the body testifies poignantly to the perduring social nature of human beings, even if the strength of our middle years can cause us to forget it. We depend on help, ever more so as our strength and stability wane. And since a variety of socioeconomic factors make families less able or less disposed to be primary caregivers of aging relatives, other institutions have been drawn into the vacuum.

Gawande chronicles the advent of the modern nursing home, which developed at mid-century “more or less by accident” as social policy planners confronted the problem of poorhouses, filled persistently with frail, aging persons. During precisely this period hospitals were being built in unheard of numbers across the country, and medical breakthroughs changed their character dramatically: from places where the sick would be well-tended to places where the sick could reasonably expect to be cured. Social welfare agencies thought hospitals might be a good refuge for the aging and infirm poor as the poorhouses closed. But the infirmities of age were not something medicine could cure. Hospitals petitioned the government for relief, funds were granted, and separate nursing facilities were conceived. Not, however, conceived so much to facilitate the flourishing of these patients in their remaining years as to ease pressure on social institutions. “This place,” as Gawande says, “where half of us will typically spend a year or more of our lives was never truly made for us” (72).

The challenges of gathering a large number of frail persons of failing strength and health under one roof are immense and complex, to be sure. For a comparatively small staff to meet the basic requirements for the survival of a complicated and highly dependent group, a certain efficiency seems necessary. And the path to institutional efficiency often involves the sacrifice of the predilections, idiosyncrasies, intimacies, freedoms, and responsibilities that permit a patient to recognize his life as his own. In Gawande’s language, it is privacy and autonomy that easily fall by the wayside in a nursing home environment, because of the sheer time it takes to respect the different habits, preferences, and desires of particular persons. To create a manageable situation, differences among persons seem to have to be repressed. It takes time, after all, to dress or feed a person in the manner he likes—and even more time to make it possible for him to do the dressing or feeding himself. Hence the reluctance of the elderly to land in a facility where too often this time can’t or won’t be spared. The sacrifice is

countenanced by family members, even if they too are reluctant, because it seems to be the condition of securing the safety of their loved one. Gawande quotes a colleague of one of his interviewees: “We want autonomy for ourselves and safety for those we love” (106).

Some remarkable creativity has been deployed to bridge that disjunction at the institutional level. One of the most enjoyable and revealing features of *Being Mortal* is the series of interviews with a variety of reformers of the nursing home model, with which Gawande contextualizes his stories of particular elderly men and women seeking, and sometimes finding, an adequate home. Home is important because it is a place and an order in which a person can make decisions and bear responsibilities—in other words, can be himself. Gawande speaks with the founder of the first assisted living residence, which opened in Portland, Oregon, in the early 1980s. Here there were no “patients,” only “tenants,” and although the support services available were essentially the same as nursing homes provide, institutional regimentation and homogenization were avoided as staff retained the awareness that they were entering someone else’s order, someone else’s home. Greater freedom means greater risks, but tracking the health and satisfaction of the residents of the first facility revealed that physical and mental health was maintained or improved and satisfaction increased.

In one of the book’s few comic vignettes, Gawande also gets to know a doctor charged with the administration of a nursing home, who performed a different kind of institutional reform. Upon noticing the widespread depression at the facility, he addressed the problem—against the incredulous objections of other staff and the clear dictates of housing code—by introducing plants, dogs, cats, and a hundred birds into the premises. Where there is no life, put life, and you will find life. The effect on the residents was transformative as survival shifted to observation, engagement, and responsibility for these living, growing arrivals. Gawande frames this story effectively with a discussion of Josiah Royce’s “philosophy of loyalty,” the idea that central to human happiness is finding meaning outside of oneself.

As the subtitle signals, *Being Mortal* is not only about the human condition, as it plays out between the poles of dependence and independence in families and in the warp and woof of the social fabric, but also about the medical profession. An unwelcome role reversal in the final chapters of the book draws Gawande into deeper insights about a particular kind of interdependence: the doctor-patient relation he had been practicing for years. He and his parents, three doctors accustomed to problem-solving from a certain affective distance, find themselves suddenly, uncertainly facing his father’s slow-growing but ultimately fatal spinal cord tumor as a patient and next-of-kin. Now encountering the medical establishment on the receiving end, Gawande recalls an ethics paper assigned in medical school that defined two common but fragmented ways physicians exercise their authority: on the one hand, the “paternalistic model” in which the doctor makes all the decisions based on his expertise with minimal explanation to the patient and, on the other, the “informative model,” in which the physician makes himself merely a conduit of knowledge about treatment options and foreseeable consequences but leaves decision-making entirely in the patient’s hands. In his medical experience in the meantime, Gawande has come to recognize these two lopsided types as prevalent and sees tendencies toward “Dr. Informative” in his own habitual approach to patients. But in seeking care for his father, he meets a physician who represents the comparatively rare third type: the integrated “interpretive model” in which the physician listens to patients and offers guidance, on the basis both of his expertise and of their personal situation and priorities. Although Gawande sometimes tends in the direction of simply making patient autonomy the measure of end-of-life care, he presents a more complex relational task here. The interpretive physician, in attending to his patients’ desires, is not simply putting his skills at their service. “At some point,” he writes, “it becomes not only right but also necessary

for a doctor to deliberate with people on their larger goals, to even challenge them to rethink ill-considered priorities and beliefs.”

Without naming it, Gawande affords us a glimpse of the virtue of prudence in the example of the interpretive physician, a healing balm for a fragmented medical establishment. In accord with classical ethics, only the one faced with a decision—in this case, the patient—has the capacity and authority to render a prudential judgment about how to proceed, but he can be *helped* in this by another prudent man, a friend who will take his part without losing sight of the good—in this case, his doctor. Patient autonomy and physician’s authority both take on a new cast here, as they meet in mutual subordination to something deeper than wishes and information. No small measure of courage is required of the aging person, his physicians, and his family members, if they are to face their circumstances in this way. Gawande offers numerous accounts of situations in which physicians, himself included, take the easy way out in communications with patients nearing death and watch unsatisfying consequences ensue. But in following the work of a hospice nurse, he learns the value of facing the realities of finitude together through hard conversations and some practical ways of actually conducting these, both as a physician and as a family member.

In *Being Mortal* Gawande has woven a rich tapestry, complex and coherent, portraying a range of paradoxes and polarities that profoundly shape human life, coming to particular expression at its close. As dramas of dependence and initiative, safety and freedom, survival and meaning play themselves out in persons, families, and institutions, we see how deeply social the human person is, how reliant he is on what is beyond himself for his sense of identity as well as for his simple sustenance. The most serious weakness of the book is that Gawande couches his perceptive depiction of interdependence in terms of autonomy and privacy, borrowing Ronald Dworkin’s idea that “autonomy makes each of us responsible for shaping his own life according to some coherent and distinctive sense of character, conviction, and interest. It allows us to lead our own lives rather than be led along them, so that each of us can be, to the extent that such a scheme of rights can make this possible, what he has made himself.” Gawande’s misapprehension of autonomy tends to obscure the possibility that it could be good, truly human, to be led—that, as important as freedom and responsibility are, self-abandonment need not be self-alienation. This mistake leaves him open to, though not enthusiastic about, assisted suicide. It is left to other writers to show that the tension between autonomy and the ultimate “letting go” finds its final resolution in the *dialogical* character of our ineluctable death, expressed in the words the Church gives us to pray each night: “Into your hands, Lord, I commend my spirit” (Lk 23:46). “Now you let your servant go in peace, your word has been fulfilled” (Lk 2:29).

Lesley Rice is a doctoral candidate at the John Paul II Institute for Studies for Marriage and Family in Washington, DC.



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The Wound in the Depths of Every Heart

JEAN VANIER

*The following is an excerpt from Jean Vanier's **Man and Woman, God Made Them** (Paulist Press, 2008), 12–14. We reprint it here with the kind permission of Darton, Longman and Todd, Ltd. Read more about Jean Vanier's life's work with the L'Arche communities in our **The Ability of Disability** issue.*

I remember a meeting at l'Arche to discuss a man who had been severely rejected by his family and who was quite disturbed. Dr. Franko, the psychiatrist of our community at that time, said of him: 'He feels guilty for existing.' So many of the men and women we welcome into l'Arche have been considered to be difficult and unbearable by their families (and often they have been). They have been treated only in negative terms, as 'deficient', 'handicapped'. It is not surprising they feel guilty, responsible for the tears and anguish of their parents. It is not surprising that they have cut themselves off from their hearts; they have suffered too much. They cannot bear the pain any more.

This deep wound of the heart is the source of their bizarre behaviour, whether aggressive or depressive. Not having been recognized as true human beings, capable of growth, they can have difficulty forming a true relationship with another. Some have always been considered by others as an object and so will consider others as objects; they cannot imagine that they are capable of giving life and happiness to another. In order to live they must make the transition from a negative self-image to a positive image, from a feeling of being without value to a feeling of being valued. Who will help them make this transition?

In the heart of every child is a void which can be filled only by an infinite love. This is the glory and the tragedy of humankind. St Augustine's words, 'My heart is restless until it rests in God', apply to each and every human being.

This inner fragmentation is not restricted to people who have an intellectual disability. It can

be found in all hurt and unwanted children, children who feel they are a burden. These, too, must protect themselves from unbearable pain. I remember a prisoner, condemned for kidnapping a child, telling me that his mother had told him when he was eight years old: 'If the contraceptives had worked, you would not be here today.'

Symptoms of depression are often found, not only in such children, but also in people who are scorned because of their race, their poverty, or their inabilities.

It becomes clearer and clearer to me each day, however, that these same wounds are found, though to a lesser degree, in the hearts of *all* children. Every child, at one time or another, has felt more or less let down by their parents, unloved, unappreciated and even rejected. Parents go through periods of depression; they are taken up by their own problems and needs and do not give adequate attention to caring for their child. The heart of a child is so vulnerable and sensitive! Often these wounds remain in the unconscious, producing difficulties in future relationships and even in the use of one's sexuality.

Most children have the inner strength and outer competencies to react to feelings of rejection; they have the strength and ability to separate themselves from their parents. Persons with disabilities, on the other hand, who may have certain strengths or other outward competences, may feel very lost in the face of rejection and tend to withdraw into a form of 'non-life' or profound despair. Their barriers are less developed than in other children whose defence mechanisms are more solid, strengthened by their inner power. That is why many with disabilities let down their barriers more quickly when they are offered an authentic relationship.

It seems evident, however, to anyone who is in contact with different kinds of families, united or divided, with whatever kind of parents, over-protective or unloving or very present and loving—that a wounded heart is not produced in a child only by their parents' attitudes. Even the most marvellous parents can never fulfil every hope and need in the child. They are able to love their child, but they are not able to ensure that the child's heart will itself be loving. Certainly in children, there is great innocence and beauty but, regardless of all the qualities of their parents, there are also all kinds of fear, fragility and egotism. In the heart of every child is a void which can be filled only by an infinite love. This is the glory and the tragedy of humankind. St Augustine's words, 'My heart is restless until it rests in God', apply to each and every human being. The wounded heart of every child, with its fears and selfishness, comes from an awareness—more or less conscious—of this emptiness deep within our being which we desperately try to fill, but which we find nothing can totally satisfy. This void is a source of inner anguish but, if the child has even a minimum of confidence, this anguish can become a driving force towards a search for commitment to others and truth.

Christian doctrine on the wounded heart, or original sin, appears to me the one reality which is easily verified. It would be an error to believe that if there were not oppressive parents, if there was no oppressive society, then we would have only beautiful, loving, happy children integrated within themselves. No, in the heart of each of us there are divisions, fears and fragility; there is a defense system which protects our vulnerability, there is flight from pain and there is darkness. However, children who live in a loving relationship which helps and truly gives them support, will find hope and trust more easily to go forward in the search for true fulfilment.

Jean Vanier is a philosopher, writer, religious and moral leader and the founder of two major international community-based organizations for people with intellectual disabilities, L'Arche and Faith & Light.

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