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Vol. 5

Between the Culture of the Right
to Responsible Parenthood
and the Culture
of the “New” Human Rights:
Reproductive and Sexual (I)



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Between the Culture of the Right
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Reproductive and Sexual (I)

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Contents

Part One Philosophy

Marian Machinek Reproductive Rights versus the Christian Culture of the Body. Two Different Perspectives	7
Marek Petro Encyclical Letter <i>Humanae Vitae</i> in the Course of Time	23
John P. Hittinger John Paul II on <i>Humanae Vitae</i> and the Priority of Ethics over Technology . . .	35
Aneta Gawkowska <i>Humanae Vitae</i> , Women's Rights, and Responsible Parenthood	69
Mariusz Wojewoda The Problem of Responsible Parenthood in the Axiological Perspective. Analysis Inspired by the Encyclical Paul VI <i>Humane Vitae</i>	83
Krzysztof Wieczorek A Child is a Human Being Now. Responsible Parenthood in the Light of Janusz Korczak's Pedagogy	97

Part Two
Reviews

John C. Gallagher, <i>A New Dawn, or the Fading of the Light? Culture and Evangelization Today</i> — John P. Hittinger	121
Maciej Woźniczka, Marek Perek, <i>Toposy (w) filozofii. Filozofia i jej miejsce w doświadczeniu kulturowym</i> — Marek Rembierz	125
Maciej Woźniczka, Marek Perek, <i>Apokryficzność (w) filozofii. Nie/anty/pozaortodoksyjne dyskursy filozoficzne</i> — Marek Rembierz	133
Notes on Contributors	139

Part One

Philosophy



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Reproductive Rights versus the Christian Culture of the Body Two Different Perspectives

Abstract: The comparison between the concept of sexual and reproductive rights and the idea of gender and the Christian culture of the body with its personalist anthropology reveals their essential differences. The concept of reproductive rights is permeated with individualism, where sex identity can be freely defined, and sexual activities of individuals—provided that they stay within the boundaries of law—are not subjected to any moral norms. The main point of the disagreement between the concept of reproductive rights and the Christian culture of the body concerns the meaning of human corporeality. For the former, human body is, in a certain way, an ‘outside’ of the self-determining subject. According to the latter view, human body participates in man’s dignity as his constituent dimension. Another difference revolves around the meaning of sexual activity. Efforts to force implementation of sexual and reproductive rights, along with gender informed law and culture, are dangerous to the fundamental group unit of society—the family—based on the marriage between man and woman.

Key words: human rights, reproductive and sexual rights, Christian culture of the body, encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, gender, personalistic concept of person

Introduction

In 2018, there were numerous celebrations marking the anniversaries of promulgation of three momentous documents, which are of interest to this paper. Seventy years ago, in 1948, the United Nations proclaimed a milestone docu-

ment in the modern history of our civilization: Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Its signatories called it the reaction of the outraged “conscience of mankind” to the barbarous acts committed during the Second World War, ended barely three years before.¹ The Declaration has become the springboard and the point of reference for various later initiatives addressing basic human rights.

Twenty years later, in 1968, the public heard about two other extremely important documents. First, the Proclamation of Teheran, passed as the Final Act of the First International Conference on Human Rights, organized by the United Nations in Teheran.² Its nineteen articles aspired to demonstrate the importance of human rights and give them necessary prominence in the lives of individuals and societies. The *Proclamation* reflects twenty years of lively discussions on human rights, and foreshadows later disagreements over their interpretations and efforts to work out further details. The third document of interest to us, proclaimed in the same memorable year 1968, was the encyclical by Pope Paul VI: *Humanae Vitae (Of Human Life)*, subtitled: *On the Regulation of Birth*.³ No other Church document of the last century caused such fierce controversies, triggered by its refusal to accept artificial methods of birth control. It came less than ten years after the invention of a contraceptive pill,⁴ and it was immediately labelled as an attack on modernity, social advance, and the progress of medical science. It was precisely what this paper calls *the Christian culture of the body*, that found its expression in pope’s arguments for the defence of the carnal and spiritual integrity of man in matters related to his sex, sexuality, and procreation, and his relevant moral obligations. Papal stance was in an opposition to the anthropological concept of man, on which present-day demands for the affirmation of the reproductive and sexual rights of minorities are based.

The objectives of this article are to identify and discuss some of the anthropological and ideological origins of the theory of sexual and reproductive rights, compare this theory with the Christian notion of the culture of the body, and demonstrate the most contested differences between these two concepts.

¹ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly at its third session on December 10, 1948, in Paris, in France.

² The Conference met from 22 April to 13 May 1968.

³ The encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, written by Paul VI, was promulgated on 25 July 1968.

⁴ The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the birth control pill for contraceptive use in 1960.

An Important Redefinition of Terms

The perusal of various papal documents and pronouncements, starting with *Rerum Novarum* by Leo XIII (1891), can create an impression that the advocacy of human rights has been the common concern of the Catholic Church and international community for decades. Later popes—John XXII in *Pacem in Terris* (1963), Paul VI in his address to the United Nations General Assembly in 1965, and John Paul II in his encyclical letters *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), *Laborem Exercens* (1981), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987) and *Centesimus Annus* (1991), and his numerous speeches and addresses—pledged Church’s support for activities defending and promoting human rights, abandoning her previous reserve, caused by their antireligious and anticlerical overtones, inherited from the French Revolution.⁵ Whence does the dissonance between the numerous UN endorsed programs for the recognition of certain individual claims as human rights (especially those concerning sexual and reproductive rights), and the teaching of the Catholic Church, come from? What makes some people see her as the opponent of human rights? In an attempt to answer these troubling questions, let us first briefly examine the evolution of the idea of human rights. Reading the Universal Declaration of Human Rights one cannot fail to recognize their origins. They are all firmly anchored in man’s rational nature. Every human being has human rights; he is born with them and he dies with them. He never forfeits them. They are inherent and irrevocable. As such, they are not dependent on any official, formal consent of any human authority. They do not need it to exist and be valid. Thus says the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on family: “Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights [...]. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State” (Article 16).⁶ Similarly, the Proclamation of Teheran: “The protection of the family and of the child remains the concern of the international community. Parents have a basic human right to determine freely and responsibly the number and the spacing of their children” (Article 16).⁷ The rights of parents concerning their procreative

⁵ See: Jerzy Gocko, “O prawach człowieka i niektórych kontrowersjach z nimi związanych,” in *Prawa człowieka. W 60. rocznicę uchwalenia Powszechnej Deklaracji Praw Człowieka – przesłanie moralne Kościoła*, ed. Krzysztof Jeżyński and Tadeusz Zadykiewicz (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2010), 40–42.

⁶ Powszechna Deklaracja Praw Człowieka, http://www.unesco.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Powszechna_Deklaracja_Praw_Czlowieka.pdf, accessed January 30, 2019.

⁷ Proclamation of Teheran, Final Act of the International Conference on Human Rights, Teheran, <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/instree/12ptichr.htm>, accessed January 30, 2019.

decisions, formulated as in the quoted texts, are clear. At this level of generality, they are in concord with the Catholic vision of marriage and family.

A shift in understanding human rights in relation to man's sexuality became visible in the 1960s, with the appearance of the idea of "reproductive health" in publications relating to gynecology and birth control.⁸ The latter term was originally meant for programs of control and reduction of the global birth rate. It is present in documents produced by international conferences on women⁹ and global population.¹⁰ Focus on health related rights, including protection of "reproductive health," led to the formulation of the term: "reproductive rights." Both names are today closely related and dependent on each other for their definitions.

The International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt, in 1994 laid a great stress on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. There was a strong lobbying for access to contraception and abortion as the important element of reproductive health and reproductive rights, a redefinition of marriage, and granting equal marriage rights to all kinds of unions. The draft of the final document prompted a strong reaction from the Vatican. Pope John Paul II sent a letter to the heads of states participating in the conference, expressing his great concern about plans for pushing ahead with making right to unlimited abortion into law, and protesting against a "lifestyle typical of certain fringes within developed societies, which are materially rich and secularised."¹¹ In the final document of the conference, there is a passage disclaiming abortion as a method of birth control, and recommending States to devise means to assist women in avoiding recourse to abortion.¹² But the term *reproductive health* was broadened to include not only concern for woman's health before and during pregnancy, but her general sexual well-being too. The latter meant access to legal methods of birth control; in fact, to contraceptives and abortion.¹³

⁸ Bioethics Reflection Group of COMECE, 2010, "The Term 'Sexual and Reproductive Health' and Its Meaning at International and European Levels," in *Science & Ethics. Collection of Opinions Prepared by the Bioethical Reflection Group* (CEMECE: Brussels, 2012).

⁹ The first international conferences on women were organised in Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980), and Nairobi (1985).

¹⁰ The first international conferences of this type were organized in Bucharest (1974) and Mexico (1984). See: Janusz Balicki, "Globalna polityka ludnościowa. Konflikt Północ – Południe," *Saeculum Christianum* 7(2) (2000): 221–224.

¹¹ John Paul II, 1994, "The International Community. List do Głównych Państw na Międzynarodową Konferencję na temat Zaludnienia i Rozwoju w Kairze," March 19, in *Posoborowe Dokumenty Kościoła katolickiego o małżeństwie i rodzinie*, Vol. II, ed. Kazimierz Lubowicki (Kraków: Wydawnictwo M, 1999), 107.

¹² Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo September 5–13, 1994, No. 7.24, accessed January 30, 2019, http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/events/pdf/expert/27/SupportingDocuments/A_CONF.171_13_Rev.1.pdf.

¹³ Cf. Marian Pokrywka, "Prawa reprodukcyjne," in *Prawa człowieka. W 60. rocznicę uchwalenia Powszechnej Deklaracji Prawa Człowieka – przesłanie moralne Kościoła*, ed. Krzysztof Jeżyna and Tadeusz Zadykowicz (Wydawnictwo KUL: Lublin, 2010), 120–122.

The Fourth World Conference on Women: “Action for Equality, Development and Peace” in 1995 in Beijing, in China, took another step forward by planting the ideas of reproductive health and reproductive rights firmly into the public conscience. Its final documents—the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action—state in numerous passages that health and reproductive rights are parts of universal human rights.¹⁴ The Platform for Action lists “unsafe abortions” as one of the threats to sexual and reproductive health.¹⁵ Though it reiterates the recommendation of the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994) that abortion should not be promoted as a method of family planning, and condemns induced abortion, it urges the governments of the countries where abortion is legal to make it accessible and safe.¹⁶ Here is the catch: abortion is safe only if it is legal. So, to make it safe, it must be made legal first.

The Conference in Beijing made another important inroad into public and legislative discourse on reproductive rights by inserting into it a certain key concept: “gender-based identity.” The term appeared for the first time in the late 1960s.¹⁷ It can be seen as the anthropological basis for sexual and reproductive rights. It postulates precedence of culturally conditioned gender over biologically determined sex. Though the latter remains the starting point for every human being, it never rises to a status of a normative reference point. Today, every reflection on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights must demonstrate sensitivity to gender-related issues. It must be gender-sensitive.¹⁸

In the last twenty years, reproductive rights and gender-based perspectives have been frequently evoked in many international documents, recommendations, political agendas, and legal acts. Their acolytes want them to be accepted as imperatives in all matters related to parenthood; and they want it on the global scale. The gap between partisans of this process and defenders of the Christian culture of the body and the teaching of the Catholic Church, is growing wider. It should be said though that the terms themselves are by no means the cause of this lamentable state of affairs. There would be no major disagreements between modern movements for the advocacy of human rights and the Christian under-

¹⁴ “IV Światowa Konferencja w sprawie Kobiet, Platforma Działania” No. 95, http://www.tus.org.pl/uploads/dokumenty/raport_czwartej_swiatowej_konferencji_w_sprawie_kobiet_pekin_1995.pdf, accessed January 30, 2019.

¹⁵ Ibid., No. 93, 106 (j), 109 (i).

¹⁶ Ibid., No. 106 (k).

¹⁷ Robert J. Stoller, an American psychiatrist, is credited with the introduction of the term *gender* into the academia. See: Robert J. Stoller, *Sex and Gender. On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity* (New York: Carnak Books, 1968).

¹⁸ “IV Światowa Konferencja w sprawie Kobiet, Platforma Działania,” No. 107. Often enough attempts are made to reduce gender-based approach to justified claims for social equality of men and women. Nevertheless, it is difficult to use *gender* merely as a symbol of feminist postulates, with no regard for the biological sex and the concept of man.

standing of those rights, if reproductive rights meant, for all interested parties, freedom from external pressure and responsible sexual activities aiming at conception of a child. Undoubtedly, the concept of *gender* does correctly recognize some cultural determinants. The teaching of the Catholic Church acknowledges it. The problem stems from ideologically driven narrowing of their definitions and forging them into weapons for redefining marriage, universal acceptance of contraceptives and unlimited right to abortion.

Anthropological Difference between the Doctrine of Sexual and Reproductive Rights and the Christian Culture of the Body

At the core of the anthropological difference mentioned above are entirely different visions of man, represented by the opposing doctrines. The Church's view was succinctly expressed in the reservations of the Holy See to the resolutions of the Cairo Conference (1994):

With reference to the terms “sexual health,” “sexual rights,” “reproductive health” and “reproductive rights,” the Holy See considers them essential to the all-encompassing (holistic) understanding of health; they refer—each in its own way—to the entire human person: his or her identity, mind and body. They aid sexual maturity and reciprocal love and shared decision-making, that is, the qualities that make marital relationships in harmony with moral precepts.¹⁹

What is at stake is not an obscure legal ruling, or one or another particular aspect of private or social life, but the very vision of man.

Shift towards Individualism

The concept of sexual and reproductive rights reflects the opinions that people are totally free in shaping their sexual identities. It lays great stress on self-determination, to which moral autonomy is crucial—the notion central to

¹⁹ “Zastrzeżenia Stolicy Apostolskiej,” *L'Osservatore Romano* (Pl) 15(11) (1994): 48 [Trans. M.M.].

every anthropology. In the context of the Christian culture of the body, moral autonomy represents the ability to perform moral discernments and follow their conclusions (knowing good from evil). As one of the constituent parts of human dignity, moral autonomy calls for legal frameworks protecting that dignity from hostile forces. That is what human rights are, actually. The doctrine of sexual and reproductive rights leans in the direction of granting an absolute primacy to individual freedom. Towering over everything else, individual freedom no longer *recognizes* good, but *defines* it autocratically.

Studying the history of the movements for the protection of human rights, and their use of the terms *reproductive health* and *reproductive rights*, one can notice the moment when a significant shift towards individualism occurred. Initially, their adherents used to employ them in the context of marriage and family, or couples. Later, they turned their attention to individual rights, especially women's rights. Parenthood ceased to be viewed as shared responsibility of couples in favor of individual projects of men or women.

That shift is present in the probably most contended issue: "The right to abortion," treated as an element of the reproductive health and the right of women to self-determination. In many countries where abortion was permissible, but regarded against the law, it was exempted from punishment because of exceptional circumstances of pregnant women. Such policy was expected to kill two birds with one stone: Satisfy the need for legal condemnation for killing the unborn child, and express sympathy with the postulates to accord pregnant women exclusive responsibility for their children. For instance, abortion in Germany is against the law, but not punishable (*rechtswidrig aber straffrei*).²⁰ Right to abortion is no longer a concession, but the valid part of reproductive rights, closely linked to the fundamental human rights. Gone is the moral iniquity of abortion, expelled by the woman's right to make sovereign decisions about life and death of the child in her womb. This is bound to generate serious social consequences. For instance, for health professionals. Today, no physician or other health professional may be compelled to perform an abortion. But, if the right to abortion becomes part of reproductive rights and—by extension—human rights, every physician refusing to perform it can be accused of violation of human rights. In legal practice, it is comparable to the use of torture, or other forms of cruel treatment. In some European countries, doctors refusing abortion²¹ already experience many problems caused by the doctrine of sexual and reproductive rights.

The Christian culture of the body is based on the personalist view of the human person. It acknowledges the importance of self-determination as person's

²⁰ See: Bundesministerium für Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz, *Strafgesetzbuch (StGB) § 218–218a*, https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/stgb/___218.html, accessed January 31, 2019.

²¹ Cf. Bogdan Chazan, *Prawo do życia. Bez kompromisu*. Interview with Maciej Müller (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2014).

potentiality and moral obligation. But, it places itself in the context of the relationship. The relational dimension of man is as fundamental as his autonomy.²² The right to self-determination, in the context of sexuality and reproduction, is not viewed simply as the freedom to self-expression, restricted only by law, and not by any other natural or objective moral norms, whatever the interpretation of the latter. In the context of the Christian culture of the body, procreative issues are always considered in the light of the shared responsibility of the married couple. Marriage is essential for establishing strong and stable bonds between parents, creating environments that are conducive to the proper upbringing of their offspring. Such environments cannot be regarded as individual projects of autonomous persons, but as the expression of the shared responsibility of the couples and the fruits of their reciprocal love. In Christianity, we do not talk of *reproduction* (that is, satisfying one's sexual needs), but *procreation* (that is, passing on life as the fruit of the conjugal love). There is no "right to child" that could be made into an element of reproductive rights, simply because no human being can be the object of the rights of another human being. If reproductive rights may be mentioned in the context of the Christian culture of the body at all, it could be only in reference to the right of parents to decide the number and spacing of their children.²³ When talking about rights of parents we must not forget about their responsibilities for the life of their child. Direct abortion is the negation of child's fundamental human right to life. Obviously then, it cannot be accepted as an element of reproductive rights.

The Meaning of the Human Corporeality

The emphasis on individual preferences in the doctrine of reproductive rights is what makes it so incompatible with the Christian culture of the body. Both concepts understand human corporeality differently. One may have an impression that the anthropological concept, on which the doctrine of sexual and reproductive rights rests, is tinted with the anthropological dualism. The essence of manhood seem to consist of the self-determining human mind, to which corporeality is something quite external: an object that can be used; a service life that can be made use of; a plastic structure that can be molded at will. It is very clear in the gender concept of human sexuality as the product of culture. According to gender-driven view of human history, culture used to be employed

²² See: Elvio Sgreccia, *Personalist bioethics. Foundations and Applications* (Philadelphia: NCBC, 2012), 384–387.

²³ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World of the Second Vatican Council calls parents "cooperators with the love of God the Creator." They are the interpreters of that love and they have the exclusive right to decide the number and spacing of their children (*Gaudium et Spes*, 50).

as the rigid frame for sexual identity, imposed indiscriminately on every newborn person. Modern, liberal societies should remove those restrictions and allow autonomous subjects freely shape their own sexual self-expression. Sexual orientation and sexual identity²⁴ are culturally conditioned and can be freely shaped, or changed, according to subject's personal preferences. Hence the drive to change law to validate the object-oriented attitude to human body and make it a lawful element of the proposed sexual and reproductive rights.

The Christian culture of the body perceives corporeality from a completely different perspective. Human person is regarded as the unity of body and spirit. Both components, body and spirit, are irreducible in their interrelation. Human person is "anima et corpore unus," in the words of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council.²⁵ The Christian perspective on person goes far beyond monism (which reduces man to one of his constituent parts, usually to the material one; like, for instance, in naturalism), and dualism (which acknowledges irreducible qualities of body and spirit, but does not recognize their unity—only a very loose relationship). The crucial thing is that human body participates in the dignity of person. Thus, it cannot be an object of manipulation.²⁶

Sexual Activities and Procreation

Different views on corporeality prompt an inquiry into the relationship between sexuality and procreation. The doctrine of reproductive rights does not pay much attention to this issue. It is concerned only about their biological interdependence, important solely in the context of reproductive health. That interdependence in itself does not have any deeper meaning. Of course, self-determining persons, using their bodies to their own ends, can give it some other meanings. Sexual encounter is simply the realization of one's sexual needs, and his body a means to achieve that end. It follows that any interference with fertility (like

²⁴ Both terms are key concepts in the gender ideology. They refer to *deeply felt experience* of one's corporeality and sex and the intensity of affectional, emotional, and sexual attraction to individuals of the same or opposite sex, entering into sexual relationships with them. The above definitions come from the Preamble to the Yogyakarta Principles, a list of claims to legislators composed in an Indonesian city of Yogyakarta in 2006 by a group of experts and activists interested in the rights of sexual minorities. See: https://www.kph.org.pl/publikacje/b-y_zasady.pdf, accessed January 15, 2014.

²⁵ *Gaudium et Spes*, 14.

²⁶ Cf. Jarosław Kupczak, *Teologiczna semantyka płci* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2013), 27–54. For more on corporeality from the Christian perspective of man as the unity of body and spirit, see: Marian Machinek, "Zur Kontroverse über die normative Dimension der menschlichen Leiblichkeit," *Studia Nauk Teologicznych* 8 (2013): 185–193.

artificial contraception and abortion), ensuring as free and comfortable realization of one's sexual and reproductive needs as possible, is permissible.

This position reflects a profound cultural change caused by the application of the theory of evolution to the philosophical anthropology. One of the key premises in the theory of evolution is the concept of accident. When employed to explain man's corporeality and his biological sex, it is argued that the latter is the result of accidental evolutionary changes. Biological sex cannot be endowed with any deeper moral meaning. It follows that it is wrong to view corporeality as a reference point for moral discernment and moral conduct. Human nature—what people call it—is a vehicle, subject to changes, for the articulation of culturally conditioned social roles and models of behavior. Since both social roles and social models of behavior are culturally constructed, they must be in the same way deconstructed, reduced to their constituent parts, reinterpreted and reconstructed again, so that they fulfil the expectations of the self-determining persons. To achieve these objectives, popular perception of biological sex and sexuality must be changed first. When this process is on the way, the time will come for the entire social structures to undergo comprehensive deconstruction and reconstruction operations, so that they cease to obstruct the rights of individuals to materialize their sexual needs and preferences.²⁷

The Christian culture of the body proposes an opposite perspective on human sexuality and biological sex. Because man is the unity of body and spirit, he exercises his freedom within his corporal nature. His sexuality is an asset to be used wisely and responsibly. It is both a gift and a task. As Karol Wojtyła puts it in his book *Love and Responsibility*, human body has a certain nuptial quality: its biological processes were created to express love.²⁸ Sexuality affects man so deeply that when he makes a decision to engage in a sexual activity, he makes a decision about the person.²⁹

According to the Christian perspective on biological sex, sexual education should not be limited to the presentation of the anatomy and functions of reproductive organs. Neither should it be part of the fight for unlimited access to contraceptives and instruction lessons on how to use them. Its objective should rather be an introduction into the *grammar* of that special language: sexual act. Sexual encounter preserves its full meaning if it happens in the context of complete reciprocity of the spouses and respects and protects—not artificially

²⁷ See: Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz, *Frau – Männin – Mensch. Zwischen Feminismus und Gender* (Kevelaer: Butzon & Berker, 2009), 165–167.

²⁸ Karol Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność* (Lublin: TN KUL, 2001), 203, ft. 69.

²⁹ For more on the role of biological sex in the Christian concept of person, see: Karolina Korobczenko, "Ideologia gender a 'osobotwórcza' funkcja ciała i płci w teologii Jana Pawła II," in *Idea gender jako wyzwanie dla teologii*, ed. Anroni Jucewicz and Marian Machinek (Olsztyn: Hosianum, 2009), 94–96.

removes—their procreative potential.³⁰ In this way, the dignity of parents and possible offspring is preserved.

The above arguments are basically independent of religious faith. They are reasonable and compatible with man's corporal and spiritual nature. We are not dealing with the autocracy of biology here, but with the consistent logics of ecology. The Christian culture of the body is supported by the belief about human nature as the materialized thought of God the Creator, not a chance product of evolution. Being a *creature* (in German: *Kreatürlichkeit*), every human being is the materialized thought of God—not the outcome of some accidental workings of biology. The whole creation, all creatures, especially men, carry within themselves the “language of the Logos,” as card. Joseph Ratzinger puts it. And not only in the mathematical and aesthetic dimensions, but in the moral one too. Since this language can be read and understood, man can learn his moral objectives and obligations.³¹ Of course, it does not follow that the meanings of human biological sexuality can be read directly from biological phenomena, conditions, and facts. Human mind has to go a long way from moral experience and analysis of person's corporal and spiritual structure to the formulation of moral norms. In the words of John Paul II: “The person, by the light of reason and the support of virtue, discovers in the body the anticipatory signs, the expression and the promise of the gift of self, in conformity with the wise plan of the Creator.”³²

Conflict in Policymaking

The concept of reproductive rights is closely linked with individualism. Some people maintain that human rights, in their modern form, do not reflect all human needs and aspirations, especially those concerning sex and reproduction. They claim that human rights are subject to change and elaboration. According to the Yogyakarta Principles, everyone should have “the right to develop and discuss new human rights norms and advocate their acceptance.”³³ The fight for passing new sexual and reproductive rights takes place in mass media and politics. The terms sexual health, reproductive rights, and gender were not that

³⁰ See: *Humanae Vitae*, 12.

³¹ Cf. Benedikt XVI, “Ansprache an die Teilnehmer an dem von der Päpstlichen Lateranuniversität veranstaltete Internationalen Kongress über das natürliche Sittengesetz,” February 12, 2007, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/february/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070212_pul_ge.html, accessed August 8, 2018.

³² *Veritatis Splendor*, 48.

³³ The Yogyakarta Principles, 27.

often used in academic debates before. They rather served, from the very start, as the weapon in policymaking and the struggle to direct and promote the desired legislative and social changes. Supporters of the doctrine of reproductive rights are so determined to induce social changes that they are more interested in manufacturing new legal and cultural standards, and influencing international political structures and global non-governmental organizations, than in initiating and participating in rational debates on those issues. They try to influence international bodies (like the United Nations or the European Union) with various appeals and recommendations and make them pass their recommendations as internationally promoted resolutions, which could be then used to press national legislatures to include them into their legal systems. That is a top-bottom strategy: inducing legislative changes on local levels by making it obligatory for them to comply with international norms, provoking in this way changes in culture and mentality of targeted societies.

Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) of 2011 can serve as the illustration of the above schemes. The Convention contains a number of regulations that are quite in harmony with the precepts of the Christian culture of the body and deserve support. For example, the objection to various forms of physical and psychological violence against women. But, in many parts of the Convention, there is the one and only true interpretation of violence given to follow; most of all, in the Article 18, recommending that the term *violence* is to be understood in the context of the cultural gender.³⁴ This interpretation may change the definition of violence and desired measures against it. Anyone objecting to the Convention on the grounds of its gender perspective as the decisive factor, must face unfair, but efficient—because mass media driven—accusation that whoever rejects the Convention, supports violence against women.

Another important conflict revolves around the institution of marriage and family. Campaigners for reproductive rights mention the institution of traditional family either in negative terms, as the birthplace of hazards and oppressive stereotypes, or in the sense of the right to start one's own family and define it according to one's views, on the grounds that "families exist in diverse forms."³⁵ It follows that persons of the same sex can found a family.³⁶ This is diametrically opposed to the Christian culture of the body. Complementarity of the sexes demands that marriage be the union between man and woman, not

³⁴ See: Rada Europy, *Konwencja Rady Europy o zapobieganiu i zwalczaniu przemocy wobec kobiet i przemocy domowej*, <https://rm.coe.int/168046253c>, accessed February 1, 2019.

³⁵ The Yogyakarta Principles, 24.

³⁶ Cf. Marian Machinek, "Teologiczna antropologia w konfrontacji z ideą gender," in *Idea gender jako wyzwanie dla teologii*, ed. Antoni Jucewicz and Marian Machinek (Olsztyn: Hosianum, 2009), 108–109.

the union between two or any number of persons of any sex. Making diverse unions equal before law, admitting them as marriages into the public sphere and endorsing various forms of families, will seriously weaken families based on the marriage between man and woman. Furthermore, it will compromise the definition of the family as the natural and fundamental group unit of society, written into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is hard to escape the impression that the key concepts of the postulated sexual and reproductive rights contrast with the Christian culture of the body, and the letter and the spirit of human rights as they were expressed in the most important declarations since the end of the Second World War.

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Marian Machinek

Droits de reproduction versus culture chrétienne du corps Deux perspectives différentes

Résumé

La juxtaposition des concepts de droits sexuels et reproductifs et de l'idée de genre avec la culture chrétienne du corps, et notamment son anthropologie personaliste, révèle une différence fondamentale entre ces deux points de vue. Le concept de droits reproductifs se caractérise par l'individualisme, en vertu duquel l'identité de genre peut être librement déterminée, et le comportement sexuel de l'individu n'est soumis à aucune norme morale, tant qu'il est conforme à la loi. Le point principal de désaccord est l'importance de la corporéité humaine dans la conception de la personne humaine : alors que dans le concept de droits reproductifs le corps reste comme s'il était « extérieur » au sujet qui s'autodétermine ; dans la culture chrétienne du corps, il fait partie de la dignité de la personne en tant que dimension constitutive de cette dernière. La différence se révèle également dans la signification à accorder à l'activité sexuelle. Les tentatives d'implémentation forcée du concept de droits sexuels et reproductifs ainsi que l'inscription de la perspective du genre au niveau du droit et de la culture ne peuvent que menacer la cellule de base de la société, qui est la famille fondée sur le mariage entre une femme et un homme.

Mots-clés: droits de l'homme, droits sexuels et reproductifs, culture corporelle chrétienne, encyclique *Humanae Vitae*, genre, conception personaliste de l'individu

Marian Machinek

Diritti riproduttivi versus la cultura del corpo cristiano Due diverse prospettive

Sommario

La giustapposizione dei concetti di diritti sessuali e riproduttivi e l'idea di genere culturale con la cultura del corpo cristiano insieme alla propria antropologia personalistica rivela una differenza fondamentale di questi due punti di vista. Il concetto di diritti riproduttivi è caratterizzato dall'individualismo, in base al quale l'identità di genere può essere liberamente determinata e il comportamento sessuale dell'individuo non è soggetto a norme morali fintanto che sono all'interno della legge. Il punto principale di disaccordo è l'importanza della corporeità umana nella concezione della persona umana: mentre all'interno del concetto di diritti riproduttivi il corpo rimane come se fosse « al di fuori » di un soggetto che si autodetermina : all'interno della cultura del corpo cristiano, esso fa parte della dignità della persona in quanto la sua dimensione costitutiva. La differenza si rivela anche in merito al significato da accordare all'attività sessuale. I tentativi di implementazione forzata del concetto di diritti sessuali e riproduttivi insieme alla prospettiva di genere a livello di legge e di cultura costituirebbero una minaccia per la cellula di base della società, che è la famiglia basata sul matrimonio tra una donna e un uomo.

Parole chiave: diritti umani, diritti sessuali e riproduttivi, cultura del corpo cristiano, enciclica *Humanae Vitae*, genere, concezione personalista dell'individuo



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Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae* in the Course of Time

Abstract: The content of *Humanae Vitae* (1968) caused an ongoing debate all over the world. It has also stirred up factual crisis of moral theology. The crisis has caused subjectivity of morality and this has caused further crisis. The most serious feature of the crisis seems to be an effort to accept moral pluralism inside the Catholic Church. The renewal of moral theology the Second Vatican Council talked about has been left blocked. A couple of years after the Second Vatican Council, but before publishing *Humanae Vitae*, warning of St. Paul VI calls for continuity with moral tradition as a criterion for the autonomy of Catholic moral theology. In spite of much opposition of some bishops, theologians, and laypeople, the teaching of the encyclical letter has priceless value. The truth about marital love and value of life is in its center. It is proclaimed in an overview of the teaching of the Catholic Church from *Humanae Vitae* to *Evangelium Vitae*. In its nature, family is invited to fullness of love and, at the same time, it is the heart of civilization of love. Unfortunately, current family has found itself between the two civilizations—*civilization of love* on the one hand and *civilization of death and uncontrolled pleasure* on the other. The teaching of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* is a constant guide when protecting true marital love and family in the course of time.

Keywords: *Humanae Vitae*, morality, crisis, marriage, family, love, education of children

Introduction

In Germany, 1990, *Stimmen der Zeit* magazine published an article by Franz Böckle, a moral theologian, entitled *Humanae Vitae—Prüfstein des Glaubens?*¹

¹ Franz Böckle, “*Humanae Vitae—Prüfstein des Glaubens?*” in: *Stimmen der Zeit*, ed. Wolfgang Seibel (Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 1990), n. 1, 9.

In other words, he asks if *Humanae Vitae* may be a cornerstone of a true faith. Of course, the answer the author has given was negative. He suggested a slow schism in the whole field of moral theology brought about by the *loose interpretation of conscience* that tends to be based on a subjective judgment without comparing it to the objective truth.

In the 1990s, a certain group of moral theologians, accompanied by theologians from other fields, publicly called to the pope for a referendum to show what believers think of contraception. This effort was obvious. The aim was to introduce a democratic form into the Church, more specifically to the moral teaching of the Church.

Such influence of secularism creates a decrease in accepting religion in everyday life, in private as well as public area. The extent of the crisis in moral theology is dual in character, for it touches upon:

1. The crisis of values—that is, certain decrease in sensitivity in benefit of new sensitivity;
2. The crisis of moral form—that is, not accepting objective valid norms in one's conscience.

In other words, we talk about the subjectification of morality. In relation to this subjectification of morality, many crises have emerged in relation to topics that are currently under social discussion. Those are, for example, politics, economy, means of communication, ecology, bioethics, etc.²

Pope Benedict XVI, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, pointed out the issue in the area of medical ethics, where, according to him, there always arise new possibilities and along with them there come up new critical situations, where it is not always possible to apply evident moral principles. He says that it is not always possible to find universal solutions, hence it is advisable to abandon solutions that are impossible to adopt. However, it does not mean to bury one's head in the sand; rather, it means not to surrender to the pressure of the system that wants to find answers instantly. It is necessary to search for the answer in common responsibility for life and the right to life for everybody, from one's birth to death. This is the role of every scientific discipline—we talk about interdisciplinary cooperation for one's good.³

On the one hand, there are basic principles—the human is the human from the beginning to the end. We cannot own human life but we are supposed to honor its dignity. On the other hand, evolution in medicine and genetic technologies always gives rise to new marginal situations, where we ask which principle to apply and how.

² Cf. Pavol Dancák, "Dialogue and Solidarity as a Basis for Addressing the Current Migration Crisis." *Acta Missiologica*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2019): 73–83.

³ Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *Sol' zeme*. Translated by Blažej Belák (Trnava: SSV, 1997), 87–88.

First of all, it is necessary to search for information. Hence, gradually, by creating new experiences among theologians, doctors, and philosophers where there is factual and accurate information, as well as a principle rightly applied, it is possible to translate common experience into utterance and state that principle has been well-applied.⁴

Paul VI and the Commission for Responsible Parenthood

Ideas forwarded by Pope Paul VI were similar to statements put forth by Cardinal Ratzinger, who observed that when dealing with serious ethical issues, it is necessary to search for interdisciplinary solutions. The pope pondered upon such issues as population growth, women's roles in society, value of marital love and evaluation of marital act arising from it.

In *Humanae Vitae* Paul VI writes:

This new state of things gives rise to new questions. Granted the conditions of life today and taking into account the relevance of married love to the harmony and mutual fidelity of husband and wife, would it not be right to review the moral norms in force till now, especially when it is felt that these can be observed only with the gravest difficulty, sometimes only by heroic effort? (*Humanae Vitae*, 3)

The consciousness of the same responsibility induced Us to confirm and expand the commission set up by Our predecessor Pope John XXIII, of happy memory, in March, 1963. This commission included married couples as well as many experts in the various fields pertinent to these questions. [...] When the evidence of the experts had been received, as well as the opinions and advice of a considerable number of Our brethren in the episcopate—some of whom sent their views spontaneously, while others were requested by Us to do so—We were in a position to weigh with more precision all the aspects of this complex subject. (*Humanae Vitae*, 5)

It could be seen that Paul VI addressed not only many scientists from the area of expertise but also married couples and bishops. Hence we cannot speak about any kind of vanity of one person that thoughtlessly decided to publish the encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae*. In spite of the suggestions of the extended

⁴ Marek Petro, *Current Bioethical Issues in the Teaching of the Catholic Church* (Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Prešovskej univerzity v Prešove GTF, 2013), 11.

Commission for Responsible Parenthood being not homogenous, the teaching authority of the Church proposes solutions to the moral teaching about marriage. The role of the commission is that of an advisory board, not a decisive body. After all, Paul VI writes: “Consequently, now that We have sifted carefully the evidence sent to Us and intently studied the whole matter, as well as prayed constantly to God, We, by virtue of the mandate entrusted to Us by Christ, intend to give Our reply to this series of grave questions” (*Humanae Vitae*, 6).

Crisis of *Humanae Vitae* is Morality Crisis

Publication of the encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* in 1968 launched not only discussion that is still ongoing but it also gave rise to a serious crisis. The encyclical letter became a detonator of the real crisis in moral theology. The process of restoration within moral theology, spoken of at the Second Vatican Council, has remained blocked.⁵ It seems that the most serious sign of the crisis is an attempt to accept moral pluralism within the Catholic Church itself. This is pointed out in the latter encyclical letter of John Paul II *Veritatis Splendor*, where it is said:

[...] an opinion is frequently heard which questions the intrinsic and unbreakable bond between faith and morality, as if membership in the Church and her internal unity were to be decided on the basis of faith alone, while in the sphere of morality a pluralism of opinions and of kinds of behaviour could be tolerated, these being left to the judgment of the individual subjective conscience or to the diversity of social and cultural contexts. (*Veritatis Splendor*, 4)

But this form of pluralism was not presented by the council. On the contrary, the council encourages Christians, who are members of social and religious community, to faithfully fulfil their earthly duties and to let them be guided

⁵ The course for moral theology, as shown by the Second Vatican Council, is the way of in-depth renewal. Its content should not be just the evaluation of individual deeds in accordance with the law, but mainly, greatness of believers' vocation. That is, moral life is connected to Christological basics, wherefrom it draws its deepest orientation. It is not only about doing deeds that are in accordance with the law, but it is also about growth in a sense of one's vocation, which sets final sense to a person. Besides, the council sets methodological message to the moral theology, hence article 16 of the Decree on priestly training *Optatam Totius* says: “Special care must be given to the perfecting of moral theology. Its scientific exposition, nourished more on the teaching of the Bible, should shed light on the loftiness of the calling of the faithful in Christ and the obligation that is theirs of bearing fruit in charity for the life of the world” (16).

by the spirit of the Gospel. At the same time, they are encouraged to respect plurality of opinions of the other person:

Yet it happens rather frequently, and legitimately so, that with equal sincerity some of the faithful will disagree with others on a given matter. Even against the intentions of their proponents, however, solutions proposed on one side or another may be easily confused by many people with the Gospel message. Hence it is necessary for people to remember that no one is allowed in the aforementioned situations to appropriate the Church's authority for his opinion. They should always try to enlighten one another through honest discussion, preserving mutual charity and caring above all for the common good. (*Gaudium et Spes*, 43)

In his address to the Redemptorists in 1967, Pope Paul VI puts emphasis on restoration of moral theology which is included in the conclusions of the Second Vatican Council and its meaning is specified there.⁶ Though the text is less known, it is important for us to understand the meaning of council's restoration and its message for true development of moral theology until today.

The pope expresses great distress regarding incorrect interpretation of the Second Vatican Council in the area of moral theology, which is in discrepancy with the Magisterium, as if Christ's law was to adapt the world and not the world to the Christ's law.

Several years after the Second Vatican Council but before the publication of *Humanae Vitae*, this serious warning called for continuity with moral tradition as a criterion for the autonomy of the Catholic moral theology. Moral teaching of the Church concerns the truths that are essential for our salvation. The content of the revealed truths is permanent and it cannot be forgotten when interpreting God's Commandments. In-depth restoration of moral theology, which the council spoke about, does not assume breaking the content of moral theology, but rather improvement of its interpretation.

From *Humanae Vitae* to *Evangelium Vitae*

In 2018, fifty years had passed since the encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* was published by Pope Paul VI. In a certain point of view, it was published in the least suitable time. At that time, people sang Beatles' songs, members of hip-

⁶ Paul VI, *Ad Sodales Congregationis Sanctissimi Redemptoris, qui Romam convenerunt, ut Generali religiosae suae communitatis Consilio interessent*. AAS 59 (1967): 960–963, <http://www.vatican.va/archive/aas/documents/AAS-59-1967-ocr.pdf>, accessed March 2, 2019.

pies had discovered new way of life, and contraception pill had already been available for several years. The concepts of sex, love, population explosion, and contraception had been declined in all cases. And just at that time, Paul VI conferred with various specialists, theologians, and married couples. He prayed and worked under great pressure. And in the end, he made his decision contrary to the expectations of the majority of people... His encyclical letter put forth a clear and unchallenged *yes* to marriage as a *communion of love*, where husband and wife cooperate as *absolute partners*, when transmitting new life. At the same time, it was a strong *no* to each attempt of married couples to make themselves infertile and to refuse the gift of fertility, the gift of marital sexual act, which is of sacred value and expresses renewal of marriage vow not by *words* but *body language*. Hence, the encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* is not a document about contraception and responsible parenthood, but it is a message about marital love understood in the context of marriage as a way to holiness, to veneration to the Creator and to accepting us as being created.⁷

As mentioned above, the document was met with great opposition not only from believers, but also from theologians.⁸ This encyclical letter focuses on two basic demands of marriage: *faithfulness* (good of the spouses) and *fertility* (transmitting of life and education).

Canon 776 in Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches says:

The matrimonial covenant, established by the Creator and ordered by His laws, by which a man and woman by an irrevocable personal consent establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the generation and education of the offspring. (CCEO can.776 § 1).⁹

⁷ Cf. Karel D. Skočovský, *Encyclical That Changed Character of the Church: Humanae Vitae* (this author is known as Karel D. Skočovský), <https://zastolom.sk/encyklika-ktora-zmenila-tvar-cirkvi-humanae-vitae/>, accessed Decembre 3, 2018.

⁸ On July 30, 1968, the New York Times published challenge with signatures of 200 theologians, with the title “Against the Encyclical of Pope Paul.” [...] The chief advocate of the text was Don Charles Curran, a theologian at Catholic University of America, a former student of father Haring. [...] A group of supporters of the Committee, who were against the encyclical letter of Pope Paul VI, including Cardinals Suenans, Alfrink, Heenan, Döpfner and Köning met in Essen, Germany, to agree upon their position against *Humanae vitae*. [...] On 9 September 1968, during *Katholikentag* a resolution was ratified, which demanded changes in the encyclical letter. It was something that had never happened during long and eventful life of the Church before. Interesting is that the discrepancy between the pope and church dogma had not originated among theologians and priests only, but also among dioceses, including Belgium (led by Cardinal Lev Suenens) and Germany (led by Cardinal Julius August Döpfner). Roberto de Mattei, *Historické korene rozporu – od druheho vatikanskeho koncilu po synodu o rodine*, <http://www.lifenewssk/8825/historicke-korene-rozporu-od-druheho-vatikanskeho-koncilu-po-synodu-o-rodine>, accessed November 23, 2018.

⁹ Code of Cannon Law which is binding for the Catholic Church of Latin rite also speaks about the good of the spouses and delivering and educating children: “The matrimonial cove-

By bonding of the spouses, a double aim of marriage fulfils: the good of the spouses and transmitting of life (KKC 2363).

Fifty years after the publication of the encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae*, it may be said that this document has fulfilled its preventative task. Even today, we observe that the encyclical teaching contains unchangeable value. The truth about love and value of life permanently is in its center. The encyclical letter found its defender and interpreter in the person of Pope John Paul II. While performing the function of an archbishop of Kraków, he brought immense contribution in order to confirm teaching about marriage and family in the context of *Humanae Vitae*. One of his most important academic works is his book *Love and Responsibility* (1960). As a later pope, he gave lectures on human love according to God's plan during audiences on Wednesdays (September 5, 1979–November 28, 1984). During these lectures, he commented on *Humanae Vitae*, especially in the cycle of lectures *Love and Fertility* (July 11, 1984—November 28, 1984)¹⁰ and in an apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (1981).¹¹

John Paul II was involved in an increased activity regarding his teachings about family in 1994, when he proclaimed it the year of the family. In many documents and speeches, he reminded the world about who shall enter into marriage and family, so they can fulfil their mission from God. Many times he reminded us that marriage as a community of people—*communio personarum*¹²—is the cornerstone of a family and social life.

Marriage was ordained by the Creator, and it is alliance of man and woman. Where does Church find its knowledge for teaching about marriage and family? We shall not forget about the Bible. The first mention about mutual relationship between man and woman is in the book of Genesis. The theology of marriage is described there: “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of

nant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and which is ordered by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring, has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized.” Codex iuris canonici (1983) (Bratislava: KBS, 1996), Kán. 1055 §1.

¹⁰ The complete cycle of all catecheses by John Paul II about human love according to God's plan was published in several languages. Also, in the Czech language with title *Teologie Těla Katecheze Jana Pavla II o lidské lásce podle Božího plánu*. See: Ján Pavol II, *Teologie těla. Katecheze Jana Pavla II. o lidské lásce podle Božího plánu* (Praha: Paulínky, 2005), 592.

¹¹ Cf. Jerzy Zamorski, *Dojrzałość psychologiczna. Uwarunkowania wychowawcze obrazu siebie* (Lublin: Polihymnia, 2003), 223.

¹² The family, a community of people, is the first society of people. It emerges, when marital contract which endorses the spouses to eternal *community of love and life* is signed and is fulfilled in family “community.” From this reason, emphasis is put on *mystery = sacrament of marriage and contract*. Only then can *communio personarum* arise. In that sense we appeal to Letter to families *Gratissimam Sane*, issued on the occasion of the year of the family in 1994 (1994), art. 7 where God's servant John Paul II writes about *communio personarum*. Cf. John Paul II, Letter to families issued on the occasion of the year of the family in 1994 (Bratislava: KBS, 1994), art. 7, <http://www.kbs.sk/?cid=1117282146>, accessed December 22, 2018.

God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gn 1, 27). Thus the Bible expresses uniqueness—community of man and woman in God’s image. We are “forced” into this community by sorrow and emptiness when we are alone.¹³

Pope John Paul II put it that way:

As an incarnate spirit, that is, a soul which expresses itself in a body and a body informed by an immortal spirit, man is called to love in his unified totality. Love includes the human body, and the body is made a sharer in spiritual love. The only “place” in which this self-giving in its whole truth is made possible is marriage, the covenant of conjugal love freely and consciously chosen, whereby man and woman accept the intimate community of life and love willed by God Himself which only in this light manifests its true meaning. (*Familiaris Consortio*, 11)

Marriage, as the community of man and woman,¹⁴ fundamentally based on love, represents a start for a family life by its being opened to a new life. God invites spouses to take part in creating new life. Formation of a new person is not limited to physical conception and delivery, but it also involves education.¹⁵

Marriage and family have also their place in society. They set up a basic unit of society. Hence, moral health and strength of marriage and family become the source of strength and health for a nation. On the contrary, their weakness and break-up lead to decline of a nation. Therefore, a society which wants to develop in that way shall take care of marriage and family for its own sake.

Pope John Paul II also proposes that the family

is truly “the sanctuary of life [...], the place in which life—the gift of God—can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed, and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth.” Consequently the role of the family in building a culture of life is decisive and irreplaceable. (*Evangelium Vitae*, 92).

¹³ Cf. Daniel Slivka, “Učenie Katolíckej cirkvi o Božom zjavení vo Svätom písme a v Tradícii na základe konštitúcie Dei verbum,” in *Štúdie z biblistiky a systematickej teológie* (Prešov: Pro Communio, o. z., 2006), 23.; Cf. Miroslav Šimko, “Uctievanie svätých ikon,” in *Zborník teologických štúdií* vol. 4 (Prešov: PU v Prešove GTF, 2008), 135–139.

¹⁴ Man and woman are created, that means, God wanted them: on the one hand, in total equality like human persons, on the other hand, in their specific being a man and a woman. To be a man, to be a woman is a good reality wanted by God: man and woman have undeniable dignity, which they are given by God, their Creator. Man and woman are, with their equal dignity, made into God’s image. In their being a man and being a woman are reflected the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. Cf. Ján Pavol II, *Teologie těla. Katecheze Jana Pavla II. o lidské lásce podle Božího plánu* (Praha: Paulínky, 2005), 26–34.

¹⁵ In *Humanae Vitae*, the term education appears several times, for example, in chapters 16, 21, 22, 23, 31, etc.

That way John Paul II pointed out the basic role of the family is transmission and protection of human life. Family is family because it delivers, that means, it gives birth to a new person, it protects him/her and takes care of him/her and fulfils his/her needs as well.

A short overview of the teachings of the family from Paul VI to John Paul II enables us to claim that the teaching from *Humanae Vitae* to *Evangelium Vitae* is very clear and very demanding as well.

Conclusion

In the light of contemplation over the encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* in the course of time—from its publication (1968) up till now, we can point out several presuppositions following its content: (1) even today, the encyclical letter *Humanae Vitae* is “providential” when protecting marital love, and thus protecting it from egoistic aims; (2) In the encyclical letter, marital love has double meaning—the good of the spouses (fidelity) and transmitting life together with education of offspring (fertility)—it is necessary to say that both meanings overlap; (3) The teaching about transmitting life in the family is always connected with responsible parenthood—a significant part of *Humanae Vitae* was devoted to it—responsible parenthood stands for protecting human dignity, marital love, and sexual life; (4) The Church as a teacher has never ceased to spread moral principle, which responsible parenthood should follow, it is presented to all people of good will—at the same time, it is aware of human weakness and that is why it comes to the help of spouses who have difficulties in following this difficult task of moral life; (5) The Church always appeals that potential marital difficulties to be solved without falsifying and breaking the truth (*Evangelium Vitae*, 33).

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Encyclique *Humanae Vitae* au fil du temps

Résumé

Le contenu de l'encyclique *Humanae Vitae* (1968) a ouvert un débat qui se poursuit aujourd'hui dans le monde entier. Il a également contribué à une véritable crise de la théologie morale. Cette crise a engendré une subjectivité de la morale qui, à son tour, a contribué à une autre crise. L'élément le plus important de la crise semble la tentative d'accepter le pluralisme moral au sein de l'Église catholique. Le renouveau de la théologie morale, dont parlait le Concile Vatican II, a été bloqué. Quelques années après la fin du Concile Vatican II, mais avant la publication de *Humanae Vitae*, saint Paul VI a appelé à garder la continuité avec la tradition morale comme critère de l'autonomie de la théologie morale catholique. Malgré la forte opposition de certains évêques, théologiens et laïcs, l'enseignement contenu dans l'encyclique a une valeur inestimable. La vérité de l'amour conjugal et de la valeur de la vie restent toujours au centre de cette encyclique. Cette vérité est aussi exprimée tout au long de l'enseignement de l'Église catholique, à partir de *Humanae Vitae* jusqu'à *Evangelium vitae*. Par nature, la famille est invitée au plein amour et, en même temps, elle reste au cœur de la civilisation de l'amour. Malheureusement, la famille d'aujourd'hui s'est trouvée entre deux civilisations—une civilisation de l'amour et une civilisation du plaisir incontrôlé. Au fil du temps, l'enseignement contenu dans l'encyclique *Humanae Vitae* devient un indice stable qui protège le véritable amour conjugal et la famille.

Mots-clés : *Humanae Vitae*, moralité, crise, mariage, famille, amour, éducation

Marek Petro

Enciclica *Humanae Vitae* con il passare del tempo

Sommario

Il contenuto dell'enciclica *Humanae Vitae* (1968) ha iniziato un dibattito che continua oggi in tutto il mondo. Ha anche contribuito a una vera crisi della teologia morale. Questa crisi ha creato una soggettività della moralità, che a sua volta ha contribuito a un'altra crisi. L'elemento più importante della crisi sopra menzionata sembra il tentativo di accettare il pluralismo morale

all'interno della Chiesa cattolica. La necessità di rinnovare la teologia morale, di cui parlava il Concilio Vaticano II, fu bloccata. Pochi anni dopo la fine del Concilio Vaticano II, ma prima della pubblicazione di *Humanae Vitae*, San Paolo VI ha sollecitato a conservare la continuità con la tradizione morale in quanto criterio dell'autonomia della teologia morale cattolica. Nonostante la forte opposizione di alcuni vescovi, teologi e laici, l'insegnamento contenuto nell'enciclica ha un valore inestimabile. La verità sull'amore coniugale e sul valore della vita rimangono al centro dell'enciclica. Questa verità è stata anche espressa nell'insegnamento intero della Chiesa cattolica, dall'*Humanae Vitae* all'*Evangelium Vitae*. Per natura, la famiglia è invitata al pieno amore e allo stesso tempo rimane al centro della civiltà dell'amore. Sfortunatamente, la famiglia di oggi si è ritrovata tra due civiltà : una civiltà dell'amore e una civiltà del piacere incontrollato. Con il passare del tempo, l'insegnamento contenuto nell'enciclica *Humanae Vitae* diventa un indicatore stabile che protegge il vero amore coniugale e la famiglia.

Parole chiave : *Humanae Vitae*, moralità, crisi, matrimonio, famiglia, amore, educazione



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John Paul II on *Humanae Vitae* and the Priority of Ethics over Technology

Abstract: We examine how John Paul II's lifelong work on the issues surrounding family and human life as expressed in Pope Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* (1968) are an exemplification of his principles for cultural renewal as stated in *Redemptor Hominis* (1979). The triad of principles, the primacy of persons over things, the priority of ethics over technology, and the superiority of spirit over matter provide a set of interlocking principles for discerning the true progress of modern culture. Contrary to the dominant view that artificial contraception represents an opportunity for great progress for women and for society, we argue that the ambivalent character of modern technology as established by Yves René Simon and Clive Staples Lewis points to a large downside of artificial contraception, namely, a real opportunity for the degradation of the marriage bond and the full flourishing of the human person. The substitution of technology as a way to regulate birth for personal choice and habit or virtue inverts the principle of ethics over technology and opens the door for the manipulation of women as predicted by Pope Paul VI which is a clear failure to place the primacy of the person over things. The fundamental error lies in the materialistic philosophy of life which refuses to acknowledge the superiority of spirit over matter. The battle over the issues at the heart of *Humane Vitae* constitutes a battle over the ultimate meaning of human existence as theistic or anti-theistic, Gospel or anti-Gospel, and thus it will always stand as a “sign of contradiction.”

Keywords: Pope John Paul II, Pope Paul VI, ethics, *Humanae Vitae*, NFP, artificial contraception, technology, *Redemptor Hominis*, C. S. Lewis, Y. R. Simon, *Sign of Contradiction*

Much of the pastoral and intellectual work of Pope John Paul II centers on responsible parenthood and issues pertaining to the encyclical of Pope Paul VI *On Human Life (Humane Vitae, 1968)*.¹ Evidence for his long-standing interest in promoting authentic human love include his work with *Środowisko (Una vita con Karol, 2007)*, his philosophical writing on *Love and Responsibility* (first published by KUL in 1960), and his play, *The Jeweler's Shop* (written in 1960). His contributions at Vatican II, the synod for Kraków Sources of Renewal, and numerous other articles and letters on married love also show his profound explorations in this area of human life.² He sums up his interest in a brief passage found in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (first published by KUL in 1994):

Responsible parenthood is the necessary condition for human love, and it is also the necessary condition for authentic conjugal love, because love cannot be irresponsible. Its beauty is the fruit of responsibility. When love is truly responsible, it is also truly free. This is precisely the teaching I learned from the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* written by my venerable predecessor Paul VI, and that I had learned even earlier from my young friends, married and soon to be married, while I was writing *Love and Responsibility*. As I have said, they themselves were my teachers in this area. It was they, men and women alike, who made a creative contribution to the pastoral care of family, to pastoral efforts on behalf of responsible parenthood, to the foundation of counseling programs, which subsequently flourished. The principal activity and primary commitment of these programs is to foster human love. In them, responsibility for human love has been and continues to be lived out.³

In order to better appreciate lifelong concern of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II for responsibility for human love, I propose to consider how his first encyclical, *Redeemer of Man*, provides a context for understanding the strategy as well as the ardor for his account of responsible parenthood as articulated in *Humanae Vitae*. *Redeemer of Man* is a pivotal work and reveals the man and his work in an exemplary way. It was published on March 4, 1979, soon after his election as pope (October 22, 1978). It also shows us the man and his heritage. It is pivotal because it gathers together the core of his experience and thoughts as Polish priest, bishop and intellectual and spiritual leader. John Paul II said:

¹ See Janet Smith, "Pope John Paul II and *Humane Vitae*," *International Review of Natural Family Planning* 10, no. 2 (summer 1986): 95–112. Reprinted in Smith, *Why Humanae Vitae was Right: A Reader* (Ignatius, 1993), 229–249. See also George Weigel, *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (Harper Perennial, 2004), 206–210.

² Lumiła Grygiel, Stanisław Grygiel, and Przemysław Kwiatkowski, eds., *Bellezza e spiritualità dell'amore coniugale* (Siena: Edizione Cantagalli, 2009). Also John Crosby, "The Personalism of John Paul II as the Basis of His Approach to the Teaching of *Humanae Vitae*," in *Why Humanae Vitae Was Right* (Città Nuova Editrice, 1989), 193–227.

³ John Paul II and Vittorio Messori, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 208.

“Everything in *Redeemer of Man* I brought with me from Poland.” In his last work on memory and identity, he said the following: “To summon a Pope from Poland, from Kraków, could serve as an eloquent symbol. It was not simply the summons of an individual, but of the entire church to which he belongs since birth; indirectly it was also a call to his nation.”⁴ And he explained his purpose in writing the encyclical this way:

I tried to express in it what has animated and continually animates my thoughts and heart from the beginning of the pontificate; these thoughts were maturing within me as priest and bishop. [...] If Christ called me with such thoughts and sentiments it was because He wanted these calls of the intellect and of the heart, these expressions of faith, hope and charity to ring out in my new and universal ministry, right from its beginning.⁵

So this little work is truly a pivotal piece of writing. In it we see Karol Wojtyła, the Polish bishop and cardinal carrying through the heritage and the background thinking and it serves Pope John Paul II as a remarkable seed, principle, and basis for his work and witness as pope for twenty-seven years. The massive set of writings he left from his papacy (fourteen encyclicals, fifteen apostolic exhortations, eleven apostolic constitutions, and forty-four apostolic letters, eighty-four letters in all) all trace in some key back to the key ideas set forth in *Redemptor Hominis*.

The encyclical as a whole provides the context for gauging the importance of his defense of *Humanae Vitae*, particularly in his Wednesday audiences on the theology of the body.⁶

In section §16 of *Redemptor Hominis*, entitled *Progress or Threat?*, John Paul II considers the many challenges to human flourishing, for we are in an era which “shows itself a time of great progress, it is also seen as a time of threat in many forms for man.” True progress will demand a participation in the office of Christ’s kingship as expressed by Vatican II in *Lumen Gentium*:

The essential meaning of this “kingship” and “dominion” of man over the visible world, which the Creator himself gave man for his task, consists in the priority of ethics over technology, in the primacy of the person over things, and in the superiority of spirit over matter. (*Lumen Gentium* §§ 10, 36)

⁴ John Paul II, *Memory and Identity: Conversations at the Dawn of a Millennium* (New York: Rizzoli, 2005), 141.

⁵ John Paul II, *The Story of My Life; Collected Memories* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2011), 106. Found in his *Memory and Identity: Conversations at the Dawn of a Millennium* (New York: Rizzoli, 2005), 5; Angelus, March 11, 1979, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 12 (March 19, 1979): 2, cited in J. Michael Miller, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*. (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1996), 31.

⁶ John Paul II and Michael Waldstein, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006).

In *Lumen Gentium* the three-fold office of Christ of priest, prophet, and king is richly developed. John Paul II references section 10 on the priestly office of Christ—lay faithful share in the priestly sacrifice of praise to God the Father through their “witness of a holy life, abnegation and active charity.” In other words, human life in its various dimensions should shine forth in a witness to the goodness of God. In section 36 of *Lumen Gentium*, the kingly office of Christ is fulfilled by the lay faithful by their own interior ordering of virtue and also by ordering the whole of creation to the praise of God. They will build a civilization of love: “They will impregnate culture and human works with a moral value” (§ 10). The three principles, (i) the priority of ethics over technology; (ii) the primacy of the person over things; and (iii) the superiority of spirit over matter, are interconnected and they together lay out a program for personal and cultural development. The priority of ethics over technology must be understood as something more than the application of moral norms, whether deontological or utilitarian, to technological projects. We must look especially to the subject of action and the perfection of the person in act. A vertical transcendence towards the true good must influence the ultimate personal quality of the agent. Ethics is about a way of life, an ethos, a development of character within a community. The whole modern project comes forth from the notion that technology can substitute for morality or ethics. It emphasizes *techne* and human art above *ethos* or character. Technology is more a way of life than a set of tools and instruments. John Paul II study of *Humanae Vitae* would reflect this very issue. Artificial birth control is precisely the substitution of technological solutions for what is primarily a moral or ethical issue. Responsible parenthood demands mutual self-giving, self-control, and generous readiness to receive children. Artificial birth control places the burden of responsible parenthood on method effectiveness and external devices. The priority of ethics over technology is intrinsically connected with the priority of the person over things. Technology can degrade the world to the status of a thing to be used, including the human person. And the priority of the spiritual over the material is perhaps the fundamental underlying principle of cultural development. This will be clear in the following paragraph. But, generally, we can say that modern culture emphasizes the material over the spiritual. The Marxist/Communist ideology is explicitly and dogmatically materialistic, denying all spirituality and goods beyond the temporal. The liberal ideology of the west emphasizes productivity of material goods and emphasizes the comfortable self-preservation of the individual. God is left out of the picture entirely. The integral vision of human flourishing is a stake in the issue of responsible family planning. It is a matter of culture, ultimately a defense of the culture of life versus a culture of death.

It is through culture that man grows towards perfection and self-fulfillment.⁷ The ultimate business of culture is education. And education must integrate and convey the whole truth about man; it must offer an “integral humanism.” John Paul II said:

Culture must cultivate man and each man along the extension of an *integral and full-fledged humanism*, through which *the whole man and all men* are promoted *in the fullness of every human dimension*. Culture’s essential purpose is that of promoting the being of man, and of providing him with the goods needed for the development of his individual and social being.⁸

Thus, the threefold set of priorities for overcoming the threats to mankind in the modern world are essentially priorities of culture.

Cultural Priorities in the Theology of the Body

We can find these cultural priorities addressed by John Paul II throughout the Wednesday audiences on the theology of the body and we find them explicitly mentioned in the very last set of audiences in his reflections on *Humanae Vitae*.⁹

(i) *On the priority of person over things:*

In his concluding remarks, given on November 28, 1984, John Paul II says that all his reflections about the sacrament of marriage were explorations of two fundamental dimensions: the dimension of covenant and grace and the dimension of “the sign.”¹⁰ These two dimensions return us to the theology of the body and the very teaching or words of Christ. John Paul II says further that the reflections on the theology of the body in light of “the redemption of the body and the sacramentality of marriage” constitute “an extensive commentary on the doctrine contained precisely in *Humanae Vitae*.”¹¹ But the provision of such a commentary at the very end of the very long work is not just by way of convenience or by an afterthought. To the contrary, the questions raised by *Humanae Vitae* “run in some way through the whole of our reflections.”¹²

⁷ Alberto Freere, quoted in *Apostolate of Culture*, 62–63.

⁸ John Paul II “In the Work of Culture God has Made an Alliance with Man.” Rio de Janeiro, 1 July 1980.

⁹ See: John Paul II and Michael Waldstein, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, §§ 118–133, pp. 617–663. I also use the Vatican English edition found in John Paul II, *Reflections on Humanae Vitae* (Boston: Daughters of St Paul, 1984).

¹⁰ John Paul II and Michael Waldstein, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 660.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 660.

¹² *Ibid.*, 662.

Indeed, the part located at the end (see *Humanae Vitae*) is “at the same found at the beginning of the whole.” The very structure and method of his work springs from the fundamental issues raised by *Humanae Vitae*. His work is the progressive deepening or development of doctrine. It is well known that Pope Paul VI sought to address the questions of human life in our day given the new opportunities and challenges afforded by technology, economics, and social conditions. He deployed the natural law account of marriage, procreation and family in a very thoughtful and compelling way. But this in turn raised additional questions and concerns, and John Paul II recognized that a richer biblical understanding as well as focused personalistic perspective would provide a more decisive way to “find answers to the questions of conscience of men and women and also the difficult questions of our contemporary world concerning marriage and procreation.”¹³ The biblical understanding roots this teaching much deeper in the tradition. The personalistic perspective does so as well, but also opens the way to “use those instruments most in keeping with modern science and today’s culture.”¹⁴ Although significant scientific developments in the study of fertility were already under way, *Humanae Vitae* helped to launch many initiatives in the understanding and applications of the science of fertility, as for example found in the work of Thomas Hilgers among many others.¹⁵ The personalist perspective for its part contains a very insightful and compelling account of marriage and family as a communion of persons. Modern culture by many accounts suffers precisely from a deficit of support and sympathy for the concrete life of the human person. And so, it is no surprise to find here at the end of the *Theology of the Body* a use of the notion of the priority of persons over things, and associated with it in previous audiences, the priority of ethics over technology and the priority of spirit over matter. The key passage in this conclusion points out the following:

The analysis of the personalistic aspects contained in this document has an existential meaning for establishing what true progress consist in, that is, the development of the human person. In contemporary civilization as a whole—especially in Western civilization—there exists, in fact, a hidden and at the same time rather explicit tendency to measure this progress with the measure of “things,” that is, of material goods.¹⁶

John Paul II commends his predecessor for his “resolute appeal to measure man’s progress with the measure of the Person.” Such a personalistic measure is open to “that which is a good man as man, which corresponds to his essential

¹³ Ibid., 663.

¹⁴ Ibid., 661.

¹⁵ Thomas W. Hilgers, MD, *The NaProTechnology Revolution: Unleashing the Power in a Woman’s Cycle* (New York: Beaufort Books, 2010).

¹⁶ John Paul II and Michael Waldstein, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 662.

dignity.” The broader context for understanding *Humanae Vitae* is the viewpoint of “authentic development of the human person.”¹⁷ No doubt this statement is an allusion to the fifth encyclical of Pope Paul VI, the provocative *Populorum Progressio* (1967).¹⁸ In this extraordinary document, he examines the various means and programs for international development and argues that the true measure for international development must be an “integral humanism.” Pushing back against the exclusively economic and financial programs for aid and development, Paul VI recalls the international community to a consideration of the full flourishing of the human person, encompassing the family, the dignity of work, and especially educational and cultural goods, culminating in a respect for religious values and contemplation. “If development calls for an ever-growing number of technical experts, even more necessary still is the deep thought and reflection of wise men in search of a new humanism, one which will enable our contemporaries to enjoy the higher values of love and friendship, of prayer and contemplation, and thus find themselves anew. This is what will guarantee man’s authentic development—his transition from less than human conditions to truly human ones.”¹⁹ Reiterating the notion of an integral humanism, Pope Paul VI, references both Jacques Maritain and Henri DeLubac: The ultimate goal is a full-bodied humanism. And does this not mean the fulfillment of the whole man and of every man? A narrow humanism, closed in on itself and not open to the values of the spirit and to God who is their source, could achieve apparent success, for man can set about organizing terrestrial realities without God. But “closed off from God, they will end up being directed against man. A humanism closed off from other realities becomes inhuman.”²⁰ Both Pope Paul VI as well as Pope John Paul II learned much from the personalism of Maritain and DeLubac. The perspective of an integral humanism, a Christian personalism, forms the proper context for the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*, but this perspective is often neglected by the secular critics, of course, but very often by the Church dissenters who attacked the teaching from the perspective of utilitarian or proportionalist thinking, or even a narrower form of Kantian autonomy. This is why the personalism of *Humanae Vitae* enters into the “strategy and method” of the discourse on the theology of the body. If we look back to the conclusion of part one of the theology of the body, the audience of April 2, 1980, John Paul II links the words of Christ concerning divorce, namely, that “in the beginning it was not so,” to the mystery of creation and the mystery of redemption. And that mystery of human love is the “integral vision of man.” Speaking boldly, John Paul II declares that Christ “laid out before his interlocuters this ‘integral

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Pope Paul VI, *On the Development of Peoples* (Washington DC: U.S. Catholic Bishops, 1967).

¹⁹ Ibid., § 20.

²⁰ Ibid., § 42.

vision of man,' without which no adequate answer can be given to the questions connected with marriage and procreation."²¹ So too, Pope Paul VI appealed to the "integral vision of man" in *Humanae Vitae* (see § 7). It falls to John Paul II to build the "integral vision of man," in the form of a theology of the body, "from the beginning." He creatively unites the streams of natural law, theological ethics, and Thomistic anthropology with a profound biblical theology and a more robust phenomenology of the person and the world of values. In his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (§ 10), John Paul II spoke of the danger of the person in contemporary society using "immediate, partial, often superficial, and even illusory standards and measures of his being." It is love that is often lost, love as self-giving that is neglected in contemporary quest for freedom. And in the theology of the body he declares that:

We are, in fact, the children of an age in which, due to the development of various disciplines, this integral vision of man can easily be rejected and replaced by many partial conceptions that dwell on one or another aspect of the *compositum humanum* but do not reach man's *integrum* or leave it outside their field of vision.²²

John Paul II speaks therefore of "cultural tendencies" influenced by these partial truths such as the consideration of the human person as an object of technologies rather than the "responsible subject of his own action." Through reproductive technologies the medical profession treats the human person as an object of technologies, and while appealing to freedom of choice, utterly neglects the call to responsible love and parenthood, insofar as that requires character, self-denial, and heroic self-giving. And the same technologies allow men and women to objectify each other as well, pushing to the side communion of persons, common vocation to parenthood, and respect for the personal modality of each. Theology of the body, using both biblical and personalist perspectives, does much to provoke a deep wonder at the beauty of love and the mystery of personal life, both in its peaks and valleys. Again, we recall the theme of the person in *Redemptor Hominis*: "the name for that deep amazement at man's worth and dignity is the Gospel. [...] [and] this amazement determines the Church's mission [most of all] in the modern world." This amazement or wonder at the human person, "in a hidden and mysterious way" vivifies every aspect of "authentic humanism" and it is closely connected with Christ (§ 10). This is especially true in the personal dimension of sexuality, marriage and responsible parenthood, leading John Paul II to exclaim "on the road of this vocation, how indispensable is a deepened consciousness of the meaning of the body in its masculinity and femininity [...] [and] a consciousness of the spousal

²¹ John Paul II and Michael Waldstein, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 220.

²² *Ibid.*

meaning of the body.”²³ But such an amazement before the person is neglected when an exclusively utilitarian mode of thinking seeks to reduce questions of value and right to uniform material measures such as sensual satisfactions and economic cost or to an absolutizing of the individual’s freedom of choice. All of these considerations pertain to the priority of persons over things, and the related cultural principles of ethics over technology, and spirit over matter.

Thus, returning to the conclusion of the book, and the general audience of November 28, 1984, John Paul II rounds out his commendation of Pope Paul VI for articulating the personalistic aspects the issues pertaining to human life in our day; the notion of an authentic development of the human person not only advocates the priority of the person over things but also the priority of ethics over technology. The meaning to this principle is explained in light of the theology of the body, that is, the biblical and personalistic dimensions as well.

(ii) *On the priority of ethics over technology:*

In the twentieth century, there have been many thinkers who have voiced the concern about a technology unfettered by moral rule, particularly following the discovery of nuclear power. Albert Einstein, Robert Oppenheimer, Andrej Sakharov are names that come readily to mind. Medical technology is also a field in which prominent thinkers have spoken about the need to develop a robust bio-medical ethics. These concerns are often expressed in terms of either beneficent utilitarian outcomes or deontological principles of fairness and respect for autonomy and personal consent. John Paul II, while aware of the important dimensions of ethics in the fields impacted by modern technology, actually has a more fundamental concern in view. From the perspective of the development of the person, as indicated by Pope Paul VI in *Humanae Vitae*, John Paul II turns to consider the development of character and the formation of attitudes concerning the person. Michael Waldstein notes that the term “ethos” is used 163 times in the audiences to which he treated the theology of the body.²⁴ Ethos designates a conscious attitude taken up with respect to the good. “Ethos is the interior form, the soul, as it were, of human morality. It is an inner perception of values.”²⁵ In *Sources of Renewal*, Cardinal Wojtyła would speak about ethos as a fundamental attitude or disposition of the Christian in the world.²⁶ The renewal of Vatican II depends upon the deepening awareness of faith and the corresponding formation of basic attitudes. The deepening understanding of faith brings in its train a renewal of “attitudes.” He says that an attitude is an active relationship, not yet an action, and it follows upon cogni-

²³ Ibid, 222.

²⁴ John Paul II and Michael Waldstein, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, Index, 694.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Karol Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal: The Implementation of the Second Vatican Council* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980), 99.

tion and enriched awareness. It is “taking up a position” and a readiness to act. Attitude is a lot like “habitus.”²⁷ Respect for the dignity of the person and the value of communion among human beings are linked to the “whole Christian ethos.”²⁸ He speaks about an attitude of responsibility presupposes an awareness of creation and redemption, and this forms the “Christian ethos.”²⁹ So too in his theology of the body, ethos pertains to a fundamental attitude about creation and redemption.³⁰ The concern that arises from the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* is that an ethos of responsibility and respect for the dignity of the person particularly in masculine and feminine dimensions, the gift of the child, and for the divine order. Technology easily obscures or altars attitudes towards the other and the dimension of the gift of fertility. It most of all substitutes an external reliance upon a technique for personal self-mastery from purity of heart. In his audience of August 22, 1984, John Paul II explains that Pope Paul VI expressed a concern that a proper balance be established between domination of the forces of nature and self-mastery.³¹ Paul VI further notes that contemporary cultural trends reinforce the tendency of transferring the methods proper to the first sphere to those of the second. But this extension of the means to “master nature” or seek domination of the forces of nature brings under external control man’s total being—Pope Paul VI speaks about control over the body, psychical life, social life and now even procreative and family life. This threatens the life of the person because “self-mastery” is and remains specific to human beings. The person, therefore, not only loses a dimension of character, but becomes subject in turn to the external forces of technology. This transposition of artificial means “breaks the constituents of dimension of the person, deprives man of the subjectivity proper to him and turns him into an object of manipulation.”³² Self-mastery corresponds to the “fundamental constitution of the person,” it is a virtue, a qualitative perfection of the person as a person. Therefore, he refers to self-mastery as a perfectly natural method. It is not really a method at this point, but a mode of being in the world, a readiness to act flowing from personal integrity of wholeness. The use of artificial methods nullifies the dynamism of character and hollows out the core of the person with respect to the sphere of sexuality and procreation. It is to treat one’s body as a machine, separable from the whole person. But in addition, John Paul II explains that man is a person “precisely because he possesses himself and has dominion over himself.”³³

²⁷ Ibid., 205.

²⁸ Ibid., 279

²⁹ Ibid., 293.

³⁰ Jarosław Kupczak, *Gift and Communion: John Paul II’s Theology of the Body* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 2014), 62–71

³¹ John Paul II and Michael Waldstein, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 630.

³² Ibid., 631.

³³ John Paul II and Michael Waldstein, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 632.

The exercise of self-mastery is an exercise of freedom, and it makes possible the freedom of the gift. Here he develops the theology of the body in terms of the “language of the body” in which man and woman “express themselves reciprocally in conjugal union.”³⁴ This gift, mutual self-giving constitutes the truth of the good of conjugal relationships. So too the conjugal act means not only love but also potential fruitfulness. The reliance upon artificial means deprives the relationship of its inner truth, the dynamic interplay of the unitive and procreative dimensions. The subordination of the cultivation and exercise of personal ethos to the technological control of the “forces” of nature is an evil because it hollows the ethos of love and degrades the person. The conjugal communion of husband and wife, he says, “plunges its roots into the very order of persons.”³⁵ The language of the body signifies something more than sexual reactivity and an invitation to mutual satisfaction; it signifies a personal act of love and a reciprocal expression in “the fullest and most profound way” of their masculinity and femininity and the whole truth of the human being as called to fatherhood and motherhood. So, to act in a way to obviate the full dimension of conjugal personal communion is “the essential evil of the conjugal act.”³⁶ John Paul II obviously accepts the derivation of the moral norm from natural law, as propounded in the tradition and reiterated by Pope Paul VI. But he deepens that personalistic dimension already indicated by Pope Paul VI; the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) more deeply explicated the integral vision of the human person surrounding the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*. The priority of ethics over technology requires the ethos of respect for the gift of fertility and for the divine order of human life. The use of technology to sunder the unitive and procreative meanings destroys the ethics of marriage by acting as the “arbiter” of the divine plan (disregarding the gift of fertility) and by a degradation of human sexuality in its dimension of total self-giving.³⁷

In the subsequent audience, August 29, 1984, John Paul II continues to underscore the importance of ethos in the achievement of self-mastery, for which technology cannot provide a substitute. The way of self-mastery is truly responsible as it is the attitude and act of the person in respect of the inner truth of the conjugal communion. He would deny the term “responsible” in its proper meaning as a personal ethos to the reliance upon artificial contraception. And alternately, he would not use the term “technique” to describe natural family planning or periodic abstinence. “The encyclical underlines rather clearly that here it is not merely a question of a certain *technique* but of *ethics* in the strict

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 633.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio: The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World* (Boston: Daughters of St Paul, 1981), § 32.

sense of the term.”³⁸ The reason is that natural family planning is defined by an inner attitude, an ethos, that requires an inner act of the person in order to be accomplished, whatever details of planning or charting must also be compiled. The behavior is formed by “reverence for the order established by the creator” and a “motivation of an ethical character.” It strikes me that “fertility awareness” is the best phrase to use to describe natural family planning, for this bespeaks the fundamental attitude of respect. Pope Paul VI argued that such a way of living ennobles human love because the couple strives to acquire perfect self-mastery and to form and witness to the true values of life and the family.³⁹ In the context of an integral vision of human love, an integral humanism, the married couple learns to live by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25), indicating the third principle the priority of spirit over matter. The ethos is formed by the conviction that natural law is an expression of “the Creator’s plan for the human person.”⁴⁰ The person lives not for an abstract or impersonal natural law, but out of fidelity to a personal Creator and understands nature as a providential order.

In the final audience on the “ethical problem” of birth control and fertility awareness (September 5, 1984), Paul VI returns to the principle of the priority of ethics over technology. A common objection to the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* stems from the confusion of “methods”—artificial contraception and natural family, because each may seek the same end of the spacing of births or even an avoidance of pregnancy. There is a calculative dimension to natural family planning, using the scientific knowledge of the conditions for fertility. But this happens only if one separates the “natural method” from the ethical dimension and applies the scientific knowledge in a “merely functional and even utilitarian way.”⁴¹ He stresses the importance of presenting the method rightly in emphasizing a deep grasp of the ethical dimension. The “method” is deemed honorable or noble when gives rise to the fruits of serenity and peace, generosity, and responsibility, and service. John Paul II wisely concludes that the way of regulation of births proposed by the Church is not only a way of behaving in a certain field, but “an attitude that builds on integral moral maturity of the persons and at the same time completes that maturity.”⁴² Thus, the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* provides the exemplary case for understanding the meaning of the priority of ethics over technology.

In his *Theology of the Body*, we see that John Paul II uses the perspective of an integral vision of the human person, an integral humanism, in order to open up the whole truth about the embodied human person and sexuality. In this light

³⁸ John Paul II and Michael Waldstein, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 635 (emphasis original).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 634.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 636.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 638.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 639.

we are tracing the way that his theology of the body may be better understood through the cultural principles that which he laid out in a crisp fashion in his encyclical, *Redeemer of Man*, namely, that there should always be a priority of persons over things, a priority of ethics over technology, and a priority of spirit over matter. We now turn to the third of those principles, the priority of spirit over matter. This principle brings into very sharp focus the two penultimate chapters of the entire work, on the spirit of reverence (§ 131, § 132). It is a fitting culmination of the work because it speaks directly about the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit as the ultimate source for the life of love. There are many times throughout the work in which this principle is at play, of course. He references, for example, Galatians to “live by the spirit” (5:25). But now in section 131 he lines up many key biblical passages concerning the priority of spirit over matter: (Galatians 5:25) “live by the spirit,” (Rom. 5.5) “the love of God is poured into our hearts,” (2 Corinthians 3:6) “it is the spirit who gives life,” and (John 6:63) “It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail.” It is this passage from the Gospel of John that provides the most decisive orientation. In *Redemptor Hominis* (§ 18), John Paul II says that “we intend and are trying to fathom ever more deeply the language of the truth that man’s redeemer enshrined in the phrase ‘It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail’” (John 6:63) (§ 18). These words, he says, express the “highest affirmation of man—the affirmation of the body given life by the Spirit” (§ 18). Of the three principles for a renewal of culture, priority of ethics over technology, person over things, and the priority of the spirit over matter—it is clear that this last principle is the most crucial. The respect for persons and the development of a fully human ethos often come to grief when faced with the *mysterium inequitatis*—the reality of concupiscence and sin, and other human limitations that hamper and subvert the human good. In his apostolic exhortation, penance and reconciliation, John Paul II explained that the Church’s call to be perfect “is not a mission which consists merely of a few theoretical statements and the putting forward of an ethical ideal unaccompanied by the energy with which to carry it out.”⁴³ Ethical idealism, as a wish or an aspiration, is easy; but from whence comes the energy to do good and the energy to overcome evil? We must look to the *mysterium pietatis*—Christ—who “though he was innocent chose the path of poverty, patience, austerity and one can say the penitential life.”⁴⁴ The way of Christ is the true summons to life of love. So too in these culminating sections of the theology of the body John Paul II speaks of a *donum pietatis*—a gift of reverence for what comes from God He then states explicitly that human beings cannot rise to this vocation to the communion of persons “except through

⁴³ Pope John Paul II, *Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Pope John Paul II on Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church Today: Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* 1984 (Boston: Pauline Books & Media), § 23.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, § 26.

the powers that come from the spirit, and precisely from the Holy Spirit, who purifies, enlivens, strengthens, and perfects the powers of the human spirit.⁴⁵ He follows this statement with the reference to John 6:63. John Paul II, following Pope Paul VI, then mentions the need for a life of prayer, penance, and Eucharistic communion. Living in the Spirit, the spouses receive from the Holy Spirit the gift of reverence for what is sacred; such reverence sustains and develops in the spouses “the singular sensibility for all that in their vocation and shared life carries the sign of the mystery of creation and redemption.” This gift of the Holy Spirit will initiate “man and woman particularly deeply into reverence for the two inseparable meanings of the conjugal act.”⁴⁶ The man and woman become habitually orientated towards the dignity of each person as masculine or feminine and towards the personal dignity of new life. John Paul II interprets Ephesians 5:21, “be subject to one another in the fear of Christ,” as an indication of this gift of piety and a sensibility full of veneration for “the essential values of conjugal union.” He concludes that the notion of “the practice of the honorable regulation of birth,” invoked by Paul VI, is part of Christian conjugal and family spirituality; it is interiorly true and authentic only if one lives according to the Spirit. Conjugal spirituality and the practice of the honorable regulation of birth is an exemplary case showing the significance of the principle of “the priority of spirit over matter.”

In the very last section of the book John Paul II briefly discusses the anti-thesis of conjugal spirituality in the anti-conceptive practices and mentality. The contraceptive mentality and the practice of separating the unitive and procreative dimensions of the marriage act evinces the “subjective lack of such understanding” of the integral meaning and value of marriage and reflects a lack of reverence for God’s work. This mentality and practice causes an “enormous harm from the point of view of the inner culture of the human person.”⁴⁷ The dignity of human sexuality, the interiority of conjugal life, the enlargement of mutual freedom are all at stake in this confrontation. It is through reverence for the work of God, stirred up by the Spirit, that the affective manifestations of married love deepen in the capacity for admiration for the beauty of masculinity and femininity and an appreciation of the gift of the other. It is the human and supernatural climate of virtues and the life of the spirit, sustained by the *donum pietatis*, that will thus form the inner harmony of marriage.

The principle that we respect the priority of spirit over matter is primarily a call for human receptivity to the Spirit of God, whereas the other two principles, persons over things and ethics over technology, are about human choice and habit. For a good reason then does John Paul II frequently cite Romans 5:5

⁴⁵ John Paul II and Michael Waldstein, *Man and Woman He Created Them*, 653–654.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 654.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 656.

—“the love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.” This is precisely the passage used repeatedly by St. Augustine and St. Thomas to explain the priority of grace and to correct the error of Pelagianism. The biographer of Augustine, Peter Brown, notes that Augustine’s battle with Pelagianism led him to conclude that “an act of choice is not just a matter of knowing what to choose: it is a matter in which loving and feeling are involved. [...] Men choose because they love.”⁴⁸ And yet we cannot generate our own healing—“the vital capacity to unite feeling and knowledge comes from an area outside man’s power of self-determination. ‘From a depth that we do not see, comes everything you can see.’”⁴⁹ Augustine also frequently cited Romans 5:5 to this effect.⁵⁰ That “area outside man’s power of self-determination,” that depth we do not see, is precisely the mystery of piety. The ultimate object of piety is Christ himself, and the reverence for the creation and redemption point to the work of God in Jesus Christ. John Paul II explained in his exhortation on penance, that piety becomes a “force for conversion and reconciliation” and enables the Christian to confront iniquity and sin through the mystery of Christ. “The Christian accepts the mystery, contemplates it and draws from it the spiritual strength necessary for living according to the Gospel.”⁵¹ This is an echo of John Paul II’s first proclamation in *Redeemer of Man* that “the Church lives this mystery, draws unwearyingly from it and continually seeks ways of bringing this mystery of her Master and Lord to humanity—to the peoples, the nations, the succeeding generations, and every individual human being” (§ 7) and “the mystery of Christ, in revealing the divine dimension and also the human dimension of the Redemption, and in struggling with unwearying perseverance for the dignity that each human being has reached and can continually reach in Christ, namely, the dignity of both the grace of divine adoption and the inner truth of humanity” (§ 11). It is through the work of the Holy Spirit “convincing the world about sin, righteousness and judgment” that the focus upon the paschal mystery of Christ will bear fruit in conversion and the attraction to the mystery of piety.⁵² This gift of piety, inspired by the Holy Spirit, will evoke that deep amazement at the worth and

⁴⁸ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 373.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Augustine’s *Spirit and Letter* § 5: “A man’s free-will, indeed, avails for nothing except to sin, if he knows not the way of truth; and even after his duty and his proper aim shall begin to become known to him, unless he also takes delight in and feel a love for it, he neither does his duty, nor sets about it, nor lives rightly. Now, in order that such a course may engage our affections, God’s love is shed abroad in our hearts, not through the free-will which arise from ourselves, but through the Holy Ghost, which is given to us” (Romans 5:5).

⁵¹ *Reconciliation and Penance*, § 21.

⁵² Pope John Paul II. 1986. *The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World: Dominum et Vivificantem: Encyclical Letter of John Paul II* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media), §§ 32, 33, 38.

dignity of the human person in the vocation to marriage and family and this gift sustains the love by which it is practiced and lived.

C. S. Lewis and Y. R. Simon on Technology

Other philosophers have explored this theme of the threat of technology to human dignity, noteworthy are Clive Staples Lewis and Yves René Simon. Their work can help shed some light on the work of John Paul II.

In the concluding chapter of his masterpiece entitled *The Abolition of Man*, C. S. Lewis takes up the theme of the “conquest of nature.”⁵³ This phrase derives from Rene Descartes (1596–1650) in his *Discourse on Method*. Rejecting the ancient philosophy for its lack of effective control, Descartes says that he wished to found a new practical philosophy; by “knowing the force and actions of the fire, water, air and stars, the heavens, and all other bodies that surround us, just as we understand the various skills of our craftsmen, we could make ourselves the masters and possessors of nature.”⁵⁴ Descartes promised as the fruit of his new philosophy, “an infinity of devices that would enable us to enjoy without pain the fruits of the earth and all the goods one finds in it, but also principally the maintenance of health.”⁵⁵ But after a three-hundred-year development of technological society, Lewis wisely judges that “man’s mastery of nature turns out to be mean man’s mastery of man with the help of nature as an instrument.”⁵⁶ And it is very interesting that the Anglican Lewis chose five technological inventions to make his point: airplane, electronic communication (radio), artificial contraceptives, modern drugs or pharmaceuticals and atomic power. The benefits may be many, but the dangers are present as well. The planes are used to destroy cities with bombs, the radio is used for mass propaganda for the rule of tyrants, artificial contraception may be used for eugenics and the suppression of an en-

⁵³ C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1947), 80–91. See Michael D. Aeschliman, *The Restitution of Man: C. S. Lewis and the Case Against Scientism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

⁵⁴ Rene Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1985). See Richard Kennington, “Descartes and the Mastery of Nature,” in *Organism, Medicine, and Metaphysics*, ed. S. F. Spicker (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1978), 212. Reprinted in Richard Kennington, *Modern Origins*, ed. Frank Hunt and Pamela Krauss (Lexington Books, 2004), 198–203. See also “On the Catholic Audience of Leo Strauss,” in *Leo Strauss and His Catholic Readers*, ed. Geoffrey M. Vaughn, 167–189 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2018).

⁵⁵ Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, part 6.

⁵⁶ Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, 69.

tire generation or population, pharmaceuticals. Can be used to control the mind and emotion or lead to serious addictions, and atomic has unleashed a weapon of mass destruction. Therefore, Lewis argues that we must understand the use of these devices and also understand that private persons through private choice can lord it over others, as also nation may dominate other nations, governments over people, or one generation over another generation. We must understand that progress is ambivalent and that human beings get weaker as well as stronger.

Lewis expresses his concern that the final stage of mastery of nature must come to the project to master human nature. And that could well mean that some men make others what they please, or make themselves what they please. The former is a possibility because scientific technique and state power have grown together. Lewis provides in this book a philosophical rationale for the principle of the “priority of people over things.”

However, more troubling is the cultural degradation of the human context of speech and symbolic deeds. The moral meaning of action is reduced to a utilitarian calculus or a private whim. Modern culture presents the spectacle of relativism and so the standard for action becomes filled by an impulse “What I want” and offers no ground for choice. This irrational will to power could give rise to a quest for the good of the group and constitute a new totalitarianism.

The deep philosophical error, according to Lewis, is reductionism: man is reduced to matter and becomes a material to be used. In order to master nature we must first reduce nature to the empirical and quantifiable. This allows it to be manipulated. Technology strives for efficiency, predictability, and repeatability. We lose a sense of mystery and the qualities of nature. Lewis asks whether we can be human without freedom, responsibility, and adventure. The human person is shorn of intrinsic worth, or dignity as a person to be respected as an end in himself.

Lewis pleads for a new respect for human integrity with personal dignity (intrinsic teleology), freedom and responsibility (capable of living a moral meaning), and also physical integrity. He concludes that only objective value, natural law, or what he calls the Way (Tao) in a previous chapter, can save us from slavery and tyranny.⁵⁷

The last chapter of *Philosophy of Democratic Government*, by Yves R. Simon, discusses technology and its implications for democracy.⁵⁸ The book as a whole contains a thoughtful and spirited defense of liberal democratic government.⁵⁹ In a later work, Simon considers confidence in human ability to achieve

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁵⁸ Yves R. Simon, *Philosophy of Democratic Government* (University of Chicago Press, 1951).

⁵⁹ For an overview of his political philosophy, see my articles: “Approaches to Democratic Equality,” in *Freedom in the Modern World*, ed. Michael Torre (Notre Dame Press, 1989), 237–252; and “Maritain and Simon’s Use of Thomas Aquinas in the Justification of Democracy,”

good in this life, including the use of technology, essentially a humanistic position.⁶⁰ But in chapter five, entitled Democracy and Technology, he explains how technology brings a lust for power, extreme and stultifying division of labor, urban anomie and loneliness, and a fluidity and mobility that may well destroy family life. As it is, democracy demands little, welcomes soft characters, prefers the easy way: in fact, Simon thinks that “democracy increases enormously the demand for heroism.”⁶¹ Yet technological power combined with demand for freedom yields precisely the conditions for hedonistic excess. His argument highlights the importance of a heroic conception of marriage and family for the long term vitality of democracy.

We must first begin with Simon’s definition of technique as a rational discipline designed to assure the mastery of man over physical nature through the application of scientifically determined laws.⁶² Technology is not the assemblage of things and equipment. It is a rational discipline, which may well entail external things; but technique, as rational discipline, may also involve the use of the body, cognitive powers, the will, and sense appetite. Simon says that dominion over nature is part of man’s “vocation”—this is a rational truth reasserted by revelation (Gen 1:28). It is presumably a rational truth because it is normal for man to proceed from empirical to scientific procedures and the acknowledgement that human beings live by “art and reasoning.”⁶³ In *Philosophy of Democratic Government* he points out that “the disciplines meant to assure the mastery of man over physical nature appeal to human interests and have aroused such historic forces that their falling into disuse or their failing to achieve progress are extremely unlikely.”⁶⁴ In other words, the communicability of modern science and its applicability to use combined with human interests (“the products of technique are in countless circumstances the only means to survival and freedom from pain and drudgery”) are conditions for its permanent progress. The first law of technological society is therefore a “tendency to remain technological.” Technological society is a society in which certain effects

in *The Legacy of Aquinas*, ed. David Gallagher (Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 149–172.

⁶⁰ Yves R. Simon, *Practical Knowledge* (Fordham 1991), 139: (Humanism) “As an attitude it is characterized by respect for all men and confidence in the ability of mankind to accomplish good things in this world.”

⁶¹ Simon, *Philosophy of Democratic Government*, 17, 19.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 267.

⁶³ “Hominum genus [vivunt] arte et rationibus.” See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book I, chap. 1 (980a28). Found in St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle* (Chicago, 1961), 5. Aquinas comments “Men have as their chief power a universal reason by means of which they live [...]. Man is ruled perfectly by reason perfected by art.” 11. “Perfectum hominis regimen est per rationem arte perfectum.” For Latin edition, S. Thomae Aquinatis, *In Duodecim Libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Exposition* (Marietti, 1950), 5, 8.

⁶⁴ Simon, *Philosophy of Democratic Government*, 272.

of technique come to radically and permanently change the conditions and expectations of human life. Simon describes six categories of significant change concerning: time, nature, life, reason, labor, and leadership.⁶⁵ First, technology has speeded the time frame in which projects can be accomplished, thereby weakening “our sense of dependence upon the past and future of society”⁶⁶ and increasing a sense of loneliness. Second, there is an increased ratio of artificial things over natural things; third, an increased ratio of the nonliving to the living things in our environment. By changing these ratios “technology threatens to impair the communion of man with universal nature.”⁶⁷ Fourth, a technological society raises the expectation of a “greater amount of rationality in the arrangement of things.”⁶⁸ The ratios of danger and security are altered; great confidence is placed in human power to control chance. But, as a result, the world of man becomes “irritatingly unintelligible.” The “untrustworthiness of man” is a scandal as we come to “trust physical processes controlled by techniques.” As Simon puts it, technology is not only a material cause of modern society, but also its exemplary cause—a model for how life is to be approached. All of these effects of technology permeate modern culture and they help to explain why a technological approach to the regulation of birth so easily displaces the approached based upon ethos and ultimately upon a conjugal spirituality.

Simon provides a philosophical rationale for the principle of “the priority of ethics over technology.” Ethics itself is a matter of the “good human use both of things and of one’s powers in relation to oneself as well as other people.”⁶⁹ Good use of things and one’s powers requires knowledge of human finalities, that is, a respect for and nurturing of an integral human good. One needs a knowledge of human nature and human perfection. Once we can attain a proper understanding of nature (derived from Aristotelian philosophy and doctrine of creation) the contours of natural law ethics are readily discernable.⁷⁰ Simon uses the classic Thomistic text concerning the three levels of human good and finality—first, the good of life and preservation of being, shared with all things; second, the good of marriage, procreation and family life shared to some degree with other forms of animal life; and third, the distinctively human quest for friendly association, truth and ultimately God himself.

But natural law, as a law or rule for behavior, is still on the level of universal precept; human action requires attention to particularities; it requires prudence and virtue. The virtuous man is in a state of existential readiness to act; this is the result of years of education and formation, but it is a readiness to know what

⁶⁵ Ibid., 274ff.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 275.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 276.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Yves R. Simon, *The Definition of Moral Virtue* (Fordham University Press, 1986), 47.

⁷⁰ Yves R. Simon, *The Tradition of Natural Law* (Fordham University Press, 1992), chap. 3.

to do and a facility to do what is good. It requires a disposition of the soul; an ordering of its parts—moderation of appetites, striving for what is a noble good. Ethics is guided by the ancient virtue of prudence.

In a technological society, the process of calculation of utility is substituted for prudence. There is a rise to prominence of technical experts and their instrumental reason, displacing authentic leaders, “men of virtue and human experience.” The experts focus on new techniques and they provide a knowledge of how to control behavior. Their schemes to achieve infallibly certain outcomes must come to grief against human freedom and the contingency of human affairs. Simon remarks that “the mystery characteristic of human affairs becomes more and more bewildering and uncongenial.”⁷¹ The contraceptive mentality nurtures the dreams of perfect control and readily abandons the mystery of the human person in his or her freedom and vocation. Yves Simon warns us of the danger of the mentality of instrumental reason: the “rationalism born of technological pride hates human liberty both on account of its excellence and its wretchedness.”⁷² It is, he says, the least reconcilable enemy of democracy and liberty. The most “efficient” technology and the right technical knowledge will not automatically produce good and virtuous outcomes or dependable behavior. Only virtue and the disposition of character can provide the modicum of stability or dependability in human affairs, and only the gift of piety can provide a decent respect for the mystery of human existence and the dignity of the human person.

John Paul II on Technology in *Redemptor Hominis*

Pope John Paul II shares similar concerns to Lewis Yves Simon, and other philosophers of our day on the challenge of technology. He not only provides a comprehensive set of principles and priorities for the development of a personalistic culture, he also provides a sharpened analysis of the underlying dynamism as a turning back upon the person who produces or uses technology. In *Redeemer of Man*, he wrote: “Man therefore lives increasingly in fear. He is afraid that what he produces—not all of it, of course, or even most of it, but *part of it and precisely that part that contains a special share of his genius and initiative—can radically turn against himself*; he is afraid that it can become the means and instrument for an unimaginable self-destruction, compared with which all the cataclysms and catastrophes of history known to us seem to fade away.”⁷³ We face threats today as we always have, from the envi-

⁷¹ Simon, *Philosophy of Democratic Government*, 277.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 278.

⁷³ *Redeemer of Man*, § 15 (emphasis added).

ronment, from diseases, from violence and war and so on. But a sign of modern life is a sense of threat from the very things that we have made or produced.⁷⁴ The object of this fear or the source of this threat includes the actual products or the processes by which they are made and the technology itself—such as cars, trains, electronic devices, tools, forms of energy, buildings, foods, medicines, and also weapons. But the threat is not simply, nor exclusively, nor even primarily the products and the tools; John Paul II interestingly says that it includes, “even more so,” the “work of his intellect” and the “tendencies of his will.” It is a threat and a corresponding fear concerning our own human activity of intellect and will because of the concentration of a tremendous power in these activities and products. Of course it is the concentration of power that enables individuals and groups to accomplish greater tasks and projects. But these very products, activities, and concentrations of power can “turn against man himself” (Lat. *contra ipsum hominem vertitur*). John Paul II repeats three times the notion that there is a *recoil* or *turning back* of what is the result precisely of human genius and initiative on or against the individual person, human associations, or even mankind as a whole. Technology can be directly turned back upon the human, as C. S. Lewis explains, or indirectly turned back at the human person in ways more hidden or more long term.

John Paul II says that this recoil of technology is “the main chapter of the drama of present-day human existence in its broadest and universal dimension.” In other words, the “crisis of our times” is generally the question of how we can live with the very things and activities that have gained us such a tremendous progress and betterment of human existence. In a way, it is about the ambivalence of human power, that it can be used for good or for evil. More fundamentally, the crisis is about how we choose to live as human persons, indeed whether we continue to understand ourselves, or rather, how we come to understand ourselves, as human persons. It is a crisis of humanism, a crisis of spirit. The human crisis is about, he said, the “work of his intellect” and the “tendencies of his will.” What is or what shall be the main work of the intellect? What are or what shall be deemed the noble tendencies of will? Must we seek wisdom and love as the perfections of intellect and will? Do wisdom and love even count anymore as essentially human and the distinctly human? Or are they considered now otiose and among the ideals of old that must be jettisoned for the

⁷⁴ The man of today seems ever to be under threat from what he produces, that is to say, from the result of the work of his hands and, even more so, of the work of his intellect and the tendencies of his will. All too soon, and often in an unforeseeable way, what this manifold activity of man yields is not only subjected to “alienation,” in the sense that it is simply taken away from the person who produces it, but rather it turns against man himself, at least in part, through the indirect consequences of its effects returning on himself. It is or can be directed against him. This seems to make up the main chapter of the drama of present-day human existence in its broadest and universal dimension. *Ibid.*

ongoing freedom and progress of mankind? What then would be the measures of freedom and progress?

It is very interesting that John Paul II uses the term *alienation* to describe this process of the recoil of the human against the human. This is a term that he first heard among the Marxists, but as a pastor and philosopher he developed it along personalist lines. Alienation is the condition whereby a person finds what properly belongs to him assigned to another person or object, or a condition in which one is estranged from the world and society. It was the experience of life in a communist society that led Pope John Paul II to rework the notion of alienation, especially in an important essay "Participation or Alienation."⁷⁵ In that work he states emphatically, "The central problem of life for humanity in our times, perhaps in all times, is this: participation or alienation?"⁷⁶ He says specifically, "civilization itself and its so-called progress must be evaluated in light of this basic criterion: do they create conditions for the development of participation? Do they enable us to experience other human beings as other I's? Or do they do just the opposite? Do they obstruct participation and ravage and destroy this basic fabric of human existence and activity which must be realized in common with others?"⁷⁷ Thus, he reorients the problem of "alienation" to the fulfillment of the person in love and community. He also reorients the question of human progress and development: "the development of technology and the development of contemporary civilization, which is marked by the ascendancy of technology, demand a proportional development of morals and ethics."⁷⁸ The essential and fundamental question we must ask is the following: "Does this progress make human life on earth "more human" and more "worthy of man"? In some aspects it no doubt has done so. But we must make a stand on the notion of humanity, what is it to be "more human" or more "worthy of human life"? It is an existential question more than it is a theoretical question. In *Redeemer of Man* John Paul II sets some markers. For "man, as man, to become truly better" we should ask: "Are we more mature spiritually? Are we more aware of the dignity of our humanity? Are we more responsible? Are we more open to others, especially the neediest and the weakest, and readier to give and to aid all?"

With these questions about alienation and authentic human development, John Paul II approaches the problem of technology, the crisis of our time and the mission of the Church with the three principles we have now reviewed: the priority of persons over things, the priority of ethics over technology, and the priority of spirit over matter. His Theology of the Body, a re-reading of *Humanae Vitae* in the perspective of personalism and a more expansive biblical theology, emerges

⁷⁵ Karol Wojtyła, "Participation or Alienation?," in *Person and Community* (New York 1993), 197–207. See also Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person* (Dordrecht 1979), chap. 7, 261–298.

⁷⁶ Wojtyła, "Participation or Alienation," 206.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ *Redeemer of Man*, § 15.4.

as a key to his pontificate and the new evangelization. It is in the very heart of marriage and the family that the “recoil” of technology and the alienation of persons has such a devastating effect. The tendencies of human intelligence and volition are stymied and disordered by the mentality and practice of contraception. The human person is alienated from nature, the spousal “other,” the generational links, and from God himself. Renewal and reformation must therefore begin here at the most fundamental level and origin of life and society. The family is the basic cell or foundation of society.⁷⁹ In *Humanae Vitae* St. Pope Paul VI laid out the solid argument and teaching about marriage and family and he voiced a prophetic warning. Lewis, by sounding the alarm about the potential for the “abolition of man,” had hoped to expose the ideology to awaken people to resist the reductivism of the new civilization. It has progressed now to a more ominous form and Lewis has little to offer beyond the prophetic warning. Lewis, nevertheless, was a consummate apologist who brought many to a renewed understanding of the faith. So too, Yves R. Simon had little to propose to counter the negative trends of technology in modern democracies other than the rural ideal because of its closeness to nature and the revival of natural law. Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II stands out in his distinctive witness to hope. I think that this is due to his personalism and his awareness of the subjectivity of the person and the lived experience of freedom and love. He was hopeful that the very distortion of the technological pressures would arouse the human person to seek a better way of life. He develops this idea in section 18 of *Redeemer of Man*. We can catch a glimpse of this attitude in his remarks in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* on why he thinks the young respond positively to the theology of the body:

It is this vocation to love that naturally allows us to draw close to the young. As a priest I realized this very early. I felt almost an inner call in this direction. It is necessary to prepare young people for marriage, it is necessary to teach them love. Love is not something that is learned, and yet there is nothing else as important to learn! As a young priest I learned to love human love. This has been one of the fundamental themes of my priesthood—my ministry in the pulpit, in the confessional, and also in my writing. If one loves human love, there naturally arises the need to commit oneself completely to the service of “fair love,” because love is fair, it is beautiful. After all, young people are always searching for the beauty in love. They want their love to be beautiful. If they give in to weakness, following models of behavior that can rightly be considered a “scandal in the contemporary world,” in the depths of their hearts they still desire a beautiful and pure love [and] they know that only God can give them this love.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ “Thus the family, in which various generations come together and help one another grow wiser and harmonize personal rights with the other requirements of social life, is the foundation of society.” *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), § 52.

⁸⁰ John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, 122–123.

In section 18 of *Redeemer of Man*, John Paul II remarks that these efforts of proclamation in the encyclical are an attempt “to fathom ever more deeply” the phrase “it is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail” (John 6:63). In paragraph 18.2 he explains the significance of the phrase, “the spirit gives life.” Spirit refers to the divine being, and the Holy Spirit of course, but it also refers to the human being; the deepest powers and capacities of the human person, intelligence and will, are spiritual powers. He indicates this when he says that the human person may range beyond the limit of the temporal and finite, even in the midst of his care and anxiety about temporal affairs.

John Paul II employs the Augustinian mode of approach to the life of the spirit, through reflection and the awareness of the certitudes of personal existence and the restless of the intellect and will in search of the absolute in truth and goodness: “You stir us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is unquiet until it rests in you.”⁸¹ John Paul II speaks about the “creative” restlessness of the human person because it ever propels the human person to seek and to search beyond the immediately given and the limits of the surrounding environment. In this creative restlessness, he says, there “beats and pulsates what is most deeply human—the search for truth, the insatiable need for the good, hunger for freedom, nostalgia for the beautiful, and the voice of conscience.”⁸² Here we find the reason for his hope in the young and an expectation for a generous response to vocation to marriage and family. The human person inquires and searches after truth through the cognitive powers; the person must always be evaluating and re-evaluating choice, action, deliberation and art in light of the good; and the person through will is zealous for its own freedom and self-determination; the awareness of the beautiful arouses a longing or “nostalgia” for that which somehow eludes our grasp; and the attention to the “voice” of conscience demands our honest and resolute response. By describing these activities as “pulsating” or knocking indicates the presence in the human person of a dynamism, an active potential that must be developed and actualized. In other contexts, John Paul II spoke about personal existence being a “gift” and “task”—a gift because these aims of personal life such as truth, beauty, and goodness are something that transcend our power, we discover them, receive them with gratitude, and at times with joy and surprise; they are a “task” because we must take responsibility in their cultivation, their activation and protection. In addition, they are described as a “beating” or “palpitating,” because like the heart’s own rhythms and constant exchanges, so too the very life of the person must be

⁸¹ St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, translation by Sr. Maria Boulding, edited by David Vincent Meconi (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 3. “Tu excites, ut laudare te delectet, quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.” *Confessions* Vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 2.

⁸² *Redeemer of Man*, § 18.

characterized by the daily rhythms and exchanges with other persons and the world that embody a respect for truth, goodness, and beauty. The transcendentals, as they are called—point towards God as their source and their exemplar.

It is a cultural opening for the Church to “appeal to Spirit to obtain the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Love, will respond to such asking, seeking, and knocking. In the face of the materialisms of communism and consumerism, John Paul II confidently proclaims, “the Spirit is the answer to the materialism of our age.”⁸³ This is a critical insight. The materialisms of the modern world are oppressive and depressing. They are behind a culture of death. The Spirit is the Lord and Giver of Life. In the modern world, the person is denied any such fulfillment according to its materialist ideologies and its dominant practices of consumerism, sensualism, or workaholicism. The negative signs of the times, the threats to human dignity, such as a technology out of control, a reductive scientism, and political tyranny may all strip away the dignity from the human person and shatter the coherence of the world, but the restlessness of the heart surges against these strictures and assaults. Many may exhaust themselves in futile pursuits, and others may despair of ever finding, still Pope John Paul II holds out the promise of redemption through these first stirrings of the spirit of man. The very denial of the spirit can have the opposite effect—that of stirring up the hunger and longing of the soul for something greater, for the full truth, a fair love, an authentic good, ultimately for God himself. For it is these “materialisms that give birth to so many forms of insatiability in the human heart.”

John Paul II writes, “This invocation addressed to the Spirit to obtain the Spirit is really a constant self-insertion into the full magnitude of the mystery of the Redemption, in which Christ, united with the Father and with each man, continually communicates to us the Spirit who places within us the sentiments of the Son and directs us towards the Father.”⁸⁴ The gift of piety is the infused love of the adopted son for the Father, and a love of all mankind as brothers and sisters made in the image and likeness of God and enveloped by Christ in his redeeming act.⁸⁵ The hunger for the spirit is a hunger for Christ. “This is why the Church of our time—a time particularly hungry for the Spirit, because it is hungry for justice, peace, love, goodness, fortitude, responsibility, and human dignity—must concentrate and gather around that Mystery, finding in it the light and the strength that are indispensable for her mission.”⁸⁶ John Paul II’s defense and explication of *Humanae Vitae*, now called the theology of the body,

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid. He cites Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6.

⁸⁵ John P. Hittinger, “Meekness, Piety and Reconciliation.” Doctor Communis Le beatitudini, programma di Cristo per l’evangelizzazione in ogni tempo e cultura / The Beatitudes, Christ’s Programme for Evangelisation for all Time and for Every Culture (2015).

⁸⁶ *Redeemer of Man*, § 18.

is an invocation of the Spirit to obtain the Spirit. His confidence in this teaching derives from the *mysterium pietatis*.

Conclusion: A Sign of Contradiction

Pope Paul VI proclaimed in the encyclical letter that his teaching would be a sign of contradiction:

It is to be anticipated that perhaps not everyone will easily accept this particular teaching. There is too much clamorous outcry against the voice of the Church, and this is intensified by modern means of communication. But it comes as no surprise to the Church that she, no less than her divine Founder, is destined to be a “sign of contradiction.” She does not, because of this, evade the duty imposed on her of proclaiming humbly but firmly the entire moral law, both natural and evangelical. Since the Church did not make either of these laws, she cannot be their arbiter—only their guardian and interpreter. It could never be right for her to declare lawful what is in fact unlawful, since that, by its very nature, is always opposed to the true good of man.⁸⁷

Karol Wojtyła worked closely with and along the side of Paul VI.⁸⁸ After *Humanae Vitae* a firestorm of dissent and scorn poured forth from within the Church⁸⁹ and from the world. In *Redeemer of Man*, John Paul II stated that he admired his faith and his personal sanctity; he expressed his “amazement” at his “profound wisdom and his courage” and “constancy and patience in the difficult post-conciliar period.”⁹⁰ He preserved “a providential tranquility” and “always maintained unhesitating hope in the Church’s solidity.”⁹¹ The solidity of the Church derives from its unity of faith and the fullness of the truth entrusted to her. Paul VI made him a cardinal and he invited him to preach the papal household Lenten retreat in 1976. He chose the passage from St. Luke to unify his talks. “He is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and as a sign of contradiction” (Luke 2:34). He opened the retreat with this introduction:

Don’t these words, spoken at the sight of a little child, bring together in a wonderful synthesis all that has the most profound impact on us and unceasingly perturbs us? Are they not a sign of our own times, or at least the key to un-

⁸⁷ Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* (July 25, 1968), § 18.

⁸⁸ Karol Wojtyła, “Crisis in Morality,” in *Crisis in Morality: The Vatican Speaks Out* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1969), 1–8 and *Fruitful and Responsible Love* (New York, Seabury Press, 1979), 11–35.

⁸⁹ See: Janet Smith, *Humanae Vitae: A Generation Later* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 161–193.

⁹⁰ *Redeemer of Man*, § 4.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

derstanding the various symptoms displayed by modern life, symptoms with which the Second Vatican Council concerned itself, and the Synod of Bishops too, and which are of continual concern to the Holy See and all bishops together with the People of God? Might not these words be a distinctive definition of Christ and his Church? “The sign of contradiction.” [...] May this light give us strength and make us capable of accepting and loving the whole truth of Christ, of loving it all the more as the world all the more contradicts it.⁹²

The sign of contradiction he applies to the entire Church and her mission, as it applied to Jesus Christ. But it also applies with specific relevance to the publication of *Humanae Vitae*, as Cardinal Wojtyła makes very clear. In a section on truth and the mystery of man, he preaches about Christ as a great prophet who, like other prophets, was rejected by his own.

In the section entitled “The Mystery of Man: Truth,” Wojtyła explains why Jesus Christ was a sign of contradiction: his salvific truth is an “extremely demanding one, fraught with difficulties.”⁹³ Accordingly the Church’s activities and the Supreme Pontiff becomes a “sign of contradiction.” He is very aware of the rejection of the Church’s teaching on sexuality and marriage when he declares:

In recent years there has been a striking increase in contradiction, whether one thinks of the organized opposition mounted by the anti-Gospel lobby or of the opposition that springs up in apparently Christian and ‘humanistic’ circles linked with certain Christian traditions. One has only to recall the contestation of the Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. These examples are enough to bring home the fact that we are in the front line in a lively battle for the dignity of man.⁹⁴

The Church’s fight for the dignity of the human person uplifts freedom and responsibility, but not “an unbridled exercise of freedom” as demanded by the abortion advocates.⁹⁵ The human person exercises such freedom “justly and responsibly” through a choice for service such as marriage or priesthood. The Church must make its efforts by the influence of “men’s hearts and in human conscience.” It is through the mystery of Christ, “a great prophet.”

In 1976, Cardinal Wojtyła visited Orchard Lake Schools in Michigan and gave a very stirring speech, reflecting one of his meditations in *Sign of Contradiction* on the deep conflict between the Word and the “anti-word,” the Gospel and the “anti-Gospel.”⁹⁶ At Orchard Lake, he said:

⁹² Wojtyła, *Sign of Contradiction*, 7–8.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 27–31.

We are now facing the final confrontation between the Church and the anti-Church, of the Gospel and the anti-Gospel. [...] We all realize it is not an easy matter, and a great deal of it depends upon the outcome on the Vistula. I think that Polonia is perhaps the most aware of it, and it seems to me that other layers of American society are less enlightened in this respect and simply eliminate the problem from their sphere of interests. Polonia, which shares Poland's sentiments, feels the significance of the confrontation going on at the banks of the Vistula. It is a trial of not only our nation and Church, but in a sense a test of two thousand years culture and Christian civilization with all of its consequences for human dignity, human rights and the rights of nations.⁹⁷

Wojtyła saw the opposition to Pope Paul VI as part of an on-going spiritual and cultural battle. And yet there are always those in the Church and in positions of political and cultural influence who continue to “eliminate the problem from their sphere of interests”—many politicians, educators, and Church leaders are oblivious to the culture of death and the primacy of the pro-life issues. Many fail to support the mission to promulgate and inculcate the whole truth about man and God and thus plant the seeds of Catholic culture. The teaching of *Humanae Vitae* is a prime example. Wojtyła hoped that his visit to the United States to attend the Eucharistic Congress and to meet with Polonia would encourage those leaders to be courageous in their witness to the truth. At the conclusion of the *Sign of Contradiction*, Karol Wojtyła returns to the theme of Christ as the light of the world and the sign of contradiction. He lays out before the Holy Father those things which “distress the soul of the successor to Peter.” These include the great poverty of many peoples, ignored by the rich and powerful of the world, many of whom profess Christianity. Also distressing is the way in which Christians are marginalized in many societies, again professing to respect religious freedom. Others seek to reshape Christianity and adapt its message to “suit mankind in this era of progress” and the program of consumerism, ignoring the eternal and transcendent end of the human person. He saves his last criticism for the totalitarian states (such as the Soviet Union, although not mentioned by name). Here we find a direct opposition to Christ—“an undisguised rejection of the Gospel, a flat denial of the truth about God, man and the world as proclaimed by the Gospel.”⁹⁸ We witness the brutal treatment of religion by the closure of churches and the execution of priests. This program uses a “face saving” means of persecution by claiming to act of sin on behalf of

⁹⁷ Frank Renkiewicz, *For God, Country and Polonia: One Hundred Years of Orchard Lake Schools* (Center for Polish Studies and Culture: Orchard Lake, MI, 1985). For background on Orchard Lake, see: Joseph Swastek, *The Formative Years of the Polish Seminary in the United States* (Center for Polish Studies and Culture: Orchard Lake, MI, 1985).

⁹⁸ Wojtyła, *Sign of Contradiction*, 200.

the poor and oppressed and by proclaiming it supports freedom of conscience. But this program is “above all against Christ.” Faith in Christ is condemned and banished because by such faith a man’s strength has the strength to resist the “anonymity of the collective.”⁹⁹

In his forward to the Italian edition of the book *Sign of Contradiction*, Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński said: “Bishop Karol carried the ‘yes’ from the altar of St. Stanislaus, Bishop and Martyr, whose relics are preserved in the historic shrine of Wawel, and brought the good news.”¹⁰⁰ His deep and lively faith “has released in him an apostolic fervor that today more than ever is the indispensable prerequisite for ‘renewing the face of the earth.’”¹⁰¹ For this reason “his gaze is on the ‘sign’ whom the world contradicts, but he views with serenity this contradiction hurled at Christ by the world.”¹⁰² This is really a remarkable passage, refining, perhaps even redefining the more common interpretation of Vatican II and *Gaudium et Spes* concerning “the signs of the times.” For the signs, Wyszyński points to the concluding sentences of the book: “Christ, Sign of Contradiction. And the woman clothed with the sun ‘a great sign in the heaven.’”¹⁰³ The time of great hope is also a time of great trial, for the “same temptation that we know from the third chapter of Genesis” is more deeply rooted than ever. Indeed, Cardinal Wyszyński says, the “human family may wander far from Christ, but then weary of exploring blind alleys, it will come back with renewed hope.” The renewal would come, must come, only from the “sign of contradiction,” and from the woman who held the child in her arms. Cardinal Wyszyński thus says: “The world does battle with the son and his mother. That is why she is ever present in the mystery of Christ and the Church.”¹⁰⁴

In technological modern civilization the contradiction to human dignity stems from the pressures of technological mindset, as we saw above in the thought of C. S. Lewis and the “abolition of man.” In *Sign of Contradiction*, Wojtyła explains it as follows:

Nowadays, there are so many attempts to reduce everything in human life to statistics, to mathematical formulae. In some places, under some political systems, man himself seems lost in a forest of figures which are used as

⁹⁹ Ibid., 201.

¹⁰⁰ Wojtyła, *Sign of Contradiction*, xiii.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., xiii–xiv.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 206.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., xiv. Concerning the victory of the Church, John Paul II said in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*: “Mary’s participation in the victory of Christ became clear to me above all from the experience of my people. Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński told me that his predecessor, Cardinal August Hlond, had spoken these prophetic words as he was dying: ‘The victory, if it comes, will come through Mary.’ During my pastoral ministry in Poland, I saw for myself how those words were coming true,” 220.

tools to regulate his existence. And man cannot remain oblivious of the great threat posed by this gigantic machine at the disposal of material power, or rather the many powers, the veritable imperialisms which vie endlessly with one another but which cannot ultimately claim to have at heart the good or the real happiness of mankind. Indeed, the reverse is true: for those powers, those imperialisms, see in man—in man's freedom and inner and truth—the biggest of all threats to themselves.¹⁰⁵

This passage is very good because it identifies the threat to human existence not simply in one political system, such as communism or capitalism, nor in technology itself, but in the very basis of modern existence. The “machines” of progress indicate not modern equipment or technology as such, but the new attitude towards man—the reduction to an object of manipulation or use. The first line of defense of the dignity of the person is the teaching of the whole truth about man and the appeal to the search for the full truth. For the dignity of man is in knowing and living the truth about the human good. In this retreat to Pope Paul VI, he said, “Christ, the great prophet is the one who proclaims divine truth; and he also shows the dignity of man to be bound up with truth: with truth honestly sought, earnestly pondered, joyfully accepted as the greatest treasure of the human spirit, witnessed to by word and deed in the sight of men.”¹⁰⁶ And yet the suppression of truth and the denial of man's right to the full truth is widespread in the modern world. “Given our society today, in which falsity and hypocrisy reign supreme, public opinion is manipulated, consciences are bludgeoned, apostasy is sometimes imposed by force and there is organized persecution of the faith—the Christ who bore witness to the truth is more than ever the Christ for us—“*Christus propheta magnus*” (Luke 7:16).

The defense of the truth about human life in our day, as faithfully and fearlessly proclaimed by St. Pope Paul VI, stands at the center of the pontificate of St. John Paul II. The remarkable teaching on the theology of the body is one of the great achievements of his pontificate. The reasons for this are proclaimed at the beginning of his pontificate in *Redeemer of Man*.

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¹⁰⁵ Wojtyła, *Sign of Contradiction*, 50.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

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John Hittinger

Jean-Paul II au sujet de l'encyclique *Humanae Vitae* et de la supériorité de l'éthique sur la technologie

Résumé

L'article traite de l'approche holistique des questions liées à la famille et à la vie humaine présentée par Jean-Paul II mais qui avait déjà été formulée par le pape Paul VI dans l'encyclique *Humanae Vitae* (1968). Cette approche est une illustration de ses principes de renouveau culturel contenus dans l'encyclique *Redemptor Hominis* (1979). Une triade de principes étroitement reliés (la primauté de la personne sur les choses, la priorité de l'éthique sur la technologie et la priorité de l'esprit sur la matière) constitue des règles qui aident à discerner le véritable progrès de la culture moderne. Contrairement à l'opinion dominante qui veut que la contraception constitue une occasion de progrès énormes pour les femmes et la société dans son ensemble, l'auteur affirme que la nature ambivalente de la technologie moderne montrée par des auteurs, tels que Yves R. Simon et C.S. Lewis, met en relief un grand inconvénient de la contraception : un réel risque de dégradation de la relation conjugale et une menace pour le plein développement de l'être humain. Considérer la technologie comme un moyen de réguler les naissances en lieu et place du choix personnel et de la vertu renverse le principe de la priorité de l'éthique sur la technique et permet également de manipuler les femmes, comme l'avait déjà prévu le pape Paul VI. Cette question est une négation évidente du principe de la primauté de la personne sur les choses. L'erreur fondamentale réside dans une philosophie matérialiste de la vie qui rejette la reconnaissance de la priorité de l'esprit sur la matière. La lutte pour les questions mentionnées ci-dessus et se trouvant au cœur de l'encyclique *Humane Vitae* est une lutte pour le sens ultime de l'existence humaine perçue de manière théiste ou anti-théiste, évangélique ou anti-évangélique ; c'est pourquoi, elle sera toujours un « signe d'opposition » .

Mots-clés: le Pape Jean-Paul II, le Pape Paul VI, éthique, *Humanae Vitae*, PFN, moyens de contraception, technologie, *Redemptor Hominis*, C. S. Lewis, Yves R. Simon, «Signe d'opposition»

John Hittinger

Giovanni Paolo II sull'enciclica *Humanae Vitae* e sulla superiorità dell'etica sulla tecnologia

Sommario

L'articolo tratta dell'approccio olistico alle questioni relative alla famiglia e alla vita umana presentato da Giovanni Paolo II ma che fu stato già formulato da Paolo VI nell'enciclica *Humanae Vitae* (1968). Questo approccio è un esempio dei suoi principi di rinnovamento culturale contenuti nell'enciclica *Redemptor Hominis* (1979). Una triade dei principi (il primato della persona sulle cose, la priorità dell'etica sulla tecnica e la priorità dello spirito sulla materia) costituisce regole che aiutano a discernere il vero progresso della cultura moderna. Contrariamente alla convinzione dominante che la contraccezione sia un'opportunità di enorme progresso per le donne e anche per la società, l'autore afferma che la natura ambivalente della tecnologia moder-

na dimostrata da autori come Yves R. Simon e C.S. Lewis, indica un grande svantaggio della contraccezione, vale a dire un vero pericolo di degrado delle relazioni coniugali e una minaccia al pieno sviluppo dell'essere umano. Considerare la tecnologia un modo di regolamento delle nascite al posto della scelta personale e della virtù inverte il principio di priorità dell'etica sulla tecnica e offre anche l'opportunità di manipolare le donne, come l'aveva già previsto il papa Paolo VI. Questo problema è un'ovvia negazione del principio del primato della persona sulle cose. L'errore fondamentale risiede nella filosofia materialistica della vita che rifiuta il riconoscimento della priorità dello spirito sulla materia. La lotta per le questioni sopra menzionate e contenute al cuore dell'enciclica *Humane Vitae* è una lotta per l'ultimo significato dell'esistenza umana percepita in modo teistico o anti-teistico, evangelico o anti-evangelico, e perciò sarà sempre un «segno di obiezione».

Parole chiave: il Papa Giovanni Paolo II, il Papa Paolo VI, etica, *Humanae Vitae*, NFP, contraccettivi, tecnologia, *Redemptor Hominis*, C. S. Lewis, Yves R. Simon, «Segno di obiezione»



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Humanae Vitae, Women’s Rights, and Responsible Parenthood

Abstract: The purpose of the article is to analyze the arguments present in *Humanae Vitae* which found positive resonance in the writings of women adopting the papal teaching on the nature of human sexuality and sexual ethics. According to some women, in particular the new feminists, the logic of the papal teaching concerning contraception contributes to promoting the dignity and rights of women as well as responsible parenthood. In their view, contraception does not contribute to women’s rights. Instead, it rather exacerbates the imbalance between men and women as well as sanctions the man’s irresponsible and hedonistic attitude towards a woman. Using contraception is in a deep sense anti-ecological. It is both disrespectful of the nature of woman’s fertility and destructive of relations within the family. The responsible parenthood defined by the papal teaching and by his commentators (both men and women quoted in the article) means taking responsibility for one’s sexual acts and their possible effects. The analyzed authors claim that by defending the nature of love, the nature of human beings, and the nature of the objective moral order, the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* defends women by defending their nature against the arbitrariness of men or society.

Keywords: *Humanae Vitae*, women’s rights, new feminism, responsible parenthood

Feminism is commonly associated with the fight for the so-called reproductive rights (rights of free access to abortion and contraception) among other kinds of women’s rights. Similarly common is such an understanding of the concept of “responsible parenthood” which associates it with the planned control and limitation of the number of children by means of artificial contraception. Within this mainstream feminist view, the contraceptive pill has contributed to the development of the women’s rights as well as enabled the practice of

limited, hence “responsible” reproduction. Therefore, the feminist opposition to the historical encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which condemned the artificial contraception, has come as no surprise. However, the past fifty years since the publication of the encyclical have witnessed the developing variety of the feminist standpoints, while many women have had the chance of experiencing the value of the papal teaching concerning the ethical dimension of human sexuality and conjugal acts.

Within the rich variety of feminisms, there appeared the new feminism which was inspired by the teaching of John Paul II and based on his teaching called *Theology of the Body*.¹ The views of John Paul II, in turn, were largely influenced in terms of the topic of the feminine by St. Theresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein), who wrote on the equality and specificity of women before World War II. Even before the name “new feminism” itself appeared with this particular meaning (in 1995 in *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 99), quite a few outstanding women expressed their wholehearted support for the Catholic standpoint against not only abortion but also contraception. A lot of these women (some identifying themselves later as new feminists, others not using this term) found the theology of the body attractive and appealing to female sensitivity as well as truly defending women’s dignity and rights. They saw the continuity between the teaching of Paul VI and John Paul II. Obviously, the theology of the body constituted a deep justification for and development of the argumentation given in *Humanae Vitae*. What is more, this collection of Wednesday catecheses of John Paul II (given between 1979 and 1984) was a result of the long-term work started many years earlier, which included Karol Wojtyła’s work on *Love and Responsibility*² and the collective work of ethicists contributing to the development of the *Humanae Vitae* arguments published as *Memoriał krakowski*.³ The team was authorized to work in 1966 by Cardinal Wojtyła, who was asked by Paul VI to provide a deep study of the issue to be resolved in the 1968 papal encyclical. Both the *Memoriał* and the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* discussed the questions of the position and rights of women as well as the responsible parenthood. However, these issues got a radically different interpretation from the mainstream feminist viewpoint. The purpose of this article is to analyze the arguments present in *Humanae Vitae* which found positive resonance in the writ-

¹ John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them. A Theology of the Body*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006). Later in my article I use the name theology of the body without capital letters to refer to the teaching of John Paul II on human sexuality.

² Karol Wojtyła, *Love and Responsibility*, trans. H. T. Willetts (London: William Collins Sons & Co., 1981).

³ Jerzy Bajda, Karol Meissner OSB, Stanisław Podgórski CSSR, Stanisław Smoleński, Tadeusz Ślipko TJ, Juliusz Turowicz. *Memoriał krakowski. Uzasadnienie katolickiej nauki dotyczącej podstaw moralnych życia małżeńskiego oraz Wprowadzenie do encykliki Humanae Vitae*, 2nd ed. (Poznań: BONAMI, 2012).

ings of women adopting the papal teaching. The question is: Why have some women found the logic of *Humanae Vitae* attractive as promoting the dignity and rights of women as well as responsible parenthood understood in a totally different way from the mainstream feminists? In other words, what is the theoretical basis of the alternative kind of feminism and alternative view on women's rights and responsible parenthood?

Let us look first at the three most important points of the encyclical from the perspective of the topic of this article (described in nos. 10, 12, and 17). In *Humanae Vitae*, 10, Paul VI recommends rational means of recognizing and respecting the natural functions of human procreative processes as well as rational self-control over one's drives and emotions together with careful discernment of the number of children which responsible parents can raise within the framework of respect for the objective moral order. Let my short summary of these points be followed by the exact quotation from the encyclical:

With regard to the biological processes, responsible parenthood means an awareness of, and respect for, their proper functions. In the procreative faculty the human mind discerns biological laws that apply to the human person. With regard to man's innate drives and emotions, responsible parenthood means that man's reason and will must exert control over them. With regard to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised by those who prudently and generously decide to have more children, and by those who, for serious reasons and with due respect to moral precepts, decide not to have additional children for either a certain or an indefinite period of time. Responsible parenthood, as we use the term here, has one further essential aspect of paramount importance. It concerns the objective moral order which was established by God, and of which a right conscience is the true interpreter. In a word, the exercise of responsible parenthood requires that husband and wife, keeping a right order of priorities, recognize their own duties toward God, themselves, their families and human society. From this it follows that they are not free to act as they choose in the service of transmitting life, as if it were wholly up to them to decide what is the right course to follow. On the contrary, they are bound to ensure that what they do corresponds to the will of God the Creator. The very nature of marriage and its use makes His will clear, while the constant teaching of the Church spells it out. (*Humanae Vitae*, 10)

Responsible parenthood is here associated with using the rational means of planning the size of one's family but always within the frame of respect for the given moral order. Arbitrary redefinition of what is good and bad or counter-natural behavior is irresponsible. With respect to the sexual and procreative activity, it refers to the proper attitude to its natural direction and end. The very meaning of the conjugal act is observed to be objectively given and twofold:

This particular doctrine, often expounded by the magisterium of the Church, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act. (*Humanae Vitae*, 12)

In other words, the conjugal act does not unite effectively if it is willfully deprived of its procreative meaning. Natural infertility, either permanent or temporary due to the phase of the fertility cycle, is not an obstacle to unity of the loving couple, but the artificial intervention is connected with the disuniting exclusion of an important aspect of the person, who should rather be accepted totally. Therefore, the contraceptive pill, being the major topic of ethical consideration in the encyclical, constitutes a serious obstacle to the conjugal unity as it excludes the female fertility and is thus deeply antifeminist because it treats the vital feminine quality as a drawback. Anticipating such negative consequence of using the artificial contraception, Paul VI warns that

a man who grows accustomed to the use of contraceptive methods may forget the reverence due to a woman, and, disregarding her physical and emotional equilibrium, reduce her to being a mere instrument for the satisfaction of his own desires, no longer considering her as his partner whom he should surround with care and affection. (*Humanae Vitae*, 17)

The pope further warns against the possible effects of artificial methods of contraception being used by public authorities to intervene in the most intimate relations in order to influence the demographic trends.

The extended explanation of the logic of marital love, as I mentioned before, has been provided in the Wednesday audiences by John Paul II. A concise summary of the major points of the theology of the body must include at least four pivotal issues: (1) the personal character of the human body, meaning that human beings express themselves in bodily acts; (2) the conjugal character of marital love, including the physical love of mutual self-giving; (3) the language of the body speaking the truth of a total gift only by joining the unitive and procreative meaning of the sexual act; (4) the given, objective character of the moral order written in human nature and discovered in experience of longing for love and being fulfilled only by love of self-gift following the loving Trinitarian God. So, the theology of the body presented the value of sexual division of humanity: man and woman are both equal and different in order to exist in complementary *communio personarum*. While the dominant world view of human history equalized the human with the male, the papal vision drawn from the depth of the biblical reflection of both the Old and the New Testaments justifies the equal value of both sexes in their complementary difference (yet also stressing the wholeness of each particular person).

Probably never before have women been so deeply recognized and valued in their differences, contributing their femininity to the fullness of humanity. No wonder that this standpoint constituted the basis of what later came to be called the new feminism. Its major tenet stressed that humanity should respect the values represented by women (like certain sensitivity to the value of persons and personal relations, connected with ability to give birth and care for children) and thus make it possible to realize the fullness of humanity by every human being. Promoting women's rights and equality according to new feminists have become associated with recognizing women's right to be different and equal in these differences working for the common good of both men and women. Janne Haaland Matlary claimed that "the real radicalism of emancipation consists in the freedom of truly being oneself, being woman on woman's terms."⁴ In her book she refers to the need to promote equality of women, most often being mothers, and requiring recognition of being different and equally valued as men in the public sphere, in politics, in business, etc. However, we can extend this standpoint also to the question of respecting women's nature more broadly. Looking from this perspective, *Humanae Vitae* defends the rights of women by appealing to the man's duty to emotional self-control and duty to adapt to woman's nature and fertility cycle. Man is called to comply with woman's nature and thus respect her rather than use woman as an instrument of his pleasure. A woman using contraception is not really helping herself or caring for her health, but is rather depriving herself of a vital part of her femininity in order to allow a man to use her for his sexual pleasure without his self-control and without taking responsibility for the effects of his sexual behavior. According to the logic of *Humanae Vitae*, explained in an in-depth way by the theology of the body, the conjugal act worthy of its name is only the one in which both man and woman are accepted *in toto*, without interference introduced by any contraceptive means. After all, love requires the total acceptance and total self-gift of persons.

John Paul II's theology of the body, though still not known widely enough, is gaining more and more widespread popularity, especially among Catholics of English-speaking countries due to the energetic activity of its popularizers. Compared to that, the collection titled *Memorial krakowski* is hardly known even in Poland, while it prepared the way for the argumentation present both in *Humanae Vitae* and in theology of the body. It is worth our attention because it contains many anticipatory comments and warnings later confirmed by experience. One of the co-authors of the *Memorial*, Fr. Jerzy Bajda notes the importance of the basic fact of a certain imbalance between the biological participation of man and woman in the sexual act and its effects: the act takes

⁴ Janne Haaland Matlary, *Nowy feminizm. Kobieta i świat wartości*, trans. Małgorzata Ratajczak (Poznań: „W drodze,” 2000), 23. Trans. of this fragment A.G.

place in a woman and both pregnancy and birth of a child encumber her, not the man. This basic difference connected with this imbalance, together with the cyclical dynamic of female fertility, which allows its observation and self-controlled adaptation to it, put important duties on the side of a man. Otherwise, equality in dignity between men and women will not be safeguarded. Therefore, contraception is not contributing to the woman's rights. Instead, it rather exacerbates the imbalance and sanctions the man's irresponsible and hedonistic attitude towards a woman.⁵ Simply speaking, the responsible parenthood means taking responsibility for one's sexual acts and their possible effects. *Memorial krakowski* contained a very broad perspective on this responsibility because it also considered the possible effects of contraception on the already born children and the emotional-educational climate within the family. Fathers Juliusz Turowicz and Stanisław Smoleński claim that contracepted sexual acts cannot create the necessary atmosphere of love based on overcoming egoistic attitudes. Parents who cannot practice self-control will not present unselfishness to their children. Their attitude will be full of unrest, nervousness, and only conditional loving, seeking only joy and pleasure, expected in contracepted acts. Turowicz and Smoleński seem to rightly anticipate that such parents may be likely to pamper and spoil their children, teach them to be too soft and comfortable, while in the long run contribute to their neurosis caused by not being loved unconditionally and by being raised in an atmosphere where the parents did not love each other in an unconditional way.⁶

The two above-quoted arguments from *Memorial krakowski* confirm the thesis that using contraception is in a deep sense anti-ecological. It is both disrespectful of the nature of woman's fertility and destructive of relations within the family. That is why a new feminist Michele M. Schumacher writes about the "prophetic value of *Humanae Vitae*" in defending the "human ecology" and the good of nature.⁷ Some other quotes from new feminists' writings further confirm the truth of anticipations made in *Memorial* and in *Humanae Vitae*. Janne Haaland Matlary writes that nowadays sexual activity is widely treated as an individual's right to sexual pleasure rather than what it meant earlier, namely giving oneself in relations of love. The contemporary view does not really see a person, because the person is treated instrumentally, while children and abortions are treated as unwanted side-effects. Matlary further complains

⁵ Jerzy Bajda, "Zagadnienie równości mężczyzny i kobiety w dziedzinie małżeństwa," in *Memorial krakowski*, ed. Jerzy Bajda, Karol Meissner OSB, Stanisław Podgórski CSSR, Stanisław Smoleński, Tadeusz Ślipko TJ, and Juliusz Turowicz (Poznań: Inicjatywa Wydawnicza Jerozolima, 2012), 28–29.

⁶ Juliusz Turowicz and Stanisław Smoleński, "Miłość małżeńska i dobro rodziny," in *Memorial krakowski*, 26–27.

⁷ Michele M. Schumacher, "Human Ecology and the Prophetic Value of *Humanae Vitae*," *Nova et Vetera*, English Edition, vol. 16 (4) (2018): 1227–1260.

that sex is now a “trivial race” without the context of responsibility and commitment, while “women are presented like sexual objects more than ever before.”⁸ Another new feminist, Mary Ann Glendon claims that despite a long history of formal equality of men and women, it is the women who bear a larger burden of consequences of divorces, abortions, or lonely fulfillment of house and family duties.⁹ Moreover, they are not appreciated in their roles as mothers or in their differences as women. These exemplary arguments not only show the proper social diagnosis and prognosis made by Catholic ethicists at the end of the 1960s but they also explain why many women who can observe long-distance trends of thought and social actions, accept the Catholic teaching on sexual ethics and contraception.

Now let us look at some of the reflections on *Humanae Vitae* collected in a book published in 1993, that is, twenty-five years after the encyclical has been issued. The book had a significant title *Why Humanae Vitae Was Right* and it embraced articles by both men and women of outstanding academic position. John Finnis made the pivotal claim that the contracepted sexual intercourse is just a simulation of the conjugal intercourse, not the real act.¹⁰ Looking from a sharp philosophical point of view, he actually concisely summarized the gist of the papal document which argued that contraception destroys the unity of the couple in the sexual act. Another interesting point raised by Finnis concerns the status of the child created as an effect of the real conjugal acts: in a sense they promote the equality of the child, who is not produced but received by the couple ready to submit to contingencies.¹¹ Production of a child would seriously lower the child's status compared to parents, making the child unjustly dependent on the will of the parents. Of course, one might say that it deprives the parents of their exercise of free will concerning the planning of their child. However, openness to the unbidden in this case is the standard which humanity should keep rather than give up, because it concerns our relations to another human being, not to a mechanical product. Generally speaking, we may notice that *Humanae Vitae* continued the trend of keeping up with the high moral standards developed within the Judeo-Christian tradition rather than going with the worldly tendency of lowering ambitions and challenges of humanity. This topic was developed by another renowned philosopher G. E. M. Anscombe, who noticed that “Christianity taught that men ought to be as chaste as pagans thought

⁸ Matlary, *Nowy feminizm*, 146–147.

⁹ Mary Ann Glendon, “Women's Identity, Women's Rights and the Civilization of Life,” in *Evangelium Vitae and Law* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 70; “Feminism and the Family,” *Commonweal*, vol. 124 (3) (1997): 11–15.

¹⁰ John Finnis, “Personal Integrity, Sexual Morality and Responsible Parenthood,” in *Why Humanae Vitae Was Right: A Reader*, ed. Janet E. Smith (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 188.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 190–191.

honest women ought to be; the contraceptive morality teaches that women need to be as little chaste as pagans thought men need be.”¹² But, in order to keep up the standard, the cultural perspective needs the framework within which the sexual act is recognized as having a natural *telos*. Otherwise, Anscombe warns about nothing less but purely logical consequences of the contraceptive activity: “If you can turn intercourse into something other than the reproductive type of act (I do not mean of course that every act is reproductive any more that every acorn leads to an oak-tree but it is the reproductive *type* of act) then why, if you can change it, should it be restricted to the married? Restricted, that is, to partners bound in a formal, legal, union whose fundamental purpose is the bringing up of children? For if that is not its fundamental purpose there is no reason why for example ‘marriage’ should have to be between people of opposite sexes.”¹³ It is really impressive how penetrating and wise was Anscombe’s argument made as early as in 1993. Only recently do we see the sociological truth of her diagnosis and the wisdom of the encyclical defending the link between the unitive and the procreative meaning of the sexual act. However, in 1968, and even in 1993, it was really difficult to envision the contemporary scale of social changes leading to the so-called gay marriage, whose real basis was established by breaking the link noticed in *Humanae Vitae*. In fact, there is no limit to possible sexual configurations (other than maybe self-destruction), once this link is disrespected by humans. As Anscombe claimed, “if contraceptive intercourse is all right then so are all forms of sexual activity.”¹⁴ Finally, she persuaded the readers that human beings are able to live up to the moral standards rather than give up on them: “we have got not to be the servants of our sensuality but to bring it into subjection.”¹⁵ Janet E. Smith in the same collection of essays made an appraisal of the natural family planning methods, basing it on the arguments similar to those formulated at the *Memorial krakowski*: “There is rarely ‘mutuality’ in the use of contraception. Most often the woman bears the responsibility for it and she must suffer most of the unpleasant ‘side-effects’ of its use. Natural family planning (NFP), on the other hand, needs the cooperation of both spouses to succeed. Whereas men who engage in contracepted sexual intercourse often come to view women as objects and desire to have them always at their disposal, men using natural family planning learn self-mastery and begin to appreciate the woman and her cycles and needs. Natural family planning is based on respect for both female and male fertility and requires a loving and respectful relationship for successful use.”¹⁶ Her arguments sound persuasive and one may

¹² Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe, “Contraception and Chastity,” in *Why Humanae Vitae Was Right: A Reader*, 123.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 136–137.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁶ Janet E. Smith, “Paul VI as Prophet,” in *Why Humanae Vitae Was Right: A Reader*, 526.

wonder why not all women but just some of them stand on the side of the teaching of the Catholic Church.

A superficial look on the question of contraception makes it look like an effective instrument serving women to take control of their bodily mechanism. However, a lot of empirical data collected by, for example, Mary Shivanandan confirm that contraception alienates women from their femininity and exacerbates the relations of couples, without raising the level of control of one's body (!), while using natural family planning improves the communication of couples and raises the levels of satisfaction with marital life and the level of knowledge about functioning of one's body.¹⁷ Thus, it seems that overcoming alienation is possible through using ecological means of recognizing fertility, accepting it, and acting according to free as well as rational methods of cooperation with nature, while learning seriously how to control oneself. What is very interesting in Shivanandan's book is the evidence that natural methods require a lot of discipline *from men*, which is good for them and for women, and for society, as it teaches them to consider themselves always within relations with others.¹⁸ Similar conclusions about positive effects of using NFP methods are collected in the book by Polish authors involved in promoting the theology of the body and new feminism, Katarzyna and Mariusz Marcinkowscy.¹⁹ What is common to women and men inspired by the papal teaching on sexuality (present in *Humanae Vitae* and the theology of the body) is the positive vision on nature as a gift full of meaning worth discovering by rational means and worth adapting to by disciplined self-control. Consequently, women's natural fertility is viewed positively, while both women and men are treated as rational and free, able to use reason for the recognition of fertile days and able to freely control one's activities. The contrary view recommending contraception is, on the other hand, based on the mechanistic view of nature deprived of inner value (including downgraded view of female fertility) and on the pessimistic view of human nature unable to be rationally controlled.

So generally speaking, as we can see from the above considerations, contraception does not serve women. It only deepens the modern problematic alienation from the body, while the papal theology of the body is a way to overcome this problem by pointing the humanity's attention to the value of the body as an expression of the person as well as to the feminine fertility as a value to be cherished rather than despised and repressed. A woman's right to live her full identity involves her right to be fully accepted by her husband, who should

¹⁷ Mary Shivanandan, *Crossing the Threshold of Love. A New Vision of Marriage in the Light of John Paul II's Anthropology* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 244–250, 259, 261.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 264–266.

¹⁹ Katarzyna and Mariusz Marcinkowscy, *NPR jest O.K.! Nowy styl życia* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Rubikon, 2012).

be ready to adapt to her cycle, wait for her, if that is considered necessary by the couple in their particular situation, and accept also the unplanned children, should they happen. Such a view of women's rights consequently leads to the view of responsible parenthood based on mutual and total self-gift of a loving couple. Luke Gormally claims that the faithful commitment of the married couple united in mind and body is a special kind of friendship which

can be realized only through a self-giving love on the part of each spouse. A marriage relationship shaped by that kind of commitment provides what one might call the "moral ecology" which the child needs. A man and woman who treat each other in their sexual relationship as irreplaceable, and to be accepted and loved for just the persons they are, convey to the child a sense of his own dignity as an irreplaceable human being who is cherished for just the person he is.²⁰

Such acceptance of a person is connected with accepting the nature of person; nature which is viewed not as a hindrance but as a value linked with this person. Consequently, this nature is not treated as opposed to freedom because freedom is not defined here as license or arbitrariness. Freedom is possible only within the perspective of truth about the good, so any arbitrary activity contrary to nature (connected with the objective moral order) places one beyond the space of freedom. *Humanae Vitae* operates within this perspective which Hans Urs von Balthasar summarized when he wrote that power is given together with "a norm according to which that power is to be exercised."²¹ In his text commenting on the encyclical he claims that for Christians the norm is theological (to love one's loved as Christ loves the church—by totally giving oneself to her, though it is impossible to do it exactly the way Christ did it) and it is also the norm for non-Christians but they do not know this norm. I would rather say that the norm of the total self-gift in love is already written down in nature, that is, the nature of the person, so it can be discovered by non-believers, too, though it has been fully uncovered and realized by Christ, so that humans could follow the example and make it happen with the help of the Savior.

Let us now follow carefully the argumentation of von Balthasar, making his point about the structural link between the two meanings of the conjugal act:

The union of husband and wife means more than merely physical fruitfulness, the begetting of children; it means spiritual fruitfulness as well, total surrender to each other. Now, the conjunction in man of the physical and the spiritual

²⁰ Luke Gormally, "Marriage and the Prophylactic Use of Condoms," *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* (Winter 2005) vol. 5 (4): 739.

²¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Retrieving the Tradition. A Word on *Humanae Vitae*," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 20 (Summer 1993): 445.

involves an inherent ambiguity, for these two aspects of his life are altogether inseparable. Man is at once body and spirit. He is a member of an animal species in which procreation, birth and death are interdependent; and at the same time he is person and spirit, superior to all other species. [...] Therefore, he cannot divert a species-oriented function from its inherent purpose solely in order to satisfy his own personal desires. Or rather, he *can* do so, but not without schizophrenically splitting his own organic unity. For when he acts in this way, he sets his own personal limits on a function of the human species, a function with its own inner finality. Ostensibly, he limits his fertility in this manner so that he can give fuller emphasis to the limitless, personal side of his being. But in doing so he obviously introduces an element of calculation and limitation into an act that is meant to be the symbolic expression of an unconditional love between man and woman.²²

Acting against the very nature of the act and excluding fertility automatically causes the exclusion of also spiritual fertility: making love calculable, one makes love impossible. In a sense, the nature of love strikes against those who want to redefine it. It defends itself by requiring us to be non-calculating. The opposite example, according to von Balthasar, is the couple using infertile days rather than artificial contraception: “in using the infertile days they are not setting bounds to their love.”²³ Therefore, just because a human being is expressing himself/herself through the body, he/she cannot arbitrarily decide on the meaning of the body. They need to respect the meanings given by nature and they need to respect the unlimited nature of love.

Thus, as we have seen, by defending the nature of love, the nature of human beings, and the nature of the objective moral order, the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, together with its commentaries and explanations provided in other documents quoted above, defends women by defending their nature against the arbitrariness of men, society, and even themselves. It safeguards them and puts them strongly in a position which cannot be liberally taken away from them. The men have to adapt to women's nature rather than make women adapt to men's pleasure. Men and women are motivated to work on themselves, control themselves rather than use the other for one's pleasure. In a sense it claims that the most fundamental right of woman is the right to be loved totally rather than partly; the right to be accepted in their integral nature and with all their differences contributing to the fullness of humanity.

²² Ibid., 447–448.

²³ Ibid., 449.

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Aneta Gawkowska

Humanae Vitae, droits des femmes et parentalité responsable

Résumé

Le but de l'article est une analyse des arguments présents dans *Humanae Vitae*, qui ont trouvé un écho positif dans les écrits des femmes en ce qui concerne l'enseignement de Paul VI sur la nature de la sexualité humaine et sur l'éthique sexuelle. Selon certaines femmes, en particulier certaines des nouvelles féministes, la logique de l'enseignement papal sur la contraception contribue à la promotion de la dignité et des droits des femmes ainsi qu'à une parentalité responsable. À leur avis, la contraception n'apporte rien de positif aux droits des femmes. Au contraire, elle aggrave le déséquilibre entre les hommes et les femmes et autorise l'attitude irresponsable et hédoniste des hommes envers les femmes. L'utilisation de moyens contraceptifs est profondément anti-écologique. Cette attitude exprime le manque de respect pour la nature de la fertilité féminine et nuit aux relations au sein de la famille. La parentalité responsable, telle qu'elle a été définie par l'enseignement papal et par ses commentateurs (hommes et femmes cités dans l'article) signifie assumer la responsabilité des relations sexuelles et de leurs résultats possibles. Ces auteurs affirment qu'en défendant la nature de l'amour, la nature des êtres humains et la nature de l'ordre moral objectif, l'encyclique *Humanae Vitae* défend les femmes, notamment leur nature contre l'autoritarisme des hommes et de la société.

Mots-clés: *Humanae Vitae*, droits des femmes, nouveau féminisme, parentalité responsable

Aneta Gawkowska

Humanae Vitae, diritti delle donne e genitorialità responsabile

Sommario

Lo scopo dell'articolo è quello di analizzare gli argomenti presenti in *Humanae Vitae*, che hanno trovato una risonanza positiva negli scritti delle donne in quanto all'insegnamento papale sulla natura della sessualità umana e dell'etica sessuale. Secondo alcune donne, in particolare alcune nuove femministe, la logica dell'insegnamento papale sulla contraccezione contribuisce alla promozione della dignità e dei diritti delle donne nonché alla genitorialità responsabile. A loro avviso, la contraccezione non porta nulla di positivo ai diritti delle donne. Al contrario, approfondisce lo squilibrio tra uomini e donne e sanziona l'atteggiamento irresponsabile ed edonistico degli uomini verso le donne. L'uso dei metodi contraccettivi è profondamente antiecológico. Esprime la mancanza di rispetto per la natura della fertilità della donna e danneggia i rapporti all'interno della famiglia. La genitorialità responsabile definita dall'insegnamento del papa e dai suoi commentatori (sia uomini che donne citati nell'articolo) significa assumere la responsabilità per quanto riguarda le relazioni sessuali e i loro possibili esiti. Gli autori analizzati sostengono che difendendo la natura dell'amore, la natura degli esseri umani e la natura dell'ordine morale obiettivo, l'enciclica *Humanae Vitae* difende le donne, in particolare la loro natura dall'autoritarismo degli uomini e della società.

Parole chiave: *Humanae Vitae*, diritti delle donne, nuovo femminismo, genitorialità responsabile



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The Problem of Responsible Parenthood in the Axiological Perspective Analysis Inspired by the Encyclical *Humane Vitae*

Abstract: The article is devoted to the issue of responsible parenthood, which was formulated in the encyclical *Humane Vitae* by Paul VI in 1968. The content of the encyclical referred primarily to the issue of responsibility arising from fertilization. The author of the article relates the issue of parental responsibility to the care of a child with mild mental disability. Parental childcare is a consequence of calling the child to live. The author of the article analyses the issue of responsible parenting from the philosophical perspective and thus focuses on the recognition of the world of values by the parent-guardian of a person with intellectual disability. Close relationships with such a person require special spiritual, moral, and axiological sensitivity. The author of the article, in addition to the encyclical *Humane Vitae*, has been inspired by the reflections of Jean Vanier and Julia Kristeva on disability, resulting from two religious and secular perspectives.

Keywords: responsible parenthood, values, an intellectually disabled person, courage, Paul VI, Kristeva, Vanier

Responsible parenthood, as we use the term here, has one further essential aspect of paramount importance. It concerns the objective moral order which was established by God, and of which a right conscience is the true interpreter. In a word, the exercise of responsible parenthood requires that husband and wife,

keeping a right order of priorities, recognize their own duties toward God, themselves, their families and human society.¹

Introduction

The issue of responsible parenthood has already been widely discussed. The author of the article is interested in an axiological perspective, in which we can analyse the problem of reading the world of values in difficult situations, and this is undoubtedly the parent's care over a child with mental disability. This issue is the subject of research of special educators, psychologists, and psychiatrists. Unlike representatives of the above-mentioned areas, the author of the article is interested in understanding the value of responsibility and related values in the case of close relationships between an able-bodied person (parent-guardian) and an intellectually disabled person (child). The axiological position adopted by the author of this article can be described as "axiological relationism." According to this stand, values exist regardless of the subject, they are revealed in specific interpersonal relationships and in relation to things. These relationships function in culture like a certain system of network relationships—the subject does not create them, but participates in them. In certain situations people get to know them and organize them into a set of values.

In his encyclical *Humane Vitae*, Paul VI emphasizes the importance of the issue of responsible parenthood. However, how to implement this postulate when parenthood is part of a difficult family life situation? Openness to life also means openness to the life of a person with disability. For the author of the article, in addition to *Humane Vitae*, the reference point is the correspondence between Julia Kristeva and Jean Vanier collected in the book *Leur regard perce nos ombres*.² The book provides two perspectives of thinking—secular and Catholic. The interlocutors describe a unique nature of meeting a fit person—a parent or guardian with people with intellectual disabilities.

Julia Kristeva is a French-speaking philosopher of Bulgarian origin, associated with the postmodernist and feminist movement. She is an intellectual interested in issues from the field of linguistics and contemporary psychoanalysis. Kristeva has introduced the term *intertextuality* into humanistic discourse,

¹ Paweł VI, *Humane Vitae*, 10.

² Julia Kristeva and Jean Vanier, *Leur regard perce nos ombres*, Polish trans. Katarzyna and Piotr Zwirchowscy, *Bez(sens) słabości. Dialog wiary z niewiarą o wykluczeniu* (Poznań: „W drodze,” 2012).

especially to the literary theory.³ Kristeva is the mother of an intellectually disabled person. She was struggling with the established French governmental institutions that could not provide proper care for her son, especially when it comes to the organization of a center where mature, mentally impaired adults could function independently of their families. Her interlocutor in the book is Jean Vanier, a Canadian social activist, philanthropist, philosopher by education, born in Geneva, founder of the Arka communities in which adults with intellectual disabilities live and work with their careers.⁴ In 2015, Vanier received the Tempelton Award for supporting the promotion of practices related to discovering the spiritual dimension of human life.

Responsible Parenthood and Disability

Human activity is always associated with the choice of specific values. Linking responsibility with parenthood shows that there is much more to it than just passing on life. While parenthood can be considered as a natural category, responsibility is a category resulting from the pattern of behavior in culture or the voluntary commitment of a parent or a carer. Freedom of choice in this case should be understood in a specific context. Nobody, or almost no one, chooses to have his child disabled. Although theoretically, it is possible that, for example, deaf parents would wish their child, conceived by means of in vitro fertilization, to have his/her hearing impaired just like the parents. The author does not analyze this issue, it falls under the problem of in vitro fertilization. In this article, the subject of research is responsible parenthood considered as an attitude towards a person functioning in a specific family and social situation (neighbors, kindergarten, local government, and state institutions). Responsibility understood as a moral value is essentially associated with the value of voluntariness, otherwise it becomes something forced, for example resulting from social pressure or a legal order. However, political (contract) responsibility should be distinguished from parental responsibility. In both cases we are dealing with a social dimension of responsibility and voluntary recognition. Lack of freedom means that we are dealing with a legal

³ Michał Paweł Markowski, "Przygoda ciała i znaków. Wprowadzenie do pism Julii Kristevej," in Julia Kristeva, "Soleil noir. Dépression et mélancolie," Polish trans. Michał Paweł Markowski and Remigiusz Rzyziński *Czarne słońce. Depresja i melancholia* (Kraków: Universitas, 2007), V–XLIX.

⁴ Anne-Sophie Constant, "Jean Vanier. Biografia," Polish trans. Katarzyna Wierchowska and Piotr Wierchowski (Kraków: WAM, 2015), 12–14.

act, considered in the context of compliance or non-compliance with the law, that is, contractual responsibility.⁵

One should look at the concept of responsible parenthood proposed by Paul VI. When writing the encyclical *Humane Vitae* in 1968, the pope focused on the issue of the transmission of life. The text also provides a broad perspective on the problem of responsibility. Man is part of the plan of divine love in the world. "Marriage, then, is far from being the effect of chance or the result of the blind evolution of natural forces. It is in reality the wise and provident institution of God the Creator, whose purpose was to effect in man His loving design" (*Humanae Vitae*, 8). Moral commitment translates itself into basic relationships that define marital love.

This love is above all fully human, a compound of sense and spirit. It is not, then, merely a question of natural instinct or emotional drive. It is also, and above all, an act of the free will, whose trust is such that it is meant not only to survive the joys and sorrows of daily life, but also to grow, so that husband and wife become in a way one heart and one soul, and together attain their human fulfilment. (*Humanae Vitae*, 9)

This love is to be full, faithful, exclusive and fertile, aimed at breeding offspring. Paul VI combined responsible parenthood with an emphasis on a rational giving of life, subordinated to natural rules that are part of the personal aspect of human behavior.

Hence the need arises for spouses to control their drive in terms of rational recognition of the physical, economic, psychological, and social conditions in which the family functions. Here we take into account the context of poverty and diseases genetically inherited by spouses. Paul VI wrote:

With regard to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions, responsible parenthood is exercised by those who prudently and generously decide to have more children, and by those who, for serious reasons and with due respect to moral precepts, decide not to have additional children for either a certain or an indefinite period of time. (*Humanae Vitae*, 10)

Openness to parenthood associated with the postulated naturalness of conception also indicates openness to a disabled child. This last postulate is not explicitly expressed in *Humane Vitae*, but stems naturally from the logic of the argument.

⁵ The distinction between moral and legal deeds is an extension of Immanuel Kant's reflection on the metaphysical aspects of legal theory. *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, Akademie-Ausgabe der Königl. Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Berlin 1910, Polish trans. Ewa Nowak, *Metafizyka moralności* (Warszawa: PWN, 2005), 18.

The issue of responsible parenthood was in the center of Paul VI's thoughts. It is based on three premises: (1) natural (duty to oneself, family, society), (2) cultural (maintaining order of things and hierarchy of values), and (3) supra-natural (human duty to God). The terms biological and natural cannot be used interchangeably to refer to the thoughts of Paul VI.

The term biological indicates the very fact of conception, while the term natural, which is close to it, has a specific axiological dimension, as it is about more than just the beginning of life. In the theological and philosophical approach, the term natural, in addition to the fact of conception, also includes action in accordance with natural law, or ethical norm, resulting from the reading of God's law by human reason. This order is read in our conscience. The double understanding of the natural as a biologically conditioned reaction, and secondly, as something consistent with the ethical norm is the cause of numerous misunderstandings in bioethical disputes between proponents of biological and theological (supranatural) interpretation of the world. This difference also applies to the connection of human nature with a teleological perspective, acting for the purpose of human life. In the classical approach, the goal of our life is inner perfection, life fulfilment, in Christian thought resulting from living close to God. From the scientific and natural perspective, the purpose of human life is not defined, it is rather about evolutionary adaptation to environmental conditions, rather than about fulfilled life. The purpose-oriented aspect is not included in the modern and contemporary description of the human condition.

Sentences like "responsible parenthood is a key aspect of human psychological maturity," or "responsible parenthood leads a person to moral perfection and good life" should be understood contextually. The sense of these sentences is part of a specific ethical-humanist or ethical-theological tradition, in which human life is associated with the postulate of moral perfection and with responsibility for oneself and others. This is especially important in the case of disability, when we are dealing not only with the care of passing on life, but also with the care of a child who was born with a developmental defect and is unable to realize the important value for us, which is the ability to live independently. A person with disability will constantly need support from the closest, to a greater or lesser extent, or support from state institutions that pay for a social worker and finance the functioning of a home accommodating adults with disabilities. Much depends here on the degree of disability. This issue was a concern for, among others, Julia Kristeva, who, despite many years of effort, could not obtain permission from the French government to finance the adaptation of the house in which adults with intellectual disabilities could live.⁶

The specificity of responsible parenthood assumes that it is not based on relationships between equal parties, its validity does not cease when the other

⁶ Kristeva, *Bez(sens) słabości. Dialog wiary z niewiarą o wykluczeniu*, 14–15.

party does not show similar behavior. Mutuality is expected in this relationship, but it is not a fundamental value. A mature parent is responsible for the child, the person entrusted to his care, but the child does not need to show a similar attitude. The German philosopher Hans Jonas described this type of responsibility as a non-reciprocal, unilateral relationship of responsibility. In his understanding, it concerned brotherly, sisterly relationships (horizontal relationship), and parental relationships (vertical relationship). The second type of relationship is stronger; requirements for parental relationships are also clearly socially sanctioned. The lack of parental help shown to their children is much more severely assessed than the lack of brotherly or sisterly help, interestingly even the lack of help given to elderly parents.⁷

Another aspect of the issue discussed is a different understanding of the responsibility of mothers and fathers. Despite contemporary trends regarding the equal role of man and woman in marriage, the parental responsibility of mothers and fathers still differs. The former is treated as more natural, because it is somehow a biological and social consequence of the fact of giving birth to a child. In the social interpretation of the value of responsibility, there is more of necessity than choice. We also know that this is not an unconditional necessity, there are cases of not taking or giving up parental responsibility by mothers. Another aspect of the issue discussed is a different understanding of the responsibility of mothers and fathers. In case of men, the factor of voluntary liability for responsibility for the child plays a greater role, as a consequence the lack of such an obligation is associated with lesser social punishment. Of course, there are many different factors that make up the social reading of responsible parenthood. Responsible parenthood is checked especially thoroughly when caring for a person with disability. Statistically, it is more often mothers who undertake their maternity tasks, and some fathers who leave their families are said to have failed in this situation and proved irresponsible. There can be many reasons for such decisions, at the moment the analysis is about the axiological relationship between responsibility and freedom, which is revealed in a challenging situation. We discover some relationships between values only when we are in a specific situation of commitment and choice.

In addition to natural liability, contractual liability should be highlighted. According to Hans Jonas, this responsibility is “artificially established” by assigning someone and accepting the task that is imposed on a person by contract. Here, too, the factor of freedom plays an important role, but it is legally sanctioned.⁸ Childcare is the legal responsibility of parents. One understands this aspect of responsibility differently in case of biological parents who are

⁷ Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung. Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation* (Frankfurt am Main: Shurkamp, 1979), Polish trans. Michał Klimowicz, *Zasada odpowiedzialności. Etyka dla cywilizacji technologicznej* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Platan, 1996), 182.

⁸ Jonas, *Zasada odpowiedzialności*, 185.

inherently subject to legal parental obligations, and differently from carers of foster families who receive obligations from the state towards the children they look after. Control by government officials (social workers) over foster families is much more extensive than with biological parents. In both cases natural and contractual liability is similar, namely, it is expected that the entity (parent, carer) will agree to accept a commitment to take care for a person with disability. In the situation of adoptive parents, we are dealing with other variants of contractual responsibility, which over time becomes a form of natural responsibility, without biological foundation.

In addition to natural and contractual liability, moral responsibility should also be emphasized. The latter concerns those aspects of the action which, in addition to being accountable for (post factum) take into account the anticipation of possible effects of human actions. In this case, it is either about taking action or not taking it, if it may result in some serious damage to the subject making the choice or relatives. This dimension of responsibility is related to the value of maturity. Predicting such consequences is not certain, but only probable. Responsible parenthood, which Paul VI wrote about, consists of all the aspects of responsibility mentioned above. The principle of ethical behavior oriented towards the value of responsibility results from the realization of this value in specific realities of life. This is not always successful. We are dealing here with a normative approach, which is a reference point for human actions. It results from the fact that we should act responsibly, although we are not always able to meet this obligation. However, this is not an excuse for irresponsible and cowardly behavior.

Responsibility in a Difficult Situation

As part of research on disability, many books and articles have been written about people with mental disabilities, but there is an insufficient number of papers on their parents-guardians. At the level of mental reactions, children's disabilities affect the functioning of parents. On the one hand, the abolition of physical and mental barriers is postulated, tolerance for otherness, elimination of prejudices, on the other hand, at the level of social perception of disability, there are still stereotypes and fears about the anti-social behavior of people with intellectual disabilities. There is often concern that they pose a potential danger to healthy people. According to *The World Program of Action for Disabled Persons*, and *The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons Disabilities*, disability is primarily a social problem, and then a medical one. When we talk about disability, we are basically faced with the lack

of understanding and lack of acceptance on the part of healthy and fit people towards people with disabilities. The World Health Organization (WHO) points to several key aspects of disability: (1) impairment—loss of fitness or irregularity in the body's structure in physical, anatomical, and psychological terms; (2) disability—the impossibility or limitation of the ability to lead an active life characteristic of man; (3) handicap—a limitation in the possibility of performing social roles according to age, gender, professional work, and cultural conditions.⁹ In this case, a lot depends on the type and degree of disability. The situation of parents-guardians of the disabled person is not defined, but it constitutes the social consequence of disability of their protégés. Although they are healthy, their perception of the world, understanding themselves, the specific stigma they bear is a derivative of the situation they found themselves in.

People with intellectual disabilities are a group highly exposed to social and occupational exclusion. This exclusion is greater than for people with physical disabilities. This is due to anxiety, shame, and fear of unconventional behavior and reactions of people with intellectual disabilities. It should be remembered that these people have limited ability to acquire communication and social competences, which makes it difficult for them to establish regular contacts with the environment.¹⁰ Usually social contacts of people with intellectual disabilities are based on family relationships or the environment of other people with disabilities. Symptoms of exclusion affect various areas: interpersonal, institutional, cultural, and social.¹¹ Crossing isolation barriers is difficult in many cases, it requires support from caregivers. A disabled person in public space is often accompanied by a parent. It seems better when it is a father than a mother. Often over-protective mothers are negatively perceived by the surroundings. Accompanying the child by the father does not involve a negatively marked stereotype of overprotection. However, the father also has to deal with the stereotype of having a “faulty” child. The social stigma of disability transfers from a child to a parent, which means that in public situations one should show calmness and a large dose of unwavering confidence which, in turn, leads to the constant preoccupation with shame because of your child's social maladjustment. It can translate into guilt in an adult as well as in a disabled person, as it is because of him that the mother, father, siblings experience unpleasantness and are exposed to social shame.

⁹ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/standard-rules-on-the-equalization-of-opportunities-for-persons-with-disabilities.html>, accessed September 20, 2019.

¹⁰ Iwona Myśliwczyk, *Uznanie dorosłości człowieka z niepełnosprawnością. Studium socjopedagogiczne narracji osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w stopniu głębszym* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Impuls, 2019), 20–22.

¹¹ Colin Barnes and Geof Mercer, *Exploring Disability*, Polish trans. Piotr Morawski, *Niepełnosprawność* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo „Sic!,” 2008), 29.

Jean Vanier used the term “tyranny of normality” in this case. It indicates a model of life based on striving for social prestige, which translates into a culturally defined value of success. The tyranny of normality lies in life, which is based on a pattern of constant competition for who will win the race and get measurable indicators of success—excellent education, well-paid work, sophisticated entertainment, and at a later stage of life successful children. In this competition, the weak lose and retreat into the area of narrowly defined privacy. The parent of a person with disability discovers that his or her child will not achieve this kind of success, its measure of success will be completely different, it will concern overcoming its own limitations—but how to show off his successes to friends.¹²

Phenomenological analysis of the situation of the parent of a person with mental disability reveals several areas related to experiencing values in a difficult situation. In the initial period, the experience of intellectual disability of a child is an experience similar to death of a child. This is a specific experience of accompanying someone who has to live with a significant “lack.” It is a fear that my child will probably not start a family, find a job, etc.¹³ Hence the urgency of thinking about a person with intellectual disability as a child, regardless of its age, and not as a separate and autonomous individual who has the right to independence. Struggling with persistent fear that my child will cope in an indifferent environment without the support of a parent, grandparents, guardians, for example, getting off at the right stop while going to school, closing the door when leaving the house, or not getting burned by heating the soup, etc. It is a struggle with the institution of school where, despite the existence of classes with integration departments in which the competition scheme operates. The effects of education and teaching are measured by means of grades. Usually, a huge amount of work on the part of the student with disability and the parent involved in his or her education brings little results and poor grades at school. Very often the parent of such a child has to deal with the frustration resulting from the mismatch between the school’s education system and this child’s needs.

The experience of a child’s disability leads to a state of false consciousness. Its symptom may be a disapproval of disability, or its apotheosis, which manifests itself as an attitude of being chosen for extraordinary acts. This first condition is associated with the belief that psychiatrists and psychologists issuing the medical report are wrong and soon the child will reach the developmental norm. This applies to the early stage of child development. Usually, the need to issue a disability certificate takes place at the beginning of school education. The second condition is treating disability as a kind of choice, which is associated with

¹² Kristeva and Vanier, *Bez(sens) słabości. Dialog wiary z niewiarą o wykluczeniu*, 53.

¹³ Halina Borzyszkowska, *Izolacja społeczna rodzin mających dziecko upośledzone umysłowo w stopniu lekkim* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo UG, 1997), 34.

the belief that disability is a trial that makes a sufferer a contemporary biblical Job. Another form of false consciousness is special care that leads to isolation of the child. It results from love for the loved one, which is manifested in the creation of safe living conditions for him or her and ensuring mental comfort. An escape from the world brings the illusion of normality. Comfort is sought in a family community where there is also a child with disability. Susceptibility to injury and fear of losing one's own self is transferred from the child to the parent of the disabled person. It is self-exclusion resulting from an internal psychological blockade. Its consequence is real suffering and is associated with the experience of being different from families with "normal" children.¹⁴ The desire to have a healthy child who is able to function independently is the most natural desire. In this case, something impossible to fulfil. However, it is not about accepting one's child's disability. At this point, we return to the issue of responsible parenthood, based on the ability to distance ourselves from the manifestations of false consolation and boldly tackling these forms of social behavior that are associated with the "tyranny of normality," Vanier spoke about.

Responsibility as Courage

According to Julia Kristeva, cultural taming of disability is similar to taming mortality. A world without people with disabilities, just like the world in which mortality is pushed aside, would be a false reality, condemning us to some incompleteness of existence. A non-disabled person faces limitations of existence, fear of a constantly felt lack of disability. In many cases, disability causes fear, which then triggers defence responses—denial, rejection, resignation, arrogance, irritation. Parents of disabled children experience the same feelings that others experience, but they are aware that they cannot afford these feelings to control them. They must be brave in the Platonic sense—a man's bravery who fights the most difficult fight with his negative attitude; such flaws as unjustified shame, feelings of helplessness, weakness, tendency to sadness and despair. Especially the disability of the loved ones reveals to us the fragility of our existence and limitations regarding the art of attentive listening and patience. Working on yourself entails taming depression and fear, tame them with cheerfulness, in inner peace, without pathos and without enthusiasm. Mental stability, internal balance is in this case the optimal state.¹⁵

¹⁴ Elżbieta Zakrzewska-Manterys, *Upośledzeni umysłowo. Poza granicami człowieczeństwa* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2010), 79–80.

¹⁵ Kristeva and Vanier, *Bez(sens) słabości. Dialog wiary z niewiarą o wykluczeniu*, 44.

External support for parents of children with mental disabilities consists of: appreciating their work despite the fact that the effects of this work are disproportionate to the effort. Here it is discovered that the measure of success is slow development, not winning awards in competitions. Creating conditions in which parents of children with disabilities have free time. Being a mentor of a child with mental disability is exhausting, parents must be able to temporarily change the role of guardians to another role. In such situations, it is also about the possibility of relieving tension, frustration, creating areas for information exchange and support, sharing responsibility with others, and being listened to. Just like people with disabilities, also parents-guardians need kindness and understanding and respect expressed by other people.

The culture in which we operate needs correction, a significant change of focus, from focusing on what is strong and successful to what is weak and helpless. People with disabilities reveal another image of humanity, often perceived as unattractive and thus hidden from others. They teach mutual listening, they teach others to see someone different and constantly check our expectations towards the cultural model of fulfilled life. It is not just about passive acknowledgement of one's weaknesses, but accepting them, being aware that they are an important element of our humanity. Kristeva wrote in this context about the need for new humanism.

In him, the desire for power and a sense of superiority over others are to be transformed into humble respect for them, because each person, in their individuality and uniqueness, has a gift to offer to others. The weakest are often the freest to be themselves—they occupy an important place because of their ability to change hearts whenever one wants to bond with them.¹⁶

According to Jean Vanier, new humanism reveals itself in the need to change the theological perspective, from an orientation in which God is presented as an almighty being to the formula of a “weak” God who needs love and support. Vanier believed that

for too long our heads have been filled with almighty God, who apparently was unable to hear the scream of all the poor. God does not give orders to people, he wants to give us his presence, which brings pleasure and happiness, even happiness and special pleasure.¹⁷

Interestingly, the postulate of new humanism is part of the thought of John Paul II. For the pope, people with disabilities are witnesses of humanity in the most difficult form of the fight for this humanity. Their existence is a preview

¹⁶ Kristeva and Vanier, *Bez(sens) słabości. Dialog wiary z niewiarą o wykluczeniu*, 84.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

of a new world that is not ruled by strength, violence, aggression, rivalry, comparison with others, but love, solidarity, and openness to others. Especially with regard to people with intellectual disabilities, John Paul II wrote that:

The disabled person, even when his mind is injured or his ability to perceive is disrupted, is a fully human subject, having holy and inalienable rights belonging to every human being. A human being, regardless of the conditions in which his life is lived and the abilities he may show, has exceptional dignity and special value from the beginning of his existence to natural death. A disabled person—in spite of all the limitations and sufferings that are his or her share—makes us respect him/her when showing wisdom over the mystery of man. The more we delve into the dark and unknown areas of human reality, the better we understand that it is in the most difficult and most disturbing situations that the dignity and greatness of a human being are revealed. The wounded humanity of a disabled person is a challenge for us to see, accept and show in each of our brothers and sisters the incomparable value of a human being that God created to be a son in the Son.¹⁸

We do not choose disability voluntarily, it requires a lot of courage to see the world through the eyes of a person with disability, that is, the person who occupies the lowest position in a competitive society. If the rights of the weakest became a measure of social order, then the world would be more just in an ethical sense than it is today.

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¹⁸ Jan Paweł II, “Przesłanie do uczestników Międzynarodowego Sympozjum na temat: Godność i prawa osoby z upośledzeniem umysłowym,” nr 2, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Pol. ed.), 2004, no. 4.

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Mariusz Wojewoda

La question de la parentalité responsable dans une perspective axiologique. Une analyse inspirée de l'encyclique *Humanae Vitae*

Résumé

L'article est consacré à la question de la parentalité responsable formulée par Paul VI dans l'encyclique *Humanae Vitae* en 1968. Le contenu de l'encyclique concernait principalement la question de la responsabilité liée à la fécondation. L'auteur de l'article pose la question de la responsabilité parentale quant à la prise en charge d'un enfant souffrant d'un handicap mental léger. Cette prise en charge par les parents est une conséquence de sa conception. L'auteur analyse la question de la parentalité responsable dans une perspective philosophique, il se concentre sur la lecture du monde des valeurs par le parent-tuteur d'une personne en situation de handicap mental. Les relations étroites avec une personne handicapée exigent une sensibilité particulière sur le plan spirituel, moral et axiologique. Outre l'encyclique *Humanae Vitae*, l'auteur de l'article s'inspire de réflexions de Jean Vanier et de Julia Kristeva sur le handicap ; ces réflexions sont issues de deux perspectives : religieuse et laïque.

Mots-clés : parentalité responsable, valeurs, handicapé mental, courage, Paul VI, Kristeva, Vanier

Mariusz Wojewoda

Questione della genitorialità responsabile da una prospettiva assiologica Un'analisi ispirata all'enciclica *Humanae Vitae*

Sommario

L'articolo è dedicato al tema della genitorialità responsabile, formulato da Paolo VI nell'enciclica *Humanae Vitae* nel 1968. Il contenuto dell'enciclica riguardava principalmente la questione della responsabilità relativa alla fecondazione. L'autore dell'articolo riferisce la questione della responsabilità genitoriale et della custodia di un bambino con una lieve disabilità mentale, il che è una conseguenza della concezione del bambino. Si analizza la questione della genitorialità responsabile in una prospettiva filosofica, si concentra sulla lettura del mondo dei valori da parte del genitore-tutore di una persona con disabilità mentale. Le relazioni strette con una persona disabile richiedono una speciale sensibilità su piano spirituale, morale e assiologico. L'autore dell'articolo, oltre all'enciclica *Humanae Vitae*, si ispira alle riflessioni di Jean Vanier e di Julia Kristeva sulla disabilità ; queste riflessioni risultano da due prospettive : religiosa e secolare.

Parole chiave: genitorialità responsabile, valori, persona con disabilità mentale, coraggio, Paolo VI, Kristeva, Vanier



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A Child is a Human Being Now Responsible Parenthood in the Light of Janusz Korczak’s Pedagogy

Abstract: The author extracts from the *Humanae Vitae* encyclical the thread of responsible parenthood. He asks about the situation of a child in family half a century after the publication of the papal document. He points towards a number of threats and disruptions in the adult-child relations, which result from an improper understanding of who a child is from the philosophical perspective. He opts for a development of philosophical reflection on a child and enriching it with new aspects. He reaches out for inspiration to the works by Janusz Korczak, which present an outline of the original philosophy of a child. What deserves particular recognition is the perception of a child as a “a project of a future man,” and not as a full-valued person who deserves appreciation of the contemporary ontic and social status. In the conclusion the author develops and clarifies Korczak’s controversial postulate of the “children’s right to death,” giving it a contemporary interpretation.

Keywords: responsible parenthood, child, children’s rights, philosophy of a child

The Humanae Vitae Encyclical Letter and the Problem of Responsible Parenting

The Humanae Vitae encyclical letter on the *Regulation of Birth* of the Supreme Pontiff, Paul VI, announced on July 25, 1968, addresses the problem of responsible parenthood, which is important for contemporary culture. In the general perception, not only by Catholic communities, it is considered primarily

as an official interpretation of the Catholic sexual ethics within the scope of conception regulation. However, this important document cannot be restricted to just one dimension. Pope Paul VI also touches upon the need for conscious and responsible shaping of relations between parents and children within a family. The document published fifty years ago reflects the concern for the contemporary family to be a permanent, strong, and functional community of people, and for all its members to create a safe environment favorable to development, building strong interpersonal bonds and proper socialization of the young generation.

In the following commentary by the Italian theologian Roberto de Mattei, it is worth noting the continuity of the papal teaching on the family and the integrity of the vision of the family as a community with specific rights, duties, and values. Mattei writes:

The doctrine of the Church on marriage was affirmed as definitive and binding by Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Casti Connubii* of 31st December, 1930. In this document, the Pope calls the attention of the entire Church and all of the human race to the fundamental truths on the nature of marriage, an institution not of men, but conceived by God Himself, and on the blessings and benefits society derives from it. The first purpose is procreation: which does not mean simply bringing children into the world, but educating them, intellectually, morally, and most of all spiritually, to help them attain their eternal destiny, which is Heaven. The second purpose is the mutual assistance of the spouses, which is not only a material assistance, nor only a sexual, sentimental intent, but primarily an assistance and spiritual union.¹

A particularly important function of the family is to create optimal living conditions and personal development for the children born within it. In the *Preface* to his encyclical, Paul VI draws attention to the need of taking into account the new problems and circumstances that contemporary families face in the context of their vocation to fertility and the education of their offspring:

The transmission of human life is a most serious role in which married people collaborate freely and responsibly with God the Creator. It has always been a source of great joy to them, even though it sometimes entails many difficulties and hardships. The fulfillment of this duty has always posed problems to the conscience of married people, but the recent course of human society and the concomitant changes have provoked new questions. The Church cannot

¹ Roberto de Mattei, "Rereading *Humanae Vitae* in the Light of *Casti connubii*," trans. Francesco Romana, in *Corrispondenza Romana*, July 5th, 2018, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2018/07/de-mattei-rereading-humane-vitae-in.html>.

ignore these questions, for they concern matters intimately connected with the life and happiness of human beings.²

On the one hand, the announcement refers to the issue of the medicalization of the regulation of conception, which requires a thorough discussion on the ethics of contraception. On the other hand, one can see here an awareness of the role—not always positive—played by new social and cultural conditions in the formation of family ethos, and especially in the transformation of the attitude of parents towards children. It is the issue that I would like to pay close attention to.

The author of the *Humanae Vitae* encyclical in the subsequent chapters lists and exposes those external conditions and mental changes that have the greatest influence on the decisions concerning responsible parenthood in all its dimensions—both procreative and educational. This is addressed in the following paragraphs: “not only working and housing conditions but the greater demands made both in the economic and educational field pose a living situation in which it is frequently difficult these days to provide properly for a large family” [...]. “The question of human procreation, like every other question which touches human life, involves more than the limited aspects specific to such disciplines as biology, psychology, demography or sociology. It is the whole man and the whole mission to which he is called that must be considered: both its natural, earthly aspects and its supernatural, eternal aspects,” “[...] husband and wife, through that mutual gift of themselves, which is specific and exclusive to them alone, develop that union of two persons in which they perfect one another, cooperating with God in the generation and rearing of new lives.” [...] “...this love is fecund. It is not confined wholly to the loving interchange of husband and wife; it also contrives to go beyond this to bring new life into being. Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the procreation and education of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute in the highest degree to their parents’ welfare.” [...]. “Married love, therefore, requires of husband and wife the full awareness of their obligations in the matter of responsible parenthood. [...] they are not free to act as they choose in the service of transmitting life, as if it were wholly up to them to decide what is the right course to follow. On the contrary, they are bound to ensure that what they do corresponds to the will of God the Creator. The very nature of marriage and its use makes His will clear, while the constant teaching of the Church spells it out” [...]. Especially marital relationship has “its ordination to the supreme responsibility of parenthood to which man is called.”³

² Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae* of His Holiness Paul VI on the regulation of birth, July 25, 1968, pt 1, accessed November 27, 2019, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html.

³ Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*, pts 2–12.

In the light of these excerpts from the encyclical, the priorities for contemporary parents should be: ensuring decent conditions for the upbringing and education of young people, caring for the needs of children in a large family, striving for an integral education that includes the child as a whole, with all his or her vocation, close cooperation between the spouses and the whole family community in the consistent upbringing of children, seeing each child as a gift (and not a threat to one's own egoistic interests) and, finally, experiencing parenthood as a vocation that is inextricably and naturally part of the structure of matrimonial life.

The order of these priorities, as commentators have noted, is partially due to the permanent moral foundation contained in the tradition of *Magisterium Ecclesiae*, but partially to the understanding of the signs of the times inscribed in the epoch in which Paul VI's papal teaching was shaped. Rev. Paweł Gałuszka, Director of the Department of Pastoral Care of the Families of the Metropolitan Curia in Kraków, in an interview with a journalist from the Catholic Information Agency, explains the ideological context of the conceptual and editorial work on the *Humanae Vitae* encyclical as follows:

The problem that arose at that time was the question of demography. Many children began to be born, which was seen as a threat to developing countries. It was pointed out that if children were to be born at such a speed, the Earth would not be able to feed them. Attempts were made to put pressure on future parents by showing the child as an enemy—as someone to be protected from. All political and economic problems were attempted to be reduced to a growing birth rate, indicating that the child is to blame for all the difficulties.⁴

Within this context, the Kraków priest recalls the teaching of Karol Wojtyła, which was shaped by the academic and didactic work of the Catholic University of Lublin:

Responsible parenthood that grows out of the logic of the gift should also be generous parenthood. Hence, Wojtyła often pointed out that when talking about responsible parenthood, we cannot think only of limiting the number of conceptions. On the contrary, responsibility is also expressed in the desire to create a large family.

At the end of the conversation, Paweł Gałuszka unequivocally points to the broader meaning of the 1968 document:

⁴ Paweł Gałuszka, "Encyklika *Humanae vitae* nie jest jedynie dokumentem o antykoncepcji." Interview for Katolicka Agencja Informacyjna, July 24, 2018, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://deon.pl/kosciol/encyklika-humanae-vitae-nie-jest-jedynie-dokumentem-o-antykoncepcji-wywiad,487353>.

The *Humanae Vitae* encyclical is not only a document about contraception. It is a text that refers to the beauty of human love, describes it, points towards its essential features, seeing it as the foundation of a successful matrimonial life. Therefore, it draws attention to man as such.⁵

The Present Situation of a Child in the Family— A Philosophical Perspective

Half a century after the publication of the text of the encyclical on moral principles in the field of the transmission of human life, the situation of the family in the Euro-Atlantic cultural circle has turned even worse. Today, not only are secularization tendencies increasing, which are conducive to breaking with the family model based on Christian values, but also the atomization of society, which entails the relaxation and weakening of family and interpersonal bonds.⁶ More and more people are resigning from starting a family and thus decide to live as singles or in fleeting, short-term partnerships. In some countries, respect for human life has declined dramatically. The result is, among others, new legal regulations legitimating abortion and euthanasia.⁷

All these and many other factors mean that the situation of a child in a family—morally and economically weakened and increasingly deprived of institutional support—should become a subject of deep concern and responsible reflection. In order to avoid gross mistakes that could have negative consequences in the future, it is worth rethinking the fundamental philosophical, existential, and ethical questions concerning the child as a human being, his or her ontological and social status. Ignorance in this field, which we observe quite commonly today, in practice translates into many dramatic life situations for our children. Knowledge of the truth and reliable knowledge of the subject matter is not sufficient, but it is certainly a necessary condition for remedying some of the difficulties.

Nowadays, there are clear disparities in the knowledge about the child. On the one hand, specific disciplines such as developmental psychology, pedagogy, and education studies are developing rapidly and dynamically. There is also a growing legal awareness related to the gradual introduction of more and more perfect and precise legislative acts concerning children's rights.⁸ On the other

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Cf. Maria Lewicka, "Rodzina nadal najwyższą wartością? Kierunki przemian współczesnej rodziny," in *Rodzina jako wartość: wzory – modele – redefinicje*, ed. Wojciech Muszyński (Toruń: Adam Marszałek, 2015), 38–49.

⁷ See: Barbara Chyrowicz, ed., *Granice ingerencji w naturę* (Lublin: TN KUL, 2001), *passim*.

⁸ See: Leda Korsoumba, "Janusz Korczak and the Convention on the Rights of the Child," in *The Year of Janusz Korczak. There Are No Children, There Are People*, ed. Barbara Smolińska-Theiss (Warszawa: Office of the Ombudsman for Children, 2013), 54–60.

hand, within this background, the philosophical perspective seems quite modest and unsatisfactory. While individual sciences, by solving a number of particular issues, are not simultaneously interested in the development of a comprehensive and general vision of the child and its existential situation, philosophy—which asks about the nature and essence of man—often loses sight of internal differentiation within this superior anthropological category. Meanwhile, today, in the face of facts and findings of contemporary science, one cannot stop at a reflection on humanity as “an abstraction inherent in each single individual,”⁹ nor settle for the metaphysics of man as a substance being, equipped with attributes and accidents.¹⁰ Instead of asking questions about ‘man in general,’ one should now ask about the problems of ‘this man’ involved in specific situations and circumstances. Some of them derive from the human psychophysical constitution, which makes each one of us a human being in a specific way. The individual way of being human consists of many factors. Being human, we are also necessarily: a child or an adult, a woman (girl) or a man (boy), white or colored, homosexual or heterosexual, etc. Each of these factors interferes so decisively with our individual ‘human fact’ that a failure to take them into account must result in a misunderstanding of the humanity as such.

The right way of thinking is the one whose outline can be found in the following books by Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, namely, *Z teorii i metodologii metafizyki* and *Ja – człowiek*. The author writes about the need to use ‘the method of agreeing with facts’ in the process of practicing philosophy, because “the object of philosophy [...] cannot be incompatible with any fact, with any being.”¹¹ Therefore, Krąpiec proposes making the object of human philosophy not an abstract metaphysical category, but a human fact, given through a concrete experience. Krąpiec prefers the following approach: “In philosophical anthropology, as a theory of man, it is necessary to indicate the fact given to us to be explained and to outline the way of explaining this fact. The fact given to be explained is the man himself expressed in his essential qualities of being.”¹²

In his critical commentary on Krąpiec’s book *Ja – człowiek*, Józef Tischner adds that the intellectual style preferred in contemporary philosophical anthropology should be hermeneutical thinking, open to experience and oriented towards its comprehensible interpretation, while at the same time distrusting

⁹ Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, ed. Fredrich Engels (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1976), <http://www.marx2mao.com/M&E/TF45.html>. Accessed November 27, 2019.

¹⁰ See: Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Metafizyka: zarys teorii bytu* (Lublin: RW KUL, 2000), 62.

¹¹ Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, “Analiza rozumowania: problem uzasadnień w filozofii,” in *Z teorii i metodologii metafizyki*, ed. Stanisław Kamiński and Mieczysław A. Krąpiec (Lublin: TN KUL, 1962), 245.

¹² Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Ja – człowiek* (Lublin: RW KUL, 1991), 57.

the habits and mental stereotypes established in the consciousness. He warns against thinking according to “the system [...] of rules determining—before undertaking the proper experience—the real nature of the object being studied [...] according to the hierarchy established in advance.”¹³

However, it is precisely this way of thinking, stressed by both Krapiec and Tischner, that continues to prevail in the reflection on the child. While it can be noted with satisfaction that contemporary philosophy is increasingly seriously and boldly entering most areas of detailed anthropology focusing on endogenous conflicts and tensions between opposition forms of embodied human existence—such as biological and cultural sex, race, social and economic status, relation to state power, especially considered within the concept of biopolitics¹⁴—it should be noted, with concern, that among these topics there is still too little interest and attention given by the problem of child–adult relations. The philosophy of the child remains a postulate rather than a reality. Sebastian Taboń writes in his article “Zarys refleksji filozoficznej nad dzieckiem”: “Philosophy paid too little attention to the child. Is the child, therefore, too banal, frivolous and trivial a subject for philosophers to deal with? It seems that for them, the child is not a serious enough subject to engage their intellect in it.”¹⁵

This is quite right, especially with regard to the area of Central and Eastern Europe. In terms of interest in children and their affairs, philosophy has lagged behind other fields of knowledge. Although the philosophy of education exists and is developing, it deals with the child in a specific perspective—more as an object of educational influence and a raw material for shaping or as a bearer of personality potential, the release and updating of which will make it a human being in its proper sense rather than a sovereign subject, a *par excellence* personal being. This approach is unlikely to free us from the stereotype of thinking that “the child as an entity is an incomplete and unfinished form of man.”¹⁶ It is, therefore, worth looking elsewhere for sources of inspiration to revive the style of thinking proposed by Krapiec and Tischner.

¹³ Józef Tischner, *Myślenie według wartości* (Kraków: Znak, 1982), 337–338.

¹⁴ See: for example, Erving Goffman, *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York: Simon & Shuster 1986); bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press 1984); Natalie Stoljar, “Essence, Identity and the Concept of Woman,” *Philosophical Topics* 23, no. 2 (1995): 261–293; Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall, *Women, Knowledge and Reality: Explorations in Feminist Philosophy* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996); Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

¹⁵ Sebastian Taboń, “Zarys refleksji filozoficznej nad dzieckiem,” in *Problemy współczesnego dziecka. Wybrane aspekty*, ed. Małgorzata Cywińska (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Adama Mickiewicza, 2014), 127.

¹⁶ Taboń, “Zarys refleksji filozoficznej nad dzieckiem,” 129.

Janusz Korczak—A Doctor, Pedagogue and Philosopher of a Child

In the Polish pedagogical thought of the 20th century, there is a promising lead that I intend to follow. It was determined by the work and practical activity of Janusz Korczak. In fact, his name was Hirszt Goldszmidt. Janusz Korczak—initially a literary pen name under which he began to publish works of fiction—with time grew to such an extent that today hardly anyone remembers his real name. He lived in the years 1878–1942, although both of these dates are not entirely certain. The first one—due to the fact that his birth certificate was lost during the war, whereas the second one was dubious due to the fact that he died in the gas chamber of the Nazi death camp in Treblinka, and it was only owing to tedious research of historians that it was possible to establish the probable date of his death, that is, August 7, 1942. However, according to the legal system adopted in Poland in the post-war years, the official date of his death was 1946. Korczak was a specialist in children's diseases, a pedagogue, a social worker, and an educator. In his professional and personal life, Korczak constantly met with children, although he never started his own family. After completing his studies and military service in the Russian army on the front line of the Russian-Japanese war, he went to practice abroad in one of the Berlin clinics (in later years he also deepened his education in Paris and London). He worked in the Bergson and Bauman Children's Hospital in Warsaw. There he encountered childhood tragedies on a daily basis: poverty, malnutrition, suffering and the death of young patients. Another important testing ground, providing the opportunity to observe the everyday life and behavior of children in various situations, was the work at the Warsaw Orphanage on Krochmalna Street. He spent thirty years there, working as an educator and head of the institution. Until 1932, when he stayed with his sister Anna, Korczak spent days and nights with his children. He slept in a shared room called the dormitory, separated only by a screen and children's beds. Owing to this close bond, he became acquainted with and understood the children's nature—in its better and worse manifestations, which he expressed with engaging honesty in his publications¹⁷—bet-

¹⁷ He wrote, among other things, the following words: "There are as many bad people among children as there are among adults, but they have no need or opportunity to show it. [...] Without organization, in a relaxed atmosphere, only a few exceptional children can develop successfully; dozens will be wasted." Janusz Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Internat. Kolonie letnie. Dom sierot* (Warszawa: Office of the Ombudsman for Children, 2013), 76. What makes the world pedagogical literature so unique is the moving, sometimes even brutal Korczak's study devoted to children with a tendency to do evil, entitled "Children of Pre-school Age." Here is a fragment of the article: "I ask what amount of suffering, what nerve reaction would a group of adults, forced to live with an offensive, brutal individual, with his bandit actions, respond to. For me, it does not matter how much innate crime, how much acquired malice the result is

ter than most education theorists, psychologists, and therapists. Based on this rich empirical basis, he built his complex image of a child, seen from close-up, realistically, and at the same time with love and empathy.

Janusz Korczak was not a systematic researcher of children's issues from a scientific perspective. All the time, however, he remained a clever observer, constantly analyzing and investigating the deeper sense of the phenomena and processes perceived. In his diary, Korczak included the following self-characteristics:

I have a research mind, not an inventive mind. Research to know? No. Research to find, to reach the bottom? Also no. I guess research to ask further and further questions. I do not have the ambition to answer, I want to go to other questions—not necessarily about the same thing. As a child, I did not break toys, I did not care why the doll was lying on the floor with its eyes closed. Not the mechanism, but the essence of things.¹⁸

One of his pupils from the orphanage, the later famous writer Igor Newerly, completes the picture: “Burdened with anxiety of inquiries, he would explore the essence of every thing to ask further and further questions. He was born this way. But why did the child become an object and inspiration, a goal and a content of the whole life—not the mysteries of the stars, the laws of heredity or the laws of society?”¹⁹

Let us add the information provided by Maria Szczepska-Pustkowska: “every day he meticulously collected notes about his pupils.”²⁰ He used the results of his observations and thoughts, based on them, in a wide range of writing. He wrote both literary works—novels and short stories for children and adults—as well as articles in professional medical and pedagogical journals. An important part of his work are works that can be described as textbooks or manuals for conscious parents. This category includes in particular: *Jak kochać dziecko* [How to Love a Child] (1919) and *Prawo dziecka do szacunku* [The Child's Right to Respect] (1928). Korczak also popularized pedagogical knowledge: he gave lectures and talks, appeared in radio plays, organized social awareness campaigns to draw attention to the real needs of children.

From all this rich but not systematized intellectual panorama one can abstract the outline of Korczak's philosophy of a child, which—although in its em-

clearly the criminal acts of small pests. How to treat, how long will the treatment last—this is a question of a completely different nature. One thing is clear: these children must be separated, isolated. They poison the atmosphere, they infect it.” Janusz Korczak, “Dzieci występne w wieku przedszkolnym,” *Szkola Specjalna* 8, no. 4 (1925): 129–130.

¹⁸ Janusz Korczak, *Pamiętnik i inne pisma z getta* (Warszawa: WAB, 2012), 117.

¹⁹ Igor Newerly, *Żywe wiązanie* (Warszawa: Czytelnik), 43.

²⁰ Maria Szczepska-Pustkowska, “The Philosopher Child, the Poet Child. Korczak's Inspirations,” in *The Year of Janusz Korczak. There Are No Children, There Are People*, 146.

bryonic form, never developed by its authorship—is undoubtedly present there. Maria Szczepska-Pustkowska believes that “although Korczak did not manage to write a great and landmark work upon child [...], the Old Doctor came closest to the nature of child and childhood.”²¹ There is no place for a detailed reconstruction. Let us conclude by stating that Korczak’s philosophy is based on four pillars:

1. Ontological identity of a child as a special but ready-made and full-valued form of human being;
2. The Code of the inalienable rights of the child as a foundation for the axiology of the relationship between an adult and a child;
3. The scope of responsibilities of adults towards children, correlated with the rights of the child;
4. An innovative and controversial idea of a “children’s republic,” developed in theory, described in the 1922 novel *King Matt The First*, and implemented in practice in the orphanage.

A Child—A Present or Future Being?

In this, of necessity, short presentation, I will focus on one thread only. It is the postulate of thinking about the child as a being endowed with the fullness of personal existence, living in the present and entitled to respect and protect its current ontological status instead of focusing solely on who it will be in the future. Thomas Cathcart and Daniel Klein quote an anecdote characteristic of thinking about a child in the future: Mrs. Goldstein is walking down the street with her two grandchildren. A friend asks how old they are. The answer is “Doctor is five and lawyer is seven.”²² This joke hides a deep sociological observation. Jean-François Lyotard announces that “a child is deeply human,” but then he adds: “since its confusion announces and promises arrival of what is possible.”²³ Therefore, for him, too, the humanity of the child is inextricably linked with the future.

There are many more similar voices and statements that can be quoted. Meanwhile, Korczak—already in the first half of the 20th century!—presents the following position: “Leading thought: the child is an equally valuable person for us. Without pedantry, to see him as a human being, not to underestimate him, kindly and trustingly”²⁴; “There are no children—there are people, but

²¹ Ibid.

²² Cf. Thomas Cathcart and Daniel Klein, *Plato and a Platypus Walk Into a Bar... Understanding Philosophy Through Jokes* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 14.

²³ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. George Bennington (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 7.

²⁴ Janusz Korczak, *Pedagogika żartobliwa* (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1939), 5.

with a different scale of concepts, different experience, different inclinations, different drives, different play of feelings. Let us remember that we adults do not know them”²⁵; “A philosopher is a man who wonders a lot and wants to know what everything is really like. Again, such are the children”²⁶; “In the childhood world, everything that happens in the difficult adult world happens. You will find representatives of all types of people and all kinds of deeds [noble and] undeserving.”²⁷ At the same time, he expresses a sharply critical attitude towards seeing the essence of childhood in its future adulthood. He writes: “Essential view: ‘A child is not, but will be. Does not know, but will know. Is not able, but will be able,’ forces to constant expectation. Half of humanity does not exist; its life is a joke, naive aspirations, fleeting feelings, funny views. [...] What have we done to get to know them and create conditions in which they could exist and mature? [...] For tomorrow, what is neglected is what makes them happy, sad, surprised, angry, occupied. For tomorrow, which he neither understands nor needs to understand, the years of his life, many years, are stolen from him. [...] And the child thinks—I am nothing. Only adults mean something. [...] How many more years do I have to wait? But let me just grow up [...].”²⁸ In another place: “Children’s doubts and reservations seem to be insignificant. [...] Weak, small, poor, dependent—it will only be a citizen. A brat, a child only, a future man, not a present one. He will be only really there. [...] There are, as it were, two lives: one serious, respectable, the other leniently tolerated, less worthy. We say: a future man, a future employee, a future citizen. That they will be, that they will start to really start later, that they will only really start in the future. We allow you to graciously wander around, but more comfortably without them.”²⁹ Elsewhere, he quotes a funny scene of a conversation with a child; this scene shows how serious and fundamental matters a child can embrace with its seemingly incompetent mind: “It was like this. I say: ‘You know, Helcia, you are a restless human being.’ ‘I am a human being?’ ‘well, yes. I am not a doggy, aren’t I?’”. She thought about it. After a long pause she adds surprised: “I am a human being. I am Helcia. I am a girl. I am Polish. I am a mother’s daughter, I am a citizen of Warsaw [...] I am so much.”³⁰

Leda Koursoumba, President of the European Network of Ombudsmen for Children, comments on Korczak’s views from a contemporary perspective in

²⁵ Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Internat*, 20.

²⁶ Janusz Korczak, *Prawidła życia. Pedagogika dla młodzieży i dorosłych* (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1930), 141.

²⁷ Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Internat*, 76.

²⁸ Janusz Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Dziecko w rodzinie* (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1919), 20.

²⁹ Janusz Korczak, *Prawo dziecka do szacunku* (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze, 1928), 13–26 *passim*.

³⁰ Korczak, *Pamiętnik i inne pisma z getta*, 37–38.

the following way: “The conceptualisation of children, as full members of the society, as individuals worthy to be appreciated for what they are and not what they are about to become, laid the foundations for Korczak’s unique and also radical, of his time, humanistic vision of children. [...] Korczak’s call, was about respect for children, their inherent dignity as human beings but also for their particularity, their capacities and competences. For him, children were human beings *à part entière*.”³¹

Korczak’s Great Charter of the Liberties of Children against the Background of the History of the Development of the Idea of Children’s Rights

As part of his plan to radically change the attitude of adults towards children, Korczak called for the introduction of *magna charta libertatis*³² following the example of that historical one, introduced in 1215 in England during the reign of John Lackland (1166–1216) and granting the subjects the right to resist the king. The difference is that the ‘subjects’ in Korczak’s version are children, and the ‘king’ is the entire adult community. The Great Charter of the Liberties of Children turned out not to be so great, because it consists of only three points. It seems, however, that the author attached the greatest importance to them. Korczak’s declaration reads as follows: “I call for *magna charta libertatis*, for rights of a child. Maybe there are more of them, I have found three fundamental ones: (1) The children’s right to death; (2) The children’s right to the present day; (3) The children’s right to be what it is.”³³

A short historical commentary is needed first. The idea of children’s rights, honored and protected by adults, as well as specially established institutions for this purpose, matured very slowly in our civilization. The basic obstacle was the not very humanistic (to put it mildly) attitude towards the child. The book *The Child and Family Life in the Ancient Régime* by the French historian Philippe Ariès is devoted to this issue. He writes there how a child was perceived in the relatively recent past: “The child was not perceived, as it is today, as a future adult. Too many of them died. [...] Indifference was the inevitable result of the demography of that time. In the deep province it survived until the 19th century [...] and it should not surprise us—in the demographic conditions of those times it was all too natural.”³⁴ The Polish sociologist Bartłomiej

³¹ Koursoumba, “Janusz Korczak and the Convention on the Rights of the Child,” 54–56.

³² Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Dziecko w rodzinie*, 18.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), 48–49.

Dobroczyński speaks out in a similar way: “Before the 20th century [...] due to the difficult life situation, the bond with children was not particularly strong, they did not receive as much attention as they do today. [...] There was nothing special about children [...], including in culture. Ancient and later literature until the 19th century did not say much about children, in fact it did not deal with this subject at all. [...] In a sense, there was no child, only an unfinished, immature adult.”³⁵ It should be added that in some regions the attitude of indifference survived until the 20th century: Janusz Korczak encountered it directly. We can find evidence of this fact in Igor Newerly’s account from when he worked as Korczak’s secretary. He quotes the doctor’s conversation with the mother of a sick child: “Do your children grow well in your home? There were twelve. Four are alive, eight have died. The opposite is true of the Nowis family: eight are growing, four have died. Kazio Nowis, the son of an Ochota worker, eight months old, is the twelfth in a row. [...] They bring and bring children from all corners of Warsaw to him. With despair, with hope or not at all, simply to get a certificate of death later, that it supposedly was being treated. Because without a certificate there was a problem with the burial [...]”³⁶

In this light, it becomes more understandable that the first legal formulas protecting children were only included in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, prepared by the League of Nations and published on the 13th of February 1924. It contains five points, not in the form of directives, but merely suggestions. The full text reads as follows:

a) Preamble

By the present Declaration of the Rights of the Child, commonly known as ‘Declaration of Geneva,’ men and women of all nations, recognizing that mankind owes to the Child the best that it has to give, declare and accept it as their duty that, beyond and above all considerations of race, nationality or creed:

- Article 1. The child must be given the means requisite for its normal development, both materially and spiritually.
- Article 2. The child that is hungry must be fed; the child that is sick must be nursed; the child that is backward must be helped; the delinquent child must be reclaimed; and the orphan and the waif must be sheltered and succored.
- Article 3. The child must be the first to receive relief in times of distress.
- Article 4. The child must be put in a position to earn a livelihood, and must be protected against every form of exploitation.
- Article 5. The child must be brought up in the consciousness that its talents must be devoted to the service of fellow men.”³⁷

³⁵ Bartłomiej Dobroczyński, “Kiedy dziecko zaczęło pytać,” in *List. Catholic Monthly*, no. 2 (2012): 17.

³⁶ Newerly, *Żywe wiązanie*, 152.

³⁷ <https://www.humanium.org/en/text-2/>, accessed November 27, 2019.

Let us take a look at the chronology: Korczak's Magna Charta dates back to 1919, the Geneva Declaration was prepared five years later. In the following years, intensive work was carried out to codify the natural rights of all children to a fuller extent. It was only in 1989, when the Convention on the Rights of the Child was promulgated, that the result was measurable, using, incidentally, the intellectual heritage of the Old Doctor. As Thomas Hammarberg noted—between 2005 and 2012 the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe—“the thinking of Janusz Korczak influenced the drafting of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Some of us who took part in the long process to formulate this treaty had read his texts and learned from them. [...] Korczak was one of those thinkers who were ahead of his time.”³⁸

The Contemporary Significance of Korczak's Adult-Child Relationship Project

However, Korczak's draft of the Children's Liberty Card cannot be left without comment. His demands are by no means obvious—especially the first one—and as it can be seen from a comparison with officially adopted documents, they have not been fully understood and accepted by the international community. It is, therefore, worth taking a closer look at not only the content, but also the intentions and consequences of the project forwarded by Korczak. I will start with points 2 and 3, to leave the most controversial one at the end.

What observations and experiences, and what desirable values are behind the claiming of the “children's right to present day,” has been already addressed above. The point is, let us repeat, to renounce once and for all the temptation to see only a misty announcement of the future in a child. Such an attitude is connected with the tendency to disregard the present world of the child: its current experiences, current problems and needs, current questions and attempts to answer them, etc. The whole of this innumerable treasury of values with which the child lives here and now is often confirmed by a frivolous shrug of the shoulders or a wave of the hand and a disrespectful commentary: when he or she grows up, he or she will become wise. “For tomorrow, what pleases them today, what saddens them, surprises them, makes them angry and occupies them is ignored”—Korczak wrote.³⁹ Meanwhile, the issue of an adult's attitude towards a child should be viewed from the perspective of the personalistic norm which (in Kant's conceptualization) proclaims: “Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely

³⁸ Thomas Hammarberg, “Korczak Helps Us Understand the Rights of the Child,” in *The Year of Janusz Korczak*, 46.

³⁹ Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Dziecko w rodzinie*, 40.

as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end.”⁴⁰ By agreeing—in line with Korczak’s postulate—that a child is a person now, and not only in the future, when he or she grows up and matures, we must consequently also agree to see the child as the ‘goal’ of our actions. Many of us, however, have a tendency to see the child as the only means of achieving the goals we care about in the future. “You say: It should... I want it to be... And you are looking for the model that it should be, you are looking for the life that you want for it”—Korczak expresses this thought.⁴¹ From the philosophical point of view, this should be considered a form of instrumentalization of the personal existence of a child.

The third paragraph of Korczak’s declaration, that is, “The children’s right to be what it is,” has a similar meaning. The Old Doctor writes with bitter irony about the scientific views prevailing in his time:

Researchers stated that a mature man is guided by motives, a child’s drives, a logical adult, a child drawn into an illusory imagination; an adult has a character, a fixed moral face, a child gets entangled in the chaos of instincts and wishes. They examine the child not as a different, but as a lower, weaker, poorer psychological organization.⁴²

He himself stands in a clear opposition: “And the seriousness, prudence and balance of children, solid commitments, self-experience, the capital of just judgments and evaluations, tactful restraint in demands, subtle feelings, non-deceptive sense of righteousness...? [...] Let us demand respect for clear eyes, smooth temples, young effort and trust.”⁴³ He tries to instill in the minds of adults a belief that children are similar to that which Chiara Lubich proclaimed in relation to every human being: “If someone in his life [...] begins to live well in the present, [...] this note so deeply marks his every action that his existence becomes very colorful. [...] We will never sufficiently understand the value of living in the present.”⁴⁴ Korczak, as a clever observer, knew perfectly well that it is the child who has the natural ability to live now and to spontaneously enjoy what the current time brings. He knew that this ability, with age, diminishes and fades away. He sought to remedy the fact that adults driven by recklessness or jealousy deprive their children of this natural, precious gift. He was aware that the persistent and unnatural transfer of the child’s attention to what was to come in the future entails the destruction of the child’s spontaneity and the deprecia-

⁴⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. James W. Ellington (New York: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993), 36.

⁴¹ Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Dziecko w rodzinie*, 5.

⁴² Korczak, *Prawo dziecka do szacunku*, 254.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁴⁴ Chiara Lubich, *Ogni momento è un dono* (Vaticano: Citta Nuova Editrice, 2001), 20 and 22.

tion of what the child is living in the present moment. Hence the postulate to protect this delicate, ephemeral but irreplaceable value.

The last problem to be discussed is the meaning of the postulate “the children’s right to death.” This theme of Korczak’s thought, the most controversial and even shocking for contemporary man, has already received several valuable studies, including Męczkowska-Christiansen⁴⁵ and Walczak.⁴⁶ However, I would like to add a few of my own observations.

Given its complexity, the issue needs to be addressed in several separate points. I will start by placing it in a specific social and cultural context. Korczak’s thoughts were formed at a time when infant and young child mortality was incomparably higher than today.⁴⁷ In those days, the death of a child was something common and somewhat natural. This fact happened in most families and due to the specificity of family life at that time (much wider contacts among closer and further relatives) it became a common experience, which was known and discussed. Korczak himself had a stoic attitude towards this phenomenon, since he wrote about everyday hospital life in his diary: “Children recover and die, as it happens in a hospital. I was not being smart.”⁴⁸

Korczak, however, as a doctor with a widely recognized reputation, moved freely in all social strata, from the lowest to the highest. There, he was confronted with polarized attitudes of adults towards the death of a child. Among the poorest people, living below the poverty line, there were some attitudes of indifference and insensitivity that we do not understand today. However, this resulted from certain reasons, such as: a low level of education and, consequently, a low level of moral sensitivity, a lack of hygiene and an unfavorable level of satisfaction of material needs, which increased the morbidity, minimal access to health care and, finally, a relatively high helplessness of contemporary medicine in the face of many serious diseases of childhood. Given these circumstances, Philip Ariès’s diagnosis should also be applied to them: “Indifference was an inevitable consequence of the then demography [...] and should not surprise us—in the conditions [...] of those times it was too natural.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Astrid Męczkowska-Christiansen, “Child’s Right to Death in View of Korczak’s Philosophy of Childhood,” in *The Year of Janusz Korczak*, 186–203.

⁴⁶ Paweł Walczak, “The Child’s Right to Death in the Perspective of Korczak’s Philosophy of Childhood,” in *Ethical Thinking Past and Present. Man and Death*, ed. Vasil Gluchman and Marian Palenčár (Prešov: Filozofická fakulta Prešovskej univerzity, 2018), 229–242.

⁴⁷ Based on estimates provided by Encyclopedia Gutenberg, child mortality in the first decades of the 20th century in Poland ranged from 13% to 19%. Compared to other European countries, this indicator was very high. A similar scale of the problem was noted only in Spain and Hungary, while the Scandinavian countries reached at that time a rate of about 5%. Source: Encyclopedia Powszechna Encyklopedia Wydawnictwa Gutenberga, Phrase: Polska—statystyka sanitarna (Poland—sanitary statistics), <https://www.gutenberg.czyz.org/index.php?word=60774>.

⁴⁸ Korczak, *Pamiętnik i inne pisma z getta*, 48–49.

⁴⁹ Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, 48–49.

On the other hand, amongst wealthy people a psychosis of fear of losing the beloved child happened sometimes. It was a motive for undertaking irrationally exaggerated behaviors, which were aimed at preventing, at all costs, a child from being exposed to the danger of injury or death. Korczak referred to these behaviors with an angry irritation. He claimed that they gave birth to educational pathologies that threatened children more than the dangers they were supposed to be protected from. He wrote:

It seems to me that the more frightened a mother of wealthy spheres is about the possible death of her child, the less conditions she will find to be able to become probably only a physically and spiritually successful person. Whenever I see a pale child in an oil-painted white room, among white lacquered equipment, in a white dress with white toys, I experience an unpleasant feeling: a bloodless soul in an anemic body has to grow up in this surgical room rather than in a child's room. [...] Fearing that death would not tear the child away, we tear the child away from life; not wanting it to die, we do not allow it to live.⁵⁰

He was thinking about finding remedies for both extreme deviations. With regard to the high mortality of poor children, little could be done with such scarce resources as Korczak had, apart from awareness-raising campaigns, for example, in the field of hygiene and appeals to the rich for charity. However, one could think of a change of mentality in this direction in order to see and protect at least the personal dignity of the child. Within this interpretation key, the postulate “the children’s right to death” should be understood as a demand for the right to a dignified death—and here much could be done, from the care for a proper and dignified setting for funeral ceremonies to the wise and serious experience of mourning.

In a completely different direction, we should consider the problem of the attitude towards death in a wealthy and well-educated family. Here Korczak’s postulates are definitely aimed at overcoming the excessive, exaggerated fear of the risk of exposing the child to danger. To put it in a more contemporary language: this is about changing the attitude of fear of an undefined danger into a rational risk management strategy (see Beck 2015; Glassner 2018). In this context, “the children’s right to death” means as much as the right to the risk of potentially dangerous behavior within a reasonably limited scope. This requires making a difficult but pedagogically correct decision, where there is a border between justified risk and dangerous bravado, and teaching the child to comply with this border.

Finally, a few words about the contemporary meaning of Korczak’s thoughts in the discussed scope. Let us again divide the question into two sectors: (a) indifference to death, (b) a psychosis of fear of an unnamed and undefined danger that may result in the death of a child. Both these symptoms, contrary to appear-

⁵⁰ Korczak, *Jak kochać dziecko. Dziecko w rodzinie*, 18–19.

ances, are still present in society but have taken on a different form. Indifference to the death of the child has now moved into the prenatal phase. Contrary to the findings of science and faith, more and more often the voices of the mother's autonomy in deciding about the life of the conceived child are raised. The abortion procedure is spoken in euphemism in order to create the impression that we are dealing with something other than taking the life of a human being. In the context of the ongoing discussion on the status of the conceived child and the right to abortion,⁵¹ it is worth considering the current meaning of Korczak's postulate. In my opinion, "the children's right to die" means, firstly, the right of every conceived child to be recognized as a living human being, and secondly, the right to clearly define an abortion procedure as an interruption of a child's life. Only by defining this situation clearly and precisely will it be possible to make a realistic assessment of the attitude of parents towards the conceived and yet unborn child.

The issue of today's attitude towards fear of losing a loved and accepted child is different. This is a multi-faceted problem, and I would like to mention just one aspect of it, namely, the deep and paralyzing fear of the suffering of loved ones affected by the trauma of a child's death. One such person, Anja Franczak, the author of the blog www.SprawyOstateczne.pl and the organizer of the Funeral Forum, confides in the editor of the Catholic magazine *Tygodnik Powszechny*: "At night, I was woken up by my own crying. My body took control of me. I was numb. [...] I felt terrible, but there was more emptiness, numbness and physical pain in it than a conscious sense of loss, to which I did not give myself the right. [...] This state of emptiness lasted for a few weeks. And then I completely broke down. Not only did my psyche speak, but also my body. The health problems I had were getting worse and worse."⁵² Only after four years of experiencing a psychosomatic nightmare did she manage—as she says—"to reach the point where there is more love than despair within [her]."⁵³ Under the influence of these experiences, she became a professional therapist, accompanying in mourning, and a volunteer in a hospice. She decided to "contribute to reducing taboos around death" and in various forms publicly encourages open discussion about our helplessness in the face of the pain of losing our loved ones, especially children.⁵⁴ I believe that her attitude is close to a proper interpretation of the contemporary meaning of Korczak's message.

Translated by Szymon Bukal

⁵¹ See: Marian Machinek, *Spór o status ludzkiego embrionu* (Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, 2007), *passim*.

⁵² Anja Franczak, "Alma znaczy dusza," *Tygodnik Powszechny* 44 (2019): 16.

⁵³ Franczak, "Alma znaczy dusza," 14.

⁵⁴ Cf. Anja Franczak, *Sprawy ostateczne. Błóg na śmierć i życie*, accessed November 27, 2019, <https://sprawyostateczne.pl/>.

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Krzysztof Wieczorek

Un enfant est déjà un être humain
La parentalité responsable
À la lumière de la pédagogie de Janusz Korczak

Résumé

L'auteur de l'article examine dans l'encyclique *Humanae Vitae* le thème de la parentalité responsable. Il s'interroge sur la situation de l'enfant dans la famille un demi-siècle après la publication du document papal. Il indique un certain nombre de menaces et de perturbations dans les relations enfant-adulte résultant d'une mauvaise compréhension du statut de l'enfant envisagé dans une perspective philosophique. Il opte pour le développement d'une réflexion philosophique sur l'enfant et l'enrichissement de cette dernière par de nouveaux aspects. Il s'inspire des œuvres de Janusz Korczak, d'où émerge l'esquisse d'une philosophie originale de l'enfant. Un aspect mérite particulièrement l'attention : le refus que l'enfant soit perçu comme un « projet d'homme futur » et non comme une personne en tant que telle, qui mérite qu'on apprécie son statut ontique et social actuel. Enfin, l'auteur développe et explique le postulat controversé de Korczak sur « le droit de l'enfant à mourir », en lui donnant une interprétation moderne.

Mots-clés : parentalité responsable, enfant, droits de l'enfant, philosophie de l'enfant.

Krzysztof Wieczorek

Il bambino è ora un essere umano
Genitorialità responsabile
Alla luce della pedagogia di Janusz Korczak

Sommario

L'autore dell'articolo esamina nell'enciclica *Humanae Vitae* il tema della genitorialità responsabile. Chiede sulla situazione del bambino nella famiglia 50 anni dopo la pubblicazione del documento papale. Indica una serie di minacce e distorsioni nelle relazioni bambino-adulto risultanti da incomprensioni su chi sia il bambino in una prospettiva filosofica. Opta per lo sviluppo di una riflessione filosofica sul bambino e per il suo arricchimento con nuovi aspetti. Prende ispirazione dalle opere di Janusz Korczak, da cui emerge il profilo di una filosofia originale del bambino. Una particolare attenzione merita il disaccordo sulla percezione del bambino come un « progetto di uomo futuro » e non come una persona che merita di essere apprezzata nel suo attuale stato ontico e sociale. Infine, l'autore sviluppa e spiega il controverso postulato di Korczak sul « diritto del bambino alla morte », dandogli un'interpretazione moderna.

Parole chiave: genitorialità responsabile, bambino, diritti dei bambini, filosofia del bambino.

Part Two

Reviews



John C. Gallagher, *A New Dawn,
or the Fading of the Light?
Culture and Evangelization Today*
Bloomington, IN: Westbow Press, 2019,
pp. 262

Rev. John Gallagher, a member of the Congregation of St Basil, based in Toronto, Canada, offers in this book a wide ranging analysis and discussion of the many issues pertaining to evangelization of culture today. Inspired by Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) and its challenge to the Church to evangelize culture and to seek to transform culture as a means of evangelization. For many years as a professor of moral theology Father Gallagher became aware of the cultural forces that either help or hinder people from receiving the traditional Catholic teaching. He found that the majority of those writing in English on the topic think it is a matter of adjusting Catholic teaching to fit contemporary thinking, even contemporary tastes. But he argues along the lines of Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* that we must rather seek to create Christian culture. This book steers the discussion in that direction and it deals with a number of issues that are neglected in current writings in English. This book does not seek to formulate a specific plan for evangelization, focusing instead on the process of evangelization in terms of its constituent elements so as to assist those who are responsible for a program of evangelization. His main thesis is that characteristics of modern life, especially secularism, have made the "default position" for men and women of today that life can be lived without any reference to God; therefore, Christian must seek to influence the culture of today to make reference to the transcendent as regular part of human

life when lived to the full. This thesis emerges out of the four parts structuring the book: one—Situating the Issue, two—Evangelization and Contemporary Western Culture, three—The Products of Culture, and four—Building a Christian Culture. Parts two and four are the predominant chapters in articulating the thesis. Part one discusses faith and culture as the drama of our time and the complexity of their relation and interactions. He also explains the new tasks for evangelization today, particularly the need to re-evangelize people in the west. He ends the first part with a very insightful account of the living faith that needs to be communicated to people of today. Part two elaborates on the characteristics of western modern life that impact the life of faith such as the meaning and impact of secularization, the reduction of ethics to a minimalistic standard in public life, the positive and negative aspects of mass media, and the pervasiveness of individualism, the privatization of religion, and the “eclipse of virtue.” Part three is a brief account of the products of culture most needed to develop, namely virtue, identity, and community. Finally, in part four, on building a Christian culture, Fr. Gallagher draws on many years of experience as a priest, teacher, and scholar to note the key methods, milestones, and achievements for the evangelization of culture. Sometimes evangelization is associated primarily with instruction. This book goes into more traditional aspects of evangelization that are too often neglected, such as symbols, history, conversation, and identification with respected persons.

In his final chapter, Gallagher offers some brief reminders to “a church that evangelizes culture.” His first counsel is to avoid the mistake of thinking that the gospel message will be more attractive if it “demands less effort and is less insistent on moral restrictions.” As a general strategy, however, the path of accommodation to the views and practices of the secular world has not been successful in converting secularists to the Christian faith or even retaining membership in the Church. The Protestant Churches that have lost the most members in recent decades for the most part are those that have accommodated most to “the world.” The real interaction between the faith and culture has usually been much more creative than just adopting beliefs and practices of secular society.

Just the empirical evidence suggest that the reverse is true, and we recall St John Paul II’s admonition to “be not afraid” of the demands of the Gospel. Gallagher explains that a period of learning and “putting off the old man” is essential to Christianity. He also offers a reminder that “Christian culture takes place in the way people act, including the meaning and attitudes with which they act” (p. 231). This is a call to reflection in the midst of practice and it requires value of small communities and groups to meet and pray upon their action and projects in light of the gospel. It also recalls to me Cardinal Wojtyła’s stress upon “deepening the understanding of faith” and the formation of Christian attitudes as the source of renewal in the Church and society.


There is much to be gleaned from this book. I would like to point to a few very relevant discussions for the topic of evangelization and the Church's teaching on family and sexuality as put forward in *Humanae Vitae*. He makes a passing reference to this document when he discusses the resistance to moral norms by the culture at large and ethical dissent within the Church. With the case of the Church's position on artificial contraception, because it has failed to persuade many people within the Church and outside, some have advised a change in the teaching and an adaption to the demands and the conveniences of modern life. Yet he reminds us that the position is not arbitrary but the result of careful thought and long experience. A convincing defense is possible as shown by Pope John Paul II and the theology of the body (p. 177). But if we go back to main challenges to evangelization, such as secularism, technology, and autonomy, the promotion and development of the issues raised in *Humanae Vitae* exemplify the way the Church must respond and continue to preach the good news in modern society. The complex elements of a secular society hit particularly hard at the sanctity of life and respect for fertility. Secularism is the exclusion of reference to God in life and the failure to integrate religion with life. It is fueled by the attitudes of scientific reductionism and technological mastery. Efficiency of results is the standard often invoked throughout all sectors of modern society. Gallagher argues that there is a certain passivity and lack of critical thinking about the claims and promises of the technology. As a result, modern culture reverts by default to the secularist position. But there is a creeping sense of a lack of meaning in life and a neglect of the value of the person. A robust education about the meaning of the personal life through the law of the gift and mutual respect should serve to offer an alternative to the loneliness and anguish of modern life. As John Paul II said in *Redeemer of Man*, "man cannot live without love" (§ 10). Gallagher explains the difference between technological solutions and personal solutions to problems of life. The technological solution requires little personal effort; whereas the development of virtue draws upon personal commitment to change behavior and cultivate new or deeper attitudes appropriate to human life. The priority of ethics over technology points to ethos as a way of life, or the morality of virtue. Gallagher points out that "the moral life is the very gratifying project of becoming the kind of person who can appreciate and attain things that expand human possibilities and enrich life" (p. 121). Evangelization is accompanied by a call to conversion, a personal, not a technological, response to the situation. "The call to conversion is a call to develop virtues, which is a call to enter into a fuller life made possible by the Holy Spirit" (p. 122). The primary imperative for the new evangelization therefore must be to break out of the secular mind set (pp. 162–165). Gallagher sees in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* a great path forward in its encouragement of wonder and the contemplative attitude, a willingness to engage ultimate questions, a consideration of the "whole truth" about the

human person, interdisciplinary approaches to the issues, and the integration of faith and reason. In addition, maintaining a historical perspective, formulating a rich narrative of Christian life, and establishing personal identity as a Christian will provide further means for the new evangelization.

Gallagher's book provides a wide range of ideas and perspectives for the task of evangelization. As its title suggests, although the light is fading in the more secularized countries and sectors of the world today, we may eagerly anticipate a new dawn because of authentic Christian humanism. As St John Paul II expressed it: "The name for that deep amazement at man's worth and dignity is the Gospel. That is to say the Good News. This amazement determines the Church's mission in the world and, perhaps even more so, in the modern world" (*Redeemer of Man*, § 10). Fr. Gallagher's book offers us way to understand how to strategically find ways to boldly and effectively proclaim this good news.

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Maciej Woźniczka and Marek Perek, Eds.
*Toposy (w) filozofii. Filozofia i jej miejsce
w doświadczeniu kulturowym Częstochowa:*
Wydawnictwo im. Stanisława Podobińskiego
Uniwersytetu Humanistyczno-Przyrodniczego
im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie, 2018,
pp. 541

The book under review is another publication in a series of publications initiated by Maciej Woźniczka. The main theme is the *topoi* in/of philosophy, with an addition *Philosophy and Its Place in Cultural Experience*. What deserves recognition is the fact that the competent authors have made an intellectual attempt to face this interesting, yet at the same time ‘esoteric’ problem. The problem of *topoi* in/of philosophy and its place in cultural experience, presented from various points of view, leads to—and even provokes—a deeper reflection on the meaning and value of philosophy, on the ways it is practiced and on its functions in various spheres of human activity. The *topoi* in/of philosophy and the ways of defining its place in cultural experience include the reflection of philosophy on itself. It was already Aristotle who wrote about the fact that an element of practicing philosophy is thinking about it. Therefore, *to philosophize* means both “to think about whether or not we should philosophize” and “to give in to philosophical inquiries” ([*Protrepticus, or Encouragement to Philosophy*], frg. 6). This duality of subjective and meta-object philosophical inquiries, which also seeks to decide “whether or not we should philosophize,” forces us to reiterate and radicalize questions about the role of *topoi* in/of philosophy and its place in cultural experience.

After all, is it true, in philosophy, that what in general seems to be a topos (a common place, a repeating motif) does not appear to be different each time and is not (only) a repeating motif? Does it not mean this intellectual dynamics of meanings, this constant transformation and deconstruction of topoi (occurring in a fairly permanent form in other areas of culture), distinguish a philosophy that is itself as if it is at the same time and, even more so, is not a common place? It is worth recalling that Boethius personifies philosophy as a woman who appears in many different ways: “with a venerable face, eyes [...] above the ordinary measure of people’s brightness, [...] and the strength of life, albeit [...] at such an advanced age that [...] it could not be considered as modern to us. Her height could be judged in various ways, because once she had an ordinary measure common to people, and another time [...] when she raised her head higher, she [...] hid in heaven and [...] became invisible” (*De consolazione philosophiae*, I, 1). Going into hidden and invisible places is also one of the cultural experiences that philosophy brings with it.

Some of the great philosophers postulate that when practicing philosophy you cannot let yourself be seduced by the hereditary role of topoi in/of philosophy and the hitherto understanding of its place in cultural experience. In recollecting the seminar, where together with Roman Ingarden we analyzed the paragraph entitled “The Necessity of a Radical New Beginning of Philosophy” from Edmund Husserl’s *Cartesian Meditations*, Danuta Gierulanka remembers one of the sentences that Ingarden said: “Whoever wants to be a philosopher, he must start his intellectual life once on his own responsibility—otherwise it is not worthwhile to get down to philosophy at all.” Is this not a permanent topos of the right attitude of a philosopher liberating himself from the embarrassing topos? Is it not a kind of ‘commonplace’ of philosophers who, in the name of superior cognitive values, go beyond commonplace and expose the apparent obviousness?

When considering the issue of topoi in/of philosophy and its place in cultural experience, one has to confront Leszek Kołakowski’s perverse remark from *Horror metaphysicus*: “A modern philosopher who has never experienced the feeling of being a charlatan is such a shallow mind that his work is probably not worth reading” (Kołakowski, 1988, p. 1). Is the feeling that he is an impostor not one of the topoi in/of philosophy and one of the factors determining its place in cultural experience? Does not it also reveal here a peculiar horror of topoi in/of philosophy, affecting the forms of its presence in cultural experience?

The reviewed monograph, showing the existing and possible new places of philosophy, while broadening the scope of cultural experience, stimulates the reader to make an independent discovery of the meaning and role of the topoi in/of philosophy, and encourages him to continue the investigation of the place(s) of philosophy in cultural experience.

The volume opens with an Introduction entitled “Wstęp. Język toposów. Toposy w języku” [The Language of Topoi—Topoi in the Language], written

by the editors of the volume, who have laid out the assumptions and research analysis of the present book. They also explain the reasons for their interest in the topos-place, that is, “the Greek *topos*-place was chosen not by chance, and even with a certain amount of premeditation. Its semantic field is so primitive, rich and internally diverse that for centuries it has been explored word-for-word in different directions that it is also subject to all three paths of conceptual revitalization in modern times. This is proven by the palette of texts in this collection, which will be discussed below. However, just to realize that this is the case, supplemented at most by a ‘summary’ list of contemporary applications of this notion with the function of a universal pick, would not be enough. We would not be philosophers if we did not try to find an answer as to why the *topos*-place, apart from its mundane function of being a common word denouncing what it is called, has become such an efficient tool for organizing various areas of experience and describing things and phenomena that are not places in the source, i.e. spatial, meaning of the word” (Introduction, pp. 13–14). The Editors recognize and show the traces of intellectual research on topos issues. Stimulating intellectual curiosity, the Editors point out the currently developing branches of mathematics among various research fields. “Even more promising possibilities in exploring the issue of ‘place’ seem to lie in fractal mathematics. This very young section of mathematical sciences, associated with spectacular fractal visualizations and links to the theory of chaos, has opened with its achievements quite new perspectives on the category of place, also—as one can suppose—in the senses considered in the works of the presented collection” (Introduction, p. 24).

In their presentation of the texts comprising the book, the Editors notice the following: “And there’s a topos hidden in the texts in this book. The authors seem to be aware of the difficulty of the procedure. Sometimes one could get the impression that they preferred to stay within their intuition circle rather than to identify the topos too nonchalantly (the clarity of the task set before them was not in doubt). The topoi express something that is impossible in other theoretical concepts. They refer to something fundamental, but also secret. They clearly perform the function of transboundary entities (they do not care about the division into e.g. literature, art or philosophy and religion) and supra-cultural entities. They establish and pass on content that is considered most important in any axiological hierarchy. They express the full range of human dilemmas: from existential and moral anxiety, through social and communication concerns, to really inalienable questions about supernatural reality (sense of suffering, interpretation of border experiences). That is why the diversity of statements about the broadly understood philosophical topic can be an example of the importance of philosophy in contemporary cultural experience too” (Introduction, p. 25). In the last section of the Introduction, the Editors discuss the volume’s construction and the issues dealt with in each article.

The first part “Topos i jego literacko-kulturowe konteksty” [Topos and Its Literary and Cultural Contexts] contains a series of texts selected according to themes discussed therein. It begins with a systematizing and thorough study competently written by Jarosław Eichstaedt entitled “Od toposu poetyckiego do toposu kultury” [From Poetic Topos to Cultural Topos].” The subsequent texts consider further aspects of the topos, namely, Jarosław Bedyniak: “*Poesia – sapientia prima. Miejsca wspólne filozofii i poezji w renesansowych teoriach literatury*” [*Poesia—Sapientia Prima. Places of Common Philosophy and Poetry in Renaissance Theories of Literature*], Adam Regiewicz: “Między miejscami. O teorii literatury i filozofowaniu” [Between Places. On the Theory of Literature and Philosophy], Artur Żywiołek: “‘Tam nie ma tam’. Poetyckie myślenie (o) przestrzeni Leśmiana Merleau-Pontym” [‘There is Not There.’ Poetic Thinking (about) Space in Merleau-Ponty by Leśmian], Marta Ples-Bęben: “Od piwnicy po strych. Dom jako przestrzeń wyobrażona w ujęciu Gastona Bachelarda” [From Basement to the Attic. Home as Imagined Space in Gaston Bachelard]. The first part duly sets the scene for the whole volume.

The second part of the book “Topos filozoficzny jako problem badawczy” [The Philosophical Topos as a Research Problem] shows different images of topos in philosophical and ethical thought. It begins with interesting analyses put forth by Stanisław Buda entitled “Poza mitem – pierwotny topos filozofii” [Beyond Myth—The Original Topos of Philosophy]. The subsequent articles present the valuable and noteworthy research—Marcin T. Zdrenka: “Domostwo i widnokrąg. Na marginesie rozważań o toposach filozoficznych” [The Home and the Horizon. On the Margins of Reflections on Philosophical Topos]; Wojciech Rechlewicz: “Miejsca filozofii w świetle teorii czynności i wytworów Kazimierza Twardowskiego” [The Places of Philosophy in the Light of the Theory of Activities and Products by Kazimierz Twardowski]; Michał Płóciennik: “Doświadczenie skończoności jako uniwersalny topos wydarzania się w człowieku tego, co filozoficzno-religijno-pedagogiczne” [The Experience of Finiteness as a Universal Topos of the Philosophical, Religious and Pedagogical Events in Human Being], and a text of a significant theoretical significance written by Maciej Woźniczka: “Topika filozoficzna—terra incognita?” [The Philosophical Topic—Terra Incognita?], whose conclusion reads as follows: “After the topos has been given new meanings and new methodologies have emerged, the philosophical topos is under reconstruction. This new philosophical topos is probably waiting for its true explorer. ‘The arsenal of latent powers,’ even naturally associated with the topos, is for philosophy too...” (p. 181). The reader’s attention is caught by M.T. Zdrenka’s expressive statement: “I believe that a special role is played here by the colorful metaphor of the ‘brainwasher,’ which aptly illustrates the long-lasting process of pushing individual ‘brainwashers,’ who—penetrating the constantly colliding and mutually changing circles—feed over again on the sources they encounter in its field—personal experiences,

resistance encountered, moral triumphs and failures, exerting and succumbing to persuasion, that is, permanent confrontation with differently thinking and valuing subjects. These external [...] insistent signals are transferred to a natural and personal moral ‘laboratory’—to the topos/surroundings, and therefrom they radiate into the interior, from where they draw their strength for change and personal development, and thus also for rebuilding their ethos. This unceasing process has a particular cognitive, but above all, moral value when subjective judgments and external rules clash in the field of the ‘neighborhood,’ which is neither an intimate home nor an alien distant outside, where what is intuitively moral meets what is socially or institutionally ethical; where personal interest must be reconciled with the interests of other subjects who are within our reach (p. 142–143).

The third part of the book bears the title “Topos filozoficzny—między klasyką a meritum” [The Philosophical Topos—Between Classics and Essence]. Wiesława Sajdek, in his article “Współczesne próby zrozumienia starożytnej kategorii miejsca” [Modern Attempts to Understand the Ancient Category of Place]” very dexterously considers the category of place. In conclusion, she says: “The experiences that have become a part of the West, apart from the history of battles and revolutions, including cultural ones, include everything that concerned the development of sciences and arts, but which somehow persists in its cultural tradition, which is as powerful as it is nowadays. On the other hand, ‘space itself’ certainly ‘has a history,’ namely, the one inscribed in the history of Western philosophy” (p. 228).

Stanisław Ciupka, on the basis of the literature of the subject, sheds light on the topos of inculturation of the Christian proclamation into the Hellenistic world in the philosophy of Clement of Alexandria. Noteworthy is also the study in which Paweł Milcarek knowledgeably examines the topics in the medieval school education program in his text “Tam, gdzie rosną argumenty. Topiki w średniowiecznym programie edukacji szkolnej” [Where arguments grow. Topics in the Medieval School Education Program]. Anna Kopeć writes about different approaches to rationality and the accompanying teleology in her article “The Topos of a Wise Man-Ironist,” where she notes that “the topos of the wise man-ironist is strongly present in the history of philosophy. Since ancient times, rationality has been associated with an attitude of distance toward reality. The proof of this (rationality) was the gesture of opposing oneself to the world. Irony, which was manifested by distance and constant negation, enabled—as it was believed—privileged cognitive access to reality, and also resulted in freedom. The sage, in the perspective of stoicism or scepticism saw his special dignity in independence, in distancing himself from reality” (p. 264). The third part is completed by the first part of the discussion-provoking triptych, that is, Dorota Halina Kutyla’s “Tryptyk rewolucyjny. Część I. Polski archetyp rewolucji – *Nieboska komedia* Zygmunta Krasieńskiego” [The Revolutionary Triptych. Part I.

The Polish Archetype of the Revolution—*The Non-divine Comedy* by Zygmunt Krasiński].

Part four focuses on the topic “Topos filozoficzny i jego konteksty” [The Philosophical Topos and Its Contexts]. Mirosław Murat discusses the topos of wandering and wandering through topoi. Daria Chibner proposes a reflection on what is the philosophical geography, the topos of place and object. Wiesław Wójcik expertly analyses the place of philosophical notions in mathematics. In his analyses, the author notes that “in the development of science we can observe two conflicting tendencies. The first of them is the divergence of the ways of mathematics and philosophy. It seems that in order to see the relation between these fields of knowledge, one should go back to [...] the beginnings of the development of European science. Then [...] mathematics, as a young field, needed philosophy [...] as a methodological background. However, with time, when mathematics developed [...] strict structures, concepts and methods of command, philosophy seemed to be unnecessary or even harmful. The second tendency points to the philosophical roots of the main concepts and methods of mathematics [...] and examines those moments in the history of mathematics in which cooperation with philosophy was necessary” (p. 343–344). Thanks to such an approach Wiesław Wójcik is able to present the place and role of philosophical concepts in mathematics in a competent and interesting way. He recalls, among others, René Thom’s views: “An interesting argument for the possibility of the flow of meanings between philosophy and mathematics is the concept developed by René Thom. He criticizes the principle of extensiveness and the multifaceted point of view, which forgets the meaning of the concept and limits itself only to its scope. It was a liberation from the philosophical and colloquial understanding of concepts which seemed to be a ballast preventing the efficient development of mathematics. Thom doubts whether achieving accuracy at the price of losing meaning was not a Pyrrhic victory for contemporary mathematics” (p. 346). At the end of the text, Wójcik points out that “especially at the level of this common area of influence of philosophy and mathematics,” the discussed concepts (harmony, similarity, and symmetry) “interact intensively with one another, although they still retain their distinctiveness,” and he stresses that an interesting example of the interaction of these concepts is the concept of probability (something that is similar to the truth)” (p. 365–366).

In the next text comprising the fourth part of the book, Dorota Halina Kutyla makes Descartes’s great dreams on the quarters near Ulm the subject of her reflections. Paweł Lechowski offers his own variations on meta-philosophical issues, such as “Scjentyzm albo metafizyka—dwa oblicza ekspiacji filozofii” [Scientism or Metaphysics—Two Faces of Philosophy’s Exposition], exposing the role of myth.

Part five “Współczesne interpretacje toposu—poszukiwania” [Contemporary Interpretations of Topos—Exploration] consists of three texts. Maksymilian

Czaja considers the location of Bruno Latour's studies on science and technology in the laboratory space. Iwona Krupecka shows what is the relation of Walter Mignolo's "pluritopical hermeneutics" with the history of European philosophy, whereas Paweł Nowicki writes on the transformations of the notion of space and on social imaginaries in the philosophy of Charles Taylor. It is good that the volume contains references to the views of Bruno Latour, Walter Mignolo, and Charles Taylor.

In Part six, "Topos czy już posttopos? [Topos or Post-topos?], Sebastian Gałęcki provides his reflections on the burning issue today, namely, "(Post)filozofia na (post)uniwersytecie?" [(Post)philosophy at the (post)university?]. Similarly, Grzegorz Trela treats about the post-philosophy in post-culture. Danuta Żak ponders on the figure of the lost, that is, the "personal model of a human without a place." Iwona Stachowska makes self-constraint an object of her reflection in "Samoograniczenie: identyfikowanie terytorium" [Self-constraint: Identification of the Territory]. Closing the transition from *topoi* to 'post-topoi,' she has been aware of the condition and dilemmas of contemporary culture.

According to the publishing tradition of the series, the whole is complemented by part seven which is the Appendix, "Appeal to the Authors" (a text documenting the research program in which the invited authors have been included) and short notes about the authors.


The reviewed volume also reveals a peculiar topos of Częstochowa's philosophical circles where Professor Maciej Woźniczka is one of the leading figures. Professors of the Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa, Wiesław Sajdek, Maciej Woźniczka, and Wiesław Wójcik, as well as junior academics, contributed their valuable texts to this volume, showing the topos of their own environment.

This carefully edited book is part of a research program consistently implemented at the Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa by Prof. Maciej Woźniczka, which is also convincingly proved by the volumes he has edited and co-edited so far. Let this book, which is part of the series of Częstochowa's publications in philosophy, serves well the development of Polish intellectual culture and may it inspire further research and discussion.

I highly recommend this valuable and interesting book, well-edited by Maciej Woźniczka and Marek Perek.

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Maciej Woźniczka and Marek Perek, Eds.
Apokryficzność (w) filozofii
Nie/anty/pozaortodoksyjne dyskursy filozoficzne.
Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo
im. Stanisława Podobińskiego
Uniwersytetu Humanistyczno-Przyrodniczego
im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie, 2017,
568 pp.

The book I wish to present to the Readers is another one in the series initiated by Maciej Woźniczka and Maciej Perek. The main theme of the book under review is the eponymous apocryphality in/of philosophy, and its full title is *Apocryphality in/of Philosophy. Un/anti/beyond Orthodox Philosophical Discourse*.

What deserves appreciation is the proposal put forward by the editors that competent authors should make an attempt to intellectually confront this interesting, somewhat ephemeral and undefined problem (as if deliberately hidden behind the veil of ignorance that masks it), yet still present in culture, and even more so provoking reflection from various points of view.

The semantic field of the *apocrypha* (ἀπόκρυφος) also evokes philosophically significant categories and problems. If the apocrypha is a text of dubious authenticity (in terms of credibility of content or its authorship), or even a text which is not authentic and false (but which attributes itself to the values inherent in the original), if a hermetic text is also addressed exclusively to a narrow group of the insiders (who declare that they correctly understand that which is difficult to understand unequivocally), is sometimes referred to as the apocry-

pha, then it gives rise to a multitude of philosophical and meta-philosophical questions, dilemmas, disputes, associations, and inspirations.

To what extent does philosophy itself contain features that are considered to be the hallmarks of the apocrypha? Well, the presence of falsehood, one-sidedness, and extremity—as Władysław Tatarkiewicz believes—turns out to be “a somewhat natural feature of philosophy because the subject matter of its investigations is so vast and concentrates so many different motifs that philosophers had to simplify or omit some elements out of necessity in order to achieve transparency in them, and thus other motifs gained an excessive position. In this way, philosophical theories became extreme, one-sided, false; yet only in this way did the objects of philosophy become transparent, tangible, however, theories became possible at all. And for most part, the development of philosophy went from extremes to extremes, and thus from falsehood to falsehood, in order to get closer to truth” (*Historia filozofii*, vol. 1, p. 68). Joachim Metallmann in his *Wprowadzeniu do zagadnień filozoficznych* [Introduction to Problems of Philosophy] indicates that this manual “should show philosophical problems, their richness and distinctiveness, their difficulties and their specific charm. Only those who have seen the ups and downs, the triumphs and illusions of human thought, can admire its heroic efforts and understand that even an error can be valuable and an illusion valuable. There is probably nothing more dangerous for culture than underestimating someone’s efforts and disregarding someone’s unsuccessful enthusiasm. There is no better school of criticism, respect for thought, independence, than to depict a struggle whose content, motive, and meaning are ultimately important in the pursuit of truth” (Archives of the Polish Academy of Sciences and Polish Academy of Learning in Kraków). Roman Ingarden, arguing about the ideals of science in philosophy, once stated that we discover truth by discovering someone else’s mistakes, and even the highest requirements of scientific quality set by our research do not liberate us from knowledge of works which have performed a prominent role in the history of research in philosophy. Józef M. Bocheński was not afraid to express somewhat contradictory values of Thomas Aquinas’s achievements. He judged Hegel’s investigations in a similar way. Stefan Świeżawski claimed that mistakes that other philosophers make somehow contribute to progress in philosophy, adding that man must have the right to make mistakes, and wondering whether mistakes always are where we see them. He reminded us to remember the limitations and aspectual nature of human cognition, because we always comprehend the content from our point of view. The above-quoted statements by eminent philosophers seem like the statements forwarded by the authors of this volume, dealing with the topic of apocrypha in/of philosophy.

The volume under review is neatly composed, the texts are arranged thematically and thus comprise chapters of the monograph. The volume opens with an

extensive and informative introduction entitled “Relacja kanon–apokryf w filozofii” [Canon–Apocryph in Philosophy] written by the editors of the volume.

The first part entitled “Prolog do teorii apokryfu filozoficznego—konteksty biblijne, filologiczne, etnograficzne i antropologiczne” [Prologue to the Theory of the Philosophical Apocrypha—Biblical, Philological, Ethnographic, and Anthropological Contexts]—contains a selection of thematically ordered texts. It opens with a well-structured and concise study, which was aptly written by Jarosław Eichstaedt: “Apokryf—konteksty badawcze i kulturowe” [Apocrypha—Research and Cultural Contexts]. The following texts of the first part, which deal with the issues in quite a general way, consider further aspects of the apocrypha: Adam Regiewicz’s “Apokryficzne a midraszowe czytanie literatury” [Apocryphal and Midrash Reading of Literature], and Artur Żywiołek’s “Tristanowskie apokryfy” [Tristan Apocrypha].

The second part shows the links between philosophical and ethical thought, as well as the issue of the apocrypha. It begins with insightful analyses presented by Stanisław Buda in an interesting text “Filozofia jako apokryf” [Philosophy as an Apocrypha]. The following inquiries also deserve the readers’ full attention: Mirosław Pawliszyn’s “Logika na ławie oskarżonych” [The Logic in the Dock], Marek Perek’s “Kanon versus apokryf: granice rekonstrukcyjnej wydajności w badaniach rozwoju wiedzy. Studium przypadku” [Canon versus Apocrypha: The Limits of Reconstructive Efficiency in Research on Knowledge Development Research. Case Study], and Sebastian Gałęcki’s “Kanonyczność, tradycja i *the Great Books*” [Canonicity, Tradition, and *the Great Books*]. This part ends with a brilliant text “Podszepty pochopnego Hermesa, czyli dlaczego filozofowie ulegają pokusie etymologizacji” [Hints of Hasty Hermes, or Why Philosophers Succumb to the Temptation of Etymologization] by Marcin T. Zdrenka.

The second part presents an overview of carefully selected relation between philosophical and ethical thought as well as the issue of the apocrypha and apocryphality.

The third part delineates the birth and establishment of the convention of apocrypha— “Narodziny i ukonstytuowanie się konwencji apokryfu w filozofii” [Birth and Establishment of the Convention of the Apocrypha in Philosophy]. It contains five texts worth profound reading: the first one by Jerzy Krzakowski “Atopia Sokratesa a misja Jezusa – parallela czy curiosum?” [Socrates’s Atopy and the Mission of Jesus—Parallel or Curiosity?]; the second one by Krzysztof Sordyl: “Ojcowie Kościoła i manichejczycy wobec apokryfów na tle kryzysu pruskiej” [The Fathers of the Church and the Manichaeans in the Face of the Apocrypha in the Light of the Crisis of Prussia]; and the third one by Michał Płóciennik: “Gnoza w filozofii i religii—apokryf czy ezoteryczna esencja?” [Gnosis in Philosophy and Religion—Apocrypha or Esoteric Essence?]; the fourth text by Henryk Popowski: “Klasyka pism apokryficznych w filozofii chrześcijańskiej na przykładzie Pseudo-Dionizego Areopagity”

[The Classics of Apocryphal Writings in Christian Philosophy on the Example of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite]; and the fifth text by Paweł Milcarek: “Tomasz z Akwinu—persona non grata Uniwersytetu Paryskiego” [Thomas Aquinas—Persona non Grata of the University of Paris]. These texts have been arranged in chronological order of the occurrence of the issues.

The fourth part focuses on the following topic “Konwencja apokryfu we współczesnym piśmiennictwie filozoficznym” [Apocryphal Convention in Contemporary Philosophical Literature]. This part opens with an interesting and important text in the whole volume written by Maciej Woźniczka, “Apokryficzność zasad filozofii—zasada racji Martina Heideggera” [The Apocryphality of Philosophical Principles—Martin Heidegger’s Principle of Reason]. Maciej Olszowski undertook his research and entitled it “Na styku kanonu i apokryfu—Alfreda North Whiteheada próba odpowiedzi na pewne problemy filozofii nowożytniej” [At the Crossroads of the Canon and the Apocrypha—Alfred North Whitehead’s Attempt to Answer Some Problems of Modern Philosophy]. Dorota Halina Kutyla discusses “Berlińskie dzieciństwo, czyli Benjaminowskie doświadczenie świata” [Berlin’s Childhood, or Benjamin’s Experience of the World]. Grzegorz Trela, referring to Stefan Amsterdam’s output, provokes a discussion about Polish philosophy. Mirosław Murat shares his impressions about humanity at the threshold of the ideological cave in “Ludzkość u progu ideologicznej jaskini” [Humanity at the Threshold of an Ideological Cave].

The fifth part of the book presents the subject matter—as the title says—“Konwencja apokryfu w piśmiennictwie filozoficznym—konteksty słowiańskie” [Apocrypha Convention in Philosophical Literature—Slavic Contexts]. Presenting the workshop of a seasoned historian of philosophy, Wiesława Sajdek leads the inquiry toward the title question, that is, “Czy poeci mogą filozofować? (Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński)” [Can Poets Philosophize? (Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński)]. In a similar vein, showing the workshop of a historian of science and philosophy, Wiesław Wójcik in an extensive study—probably an announcement of a monograph—presents the philosophy of Józef Hoene-Wroński. The subsequent texts in this part are also very interesting, namely, Daria Chibner’s “Nowość jako kategoria kierująca życiem—droga Juliana Ochorowicza od szanowanego filozofa do wyklętego szaleńca” [Novelty as a Category Guiding Life—The Path of Julian Ochorowicz from the Respected Philosopher to the Cursed Madman], Mariusz Oziębłowski’s “Przejawy i przyczyny deprecjacji filozofii Stanisława Ignacego Witkiewicza” [The Manifestations and Reasons for the Depreciation of the Philosophy of Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz], and Paweł Lechowski’s “Od futurologii do metafizyki nauki—Aleksandra Bołdaczewa filozofia temporalna” [From Futurology to Metaphysics of Science—Aleksander Boldaczew’s Temporal Philosophy]. The fifth part constitutes a coherent whole.

The sixth part bears the title “Apokryf filozoficzny jako inspiracja dla innych jego form w kulturze” [Philosophical Apocrypha as an Inspiration for Its

Other Forms in Culture]. This part comprises five texts: Zuzanna Sokołowska's "Na obrzeżach cywilizacji. Henry Thoreau i jego 'sztuka chodzenia'" [On the Outskirts of Civilization. Henry Thoreau and His 'Art of Walking']; Anna Gładkowska's "Relacja między sprawiedliwością a miłosierdziem, czyli słów kilka o miłosierdziu jako doskonałym wcieleniu sprawiedliwości" [The Relation between Justice and Mercy, or a Few Words about Mercy as a Perfect Incarnation of Justice]; Dawid Dziurkowski's "Urodzeni przestępcy w filozofii Cesarzego Lombrosa i Bogusława Wolniewicza" [Born Criminals in the Philosophy of Cesary Lombros and Bogusław Wolniewicz]; Dorota Halina Kutyla's text discusses the life and work of Saint-Simon; and, last but not least, Krzysztof Habdas's "Paradygmatotwórczy paradoks termiczny nestinarstwa" [The Paradigm-forming Thermal Paradox of Anastenaria].

According to the publishing tradition of the series, the whole is complemented by part seven which is the annex, "Appeal to the Authors" (a text documenting the research program in which the invited authors have been included) and short notes about the authors.

I heartily recommend this epistemologically valuable, interesting, and well-edited book by Maciej Woźniczka and Marek Perek. Let it inspire further research and discussions on the issues of apocryphality in culture.

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