

**MOTHERHOOD AND FATHERHOOD: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR
CHILDREN'S SECURITY AND FLOURISHING IN AN INCREASINGLY COMPLEX WORLD**

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Part 1: The human person and the family

The dignity of the human person and the stability of the traditional family are under attack in the modern world. A variety of political and social ideologies have emerged which are antagonistic towards traditional Judeo-Christian values. Family values have lost much ground in recent decades to other, and in some cases competing values, such as materialism, individualism and consumerism.

At the transcendent level, Pope John Paul II (1981) exhorts families to “*become what you are...*” He continues by stating that “the family has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love ... (and that) Family communion can only be preserved and perfected through a great spirit of sacrifice” (no. 17). At the natural level too, the family is known as the usual source of the most enduring and formative relationships in a child's life (Institute for American Values, 2003). In a series of declarations and conferences during the 20th century (United Nations, 1948; 1976), the international community developed a common understanding regarding the concept of family as the basic unit of society, and as such, entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support. More recently, it has been noted that rapid demographic and socio-economic changes throughout the world have influenced patterns of family life, placing greater strains on the family (United Nations, 1994). Finally, some writers have attempted to use the language of “various forms of the family” to promote agendas that are contrary to the family as a natural institution (Trujillo, 2004), and to challenge traditional family values (Saunders, 2006).

Although many difficulties confronted by families at this time have been present throughout time (e.g., geographic separation of the father to enable him to provide for the family, and absence of parents through death, divorce or abandonment), more recently, other complications have arisen (e.g., both parents working outside the home, and families living great distances from extended family members). One particularly harmful aspect of this trend is the widespread absence of fathers in children's lives (Popenoe, 1996; Pruett, 1997, 2000). Related to this aspect is the effective disconnection in our society from what Erikson (1968) called generativity in adults, where parents are challenged to transcend their own needs and to care for others. The overall situation is further complicated by globalization which has accelerated dramatically the degree and intensity of the contact among different cultures, beliefs, and ideologies, some of which appear unmindful of the potential impact on the next generations of traditional family life deteriorating. Since the family is the cornerstone of society, and the mental health of each family member directly impacts the health of the rest, a crucial aspect of globalization is the psychological effect on the individual human person, and especially on the child (Sweeney, in press).

Part 2: Children and parents

The *Commission on Children at Risk*, a group doctors, research scientists, mental health, and youth service professionals, recently documented that many young people currently are suffering from emotional distress, mental illness, and behavioral problems, and in the future, are at risk for not achieving productive adulthood (AACAP, 1998; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Haggerty, 1995; National Institutes of Mental Health, 1999; Twenge, 2000). Their report concludes, that "in large measure, what's causing the crisis of American childhood is a lack of ... close connections to other people, and (a lack of) deep connections to moral and spiritual meaning" (Institute for American Values, 2003; p.5). Furthermore, the report suggests that social institutions (e.g., the family), which foster

these two forms of connectedness for children, have gotten significantly weaker. Therefore, the central thesis of this paper is that parents are at the core of the solution to the problem of childhood risk of mental distress or illness. Ultimately, many troubles and confusions of children as they grow and develop can be managed and assisted by improved relationships with parents; parents who are present physically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually (Sutton, 2005).

Parents are called, as the primary educators of children, to foster their children's physical, emotional, and spiritual development. John Paul II (1981, n.25) states that each human being needs to be "educated", which includes not only the informing of their minds, but also, and even more importantly, the forming of their hearts and characters in virtue. Realizing this, we can then best know how to guide parents through the complicated, global world in which we live.

Part 3: Globalization: A risk for persons and families, as well as an opportunity for good, through connection with cultural and transcendent values

The phenomenon of globalization may be thought of as the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life (Held, McGrew, Goldblatt & Perraton, 1993). As a result of telecommunications and economic factors, the amount of interaction and communication among peoples has become increasingly prevalent and immediate (Arnett, 2002). Thus, globalization presents some risk to the dignity of the human person and to the stability of the family, as it challenges the culture in which they exist, changing dramatically the number and range of influences on the family: John Paul II (1981) states that "... in the modern world ...some have become uncertain over their role, confused or unaware of the ultimate meaning and truth of conjugal and family life...others hindered by various situations of injustice". The Holy Father warns that there has evolved from this phenomena a mistaken concept of independence of the spouses in relation to each other, misconceptions regarding the

relationship of authority between parents and children, concrete difficulties in the transmission of values, and the corruption of the idea of freedom, as an autonomous power of self-affirmation for one's own selfish well-being (John Paul II, 1981).

Furthermore, many secular psychologists, as well as Pope John Paul II, warn that globalization as practiced today risks a stifling conformity among cultures and nations, resulting in a loss of the sense of particularity that is so valuable between cultures (Sweeney, in press). Psychology offers a framework for describing the results of intercultural contact and its affect on cultural identity. The process is called acculturation, which occurs when groups of individual having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, resulting in subsequent changes in the original culture pattern of either or both groups (Berry, 1997). Because of globalization, the challenge of acculturation now impacts not only immigrants to a new land, but potentially impacts all families and children, creating dilemmas heretofore not faced.

However, a proper understanding of the human person, situated in culture ¹ can provide insight into how to manage the dilemmas presented by globalization. John Paul II paints the picture of a modern world united in its recognition of the truth of the human person, yet diverse in a culture and tradition arising from dialogue and mutual respect (Sweeney, in press). He states that cultural identity reflects the person's natural desire to live community, to share life with others whom they love, to find meaning in personal relationships and in the context that frames those relationships. Man seeks to create community, and in psychological terms, to find his cultural home and cultural identity². The individual, sure in his identity and insistent on retaining his core values, who comes face-to-face with the global culture and dialogues with it, is the one who benefits the most psychologically (Sweeney, in press). Christian parents can offer their unique contribution in the various situations and cultures in which their family is found (John Paul II, 1981).

Yet, while parents attempt to preserve the family's cultural values, the impact of globalization instigates conflicts between parents and children (Jensen, 2003), disrupting parent-child attachment relationships, when children rebuff their cultural identity³ (Sweeney, in press). Pressure and conflict rise when the child seeks to identify with his peers in the dominant, secular culture while the family insists on maintaining its cultural and religious traditions (Vivero & Jenkins, 1999). If a child exposed to the global culture routinely gets the message that his culture of origin is worthless, or that he must reject it in order to be accepted by the larger culture, he will suffer psychological conflict (Berry, 1997). The implications of this psychological stress are significant because unsure of his own identity, the child is less able to give and receive love. This pattern may become ingrained, inhibiting future ability to have healthy, giving relationships, for when a child has impaired perceptions of emotional ties to his parents, he in turn may have impaired relationships with a future spouse and children (Sweeney, in press). These processes are vulnerable to the dilemmas of globalization (Sweeney, in press) and as a result, an increasing number of young people are at risk for suffering from emotional or behavioral problems because of confusion associated with a lack of connectedness to their parents and traditions that provide meaning.

In summary, it is important to recall that globalization per se is not necessarily problematic. John Paul II (2001a) offered a helpful critique of globalization, noting that "globalization, *a priori*, is neither good, nor bad. It will be what people make of it ... it is necessary to insist that globalization ...must be at the service of the human person..." Therefore, it is important to engage the phenomena of globalization with a keen eye towards respect for cultures, which support preservation of healthy psychological development of identity, and thus of the human person. A clear understanding of the human person at both a natural and supernatural level must be understood in order to navigate the changing world.

Part 4: An anthropology of the human person consistent with Catholic Church teachings

While the social circumstances of human existence continue to develop and change, the truth of the human person remains unchanged. Consequently, the goods that mothers and fathers each uniquely bring to the task of parenting and family life must be understood both from bio-psychosocial and spiritual perspectives. The following conceptualization is based on anthropological premises generated by the faculty of the Institute for the Psychological Sciences in Arlington, VA (Brugger, Donahue, Moncher, Nordling, Palmer, Rondeau, Scrofani, Sweeney, Titus, & Vitz, 2006; I will provide a brief overview of key concepts and refer you to the Appendix for a complete description).

Regarding the supernatural aspect of the human person, we learn from the truth of revelation that the human person is created in the image and likeness of God, is fallen as a consequence of original sin, yet is redeemed in Christ, and ultimately called to holiness, with a vocation of love. Nonetheless, human nature is weakened by sin, that is, by concupiscence, with the consequences of disordered emotions, weaknesses of reason and will, and proneness to disorder in relationships, including relationships in the family. These weaknesses manifest in a variety of ways, but certainly in ways central to understanding the responsibility of mothers and fathers in providing for the formation of their children in a manner that promotes flourishing in their lives. This parental vocation to love is made evident in their relationship with their children, which is present at not only the supernatural but also the natural level.

At the natural level, we understand the human person to be a unified, integrated whole, which is at once intelligent, bodily, and relational. While the coexistence of these aspects within the unity of the person can never be denied, it is helpful to consider each of the different aspects separately. First we consider that the human person is intelligent, evident in their rational capacities to know themselves, others, and God; to know truth, good and evil; and in the will, as responsible and self-determining beings. Our freedom to

choose for ourselves and our bearing the burden of these choices responsibly is a vital concept for children to learn from their parents. However, this must be understood in the context of natural limitations to our freedom which result from concupiscence. Thus, through multiple factors and to varying degrees, any particular human person will have limitations on their ability to enact their will. This is in some ways the task of the parents, to minimize the impact of their own natural limitations on their developing children, so that each child might be as free as possible to know and follow the will of God in his life.

Next we consider that the human person is bodily, that is, emotional, motoric, sensory, perceptual, and situated in a cultural situation. In terms of our focus on motherhood and fatherhood, it is crucial to understand that as bodily beings, human persons are gendered (Gen 1:27), and that maleness and femaleness are intrinsic and complementary, neither identical nor ontologically mutually exclusive. Healthy motherhood and fatherhood are manifest in marital love and actualized through a husband and wife first making a *disinterested gift of self* to each other.

Finally, we consider the relational nature of the human person, wherein we observe natural inclinations and needs for life in society. This interpersonal aspect of human nature is first developed in the family, as humans have natural inclinations and needs for marriage and children. Further, men and women are different, interdependent and complementary in relational as well as in physical ways. Therefore, proper fostering of the development of a child requires mothers and fathers who each make indispensable contributions. As John Paul II (1981) states “God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion”. One’s sexuality affects not only one’s body but also the totality and unity of one’s body and soul, including one’s “affectivity ... capacity to love ... and (one’s) aptitude for forming bonds of communion with others” (CCC no. 2332). In particular, we highlight the essential appreciation of the unique contributions of fathers and mothers that are present in

assigning meaning of gender to children as a human universal that deeply influences well-being. The importance of these last two aspects at the natural level of the human person, bodily-ness and relationality, is supported by what is observed clinically, where people most often seek help for problems when they are suffering interpersonal troubles or emotional (i.e., bodily) pain. Further, the biological reality that we are first bodily and relational, before we are volitional and rational, (personal communication, C. Brugger) highlights the importance of parental attachment relationships in clarifying for children their course in this complex world.

Part 5: Connectedness with parents: Key to healthy relationships and moral development

The formation of one's identity is profoundly impacted by early formative experiences attaching to, or bonding with, one's parents. While identity depends to some extent on personal variables, it is intimately tied to relationships with attachment figures who afford emotional support and protection (Bretherton & Mulnholland, 1999). Bowlby's (1969) seminal work on attachment theory has generated a remarkable amount of interest and research on the processes by which infants (e.g., Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978), and in later research, adults (e.g., Hazan & Shaver, 1987; 1994; Parkes, Stevenson-Hinde, & Marris, 1991), develop the capacity to form bonds with their parents, family members, and ultimately with all human persons. Attachment is an inborn system in the brain that evolves in ways that influence and organize motivational, emotional, and memory processes with respect to significant caregiving figures. The attachment system motivates an infant to seek proximity to parents and to establish communication with them (Bowlby, 1969).

It is important to note the universality of attachment across cultures. Psychological research has demonstrated that concepts such as parental support, nurturance, closeness, and caring are important for children and adults everywhere, regardless of race, language, gender, or culture (Rohner, 1975, 1986, 2006). The basic fact of this

capacity to attach also is found in biological research, animal studies, cross-cultural research, and in studies with institutionalized children⁴. In addition, the importance of attachment is persistent throughout the life cycle. For not only young children, but human beings of all ages are found to be at their happiest and best able to deploy their talents when they are confident that standing behind them, there are one or more trusted persons who will come to their aid should difficulties arise (Bowlby, 1973).

The capacity to attach has been categorized into a finite number of attachment styles or types: the healthy attachment style (called Secure or Autonomous), and a variety of unhealthy, insecure attachment styles (e.g., Resistant/Ambivalent/Preoccupied; Avoidant/ Dismissing; or Disorganized/Unresolved/Fearful). Parents who are perceptive, emotionally available, and responsive to their infants' needs and mental states have infants who are most often securely attached (Siegel, 1999). The theory posits that *internal working models* are developed based upon early experiences which form mental representations of caregivers' sensitivity and responsiveness, which then proceed to influence how people perceive, interpret and act in relationships across the life span (Bowlby, 1969, 1988). In this way, attachment relationships may serve to create the central foundation from which the mind develops, and thus secure attachment appears to confer a form of emotional resilience (Rutter, 1987, 1997). Alternatively, insecure attachment, resulting from parents who are unavailable, unresponsive, and/or lacking attunement to their child, may serve as a significant risk factor for the development of psychopathology.

Furthermore, the beginning of morality is biologically primed in attachment relationships. Stilwell (2002) describes the child's quest for parental approval as the foundation for the emergence of conscience: "moralization is a process whereby a value-driven sense of oughtness emerges within specific human behavioral systems ...governing attachment, emotional regulation, cognitive processing, and volition...." (quoted in IAV,

2003; p.25-6). Similarly, Karen (2002) describes the dangers of these attachment needs being ignored or denied: “All of the early researchers had found the same symptoms in children who’d been deprived of their mother: (those symptoms being) superficial relationships, poverty of feeling for others, lack of emotional response, pointless deceitfulness and theft, and inability to concentrate in school” (quoted in IAV, 2003; p.26). In this way, it becomes clear that the task of nurturing children into healthy, functional adults is one and the same as raising children who are able to function as persons with a clear sense of identity and honorable purpose in their lives. The call for both mother and fathers to be part of this attachment process is supported in psychological research that finds differences in the impact upon children of paternal versus maternal love (Rohner & Veneziano, 2001).

Part 6: Motherhood.

The attachment literature makes clear the profound influence of the mother-child relationship on future psychological growth, development and potential for flourishing in interpersonal relationships. Early attachment research focused on the mother-child bond, based on the premise that women are genetically endowed for child care, and that maternal love and care provide everything that children need for normal, healthy development (Rohner & Veneziano, 2001). While this is an incomplete understanding of the child’s psychological need for both mother and father, we should not lose sight of the truth contained in it, that mothers have always been seen, and rightfully so, as essential to child growth and development. This is related to how the infant’s attachment and bonding experiences connect them in a unique manner to the mother, because of, not in spite of, her femaleness.

In addition to the psychological importance for children of females, as mothers, John Paul II made clear their profound importance at a spiritual level: “The moral and spiritual strength of a woman is joined to her awareness that God entrusts the human

being to her in a special way. A woman is strong because of her awareness of this entrusting. That is why when the human race is undergoing so deep a transformation, women imbued with a spirit of the gospel can do so much to aid humanity not falling” (John Paul II, 1988, no. 1). All motherhood is understood more deeply as a personal calling from God for women to humanize humanity in serving the temporal and eternal welfare of any children whom their lives touch (Sutton, 2005)⁵. Furthermore, an essential aspect of what it means to be human, the gift of self, specifies a more complete understanding of women’s motherhood. In the openness in conceiving and giving birth to a child, the woman discovers herself through a sincere gift of self. In this way, there can be no doubt that a mother’s contribution to the task of parenting is not disconnected from her gender, and that it is precisely because of her femininity that she brings a specific good to her children.⁶

In summary, the overwhelming evidence psychologically and the clear teachings of the Church, both reflect the unique significance of mothers in the lives of children, which cannot be replaced by society, public institutions, nor by fathers alone.

Part 7: Fatherhood.

While there is certainly commonality between mothers and fathers based on their shared human nature⁷, it is important to understand that similarities do not eliminate differences, and if the goal is flourishing children, both mothers and fathers are needed. Consequently, in a similar yet distinct and irreplaceable way, fatherhood’s influence on children and the family can be seen clearly both psychologically and spiritually.

The concept of fatherhood has shifted dramatically over the course of history, from the stern patriarch, to the distant breadwinner, to the genial playmate, to the more recent co-parent (Pleck & Pleck, 1997). Furthermore, scientists prior to the 1960s and 1970s

assumed that fathers were relatively unimportant for the healthy development of children (for a review, see Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000). Most recently, however, when behavioral scientists began to study fathers and father love directly, they found that fathers are as capable as mothers of being competent and nurturing caregivers (Bronstein & Cowan, 1988; Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999), and that the father-child bond often parallels the mother-child bond both emotionally and in intensity (Fox, Kimmerly, & Schager, 1991; Hanson & Bozett, 1991).

Father love is implicated in a wide array of psychological and developmental issues (e.g., adjustment, behavior problems, gender role development, cognitive achievement, social competence). Two themes appear to be key: the warmth of the father, and the involvement of the father (see Rohner & Veneziano, 2001 for review). In terms of father involvement, important factors appear to include the amount of time that fathers spend, the extent to which fathers make themselves available, and the extent to which they take responsibility for their children's care and welfare (Lamb, Pleck, Chernov, & Levine, 1987). It is important to note, however, that one review concluded that it was not the simple fact of paternal engagement, availability, or responsibility for child care that was associated with positive adjustment and competence, but rather that the quality of the father-child relationship made the greatest difference (Lamb, 1997)⁸. Support for the importance of father love, above and beyond the impact of mother love, has also been found in comparative studies of psychological illness and well-being (Rohner & Veneziano, 2001): for example, paternal but not maternal warmth was negatively associated with disruptive aggression towards peers (Chen, Liu, & Li, 2000); depressed or delinquent youth felt rejected by their fathers but not necessarily by their mothers (Andry, 1962, Cole & McPherson, 1993); and perceived closeness to fathers, over and above perceived closeness to mothers, was related to adult sons' and daughters' happiness, life satisfaction, and psychological distress (Amato, 1994). Finally, in a longitudinal study

(Brody, Moore, & Gleib, 1994), fathers' warmth had a significant effect in shaping adolescents' attitudes toward such social issues as marriage, divorce, sex roles, and teenage childbearing. Apparently, the impact of fathers is not only important for preventing certain psychological problems, but also for encouraging virtuous attitudes and behavior. It is hypothesized that part of the reason for fathers' unique contribution is that they initiate different types of interactions than mothers, engaging in more physical, rough and tumble, and idiosyncratic play. In addition, fathers are more likely than mothers to encourage children's competitiveness, risk-taking, and independence (Cabrera et al., 2000).

In addition to these psychological findings, the role of father is important from a Christian perspective. Spiritually, the role of a father in guiding his family and demonstrating to children how manhood is powerfully yet appropriately manifest in the world, has its own dignity and place. The Church especially venerates St. Joseph as a model of spiritual fatherhood. John Paul II (1989) states that all men are called, like St. Joseph, to make a total sacrifice of their lives by submitting their wills to God and giving themselves permanently, faithfully, and generously to their wives, and defending their families from the perils of the world. A man's self-gift to his wife promotes and secures her ability to give to the children. Authentic love and spiritual fatherhood for his children requires that a man develop a profound respect, esteem, and generous concern for each child's dignity and well-being (Sutton, 2005). A father's sacrificial approach, in humility to God's providence, teaches children valuable lessons that may be counter to what the globalized world suggests. For example, competent fathers importantly teach the following: that children are "grown up" when they can take care of others (not when they can take care of themselves); they teach that success comes from longterm planning (not from instantaneous gratification of needs); and they teach that longterm commitments, such as honoring one's wife and leading children to do so are valuable (as opposed to

spending leisure time away from family responsibilities) (Stenson, 2000). Fathers also project moral leadership in the family, by monitoring and evaluating what they allow children to be exposed to from outside the family.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Therefore, through faith and reason, we know the crucial importance of both father and mother in the well-being of children, and their essential need in these times of unparalleled complexity in the world, for parents to effectively nurture and guide the next generation. Parents are at the forefront of the encounter between the unchanging essence of motherhood and fatherhood, and the changing world in which we are living, where the meaning of motherhood and fatherhood is being challenged. For these reasons, it is important to support individual fathers and mothers with a solid declaration of not only their right, but also their duty, to retain their role as primary educators of their children.

An integrated, Catholic anthropology of the human person supports this duty in the context of globalization because the individual maintains his core integrity and fundamental identity. The unity with which the human person was created by God transcends contextual influences and compels parents to foster healthy psychological development of the children in the family. This fundamental identity is developmentally formed first in the bodily and interpersonal aspects of our nature. Therefore, an essential need for children is that their parents, both mothers and fathers, are physically and emotionally present in order to provide a secure attachment base from which they can grow and develop. It is from this secure attachment base that children's intellect and will can reach their full potential, unencumbered by anxieties, conflict, and emotional burdens that weigh down those who are not confident in their mother's and father's love and support. Therefore, it is recommended that fathers and mothers be supported at multiple

levels in their unique and irreplaceable roles as primary attachment figures, educators, and guides of their children.

First, individual therapy for fathers or mothers who had not benefited from secure attachment relationships with their own parents; to the extent to which parents have personal histories that were less than ideal, they will have greater difficulty embracing their calls to be fathers and mothers, physically and spiritually (Sutton, 2005), resulting in difficulties being perpetuated across generations; Second, marital therapy for parents who are struggling in sustaining a healthy giving of self in their marriage, which would inevitably have bad consequences for the children. This should include attention by the Church to comprehensive marriage preparation programs and assistance for troubled marriages (e.g., Retrouvaille); Third, family interventions that focus on enhancing the filial, parent-child relationship, as well as interventions that support extended family members who play an invaluable role; and Finally, systemic interventions that impact the societal organizations by which parents are impacted; for example, corporate policies that free workers to be better parents and better guides for the next generation (Institute for American Values, 2003); schools policies that encourage parental involvement and input regarding curricula; social or political actions that promote traditional family values, for example, encouraging the removal of confusing messages about sexuality (e.g., legalized same-sex marriage and abortion). With support at these multiple levels, the above mentioned psychological interventions, as well as support from the Church through cultivation of a sense of meaning and transcendence in their lives, fathers and mothers will be better positioned to provide their children with the nurture and guidance needed for them to negotiate an increasingly expanding and interconnected world.

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Appendix

The Human Person is ...

- I. **CREATED:** humans are created by God in the image and likeness of God
 1. They are good (as is everything created by God) and have special dignity and value as persons.
 2. They are created as a unity, a material body with a spiritual soul, and in space and time.
 3. Since God is a loving communion of persons (a Trinity of Persons), humans are created as persons, whose vocation is love.

- II. **FALLEN:** Human nature is fallen: sin, death (mortality) and relational disorder are constitutive of human life (but are secondary to the goodness of God's creation).

- III. **REDEEMED:** Human nature is redeemed in Christ and restored to right relationship with God.
 - A. In Christ the human person is
 1. invited into a relationship of adopted sonship
 2. called to holiness, and to love God and others in this life
 3. called to eternal beatitude in the life to come
 - B. Human nature remains weakened by sin (concupiscence—disordered emotions, weakness of reason and will), but can be assisted, and in certain ways healed, and also divinized, by divine grace.

(The above three realities constitute together the cosmic & existential conditions for all human life.)

IV. **The human person is a unified, integrated whole that is *at once* intelligent (rational and free), embodied, and relational. For purposes of analysis we distinguish the following:**

- A. **INTELLIGENT:**
 1. **RATIONAL:**
 - a. Humans are capable of knowing
 - 1) themselves, others and God
 - 2) the created order
 - 3) truth, including divinely revealed truth
 - 4) good and evil, and that good is to be done and evil avoided
 - 5) concrete moral norms that guide human action in accordance with good and away from evil
 - 6) and appreciating beauty (they are aesthetic beings).
 - b. They have rational inclinations to seek and know the truth and find happiness.

Appendix (cont.)

2. **VOLITIONAL & FREE:**
 - a. Humans are the subject of moral action, capable of free-choice (i.e., they are agentic). As such they are
 - 1) responsible (capable of responsibility)

2) self-determining of their moral character (i.e., dispositions of their minds, wills and affect)

3) creative: like God (only by analogy), they are able to conceive of and deliberately bring into existence things that once were not.

- b. Although they are free, they are limited by multiple factors and to varying degrees.
- c. They have volitional inclinations to know and love diverse human goods (and, when baptized, divine goods)
- d. The development of human freedom involves freedom from undue limitation and growth in capacity to choose good and avoid evil.

B. BODILY: Human are bodily, i.e., bodies are intrinsic to human personhood, partially defining of personhood.

As bodily, human persons are

- 1. either male or female; male and female are complementary (neither identical nor ontologically
- 2. mutually exclusive) embodiments of the one being we call the human person; this complementarity has a nuptial significance. This nuptial significance is revealed and actualized through a “disinterested gift of self,” typified in and through marital love.
- 3. emotional; through training, humans develop emotional dispositions that can be ordered in accord with what is true and good.
- 4. sensory and perceptual: all knowledge and experience begins with the senses
- 5. motoric (self-moving)
- 6. situated in history and influenced by their historical situation

C. RELATIONAL: humans are relational, i.e., have natural inclinations & needs for life in society; as such they are

- 1. interpersonal, which is first developed in the family, for which humans have a natural inclination (i.e., for marriage, procreation and education of children)
- 2. situated in a culture and influenced by that culture

Brugger, Donahue, Moncher, Nordling, Palmer, Rondeau, Scrofani, Sweeney, Titus, & Vitz (2006). Anthropological Premises, 7th Revision, 9 February, 2006

¹ Culture understood as “(t)he form of man’s self-expression in his journey through history, on the level of both individuals and social groups. For man is driven incessantly by his intellect and will too cultivate natural goods and values, to incorporate in an ever higher and more systematic cultural synthesis his basic knowledge of all aspects of life... and to foster those existential values and perspectives, especially in the religious sphere, which enable individual and community life to develop in a way that is authentically human.” (John Paul II, 2001b)

² John Paul II (2001b) says that “the need to accept one’s own culture as a structuring element of one’s personality, especially in the initial stages of life, is a fact of universal experience whose importance can hardly be overestimated. Without a firm rooting in a specific soil, individuals risk being subjected at a still vulnerable age to an excess of conflicting stimuli which could impair their serene and balanced development”.

³ Vivero and Jenkins (1999) summarize the benefits of cultural identity: Cultural identity is the discovery of a psychological home, a sense of belonging to an ethnic or geographic community with consistent socialization themes and traditions. The cultural home provides a set of integrated assumptions, values, beliefs, social role norms, and emotional attachments that constitutes a meaningful personal identity, developed and located within a social cultural framework, and that is shared by a group of similarly located individuals.

⁴ (a) biological research where the mechanisms by which we become and stay attached to others are primed and increasingly discernible in the basic structure of the brain, through emotional communication beginning before words are spoken (A. Schore, 1994 quoted in Institute for American Values, 2003); (b) animal studies which demonstrate that attachment hormones help to trigger parental care, which in turn helps to trigger the release of more attachment hormones (Dixon & George, 1982; Insel & Young, 2001); (c) cross-cultural research which indicates that children’s attachment styles can be distinguished reliably in a variety of cultures (van Ijzendoorn & Sagi, 1999); and (d) studies on the impact upon institutionalized children raised without attachment figures (see, for example, Carlson & Earls, 2000)(see also Siegal, 1999).

⁵ The theological foundations for the indisputable contribution of females to parenting is expounded upon in his Apostolic Letter *Mulieris dignitatem* (John Paul II, 1988). He concludes this letter stating: “In our own time, the successes of science and technology make it possible to attain material well being to a degree hitherto unknown. While this favors some, it pushes others to the edge of society. In this way, unilateral progress can also lead to a gradual *loss of sensitivity for man, that is, what is essentially human*. In this sense, our time in particular *awaits the manifestation* of that “genius” which belongs to women, and which can ensure sensitivity for humans in every circumstance: because they are human!-and because “the greatest of these is love” (cf. 1 Cor 13:13)...If the human being is entrusted by god to women in a particular way, does it not mean that *Christ looks to them for the accomplishment of the “royal priesthood”* (1 Pt 2:9), which is the treasure he has given to every individual?” (no. 30)

⁶ This is clarified by John Paul II (1988) extensively in *Mulieris dignitatem*: Mary, as the archetype of the personal dignity of women, signifies the fullness of the perfection of “what is characteristic of woman”, of “what is feminine” in the expression “handmaid of the lord” (Luke 1:38) in which she demonstrates complete awareness of being a creature of God.

Implied in this then, is the understanding of “to serve means to reign” showing all people the reality of the royal dignity of service. Later in this letter, the Holy Father explores how Jesus expresses appreciation and admiration for a distinctly “feminine” response of mind and heart, a special sensitivity, as in the case of the Canaanite woman as well as the first witnesses of the resurrection.

⁷ Some research suggests that fathers and mothers seem to influence their children in many similar ways (e.g., warmth, nurturance, and closeness are associated with positive child functioning whether the parent involved is a mother or a father; Lamb, 1997).

⁸ It is important to note that much of this research is limited by having been conducted with middle-class European American parents (Rohner & Veneziano, 2001) and some variability might be expected in other cultures.