

BENEDICT XVI, *The Garden of God: Toward a Human Ecology*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington DC, 2014.

Pope Benedict XVI was well known for his interest in ecological matters and a new anthology of his statements on this subject provides some interesting insights. *The Garden of God: Toward a Human Ecology* is a translation of a book originally published in Italian in 2012. In just over 200 pages it provides a series of texts from the addresses, letters and other declarations by Benedict XVI. The book's title, referring to a human ecology, gives a good indication that the former Pope's interest was not just based on some well meaning concern for the environment, but is related to a much more profound theological consideration about creation and the human person. In his introduction Archbishop Jean-Louis Bruguès, at the time secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education, and now the Vatican's archivist and librarian, explained that while previous popes had written and spoken about the ecology Benedict XVI made it a much more frequent topic in his addresses.

He identified five key principles present in some of the writings of Benedict XVI on the environment. 1) Man comes first and good ecological decisions respect the dignity and rights of the human person. This is opposed to a utilitarian approach in which the ends justify the means. 2) Ecology is first of all an ethical question and humanity cannot be dominated by technology. 3) Ecology should not be founded on a relationship of power or domination, but on a harmonious relationship between humans and development. Nature is a gift from the Creator to be taken care of and cultivated. It is also something that is not superior

to humanity. 4) The human race is a family and our relationships should be shaped by solidarity. 5) There needs to be a change of mentality away from a purely consumerist approach.

The texts of Benedict XVI cover a wide range of issues but one theme that comes up frequently is that humans are not merely material creatures but open to the infinite and to God. This also leaves its mark on the created world. «The world does not exist by itself; it is brought into being by the creative Spirit of God, by the creative word of God», Benedict XVI explained in his Pentecost homily in 2006. Man has been given creation, he commented in a 2007 address, so that he might implement God's plan. It is a mistake, therefore if we put ourselves at the center of the universe in a selfish search for our own well-being. «Is it not true that an irresponsible use of creation begins precisely where God is marginalized or even denied?», he asked in a 2009 audience address. Losing sight of God means that matter is reduced to a selfish possession and the purpose of our existence is reduced to an effort to obtain the maximum number of possessions, he continued. Retaining an awareness of the role of God, and conscious of our obligations not only to those alive today but also to future generations will lead us to a responsible stewardship of creation instead of considering ourselves the absolute master of creation. In his message for the 2010 World Day of Peace, Benedict XVI again dealt with the environment and insisted once more that we need to consider creation as a gift from God to all people. He also called for a "profound cultural renewal" in order to identify those values that can help build a better future.

Both in this message and other statements on ecological matters

Benedict XVI explicitly linked respect for the environment with respect for the inviolability of human life «at every state and in every condition». He also stressed the importance of the family where we learn to love our neighbor and respect nature. In his World Day of Peace message for 2007 he examined the links between different aspects of ecology. There is a natural ecology, which means respect for nature, and also human ecology, that in turn leads to a social ecology. Disregard for the environment leads to negative consequences for human coexistence, he warned. He also warned against a reductive vision of human nature. «May the light and strength of Jesus help us to respect human ecology, in the knowledge that natural ecology will likewise benefit, since the book of nature is one and indivisible», Benedict XVI concluded in his 2010 address to members of the diplomatic corps. Science is a place of dialogue, he commented in an address later that same year, «a meeting between man and nature and, potentially, even between man and his Creator». Concern for the environment, therefore, is not just a series of technical fixes, but an endeavor based on a vision of mankind and the Creator.

*John Flynn, L.C.*

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J. CLAUSEN - N. LEVY (eds.), *Handbook of Neuroethics*, Springer, 2015, 3 volumi, 1850 pp.

È uscito da poco, in formato cartaceo e digitale, il corposo *Handbook of Neuroethics*, pubblicato dall'editrice *Springer Reference* (2015). Quest'opera, strutturata in tre volumi articolati in un totale di XXIII sezioni e 117 capitoli, comprende

un indice finale che termina a pagina 1850.

Questo sforzo monumentale, che a tutti gli effetti può benissimo essere considerato la “bibbia” della contemporanea “neuroetica”, sancisce la maturità accademica, oltre che culturale e sociale, di questa disciplina e la caratterizza nella sua specificità come “nuova” area del sapere, certamente aperta a 360 gradi verso gli sviluppi clinici che riguardano il cervello umano e il sistema nervoso, nella loro totalità e complessità, come nelle applicazioni neuro-tecnologiche più sofisticate.

La presentazione del volume che si trova sul sito ufficiale della Springer, descrive la “neuroetica” quale «sforzo o tentativo» multi e interdisciplinare che «analizza, in generale, le implicazioni e i risvolti delle neuroscienze sugli esseri umani e, in particolare, sulla loro (nostra) auto-comprensione». L’interdisciplinarietà della “neuroetica” emerge immediatamente scorrendo i titoli delle XXIII sezioni, e leggendo la varietà di argomenti scelti per i 117 capitoli che compongono i tre volumi.

Curato da Jens Clausen, insieme a uno dei nomi noti della “neuroetica globale”, Neil Levy, questo manuale di “neuroetica” è, per dimensioni e per contenuti, tutto tranne che un manuale. Jens Clausen è direttore del gruppo di neuroetica dell’*Institute for Ethics and History of Medicine* dell’Università di Tubinga e *managing director* della commissione di etica clinica dell’ospedale universitario della medesima città tedesca. Clausen è inoltre membro del *Center for Integrative Neuroscience* (CIN) e della stessa commissione etica. La sua ricerca si concentra sulle conseguenze etiche e antropologiche relative alle moderne neuroscienze, in particolare, sull’uso di dispositivi cerebrali, sul potenziamento cognitivo e sulla medicina rigenerativa.

Neil Levy, nome noto nel contesto della ricerca e della divulgazione neuroetica globale, capo redattore della rivista *Neuroethics*, è *Fellow* dell’*Australian Research Council Future* presso il *Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health* di Mel-

bourne, in Australia. Le sue pubblicazioni spaziano soprattutto tra scienze della mente, etica e libero arbitrio. Tra le sue ultime opere ricordiamo: *Hard Luck* (Oxford UP, 2011) e *Consciousness and Moral Responsibility* (Oxford UP, 2014).

Oltre ai curatori dell’opera Clausen e Levy, si possono citare alcuni tra i nomi emblematici della “neuroetica” globale, che hanno contribuito, con la loro esperienza e professionalità, a questo manuale della Springer. Ne ricordiamo i più noti, come, per esempio, Eric Racine, la neuroscienziata e filosofa Adina L. Roskies, James Giordano (che nel 2005 ha coniato il neologismo “*neurobioethics*” sottolineando l’importanza e la centralità della persona umana nel dibattito neuroetico), Adrian Raine, esperto in neurodiritto e autore di un interessante volume sull’anatomia cerebrale del crimine, Steven Laureys, esperto mondiale di coscienza e stati alterati di coscienza, Walter Glannon, filosofo canadese e divulgatore dei temi di neuroetica e Martha J. Farah.

Questo *Handbook of Neuroethics* (2015), come si legge nella presentazione della Springer, «fornisce una panoramica specializzata e comprensiva del dibattito neuroetico internazionale», inoltre, «offre spunti innovativi sull’impatto della ricerca neuroscientifica, della diagnosi e terapia» a livello cerebrale.

Una delle sue caratteristiche distintive è quella di includere un’ampia gamma di prospettive riguardanti la “neuroetica” che vengono affrontate con un taglio storico, antropologico, etico, filosofico, teologico, sociologico e legale. Si crea una sorta di “sinfonia armonica” utile al lettore appassionato in questo settore specialistico della ricerca e della riflessione contemporanea.

La “neuroetica” viene presentata quale “sforzo o tentativo” (*endeavor*) multi-disciplinare e inter-disciplinare che esamina le implicazioni e i risvolti, delle neuroscienze sugli esseri umani in generale e, in particolare, cerca di riflettere sulla nostra auto-comprensione in chiave neurobiologica quali esseri umani in relazione con altri individui della stessa specie.

Nella loro introduzione all’opera, i curatori approfondiscono la definizione di “neuroetica” caratterizzandola come la “riflessione sistematica e informata sulla neuroscienza ed interpretazione della stessa neuroscienza”. Clausen e Levy includono, oltre alla neuroscienza, “le correlative scienze della mente (la psicologia in tutte le sue molteplici forme, la psichiatria, l’intelligenza artificiale e così via), allo scopo di capire i loro risvolti per l’auto-comprensione umana e i pericoli e le prospettive delle loro applicazioni” (pag. vi).

La gamma di approcci e prospettive all’interno della “neuroetica”, includono, senza per questo voler limitare la disciplina, prospettive di carattere storico, antropologico, etico, filosofico, teologico, sociologico e giuridico.

Questo “manuale”, che si centra sullo studio degli sviluppi e delle innovazioni neuro scientifiche, considerate da diverse prospettive, fornisce una visione comprensiva della riflessione neuroetica internazionale, potremmo dire, globale. Inoltre, offre inediti approfondimenti sull’impatto della ricerca, diagnosi e terapia neuroscientifica.

La prima parte, il primo volume, intitolato “Aspetti concettuali della neuroetica” (*Conceptual Aspects of Neuroethics*), comprendente le prime sei sezioni (I-VI), ciascuna delle quali contiene diversi capitoli. In questa prima parte vengono presentate le discussioni relative alle diverse correnti e teorie all’interno della “neuroetica” e della cosiddetta “filosofia della mente” (*Mind Philosophy*), dell’identità personale, del libero arbitrio, come pure, considerazioni di carattere filosofico al rispetto.

Il secondo volume, intitolato “Questioni speciali di neuroetica” (*Special Issues in Neuroethics*), che include le sezioni VII-XVI, tratta in modo esaustivo, le applicazioni odierne e future delle neuroscienze all’essere umano, come, ad esempio, la stimolazione cerebrale (sezione VII), le neuroimmagini (VIII), la cosiddetta “prostetica”, che include le interfaccie cervello-computer, ma anche cervello-cervello (IX), le cosiddette “protesi sensoriali” (X), le innova-

zioni nell'ambito della terapia genica e cellulare (XI), le applicazioni alla psichiatria (XII) e alla neurochirurgia, includenti le odierne tecniche di neurochirurgia da svegli (XIII), come la grande tematica delle addizioni (XIV) e dell'etica applicata alla psichiatria, con risvolti alla ricerca sul cervello umano (XV) e al potenziamento cognitivo (XVI). L'ultimo volume, il terzo, intitolato "Neuroetica e società" (*Neuroethics and Society*), comprendente le sezioni XVII-XXIII, considera la neuroetica nel suo versante sociale ed include le sezioni riguardanti il cosiddetto neurodiritto (XVII), la neuroetica femminista (XVIII), la neuroetica e i mezzi di comunicazione sociale (XIX), l'ampio e dibattuto campo della cosiddetta neuroteologia (XX), il neuromarketing (XXI) e il potenziamento nella sua versante di neuroetica dello sviluppo (XXII) e delle applicazioni belliche (XXIII). L'opera si chiude con un *Indice*, da pagina 1839 a pagina 1850.

*Alberto Carrara, L.C.*

ANTHONY ESOLEN, *Reclaiming Catholic Social Teaching: A Defense of the Church's True Teachings on Marriage, Family, and the State*, Sophia Institute Press, Manchester, MH, 2014.

Catholic social teaching can often be misinterpreted and therefore we need to return to its first principles, says Anthony Esolen, author of a recent book that addresses fundamental issues such as God, human nature and society. Esolen based his reflections on the writings of Pope Leo XIII. The most fundamental truth about our human condition, Esolen explained, is that we were made by God, in the image of God. Ignoring our connection to the eternal would mean that we will lose our notion of what is good and right, he commented, quoting Pope Leo XIII. People who believe in God and a natural order will be able to see that human life is sacred, that marriage is a contract between a man

and a woman and that children belong to their parents, he observed. «Reason without faith is crippled at best and grows deformed and monstrous at worst, animated by the pride and passion of man», he added. Esolen continued by deliberating what human liberty really means. Our liberty is meant to help us achieve our perfection. «Freedom is the unimpeded capacity to fulfill our God-ordained end» he maintained. Religion also helps keep the state in place, which is subordinate to our higher destiny. On the subject of marriage, Esolen explained that even Aristotle admitted that the family and the household comes first and is the foundation for the state. Society in turn should protect and promote marriage and the family. By contrast laws that weaken marriage damage civil society and the Church. «Good laws assist us in the difficult pursuit of virtue. Bad laws thwart that pursuit and encourage vice» Esolen commented. A bad law, Pope Leo said, that allows divorce is like a rotten tree trunk from which only "worthless fruits" can come. As well, individuals who turn their backs on Church teaching regarding the family are being antisocial and self-centered. An anti-society of self-will and divorce will inevitably damage the sense of civic responsibility and the love of neighbor. Esolen likened the role of families in society to that of bones in a human body. Therefore, he continued, you can't talk about a real society, about the economy or poverty, about sexual ethics, without involving the family. Esolen also considered the teachings of Pope Leo XIII on work and private property. The right to private property is not founded on the laws of economics, but on human nature and the need to provide security for a family. «Only persons can own, because only persons seal their creations with the stamp, not of their labor merely, but of their persons, the very selves that dwell in and beyond time». «Human labor must be honored not because it is labor, but because it is

human», he added. He went on to consider a number of consequences that arise from this, including the need that companies should treat their workers as humans and not be unjust and that workers should be paid a fair wage. «It is always shameful to treat human beings as if they were mere machines», Esolen commented. He also noted that Pope Leo XIII had in mind a society in which the poor and the rich are not separated from each other. It is not enough that the rich pay taxes to help the poor; instead what is needed is a mutual interest and love.

Esolen decried how in more recent times the state has squeezed the Church and charitable associations out of schools, hospitals, adoption agencies and other activities. The state, instead, Pope Leo explained, should foster objective moral law and self-restraint. He also referred to what is now known as the principle of subsidiarity, that is, the state should respect the role of families and associations and local communities. In his conclusion Esolen insisted on the central role of religion and in particular the Eucharist. «A sincere devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, Leo says, will bring unity among men again by fostering three virtues: faith, patience, and charity». In some of his criticism of contemporary society Esolen's comments bring to mind the content of Robert Bellah's book, "Habits of the Heart", or Robert Putnam's "Bowling Alone". Both of these books noted the fragmentation of society, the breakdown of local communities and a growing individualism.

Esolen certainly provides a good overview of the social teaching of the Church, as contained in the writings of Pope Leo XIII, but it would have been interesting to also consider some of the subsequent documents in the following century or more – perhaps he will deal with this in a future book.

*John Flynn, L.C.*

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LUKAS THOMMEN, *L'ambiente nel mondo antico*, Il Mulino, 2014, 184 pp.

El presente volumen, según palabras del propio autor – profesor de Historia Antigua en la universidades de Basilea y Zúrich – se basa en su libro *Umweltgeschichte der Antike* (Múnich, 2009), «ampliado e integrado en algunas de sus partes», y nace de una larga carrera docente (1995-2005) dedicada a la enseñanza de la historia del ambiente. Y su tema es muy concreto: el de clarificar «las interacciones recíprocas entre el hombre y el ambiente, en el período que va desde la Grecia arcaica (siglos IX al VIII a. C.) a la antigüedad tardía (IV y V siglos d. C.)» (p. 17).

Este propósito, sin embargo, se aborda de un modo cauto, consciente de lo mucho que queda por investigar en este terreno. El autor lo dice explícitamente, en el sentido que no pretende otra cosa que «ofrecer *los fundamentos* necesarios para una investigación histórica sobre el ambiente en el mundo antiguo» que pueda ser útil «como *punto de partida* para posteriores indagaciones sobre este mismo tema» (p. 7; las cursivas son mías). Es decir, se trataría, para decirlo en una sola palabra, de una *introducción general* al problema del ambiente en el mundo antiguo.

La relativa modestia científica en este campo está bien justificada, pues se trata de un tema – el ambiente o *Umwelt* en el mundo antiguo – difícil de tratar por diversos motivos: en primer lugar, porque comprende un período histórico amplísimo, que presenta inevitables diferencias entre sus diferentes etapas haciendo difícil cualquier generalización; en segundo lugar, porque para tratarlo adecuadamente deben concurrir una pluralidad de disciplinas, de modo que a la historia, en sentido estricto, deben sumarse, por ejemplo, la biología, la teoría económica y la ética; y por último, porque, tratándose del mundo antiguo, nuestra principal vía de acceso al problema lo constituyen fuentes literarias que sólo ocasionalmente se refieren al problema del ambiente y,

además, de un modo poco *objetivo* según la comprensión moderna del término. Es perfectamente razonable, en este sentido, que el autor dedique las páginas iniciales a cuestiones de método y terminológicas, advirtiendo no sólo acerca del sentido en que deben ser comprendidos conceptos como “ambiente” y “ecología” sino, sobre todo, llamando la atención sobre los riesgos de incurrir en análisis anacrónicos que olviden hasta qué punto las condiciones de vida de los antiguos, así como los modos de intervenir en el ambiente, son diferentes respecto de las nuestras. Thommen es enfático al señalar, en este sentido, que «la reconstrucción de las condiciones antiguas puede contribuir sólo indirectamente a ampliar la prospectiva para el análisis de nuestra época» (p. 9).

Desde el punto de vista de su estructura, este breve volumen se abre con una relativamente amplia *Introducción* para dar paso a dos grandes secciones, dedicadas, respectivamente, a Grecia y a Roma. En ambas secciones se ocupa exactamente de las mismas cuestiones, que son: el espacio geográfico, el hombre y la naturaleza, la agricultura, los bosques y su aprovechamiento, los jardines, los animales, la alimentación, fuego y agua, terremotos y volcanes y, por último, la actividad extractiva. Además, al final del volumen, antes de la *Conclusión* y la *Bibliografía*, dedica unas pocas, aunque interesantes, páginas a los problemas urbanísticos de las grandes ciudades y de las villas de campo, tan distintivas de la antigüedad tardía.

Desde el punto de vista de las ideas o interpretaciones propuestas, en cambio, el volumen no pretende ofrecer perspectivas hermenéuticas nuevas sino sólo una amplia visión sobre el *status questionis* (la bibliografía, a este respecto, es muy amplia y pertinente). Es enfático en recordar, eso sí, algunas ideas importantes sobre la materia que conviene tener siempre presente. Dos me parecen especialmente importantes.

La primera, que en el mundo antiguo no existió, propiamente hablando y salvo contadas

excepciones, una preocupación ecológica de tipo ambientalista tal como la entendemos nosotros; tanto es así que la propia palabra ecología, de evidente origen griego, no existía en la antigüedad. La causa resulta evidente: nuestro interés por la ecología y el medio ambiente depende, en gran parte, de nuestra capacidad técnica de intervenir radicalmente el “mundo circundante” (*Umwelt*), que es posible sólo a partir de la modernidad. Para el hombre antiguo, en cambio, la Naturaleza aparecía, ante todo, como un espacio casi inagotable del que cabía defenderse y, de ser posible, aprovechar en beneficio de una vida humana más cultivada (su ambiguo carácter divino se inscribe dentro de esta misma lógica). Ello explica que la idea de sustentabilidad, tan importante para nosotros, era prácticamente desconocida en la antigüedad. De ahí que las pocas voces que se alzaron en defensa del medio ambiente – o de algunos de sus elementos, como los animales – lo hicieran no tanto porque creyeran en que éste poseía un valor en sí, digno de respeto, sino sobre todo como una forma de reprochar a sus contemporáneos los vicios morales que suponía el consumo desmedido de determinados recursos naturales (Plinio y Séneca son dos buenos ejemplos de esta perspectiva moralizante). Dicho en otras palabras, no se trataba tanto de ecología o ambientalismo cuanto de ética.

Y la segunda, que, contrariamente a la idea un poco idealizada que se tiene del hombre pre-moderno el hombre antiguo no dejó de explotar, a veces irracionalmente, la Naturaleza, poniendo en riesgo los delicados equilibrios ambientales y llevando a determinadas especies de animales casi a su extinción (piénsese en la enorme cantidad de animales sacrificados en el circo romano) sin que por ello se despertara una conciencia ecológica en sentido propio. La relación del hombre antiguo con la naturaleza, en este sentido, habría estado lejos de ser una relación de armonía e integración, que sólo con el cristianismo y la época moderna se ha-

bría roto de un modo casi irremediable. De hecho, en la mentalidad antigua la idea de la sacralidad de la naturaleza estaba perfectamente integrada con la otra idea, aparentemente contraria, de la legitimidad de su sometimiento y explotación. En resumen. El texto, aunque ambicioso, resulta formalmente equilibrado (cada sección tiene un extensión similar a las demás), y permite hacerse una idea suficientemente clara del tema propuesto. Es, como ya he indicado más arriba, una correcta puesta al día de la información disponible sobre el argumento. Pienso, sin embargo, que la sección dedicada a la comprensión antigua de la Naturaleza, y del lugar que el hombre ocupa en ella, resulta demasiado esquemática y breve (lleva por título “El hombre y la naturaleza” y no ocupa más de seis páginas en total, sumando la sección dedicada a Grecia a la de Roma) aunque constituye, en mi opinión, una de las cuestiones cruciales para una correcta comprensión del argumento.

Me parece evidente, en este sentido, que aquí hay un terreno sobre el cual hay mucho que investigar y pensar, que al ser tratado más ampliamente permitiría, además, apreciar con mayor claridad la importancia de la nueva comprensión que de la naturaleza introdujo el cristianismo en el mundo antiguo, que Thommen sí refiere de un modo correcto aunque, lamentablemente, sólo de pasada.

*Rodrigo Frías Urrea*

PAUL RAEBURN, *Do Fathers Matter? What Science is Telling Us About the Parent We've Overlooked*, Scientific American / Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, NY, 2014.

Fathers play a vital role in the upbringing of their children, different from that of a mother, according to a recent book that examines a variety of scientific evidence. In this book, journalist and author Paul Raeburn examines the various stages of fatherhood. For a long time, he explained, fathers were not

considered to have a big role in their children's development, particularly in the early years. «The irrelevancy of fathers had become an article of faith among researchers», he said. This opinion started to change in the mid-1970's, but even as recently as 2005 one review of 514 studies of clinical child and adolescent psychology from leading journals found that nearly half of them excluded fathers and only 11% focused exclusively on fathers. The topics examined by Raeburn cover a wide range. On matters of health he noted that while the link between maternal health and their children is well known research in the last decade or so has revealed that the father's health leading up to the time of conception also has a role to play. Factors such as whether or not the father had a healthy diet, body weight, substance abuse, exposure to toxins and pollution, are a factor in influencing the health of their children. During their wives' pregnancy men also experience weight and hormonal changes and after birth the hormonal changes are higher in those men who devote more time to the care of their child. While the hormonal changes in women are related to the physiological process in pregnancy, for men the changes relate to the hormonal changes in the mother. There is not direct proof of a connection between maternal and paternal hormones, but Raeburn affirmed, there is a strong suggestion that there is a link.

Changes also take place in fathers' brains during the first months of a newborn's life. The changes occurred in areas of the brain associated with motivations and moods, and their involvement with their infants. «Fathers are clearly wired to respond to their children; their brains are engaged», Raeburn said. As well, fathers engage with infants in a different way to mothers. This, Raeburn affirmed, is evidence of the importance of fathers spending time with their babies. One effect of this came out in a study of couples and the sleep patterns of their babies. The higher the involvement by fathers in the care of their ba-

bies the lower the nocturnal awakenings by the infants. Greater engagement by fathers is also associated with lower levels of aggressive behavior by young children, including tantrums, biting and kicking. Other research has found that fathers who were involved with the mother of their child during pregnancy led to a reduction in the risk that the children would die in the first year of life. Meanwhile infants whose fathers were absent and had not involvement in the pregnancy were more likely to be born with lower birth weight and to be born prematurely. Additionally, depression in fathers during pregnancy increases the risk of depression in children, just as mothers' depression does, even though fathers have no direct connection with the fetus during pregnancy.

The importance of fathers does not cease as children grow up. Fathers play a crucial role in children's language development. As well, affectionate and engaging interactions between fathers and children lead to better social skills. One study found that when children were supported by their fathers in the transition to school then it led to a much better relationship between the child and teacher. The positive influence continues as children move into their teens, with those supported by their fathers doing better at school and having less disciplinary problems. For girls a warm relationship with their father means a reduced risk of early puberty, early initiation of sex, and teen pregnancy. When it comes to sons there is evidence that those who have positive childhood memories of their fathers were more likely to be able to handle the stresses of adulthood. As the evidence in Raeburn's book demonstrates the father's role in a family is a vital complement to that of the mother. The trend towards single parenthood so prevalent in many countries, usually without a father being present, should be a cause of great concern.

*John Flynn, LC*

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