

THE CIRCLE AND THE LINE:
KINSHIP, VANISHMENT AND GLOBALIZATION
NARRATIVES IN A RICH/POOR WORLD

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We are asked to consider an impossibility – the horror of the missing child, the anxiety of the lost youth, a life unlived, a death unmarked. Vanishment arouses in us the fear that our cultural narrative is collapsing around us and with it the stories of our lives, our families and communities. Of course, we do play peek-a-boo with ourselves but we expect to be found – just as we collectively expected to survive the last millennium played out on our TV. Even so, our survival narratives contain a test imposed by a devouring god or monster, a parent, a sibling who may be ourself. The Sphinx's riddle – what goes on four legs in the morning, on two legs at noon and on three legs in the evening – is not a question about man's *life-cycle* from baby, to man, to old man on a cane: nor woman's passage from mother to wife, to widow. Its asks *who is subject to the law of inter-generationality?* The Sphinx's riddle asked Oedipus who has scrambled the space which we owe to one another within families and between generations? In other words, do we have any right to shorten, abuse or erase the stages of human life that are the gift of intergenerationality that must be exchanged and not hoarded from jealousy or greed? The life-cycle is therefore more than a figure of biology; it is the figure of *moral kinship* and *civic intergenerationality* – it is the very mirror of self and society:

Look in thy glass and tell the face thou viewest
Now is the time that face should form another,
Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest
Thou dost beguile the world, unbless some mother.
For where is she so fair whose unneared womb
Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry?
Or who is he so fond will be the tomb

Of his self-love to stop posterity?
 Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee
 Calls back the lovely April of her prime;
 So thou through windows of thine age shalt see,
 Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time.
 But if thou live remembered not to be,
 Die single, and thine image dies with thee
 (Shakespeare, Sonnet 3).

In his magisterial survey of the shifts in world family patterns, Goran Therborn (2004) concludes that the overall effect of the demographic shifts in the past century is that rich countries no longer replace themselves but have displaced this burden upon poor countries. What raises our fear of vanishment, then, is that families in rich countries have refigured themselves in a complex struggle over the good(s) life at home and abroad. Yet the will-to-marriage has accommodated premarital sex, cohabitation, divorce, single parenting, same-sex unions, adoption and surrogacy. In rich countries the life-cycle has lengthened for elders while the periodization of childhood and youth has been extended through schooling, contraception and personal autonomy. The result is that love and marriage, marriage and family are more deliberative arrangements (education → employment → family) than the traditional marriage of horse and carriage that nevertheless survives in more expensively staged wedding rituals. On both the national and global stage, it is state and UN contraceptive policies that have acted as our parent of last resort! Yet, there remains a considerable cultural conflict between our global *will-to-family* and our globalizing *will-to-inequality* and genocidal violations of humanitarian kinship. Thus we may imagine life's journey as a *line* – some are in front, others at the back, many in the middle, uncertain where the line is moving. These are the queue lines for food, water and rescue. They are lines of death and despair. But if we imagine life as a *circle*, we remember since childhood wanting to be in, holding hands, singing, dancing and the circle widening so that no one is left outside. The circle is made from a line but the line must become a circle if we are not to scramble the world's family.

Let us consider for a moment the cover page of our program (Figure 1). What we see is Picasso's *Family of Saltimbanques* which captures the eternal pathos of the wandering family, caught together and apart, at home wherever it is, juggling its sorrows and dreams – like and unlike ourselves; inside and outside the city, the church, the marketplace, together and alone they wander somewhere between Bethlehem, Paris ...anywhere along the

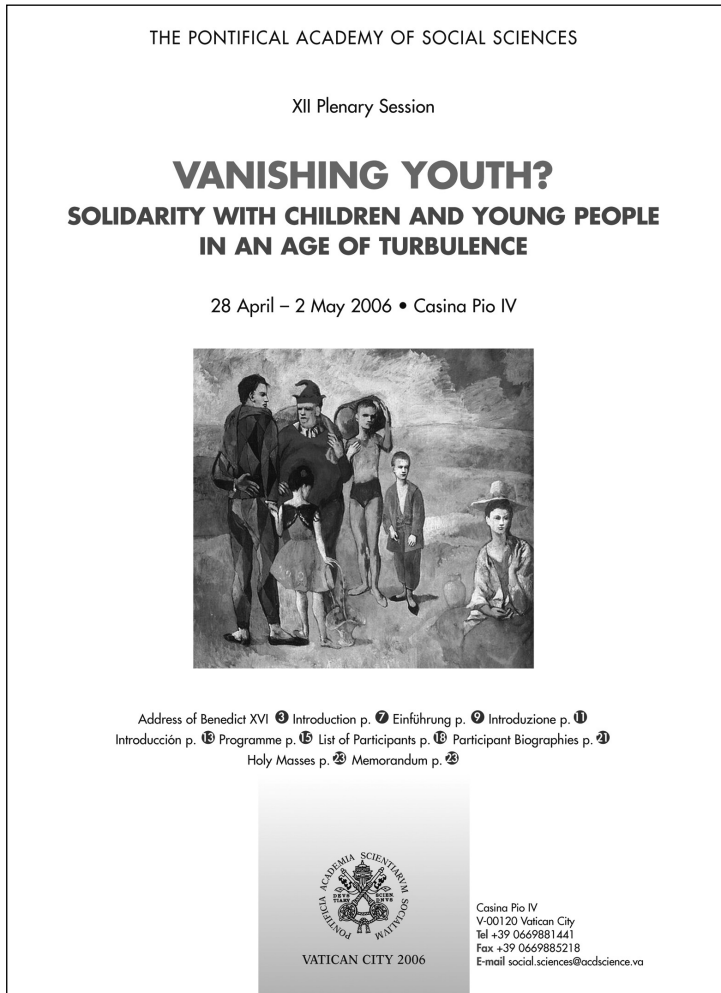


Figure 1.

gypsy roads of Europe, from circus to circus, season to season, from childhood to death. Within this family we are drawn to the figures of the little girl, Raymonde, looking away from the half-turned but empty-armed woman, Fernande Olivier.

Sometimes, in half-pauses, a tenderness tries to steal out over your face to your seldomly tender mother (Rilke, *The Fifth Elegy*).

How close is a child to itself or its elders, or they to themselves in life's tumble and turn? After adopting Raymonde, Picasso and Fernande who was his mistress asked the poet Max Jacob to return the little girl to the orphanage. The story goes that the poet could not bring himself to do it but neither could he keep her and they too parted – each in their way 'a lost child' (Crespelle, 1967).

It is a curiosity of late modernity that it endlessly celebrates its overpowering command of nature and itself. And yet it remains haunted by images of self-destruction and disappearance. The very societies that claim to live longer and better; to extend their love of themselves and others towards nature, to its oceans and forests, to its fauna and wild creatures are equally obsessed with images of extinction, exhaustion and vanishment. Whereas earlier societies embedded themselves in the repeating cycle of nature's living and dying, we are embarked upon making the gift of life our own unique gift (O'Neill, 2004a). None of this is reversible; none of it unnatural. What is noble in our species, as Sophocles put it in his *Ode to Mankind*, is that we are determined to cross the seas, unmatched by any greater terror than ourselves, overcoming all odds – except Death, the divine price of Life. We are by nature unnatural. Nor are such reflections resolved by turning from poetry or existential philosophy to the sobriety of the social sciences that are at the engine of modern self-knowledge and reproduction. Here, too, media images and statistical data are interwoven in narratives of development and despair, of cooperation and conflict, where at times the rule of law shines through lawlessness and at other times love seems overshadowed by evil, inequity and disease. Yet our kinship with ourselves and nature is the mark of the changes we experience in one or the other (Strathern, 1992).

What may be said is that we are currently subject to excesses of culture that vanish nature which is then reworked in the name of fundamental norms or benchmarks in a world of ephemeral cultural fashions. It is unavoidable that 'the' family and its life-cycle – infancy, childhood, youth, adulthood, old age are also caught in our revisions of nature, society and self or of our divinity, humanity and sacrament (Wagner, 1975; 1986). As well, our concept of ourselves and relations to one another are enormously expanded in a global narrative of development that simultaneously puts all relations to nature and society at risk. But we are not helplessly stalled between the claims of culture and our own agency because their corrigibility is the very story of our lives:

There is a life-long dialectic between objectivity and subjectivity because circumstances can change (necessarily or contingently)

and so can we again necessarily, as we move through the life cycle, and contingently because we can re-assess our concerns. (Archer, 1996: 141).

I propose, then, to treat Western capitalism as a *corrigible narrative* in which the claims of polity, economy, society and personality, despite internal conflicts, have developed an overall bias toward *civic capitalism* (O'Neill, 2004b). This is also a contested concept in terms of its own history of left and right politics, as well as from the standpoint of global capitalism (Dasgupta and Serageldin, 1999). It might be said that early-modern industrial society had to learn to repair the natural risks incurred by its technological apparatus as well as devise welfare regimes to reduce the civic risks endemic to its class/property apparatus (Esping-Anderson, 1990). However, while we are still concerned to tinker with the industrial and social risks engendered by a wealth-driven political economy, we now have to learn how to repair the huge risks to sustainable civic institutions that are incurred by the global economy.

For what we do when we declare this or that good to be a *needed good* is to block or constrain its free exchange. We also block any other distributive procedure that doesn't attend to need – popular election, meritocratic competition, personal or familial preference, and so on. But the market is ... the chief rival of the sphere of security and welfare; and it is most importantly the market that is preempted by the welfare state. Needed goods cannot be left to the whim, or distributed in the interests of some powerful group of owners or practitioners. (Walzer, 1983: 89).

This means that we must extend – rather than reduce – welfare state practices to include the reduction of ill-health generated not only by the self-contaminating products and hazards of global industrialism but also by its dereliction of civic well-being. This is the broader framework of any adequate concept of well-being in respect of the world's children and their families (Sen, 1985; Nussbaum and Sen, 1993). It is possible that this global framework of risk may induce a certain solidarity between adults, children, and youth. For whereas in class terms *some* are never afflicted by the risks of poverty, *no one* escapes the afflictions of globalized risks to our air, water, food chain, forests, and heavens. Having said this, we have still to rework our cognitive and moral maps to rethink civic sustainability rather than continue to rely upon scarcity-thinking to ration out the unequal risks of the emerging global economy of industrialized hazards.

We are obliged to *globalize our moral map* since it is increasingly impossible to set up national and class walls to protect privileged moral environments. It follows that the moral environment of children can no longer be isolated. We can no longer imagine childhood as a pre-political or pre-economic realm safe from the hazards of the adult world without indulging a fantasy of child-immunity that is constantly violated through the intrusions of generation, class, race, and nation (Glendon, 1987). Nor can we reasonably treat the middle levels of privilege in industrial societies as the normative environment for every other underprivileged group either within industrial democracies or outside of them (Nieuwenhuys, 1994). It is a basic concept of civic capital theory that the cognitive and moral formation of the child cannot be understood apart from the child's location in a more or less intelligent and ethical society. Thus, the ecological exchanges between the family, school, economy, and the state that work to capitalize child and youth development may be represented in the accompanying schema (Figure 2).

We may read the diagram to trace inputs to social (left side) and individual (right side) capital formation that foster a life-cycle of child, youth, and adult well-being that in turn feeds back into economic growth. Assuming globalized market effects and state policies, the redistributive functions of a civic state produce health, social cohesion and competence that contribute to economic innovation and growth. State, community, and family capital transfers underwrite health, education, and individual agency. Disinvestment in any of these areas weakens both the polity and the economy, contributing to social and personal destitution (Dasgupta, 1993). All children should be able to see in their families, schools, and communities the prospect of their own turn to adulthood and family with reasonable security for their elders. *The fragmentation of intergenerationality must be regarded as one of the severest injuries of poverty.*

In the civic state the child is both a moral and political subject whose voice is heard only when adults subordinate their present selves to their future selves. This sacrifice is an exercise in civic citizenship and *continuity of care* (Alstoft, 2004) – not a confirmation of backward ideologies of familism and privatism. We seek rather to offer to any child a number of basic civic assurances grounded in the best child research (Bronfenbrenner and Neville, 1994), which we cast as follows:

1. A child's development is more secure (cognitively and ethically) the more complex and intensive are its interactions with its primary care-takers – that is, a child benefits from those conditions that sustain a *narrative of parental love*.

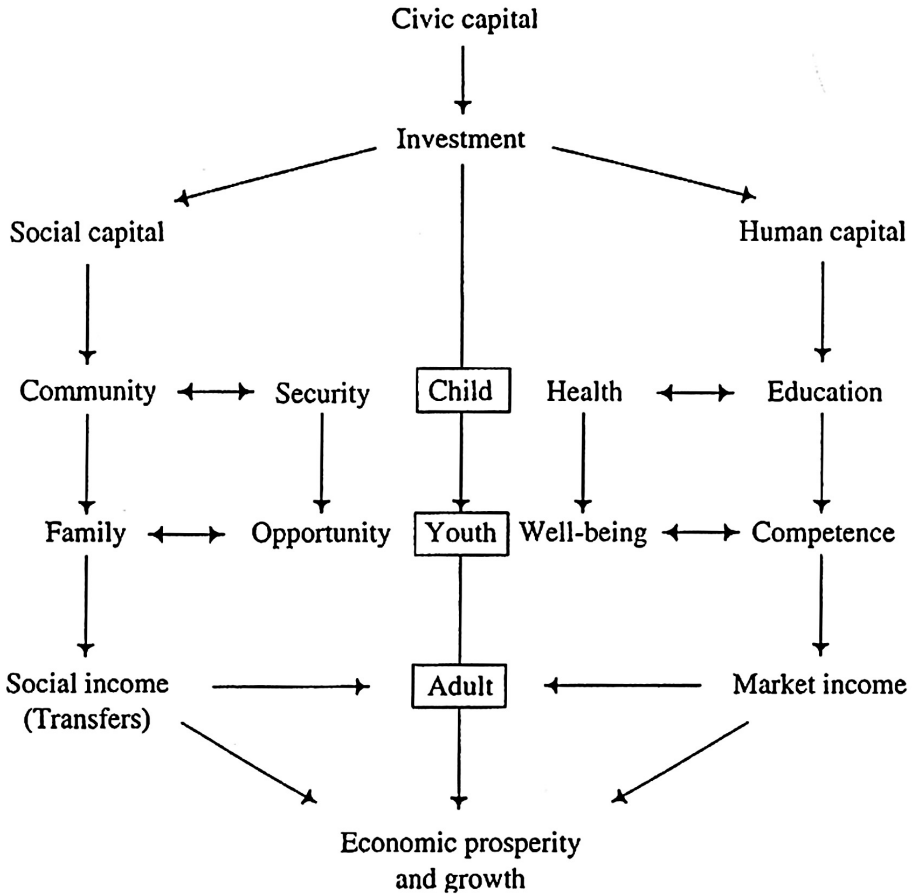


Figure 2. Civic capital exchanges in child development and growth.

2. A child's development is more secure the more its home culture overlaps with its civic environment (physical, cultural, and emotional) – that is, a child benefits from those conditions that sustain a *narrative of social competence*.
3. A child's development is more assured the more its parental, sibling, school, and neighborhood cultures are congruent – that is, a child benefits from those institutional conditions that sustain a *narrative of civic transitions*.

4. A child's development is more assured the more its home, its care institutions, its school, and its parental workplace(s) are in communication to balance their competing demands upon the child – that is, a child benefits from the communicative practices that sustain a *civic narrative of the child's worth*.
5. A child's development is more assured the more the state adopts child-focused family support policies – that is, a child benefits from national policy that sustains a *narrative of the civic value of children*.
6. A child's development is more sane wherever nation states enforce the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Children as an index of national achievement – that is, the child benefits from those international laws that enforce the *narrative that children are the world's treasure*.

RE-SHAPING THE WORLD NARRATIVE

Today we are experiencing an extraordinary strain between our narrative of kinship and our narratives of globalization and development. We are dividing into rich and poor countries, rich elders and poor youth, families that choose whether or not to replace themselves and families that are powerless against infant mortality, disease, unemployment and war. The challenge is to recast our national practices of kinship and kindness on a global level in order to sustain both economies rather than starve one in favour of the other. It is intolerable that 'we' should deny that the world is round and reduce it to a line-up of first, second and third world children waiting for food, shelter and justice. By the same token, a 'round world' is not the 'flat world' evoked recently by Thomas Friedman whose best-selling global scenario of digitized knowledge and communication culminates in a children's war:

Girls, when I was growing up my parents used to say to me, 'Tom, finish your dinner – people in China and India are starving'. My advice to you is: Girls, finish your home work – people in China and India are starving for your jobs (Friedman, 2005: 237).

Coupled with this homely advice to his daughters, Friedman's message of *compassionate flatism* to the rest of America envisages the most extraordinary reversal of fates to counter globalized competition between the world's advantaged and disadvantaged youth:

The way I like to think about this for our society as a whole is that every person should figure out how to make himself or herself into

an *untouchable*. That's right. When the world goes flat, the caste system gets turned upside down... Untouchables, in my lexicon, are *people whose jobs cannot be outsourced* (Friedman, 2005: 237-238).

Friedman's wake-up call to American parents destroys their children in the very name of Americans' national myth of themselves as innocents at home and abroad (Dorfman, 1983). Yet it is a remarkable expression of the credo of neo-liberal familism which may be summed up as follows:

1. children should *not be visibly predictable* winners/losers in the inequality game;
2. children must be *procedurally equal* in any process of talent discrimination;
3. no child should be a predictable *winner* or *loser* as a result of the cumulative class effects of competition;
4. because children are even more are condemned by competition than their parents – whose individualizing ideologies they have not yet acquired, they must be *lovingly schooled to develop a competitive edge*.

Friedman's *Flat World* anxieties are better addressed in Branko Milanovic's *Worlds Apart...* (2005) where the plutocratic divide between wealth and poverty is subject to extremely sophisticated statistical measurements of income inequality in individual and cross-national households. While there are no 'laws of motion' of world income distribution, nevertheless:

1. inequality between incomes in rich and poor countries is widening rather than converging;
2. the middle-class is shrinking along with middle-income countries;
3. the richest one per cent of world households enjoy as much income as fifty-seven per cent of the poorest;
4. the wealth of the richest countries grows at the expense of the poorest countries.

We live in a global plutocracy coded through international treaties and organizations (World Bank, IMF) that are not properly speaking organs of democratic governance, as Joseph Stiglitz has revealed with such moral energy in his *Globalization And Its Discontents* (2002). This is the backdrop for the endless flow of data and imagery concerned with the two billion or more people living on less than two dollars a day, of children who live in hunger, who die daily in the thousands from lack of shelter and sanitation. Here too is the real ground for Friedman's *child war*, namely, in the extraordinary capacity of the few to command the labour of the many (Homer-Dixon, 2005). Once we turn to more sober scenarios of global trends in wealth and poverty, the tide seems well set against the world's children. We

read that the birth of 50 million infants are never registered at all – not to mention millions of aborted females; a hundred million children have lost a parent, work in dangerous factory, mining, farming jobs; a quarter of a million are conscripted as child soldiers (Shepler, 2005).

Overall, even if the United Nations Millennium Goals for 2015 were met, we can still expect child deaths on the order of 3.8 million, down from 8.7 million. Similar facts can be found in country by country annual reports on child and family poverty, ill-health and under-education. *A child dies every three seconds as a result of extreme poverty* (www.makepovertyhistory.ca). Yet so often these reports seek to mobilize change by pointing out how little it would cost to *save the children* – for, say, half of what we spend yearly on cigarettes in Europe or less than we spend on beer in the USA. In Bob Geldof's *Live 8 Campaign* we were witness to a curious marriage of overdeveloped youth culture and the hard core issues of debt relief, trade justice and AID/S to produce an impatient charity whose last line of rational appeal is that in helping others we help ourselves... 'We are the world, we are the children' (USA-for-Africa.html), we chant! The difficulty with such events is that they too are at risk as self-consuming artifacts that are folded with the cameras and the tents, leaving to others the long march through the institutions on the ground. Here organization and sustainable local practices in health, education, gender equality and employment are the daily bread of global justice. They are also the necessary staples that must be conveyed in high-school and university curricula to increase the *civic literacy* (Milner, 2002) of today's youth who are so deeply divided between political alienation and global protest. Here, of course, the digital divide is not only a matter of global *winners* and *losers*. This division is aggravated by the lack of *civic education* which strengthens democratic participation and debate from the side of youth so largely consumerized and demoralized by forces beyond them. Here, too, youth suffer very much from media representations of their lawlessness which is both reviled and celebrated throughout our culture (O'Neill, 2002).

Bono introduces Jeffrey Sachs' *The End of Poverty* (2005) – as if to arrange a marriage of expertise and enthusiasm that will produce the very first generation to eradicate 'bad trade, bad debt, and bad luck' (Sachs, 2005:xvii). Sachs' work in *clinical economics*, as he calls it, also produces a *global family portrait*. The result, however, is to make it clear that the world's population is set the Sisyphean labour of climbing the *ladder of economic development*. At the foot of the ladder, there struggle one-sixth of the world's population – *the poorest of the poor*, for whom the very life-

cycle has imploded, where grandmothers raise orphaned children condemned to labour, illiteracy and diseases that decimate already stunted lives. At the top of the ladder, are the one-sixth of the world for whom the pace of global development has set apart the distance between the top and bottom steps of the ladder more than twenty-fold (Sachs, 2005:30). Whereas Friedman's flat earth thesis is obsessed with China and India reaching the middle rungs of the ladder, Sachs' clinical economics *familizes* the development process – each case must be treated on its own terms and yet within the concerns of a world community, as expressed in the UN Millennium Development Goals, 2005/2015. Yet once again, we run into our own scrambled culture of hope and cynicism to which Sachs' alliance with Bono attests. In an appeal for the viability of the narrative of *Enlightened Globalization* (Sachs, 2005: 358-359), separating himself from the anti-globalization movement, anti-corporatism and American imperialism, Sachs pleads for an *end of poverty* among the poorest of the poor to meet the 2015 Millennium Development Goal of cutting world poverty by half:

The truth is that the cost now is likely to be small compared to any relevant measure – income, taxes, the costs of further delay, and the benefits from acting. Most important, the task can be achieved within the limits that the rich world has already committed: 0.7 percent of the gross national product of the high-income world, *a mere 7 cents out of every \$10 in income*. All of the incessant debate about development assistance, and whether the rich are doing enough to help the poor, actually concerns *less than 1 percent of rich-world income*. The effort required of the rich is indeed so slight that to do less is to announce brazenly to a large part of the world, 'You count for nothing'. We should not be surprised, then, if in later years the rich reap the whirl-wind of that heartless response (Sachs, 2005: 288, my emphasis).

Sachs' warning is, I think, representative of the crossed rationality and irrationality, hope and despair – even seriousness and frivolity – in Western concepts of aid, charity and development.

CIVIC FUTURES

The current intensification of risks to families, children, and youth that derives from the globalization of market forces should not stampede us into stripping our civic institutions into lean and mean instruments of competi-

tion where self and community become ever-thinner concepts wasted by irresponsible greed and the privatization of the commons:

What a community requires, as the word itself suggests, is a common culture, because, without it, it is not a community at all... But a common culture cannot be created merely by desiring it. It rests upon economic foundations. It is incompatible with the existence of too violent a contrast between the economic standards and educational opportunities of different classes, for such a contrast has as its result, not a common culture, but servility or resentment, on the one hand, and patronage or arrogance, on the other. It involves, in short, a large measure of economic equality – not necessarily, indeed, in respect of the pecuniary incomes of individuals, but of the environment, habits of life, of access to education and the means of civilization, of security and independence, and of the social consideration which equality in these matters usually carries with it (Tawney, 1931: 28-39).

Civic institutions are not created for any single purpose nor can they be exhausted in any single use. They do not belong to us except as an endowment that obligates us towards past and future generations, to whom we believe our present care of the *civic commons* to be owed. But today our commitment to civic futures is made despite an alternative scenario that puts in question the very future of the future. *We are experiencing a massive shift in our conception of where and how people are produced.* A few decades ago, such a statement would have raised the horrible vision of Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1946), a state-medical hatchery in which family is a lost memory, a dream punishable by the guardians. In the distance created by our future biotechnologies, we may one day erase our maternal memory and with it the world's great model of love. Yet beneath the fantasy of the new genetics, we may sense old-order questions. Who am I? Why am I? What am I to do? My parents are not my parents – they are DNA shoppers; my mother was not my mother – her mother was to help her out; my sex is not my sex – it is the sex picked by those who bought me. I am the child of the end of the family. Henceforth I shall be ruled by conjugal convenience rather than any family romance. Henceforth I shall not need to think myself but rather to keep up with the fashions in the bio-market, in the market schools, and in the marketplace. Henceforth I am both omnipotent child and the impotent offspring. The genetic nativity scene requires no self-discovery beyond a bare look into the microscope. No life stories emerge beyond the history of one's bio-repairs. *The end of childhood.*

We have set forth a *civic genealogy* of the family foundation because it is fast becoming a shibboleth of social reporting that 'the family' no longer exists. What is actually contested is that a secular variant of the family, i.e., a married couple with two or more children and a single wage, should any longer be the political norm. But nobody enters the world except by means of another body whose bond with yet another body is the basic social cell of intercorporeality presupposed in the birth of any individual. It is only a romantic fiction that marks birth as the appearance of an *individual* rather than as the reappearance of *family*. What is involved here are two time-frames within the life-world. *Birth* marks both an *intra*-generational event within a marriage and a *inter*-generational event between families. Or we might say that the advent of birth marks the inaugural moment of the *parents*, in the first case, and of the *grandparents*, in the second. No family is *the family*, since the idea of family as an institution founded upon the absolute value of inter-generationality can only be honoured in principle (Barry, 1978; Dasgupta, 1994; Heyd, 1992). At the same time, the *intergenerational family* may serve as a regulative notion in the derivation of social policies whose task is to sustain families in difficulties of one kind or another but for which we need some benchmark of viability (Silverstein, 2006). It is only on an extremely narrow understanding of *procreation* that the implicit institutional concerns inscribed in the term *pro*-(on behalf of) *creation* can be ignored in favour of its biological sense as sexual reproduction, any more than we should ignore the institutional trace contained in the word *re*-(again) *production*. If we undermine the distinction between the responsibility for life and the reproduction of life, we lose the civic assurance that goes with childhood and youth as intergenerational passages.

CONCLUDING SOCIOLOGICAL PRAYER

The zero point of civilization looms once nature and culture no longer produce *the good gift* or when civilization is ruled by incontinence and indifference, where nothing is sacrificed to limit, exchange and the double legacy of present and future generation. Despite the contemporary celebration of endless exchange value, we cannot abandon the idea of *use value*. But *use* must mean *good enough* to serve its purpose and thereby to earn a similarly well-produced return. The gifts of milk and blood are not good because they are exchanged, but are exchanged because they are good, for society and for posterity. Life is doubled from the standpoint of collective

and intergenerational circulation. All gifts are *eco-gifts* – that is *eco* from *oikos*, as *source of sustainable life*. Or better, they are *civic goods* to which we have right of production as well as a duty of consumption (Titmuss, 1970). Hence milk and blood – and water, air, ‘green’ – are garnishes of the sacred. *Sacred* means not appropriable (in mimetic rivalry) because life ought not to be opposed to itself –but repeated here and there –parochially, *per omnia saecula saeculorum*. Therefore, what is secular is not opposed to what is sacred. Rather the *secular* is what is given to be continued, to be repeated and be reproduced within the fold of the sacred. The *sacred* marks off the clearing, the lightning space, in which there arises a civic domain from which all other human institutions arise. The sacred is not a vision of things beyond what lies before us; it is the vision that discerns the very realm of thought, an appropriation of reality according to a language whose own history will differentiate the realms of law, science, economy, art and literature – but from an original matrix of poetry and fable, as Vico demonstrated in *The New Science* ([1744] 1970).

Here my argument may be found in Talcott Parson’s extraordinary *tableau religieux* (Figure 3) where the sociological figures of structure and agency – invoked at the outset of my essay – are translated into the core symbolism of *reciprocal gifts* that bind family to our divinity and our humanity. In the *inner* rectangle of Figure 3, the social categories of sex (masculinity/femininity) and age (birth, life, and death) are translated into the symbolic exchanges of Mary’s gift of birth to Jesus and the gift of social recognition by Joseph, which mediate God’s gift of His only begotten son, Jesus, who will in turn give (sacrifice) his body and blood (Eucharistic bread and wine) to redeem all generations through the church’s gift of grace (church as Christ’s Bride and our Holy Mother):

1. God’s gift of Christ to Humanity;
2. Mary’s gift of life to Jesus;
3. Christ’s gift of his death to redeem life for humanity; and
4. the death of the individual, especially in the fullness of a complete life, as itself the gift which constitutes a full reciprocation of the original gift of life. (Parsons, 1978: 267).

The *outer* rectangle represents the relativization of the categories of the divine and human, mortality and immortality, past (covenant) and future (redeemed) generations, once again mediated through Christ’s reciprocation of the gift of life with His death which funds the Divine gift of eternal life.

Parson’s God is a sociologist! The core symbolism of high mediaeval Christianity reveals God as an action theorist, a secularist, ordaining an

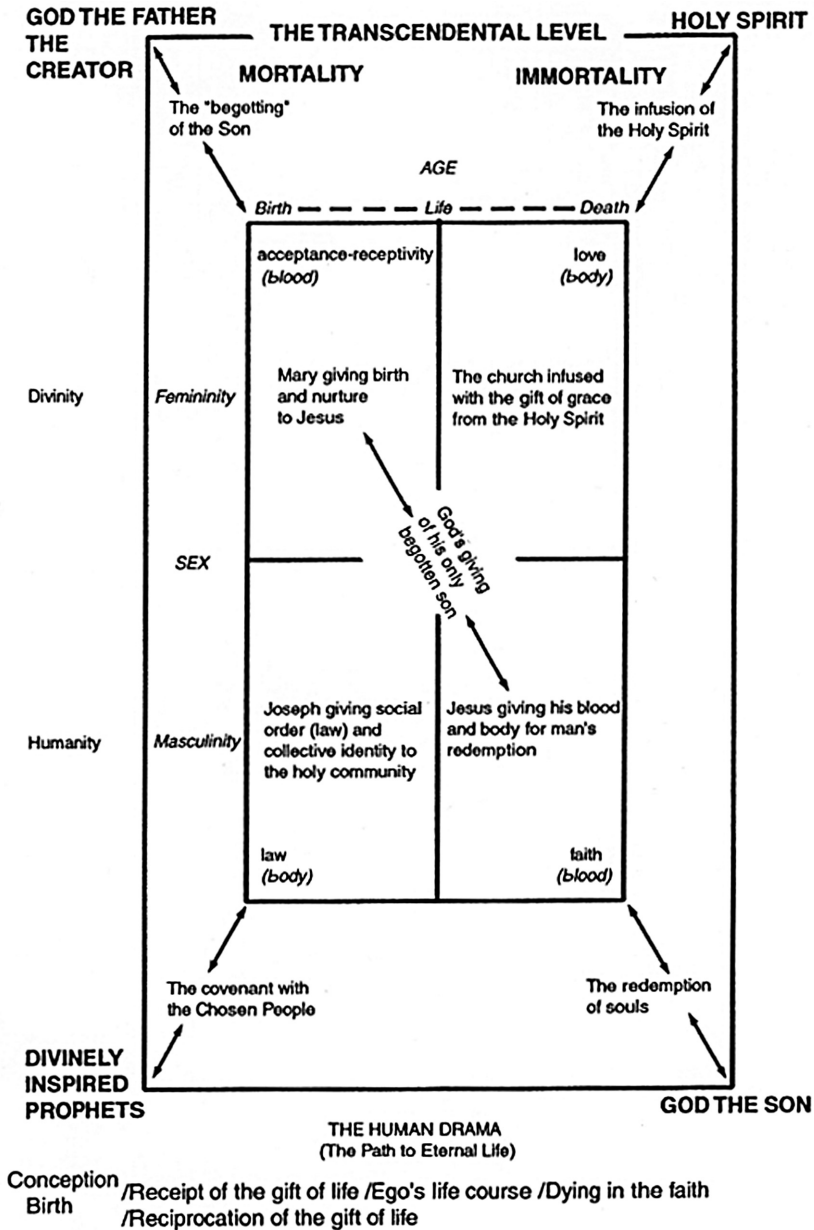


Figure 3. Christian syndrome as gift complex: the human as symbolically organized about age and sex (Parsons, 1978: 301).

institutionalized individualism whose 'transcendental activism' is mediated by the Christian Church:

... If the conception of 'agency' is meaningful, to be 'ultimate' in the currently relevant sense, the agent cannot be either a 'human' or a 'natural' entity but must have, in accord with our whole line of argument 'transcendental' credentials.

(Parsons, 1978: 391)

POST SCRIPT

I have constructed a narrative of kinship, of kindness crossed by unkindness. This narrative is itself embedded in a liturgical year that has taken me through the birth, life and death of a holy child and its family. Whatever is sacred in this narrative is repeated in the everyday events that deepen disease, destroy families and impoverish children, while simultaneously seeking to foster and save them. I have set this terrible alternation in the contrastive imagery of the *circle* and the *line* – the lines of starving, homeless families, and the circle or round world that embraces difference, celebrated in our choirs and concerts loved by youth and elders alike.

The Mother Church, in whose vicinity we are gathered for our conference, may also be read as the setting of our narrative (Kitao, 1974; Napier, 1992). If we now look at Figure 4, we can see that we enter the Square of Saint Peter through Bernini's *Piazza Obliqua*, an oval form flanked by colonnades which embrace and release all who come to practice their faith and curiosity. In doing so, we cross the threshold where the bread of life repeats the cycle of death/life through which our divinity and our humanity are repeated *per omnia saecula saeculorum*. Thus the Petrine Church – the rock of our faith – is approached through the womb of the world – *petra genetrix* – leading up to the great altar upon which we lay our prayers for safe pregnancy, birth and infancy.

Would it strain things, then, if we were to locate the Vatican circle in that moment of vanishment caught in Piero della Francesca's *Annunciation* (circa 1470)? There divinity becomes a *born* thing (*genitum non factum*) turning from the *made* world into a fleshed world that will have been the human family? Yet the Angel Gabriel's tactful interruption of Mary's reading (which must contain her own story of conception, birth and family) introduces the male conceit of virgin birth and nomination... *Ave/Eve!* Nevertheless, I believe we are challenged to re-find the lost girl (*Kora – puel-*

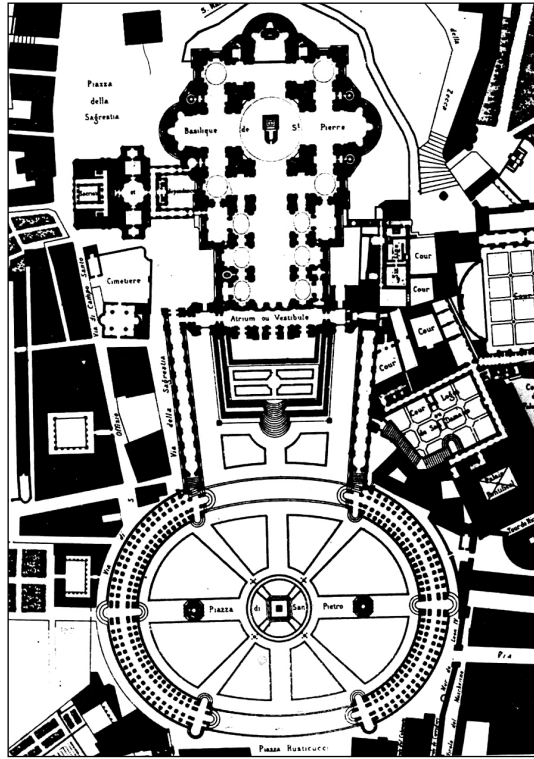


Figure 4.

la sacra) in this tale and to set this task as a model of research (*heuresis*) and pedagogy in the human sciences. Let us pray that the Petrine Church will open itself to incorporate its women, our mothers, our sisters and daughters without whose intelligence and love –we walk on one leg.

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