

THEOLOGIES OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY IN A NEW GENERATION: AN OVERWHELMING DESIRE FOR HOME

GENERATIONS

Julie and I have been asked this morning to address you on the topic of “Theologies of Marriage and Family in a New Generation.” When Terry Tilley offered the title, I was pleased with the reference to plural theologies and the preposition, “of.” I do not have confidence in speaking *for* my own generation and much less speaking for a newer one. Marriage and family are, by definition, intergenerational projects, and the members of my own Post-Vatican II generation (or Generation X) are connected to the generations before us in a variety of different ways. Like most of us, I am an idiosyncratic mix of old and new, which I suppose will be the case if our attitudes and images of home emerge in a pluralistic culture. By and large, we presuppose the priority of what sociologist Anthony Giddens calls “the pure relationship”—a private and passionate relationship sustained for its own sake.¹ The priority of the “relationship”—distinct from and outside of marriage—is well established in us; it is the institutions of family that present both an ideal and a problem. A central theme for theologies of a new generation will be how social and institutional roles and duties of marriage and family are integrated and practiced.

Lisa Cahill, in her “Notes on Moral Theology” in 2003 gives an apt description of what she calls a new generation of Catholic scholars.² She notes that the issues of this generation are set within the wider culture rather than amid debates within the Church. “Their primary concern is to find resources for resistance of cultural trends toward family fragmentation and consumerism, and to do by exploring in a realistic way their own experiences of sexuality, marriage, parenthood, and social connectedness.”³ Cahill explains that “their views cannot easily be categorized along ‘conservative’ and ‘liberal’ or ‘orthodox’ and ‘dissenting’ lines.” Rather, they “appreciate the ‘traditional’ Catholic values” of marriage and family. Cahill’s reference to “traditional” does not point to a faction of “traditionalists,” but refers to common Catholic values of “commitment and

¹Anthony Giddens, *The transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love, and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

²Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Notes on Moral Theology, Marriage: Developments in Catholic Theology and Ethics,” *Theological Studies* 64 (2003): 78-105.

³Cahill, “Notes,” 80.

monogamy, openness to procreation and parental responsibility, the cultivation of religious identity in the home, and the family's dedication to service for the common good."⁴ The distinctiveness of young Catholic generations is their various and often opposing ways of drawing on traditional and institutional practices as they attempt to create the space and time for home amid the pressures of contemporary life.

A similar approach to generations is taken by Robert Wuthnow in his *After the Baby Boomers*.⁵ Wuthnow argues that young adults, aged 21 to 45, are defined not so much by distinct attitudes or shared generational events (like the Depression or the Vietnam War), but by a cultural context that has been developing since before most of them were born.⁶ After Boomers are as likely to share attitudes with older generations as they are with their own peers.⁷ Wuthnow shows, for example, that marital status and family size are more determinative for religious participation than generation or age *per se*.⁸ His general picture of generations is consistent with the framework of James Davidson's "Generations of American Catholics."⁹ The Vatican II generation is defined by an event, and the next two are described by the passage of time—the Post-Vatican II generation and the Millennials (who are described by a date on the calendar and not even their distance from event in the Church).

Central to Wuthnow's analysis of this passage of time are matters pertaining to marriage and family.¹⁰ Trends among young adults are consistent with those of the Baby Boomers: a decline in the percentage of the population that is married

⁴Cahill, "Notes," 80.

⁵Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

⁶Wuthnow, in *After the Baby Boomers*, explains that "until recently, a generation was defined the same way a genealogy was: by the succession backwards from parents to grandparents to great grandparents . . . Conceived in this way, generations help us keep track of our ancestors and descendents." He argues that the baby boomer is the peculiar generation in this regard. "The baby boomer concept of generations . . . suggests that people are largely defined by some major event or attribute that they have in common, even though their exact birth date are different" (Ibid., 3).

⁷Wuthnow, nonetheless, does point to common characteristics among the age 21 to 45 cohort. For example, he calls them "tinkerers" who tend, not to create whole systems, but take a little bit from here and a little bit from there to create something that works for them. Again, he also admits that this penchant for tinkering is not distinct but shared with Baby Boomers (Ibid., 16).

⁸Ibid., 51-70.

⁹James D. Davidson, "Generations of American Catholics," Catholic Theological Society of America, Miami (June 5, 2008).

¹⁰One feature of his research, I think, might be distinctive and certainly has a profound affect on how we think about the home: the growing sense of economic and job insecurity. Work and neighborhoods are more transient than decades ago. See Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 28-36.

from its peak in 1960,¹¹ an increase—beginning in 1965—in the median age for first marriages,¹² a growing gap between first sexual intercourse and first marriage,¹³ and fewer children.¹⁴ An increase in cohabitation, as the “first living together union” might be distinctive,¹⁵ but living together is consistent with intergenerational trends.¹⁶ Wuthnow points out that attitudes toward pre-marital sex have not changed much since the mid 1970s.¹⁷ Although the marriage rate is lower, social research shows that marital happiness (consistently high) is not significantly different from 1970s to 1990s.¹⁸ The ideal of marriage—as an intimate and long lasting union—is alive and well even though fewer and fewer people are choosing to be married.¹⁹

If we grant Wuthnow’s data about the continuity of cross-generational trends, it does seem, nonetheless, that we have something new. Here, I cite Barbara Dafoe Whitehead. “In the Western tradition, there is a long-standing ideal and aspiration for romantic friendship in marriage. However, today’s young adults seem to be notching up [these] expectations . . . At the same time . . . they see a diminished role for marriage in its institutional aspects.”²⁰ There is a “shift away from marriage as a child-rearing institution . . . away from marriage as an economic partnership . . . away from marriage as a public institution . . . [and] away from marriage as a religious institution.”²¹ Marriage is no longer the

¹¹Ibid., 21. In 1960, 69% of the population over age 15 was married.

¹²Ibid., 21-22. Likewise, the median age at first marriage in 1965 “was 22.8 years for men and 20.6 years for women” (22). Since then it has steadily increased. “In 2002, it was 26.9 years for men and 25.3 years for women” (33).

¹³Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, “The Changing Pathway to Marriage: Trends in Dating, First Unions, and Marriage among Young Adults,” in *Family Transformed: Religion, Values, and Society in American Life*, eds. Steven M. Tipton and John Witte, Jr., 170 (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005).

¹⁴Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 26.

¹⁵Whitehead, “The Changing Pathway to Marriage,” 171.

¹⁶See Pamela J. Smock, “Cohabitation in the United States,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 1-20; Lee A. Lillard, Michael J. Brien, and Linda J. Waite, “Pre-marital Cohabitation and Subsequent Marital Dissolution: A Matter of Self-Selection?,” *Demography* 32 no. 3 (1995): 437-457.

¹⁷Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*, 138-39.

¹⁸Ibid., 142.

¹⁹See Pamela J. Smock, Wendy D. Manning, and Meredith Porter, “‘Everything’s There Except Money’: How Money Shapes Decisions to Marry Among Cohabitors,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 67 no. 3 (2005): 680-96; Kathryn Edin, Maria J. Kefalas, Joanna M. Reed, “A Peek Inside the Black Box: What Marriage Means for Poor Unmarried Parents,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66 no. 4 (2004): 1007-14; Kline Rhoades, Galena, Scott M. Stanley, Howard J. Markman, “Pre-engagement Cohabitation and Gender Asymmetry in Marital Commitment,” *Journal of Family Psychology* 20 no. 4 (2006): 553-560.

²⁰Whitehead, “The Changing Pathway to Marriage,” 175.

²¹Ibid., 175-77.

institutional context for a life-course. “[T]oday’s young men and women focus on achieving certain individual life goals . . . [They] place finishing schooling, being financially independent, living on one’s own, and obtaining full-time employment well ahead of marriage as key steps toward achieving adulthood.”²²

This shift marks the “deinstitutionalization” of marriage.²³ For most, marriage and family are no longer a practical context that defines one’s social contributions and personal life-course. Instead, in broad cultural terms, marriage is a symbolic marker that comes after individual achievements—secure income, home ownership, and perhaps even children.²⁴ This deinstitutionalization of marriage is not an event of a new generation, but a gradual shift across generations, which has now definitely arrived. It fits well with a “church-wedding,” because the vows become a matter of personal style rather than sacramental commitments.²⁵ Deinstitutionalization makes young Catholic couples clearly different from their peers if they are working through marriage as an institution bound practice.

We could call the issue of deinstitutionalization of marriage part of “Culture III” Catholicism (to coin a phrase). In Davidson’s “Generations of American Catholics,” he uses Eugene Kennedy’s descriptions of Culture I and Culture II Catholicism.²⁶ Culture II enacts “a shift from seeing the Church as a hierarchical institution [Culture I] to seeing it as the People of God; from an emphasis on ordination, which set priests apart from the laity [Culture I], to baptism, which priests and the people have in common; from the laity passively complying with Church teachings to the laity taking more responsibility for their own faith and following their individual consciences.”²⁷ Culture I and Culture II offer contrasting conceptions of the Church as an institution. The newer generations are in a third phase where the issues of marriage and religion raise skepticism and doubt about the very need for institutions. In the Culture III phase, the Church as the “people of God” can look as stuffy as the Church as the hierarchy and the Church as hierarchy can look as inviting as the people of God. In Culture III, deinsti-

²²Ibid., 177.

²³Andrew J. Cherlin, “The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66 no. 4 (2004): 848-61.

²⁴Ibid., 855. According to Cherlin, marriage is “a status one builds up to, often by living with a partner beforehand, by attaining steady employment or starting a career, by putting away some savings, and even by having children.”

²⁵See Joann Heaney-Hunter, “Living the Baptismal Commitment in Sacramental Marriage,” in *Christian Marriage and Family: Contemporary Theological and Pastoral Perspectives*, eds. Michael G. Lawler and William P. Roberts, 106-24 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1996).

²⁶James D. Davidson, “Generations of American Catholics,” 3-4; see Eugene Kennedy, *Tomorrow’s Catholics, Yesterday’s Church* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988).

²⁷Ibid., 3.

tionalization is characterized, not by contrasting definitions of the institution, but by intra-generational diversity about whether there needs to be an institution at all.²⁸ In other words, the institution of marriage is the dividing line on how newer generations are going to think about and choose marriage.

OVERWHELMING DESIRE FOR HOME

When thinking about marriage and family as institutions, “home” is a term, borrowed from anthropologist Mary Douglas, which I will use to bring together the social idea of the household with the interpersonal meanings of marriage and family.²⁹ When Terry asked for the title of my talk (last November I think) I was reading the *Odyssey*. An “overwhelming desire for home” was weighing on my mind. Ironically (or appropriately), I never finished the book. Odysseus had just revealed himself to his son (Telemachus) at his swineherd’s hut. He had plotted the murder of Penelope’s suitors, but as far as I know, he never finished the job. So, lost is my grand literary analogy. I thought to go with Harry Potter series instead, as the seven volumes are framed by the loss and achievement of family. However, I finally settled on TV.

After some research, I found that television is at the center of Generation X commentary on Generation X.³⁰ I discovered an interesting set of facts. From 1971 to 1975, *All in the Family* was number one in ratings, but in 1976, it fell from number one to twelve and switched places with *Happy Days*, which went from eleven to one. I should not make too much of this, but I will. *All in the Family* plays out the dying of the socially rigid household for the sake of social change and personal growth. *Happy Days*, in contrast, seems to be mere nostalgia. *All in the Family* displays real tensions of family forms and generations. I know that my Catholic, Baby Boomer, peacenik neighbor (William Portier) has a father-in-law who used to call him meathead, but his own adult children think of him as Archie Bunker; I had an Archie-Bunker-like stepfather who initiated the happy days (for me and my siblings) when he finally left our home. I know that there is something to the fact that, for my generation, we loved the cool and detached Fonzie and mocked the Fonzie who becomes a goodie-goodie and the center of the Cunningham home.³¹ There will be more on Fonzie and Archie later.

²⁸The work of William L. Portier should be noted here. “Here Come Evangelical Catholics,” *Communio* 31 no. 1 (Spring 2004): 35-66.

²⁹Mary Douglas, “The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space,” in *Home: A Place in the World*, ed. Arien Mach, 261-81 (New York: New York University, 1993).

³⁰For example, Martine Delvaux, “The Exit of a Generation: the ‘Whatever’ Philosophy,” *The Midwest Quarterly* 40 no. 2 (1999): 171-86; Mimi Marinucci, “Television, Generation X, and Third Wave Feminism: A Contextual Analysis of *The Brady Bunch*,” *The Journal of Popular Culture* 38 no. 3 (2005): 505-24.

³¹My sources for *All in the Family* and *Happy Days* are <www.sitcomsonline.com>, <www.wikipedia.org>, <www.museum.tv> and <www.classictvhits.com>.

First, however, I would like to develop, briefly, Mary Douglas' analysis of home. In an essay on home as "A Kind of Space," Douglas attempts to account for the persistent solidarity of home. She notes that home cannot be defined by its functions, such as care for the body or the education of children, because in these it is terribly inefficient. Likewise, "as to those who claim that the home does something stabilizing or deepening or enriching for the personality, there are as many who claim that it cripples and stifles."³² She calls the rules and habits of home inexorable, absurd, and tyrannical, and she suggests that the hotel and market are far more rational. After looking at constraints of home, she notes that "we need hardly say more to explain why children want to leave it and do not mean to reproduce it when they set up house."³³

In arguing her case for household solidarity, Douglas begins with practical constraints, not with fixed roles—say of father or mother—or with a standard family form, nuclear or extended, but with the requirements and pressures on common space and time. For households to become homes, they develop complex systems ("difficult to enter and difficult to change") that are set to the problem of the common good and the commons (e.g., pantry, living room, computer, and bathroom). Douglas proposes that:

The type of home [to be taken as] exemplary has a lot of authority at its disposal, but it is not authoritarian or centralized. Everything happens by mutual consultation. Mutual adjustment of interlocking rules combines to meet functional requirements, personal claims on scarce amounts of time, space, and other resources . . . This home emerges as the result of individual strategies of control defended respectively in the name of the home as a public good.³⁴

Home is distinctive in its use and dependence on institutional memory (knowing who went first last time, who sits where, and how we celebrate Christmas). It develops "time rhythms in response to outside pressures" and means to anticipate needs, allocate materials, and negotiate the use of private and common space.³⁵ For example, a family member may be responsible for cleaning clutter he or she did not create; complex bathroom rotations are negotiated to disallow monopoly, and it is taboo to open and devour the rare and prized box of *Captain Crunch* in private. Some foods require a quorum when the seal is broken.

The use of common ground and collective goods requires patience, uneven reciprocity, budgetary constraints, collective efforts, and long-term plans. Douglas holds that "a home is a tangle of conventions and totally incommensurable rights and duties."³⁶ I became aware of this tangle of conventions a few years

³²Douglas, "The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space," 263.

³³Ibid., 277.

³⁴Ibid., 280.

³⁵Ibid., 268-9.

³⁶Ibid., 276.

back when my sister-in-law and her husband took care of our children when my wife and I took a trip to Ireland. They asked for a few pages of instructions, but I produced something in form and length more like the Talmud. There is a solidarity of home—unique to the common life of its members—that comes through amateurish working out of common space and time.

If we return to Barbara Dafoe Whitehead's contrast between the pure relationship and the institution of marriage, we can see that home is both the problem to be overcome and the ideal to be desired. Whitehead suggests that, for the new generation, marriage and family are considered in terms of individual goals. Yet, Douglas argues that solidarity requires the priority of the commons. The inexorable rhythms of the commons (whether living room, drive-in, apartment, or office) seem to be the appeal of *All in the Family* and *Happy Days* (as well as *Seinfeld* and *Friends* and *The Office*). The infrastructure of home, according to Douglas, is its organization of time and physical presence, and she calls physical presence "the main contribution of members to the collective good."³⁷ The common meal, for example, is important. But it is not a candle lit affair or a dining room meal. It is more likely to be scrambled eggs and potatoes at the kitchen table. It is cleaning up spills, quarrels and compromise, knock-knock jokes, and then cleaning up and doing the dishes.³⁸ The pure relationship has become relatively easy when we set ourselves apart. The hard part, which is also the goal and ideal, is to settle into the solidarity and tyranny of home.

Douglas articulates this tension in her work on *Natural Symbols*, where she develops a framework of family systems.³⁹ She describes two types of linguistic codes with corresponding family structures. One type, what is called the restricted code, offers limited personal expression but is "deeply enmeshed in the immediate social structure" and emphasizes the solidarity-maintaining function of communication.⁴⁰ The restricted language is generated in what Douglas calls

³⁷Ibid., 275.

³⁸The most insightful theologian of the home, I think, is Jean Vanier in his *Community and Growth* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989).

³⁹Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 40-58. Douglas cites the work of socio-linguist Basil Bernstein. See, for example, Bernstein's "Elaborated and restricted codes: an outline," *Sociological Inquiry* 36 (1966): 254-261. I was introduced to the application of Douglas' *Natural Symbols* to marriage and family by Robert N. Bellah, "Marriage in the Matrix of Habit and History," in *Family Transformed: Religion, Values, and Society in American Life*, eds. Steven M. Tipton and John Witte, Jr., 21-33 (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005). I should also note that Douglas' analysis of "Positional" and "Personal" family systems fits with Robert Wuthnow's distinction between "Dwelling" and "Seeking" spiritualities. I think that what can be said about young adults and the institution of marriage can also be said about young adults, spirituality, and the institution of the Church. See Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

⁴⁰Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 44.

the positional family, which shapes behavior according to a “building up of a sense of social pattern” and “ascribed role categories.” Personal expression is *restricted* by one’s *position*, one’s role, and place in relation to others. The positional pattern is Archie Bunker’s “You knew who you were then; Girls were girls, and men were men.” The restricted code is Fonzie’s impervious image and his imposition of privilege in his own sphere—chasing frightened teenagers out of his booth at Arnold’s Drive-in. He knows who he is and where he stands. The positional system (and to a degree the restricted code) is also operative in Douglas’ non-authoritarian but authoritative home—what she calls and recommends as “protohierarchical.”⁴¹ The positional framework is at work when I say to my children, “because I said so,” “because you’re not old enough,” “because you are part of a family” and “you are not the parent.”⁴²

In contrast to this restricted code and positional family, Douglas outlines the elaborated code and the personal family system. Elaborated language is oriented to social mobility and changing social pressures; it is the language of the middle and the upwardly mobile working classes. It moves away from established social forms—as the industrial and post-industrial systems “press hard upon education to produce more and more verbally articulate people who will be promoted to entrepreneurial roles.”⁴³ The corresponding family system is personal rather than positional. It will emphasize autonomy, personal growth, and internal ethical sensibilities rather than responsiveness to social roles. Elaborated language articulates personal desires over social roles. It is the means to critique the positional system and the restricted code. It is represented by the attitudes that surround Archie Bunker in his own house; it is the language of interaction in what seems, at first glance, to be a positional Cunningham home.⁴⁴ According to Douglas, “behavior [in the personal home] is controlled by being made sensitive to the personal feelings of others, by inspecting [one’s] own feelings.”⁴⁵ I do not

⁴¹Douglas, “The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space,” 280.

⁴²Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 45.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 44-5.

⁴⁴Although the Cunningham family takes the overt form of gender roles and the middle class family, there is no conflict, ultimately, between these roles and individual expression and self-discovery. Unlike the Bunker home, where the elaborated and restricted codes conflict, the Cunningham home is held together by elaborated ways of understanding feelings. “One episode pits Ritchie and his friends against Ritchie’s father, Howard (Tom Bosley), by virtue of his support of a business plan that would send a freeway through the teen make-out spot, Inspiration Point. Civil disobedience is suggested by the teenagers’ organization of petitions and picket signs to protest the plan. Fonzie even chains himself to a tree at the site. Yet generational harmony is restored when Ritchie makes Howard realize that he, too, participated in the culture of Inspiration Point when he was young” (“Happy Days,” *The Museum of Broadcast Communications*, (www.museum.tv/archives/etv/H/htmlH/happydays/happydays.htm)).

⁴⁵Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 47.

say, “help clean up because you are part of a family,” but ask my children to “imagine how your mother and I feel.” I do not refer to the authority of the commons, but desire to elaborate a fully rational and relational explanation based in personal desires and aspirations.

Douglas holds that we, the mobile middle and professional classes, are clearly in the frame of the elaborated code and personal family structure. We might give positional explanations, but we will feel terribly guilty about them. The personal home is oriented to freedom from positional limitations and freedom for social mobility and individual success. She also notes, however, that the fully personal family undermines the commons of the home. The personal family system and elaborated language contain “seeds of alienation.”⁴⁶ They are suited to more transitory and utilitarian forms of teamwork, see institutional memory as a barrier, and resist the demands of the commons and the common good.⁴⁷ Individual development is primary; soccer practice always trumps the family meal. This transition away from the commons can be seen more clearly, perhaps, in the clean and friendly middle class neighborhood. Like the suburbs and exurbs, space and time in the household are individualized; the house takes on the character (in Douglas’ view) of a hotel, with restaurant, private bathrooms, and (we could add) exclusive rights on cell phones, televisions, and personal computers.⁴⁸ According to Douglas, the personal and elaborated household will eventually undermine the home and its deep and abiding solidarity. Family and marriage will be judged in merely instrumental and affective terms.

We cannot simply revert back to the positional family and restricted code. The point, it seems to me, is that modern families live through the tensions, irregularities, and instability of being both positional and personal at the same time. If we think in terms of a theology of home, the sacrament of marriage, the role of families in parish life, and participation in neighborhood and subsidiary institutions, then tensions only increase. These tensions are not new. The personal family starts to be advantageous, and the positional family begins its decline, by the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴⁹ The industrial era marks

⁴⁶Ibid., 190.

⁴⁷See Richard Sennett, *The Culture of the New Capitalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). Sennett (sociologist of the economy) shows that shifts in the U.S. economy (and law) in the 1970s have oriented work and business practices in the same direction—away from institutional loyalty, the importance of complex institutional practices, and unified narratives of progress: away from craftsmanship and toward the ability to move quickly from one task to another and engage co-workers without constancy or long-term commitment. Sennett also shows the effects on politics and social participation (which have taken on the character of the market).

⁴⁸Compare Douglas’ *Natural Symbols*, 55-56 and “The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space,” 278-79.

⁴⁹Tamara K. Hareven, “The Home and the Family in Historical Perspective,” in *Home: A Place in the World*, ed. Arien Mack, 227-59 (New York: New York University,

a transformation of marriage and family way from social functions toward personal and emotive relations.⁵⁰ With changes in the economy since the 1970s and their strain on upward mobility, the tensions are being stretched even further in the elaborative direction and away from the solidarity of the commons. For the newer generations, there are only new strains on old tensions.

That is to say, *All in the Family* and *Happy Days* are very much the same insofar as they represent traditional positional contexts or, at least the appearance of positional contexts, where the elaborated code and personal family system are cultivated. There is, however, an interesting difference in orientation. *All in the Family* pokes fun at Archie's nostalgia for the good old days; nonetheless, he is able to embody the positional claims and its conflicts with the personal. *Happy Days*, in contrast, celebrates nostalgia. Fonzie's restricted code and positional sensibilities are inserted from the outside into a highly elaborated context—without any deep tensions. It is too easy. On one hand, the elaborated code circles around Archie's positional armchair; on the other hand, Fonzie is attractive as outsider of the restricted code and becomes silly when he is disarmed by the elaborated family.⁵¹ Both Archie and Fonzie are caricatures, certainly. The domesticated Fonzie represents a saccharine and nostalgic harmony of home. In contrast, Archie heightens the tensions of solidarity. He is always proved wrong, but he is a site for public discussion and social change.⁵² His positional stance creates realistic tensions and provides a site for engaging social issues and the meaning of home.

1993). Hareven discusses the pressures of industrialization and suburbanization that separate work from home and establish home as a sphere of private relations.

⁵⁰Stephanie Coontz, "The Origins of Divorce," *Family Process* 46 no. 1 (2006): 7-16. Coontz notes, however, that new romantic forms of marriage and the interpersonal domestic sphere foster a "rigid redefinition of gender differences" that sustains a fragile image of (what Douglas has called) the positional home (10). In other words, positional controls had been transformed to personal and elaborative ones. Male and female roles were justified in terms of personal fulfillment and the social mobility of the family. Coontz argues that marriage and family simply could not bear the weight of romantic notions of interpersonal love and ideals of personal fulfillment. She marks the 1960s and the "growing economic independence" of women as a beginning and the 1970s as a clear shift "when wives' rapid entry into the labor force challenged the internal arrangement of marital roles that had prevailed for more than 100 years" (14). For an extended presentation of Coontz thesis, see her *Marriage, a History: How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

⁵¹See "Happy Days," *The Museum of Broadcast Communications*: "Fonzie was, by this time, a thoroughly domesticated character. His role not only paralleled that of Mr. Cunningham, but those of countless sitcom fathers before him, and he was as likely to dispense careful, family-oriented wisdom, as to suggest rebellion of the slightest sort. But it was always proffered with Winkler's parody-delinquent sense of style, a style that continues to appeal to youngsters in syndicated rerun throughout the world."

⁵²"Family on Television," *The Museum of Broadcast Communications*, (www.museum.tv/archives).

In other words, it is the tensions that make it real. Our personal families and elaborated codes need a positional reference point. Douglas' own phenomenology of home, its authority and sense of place, fits with her account, in *Natural Symbols*, of a positional family system that operates with elaborated speech. She calls it an Aristotelian frame where active and "internally differentiated" agents are sensitive to the claims of the whole and respond to their social roles.⁵³ My good Baby Boomer neighbor is meathead for his father-in-law, but he quite naturally has fulfilled the role of what his children lovingly call the "non-psychic mass." I do not know what my children will call me (maybe Mr. Crabs from SpongeBob). I was raised in a family that struggled to become elaborated and personal, and we were able to free ourselves from the restricted, positional framework of our working class neighborhood and parents. With my mother's second divorce, the elaborated code won the day for good. However, in order to make sense of home, I am constantly attempting to retrieve the wisdom of the inarticulate relationships and some kind of revised version of the positional roles that I was so happy to escape. For the new generations of Catholics, it is this need for a positional and restricted reference point—to invite back in our own kind of Archie—that I take to be our awkward, usually inconsistent, yet overwhelming desire for home.

CATHOLIC THEOLOGIES OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY: PERSONAL AND POSITIONAL

I am at the conclusion, but you can see that I have only set the framework for a conversation. I am suggesting that we try to understand our various and contending theologies of marriage and family according to how they mix, as they must, positional-institutional and personal-elaborative claims and codes. Seeing the positional and personal tensions will also help us understand a newer generation's habits of mixing old and new and putting together what seem to be contradictory views and practices. In a longer draft of this essay, I outlined a variety of examples. Under the rule of brevity, I will take aim at one, Christopher West—not to criticize or defend his version of a theology of the body, but to understand its appeal.

Young Catholics who hope to join with us in sustaining practices of marriage are attracted to popularized versions of the theology of the body. These young adults are both liberal and conservative. Like us, they want to make Catholic life important to the world. They are attracted to the very idea of a "theology of the body" insofar as they are reacting to the sexual pluralism of our time and the deinstitutionalization of marriage. As far as I can tell, few have a clear sense of a debate within the Church. They are oriented, instead, to popular culture, and they take two points from the theology of the body: sexual intimacy is wonderful,

⁵³Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 50-1.

and sex, in its formal and necessary character, gives us roles and duties. Sex is a vocation.⁵⁴ West's popularity, then, is that he starts with a highly elaborated code and personal framework of the pure relationship (i.e., sex is wonderful) *and* asserts highly positional claims and a restricted code—based in the objective nature of sexuality.

He claims to out-elaborate the hyper-elaborated sexuality of our culture by holding that a fully personal and elaborated sexuality requires a positional, restricted account of the pure relationship.⁵⁵ To do so, West has to cover up the tensions and contradictions between the personal and positional by drawing on romantic (and prominent) conceptions the pure relationship; sex and personal intimacy become the contours of a life world.⁵⁶ (Could this be the problem and attraction of *Happy Days*?) We should, however, give the younger generation credit for putting their own stamp on the theology of the body. In conversations with young Catholics, I have found that most have not read John Paul II and have only a general knowledge of Christopher West (emphasizing the two points above). They learn the theology of the body from each other: it is part of their own Catholic milieu (again, oriented to popular culture). What they seem to be looking for, in a deinstitutionalized environment, is a common identity (a posi-

⁵⁴These two points come from conversations with students at Mount St. Mary's University over the span of about three years and at the University of Dayton in March 2008.

⁵⁵See West's "Living the Theology of Our Bodies, Part III," on (<http://www.christopherwest.com>). In a short introduction, he connects the interpersonal relationship with both institutional practices of prayer and worship and our nature as human beings. "This is the final installment of a three-part series on what John Paul II called the three 'infallible and indispensable' means for living the theology of our bodies: prayer, Eucharist, and Penance (see TOB 126:5). As we observed in the last column, to live the 'theology' of our bodies means to recognize the plan of love that God has written into our bodies as male and female and to live in accord with it." I take these connections to be the attraction of his theology of the body.

⁵⁶To cover up the tensions between positional and personal systems, West must also romanticize—and sexualize—the whole of Christian doctrine. He frequently repeats a line from George Weigel's autobiography of John Paul II (*Witness to Hope*): the theology of the body "will compel a dramatic development of thinking about virtually every major theme in the creed." See *Theology of the Body For Beginners* (Ascension Press, 2004), 1. On this point, West (and Weigel) are departing from John Paul II's own use of theology of the body. Pope John Paul II discusses the theology of the body during Wednesday addresses to clearly keep it apart from authoritative doctrine. There is hardly a hint of it, for example, in the new Catechism.

Along with *Theology of the Body For Beginners*, I am drawing on numerous articles on West's website (www.theologyofthebody.com), "Theology of the Body: A Compelling, Bold, Biblical Response to the Sexual Revolution," "What is the Theology of the Body and Why is it Changing so Many Lives?," "A Basic Theology of Marriage," and "Living the Theology of Our Bodies" (Parts I, II, and III).

tion) and institutional ground. The language of the theology of the body is the site for thinking through the common roles and duties of marriage and family.

Young Catholics and their popularized version of theology of the body cannot and should not be dismissed. The theology of the body represents a real challenge for the newest generation and to us: The overwhelming desire for home is for a positional anchor and its solidarity—for received roles, identity, and duties of marriage and family, for the inexorable, absurd, and tyrannical rule of home and its connection to social life. It is a desire to have a role and place. This desire will not be satisfied with the way that theologies of marriage and family have been framed in the second half of the twentieth century. We have been taking a positional point of departure for granted and giving it elaborated and personalist meaning (e.g., John Paul II, Bernard Cooke, Germain Grisez and Joann Heaney Hunter).⁵⁷ We have been circling and depending upon Archie

⁵⁷John Paul II, in his writings as a whole, presents marriage and family as a positional system, but often through elaborative codes. In my reading, his elaborated theology of the body and personalism are set within the clearly positional structure of *Familiaris Consortio* and *Letter to Families*. Many proponents of the theology of the body try to achieve the inverse: to establish a positional structure on sex and gender through an elaborated code. In this understanding of theology of the body, they disregard John Paul II's own efforts to place theology of the body within the positional frame of the Catechism and his more authoritative writings. In other words, Wednesday addresses on the theology of the body signal that this elaboration of sexuality are secondary to his Apostolic Letters and Exhortations.

Bernard Cooke, in *Sacraments and Sacramentality* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-third Publications, 1983), takes a personal and elaborated way in to a positional (but not restricted) sacramental form. I take this book to be a generational standard precisely because the tensions between personal-elaborative and positional-restricted codes are pronounced. A personal and elaborative phenomenology of experience is a foundation that does not explicitly destabilize positional sacramental practices, but it does free us from the positional system of authority and the authority of the sacraments as Church-bound practices.

Germain Grisez develops marriage as his eighth basic good. Within his (Kantian) moral epistemology, a basic good is something like a positional and restricted claim: he rejects the idea that we can conceive of basic goods in experiential (elaborative terms), but he does hold that they will enhance (in a rational way) human fulfillment. Marriage is not a basic good in Grisez's *The Way of the Lord Jesus, Volume 1: Christian Moral Principles* (Franciscan Press, 1983), but it is a basic good in his *Fulfillment in Christ: A Summary of Christian Moral Principles* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1993).

Joann Heaney-Hunter, given her catechetical projects in particular, is close to Douglas' Aristotelian, positional system with an elaborated code. The key term, I think, is vocation. She holds that through the sacrament of marriage a couple takes an active role in an established social form. See Joann Heaney-Hunter's "Domestic Church: Guiding Beliefs and Daily Practices" and "Living the Baptismal Commitment in Sacramental Marriage," in *Christian Marriage and Family*, eds. Michael G. Lawler and William P. Roberts, 59-78, 106-124.

Bunker's armchair. The appeal of West, I have noted, goes in the opposite direction. He takes the personal, elaborated code as a point of departure and gives it positional meaning. In *Natural Symbols*, Douglas predicts this reversal as well as its emphasis on the body. She notes that symbols of the human body will be the site for working out the solidarity of positional claims in relation to the social body.⁵⁸ A theology of the body will appear as a response to a deinstitutionalized world.

In short, theologies of marriage and family in a new generation will emphasize a retrieval of the positional frame and restricted language—not a return to Archie Bunker's ideal, obviously, but something like Mary Douglas' concern for the authority of home and the household as place where we work out problems of the commons. Among the various criticisms that can be put to the theology of the body, I will highlight the problem of its seamlessness.⁵⁹ Those among us who are attracted to the theology of the body are energized by its perfect connections between a modern conception of the pure relationship and the institution of marriage in the Church. (This is West's own claim.) My view is that it does not offer a viable option precisely for this reason: it is too romantic and too closely bound to the private and passion-driven relationship. A more liberal elaboration of interpersonal intimacy *per se* is equally unsatisfying. Instead, we might look to After Boomers—and After Vatican II'ers—who are undertaking the struggle of the commons—of connecting contemporary family to our traditions and practices of home, hospitality, and social Catholicism (the tradition noted by Lisa Cahill at the beginning of this lecture).⁶⁰ One of our best hopes is our next speaker, Julie Rubio.⁶¹

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⁵⁸Douglas, *Natural Symbols*, 191.

⁵⁹Popular versions of the theology of the body could be criticized on doctrinal grounds. In West's theology, private sexual intimacy becomes the social and public good of marriage and the interpretive lens for Christian doctrine. I do not think that I need to argue that reading all doctrine through sexual intimacy is a bad thing (it should make us wistful for Augustine). I have noted above that he turns John Paul II's theology of the body on its head. One of the most insightful critiques of West is offered by David Cloutier, "Heaven Is a Place on Earth? Analyzing the Popularity of Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body," in *Sexuality and the U.S. Catholic Church: Crisis and Renewal*, eds. Lisa Sowle Cahill, John Garvey, T. Frank Kennedy, 18-31 (New York: Crossroad, 2006).

⁶⁰Social Catholicism is a term that I am borrowing from Paul Misner's *Social Catholicism in Europe: from the onset of industrialization to the First World War* (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

⁶¹Julie Hanlon Rubio, *A Christian Theology of Marriage and Family* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003).