Divine, Human, and Embryo Adoption

Some Criticisms of Dignitas personae

Christopher Tollefsen

Abstract. The author shows how, by means of adoption, spouses become parents together and as the fruit of their marital love. The account serves two purposes. First, it allows a rebuttal of two types of objections to embryo adoption: that embryo adoption fails to respect the mutuality of marital love and that it in some way "constructs" parenthood. Second, the account makes it possible to recognize a deficiency in the way *Dignitas personae* understands embryo adoption, a deficiency indicated by the Instruction's discussion of embryo adoption in the context of "treatments for infertility." The author suggests that the Instruction is guilty of a misuse of terms and possibly a misunderstanding of the nature of adoption as such. *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 10.1 (Spring 2010): 75–85.

Dignitas personae (*DP*) n. 12 sets out three fundamental goods that must be respected in the treatment of infertility:

(a) the right to life and to physical integrity of every human being from conception to natural death; (b) the unity of marriage, which means reciprocal respect for the right within marriage to become a father or mother only together with the other spouse; (c) the specifically human values of sexuality which require "that the procreation of a human person be brought about as the fruit of the conjugal act specific to the love between spouses." [1]

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[1] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction* Dignitas personae *on Certain Bioethical Questions* (September 8, 2008).

It is appropriate to see this passage at work in the document's later treatment of so-called embryo adoption,[2] the practice by which embryos conceived in vitro and then cryopreserved are rescued and adopted from what *Donum vitae* terms their otherwise "absurd fate."[3] And indeed, two of these fundamental goods—the first and especially the third—have noticeably structured Catholic debate about the morality of embryo adoption.

In particular, the third good, that the procreation of a human person be the fruit of conjugal love, has been the dominant emphasis in recent discussion. Some Catholic thinkers, especially Mary Geach and Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, have argued that embryo adoption does not respect the third good, for the procreation of the child is brought about through a non-conjugal intervention, an "intromission," in Mary Geach's words, that makes the mother pregnant.[4] Yet many scholars, myself included, have argued that in making the mother pregnant, embryo transfer, the necessary first step for embryo adoption, does not itself bring about the procreation of a child; the child, after all, already exists and does not owe his or her existence to the act of transfer as such. Therefore, while there has been a wrong done as regards the procreation of the child, that wrong is neither done nor inevitably perpetuated by the woman who receives the embryo into her womb.[5] Moreover, respect for the first of the goods listed above, the right to life and to physical integrity, can play a motivating factor, and perhaps the motivating factor, in a woman's decision to transfer the embryo of another.

In this paper, I leave such debates aside. Rather, my focus will be, although somewhat obliquely, on the second fundamental good, with its concern for mutuality between spouses in becoming parents, and on a concern related to the third that I believe underlies some of the worries about embryo adoption. That concern may be put as follows: at the end of the day, embryo adoption, and perhaps adoption more generally, are similar to impermissible forms of fertility treatment in their aspiration to *construct* parenthood.

The solution to both worries is to be found in an adequate understanding of adoption more generally: what it is, and how, by means of adoption, spouses become parents together and as the fruit of their marital love. Such an account would, in fact,

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[2] I say "so-called" here because, as I argue, the Instruction does not truly address embryo adoption in its full reality.

[3] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum vitae* (February 22, 1987), I.5.

[4] See, for example, Mary Geach, "The Female Act of Allowing an Intromission of an Impregnating Kind," 269, and Tadeusz Pacholczyk, "Some Moral Contraindications to Embryo Adoption," 37–53, in *Human Embryo Adoption: Biotechnology, Marriage, and the Right to Life*, eds. Thomas Berg and Edward J. Furton (Philadelphia and Thornwood, NY: National Catholic Bioethics Center and Westchester Institute for Ethics and the Human Person, 2006).

[5] Christopher Tollefsen, "Could Human Embryo Transfer Be Intrinsically Immoral?" in *The Ethics of Embryo Adoption and the Catholic Tradition: Moral Arguments, Economic Reality, and Social Analysis*, ed. Sarah-Vaughan Brakman and Darlene Fozard Weaver (Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer, 2007), 85–101; and E. Christian Brugger, "A Defense by Analogy of Heterologous Embryo Transfer," 197–228, and William E. May, "The Object of the Acting Woman in Embryo Rescue," 135–163, in *Human Embryo Adoption*, ed. Berg and Furton.

serve two purposes: it would allow rebuttal of the two types of objections sketched in the previous paragraph, and it would make possible recognition of a serious deficiency in the way *DP* understands embryo adoption, a deficiency which begins with the treatment of embryo adoption in the context of "treatments for infertility" and extends into the document's very use of the term "embryo adoption." These deficiencies suggest that the document is at least guilty of a misuse of terms, and possibly of a genuinely problematic understanding of the nature of adoption as such.

In the first section of this paper, I articulate further the way that the second and third fundamental goods might be seen to generate moral difficulties with embryo adoption. In the second section, I provide an outline of a more general theology of adoption that I believe meets the objections. In a final brief section, I show that the view I have put forth provides a more accurate account of embryo adoption than does *DP*. The more accurate account should serve as the basis for a more constructive evaluation of the morality of embryo adoption than seems presupposed in *DP*.

What In Vitro Fertilization Has Taught Us

The practice of in vitro fertilization has forced upon the Catholic and wider Christian community a reconsideration of a distinction essential to our creedal history, that is, between what it means to be begotten and what it means to be made. In *Donum vitae*, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith brought this distinction implicitly to bear in distinguishing between the procreation of children through sexual intercourse, especially marital intercourse, and the making of human beings by means of a technological procedure.[6] Just as it was necessary to describe Christ as "begotten" of the Father in order to preserve his substantial equality with the Father, so is it necessary for children to be begotten of their parents—conceived as a fruit of their loving embrace—in order for their equality as persons to be respected. But in any procedure of making, of *poiesis*, the maker stands over the made as a superior, as master of materials to be reshaped as desired by the maker.[7]

This concern lies just beneath the third of the "fundamental goods" identified in *DP*. For, while framed in terms of the value of "sexuality," this value takes the shape it does because of the appropriateness of the relationship between marital sexuality and procreation. But it lies as well beneath the surface of the second fundamental good, for unilateral parenthood deprives the child of the opportunity to be conceived in the circumstances most appropriate and respectful of his or her personhood,

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[6] "The one conceived must be the fruit of his parent's love. He cannot be desired or conceived as the product of an intervention of medical or biological techniques; that would be equivalent to reducing him to an object of scientific technology. No one may subject the coming of a child into the world to conditions of technical dominion." CDF, *Donum vitae*, II.B.4.c.

[7] As John Finnis has recently noted in these pages, Elizabeth Anscombe made a proto version of this argument; see his review of *Human Life, Action and Ethics: Essays by G. E. M. Anscombe* and *Faith in a Hard Ground: Essays on Religion, Philosophy, and Ethics by G. E. M. Anscombe*, ed. Mary Geach and Luke Gormally, *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 9.1 (Spring 2009): 199–207. William May and Germain Grisez likewise were early articulators of this argument.

namely, the context of mutual spousal love, of which marital intercourse is both the expression and embodiment.

Now this concern, that children should be begotten, not made, does raise potential objections to embryo adoption, understood as a way for a woman to become a mother. For if this really is a unilateral form of becoming a parent in which husbands are inessential, then it threatens the mutually ordered reciprocity of spouses in becoming parents. And if it is a way of *making* someone one's child, then again, it seems to involve something like the mastery of one person over the fate of another found in in vitro fertilization.[8] But we should note that these objections threaten not just embryo adoption but the practice of human adoption more generally; for it can appear that the practice of adoption itself is one in which the parent–child relationship comes about *through choice*, through a decision to *make* the child be one's own. This choice does not, clearly, make the child to be; but it can seem that in adoption there is a choice to make a person be one's child, and this choice can seem to have the artificing nature found so objectionable in other assisted reproductive techniques. Thus, although she does not deny its legitimacy under certain circumstances, Catherine Althaus asserts of "social adoption" that it, like embryo adoption, "fabricates" kinship, language not inapt in the context of artificial reproductive technologies.[9] Moreover, if such a choice to make a child be one's own really is at the core of adoption as a social practice, then there is no reason why a single person could not choose to adopt and become a parent, a possibility which, at the least, would introduce considerable tensions between adoptive and what I will call marital parenthood.

I believe that such lines of thought should force us to reconsider the nature of adoption: what, normatively, is it to be, and, when it is rightly pursued, what is the ontological relationship that thereby obtains between parents and children through adoption? In the next section, I offer a theology of adoption explicitly modeled on the insight of *Donum vitae*, that children are begotten, not made, and the extension of this insight in the theology of marriage developed by the magisterium and Catholic thinkers in the past twenty years.

Human and Divine Adoption

As Germain Grisez has written, "Since we must understand God as a unity of three distinct persons, we can think of Him, as the terms 'Father' and 'Son' require, as being familial."[10] This invitation from God, as it seems, to think of him in this

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[8] Catherine Althaus makes this comparison explicit: "The case of embryo transfer can be argued to be morally equivalent to the case of in vitro fertilization (IVF). The woman who seeks motherhood through IVF ... chooses to *make* rather than *beget* a baby. ... The woman seeking motherhood through embryo transfer does the same." Catherine Althaus, "Human Embryo Transfer and the Theology of the Body," in *Ethics of Embryo Adoption*, ed. Brakman and Weaver, 52.

[9] Ibid., 53.

[10] Germain Grisez, *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, vol. 1, *Christian Moral Principles* (Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1983), 578.

way is fruitful for us in at least two ways. First, because it provides us with an image based in what we know, and it allows us to make progress in understanding who God is and what his relationship to us is. At the same time, our understanding of the familial, and of the various relationships encompassed within the familial, is enhanced by reflection on the nature of the divine.

Precisely this sort of thinking is on display in the reflections on reproductive technologies in both *Donum vitae* and *DP*. As creatures made in God's image we may strive to more perfectly mirror the perfect love, and perfect unity-in-diversity, of Father and Son (and Holy Spirit) in our own families, not least by acknowledging the moral limits on our manufacturing capacity over our own children—accepting children as begotten in love, rather than as to be made in a laboratory. Our understanding of the moral limits of procreation and our positive understanding of the good of procreation are enriched, deepened, by understanding what we do, and do not do, as ways of mirroring the divine, becoming more like the divine, and manifesting the divine in our own lives.

God's familial life is not only procreative, however; it is also adoptive. God calls to us to be his adoptive children, adoptive brothers and sisters of Christ, to enter into the familial life of love that exists in the Trinity. And this aspect of his familial life should provide us the key for understanding what human adoption is and should be. What I wish specifically to investigate in this section is how one's understanding of the adoptive relationship in the human context—the relationship created when human parents adopt a child who is not biologically related—can be enriched and deepened by thinking of that human adoptive relationship in light of the image provided us by Scripture, tradition, and the magisterium of God inviting us to join into an adoptive relationship with Him, the relationship Paul adverts to in saying, "He has chosen us out, in Christ, before the foundation of the world … to be his adopted children through Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1, Knox translation).

My rather modest goal here is to make four points about the relationship between the divine–human adoptive relationship and the human–human adoptive relationship. In each case, I will attempt to draw some further lesson from the parallel, beyond simply pointing it out. But in each case, the relevant lesson will be made possible only because the parallel I am drawing is not purely descriptive, but normative: God wants our adoptive relationships in this life to become more like the relationship He wishes us to have with Him.

Adoption as Gratuitous

The first point of parallel, then, is that God's call to us to become His adoptive children is entirely gratuitous. Just as God created us though a free act of will, not needing to have the created world or human persons in particular but motivated entirely by love, so is his invitation to us to join the Trinity in their unique love likewise entirely gratuitous. So normatively, it seems, ought human adoption to be a free and gratuitous act.

This is a difficult thought to sustain in light of the motivations that frequently lead people to adopt. When my wife and I started the adoption process, I was inclined to distinguish adoption from need and, for want of a better term, adoption

from abundance. Unlike those couples who are unable to have biological children of their own, my wife and I had five and were expecting a sixth. We did not in any ordinary sense *need* an adopted child; rather, we wished to share what we had—a wonderful family, itself entirely undeserved and given us by God—with someone who was himself or herself in need. By contrast, it seemed plausible to think of at least many other adoptive parents as adopting primarily because they needed or wanted a child in consequence of infertility.

Descriptively, I think this is a genuine contrast, in at least some cases. But normatively, it is quite problematic: we should never think of our children primarily as the projected satisfaction of our needs or wants. Among the devaluations of parenthood available to us in the popular culture is a pervasive image of parenting as something to be undertaken because one "wants" or "needs" children to feel complete or fulfilled. It is not a great step, psychologically, from this to the belief that children are one's right, something it is appropriate to "demand" if one is unable to have children because of a health condition, age, or choice of sexual partner.

Adoptive parents perpetuate this misunderstanding when they adopt primarily "out of need." They should not look at their prospective adopted children from a standpoint of what they do not have, but of what, it is to be hoped, they do have: a flourishing, loving marriage. By adopting as an expression and outpouring of their mutual love, they mirror God more adequately than if they adopted to complete or to satisfy themselves. At the same time, it should be noted, what I have called adoption out of abundance should not be mistaken for anything condescending, nor its initial condition be thought of as one of self-sufficiency. For our starting point—mutual love of spouses and the desire to share that love more abundantly with children—is itself a gift, and not something for which we are self-sufficiently responsible.

A Response to God's Call

The second parallel between God's call to us and the human project of adoption brings us to man's response to God's call. God's will alone does not make us part of his divine family, but requires active participation by us. As Grisez puts it, "Although living faith is wholly God's gift to us, it is also our own human act."[11] Faced with God's invitation we must freely accept it; and in accepting God's love we, in some mysterious way, become that love, the love of the Trinity, in whose divinity we thereby participate.

It is commonly enough said that blood is thicker than water, and that while you can pick you friends, you cannot pick your family. Neither claim is entirely true—children can reject their parents and do, and vice versa. Yet adoption vividly brings to the surface the radical need for adopted children to freely accept the gift of family that is offered to them in order to fully become part of their adopted family. At the same time, it vividly highlights the way in which adoptive parents make themselves vulnerable; their offer might never be accepted. But, finally, reflecting on God's vast patience with us as we struggle to find the will to say yes to Him, adoption vividly demonstrates the need for a similar patience. Adoptive parents make

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[11] Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, 584.

an initially one-way commitment without the supporting bonds of blood kinship, and hold open the invitation for the reciprocal act of the will, required of the adoptee at some point, in order for him or her to genuinely, rather than simply legally and conventionally, become a part of their adoptive family.

This is, again, a set of normative claims, and their difficulty cannot be understated. Adoptions do fail and there are, no doubt, natural and sometimes reasonable limits to the patience that adoptive parents can show in waiting for cooperation from their adoptive children. But I think there is an additional practical lesson here. God has let us know that He requires our active participation and that He has entered into a covenantal relationship with us that we can refuse but that He will not abandon. That is to say, He is open and honest with us about what we must do in order for our adoption in Christ to "work." Adoptive parents must be similarly open and honest with their children in making it clear that the offer of love must be freely accepted, that adoption is a two-way relationship.[12]

The Adoptee's Two Identities

The third point I wish to make will be done in a rather personal fashion. My impetus to start thinking about it first started on the plane from Newark to Addis Ababa in September 2004, when I was surrounded almost entirely by Ethiopians going back to their native country. They seemed very alien to me, speaking a different language, of a different color, and with different customs and dress. But was it, I wondered, possible in some way to see my adoption of an Ethiopian boy as also a way of making a new connection to these people, of making brothers and sisters of all these strangers?

It is easy to think not, to think that adoption brings a child from his natural home into another home. The change is all on the part of the child. But how is it that God has made available to us the possibility of our becoming his adoptive children? Only through the Incarnation, by which Christ himself became one of us, so making available the prospect that we should be his adoptive brothers and sisters. But in so doing, He himself became our adoptive brother, a man as we are men. So why should I not think that I too have in some sense become Ethiopian by virtue of becoming the father of an Ethiopian son? And if so, are not his people my people, my brothers and sisters, even if they do not know it? So it seemed to me.

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[12] Although well beyond the scope of this paper, it is perhaps worth mentioning in this context one particular challenge increasingly faced in international adoptions, that of reactive attachment disorder. The result of insufficient love and affection for a child in the first few years of life, RAD leaves children unable to love and to be loved. In other words, they are radically incapacitated for that "sincere gift of self" in which human persons are enabled to find themselves. Children with RAD are thereby also radically incapacitated from making the commitment to be a child, whether of their new adoptive parents or, ultimately, of God. Being the parent of a child with RAD might, perhaps, be compared to God's covenantal fatherhood of the chosen people, a relationship rejected repeatedly by the Jews, until Christ made the ultimate sacrifice to restore fallen humanity's capacity to respond to God's adoptive initiative; being a child with RAD involves suffering, with a particular intensity, the alienation of fallen humanity.

In this, we have but one instance of the tremendous mystery of God's becoming one of us, fully man, while remaining fully God. In his offer to us, he likewise promises that we should become divine without ceasing to be human. As Grisez again writes, "Human persons remain always of human nature and always creatures; yet by a free self-giving of the divine persons, a self-giving which always presupposes their own interpersonal relationships, human persons also in a real way share—'share' in an irreducible sense—in divinity."[13]

The mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of the Incarnation, and the mystery of our adoptive relationship to God, as Grisez goes on to argue, are all of a piece: "In all three cases, unity and multiplicity, which seem absurdly opposed, are perfectly reconciled."[14] Such perfect reconciliation is not to be expected in earthly affairs. But as a normative aspiration, it helps make sense of some of what is received, if under-theorized, wisdom in adoption.

For example, parents in a trans-ethnic adoption are encouraged to learn what they can about the culture of their adoptive child's country of origin and to encourage in their child a love and awareness of that culture. Many adoptive children, as they get older, wish to know of their biological parents if they are dead and to know them personally if they are alive, to reconnect with their country of origin, and to develop and maintain those aspects of their identity into which they were born, in addition to those into which they were adopted.

It seems to me that it is insufficiently acknowledged just how dangerous all these desires are. Adopted children can grow apart from their adoptive families, even cease to think of them as their "real" families—parents, brothers, sisters, etc. Adoptive parents can feel threatened and even betrayed by a child's interest in his or her biological parents. It seems quite natural that parents should want and expect their adopted children to cut the cord with their past and radically begin again as members of only one family.

But God doesn't require this of us. Rather he promises that we will maintain our human identity even as we are divinized. And after all, would we want to be divinized if it meant the loss of our identity? Presumably not. So if God and his adoptive relation to us are to be taken as the model by which adoptive parents and families are to learn, then I do not think that we can accept what is obviously the easiest and safest path: adopted children really do have two realities to their identities, just as God's adopted children do, and adopted parents and their children must work to maintain both in an "absurd" unity.

Adoption as Rescue

It is common to hear from people that what my wife and I have done is a good thing because we have rescued our son from the life he otherwise would have had. This is likewise common for other parents who adopt children, especially from

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[13] Grisez, *Christian Moral Principles*, 582.

[14] Ibid., 594.

developing countries. However, when I was in Ethiopia I was interested to read a rather long and somewhat strident article denouncing this thought.[15]

The author of the article argued that the rescue mentality was demeaning to the adopted children. As one adopted teenager put it, more or less, just who do the parents think they are to believe that the child wouldn't have been able to make it without them? Moreover, the author argued that the rescue mentality unwarrantedly underplayed the extent to which adoptive parents themselves gain from the adoption. She wrote, again, rather roughly, that when people tell her she has done a good thing in rescuing her adoptive children, she says, "No, they have fulfilled me." Similarly, it appears that social workers are inclined to object when they hear from prospective adoptive parents of a desire to "rescue" a child.

On the other hand, our Christian model of adoption—divine adoption of us as God's children—is a model of rescue, of salvation. Could the human act of adoption really be so different that it would be offensive to think of it in such terms? Not when we recognize, I think, what we were saved from and saved into. God did not become man, suffer and die on the cross, and rise from the dead in order to improve our "life chances," our opportunities. God rescued us from our profound alienation from Him, a condition that might be best described, given God's nature, as an alienation from God's triune family, similar to the alienation experienced by the prodigal son from his family. Neither could we save ourselves from this alienation. God needed to act on our behalf, and it would be and is the grossest form of pride to think we can "make it" without Him.

Adoptive parents, similarly, really do rescue their children from a condition that they cannot save themselves from: the condition of being without a human family. There are, of course, some variations in this condition: some parents put their children up for adoption while others die, leaving their children without any family at all. But in either case the adoptive parents offer the children something for which no human being is self-sufficient, a family. If the condition of being without a family is among the most miserable, as I think it is, then adoption really is rescue, albeit not the sort of worldly rescue we are inclined to think it is. So it really is acceptable, even necessary, to think of adoption in terms of the concept of rescue, but it is indeed demeaning, just as it demeans the prospect of divine adoption, to equate rescue and salvation with an increase in worldly goods and opportunities.

All these points are interconnected in various ways, of course. Part of the free acceptance required of the adoptive child is free acceptance of a gift that, as the previous points make clear, the adoptive child could not have self-provided. This can be difficult; Aristotle noted the preference of the "high minded" to do good while being ashamed of receiving goods, "because the former marks a man as superior, the

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[15] The article was in a magazine with a focus on adoption that I found in the house in which I was staying. I have been unable to track down either the magazine's name or the author of the article.

latter as inferior."[16] There are dangers in these parts for everyone: for the children, that they could resent their dependence; for the parents, that they could play God with their children's lives. It is not easy to get the balance of things right in human adoption, but as in all things, God has richly provided for us, so that by thinking of Him we may come more adequately to understand ourselves and our endeavors as He wishes them to be understood.

No Statement on Embryo Adoption

What implications can be drawn from this discussion for embryo adoption and for the treatment of embryo adoption in *DP*? Most obviously, embryo adoption would need to be a practice pursued by married couples as an expression and realization of their marital love, in which the offer of a family is freely made to the child, to be accepted or rejected, and in which not only does the child enter into the parental family unit, but the parents too take on a share of the child's previous familial reality. To speak directly, then, to the more general concerns of *DP* and opponents of embryo adoption, the adoption of embryos along the lines of adoption as I have presented it here would respect the marital unity and would be far from an effort to *make* a child be one's own, or *make* oneself, unilaterally or with another, to be a parent. Rather, to repeat, embryo adoption would be, like both conventional adoption and procreation in the context of marital sexuality, normatively a matter of gift as expression and realization of marital love.

The specific treatment of embryo adoption in *DP* must, however, in light of this, be thought disappointing, not simply by proponents of embryo adoption but by proponents of more traditional forms of adoption as well. To make this point, I will quote the two crucial paragraphs in which embryo adoption is introduced and discussed:

> The proposal that these embryos could be put at the disposal of infertile couples as a *treatment for infertility* is not ethically acceptable for the same reasons which make artificial heterologous procreation illicit as well as any form of surrogate motherhood; this practice would also lead to other problems of a medical, psychological and legal nature.

> It has also been proposed, solely in order to allow human beings to be born who are otherwise condemned to destruction, that there could be a form of "prenatal adoption." This proposal, praiseworthy with regard to the intention of respecting and defending human life, presents however various problems not dissimilar to those mentioned above. (n. 19, original emphasis)

Quite simply, the problem with these two paragraphs is that neither discusses a practice that could rightly be called "embryo adoption."

Consider the first, in which embryo transfer is envisaged as a "treatment for infertility." Here we have a description of what I earlier called "adoption from need"—precisely the opposite attitude and will from that which should inform all efforts at

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[16] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Oswald (New York: Macmillan, 1989) 1124b8–10.

becoming parents: parenthood should be the fruit and realization of the mutual love and commitment of spouses. The document is certainly correct that any embryo transfer for such reasons would be relevantly similar to heterologous artificial procreation. But it would also be relevantly similar to homologous artificial procreation in taking an instrumental attitude toward one's potential children, and it would indict not only embryo adoption but any form of adoption pursued as a "treatment for infertility." By contrast, embryo adoption proposed for the same reasons that normatively should inform conventional adoption is left untouched by this paragraph.

Mention of prenatal adoption in the following paragraph initially suggests that the authors of the Instruction were aware that the first paragraph does not address embryo adoption normatively understood, and sought only to address this in the next paragraph. Yet the intention ascribed to agents engaged in embryo adoption in this paragraph is "solely … to allow human beings to be born who are otherwise condemned to destruction." This too fails to discuss embryo adoption and is, rather, a description of embryo *rescue*, the practice of embryo transfer with a view to saving a child from the absurd fate of cryopreservation, presumably with the intention of putting the child up for adoption or perhaps serving as the child's steward if the gestating woman is unmarried but wishes to continue to care for the child after birth.

But that is all: the Instruction does not go on to discuss anything that could be considered true embryo adoption, and its treatment leaves one believing that conventional forms of adoption are themselves legitimate forms of treatment of infertility, by contrast with the illegitimate form offered by embryo adoption. In implying this, the Instruction does an injustice not only to embryo adoption but to other forms of adoption as well, for if adoption is practiced in a normatively appropriate way, then, even when practiced by infertile couples, it is not a treatment of infertility.

No doubt others have been perplexed by some of the ambiguities present in *DP*'s treatment of human embryo adoption. And, as mentioned above, embryo adoption, and adoption more generally, have been understood by some Catholic thinkers as morally problematic—even if not morally wrong—by contrast with the paradigmatic form of parentage, that is, procreation through marital intercourse. What I have tried to suggest in this essay is that the resources of the Catholic-Christian tradition for thinking about parenthood are richer than is sometimes realized and that those resources open up for us a more adequate way of considering adoption, including embryo adoption, than *DP* achieves.