



# Artificial Reproductive Technology

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# Letter

KATHLEEN CURRAN SWEENEY

Dr Andrew Root's *The Children of Divorce* has provided a valuable study of the ontological fracturing that occurs for persons whose mother and father have divorced. This is an important advance in understanding the depth of the loss that divorce causes for the children of the marriage. He has pointed out that relationships of origin are an essential part of a person's being, and explains the source of this in God's inner life of Trinitarian relationships, of which the human family is an image analogically. However, there are a couple of considerations I would like to propose regarding the analogy of relationship in view of the analogy of being.

I think we all need to be grateful to Dr Root for his focus on the ontology of relationships in marriage and family. At the same time, I would like to suggest that to further this ontology there is an additional understanding that needs to be clarified and that can, I hope, augment the ministry to children of divorce and to families generally.

Here is the point I want to make: the analogy of relationships needs to be firmly grounded in the analogy of being for, if God is Being ("I Am Who Am," - God revealed to Moses), and God, the Creator, is the source of human existence, then the root of our existence is in Being and our relationship with God comes from this. (Of course, only God is Being absolutely and perfectly; humans only possess being contingently and imperfectly, which is why it is analogical and not equivalent.) But Dr Root states we need to put relationships first, before being: "It is relationship that leads to being (not the other way around)" (p. 73). I would submit that this statement is putting the matter backwards, since God as Being is the source of relationship.

It is actually not necessary to set up such a primary/ secondary order of priority. These are unified, inseparable aspects of our existence. But I think it is important, particularly for persons suffering from fractured relationships, to remember that no matter how disconnected and "unreal" one is feeling, one's being is always solidly grounded in God's Being. This is one's first relationship, and it is permanent and indestructible.

Dr Root's desire to emphasize the centrality of relationships, which is indeed necessary, has led to some loss of balance in his ontology. The source of this imbalance seems to be his dislike of the concept of substance as the basis of anthropology, with its emphasis on intellect and free will as the defining characteristics of the human being. Karl Barth is the mentor of his approach and Barth was correct that there has been a need to augment theological anthropology with the understanding of the human person as a being in relation. Barth's dramatic statement, "I regard the doctrine of the analogy of being as *the* invention of the Antichrist," however, has left an unresolved legacy, although he may have modified this opinion later. (See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth*, and Thomas J. White, *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Anti-Christ or Wisdom of God?*) Root, in focusing on divorce, particularly emphasizes the person's being in ontological relationship to his mother and father. But in emphasizing this, one need not disparage the importance of the human person existing as a rational and free substantial being. These are the qualities that give the human person special dignity, distinct from other beings that God has created. They are part of man's being an image of God, just as much as being in relation is part of the divine image.

Root categorizes intellect and will as epistemological rather than ontological. At one point he seems to confuse substance with individualism, the power to dominate, and self-centeredness (p. 92). It is true that there was in the past a tendency to focus on the *imago Dei* as reflected in dominion over the earth, and not enough on man's imaging the internal relationships of the Trinity. So the focus of 20th-century theology on the analogy of relationship has been needed. However, rejecting substantial existence as the basic reality of the human person along with the essential faculties of reason and will seems like "throwing out the baby with the bath water." Of course, it has its source in the history of Protestant theology which often worries that allowing man to possess a nature of his own and to "possess" supernatural grace as an interior property conflicts with God's total freedom and gratuitous grace. However, man's substantial existence as a rational and free being is always completely dependent on God's Being and gift, and is always in an existential relationship; therefore this conflict seems unnecessary. Root suggests moving "from noun to verb" (p. 92) - the noun referring to substance and the verb to the act of relating. But maintaining a sense of substance, "that which stays the same," underlying all change, accidental qualities, and circumstances, will be important to avoid everything becoming process only, which can lead us to relativize the human person and objective truth.

Blessed John Paul II's contribution of the terms "original solitude" and "original unity" are particularly helpful here. "Original solitude" does not mean that man is meant to be by himself, but that each person has his own particular relationship with God that constitutes his dignity and special status. Man is the only creature desired for himself alone, always an end and never a means, created from the beginning in relationship with God as his image in the world. Man's restless reflection on himself and his relation to the world around him is unique among creatures and draws him toward the One who created him and toward the other that is like himself. "Original unity" expresses the relationship with the other that reveals new depths to his existence. He is called to unity with one who is like himself and different from himself, one who opens a new self-understanding. That both of these realities are essential is revealed in the adjective describing both, "original," meaning that both realities are part of our constitutive origins.

Why is this reference to both aspects of our ontological reality important? I believe it is so because all of the human persons with whom we are in relationship are imperfect. Our human relationships will always bear some element of dissatisfaction, disappointment, or failure. We need to have a solid sense of the *substance* of our being as grounded first of all in the eternally faithful divine Being who is also our Father and our primary origin. When a basic human relationship that structured our life dissolves beneath us, and we feel afloat on nothing, we need not give in to despair or desperation, because we always have a Father who cares for our particular life and will sustain it through all challenges.

Dr Root is going in this direction by calling on church communities to stand with the person suffering from the dissolution of their family. He provides very helpful suggestions that are practical and sensitive to the particular kinds of emotions and needs of a person in this situation. This can provide an extended Christian family to fill the hole in a person's life. However, all of us being imperfect, we can also experience disappointment or insufficiency in our communities. Only a firm understanding that over and above all we are made for God, and our being is firmly rooted within him, can provide ontological stability and peace in our life.

Nicky Rowden's words about his own religious experience after his parents divorce provide an important insight:

"It has been noted that the children of divorce frequently have problems relating to a God who is grounded in an ecclesial community, and a Church that exercises authority. We are held to be

incapable of accepting authority. This is only logical, given our formative experiences. And yet God's logic transcends human logic (or "worldly wisdom," as the Gospels have it). While children whose family background is relatively secure may experience a primary relationship with God as Father, my own first relationship with God was through the Son. As a young child, after nightmares about the darkness engulfing me, I would dream that a tiny, tiny white man was placed on my tongue. Then the fear would subside. I would be safe." ("Cold War: Toward a Phenomenology of Hope" *Humanum*, Spring 2012.)

He also relates how Christ's suffering was a healing reality for him:

"My first and primary experience of the divine smile had to be grounded in the divine tears. I met God in his most reduced, self-effacing moment: in his defeat and death. Only *there* could he harrow the hell in which I felt myself to be trapped and, seizing me by the wrist as in the icon of the Resurrection in the Hagia Sophia, draw me out to the light. He had hung next to me while I was on my own uncomprehending cross, and he had told me that today I would be with him in paradise, simply because I had named him for who he is." (*Op. cit.*)

Rowden points out that in belonging to Christ, one does not have to accept the suffering of divorce or difficult marriages as defining one's existence. Instead, one can live in hope and give to others the love and healing received from Christ. This points to the resolution of the question of analogy of being because it is the *Person of Christ* who is the concrete embodiment of the analogy of being, revealing to us its true meaning. The Person Christ, in his hypostatic union of divine and human nature, is Being in its fullness and the one "for whom and in whom all is created." This Divine Person has taken on a nature that is human, thereby manifesting the essential dignity of human nature and what man is truly called to be. This reveals the analogy both of both being and relationship that exists between God and the human person. Any conflict between what man is and what God is has been resolved within the Person of Christ.

The point, therefore, is not to impose a particular philosophical structure on the pastoral ministry to children of divorce, but rather to leave an opening so that persons in this suffering have a consciousness of the deep reality of their being in God to sustain them throughout the ontological disorientation they feel from the fracturing of their family of origin. Always there is a place for them in their suffering within the heart of Christ.

# Begging the Human Question

MICHAEL HANBY

"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee." [1] With these famous words, St Augustine launches his *Confessions*, an odyssey through the depths of his memory and a relentless search for the truth of his own existence which only comes with the discovery of the love of God at the mysterious core of his own being. This memory, as Augustine conceives it, is not merely psychological but ontological - this is also what Cardinal Ratzinger meant in equating conscience with anamnesis - and thus this truth, if it is true, is "not far from each one of us." [2] And because this memory is ontological and not merely psychological, we can never fully fail to remember this truth, even though we sometimes go to great lengths to try to erase it. "You were within me," Augustine says, "but I was outside." [3]

All of us are called to this quest simply by virtue of our humanity, and it was indeed the very capacity for this quest after truth that was once thought to distinguish us as human. The universality of this quest, and the fact that it is not restricted to Christian theological concern, is evidenced by the anticipations of it in the epic journeys chronicled by Homer and Virgil and in the philosophic wonder of Plato and Aristotle, not to mention the fact that each of the latter took as the measure of a healthy city its capacity to sustain the quest for truth. A healthy city is one in which genuine "philosophy," the love of wisdom, can thrive, and philosophy can only thrive where there is receptivity to truth in its defenseless simplicity as something good for what it is, rather than for what it does. [4] The capacity for philosophy is thus of a piece with the capacity for play; they spring from the same spirit. [5] All of this makes up part of the "primordial knowledge" of creation - though seen darkly through a glass - that belongs to every culture except, it seems, our own. [6]

While closer to us than we are to ourselves, this truth is nevertheless destined to remain elusive so long as we fail to come to grips with the meaning of childhood, understood not merely as a developmental stage to be superseded by maturity (though the child in his helpless innocence is the very incarnation of the defenseless goodness of being), but as the basic ontological disposition of the human being which marks the whole of his existence as a gift from beginning to end. If we are ontologically children, then being a child is not something we outgrow but something we grow into, a growth evidenced in subjective terms by an increase in wonder, adoration, and gratitude and receptivity.

The phenomenon of being a child, which is the same thing as my "being" at all, is, as Hans Urs von Balthasar remarked, "astonishing beyond measure." Each of us enters into being as Eve, awakening in paradise. [7] Each of us is a genuinely new creation, a *subject of being* who can never be fully accounted for by his antecedents, who possesses an interior that is never fully communicable or transparent, even to ourselves, and who thus occupies a perspective within the cosmos that can never be replicated. Each of us, in essence, a gratuitous surprise, a little world appearing where once there was nothing, awakening to itself in the presence and at the generous behest of another. All that I am or will be is included in this gift and marked by it - "What do you have that you have not received?" [8] - and nothing of me can be true to the nature of this gift unless it is entirely given away. This necessarily includes my bodily and biological dimensions.

This is the mystery of the human person, given metaphysical specification down the Christian centuries

in a number of formulae whose inner unity is not always apprehended, even from within Catholic thought: that the person is the incommunicably proper *existence* of a spiritual nature and therefore an individual substance of a rational nature, that this substance is a *per se* unity of body and soul that transcends and thus precedes his own development as the subject of that development, that as a subject of being he is *existentially* indivisible despite the nearly infinite divisibility of his material parts, and that precisely as a unity, his body is a sign and expression of the gift which is his being, bearing within itself the sign of its being *from* another and being apt, through sexual differentiation, for a total and fruitful self-donation *to* another.[9]

The "existentialist" definition of the person is often taken to repudiate rather than comprehend the substantialist definition. So too the recent emphasis of John Paul II on the unity of the person, the personal nature of the body and its nuptial character, which presupposes not only this existentialist understanding but that existence (*esse*) is love, is sometimes regarded as a tacit assault on the traditional notion of the *visio dei* rather than as a necessary ingredient to that vision. Now I believe it is not only possible, but indeed absolutely necessary, to provide a metaphysically adequate account of the unity of the "existentialist" and "substantialist" visions, as well as the unity of their nuptial and intellectual *teloi* or "ends." However, this is not my purpose in this essay.[10] Rather, presupposing this metaphysical unity and certain of its immanent manifestations, I wish to think through one contemporary challenge both to its integrity and to its intelligibility, a challenge which threatens to extinguish even the *desire* to understand the mysterious truth about ourselves.

To begin, I wish to elaborate just slightly upon my opening suggestion. If we are indeed children, ontologically speaking, then this metaphysical unity will find its objective expression in childhood, becoming "visible" there.[11] But this also means that childhood is a privileged site for the subjective apprehension of this unity. In other words, just as knowledge and love are always ingredients of one another, then understanding childhood - which entails, on the side of existence, understanding the defenseless goodness and gift character of being, and, on the side of essence, understanding the personal body and its nuptial attributes - is essential to vision, to the discovery of the fundamental truth of being, and this in two senses. The discovery of childhood is not only the end of the vocation to truth, but is also its necessary condition, for only an awareness of our childhood makes possible the wonder and openness to truth that is necessary for the search. "Unless you become like this child, you shall not enter the kingdom of God." The implications are dramatic and severe: alter or destroy the ontological meaning of childhood and we not only separate ourselves from the truth of our existence, we risk choking off the desire to discover it.

I was prompted to these reflections by a recent event that brings all of this to light, namely, the decision to award the Nobel Prize to Robert Edwards, the British biologist and clinician who developed *in vitro* fertilization, a procedure now responsible for the birth of some four million children worldwide and *asine qua non* for contemporary redefinitions of family independently of sexual difference and biological motherhood and fatherhood. The awarding of the Nobel Prize signified official cultural approval of IVF and associated ARTs, and journalistic coverage of the announcement followed accordingly. With routine predictability story after story juxtaposed the standard objections to IVF with the poignant testimony of an infertile couple who had children with the aid of IVF technology or a person born from IVF itself, providing nominal balance but conveying an overwhelming sentiment of approval for the IVF revolution. These standard objections were and continue to be couched in utilitarian terms - is the procedure "safe" for IVF children, for example? - and "resolution" of the question means, again, either some empirical reassurance about "safety" or simply a majority cultural consensus about the licitness of the once-controversial procedure.

Now it should be said that there are loads of question-begging assumptions in all this, and it is questionable even on its own terms. It goes without saying that social consensus does not determine the truth of human nature. (Plus it ought to be said that this is inevitably a philosophical and not *just* a scientific or empirical question.) And one cannot avoid the suspicion that the operative notions of safety are rigged from the outset by narrowly empirical criteria that preclude a more penetrating and comprehensive analysis. Yet even within the narrow confines of safety as conventionally defined, the data are ambiguous. It is impossible to have reliable long-term studies on a technology that is only thirty years old, and there appears to be some evidence to suggest that IVF babies are more susceptible to certain pathologies.[12] Reliable data are even harder to come by when the cryopreservation of embryos is involved, since this is a more recent development and sample sizes are smaller. To my knowledge, there is no long-term assessment of the risks entailed by cryopreservation.[13] And any notion of "safe consequences" means bracketing out the millions of embryos frozen or destroyed (though one might argue that this is but an "accidental" by-product of the procedure), along with the psychological damage inflicted upon parents not only when this procedure fails, but even when it succeeds.[14]

The positivism and pragmatism exhibited in the contemporary debate over IVF preclude us from asking, in more comprehensive or ontological terms, what IVF is and what it means.[15] The ontological order apprehended by the Greeks and brought to term in Christianity is all but invisible to these empirical studies and to the dutiful reporting of them by journalism, not because the violation of this order is without visible effect - perhaps it would be possible to formulate studies which assessed the manifestation of a different kind of "risk" if this order were held in view - but our positivism and pragmatism preclude any sustained philosophical reflection on the meaning of "health," "flourishing," and suchlike.[16] Neither can this order appear easily to view from within the assumptions of journalism, also a form of empiricism and a method, presupposing no philosophical formation or even any particular knowledge, which consists of arranging "facts" which are transparent by definition and thus require or admit of no further penetration. (Journalism, as the invitation to *stop* thinking, is thus the very antithesis of philosophy.) And of course it is just such ontological reflections which are precluded in advance by our liberal and social political discourse and their pretense to stand neutrally outside of any ontology.

But let us suppose, for a moment, the metaphysical truth implied in the universal fact that we are all born: that there really is an order of being, and that, ontologically speaking, being really *is* gift and we really *are* children. How might violation of this order show itself? What might the effect be of these technologies on our ability to understand and live into that reality?

This is obviously very delicate territory, which is an indication of just how deeply these technologies cut to the heart of the human question. So before taking up this question, it is probably necessary to add two things that should go without saying. First, if childhood is an ontological category definitive of what we all are as human beings, and if a child, that is, the human person, is essentially gift not just in its origin but in its internal ontological structure, then no human act, no human intervention in the genesis of the child, can erase this fundamental gift character. It can only qualify this gift and obscure it in ways that might be intrinsically harmful. So a child conceived through IVF is no less a child, no less a gift - and thus no less worthy of his life or worthy of love - than a child conceived through procreation. The question, rather, is whether this gift is marked by a kind of original violence that is harmful both to the parents who undergo it and to the child himself, and if so, what this harm consists in. Secondly, the desire of a couple for a child is wholly natural and wholly good. So we must acknowledge both the goodness of the desire and the profound suffering and desperation that often comes from its being unfulfilled, factors which underlie the decision to undergo IVF in the best instances. And we must

indeed acknowledge a qualitative difference between IVF undertaken by a married couple as a remedy for infertility and IVF undertaken either to compensate for not having a spouse, or as a means of circumventing nuptiality altogether.

In order to grasp IVF and related ARTs in their ontological meaning, it is important to see that this is not a discrete moral issue but part of a larger complex of questions that goes right to the heart of the meaning of our humanity. It is a matter of fundamental anthropology. Our society, as we have noted, purports to be founded on a certain agnosticism about such questions - this is at the core of our idea of freedom, which ultimately means power unqualified by any meaning or truth beyond that which the will sets for itself - though in truth this codifies an anthropology that identifies the essence of human nature with the will to will and regards the body as an aggregate of meaningless material subservient to "choice" and susceptible to manipulation that is in principle endless.

Our ostensible agnosticism or neutrality about questions ontological thus turns out already to be the expression of what Heidegger, George Grant, and Hans Jonas all variously refer to as the *technological ontology* of modernity. To say that technology is our reigning ontology is to say that technology is not merely an instrument at our disposal to be "applied" in responsible or irresponsible ways - this understanding only results in effectual moralism - but is the all-embracing milieu in which we as moderns live, and move, and have our being. It is not just a tool which we use to shape the world to our will, but something which profoundly shapes us, and it has profoundly re-shaped what we now take an organism, and thus a human person to be, effacing the traditional and essential difference between an organism and an artifact. As a consequence of this transformation, we no longer understand an organism as a *per se* unity of body and soul and an incommunicable subject of being whose identity transcends and therefore (ontologically) precedes the coordinated interaction of its parts. Rather the ontological identity of a given organism is now precisely identical to the coordinated interaction of its parts and the history of causes which produced it. This reflects the fact that the conflation of nature and artifice, which denies the self-transcending unity and interiority of organisms traditionally conferred on them by *esse* and *essentia* and makes each thing only extrinsically and accidentally related to its own form, is the attempted conflation of being and history as well.[17] The organism-cum-artifact is no longer the *subject* of its own development - an artifact has no interiority, no being of its "own"[18] - but the *consequence* or *outcome* of that development. This is ultimately why people like Derek Parfit or Peter Singer can follow John Locke and identify personhood not with the *being* whose development might be at such and such a point at any given instant, but with a particular *point* in that development when some "essential" characteristic such as consciousness or deliberation manifests itself.[19] And it is why it is impossible, from within this ontology, to give a principled account of the limits of biotechnical manipulations. For once an organism is re-conceived as an artifact, knowledge of organisms become identical to engineering.[20]

IVF and related ARTs *are* this anthropology in action, recapitulating its basic dualism and fragmenting the unity of the person into affective and "merely biological" dimensions. On the parents' side, IVF dissociates body and soul by bifurcating the unitive and procreative dimensions of love, thus sundering the personal meaning of the body from its biological meaning, to double effect. The body is necessarily reduced then to the status of a machine, mere matter accidentally aggregated and organized with no inherent meaning of its own. The body's capacity for reorganization limited only by the bounds of possibility; it becomes a mere receptacle or instrument for the affective or technological will. With the body now emptied of its personal meaning, love is equally reduced. It no longer expresses or makes visible the inherent meaning of the body - which now has no inner meaning - and so it ceases to be integral to the meaning of the person as a totality. Love is reduced to an emotion subject to changing fancies and is thus incidental to the meaning of human and social reality. A dangerous fragmentation is

therefore introduced into the very being of the person, with a rift between the affective or technological will and the body that is now subordinate to it, on the one hand, and with love sequestered to a state of private whimsy on the other. The drive to normalize same-sex unions [see next issue] and the quest for endless technological control over procreation both spring ultimately from this same root.

Separating the unitive and procreative dimensions of love divides and reduces the persons who undergo IVF.[21] On the side of the child, the result of is arguably even more serious. Just the *act* of removing conception from the context of nuptiality and the body treats embryonic life as mere matter to be controlled, selected, and worked upon, even before the more egregious dimensions of IVF such as the creation of multiple embryos, cryopreservation, or embryo selection comes into play. IVF treats the child at the embryonic stage of its development *not* as a child, not as a surprising gift, a *per se* unity of body and soul, or a subject of being, but as a "thing" whose being is instrumental. It therefore denies or contradicts the very nature of the child who, as the free subject of its own being and development, cannot be owned or controlled by definition.

Again, this is not to impugn the *motives* of those who in their desperation take recourse to these techniques; nor is it to deny that they love their children. Desperation limits our horizons. And couples suffering through infertility who resort to IVF in their desperation are not thinking about "dominating nature"; they want only a child. Their willingness to submit themselves to the great expense, the anxiety, and the indignity of IVF can even be seen, in the best instances, as an indication of their willingness to sacrifice and suffer on the child's behalf. The issue is not subjective motive but rather the *objective inner logic* of IVF, which treats nascent life like a thing in order to control it, thus contradicting both the nature of that life and the loving intentions of the parents. It is because the perspective afforded by IVF already regards the child in its embryonic stages as a thing, and not merely because this technology is "applied" immorally, that it has led ineluctably to the warehousing of frozen embryos in a kind of limbo, to embryonic research and eugenical fantasies of germline manipulation.[22] It is because IVF is *already* the expression of a technological ontology and a fundamental - and fundamentally inhuman - anthropology. It matters little in the end whether one adopts this ontology in its materialist or dualist variant. Contrary, then, to the loving intentions of parents who undergo these procedures, IVF and similar techniques insinuate into the act of conception a multi-layered act of violence.

This violence is compounded exponentially where IVF is deployed not simply as a *substitute* for the procreative act and a remedy for the body's failure but as a *replacement* for that act and a liberation from the body altogether. The former violates the child's being by treating it as an *instrumentum* and his nature (form) by insinuating a dualistic or mechanistic conception of the body (both parent's and child's) in the place of the unity of the person. The latter violates both being and nature by denying their essentially *relational* character. This is the consequence of sundering procreation from the relations of paternity, maternity, and filiality mediated to us through the body. As Leon Kass puts it, "To be human means not only to have human form and powers; it means also to have a human context and to be humanly connected. The navel, no less than speech and the upright posture, is a mark of our being." [23] In these latter cases, which are growing in frequency as ARTs render sexual difference and marriage incidental to the definition of "family," IVF emerges to view as a technical means, unprecedented in history, for manufacturing in reality those individuals who have heretofore existed only at the theoretical foundations of our political theory: blank entities who are the recipients of no prior history or relations and thus nobody's sons or daughters, ontologically alone with their wills and in their individuality.

To consent to these technologies is to commit implicitly to an anthropology that is intrinsically violent

and that would prevent us from recognizing the truth about ourselves. And yet this violence, like other contradictions of the truth, does not permit itself to be easily concealed. There are at least two, unanticipated ways that this violence can manifest itself to IVF parents. First, cases involving the creation of multiple embryos, selective abortion, or cryopreservation serve as a mirror casting light on the violence inherent in IVF as such, even where it is successful. For one must either concede the humanity of the embryos sacrificed or deferred in storage for the sake of the surviving sibling - as well as a certain arbitrariness in selecting this child rather than that one - or admit a point in the gestation process of the living child when he was treated by his parents as subhuman. Consequently many people, who prospectively could only hope for the successful birth of one child, find themselves haunted in retrospect by unanticipated anguish over the fate of their "spare" embryos.

Second, no amount of anticipation is preparation for the profound transformation, the experience of love or the overwhelming sense of responsibility that arrives with pregnancy and when a child first appears in the surprise of his own being. This is particularly true for new mothers, who, carrying this new life within themselves, bear this responsibility in a profoundly intimate and internal way. This brings great uncertainty and anxiety, and there is already a great and natural temptation for mothers to worry, or in the case of health problems, to blame themselves for the troubles of their young children: "What about that bottle of wine we drank before I knew I was pregnant?" "What about that terrible case of the flu?" "I knew shouldn't have taken that medication," and so on. The fact is that we simply do not know, and can *never* fully know in principle, just what the impact of an intervention such as IVF has upon the physical health of children conceived through that procedure. Precisely because we are *not* isolated atoms, but have our being through an infinite number of mutually supporting relations, most of our technological interventions in nature bring with them unanticipated (and uncontrollable) consequences. As I have noted, there is some concern that IVF may be a factor in the onset of certain pathologies later on, and no long-term data upon the long-term impact of cryopreservation. The uncertainty is difficult enough; the blame, should it arise, is an enormous burden to bear.

One can repent of an abortion. But it is difficult to acknowledge the violence inherent in IVF without feeling at the same time the need to repent of what no parent should ever be asked to repent of, namely the child that she loves more than she loves herself. What parent would ever accept that? Faced with the anguish that follows upon this violation of the truth of being, the parents' life can easily become a rearguard action against having to confront this unbearable truth and to repent of the unrepentable.[24] The great temptation then is for parents to harden themselves against facing the fundamental questions and the fundamental truth of their existence, in order to "protect" themselves, embracing ever more deeply the bifurcated anthropology, the flawed notion of freedom, and the limited horizon implicit in their original decision. IVF thus carries within it an enormous inducement for parents to avoid real introspection or genuine self-knowledge and inoculation against passing a truly humane or searching humanism along to their children.

The situation is no less painful and extreme for children born of IVF. Type "what to tell children born from IVF" into Google and you will discover a great deal of public consternation over whether, how, and when to tell IVF children of their origins, an indication both of the intimate relation between origin and identity and of the deep seated unease that accompanies this technology. A common strategy attempts to make virtue of necessity by telling children they were "chosen." But no thoughtful person could long remain satisfied with this superficial explanation. What is chosen could always have been un-chosen, a fact underscored by any siblings created concurrently through IVF who weren't so selected. This indicates just how profoundly the person, conceived as an object of choice differs from the person conceived as a gift. Moreover, the object of this choice, strictly speaking, wasn't *me* - my personal identity was shrouded in mystery - but a set of desirable characteristics, that is if any

discrimination entered into the selection of embryos at all. How is a child to understand that his siblings were sacrificed through selective abortion or were held in a state of limbo through cryopreservation - that they *weren't* his siblings? What then was *he*? Or worse, how is a child to understand that *he* was once held in a state of cryopreservation, so that "older" siblings, if he has them, could be born first? Again, what was he - and what was he to his parents - while they left him in that state of limbo?

Once again these questions of identity, which are present in any event, are multiplied exponentially in those instances where IVF is undertaken outside the context of the married couple: for example, when "the daddy's name is donor," when IVF is undertaken for single women, gays, and lesbians, where a surrogate is involved, or where a "global baby" has been assembled.[25] IVF, as we have seen, entails a certain reductive ambivalence about the body even in the very best instances. Since all bodies are sexually differentiated, this means a reductive ambivalence about sex and gender. In these latter cases, though, that ambivalence becomes explicit, and the questions become truly bewildering. How are children born in these circumstances to understand their own sexual and gender identities, as biological accidents, or blank tableaux? How are they to understand motherhood, fatherhood, and marriage as such, which have already been rendered accidental by this technique?

To this ambiguity may be added a further ambiguity about those historical and bodily relationships of "lineage, kinship, and descent" that have heretofore constituted us in our humanity and in our place in the world.[26] What are these relationships in principle? And what are they to *me*? Who am I - *what* am I? - when all of these relations have been circumvented and rendered superfluous by technology?

These questions are painful and bewildering. Perhaps then, we hope, the child won't think about them. But that is precisely the point. Cultural acceptance of IVF is a social and personal inducement *not* to think rigorously about the meaning and nature of human being, *not* to know ourselves. It is a massive discouragement, in other words, from embarking upon just that quest which heretofore characterized human life as human. And the pressure to avoid rigorous thinking about this question only grows as more of our acquaintances, friends, and loved ones come to be immersed in this technology. The fact that it is so extraordinarily difficult to broach this subject is of course an indication of just how close it lies to the core of human being, and it gives the lie to the notion that the question of origin could ever really be incidental.

Our culture's embrace of this technology and its effects is a sign that we have already ceased to think or to understand ourselves in anything other than pragmatic and technical terms, as evidenced by the superficiality with which our culture has addressed the meaning and "safety" of IVF. The society that embraces these procedures is the very antithesis of a true society, inasmuch as the health of a society depends upon its capacity for real philosophical thinking about the true and the good. For such a society must have *not thinking* as one of its fundamental goals, and will indeed inscribe this goal into its educational apparatus and its predominant forms of discourse. The child produced by IVF, especially a child who was "assembled" like a product of manufacture or whose siblings were sacrificed to selective abortion or cryopreservation, faces enormous personal difficulty in discovering that he is truly (i.e. ontologically) a child, because this truth was effectively denied at his origin and in his most primal relationship in ways that, if taken seriously, are almost unbearably painful. To bear this pain, he will either have to decline to take this questioning seriously, which means embracing more fully in his own life the fragmented and reductive anthropology operative in his origin, or he will have to find the grace to confront and transcend this original violence. Fortunately, this grace is available.

Inasmuch as IVF is an act of ontological violence, that is, violence against who and what human beings

are, it entails numerous, unanticipated forms of anguish for any thoughtful persons. The personal and social temptation, as noted above, is not to be thoughtful. Here we see something deeply at stake in the normalization of IVF that extends far beyond the normal questions of cost, clinical safety, physical health prospects, and social and psychological adjustment, important though all these are. Childhood and philosophy rise and fall together; only the innocence and wonder of the child, the discovery that we are children, and the willingness to accept the truth of being in its defenseless innocence can sustain the effort of thought necessary to discover the good life and to live in the light of that discovery.[27] It is precisely this capacity for discovery, and for living in the light of the truth that it reveals, that qualified human life as human down the Western centuries until now. The virtual disappearance of this quest and the dismissal of the human question as meaningless are not incidental to the arrival of IVF and the technological ontology of which it is the practical expression. For a society that cannot countenance childhood, that denies the innocence of its being, is a society that has already lost sight of its own humanity.

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## NOTES

[1] Augustine, *Confessions*, I.1.

[2] Acts 17:27. Ratzinger, *On Conscience* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), pp. 77-79.

[3] Augustine, *Confessions*, 10.27.

[4] A beautiful account of the 'defenselessness' of being in its goodness and truth is given in D.C. Schindler, *Plato's Critique of Impure Reason: On Goodness and Truth in the Republic* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), pp. 226-82.

[5] See Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord V: The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), p. 617.

[6] For reasons similar to those we will discuss below, Joseph Ratzinger saw our technological civilization as a threat to eclipse the "primordial knowledge" of creation shared by the great and disparate cultures of antiquity, a sign of "the profound and never altogether lost contact that human beings had with God's truth." "Ultimately every people has known this. The creation accounts of all civilizations point to the fact that the universe exists for worship and for the glorification of God. This cultural unity with respect to the deepest human questions is something very precious. In my conversations with African and Asian bishops... it becomes clear to me time and time again... how there is in the great traditions of the peoples a oneness on the deepest level with biblical faith. In these traditions there is preserved a primordial human knowledge that is open to Christ. The danger that confronts us today in our technological civilization is that we have cut ourselves off from this primordial knowledge, which serves as a guidepost and links all the great cultures, and that an increasing scientific know-how is preventing us from being aware of the fact of creation." Ratzinger, *"In the Beginning..." A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 10, 28.

[7] Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord V*, p. 616.

[8] 1 Cor. 4:7.

[9] The indivisibility of the person as a *per se unum*, which is at the same time the untroubled unity of a person and his world (what Aristotle calls a "single actuality"), is so profound that we normally have

the luxury of taking it for granted. Consequently, this unity often becomes visible only in the moment when it begins to break down, in illness, whose effect is to fracture the psycho-somatic unity of the person and his "belonging" to the world, and to call attention to some part or aspect of the person which is normally seamlessly integrated into his being. It is never just a part of the body or a biological system that is ill, but the *person* who is ill.

[10] One can find "source materials" for such a defense in Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology, in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 17, no. 3 (1990), pp. 439-54; Adrian J. Walker, "Personal Singularity and the *Communio Personarum*: A Creative Development of Thomas Aquinas' Doctrine of *Esse Commune*," in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 31, no. 3 (2004), and Robert Spaemann, *Persons: The Difference between Someone and Something*, trans. by Oliver O'Donovan (Oxford University Press, 2007).

[11] See Balthasar, *Glory of the Lord* V, pp. 613-27.

[12] Eve Ahmed, "Why Children Born by IVF May be More at Risk of Autism and Childhood Cancers," *The Independent* (October 31, 2006).

[13] See Wennerholm *et al*, "Children Born after Cryopreservation of Embryos or Oocytes: A Systematic Review of Outcome Data," in *Human Reproduction* (2009).

[14] The anguish when ARTs are unsuccessful is conveyed in a quite poignant way and in the first person by the journalist Anne Taylor Fleming in her *Motherhood Deferred: A Woman's Journey* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995). The anguish that accompanies successful IVF cases remains largely unexplored in any systematic sense, so far as I know, but we see indications of it in the article by Eve Ahmed, cited above.

[15] A powerful exception to this can be found in Leon Kass, *Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002), pp. 81-117. Kass writes (p. 85), "the first task, it seems to me, is not to ask 'moral or immoral?' or 'right or wrong?' but to try to understand fully the meaning and significance of the proposed actions... As most of us are at least tacitly aware, more is at stake in ordinary biomedical research or in experimenting with human subjects at risk of bodily harm. At stake is the *idea* of the *humanness* of our human life and the meaning of our embodiment, our sexual being, and our relations to our ancestors and descendants." Morality and significance are not mutually exclusive alternatives, of course. I do not agree with all of Kass's conclusions, nor am I entirely happy with phrasing the issue as a matter of "meaning and significance" or the stakes simply as a matter of the "idea" of our humanness. What I find unsatisfactory in this regard I attribute to Kass's refusal to treat the metaphysical issues raised by his analysis as rigorously as he might. Nevertheless I agree with his *ordo rationis* insofar as it signals a certain priority of ontology to ethics and with the conclusion (p. 89) that a blastocyst "deserves our respect not because it [first] has rights or claims or sentience (which it does not have at this stage), but because of what it is, now and prospectively." Whether and to what extent we concur as to what a blastocyst is remains an open question.

[16] By positivism I mean a certain taking being for granted which is the antithesis of wonder. Balthasar refers to it as a "sick blindness" that "arises from regarding reality as raising no questions, being 'just there'." Balthasar, *Theo-Drama II: Dramatis Personae: Man in God* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), p. 286.

[17] The distinction between nature and art is famously captured by Aristotle through the example of Antiphon's bed, which acquires its form from the "outside" by the imposition of the craftsman. Because

the artifact, in this case the bed, is only accidentally related to its form, if it were planted in the ground and suddenly magically acquired the power to grow shoots, the result would be, not another bed, but a tree. Robert Spaemann captures the contrast between a natural thing and an artifact, as well is the interiority and thus incommunicability proper to organisms, by posing a variation of Thomas Nagel's famous question, "What is it like to be a bat?" The example points to the necessity of the real distinction between *esse* and *essentia* and the way in which the former, as act, is both prior and posterior to the latter. Spaemann writes, "Nobody would ask what it is like to be to be a car. Being a car is not like anything, because a car does not exist in other than a purely logical sense. The kind of thing indicated by the word 'car' is instantiated at a given space-time situation just for us who look on a certain arrangement of pieces of metal as a care. Natural beings, on the other hand, exist in other than a purely logical sense. For them there is something 'it is like' to be themselves. We can, of course, never know what it is like to be a bat. We can only understand the question by analogy, from knowing what it is like to be a human being, or more precisely, what it is like to be *this* human being. And here we make a distinction between the self that sustains existence, on the one hand, and *what* it is that exists, on the other. We say that someone finds life difficult, or that someone takes his or her own life, and in some states of life we feel that simply existing is an effort. These expressions are all paradoxical. They speak of existing as an activity which subjects perform, though in order to perform any activity, a subject must exist first, while the 'activity' of existing is apparently a condition for there to be a subject to exist. We would do better to say that the 'what' of the subject's existence is a 'way of being.' In the case of the bat it would seem that its being is wholly swallowed up in its way of being, wholly accounted for as 'living.' Human beings, on the other hand, exist by distinguishing their being from their specific way of being, their specific 'nature.' Their nature is not what they *are*, pure and simple; their nature is something that they *have*. And this 'having' is their being. To be a person is the form in which 'rational natures' exist." (Aristotle, *Physics* II.2, 193a10-17.) Spaemann, *Persons*, pp. 30-31, emphasis original.

[18] As Aquinas puts it, following Aristotle, "We in a sense are the end of artificial things." Aquinas, *In Metaph.*, lecture 4, 173. The conversion of organism to artifacts in modern thought is thus tantamount to the *a priori* instrumentalization of being.

[19] See, e.g. Parfit, "Personal Identity," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 80, No. 1 (January, 1971), pp. 3-27.

[20] As Gregory Stock, a biotech entrepreneur and former director of the Program on Medicine, Technology, and Society at the School of Medicine at UCLA enthusiastically puts it, "Over the past hundred years the trajectory of the life sciences traces a clear shift from description to understanding to manipulation... In the first half of the twenty-first century, biological understanding will likely become less an end in itself than a means to manipulate biology. In one century, we have moved from observing to understanding to engineers." My only objection to Stock's remark is that, in fact, is that in fact understanding-as-engineering has been inscribed into our biological understanding since the advent of mechanistic ontology in the seventeenth century. Modern technology, in other words, was always already bio-technology, even if it took several centuries for this to be fully realized in practice. Stock, *Redesigning Humans: Our Inevitable Genetic Future* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), p. 7.

[21] Again, I find myself in partial agreement with Leon Kass. As he puts it, "The existence of human life in the laboratory, outside the confines of the generating bodies from which it sprang, also challenges the meaning of our embodiment." While generally cautious about IVF, Kass's reluctance both to think first in terms of morality and to press the ontological questions to their limit means that he allows that for people such as the parents of Louise Brown (the first IVF baby), "who seek a child derived from their flesh, celebrate in so doing their self-identification with their own bodies and acknowledge the meaning of the living human body by following its pointings to its own perpetuation. But he adds that

"life in the laboratory also allows other people - including those who would donate or sell sperm, eggs, or embryos; or those who would bear another's child in surrogate pregnancy; or even those who will prefer to have their children rationally manufactured entirely in the laboratory - to declare themselves independent of their bodies, in this ultimate liberation. For them the body is a mere tool, ideally an instrument of the conscious will, the sole repository of human dignity. Yet this blind assertion of will against our bodily nature - in contradiction to the meaning of the human generation it seeks to control - can only lead to self-degradation and dehumanization." And he warns, particularly in the latter instance in the case of "surrogate wombs," that this is to deny the meaning and worth of one's body [and] to treat it as a mere incubator, divested of its human meaning." As will become clear, I agree with Kass that there is a significant difference between IVF undertaken as a remedy for "the body's failure to serve the transmission of embodiment" and IVF undertaken to circumvent embodiment altogether (though in terms of traditional moral theology, I regard this as a difference in gravity not in "moral species"). However, this aspect of Kass's analysis appears to regard the question as a question of the (moral) application of a technology, as if it were our *intentions* that finally and simply determined the nature of a technique that otherwise is, if not ontologically neutral, at least ontologically ambiguous. In this the analysis appears to fail to do justice to the insight implicit through much of the rest of his argument, namely, that IVF in its inner logic is the expression of an ontology that is already self-degrading and dehumanizing. This is precisely *why* "well-intentioned" IVF leads ineluctably to the brave new world of eugenical embryo selection, embryo research, and germline experimentation, a fact which Gregory Stock points out with chilling clarity. Kass, *Life, Liberty, and the Defense of Human Dignity*, pp. 100-101.

[22] As Gregory Stock enthusiastically puts it, "The coming possibilities will be the inadvertent spinoff of mainstream research that virtually everyone supports. Infertility, for example, is a source of deep pain for millions of couples. Researchers and clinicians working on in vitro fertilization (IVF) don't think much about future human evolution, but nonetheless are building a foundation of expertise in conceiving, handling, testing, and implanting human embryos, and this will one day be the basis for the manipulation of the human species. Already, we are seeing attempts to apply this knowledge in highly controversial ways: as premature as today's efforts to clone humans may be, they would be the flimsiest of fantasies if they could not draw on decades of work on human IVF." Stock, *Redesigning Humans*, p. 5.

[23] Kass, *Life, Liberty, and the Defense of Human Dignity*, p. 95.

[24] See, "Why Children Born by IVF May be More at Risk of Autism and Childhood Cancers," *The Independent* (October 31, 2006).

[25] See the ground-breaking study by Elizabeth Marquardt, Norval D. Glenn, and Karen Clark, *My Daddy's Name is Donor: A New Study of Young Adults Conceived Through Sperm Donation* (Poulsbo, WA: Broadway Publication, 2010), reviewed elsewhere in this issue. One can only imagine the effects of discovering that some donors are responsible for as many as 150 children. See "One Sperm Donor, 150 Offspring," in *The New York Times* (September 5, 2001). This has given rise to concern that "rare diseases could be more widely spread through the population" or to the increased possibility for "accidental incest." To the extent that concern is confined to this level, it is an indication of the dearth of serious ontological thinking that has accompanied the arrival of these techniques. The "global baby" is a reference to a *Wall Street Journal* article reporting a small but growing trend in international adoptions where babies are created using sperm and egg donors from different countries and surrogate mothers. See "Assembling the Global Baby," *Wall Street Journal* (December 10, 2010).

[26] Kass, *Life, Liberty, and the Defense of Human Dignity*, p. 95.

[27] Joseph Pieper's remarks about leisure underscore this relationship between childhood, philosophy, and play. "Leisure is a form of stillness that is the necessary preparation for accepting reality; only the person who is still can hear, and whoever is not still, cannot hear. Such stillness as this is not mere soundlessness or a dead muteness; it means, rather, that the soul's power, as real, of responding to the real - a co-responsence, eternally established in nature - has not yet descended into words. Leisure is the disposition of receptive understanding, of contemplative beholding, and immersion - in the real." Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture* (South Bend: St Augustine's Press, 1998), p. 31.

# Human Dignity and Reproductive Technology

JULIANA WEBER

**N.C. and Kelly Lund-Molfese**, *Human Dignity and Reproductive Technology* (University Press of America, 2003, 121 pages).

Symposium papers delivered at the Integras Institute in March 2002 have been re-organized here into three thematic sections: 1) cultural notions of human dignity and reproductive technology; 2) the proper role of modern science with a view to preserving the sanctity of human life; and 3) the political and legal context in which the debate is taking place. Some papers struggle a little against the time that has elapsed since the papers were published, most notably in their silence on the recent challenge of ANT-OAR, but the entire book presents at least a good exercise in how to think and argue about the issues, if not also a most current grasp of the issues.

Patrick Guinan writes an historical introduction, placing the papers within the context of philosophy and science. In particular, he presents a useful historical understanding of notions such as rights and technology. Rights were once understood as based in nature, whereas they are now understood as based in legislation or contracts. In other words, modern rights exist only after they are asserted. Technology, likewise, once attempted to improve man's life within the limits of what he ought to tinker with, whereas now, technology is more widely understood as man's ability to perfect himself by himself alone. In these few words, Guinan introduces the over-arching theme of the conference, which the various speakers detail in reference to their particular topics.

Part I opens with Bethke Elshtain's "The Body and the Quest for Control." If we take the project of perfecting ourselves to be limitless, then we reject creaturely finitude. The body becomes mere property, the project and product of the individual. Control of this kind always means manipulation and elimination of unwanted products, a lack of acceptance for what has been given (p. 5). Standing in opposition to this notion of self-mastery is a notion of freedom within creaturely dependency. Elshtain argues that it is the given limit of what is "natural," the moral limit from time immemorial, which allows us to accept all persons regardless of their needs without finding them too burdensome or wondering whether they would have chosen not to be born.

John Haas's "The Magisterium on the Cutting Edge: Evangelization and Culture" continues the logic of the previous argument with a discussion of materialism as it has robbed man of his (participatory) dignity, kidnapping him from the context of creation, rendering him no longer intelligible or awe-inspiring. In Haas's view, when we reject God and the sacred, we necessarily reject an intelligent order to things, a *nature* of things. This is the logical upshot of a public debate that suppresses all language of the spirit and the divine. The new rule, he explains, is choice, which takes a few forms in our culture: relativism, utilitarianism, human autonomy, etc. (p. 30). Our culture does still pursue human goods, but only in a disordered way, which Haas predicts will continue until a new evangelization puts human

nature and sin back in the public vocabulary.

Steven Bozza wraps up Part I with "Human Dignity and Reproductive Technology: Pastoral Implications," a highly compassionate essay that ranges from the nuptial meaning of the body to the stages of grief for couples that find themselves infertile. The final stage of grief is hope, which Bozza takes to mean a re-envisioning of the couple's fruitfulness and the whole vocation of their marriage. The theme of acceptance and creaturely limits reappears in Bozza with the note that children are a gift, not a right or a commodity. It undermines human dignity to try to bring new life into being outside the marital act, because this is our creaturely limit (p. 41). Bozza offers and explains the following principles of discernment to guide couples in making reproductive decisions (after the objectively disordered options are ruled out): the dignity of the man and woman on all levels including emotions; the good of their marriage and the marital act; and the stability of their finances (pp. 42-43).

Part II also consists of three papers, beginning with Daniel P. Toma's "What's Wrong with Biology and Biologists? The Remote Roots of the Moral Crisis." For Aquinas, knowledge starts in the senses, and faith builds on knowledge; also, things more remote to the senses are known on the basis of things more commonly known. For Stephen J. Gould, however, a science of facts is separate from a faith of morality and values (p. 51). Gould represents the current dominant position. Toma thinks that the difference between Aquinas and Gould lies more in their *approach to nature* than in their respective beliefs about God or scientific method. Gould assumes, without defense, that there is nothing real besides matter (p. 52). Furthermore, the standard science textbook begins with tiny pieces of matter, D.N.A. or atoms, and works back up to a whole deer or blade of grass by the end of the book. This flips on its head the traditional method of approaching nature. Psychology usually follows this example by beginning with animal behavior or abnormal human behavior in order to explain normal psychology; there is no understanding of human intellect, so there can be no understanding of morality by the time the microscopic building blocks have added back up to a whole man. Every evidence lodged against theism, Toma argues, is a product of this backwards approach to nature and can be answered on those grounds (p. 65).

Patrick Lee is charged with the wide task of delineating the front-line trenches in the debate about the "The Moral Status of Human Embryos." He argues that the lines in the sand have less to do with souls than they have to do with *embodiment*. The pro-choice side of the argument tends to equate personhood with consciousness (p. 72), whereas pro-lifers see the body or life as the most important point. Denial of personhood at conception is a logical result of the premise that we are not our bodies, that we came to be sometime after conception and/or became intrinsically valuable sometime after conception. Lee's response to this is a discussion of kinds and degrees of potentiality, and how to distinguish the embryo from his mother both in his potentiality and in his activity.

Part II ends with William E. May's "Begetting vs. Making Babies." For May, "making" is primarily about the product, whereas "begetting" is about the actors and their perfection as moral agents. Marriage makes a couple fit for procreation in the way that studying medicine makes one fit to diagnose a patient and prescribe treatment. *Making* a baby *via a technician* is dehumanizing for the human product on account of the unfit activity and unfit actor, so it can never be morally justifiable. In contrast to this, May discusses the Trinity in whose image we are made. The Son is not made but begotten "by an immanent act of personal love" (p. 91). Our dignity is respected when we likewise beget (and refuse to make) human life. We have no right to children; desires simply do not justify every means to attain a thing (p. 92).

Part III consists of only two papers. Richard M. Doerflinger opens with "Retrospective and Prospective:

The Public Policy Debate on Embryo Research." He begins his historical survey in the 1970s with federal funding and limits placed on IVF, the presidents and their appointed ethics panels, and other issues such as cloning. "Every major federal advisory group that has defended destructive human embryo research... has conceded that the early embryo is a developing human life, and has even said that this life deserves some measure of 'respect'... [but that] some human lives lack 'personhood'... so the 'respect' we owe to these human lives is outweighed by the benefits we can hope to gain by disrespecting and destroying them" (pp. 100-101). This finding certainly adds weight to the previous papers' discussions of personhood.

Doerflinger points out bad arguments on both sides of the political fence: Clinton's committee wanted to fund embryonic stem cell research only if less problematic research would not be as productive, but adult stem cell research has called this policy into question; Bush's administration allowed federal funding for research on existing stem cell lines so that no new embryos would be destroyed, but it admitted that, if the research proved fruitful, private investors would then jump on board (p. 103). While Doerflinger's future predictions can only be guesses, the few years since he delivered this paper have been eerily obedient: he predicts the patenting and marketing of embryos, using embryos for organ harvesting, and eventually large-scale genetic engineering. Doerflinger also tips his hat to Lee Silver's prediction of a future caste system based on genetic enhancement.

The final paper in this collection belongs to Bradley and concerns "The Constitutionality of Recent Pro-life Legislation," a discussion of the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, the Born Alive Infants Protection Act, and the Human Cloning Prohibition Act, all of which appear to Bradley to be constitutional. UVVA makes a clear allowance for *Roe v. Wade*, and it challenges none of the logic of that decision. *Roe v. Wade* made no ruling about the beginning of life, nor did it attempt to solve the question of personhood. Since UVVA does not override the mother's choice, its parameters fall entirely outside the scope of *Roe v. Wade*. BAIPA. is safe on the same grounds, because *Roe v. Wade* consistently ruled in favor of the choice of a *pregnant* woman, even though most of the detriments to her that are listed within the decision concern the raising of a child. It remains consistent that *Roe v. Wade*, throughout, concerns pregnancy. BAIPA. absolutely respects the boundary that defines actual life beginning at birth. Finally, HCPA. seems safe, since the Court has not established a right to clone, nor a right to IVF. In order to win an argument on the grounds of privacy, the asserted liberty must be deeply rooted in our nation's tradition and history, and it must be described in specific, concrete terms. If IVF should be approved on the grounds of privacy, it would have to be defined so narrowly as to exclude cloning, so that cloning would require its own trial. In that way, it seems HCPA will be safe for a while.

In all, this is an excellent collection of papers from which a wide audience could benefit. Where "recent" pro-life legislation is a bit dated, Doerflinger's predictions benefit from the decade of hindsight, and Bradley's remarks still represent clear thinking on the subject at hand. These papers would be especially useful in a classroom setting.

# NaPro Technology Revolution

CATHERINE SIENKIEWICZ

**Thomas W. Hilgers**, *The NaPro Technology Revolution: Unleashing the Power in a Woman's Cycle* (Beaufort Books, 2010, 436 pages).

Dr Hilgers has taken on a major task: to give the lay person comprehensive information about this alternative reproductive science of NaPro technology, in a way that integrates its findings with the existing medical literature, without overwhelming the reader by too much technical detail.

He understands, from years of his own experience and research, that there is a great need for this information to be shared, and that for many people this book may be a door into a world of research and treatment that offers the true help they have been seeking. NaPro (Natural Procreative) technology is a way of diagnosing and treating reproductive and fertility problems based upon over 30 years of dedicated research and evaluation. It is a natural approach based on the basic concepts of the normal fertility cycle: by tracking the cycle in a standardized way, Dr Hilgers and his associates have been able to determine what is normal and abnormal, and to then isolate and treat the *underlying* causes of fertility problems.

Why is this area of reproductive research still so hidden after over a quarter century of development? It is in large part due to that intent to find underlying causes. Hilgers explains how the advent of the contraceptive pill inaugurated a major shift in reproductive medicine, from an individualized approach to the individual patient and her problem, to a generalized one-size-fits-all prescription which can effectively mask a host of symptoms for years of a patient's life. Through his work, Dr Hilgers has become all too aware of the population of women whose health issues remain untreated or become worse because the contraceptive pill is universally given to women in order to "regulate" the natural cycle - the main diagnostic indicator of their underlying problem. Since the adoption of the pill by the obstetric/gynecological profession, the funding for research and even insurance reimbursement has focused on its use in near-exclusive way.

Adding to this environment, the introduction of IVF technology has further pushed the motivation of research to the side of treating symptoms rather than searching for underlying causes, and to seeking ever-more technological and artificial means of addressing infertility. Without assuming ill-intent on the part of mainstream health practitioners, it is clear that the financial payout for hi-tech fertility treatment is high, and it grows with each new advancement.

But despite the high cost of the more accepted methods of reproductive healthcare, the disappointing reality is that because the status quo is so promoted and so little challenged, there has been very little development in the diagnostic realm in more than half a century. In fact, in some areas there has been a decline in successful treatment because practitioners are collectively losing some of the surgical expertise they once had, due to the dependence on the symptom-masking contraceptive pill.

Nevertheless, despite limited funding and widespread prejudice against his own approach, the word is

slowly getting out about Dr Hilgers and the reproductive health center he founded. The patient testimonials in his book show an excitement about the hope and healing that has been discovered there, after the "abandonment" by the medical field that so many had previously experienced. While many people are still in the dark about what is causing their health and fertility problems, and about why there seems to be so little interest in truly understanding their bodies, Hilger's book offers much-needed light, and a way forward. Though some - especially those looking for a true self-help book - may find this work needlessly technical and overladen with medical speak, it should be remembered that for women unaware of the options Dr Hilgers offers, this book provides vital access to a more than superficial understanding of the normal and abnormal working of their bodies.

There are some sections of the book designated for doctors, and some of the later chapters can be quite technical in their explanations of specific health problems. But for a person suffering from these specific symptoms - and never receiving adequate diagnosis and treatment - one can surmise that there is no such thing as too much information. This book serves as a very helpful introduction to fertility awareness and the NaPro technology approach: important general information for every woman. But it is also an excellent reference manual, as the chances are good that the reader or a friend or relative will experience some of the reproductive health problems addressed in the book.

As Hilgers points out, most women are not equipped with a basic understanding of their bodies and the natural reproductive cycle. It is necessary that every woman acquire this knowledge, because the current medical environment requires the patient to be proactive about her own health, and to search for the underlying causes to various symptoms. Much of the book is focused on this concern.

In the first four chapters, Hilgers describes the two different approaches to reproductive medicine, and why and how NaPro technology and the Creighton charting method were developed. Chapters 5 through 8 provide a review of basic anatomy and physiology, of the fertility cycle and the hormones involved. The author also makes the reader aware of common misconceptions and prejudices about the information he is presenting, since it is probable that many health practitioners would discourage this approach to women's health. In chapters 8 through 14, Hilgers describes the Creighton charting system, explains the important distinction between hormones and artimones (and the implication for treatment), the promising use of progesterone support for a variety of problems, and the surgical aspects of NaPro technology. All of these chapters together give a helpful basic introduction to the field of NaPro technology. The remaining chapters deal individually with specific problems regarding fertility and reproductive health. They are a helpful reference for those who have undiagnosed or untreated symptoms, and also provide preparation for the likely scenario of being faced with such symptoms in the future.

Hilgers' book is not a quick or an easy read. But for many women it will be impossible to put it down, so much are they in need of real answers and self-understanding. An ever-growing number of women and their spouses are becoming dissatisfied and frustrated by the standard approach to their health and fertility. They want better for themselves and their daughters. Dr Hilgers' clear recognition of the dignity of each person and the need for individual, respectful care will insure that, among this group, the word will continue to get out.

# Everything Conceivable

LESLEY RICE

**Liza Mundy**, *Everything Conceivable: How Assisted Reproduction Is Changing Our World* (Anchor Books, 2008, 353 pages).

Of all the reproductive technologies Liza Mundy considers in her dizzying chronicle of their history and implications, cloning is one she is fairly certain will not catch on. Why? Because "what most people want to do is procreate together. People want to have a baby, if they can, with the person they love" (p. 336). And a baby is "human love made concrete, human love given flesh, human love that takes form and is now moving about and growing, the living, breathing testament of our union with another person" (p. 117).

In Mundy's account, the defining human desire to see love take flesh in a new child seems to leave no one untouched by its urgency. As the author shows through diverse interviews and anecdotes, the quest for a baby drives not only married couples struggling with infertility but also new categories of people who won't or can't conceive without technological intervention: "single mothers by choice," post-menopausal women, same-sex pairs. In unrelenting pursuit of a child in the face of high cost, physical pain, and inconvenience, these seekers are absorbed into a vast experiment in casting off the constraints of nature, abetted by what in America, at least, is a scantily regulated \$3 billion fertility industry.

Although Mundy evinces no principled objection to baby-making transposed into a technocratic key, she casts a perceptive eye on the emergence of techniques from artificial insemination to intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) - and on the social consequences, unanticipated and unrestrainable, of what might originally have been regarded as private personal choices. Where nature is rendered obsolete, cultural forms quickly follow suit, as we see in the book's opening vignette: the efforts of an Episcopalian priest to write the egg donor into the baptismal liturgy of triplets conceived by in vitro fertilization.

Another of the countless dilemmas Mundy details is the simple question of what to call the participants in the generation of a child. There can be gestational carriers (formerly known as "surrogate mothers"), egg donors, sperm donors, the legal parents (who could be any of the above or none of the above)... and then of course we need to account for the gestational carrier's husband, for whom Mundy, in despairing irony, crafts the moniker "non-biological birth father" (p. 149). What seems a comically complicated parody of the traditional "Mom" and "Pop" reflects an unprecedented web of serious relationships that, once invented, must be navigated moment by moment without benefit of a cultural script.

Even when assisted reproduction remains within the traditional domain of a marriage, Mundy's stories show that choices and consequences are legion, complicated, and alienating. There is the couple undergoing in vitro fertilization using their own gametes, who discover that the wife's oocytes seem to

be defective. The wife is ready to pursue adoption; the husband would prefer IVF using his own sperm and a donated egg so that some genetic link is maintained. Left out, the would-be mother hesitates: "If it's not going to be mine, couldn't it not be both of ours?" (p. 56).

And then there is the couple who, having conceived triplets, chose "selective reduction," that is, the abortion of one of the children while the others were permitted to develop to term. The mother, now busily raising the remaining twins, told Mundy, "People will say to me, 'Could you imagine triplets, how hard that would be,' and I can't help but think: I did have triplets. It was a decision between me and my husband. We talk about it, how hard it is. He talks a lot about how sad he feels about it, and he's surprised how sad he feels about it. And he does feel sad" (p. 269).

Parents who conceive through artificial reproductive technologies are surprised in more ways than one, and the grief they encounter is not just their own. The desire to bring forth new life is matched by the desire to know one's origins. This is something that we have learned, as Mundy shows, from the practice of adoption, transformed in recent decades from a "closed" transaction that protects the identity of the adults to an often more "open" process that affords the child the greatest possible opportunity to know not only the parents who raise him but also those who engendered him.

But the lesson evidently has to be learned all over again in the face of new technologies: Mundy reports that while only 47% of parents who conceive children with donor gametes expect that their children will be interested in a relationship with the donor, 82% of children so conceived actually are. The statistic presupposes, of course, that the children responding have discovered or been told the nature of their conception; this does not simply go without saying, although many of the parents Mundy interviews are open with the children about using ARTs.

Self-deception surfaces in Mundy's account, in any case, as her subjects find ways to justify their acceptance of the shadowy side of the technologies. There is the doctor, a pioneer in fetal therapy *in vivo*, who also performs selective reductions on the premise that this can't be abortion because the woman remains pregnant (with the remaining twins or a singleton) after the procedure. "I've come to look at it as: the finished product has a much better chance of surviving. Look - you never want to dehumanize it, because then you get cavalier. You have to keep the big picture in mind. We're not losing one. We're saving some" (p. 266).

In a similar vein, a mother recounts her changed attitude toward her frozen embryos: "Little lives: that's how I thought about them, but you have to switch gears and think, they're not lives, they're cells. They're science. That's kind of what I had to switch to" (p. 293). Others, who can't reconceive their "leftover" embryos as "science," are continuously tortured by the question of what to do with them.

The achievement of *Everything Conceivable* is Mundy's ability to weave diverse strands of biology, politics, economics, history, and personal stories into a comprehensive, insightful picture of the brave new world of procreation remade through technology. She sports a breezy journalistic style, but approaches her subjects with genuine pathos and a willingness to see and criticize many of the untoward dimensions of ARTs even as she admires the beautiful children so conceived and their dedicated parents. Her account of the relationship between the fertility industry, feminism, and the homosexual movement over several decades is a fascinating synthesis, and her feminist sympathies do not prevent a discussion of the uneasy transformation of pro-choice rhetoric in light of increasing public awareness of the facts of fetal development - and in light of the resurgent desire of women to have children as well as to prevent them.

Mundy does resent the American pro-life movement's effective resistance of federal funding for human

embryo research to make ARTs safer and more effective for children as well as parents. "IVF itself was the experiment" she laments (p. 32), refusing to acknowledge that ARTs ineluctably involve experimentation with human subjects, whether this takes place in concerted fashion through planned experiments or *ad hoc* in the course of meeting would-be parents' expectations.

Mundy's agnosticism about the dignity of nascent life colors her overly vague account of the product of ICSI, in which a sperm cell is injected into an oocyte. She recounts her fascination at the arbitrary power of this procedure, which usurps the prerogatives of "God..., or natural selection, or whoever chooses which gametes become humans" (p. 85). Two-hundred fifty pages later Mundy reports that young cell biologists are often horrified by the violence of ICSI. - it's "like stabbing a body with a bayonet," one says - but she minimizes this reaction as the "outsized reverence for the natural processes they spend their lives studying" (p. 337).

While Mundy herself can't be accused of "outsized reverence," she, like many of her subjects, has to resist her own spontaneous response to what she witnesses on occasion, suppressing her discomfort with a reminder "not to fetishize nature" (p. 86). Ironically, her profound recognition that a child is desirable as an embodiment of love crystallizes not in the context of normal conjugal relations but with reference to a lesbian pair's selection of a sperm donor with physical traits to match the non-biological mother. We are confronted by a paradox: the child conceived in this way embodies a love that in fact circumvents the flesh as far as possible. This child is not so much a gift to two spouses, the always-surprising fruit of their love's spontaneity, as the meticulous construct of the wills of four protagonists - the lesbian pair, the sperm donor, the IVF doctor - with the aid of props and a supporting cast.

It is a delicate business to offer criticisms of technologized fertility, for there is no dearth of generosity, sacrifice, gratitude, and wonder in the mothers and fathers Mundy depicts in their pursuit of one of the great goods of human life. And inasmuch as reproductive technologies cannot but piggyback on the structures of creation itself, the children conceived through ARTs cannot but be gifts to their families and to themselves. The question is whether the mode of their conception, abstracted as it is from embodied communion, does justice to them and to their parents' love, or whether it does not instead tend to displace the Giver of love and life, to the detriment of both. Lacking a transcendent horizon, *Everything Conceivable* - for all its insight and valuable perspective - cannot entertain this decisive question.

# Motherhood Deferred

LESLEY RICE

**Anne Taylor Fleming**, *Motherhood Deferred: A Woman's Journey* (Putnam Adult, 1994, 256 pages).

Fleming's memoir commences in 1988, a decade after the first birth via in-vitro fertilization, as her own quest for a baby begins in the doctor's office: "I am about to have some kind of sexual encounter, but of this weird new kind: not with a person but with a syringe of sperm." Conscious of the multifold alienation that burdens her mission - which begins here with artificial insemination and progresses through rounds of gamete intrafallopian transfer, zygote intrafallopian transfer, and frozen embryo transfer - Fleming is drawn to revisit her past in search of reconciliation. A journalist by profession, she punctuates uninhibited descriptions of these artificial reproductive procedures with no less gritty chapters situating her four decades of experience being female with an account of gender in America during the same tumultuous period between the 1950s and the early 1990s. The result is a fascinating portrayal, perceptive, articulate, and raw, of the morass of trends in American life to which we owe the ascendancy of laboratory baby-making, and of their meaning, particularly for women.

Fleming's etiology of infertility hones in on women whose adulthood, like her own, unfolded within the frame of the 1950s and the 1980s, decades she derides as "manly" and "pro-family." In her eyes, the 1950s saw a "return to sharply etched male-female roles" and an "effort to redignify American manhood and redomesticate or 'contain'... the American female after her escape from the house into the wartime economy." Fleming's parents, both Hollywood actors, contributed to the idyllic public veneer of 50s family life, but divorced when Fleming was five, well in advance of the American trend.

Fleming takes the domineering father and the frustrated, subservient mother, and the distortion of marriage by *Playboy* and hushed infidelity, to be the typical reality beneath the happy American family portrait at mid-century. Dissatisfied with their parents' relationship and with their own lot as "caretakers," young girls like Fleming learned to "identify with the aggressors" - their fathers - seeking achievement outside the home to avoid the sense of the constriction they saw in their mothers. They became the "Sacrificial Generation of Women," as Fleming puts it, because they came of age with no firm ground to stand on, in a culture eagerly dispensing with every conventional script to make room for the tenuous freedom to invent oneself.

"We were the golden girls of the brave new world," she writes, "ready, willing, and able to lay our contraceptively endowed bodies across the chasm between the feminine mystique and the world the feminists envisioned." But the "liberation" of sexual mores and gender roles gave rise to decisions with consequences that no one anticipated, not the least of which was the seemingly obvious new choice to delay motherhood.

Fleming finds that her own eleventh-hour desire for a child demands a day of reckoning, a re-examination of the bracing feminist rhetoric that has been a mainstay of her life and work, from the new vantage point of the fertility clinic. Now a "baby-hungry object of embarrassment to the feminists,

an object lesson for the counter-feminists," she winces at the fact that she is succumbing to the "revenge of the wombs," the reassertion in her own body of the rejected maxim that biology is destiny. She grapples incisively with the meaning of feminine fulfillment, never abandoning the aspirations or resentments of feminism, but nonetheless taking stock of its limits.

For all her desire to be free of gender-related strictures that might limit her career or define her relationships, she wishes that women would achieve this freedom while retaining their "female ethnicity," what others have called the "feminine genius." But what she perceives, first in gender relations and in the workplace, and now in the technologized, goal-oriented fertility industry, is a masculinization of womanhood and of motherhood. And though she objects to it, she herself has been taken up into this logic: her quest for a baby, for all the authenticity of her maternal desire, is a project with a deadline, carried forward by long-disciplined ambition - and it is *her* project, though her less-invested husband co-operates.

Fleming's searingly frank consideration of relations between the sexes, and of sexual relations, in the throes of both contraceptive and artificial reproductive technologies (ARTs) exposes a twofold instrumentalization of sex. Although her genuine insights, and her quest for reconciliation, are limited by the absence of a transcendent horizon capable of illuminating these signs of the times in their full depth as matters of love and the failure to love, matters of sin and redemption, *Motherhood Deferred* offers an important perspective, from an early moment in the ascendancy of ARTs, on the reconfiguration of personal relationships and the social order in light of these technologies and the movements that gave rise to them.

Fertility technologies demand painful treatments and may still end in barrenness, to be sure, but perhaps the more significant cost is that they represent a new phase of the estrangement from one's body and one's spouse that contraceptive technologies inaugurated, leaving women resolved to catch up with themselves in a race against time that defies femininity itself.

# Experiences of Donor Conception

PAIGE S. SANCHEZ

**Caroline Lorbach**, *Experiences of Donor Conception: Parents, Offspring and Donors through the Years* (Kingsley, 2003, 192 pages).

"A Response to the Malaise of Not Being God by Creating Children for Biologically Infertile Persons of the World to Eliminate the Burden of an Unfilled Desire, and for Making Gametes Beneficial to the Public." [With apologies to Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland From Being a Burden on Their Parents or Country, and for Making Them Beneficial to the Public," 1729.]

*I think it is agreed by all parties that to have a child is an inalienable right of every human person. To pass on one's genetic make-up to progeny is something every man desires and deserves. The prodigious number of women lacking an ovum, of men with a low sperm count, or of people who have suffered disease or have hereditary abnormalities that could be given to their children is a presently deplorable state, a very great grievance indeed; and therefore, whoever can find a safe and probable way of using science to answer this tribulation would serve the public immeasurably. Certainly to help infertile persons in their great need would be nothing short of an immense act of generosity and charity of the truest kind.*

*But my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for those who desire to be mothers and fathers: it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of persons who are not in a position to give birth to and raise a child but who have the possibility of being the source of a rich harvest of gametes. Sperm and egg donors, whether they already have children of their own or do not wish to ever have children themselves, have at their disposal spare parts that through their donations can help their fellow man and in turn receive financial compensation for their anonymous biological contribution in response to the dire situation in which infertile persons find themselves. As one donor has said, "In the end it's what's in your heart, what the feelings are, what the sentiments are, if you're doing the right thing and you're doing it from the heart you can't go too far wrong" (p. 18).*

*The advantages of the proposal of donor conception are obvious and many, as well as of the highest importance. I can think of no one objection that will possibly be raised against this proposal, unless it should be urged, that the number of unwanted children would thereby be lessened. This I freely own, and 'twas indeed one principal design in offering it to the world. Therefore let no man talk to me of other expedients: where there is suffering it must be eliminated, for nothing good has ever come of man not getting what man himself determines, wants, and deserves.*

This is the ideology from which this book is born; one that denies that the givenness of being born has an objective meaning at all.

Certainly, the experience of infertility is a circumstance that feels contrary to man's nature, which has been made for happiness and fulfillment. While infertility is a painful state of affairs, it can also be

lived as a grace that puts man in front of his own life realizing that he is not the maker of himself. However, the proposal of this book suggests the contrary: when man cannot make his own life, his response is to take matters into his own hands to make the life of the child he so ardently desires. In this, he rejects the grace offered to him in the suffering of infertility.

In this book the act of donating a gamete is viewed as a way of taking control of one's life. The body has no relation to the person and becomes simply raw material to be used. Lorbach writes: "Years ago I used to donate blood and would walk out of the blood bank proudly wearing the sticker given to me which read, 'Be nice to me, I gave blood today.' Imagine if stickers were given to sperm and egg donors: 'Be nice to me, I donated sperm today.' Men and women who donate their reproductive tissue are rarely recognized in any public way" (p. 73). Lorbach implies they should be.

As a consequence, donors often find themselves wondering what has resulted through their donations. "Donors have often been faced with inevitable questions such as: 'How many other children are there?'" (p. 80). "I asked one clinic, I said, 'Is it possible for you to tell me how many I've fathered?' They told me that I'd fathered six, three boys and three girls" (p. 82). While it is most common for donors to remain perpetually unknown and therefore without conscious relation to the families that care for the offspring produced through their gametes, some have said: "I would be eager to hear about the offspring from my donation, not to meddle in their lives to supplant their parents, but just to be available. Also, I have been very successful, so I would think nothing of helping them with college tuition in a few years" (p. 82).

In this book, donor conception is presupposed to be a great good answering an acute need, regardless of the inevitable consequence of the task of telling others and also the offspring produced by donor conception. The author laments that this is made more difficult by the societal censure surrounding this mode of coming into being. "Donor conception is nothing to be ashamed of, and if we tried to hide it, it would be as though there was something to hide" (p. 118). Therefore, some parents have said, "We have told anyone who will know our child because we want the child to grow up feeling that their circumstances are quite normal," even though from the beginning, "we never even thought past having the child" (pp. 95, 113).

The number of children by donor conception is growing. These children are formed to affirm the normality of coming into being this way, marked by comments such as: "Daddy didn't have any seeds. We went to a hospital where they had seeds from lots of different men, and we picked one, and that went with Mummy's eggs and made this fantastic boy" (p. 127). Children can now confidently proclaim, in "referring to the 'lady that helped us out'... 'Oh yes, it's almost like she's our 'ex-mother'" (p. 131).

This book reads as a project seeking to help recipient parents affirm their experiences of donor conception as conventional and benign. Unfortunately, what is denied in this effort is the truth of the human person and his relation to God. Rather than entering into an understanding of life, children, reality, and even suffering as gift, this book instead presupposes that where there is suffering it must be eliminated, because nothing good has ever come of man not getting what man himself determines, wants, and deserves. The truth of the frustration with infertility is ultimately a profound fear that man is not God.

I close with a quotation from the final chapter of the book entitled, "Thoughts and Experiences of Donor Offspring." This chapter offers a surprisingly inconsistent conclusion compared with those that precede it, which mostly read as an effort of the author to affirm her own decision in favor of donor insemination when faced with her own infertility. These stories of donor children confirm that the truth of the human person's relation to his origin is something that can never, no matter how much the

relation is rejected, ignored, or kept secret, be blotted out from one's ontological memory.

I'll never give up [finding information about my donor]. How can you just accept injustice and carry on with dignity? (p. 180).

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# Fertility and Gender

BETHANY MEOLA

**Helen (ed.) Watt**, *Fertility & Gender: Issues in Reproductive and Sexual Ethics* (Anscombe Bioethics Centre, 2011, 220 pages).

This collection of essays is, on the whole, an example of robust engagement with a culture deeply confused about the meaning of sex, love, marriage, fatherhood, motherhood, and, of course, fertility and gender. How confused? Consider the following examples.

In January 2012, a judge in Iowa ruled that a child's birth certificate should list the name of her mother's "wife," despite the state pointing out the biological impossibility of a woman establishing legal paternity of a child.[1]

In a September 2011 article entitled "The Freedom to Choose Your Pronoun," the *New York Times* discussed the concept of "preferred gender pronouns" whereby a person chooses which set of pronouns (male, female, or gender-neutral) best fit the person's gender identity - for that day, at least.[2]

In July 2011, the British *Telegraph* highlighted the phenomenon of so-called "co-parenting relationships," where a man and woman contract with each other to have a baby and raise the child together but maintain a platonic relationship.[3]

Such stories confirm the need - and the urgency - for a renewed evangelization on marriage, the family, and the meaning of the human person in light of Christ.

The majority of the essays found in *Fertility and Gender* had their genesis in a 2010 international conference hosted in Ireland by the former Linacre Centre for Healthcare Ethics (now the Anscombe Bioethics Centre, named for British philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe). Most of the authors hail from outside of the United States, including England, Australia, and Rome. For the American reader, this multi-national forum provides an opportunity to be introduced to important thinkers beyond our shores.

The essays themselves touch on everything from celibacy and IVF to teenage pregnancy and same-sex attraction. This diversity finds its unity in the question of what constitutes living ethically as a human - and therefore embodied and sexual - person, a question that indeed touches on a plurality of distinct yet interrelated issues.

Bishop Anthony Fisher's introduction is clear and to the point. He persuasively shows the dissonance between authentic Christian anthropology and constructionist, consumerist modern thought. And nowhere is this dissonance more evident than in questions of gender and sexuality. Is one's sexual identity self-constructed or ontologically given? Are children gifts to be received through the embrace of marital love or products to be designed and manufactured? As the bishop points out, Catholic answers to these questions are more difficult to defend in an environment where truths of the human person have been forgotten. And yet there remains hope, not the least of which are the remaining

essays introduced by Bishop Fisher.

For example, Alexander R. Pruss and Anthony McCarthy provide intellectual fodder for resisting the redefinition of marriage to exclude sexual difference, a cultural and legal challenge currently roiling not only in the US but in numerous countries worldwide. Pruss, in his essay "From Love to Union as One Body," delicately but thoroughly examines the question so often left unanswered in the contemporary debate. Yes, marriage is about love, but what is love? What does it look like? Is there something unique about *married* love? For Pruss, the crucial defining factor about love is that it should have a "form" which is "appropriate to the beloved, to ourselves, and to the relationship," and which "fits the reality of the situation" (p. 20). In other words, the appropriate *kind of union* expressed in love (for love always involves union) depends on the *kind of relationship* one is in. Intellectual union might be appropriate with one's professor, while sexual union is not. In fact, sexual union is such a unique kind of union that it is only appropriate in the context of marriage (an argument that brings to mind John Paul II's words in *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 11: "The institution of marriage is...an interior requirement of the covenant of conjugal love"). In light of that natural openness of sexual love to marriage, then, marriage only makes sense for two persons who are capable of engaging in (procreative) sexual union, namely a man and a woman. Love is possible between two persons of the same sex; but love as sexual, consummating, *marital* union is not.

Anthony McCarthy's piece, "Marriage and Meaning," continues similar themes. Asking not only *what* the meaning of sexual love is but *whether* it has meaning, McCarthy engages with the social constructionist theory that the meaning of sexuality is entirely bestowed by society and not in the least inherent in human nature. For example, one such proponent equates the meaning of sex with the meaning of words: "Just as the meaning of words change over time in the same society, as people come to use words in changing ways, so the meanings of human acts can change with changing institutions and habits... Sex is no exception to this common phenomenon" (p. 49). And yet, as McCarthy points out, such an attitude turns a blind and uninterested eye to the rather striking features of human sexuality, such as its propensity to procreate children (a feature which, for understandable reasons, a society should naturally be interested in). Drawing to a similar conclusion as Pruss, McCarthy affirms that sexuality and marriage *do* have an inherent meaning, and one that is ignored at our own peril - and especially at the peril of children, who stand to lose the most from the redefinition of marriage.

John C. Berry's piece, "Contraception, Moral Virtue and Technology," is particularly intriguing and helpful. He begins by noting the significant potential, influence and danger of technology. "In modern technology," he writes, "the emphasis falls heavily on efficient cause, and what is instrumentally useful to achieve an effect" (p. 137). Further, "technology shapes our very perception of reality" (p. 139). Finally, quoting Pope John Paul II, if "technology is not ordered to something greater than a merely utilitarian end, then it could soon prove inhuman" (p. 143). For Berry, *contraceptive* technology proves a perfect example of these possible dangers. Indeed, contraception replaces properly human actions (virtue, discernment, self-control) with manipulative technique, such that one's relationship to one's fertility becomes marked by domination instead of respect. Berry's angle provides fresh insights into what exactly is disordered about contraception. It also could serve as a starting point for dialogue with those who find themselves disaffected in a world growing ever more technological but who may still not see what is wrong with contraception.

The last three essays offer a three-fold look at the polar opposite dilemma to contraception, so to speak: assisted reproductive technology. All three essays, by Mary Geach, Kevin L. Flannery SJ, and editor Helen Watt, employ more technical language than others in the book, but for good reason. Debates over the morality of certain medical procedures hinge on the accurate interpretation of, for example, what it

means to "help" and "facilitate" the conjugal act (as opposed to "substitute for"). In fact, parts of Watt's article, "Ethical Reproductive Technologies: Mismatched Hopes?" could provide helpful examples for academics *and* those engaged in pastoral ministry as to how the Church's definitions and distinctions do connect genuinely with human experience. For example, she writes that while a couple who conceive a child through sexual intimacy are protected from feeling "an excessive, God-like responsibility for the child" by virtue of the fact that their action in the matter was mediated and secondary, "non-sexual conception involves and encourages an exercise of excessive power and control over the child... In a similar way to purchasing a child, producing a child begins the parent-child relationship in a way which has precisely the wrong symbolic connotations" (p. 203). This description lifts the Church's teaching about assisted reproductive technology "off the paper" so to speak, and into the real lives and experiences of persons who make these choices.

Flannery's "In This Regard, the Teaching of the Magisterium is Already Explicit: On *Dignitas Personae* 12," examines that section of the CDF document in depth. The appeal here is a very thorough look at the criteria for medical procedures that seek to assist a couple in achieving a pregnancy. Flannery's tight focus compensates for the rather dense material, and the article delivers a wealth of information and insight.

In sum, the essays found in *Fertility and Gender* offer an educational and edifying perusal of some of the most controversial, and unavoidable, issues in contemporary times. The language is expectedly more complex than that usually aimed at a general audience, but most of the essays are worth the effort. For anyone seeking to further his or her knowledge and competence in issues about sexuality, marriage, and procreation, this book is a valuable resource.

# Embryo

JOHN LARACY

Robert P. and Tollefsen George, *Embryo: A Defense of Human Life* (Doubleday, 2008).

Now four years old, George and Tollefsen's defense of embryonic human life in *Embryo* remains worthy of scrutiny because it represents a mode of public argument popular among Catholics today. That is to say, *Embryo* is a good test case for a particular version of "natural law" argumentation that attempts to shift public opinion toward traditional morality by appealing to the intelligibility of basic moral goods like the good of human life, without direct reference to metaphysics and theology. George and Tollefsen claim that their argument is founded on what philosopher John Rawls called "common human reason" (p. 143), rather than on any religious creed or dogma. Admirably, they place themselves on the front lines of the public bioethical debate, arguing in an accessible way against America's widespread approbation of embryo destruction.

Their core premises, as enumerated in Chapter 1, represent a concise distillation of the basic pro-embryo argument: 1) The early human embryo is a human being; 2) All biological human beings are persons; 3) As persons, all human beings deserve full moral respect; and 4) One cannot respect and destroy a human embryo. The first premise is backed up by a thorough presentation of embryological science in Chapter 2, which confirms that the embryo is a unique human organism, having its own "active capacity for self-development" (p. 41). The rest of the book refutes those views that deny or undercut one or more of these core premises: Chapters 3 and 4 mount an attack on metaphysical dualism and utilitarianism - the broad philosophical positions underlying such denials - and chapters 5 through 7 confront particular arguments from contemporary bioethicists. On the surface, all of this appears to be a marvelously clear appeal to natural reason in defense of the embryo's right to life.

On closer inspection, however, one wonders whether their version of "natural law" argumentation naively ignores the fact that reason is always informed by culture. In light of America's current crisis over the status of human life in its early stages, the authors would agree that widespread consensus does not in itself make a view reasonable. Nevertheless, it seems that their attempt to communicate in the cultural idiom of our time leads to some significant philosophical errors.

Firstly, they accept the commonly held view that modern science, rather than natural philosophy, metaphysics, or theology tells us *what a thing is*. According to the Aristotelian natural philosophy appropriated by the Church, the nature or essence of a living thing - what it is - is determined by the kind of soul it has. Soul in this sense is an organism's transcendent life-principle, which guarantees its sustained identity as it develops in time. At several points, George and Tollefsen explicitly reject the concept of soul as part of the theological tradition.

Accepting modern science as the arbiter of facts thus leads to an inadequate understanding of the human organism as nothing but a system of developmental processes. Looking for the presence of new human life, George and Tollefsen rightly ask, "When is there a single biological system with a

developmental trajectory, or active developmental program, toward the mature stage of a human being?" (p. 39). Self-organized development is indeed a manifestation of life, and modern biology is helpful in analyzing and elucidating the nature of this development. However, no organism is simply identical with the manifestation of its self-development. Soul is not merely a matter of religious revelation, but a philosophical principle intuited from the organism's capacity to remain a single living whole despite its ongoing transformation in appearance. More than just a mind or conscious self, the transcendent rational soul is also the underlying form of the human body. Without this principle, the human organism is reduced to its material or phenomenal parts and processes.

George and Tollefsen recognize that an organism is a *unified, self-integrated* system of development, not a mere heap of matter, and therefore their reductionism takes a rather subtle form. Their view is further complicated by their acceptance of a philosophical position known as "animalism," which makes the general claim that every human organism is a self or person. On their scientific terms, this self or person, which animalism identifies with the organism, becomes reducible to the system of processes discerned through biology. By conflating self, organism, and the visible system of biological development, they leave one wondering who or what "self" integrates the "self-integrated" embryonic system?

This is not just metaphysical quibbling, for it has significant ethical implications. To note one concrete example: George and Tollefsen hastily endorse the current medical criteria for brain death. They equate brain death with the death of the person, "because the irreversible collapse of the brain destroys the capacity for self-directed integral organic functioning of human beings who have matured to the stage at which the brain performs the key role in integrating the organism" (p. 133). However, if they had affirmed that the rational soul, rather than the brain, integrates the organism at all stages, they might have more qualms about harvesting organs from a still-breathing human being. And with regard to embryo ethics, one can see how their reduction of life to visibly organized development might lead them to mistake an apparently undeveloped or undeveloping human embryo for a non-human, and thus to unwittingly condone embryonic manipulation in such a case (specifically, I am thinking of George's official approval of the ANT-OAR technique in 2005).

A second assumption they share with the larger culture is that truths about *nature as such* play no role in determining our *moral* goods. They tacitly accept what philosophers call the "naturalistic fallacy": the view that one cannot argue from an "is" to an "ought." Accordingly, there is fundamental divide for them between science, which tells us what things are, and moral philosophy, which tells us what we humans *ought* to do (p. 8). Generally speaking, this view seems to devalue creation by implying that nature in itself, including the human body, has nothing to tell us about how to live well. More to the point, it makes a persuasive argument in defense of embryonic life impossible in principle, because goods like human life cannot be rationally defended based on the nature of reality as such, but can only be asserted as irrefutable first principles of moral reasoning. George and Tollefsen merely assert that human life at all stages is one of the "basic human goods" necessary for a fulfilling human life. But what if one disagrees about the status of embryonic life as a basic good, as presumably the proponents of embryo destruction do? They present no actual argument as to why these goods are fulfilling or basic; they are mere postulates of an otherwise unfounded "moral philosophy."

*Embryo* thus succeeds only in affirming the moral values of those who already agree with its authors. In order to convert their opponents, George and Tollefsen would need to root the basic goodness of dependent human life in a more inspiring metaphysical and theological vision of existence as a matter of love. Such a robust metaphysics and theology, however, are excluded from their decidedly modern sense of public reason. In effect, then, their "natural law" arguments do little more than reinforce the

status quo, including those aforementioned assumptions about the role of science, the meaning of soul, and the divide between fact and moral good. Despite these problems - or perhaps because of them - *Embryo* can teach us a great deal about the current state of the contemporary bioethical debate.

# Children of Choice

THOMAS HURLEY

**John A. Robertson**, *Children of Choice: Freedom and the New Reproductive Technologies* (Princeton University Press, 1994, 281 pages).

How important is "procreative liberty" - the freedom to decide whether or not to have offspring - in resolving the controversies created by reproductive technology? John A. Robertson defends a variety of reproductive technologies, including abortion, IVF, various forms of surrogacy, the creation of embryos to be destroyed for research, genetic manipulation in reproduction, and more. All of these are endorsed as legal, and in most cases as ethical, as long as they are not imposed on the individual without consent (with certain possible exceptions).

Typical of many books in the field, including those written more recently, *Children of Choice* understands freedom exclusively in terms of choice, and choice in terms of technology. Liberty is expanded through the multiplication of choices in technology. It is technology that Robertson ends up repeatedly defending against any objections that certain procedures may violate what is human, whether these objections come from defenders of embryonic human life or from feminists concerned that some reproductive technologies may embody merely another form of dominance over women. It is thus unsurprising that Robertson repeatedly uses the vocabulary of manufacturing to describe reproduction (speaking of "quality control" in reproduction, to cite just one example).

This emphasis on technological control is seen in the way he thinks about procreative liberty itself. It is not reproduction that ultimately has value, but rather *control over* reproduction: "control over whether one reproduces or not is central to personal identity, to dignity, and to the meaning of one's life" (p. 24). In this view, there can be no inherent meaning in motherhood, childhood, or sexuality, as we see particularly in his defense of paid surrogacy (pp. 140-142). Robertson's concept of freedom has no foundation in a sense of nature as good as such, or of a goodness inherent in new human life, apart from the control exercised through choice. Indeed, if nature by definition is that which we do not choose, it would seem that Robertson's perspective must necessarily privilege that which is not natural, except insofar as nature is taken up and controlled in choice.

And yet the concept of procreative liberty itself seems arbitrary. Robertson will suggest that we should understand it as limited to actions which "aim to produce healthy, normal children for rearing" (p. 167). However, without some sense of nature as foundational, how are we even to *define* normal and healthy? Robertson sees procreative liberty - and indeed rights-based arguments in general - as a bulwark against majoritarian impositions of particular norms. However, it would seem that the limits of this liberty must inevitably be set largely by public consensus. Robertson himself repeatedly refers to the fact that many people disagree about particular moral claims as an important reason why these claims must not be allowed to limit procreative liberty. While any substantive sense of human nature is clearly rejected here, without such a sense it seems the path is always open to an undermining even of what Robertson wishes to defend under the umbrella of procreative liberty.

Robertson also inevitably involves himself in taking a position on who counts as an individual with rights under procreative liberty. Even in the defense of his rights-based perspective contained in the final chapter, Robertson never adequately addresses the point that a decision appears to be made before the book even begins about who gets rights and who does not, and this is a decision that dismisses humanity *per se* as of at most non-intrinsic symbolic importance. This is particularly clear in his discussion of embryos, in which he holds that embryos, while human, cannot be persons because they do not currently have the capacity to reason and choose. Further, while he acknowledges that some protection may be owed to embryos after viability insofar as they are sentient, it seems clear that such protection will hardly be unconditional at any point, since it is analogous for Robertson to moral duties sometimes owed to animals (pp. 51-53). Though Robertson does not pursue this, it seems that young children must fall into the same class, until they can demonstrate their ability to reason and choose.

Once the door has been opened to defining some humans out of the human community that must be socially protected, it is not clear how this decision can be limited in its impact. Why should not the mentally ill or developmentally disabled be similarly dismissed? More fundamentally, what does Robertson offer that will protect anyone from being so dismissed, regardless of personhood? Why should everyone's rights be assumed to be equal, incapable of being trumped by the choices of persons more able to choose or express choices, or to do so with greater strength? Nor is this a merely hypothetical question about a future stage of societal decay. For Robertson, even if the personhood of the fetus were granted, a woman who became pregnant despite the use of contraception would have the right to expel the fetus, a right which would trump the right of the fetus to live if the two come into conflict (p. 51). Already here, if all persons are still equal, some persons can be more equal than others. Moreover, this embodies a rejection of any inherent and unconditional responsibility for the other on either side of a human relationship. The raising of such radical questions is presumably well beyond Robertson's intent, but they must necessarily be raised on the road to which he points us.

Aside from fundamental problems with Robertson's presuppositions, there is also simply not as much philosophical or ethical argument here in defense of Robertson's positions as at first glance one might suppose. Aside from his affirmation of procreative liberty, many of the interesting questions about particular issues along the way - such as what counts as harm to a human being, what kinds of interests he finds compelling, and so forth - tend to be answered, if they are addressed at all, through assertions which simply dismiss concerns about morality or the consequences of certain actions for humanity. It is not clear that there is much here that would be likely to appeal to anyone who does not share Robertson's assumptions.

Nevertheless, one should not underestimate the extent to which the assumptions of Robertson *are* in fact widely shared. Robertson may take his arguments to points beyond many popular moral opinions on various specific points, for example in finding no ethical problems with abortion for sex selection (p. 159), or for the sole purpose of obtaining tissue (p. 212). However, even more extreme positions on reproductive technologies would not be contrary to Robertson's fundamental assumptions about choice, humanity, and technology, and these assumptions appear to correspond with much that is embraced unthinkingly by many. In order to respond adequately to such perspectives, it is not enough to argue on this or that issue; what must fundamentally be addressed is the goodness of nature, specifically of human nature, as prior to our choice and transcending our control, carrying intrinsic meaning and not merely symbolic significance assigned by us. Such meaning necessarily implies order and limit not merely in this or that exercise of freedom, but in the very meaning of freedom in relation to ourselves and the world as a whole. If a liberal understanding of freedom in terms of unlimited and indifferent choice is not called into question from the start, this not only will make it difficult to avoid

conclusions similar to those of Robertson on any further technologizing of reproduction, but also will prevent any legitimate defense of freedom grounded in human dignity.

# Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity

THOMAS HURLEY

**Leon R. Kass**, *Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity: The Challenge for Bioethics* (Encounter Books, 2002, 313 pages).

Leon Kass sets out to defend human dignity in the context of advancements in biotechnology which he sees threatening humanity, not merely in their details but in their technological structure, potentially propelling us towards the "abolition of man" (in C.S. Lewis's phrase). Kass begins by considering our general situation in relation to technology and bioethics, following this with chapters on more specific issues, including embryonic research, *in vitro* fertilization, cloning, organ selling, and euthanasia, and concluding with more general reflections on biology.

The strongest part of the book lies in Kass' reflections on technology in the introduction and first chapter. A recurring image in the book is that of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, and Kass argues persuasively that such a dehumanizing dystopia will not require any totalitarian imposition from above, but is being gradually embraced by human beings engaged in the technological pursuit of desire. This involves a forgetfulness of humanity rather than an explicit rejection of it. Our beneficent intentions can carry dehumanizing meaning, for the technological approach has already changed what we mean by humanity.

Kass suggests that in liberal democratic principles there is something lacking, which can be expressed in terms of human dignity, though he does not question the compatibility of liberalism with dignity as he describes it. Kass recognizes that human dignity, if it is to stand in the way of technological dehumanization, must be a human dignity precisely as embodied, and that in defending such a dignity, the "defense of what is humanly high requires an equal defense of what is seemingly low" (p. 17).

This *embodied dignity* points to a fundamental problem in modern biology, where the human body is reduced to mechanized stuff, not interiorly striving towards any good. This goes hand in hand with the problem of technology as Kass understands it, which concerns not merely the use to which we put our tools, but a foundational approach to the world, in which modern technology is "a setting upon, a challenging forth, a demanding of nature" (p. 32). The technological approach applies to ourselves as well, and thus inevitably makes claims about meaning - or lack of it - in the human being. Thus, there is a need for renewal in biology and anthropology in order to address ethical questions posed by technological advancements.

Unfortunately, Kass's conclusions on particular issues in later chapters do not always live up to the broader insights he offers. To take one example, Kass appears to grant that human life begins at fertilization, but holds "that a blastocyst is not, in a *full* sense, a human being" (p. 88). He recognizes that embryos need to be approached with a sense of wonder and mystery that is due to human beginnings, and that embryos thus command some respect. However, he seems less than clear about what it means to be a human being. Instead of a given all-at-onceness of dignity in human existence

that transcends human control, and is not dependent on what human life looks like or what any particular human life is able to do, we seem to be left with a kind of continuum in which we must establish standards to evaluate intuitively how much dignity various stages of human life should be allowed, based upon their appearance and action, or lack thereof. It is not a question of whether this is what Kass wants; it simply seems that this is where his thought will leave us. Thus, while Kass wishes to restrict embryo research significantly, one appears to be left with little clear anthropological reason for specific restrictions.

Similar issues could be raised about ambiguous positions taken by Kass on *in vitro* fertilization. Kass affirms the profound point that, in terms of human beginnings, a "yes" to manufacturing is a "no" to *eros*. However, while raising concerns about IVF, Kass suggests that there can be no objection to it in cases involving a married couple intending to pursue and love a child of their own flesh. In this sense, he does not seem anxious for clarity about whether this action of production inherently carries the meaning of a dehumanizing attack on *eros* and giftedness in humanity. In the separation of babies from sex, here and also in marital contraception, Kass appears to privilege the broader intentions of the married couple over what is concretely being done in a bodily way.

On other issues as well, Kass courageously calls for ethical concern in areas where few others are willing to do so, but he is inconsistent about bringing us beyond that level of concern. Perhaps these points are evidence of underlying gaps in Kass's own anthropology, despite his best intentions. As part of an effort to avoid excessive abstraction, Kass criticizes much of philosophical ethics and calls for a more political bioethics, but his book does not offer a coherent philosophical understanding of humanity. Nevertheless, he raises questions, particularly in relation to biotechnology, that are important for any adequate response to our modern technological situation, which he recognizes as an existential challenge for truly human life.

# Bioethics Matters

KIMBERLY HENKEL

**Moira McQueen**, *Bioethics Matters: A Guide for Concerned Catholics* (Burns & Oates, 2009, 107 pages).

The field of bioethics opens us to the deepest question of what it means to be human. Discussions on the morality of contraception, assisted reproductive technologies, embryonic stem cell research, and euthanasia lead us to reflect upon questions such as: What is man? What is our responsibility to each other? Who counts as a person? Catholic moral theology suggests these answers are discovered through the inextricable link between man as *imago Dei* and the two great commandments to love God and love our neighbor.

McQueen touches briefly upon both of these themes in *Bioethics Matters: A Guide for Concerned Catholics*, where she offers a quick overview of bioethics from a Catholic perspective for the lay person. Beginning with an outline of various ethical approaches, she explains the importance of revelation and natural law for Catholics. She addresses issues such as conscience, conversion, and personhood before moving onto practical applications of in vitro fertilization (IVF), stem cell research, and euthanasia.

McQueen's arguments against IVF are among her strongest. She affirms the teachings of *Donum Vitae* that underscore the importance of both unitive and procreative dimensions of the marital act, the rights of the child to be conceived within marriage, and the dignity of the child who is to be treated as a gift and not property to be manipulated, frozen, or discarded. She highlights the confusion surrounding the division of parenthood into biological, surrogate, and social spheres, along with the resulting impact upon the child. Emphasizing how a child conceived through the loving intimate act between spouses "is what best fits our human dignity," McQueen suggests a profound lack of respect for that dignity when a child is conceived either through rape or in a petri dish (p. 51). In both cases, the child is a gift worthy of love and respect, yet there remains a violation of human dignity in the manner of the child's conception.

Although McQueen affirms the roles of natural law and revelation in evaluating moral decisions, maintaining "that the human person participates in the divine law through his or her being" (p. 21), at times she seems to promote a somewhat antagonistic relationship between freedom and law. In her example of a deontological approach to ethics, she refers to a priest advising a couple of the Church's prohibition of contraception "without considering either the individual's circumstances or capacity to fulfill the law" (p. 13). She argues that this approach to ethics is problematic because it looks only to an external law for guidance "no matter what the consequences for the individual may be" (p. 13). In offering this example, it seems that she has in mind situations when a priest could advise a couple to use contraception. Rather than affirming the Church's teaching of the beauty and gift of sexuality, the prohibition of contraception is regarded as an imposition that restricts a person's freedom.

In her section on conscience, McQueen seems to again imply an opposition between freedom and law,

arguing, "As thinking people we know we are not sheep, slavishly following the rules of others. We have the responsibility to think things through for ourselves and to reflect on church teachings" (p. 41). Although Catholic tradition places great import on the value of conscience, this conscience must be properly formed since it is always ordered to the truth. Since God's law is based in truth, there should be no conflict between conscience and the moral law. "Human freedom and God's law are not in opposition; on the contrary, they appeal one to the other. The follower of Christ knows that his vocation is to freedom" (*Veritatis Splendor*, 17).

What seems to be missing in McQueen's account is an ecclesial dimension of conscience. While she suggests the need to be informed of the Church's teachings on moral issues, she argues that "what it means to be a Christian" is to be "a disciple not of the Church and its moral theology, but of Jesus Christ" (p. 27). This seems to imply that the Church is separate from Christ and that its moral theology is a human product. Pope John Paul II highlights the nature of the Magisterium, the Church's teaching authority, in aiding each person's conscience towards "freedom 'in' the truth" as opposed to "freedom 'from' the truth." He disparages the tendency of some to set the Magisterium at odds with conscience since its goal is to help Christians to "attain the truth with certainty and to abide in it" (*VS*, 64). Nowhere does McQueen specifically mention the authority of the Magisterium to interpret scripture or provide moral guidance.

Towards the end of her book, McQueen affirms the "inherent dignity" of all humans and the "inviolability of every life," condemning euthanasia. She quotes *Evangelium Vitae* to the effect that euthanasia is "an action or omission which of itself and by intention causes death, with the purpose of eliminating all suffering" (p. 90). However, when she addresses Pope John Paul II's statement on artificial nutrition and hydration that argues for the continued nourishment of PVS patients, she seems to question why these patients should be given food and water when they have "no capacity whatsoever for self-awareness or for interaction with others" (p. 83). Although she allows that the Pope's statement "seems to settle a long-disputed matter" (p. 83), she does not provide any arguments in support of his conclusion. It seems that even if the PVS patient is still considered a person (which she grants), McQueen finds it odd to provide them with "artificial nutrition and hydration" since "the patient does not experience anything" (p. 83).

A stronger ontological concept of personhood might help McQueen with this difficulty. Ratzinger, Norris Clarke, and David Schindler have all written on the importance of relationality in our understanding of the person. Personhood is not simply based on rationality, but on being *in relation with God and others*. Human life has value based on its being created in the image of God and not on the basis of how much a person is able to experience. The patient in a "vegetative" state is still in relationship, even if he may not be conscious of it. He is still part of a family and community, and as one of the most vulnerable among us, he is a gift to those surrounding him, giving them the opportunity to learn what selfless love truly is.

At the end of the book, McQueen beautifully remarks on the Christian understanding of death as not "an end in itself" but rather "a transition to fullness of life in God through the power of Christ's resurrection" (p. 97). In her discussion of suffering, however, she only addresses the ethical responsibility to reduce it, rather than mentioning its salvific power. Since this is a guide specifically for "concerned Catholics," it seems important to bring up the deeper meaning of human suffering in light of Christ's salvific suffering on the Cross. John Paul II's *Salvifici Doloris* is a rich resource that can help bring hope and strength to the inevitable suffering that each of us must face. It seems a real oversight to disregard this deeply held belief in the Church.

Biotechnological developments are challenging our notions of the world and ourselves. At the intersection of technology and human life, the boundaries are becoming blurred. There is a great need for clear teaching on bioethical issues that are transforming our understanding of what it means to be human. While McQueen offers some good insights on human dignity and the problems with artificial reproductive technologies, she fails to provide both a proper ontological account of the human person and the intrinsic connection between law, freedom, and conscience necessary to evaluate current and future biotechnologies from a Catholic perspective. As a bioethical guide for Catholics, this book falls short.

# Adam and Eve After the Pill

CARLA GALDO

**Mary Eberstadt**, *Adam and Eve After the Pill: Paradoxes of the Sexual Revolution* (Ignatius Press, 2012, 275 pages).

Mary Eberstadt's *Adam and Eve After the Pill* is a satisfying, albeit disturbing, read for those already convinced of the perils of tinkering with the divinely designed structure of human sexuality and procreation. One would hope it would be similarly disturbing for those who herald the so-called advances of the sexual revolution, given the clarity with which Ms Eberstadt lays bare the sociological evidence of the various damages wrought by modern contraception and the accompanying "destigmatization of all varieties of nonmarital sexual activity" (p. 12).

The book, in large part a collection of essays from other publications, opens with the assertion that the "amputation" of sexual activity from the procreation of new life "has proved a disaster for many men and women" and, interestingly, that "its weight has fallen heaviest on the smallest and weakest shoulders in society - even as it has given more strength to those already strongest and most predatory" (p. 16). It is to be noted that Mary Eberstadt is not blind to the purported success stories of the sexual revolution - the childless female CEO unencumbered by family demands; the happy couple well-off and child-free vacationing in exotic locales instead of surrounded by children playing in their local campground. Armed with secular, scientific data (often ignored, she points, out by many intellectuals and academics), as well as common sense, Ms Eberstadt uncovers the hidden and not-so-hidden victims of the sexual revolution, highlighting its specific effects on women, men, children, and college-age young adults, respectively. Frequently her arguments are bolstered by thoughts and details pulled from the work of those who are unlikely to want to make a case friendly to the Catholic Church or her allies in the stand against contraception, which further serves to convince the reader of the pervasiveness of the problems at hand.

Women, she says, are at the heart of the paradoxical effects of the sexual revolution. Rather than reveling in their satisfying liberation from the bonds of the sexual act's natural and normal effects, women, both single and married, are suffering from, at best, a lingering unhappiness and dissatisfaction with their relationships, and, at worst, are using divorce as the trapdoor to escape from their sexless, miserable marriages. Ms Eberstadt suggests that two bad ideas may be smoldering beneath the ruins that many relationships are in these days - the theory of gender neutrality on the one hand, and the purported "innocence" of pornography on the other. Of pornography specifically she meditates: "[there is a] sexual flood - a torrent of poisonous imagery, beginning now for many in childhood, that has engulfed women and men, only to beach them eventually somewhere alone and apart, far from the reach of one another" (p. 53).

Children and young adults are similarly suffering, although the wave of "pedophilia chic" that rolled through the 1970s to the 1990s seems to have come to a screeching halt in the wake of the Catholic church sex-scandals. College-age young people have not been as fortunate; on campus the fallout of the

sexual revolution can be observed as though in a "petri dish": the clearly toxic mix of binge drinking and the "hookup culture" has served to empower the strong (often the drunk, sexually aggressive man) and penalize the weak (frequently the even-more-drunk young woman). Eberstadt suggests three possible solutions to parents concerned about "Toxic U" - first, opt out, and send one's child to a religious school; second, for those for whom such a solution is not practical, support the campus counter-culture; and third (a thought-and-argument-provoking suggestion), bring back early marriage (p. 92).

One highlight of Eberstadt's book is her use of incisive personal observation as an intelligent person living in the midst of the situation she is describing. This is particularly true in two fascinating chapters in which she reflects on the Nietzsche-esque "transvaluation of values" occurring in today's society. Two entertaining vignettes detail the flip-flopping attitudes on the subjects of pornography and tobacco. Whereas Betty, a fictional but typical woman of the 1950s and an occasional smoker, does not consider tobacco "a moral issue in its own right" but rather "a matter of individual taste" (p. 123), she considers the rarely-encountered phenomenon of pornography to be "smut" that is "morally wrong" (p. 124). Her fictional granddaughter, Jenny, a culturally typically thirty-something living in the 2000s, however, has attitudes that are exactly the reverse. While she would "never dream of putting a cigarette in her mouth" and considers those who create cigarettes "borderline evil" (p. 125), she is somewhat more ambivalent towards pornography, which she encounters much more frequently than her grandmother Betty. Although not a fan of it herself, she "does not think [it] is morally wrong" when made by and for consenting adults (p. 125).

Ms Eberstadt sees reason to hope in the similarities, pointing out that just as tobacco's ubiquitousness in the 1950s gave way to increasing popular disdain, there is the chance that a future society may similarly turn a cold shoulder to pornography, as well it should given her well-documented assertions about the damages wrought by smut on the whole of society and on men in particular. (She knows that of which she speaks, as the co-editor of a widespread, empirical study on the "Social Costs of Pornography," published in 2010 and cited in the book.)

The timing of Ms. Eberstadt's book is striking, to say the least, considering the Church's current struggle against the Obama administration's claims that contraceptives are a vital part of women's preventative *health care*. Anyone who continues to insist in such a vein has missed the "ongoing empirical vindication in one arena after another" of Pope Paul VI's 1968 promulgation *Humanae vitae* (p. 158), the encyclical which upheld the long-standing Christian opposition to artificial birth control. In the 1970s and 80s, the Catholic Church suffered through a few decades of post-Vatican II turmoil and confusion, yet as the years go by more and more people, young people in particular, are noting the negative fallout of society-wide contraceptive use.

What is more, in the wake of the current insurance-funding challenge issued to all Catholic institutions from the US Department of Health and Human Services, it seems that the Church no longer has the luxury of sweeping the Church's teachings about sexuality and contraception under the rug to avoid ruffling the feathers of faithful yet selectively-dissenting church-goers. Upon pondering the evidence of this book, one wonders whether (to use Ms. Eberstadt's own word, paradoxically) the social, psychological, and physiological cost of the contraceptive-spurred sexual revolution could be the problematic "elephant in the room" dragging down both the health care system and society as a whole.

# In Their Own Words

CAITLIN DWYER

**Jean Blair (ed.) Packard**, *In Their Own Words: Women Healed* (Pope Paul VI Institute Press, 2004, 248 pages).

In the wake of the controversy over the Department of Health and Human Services mandate requiring all insurance companies to provide free coverage for contraception and sterilization, regardless of religious objection, Catholic teaching on sexuality has been subject yet again to intense public scrutiny. Unsurprisingly, many officials, media personalities and members of the general populace have once again pegged the Church's teaching against contraception as outdated, sexist theology. What is notable, however, is the growing consensus that the Church's teaching is bad medicine that endangers women's health.

This view has gained traction with women largely because their doctors have come to regard contraceptives and in-vitro fertilization (IVF) fertility treatments as essential tools of reproductive health care. Oral contraceptives are prescribed not just for birth control, but also for acne, cramps, endometriosis, and more. Women are quickly and routinely referred for IVF (costing \$10,000 or more per cycle), often being told that it is their only hope for achieving a full-term pregnancy. The morality of such practices is no longer questioned. Their use is justified by the fact that they supposedly "work" for their intended purpose. Many go so far as to argue that to deprive women of these solutions for family planning and infertility is to deprive them of their liberty, health, and happiness.

But the reality is this: alternative, more effective and morally acceptable treatments exist. *In Their Own Words: Women Healed* presents a radical new vision and practice of women's health care called NaPro TECHNOLOGY (Natural Procreative Technology), developed by Dr Thomas Hilgers. The book - compiled and edited by Jean Blair Packard, a former patient and long-time employee of Hilgers - relays the personal stories of fifty women who struggled with various reproductive health issues before they received NaPro treatment from Hilgers at the Pope Paul VI Institute in Omaha, Nebraska.

NaPro TECHNOLOGY is a set of innovative medical and surgical approaches that are not only theologically sound, but are also incredibly effective. Unlike some mainstream care which seeks to treat symptoms such as infertility or irregular menstrual cycles, NaPro addresses the fundamental medical issues causing the symptoms. By going to the root of the problem, NaPro has been shown to be 1.4 to 2.8 times more successful in achieving pregnancy than currently-used artificial reproductive technologies and has high success rates for treating other gynecological problems as well.

Hilgers developed NaPro TECHNOLOGY through decades of research conducted in response to *Humanae Vitae's* call to doctors, researchers, and medical specialists to "consider as their proper professional duty the task of acquiring all the knowledge needed" regarding reproductive health in order to give women the highest level of care, in accordance with the dignity of the human person. The result is a new women's health science that monitors and maintains a woman's reproductive and

gynecological health using the CREIGHTON MODEL FertilityCare™ System of natural family planning. Women chart the biological markers of their fertility, and Hilgers (along with a growing number of doctors and healthcare professionals around the world) uses this information to help women space their children or achieve pregnancies by treating their health problems through hormone therapy, medication, and surgery. NaPro is "natural" because its primary goal is to restore a woman's reproductive health through proper diagnosis and treatment of the underlying gynecologic issues.

NaPro extends beyond the treatment of infertility. Packard gathered and arranged testimonies regarding six additional topics: previous miscarriage, pre-term birth, premenstrual Syndrome (PMS), postpartum depression, and general health problems. There is also a section dedicated to the stories of women who used the CREIGHTON MODEL FertilityCare™ System to space children. Each section begins with a brief commentary by Hilgers explaining the symptoms, diagnoses and treatments and is followed by testimonies of women who were treated for the issue.

The stories are powerful and easy to read. Each woman had a different path leading to the Pope Paul VI Institute. Some were Catholic women struggling to find morally acceptable treatment for their health problems. Others were patients who had unsuccessfully tried mainstream treatments. What they all have in common is their gratitude to a medical institution that treated them with dignity. One woman, Stephanie, described her experience as an effort to "take into account the clues that my body seemed to be providing, and put the pieces together in an effort to facilitate health, not just pregnancy."

And the results are striking. Hilgers' patient, Amy, suffered from severe episodes of high fever, diarrhea, vomiting, and blinding pain. Every doctor she saw recommended oral contraceptives, which she was reticent to take, and painkillers, which did little to help her through her episodes. At the Institute, Amy had a different experience: "I finally felt respected and knew that someone listened to me and wanted to get to the root of my problems." Hilgers performed surgery to remove extensive endometriosis and cysts on her ovaries and performed an ovarian wedge resection. Amy now has three children and is pain-free.

It is often argued that Church teaching must be abandoned in order to provide women quality care. NaPro shows that when doctors and healthcare professionals are obedient to this teaching, deeper physical, emotional, and spiritual healing can result, as Hilgers' patients attest (see e.g. p. 107). *Humanae Vitae* does not sentence women to a life of suffering. Rather, it calls caregivers to a higher standard of medicine which both respects the dignity and truth of the human person and provides the highest quality of care within the parameters of that truth.

I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in women's health from a moral, medical, or simply practical point of view, professional and layperson alike. I would also recommend it to anyone interested in gaining a vision of a field of medicine transformed by obedience to the truth of the human person. NaPro faces an uphill battle to loosen the grip that the lucrative contraceptive and fertility industries hold on women's reproductive health care. However, I hope that all who care about women will pause to listen to the voices of the women healed by NaPro technology.

# Biotechnology and the Assault on Parenthood

KRISTINE CRANLEY

**Donald De Marco**, *Biotechnology and the Assault on Parenthood* (Ignatius Press, 1991, 269 pages).

In November 2011, voters in the state of Mississippi were asked to decide when a human being becomes a person. Initiative 26 read as follows: "*Should the term 'person' be defined to include every human being from the moment of fertilization, cloning, or the equivalent thereof?*" The devolution of personhood into a category assigned by popular opinion reveals a deep philosophical crisis in our understanding of what it means to be a human being. Our personal dignity is no longer recognized as intrinsic to our human nature but rather something extrinsically bestowed by others.

For John Paul II, this "eclipse of man" and his transcendent personal value is rooted in a more fundamental "eclipse of God." For "when the sense of God is lost, there is also a tendency to lose the sense of man, of his dignity and his life" (*Evangelium Vitae*, 21). Our greatness and inviolability flow from our origin in divine love and our summons to divinization through eternal communion with the Triune God, by becoming love in and through Christ. Human generation *via* the incarnate self-gift of love between husband and wife is meant to educate us that our very identity as persons is "gift" and "love." However, when procreation is severed from the marital embrace the truth of this inalienable personal identity is obscured.

In *Biotechnology and the Assault on Parenthood*, Donald De Marco addresses this concern by offering a comprehensive discussion of the problem of Artificial Reproductive Technology (ART) and its devastating philosophical, moral, legal, psychological, and social impact on how we understand ourselves. Right from the outset, De Marco grounds his critique of ART in the biblical anthropology of John Paul II. Beginning with a defense of the "normalcy" of marriage through a eudemonistic natural law perspective, he fills out his argument by referencing the late Holy Father's "Theology of the Body" catecheses, and their teaching that Christ reveals the full truth of marriage and gives the grace to live it. Marriage, as a vocation to become a communion of persons through total self-giving, is "the ordinary way in which ordinary people deepen their knowledge of life's meaning and mystery, most fully express what is immortal in them, and share in the life of the divine" (p. 17). The couple, called to communion with God, embraces marriage as a pathway toward that union, allowing the whole of their married life and love to be transfigured into the image of Love himself, Jesus Christ, through his grace. Man and woman's procreative capacities enable them to express personal and familial love to their children, and thus experience their reality as "self-giving persons" made in the image of the Trinitarian God.

For De Marco this understanding of the truth of the human person is what gives marriage and procreation their deeply personal nature. He then goes on to spend the rest of his work exploring the consequences of contradicting this internal truth of marriage and procreation through ART

## The Depersonalization of the Child

In turning away from their divine origin, Adam and Eve lose sight of their identity as gift, as testified to in their experience of "original shame" at the objectifying gaze of the other. De Marco claims that ART is a continuation of this same objectification and involves the incapacity to recognize the other as gift. Through ART the child effectively becomes a commodity to be bought and sold. The sundering of his generation from the physical act of unity between spouses causes a ripple effect of alienation for all involved. Surrogacy declares the natural bond between mother and child revocable. Sperm donation denies the child the right to be in relationship with her father. While the abolition of slavery outlawed the practice of considering one person the object of another's "rights," yet in ART children become the object of a newly-defined right to conception, pregnancy, and childbearing (a right which has now been extended from infertile couples to non-fertile same-sex couples). De Marco asserts that these injustices against the child grow out of a loss of the recognition of God himself as the author of every human life, and as such the guarantor of their inviolable dignity.

## The Assault on Motherhood and Fatherhood

He goes on to demonstrate that the practice of ART violates the nature of authentic parenthood. Procreation degenerates into mere reproduction, the making of products rather than a privileged participation in the creation of new human beings by God. Instead of parents being "for" children, these technologies cause offspring to be increasingly viewed as "for" parents. Contrary to the dictates of justice, a vulnerable and needy child is summoned to fulfill the subjective desires of his relatively "wealthy" parents. De Marco believes that the myopic emphasis on biological reproduction in the discussion involving ART tends to exclude the moral and spiritual dimension integral to our human vocation. Thus ironically, despite placing the emphasis on the desires of the parents, its widespread acceptance corrodes our understanding of the personal significance of both motherhood and fatherhood. The father's role is reduced to that of a "loveless, mindless, bodiless sperm donor." He is expendable. Likewise "the objective reality of motherhood as a hallowed vocation is reduced to a choice." Through ART a woman no longer conforms to motherhood but "invents" it. She can choose to be a mother without undergoing pregnancy, or having any genetic relation to the child. Through embracing these technologies she allows her radical, embodied self-gift in motherhood to be depersonalized and objectified.

## The Disembodiment of Motherhood

By citing numerous legal case histories, De Marco demonstrates the Cartesian disembodied or dualistic anthropology at the foundation of the ART laws. Surrogacy sunders pregnancy from motherhood, for the woman from whom the child is born is no longer legally considered the mother (even in the cases of "full" surrogacy, where the child is genetically her own). Surrogates are spoken of in subhuman terms as "human incubators" or "rented wombs." In cases where a mother desired to revoke the contract and keep the child, her rights are superseded in court by those of the contracting couple, who are described as having "mentally conceived" the child. In favoring this fiction, the courts show a blatant disregard for the truth of the biological and psychological bond between mother and child, which De Marco attributes to the "triumph of marketing over common sense." As he says, "Surrogacy glorifies the will and makes an invalid of reason" (p. 203). No longer subject to reason, law becomes founded on will alone, and as such is increasingly distanced from any connection with the objective reality.

## Societal Repercussions

On a wider scale, the book looks at some of the cultural implications of the practice of ART De Marco

speaks about social justice concerns involved with the practice of treating a desire rather than a disease (as in the case of in vitro fertilization). The glut of money and medical expertise poured into these technologies diverts these resources from the poor and those with true diseases. Little attention is given to infertility prevention. Advertisements promising miracle pregnancies exploits the vulnerability of couples desperately desiring a child. The feminist ideology which champions ART is incapable of reconciling its two fundamental tenets of freedom and equality. A woman's "reproductive freedom" overrides the "equal rights" of anyone who stands in its way, in the process objectifying women through surrogacy contracts, ignoring the rights of the unborn, denying fathers the right to protect or raise their child, and paradoxically enabling women to use their "right to choose" for the purpose of gender discrimination (sex selective abortion). Following this ideology to its logical conclusion, De Marco claims, makes motherhood itself the enemy, because it "compromises individuality by sharing itself with others" (p. 250).

### Verbal Engineering

As the moral theologian Msgr William B. Smith has noted, "All social engineering is preceded by verbal engineering." Maternity, paternity, family, human generation, and personhood itself; the way we define these words will have profound implications for the whole of human society. In this book De Marco offers a luminous defense of these sacred realities from the growing assault waged on them by proponents of ART. For example, the concept of surrogate parenthood itself is founded on the contradiction that a woman can simultaneously both be and not be a mother. Traditionally the mother is the one who gives birth to the child, and it is more properly the adoptive or contracting woman who is the "surrogate" mother. The woman bearing the child is more precisely a *surrogate wife* to the father of the baby.

Surrogacy is also the legal flip side of abortion: in both cases one party is depersonalized. While in abortion the child has no legal protection in the face of the mother's "right to choose," so too in surrogacy contracts the mother has no right to keep the child who as we have seen is considered as a mere "tenant in a rented womb," mentally conceived by another. "Surrogate motherhood," De Marco writes, "demands a great deal of alienation: the pregnant woman from her child as well as from her own motherhood, the husband from his wife, and the surrogate from her own husband and children, and even her children from their surrogate sibling. Such alienation on so many fronts weakens personal identities as well as the family unity" (p. 179).

### Conclusion

De Marco's book is invaluable in bringing clarity to some of the anthropological ramifications of the use of ART. However, because the book was written over two decades ago, the case histories cited may be legally outdated. Another shortcoming is that the text focuses extensively on surrogacy cases without spending as much time on IVF or issues involving cloning, embryo freezing, and reduction. If written today the author might also have referenced the tremendous success of clinics such as the Pope Paul VI Institute which have made great strides in treating and curing many of the fertility problems which ART seeks to circumvent. Nevertheless, the philosophical foundation De Marco provides in this work is beautifully articulated and remains perennially valid.

Rooted in an anthropology enlightened by revelation, his arguments expose the inconsistencies, deceptions, and dangers of the untruth about human person which these technologies are predicated upon, while simultaneously testifying to the true glory of the human being called to communion with God. It is a glory demanding the reverence of the barefoot Moses; the mysterious glory so poetically expressed in C.S. Lewis' sermon "The Weight of Glory":

"You have never met a mere mortal.... It is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and corruption such as you now meet if at all only in a nightmare. All day long we are in some degree helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in light of these overwhelming possibilities, it is with awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another."

# Clones, Genes, and Immortality

RACHEL M. COLEMAN

**John Harris**, *Clones, Genes and Immortality: Ethics and the Genetic Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

In a series of lectures later published under the title *The Principle of Reason*, the philosopher Martin Heidegger draws attention to the name that had been given to his era, a title conceived from the foremost technology possible at that time: "the atomic age." We are now defining ourselves based not on cultural or humanitarian achievements, but on the possibilities given to us by our latest technologies. "Humanity defines an epoch of its historical and spiritual existence by the rapacity for, and availability of, a natural energy." He notes the danger that "the more decisively humans try to harness the 'mega-energies' that would, once and for all, satisfy all human energy needs, the more impoverished becomes the human faculty for building and dwelling." The quest for energy inevitably leads us to view our world only in terms of its energy *potential*. And it is not long until human beings are understood in a similar way.

We are now living in the genetic age. Rather than an age governed by power plants and factories, it is one governed by the cold and sterile atmosphere of the laboratory. Genes now, not atoms, are the lens through which we see the world. Life, rather than energy, is that for which we now quest inexhaustibly. But what kind of life? And at what cost? Reading John Harris' *Clones, Genes and Immortality* is not unlike walking into a biotechnology laboratory: precision and accuracy are at a premium, and not a single detail is out of place or unaccounted for, and yet a cool and calculating sterility underlies the entire operation.

The book was written in the early 90s, when the Human Genome Project seemed to promise a disease-free world through genetic engineering once the complex code of the human genome had been unraveled. Despite its relatively early publication date, however, *Clones, Genes and Immortality* is not an outdated or unuseful read. Harris predicted some of the hot-points of biotechnology and bioethics over the past 15 years with remarkable accuracy. At their (controversial) infancy when Harris was writing, issues such as abortion, IVF, and embryonic cell research are now almost completely normative. Indeed, Harris begins his book with what is now a relatively rote discussion of the ethics of those procedures and technologies and comes to the unsurprising conclusion that none of these are very problematic in the end, provided we use new the technologies responsibly and without infringing anyone else's rights.

What he means by *responsibly* and *rights* Harris feels he hardly needs to say, since he defers to the Anglo positive law tradition of the past fifty years. This tradition is not unfamiliar to anyone following recent bioethical debates. It generally relies, if implicitly, on a concept of person based on will and the ability to assert oneself: "a creature capable of [consciously] valuing its own existence" (p. 87). Such a definition allows Harris to regard a human being in the womb as a "pre-person," and someone who can no longer consciously value his existence due to an accident, disability, or age as an "ex-person," able to

be manipulated, destroyed, or experimented upon for the sake of the betterment of humanity.

Again, these are familiar, if somewhat banal and shallow arguments. What is fascinating, however, about Harris' book is where it goes after the issues of abortion, embryonic cell research, and IVF are addressed. Harris then turns his attention to the question of disabled human beings, and therapeutic cloning. His contention is that mothers who know that their children will be born with a disability, for example, Tay-Sachs disease or Down's Syndrome, or even a missing finger, are *morally obligated* to "terminate" their pregnancies in order to prevent "needless suffering" and "wrongful life." In the case that parents decide to bring a child with a disability to term, they may be penalized by the state and even brought to court by their own children, on the grounds that non-existence is preferable to a disabled existence.

All of this is in service to Harris's rather blatant eugenicist concerns of breeding "wonderwomen" and "supermen" (in fact a shorter version of this book was published under that title in 1992). Not quite hidden behind a cool logic that proclaims as its only wish a world without suffering is a desire to build the human race into some sort of *uber*-humanity - to allow biogeneticists to take human nature into their hands and mold as they see fit. The corpses of those children which have been deemed unworthy - whether they be in embryonic or fetal form - should become the property of the state and be handed over to scientists to experiment on, for the sake of discovering cures and promoting health. We should be able to make clones at will in order to harvest their embryonic cells for use in our own bodies. Neither is the other side of the spectrum of life safe from this exploitation: all "ex-persons" and dead bodies should also be property of the state so that it may delegate the "donation" of viable organs to the living.

And herein lies the question Harris's book: who, exactly, are the living? On the surface it seems as if Harris would claim the highest moral value is life, but no single life *per se* is truly valued - if it were, one could see the infinite and inexhaustible value in every life, even one which Harris calls "disabled." It is the *potential* good of those who are living or those who might live that Harris values most. It is the good of a future super-race that Harris hopes humanity may one day be. His ethical outlook is built upon viewing our genetic code as containing the potential for something better. A potential that we are morally obligated to exploit to the limits of our technical proficiency.

Harris does not balk at his own logic. An argument that condones abortion, IVF, and even contraception, must allow someone to assert - in good faith, if you will-"that the decision to go ahead and have a child requires as much and as careful justification as the decision to terminate a pregnancy, and that it can also be wrong not to terminate a pregnancy" (pp. 90-91). It is a logic of will: an assertion of the power of the strong and superior over the weak and inferior. Eugenic tendencies are not incidental to, indeed they lie at the very root of, those technologies and procedures contemporarily understood as normative. The genetic age is upon us, and one cannot accept only some of the consequences without swallowing its logic wholesale: either humanity is ultimately another resource that can be exploited at the hands of those with the power, resources, and will to do so or it is not. But if it is not, then what must be recognized is a human life's inherent and intrinsic value from first to last.

# On Cloning

MICHAEL CAMACHO

John Harris, *On Cloning* (Routledge, 2004, 184 pages).

John Harris is an influential British bioethicist. He has served on the ethics committee of the British Medical Association and on the government advisory committee on genetic testing, and been consulted by the European Parliament and Commission, the World Health Organization, and the United Nations. In his book *On Cloning*, he proposes to provide "a fairly comprehensive account of the science and ethics of cloning and of the arguments for and against the various applications."

Cloning is defined by Harris as asexual reproduction that results in two or more genetically identical individuals. This definition allows him to introduce right from the start a subtle confusion between or leveling of the natural and the artificial that runs like a thread throughout the book. Naturally occurring monozygotic twins, Harris tells us, are simply natural clones: they have the same genetic identity, resulting from an asexual division of cells after the moment of fertilization. Scientists can induce such division to create one of two methods of cloning: the splitting of an embryo. The other method, known as Cell Nuclear Transfer (CNT) or Cell Nuclear Replacement (CNR), is to take an oocyte egg cell and replace its nucleus with that of a regular somatic body cell. The resulting embryo will be genetically identical to the individual who donated the nucleus.

To say that an identical twin is simply a natural clone is something of a stretch, but Harris seems intent on blurring the lines between nature and artifice. He sees little difference, for example, between enhancing brain function through genetic modification and the more customary, albeit slower and less certain, method of educating our children. Somewhat more subtly, he at times refers to sexual reproduction as simply one possible means of procreation among several. "No one who either has used or intends to use sexual reproduction as their means of procreation," he says at one point, "can consistently object on principle to human embryo research." This attempt to do away with any distinction between what occurs by nature and what occurs by choice is doubtless influenced by his understanding of what nature is, namely, chance combinations of genes and molecules. Indeed, with this understanding of nature as mere meaningless chance, it is somewhat understandable why Harris would advocate for purposeful human choice and intervention in its place. If nature itself is inherently irrational or non-rational, having no intrinsic *logos* of its own, then it is up to man to impose reason upon it.

Just as there are two primary means of cloning, embryo splitting and nucleus transfer, there are also two primary purposes for cloning: reproduction and cell therapy. The first entails creating a cloned embryo as an alternative to "natural" reproduction, with the intention of permitting it to come to term. Harris admits that "the purely reproductive purposes of cloning are not obviously important or urgent," especially once we realize that it is virtually impossible to create an individual that is not only *genetically* identical but also physically and psychologically identical. This commonplace idea of what a clone is and what cloning is for would seem unattainable, given the irreplaceable role of environment

on these factors, to say nothing of free will. Still, Harris argues that we cannot entirely dismiss the importance of permitting reproductive cloning, since any attempt to limit it would be an inadmissible infringement on reproductive autonomy. Even if it is something that we ourselves may not care for or even find downright "distasteful," we should nonetheless be willing to accept some degree of offense in a pluralistic society that values the right of others "to choose their own procreative path."

This is also Harris' response to one of the most significant arguments against reproductive cloning, which is the idea of a "right to an open future" or a right for our children to be "radically Other" and a complete surprise, rather than always bearing the weight of some preconceived and perhaps mistaken ideal of imitation. Harris sees the value of radical alterity, but for him this right to pluralism and otherness ought to be grounded in a *parent's right to choose*: this is the "otherness" that really counts. Indeed, he argues, rather unconvincingly, the best way to encourage diversity is to permit *absolutely free* parental choice, since "such choices are for the most part likely to be as diverse as are the people making them."

The principle of autonomy comes into play also in Harris' response to arguments against cloning as a violation of human dignity. Harris finds the concept of human dignity to be ultimately too *vague* to function as a useful concept in making decisions about cloning. The idea is usually tied to the Kantian notion of persons as ends in themselves and therefore incapable of being instrumentalized. Harris argues that most children are also wanted for some end beyond themselves; for example, to provide "a son and heir," a sister for Bobby, and so on - almost all economic relationships likewise involve some form of instrumentalization. The conclusion he draws is that we cannot use the idea of autonomy or human dignity (for him essentially equivalent) to help decide on issues of cloning. Kant's principle "is so vague and so open to selective interpretation and its scope for application is consequently so limited that its utility is virtually zero." Instead, we must weigh the benefits and harms of the given situation in consequentialist fashion; and it is *always* in the best interest of the potential child to come into being, provided that he has "the capacity for autonomy like any other" and that his life can be deemed worthwhile, meaning "a life that the child, and later the adult, would find acceptable."

Autonomy is not, however, for Harris a right before it can be claimed as such by the subject. When Axel Kahn defines autonomy as "the indeterminability of the individual with respect to external human will," Harris comments that it is "hopeless as a definition" because "those in Persistent Vegetative State (PVS) and indeed all new-borns would on such a view have to count as autonomous!" There is then no "ontological" or original autonomy, no inviolability of the person as such, only an "empirical" or exercised autonomy. The adult will is paramount. Thus any appeal to human dignity is "empty rhetoric which invokes resonant principles with no conceivable or coherent application to the problem at hand." Opposing arguments are dismissed as expressions of irrational prejudice, "born of a desperation to find something (one may reasonably think desperation to find *almost anything*) that can be said against cloning." In fact, he prefaces his engagement with them as follows: "Let us turn now to some very banal objections to cloning that have not been given separate attention so far in this book and treat them with the brevity they doubtless deserve." Such a lack of respect and inability to try and see what it is that his opponents are attempting to defend does little to engender confidence in Harris's position.

As far as *therapeutic* cloning is concerned, this is for Harris immensely important and urgent: he claims that it promises significant medical benefits through the use of embryonic stem cells specifically tailored to the individual whose nucleus would be cloned. Interestingly, Harris does not engage here in the debate about whether a human embryo is a person and therefore whether or not it is permissible to kill and dismember it in order to use its cells for research or medical purposes. Instead he relies on a

"principle of waste avoidance": "faced with the opportunity to use resources for a beneficial purpose when the alternative is that those resources are wasted, we have powerful moral reasons to avoid waste and do good instead." The "resources" that are wasted here, instead of being put to good use, are early embryos: "We now know that for every successful pregnancy which results in a live birth many, perhaps as many as five, early embryos will be lost or 'miscarry.'" This applies to normal pregnancies; the number is much higher when Artificial Reproductive Technology (ART) is employed. Since, according to Harris, anyone who "intends to use sexual reproduction as their means of procreation" is (perhaps unconsciously) *instrumentalizing* these discarded embryos for the sake of the sixth child that will be born, implying it is worth the cost of the previous five in order to have the sixth, there can be no argument against human embryo research or therapeutic cloning, for saving a life is as important as creating a new one.

Much could be said in response. In the first place, it is not at all clear what effect the virtually ubiquitous use of birth control has had upon women's health and the capacity for embryos to implant in the uterine lining and to remain there once implanted. In the second place, many people would recognize a significant difference between what occurs by nature (embryo loss or miscarriage) and by deliberate human choice (embryo dismemberment). But thirdly and most obviously, it is surely insupportable to claim that the embryos that *happen to be* lost through early miscarriage have been "instrumentalized" for the sake of the embryo that comes to term. Each of these embryos is, if not desired for its own sake, at the very least certainly not desired merely *for the sake of* the viable embryo to come. There is no intrinsic connection between the two besides a statistical number, and the death of the first embryo is in no way connected to nor aiding the birth of the second. Whereas in ART and in therapeutic cloning, the dismemberment and death of embryos is directly willed and deemed necessary for the achievement of the goal being pursued.

Harris' argument is based on a kind of utilitarian balancing of costs and benefits: "I am saying that we do as a matter of fact and of sound moral judgment accept the sacrifice of embryos in natural reproduction, because although we might rather not have to sacrifice embryos in order to achieve a live healthy birth, we judge it to be defensible to continue natural reproduction in the light of the balance between the moral costs and the benefits." While some goods, such as reproductive autonomy, are apparently inalienable rights that we must accept regardless of how distasteful we might judge the use they are put to, others, such as the life of an embryo, are legitimately liable to cost-benefit analysis. Again, it seems that it is only when a human being becomes capable of asserting his autonomy that his right to it becomes inviolable.

Harris is at least helpful in spelling out the utilitarian framework that seems necessarily built into cloning, and indeed all ART. "Most countries and most religions accept IVF and its benefits," he says, "and in doing so accept that spare embryos will be produced only to die." The logic of IVF and the logic of cloning are essentially identical: that fact should give pause to those who support the first while opposing the second. The author of *On Cloning* unfortunately fails to engage the arguments of those opposed to cloning, and therefore to drive the overall argument forward to the points where it really becomes sharp and interesting. The book simply exposes the ethical mindset of someone who supports cloning not just in terms of the technological imperative (that we should do something because we *can*), but because of the potential "benefits" it would provide - regardless of the human and social costs.

# About Bioethics

DAVID ALBERT JONES

**Nicholas Tonti-Filippini**, *About Bioethics: Philosophical and Theological Approaches* (Connor Court Publishing, 2011).

Bioethics is the discipline or set of disciplines that considers the ethics of medical interventions and the ethical implications of the human biological sciences. It is therefore essentially about human beings considered as vulnerable, material, dependent, mortal, more or less sick, more or less confused, and more or less desperate. It considers human beings in relation to others as parents or children (born and unborn), as spouses or lovers, as carers and/or as professionals.

It is curious, then, that many who write on bioethics write as though they had no bodies, sickness, or vulnerabilities, no relationships on which they depended. Much bioethics is conducted as though those engaged in it were pursuing activities of pure reason, a kind of moral mathematics or ethical Sudoku, requiring no experience or maturity but only a limited set of logical rules. Modern practitioners of bioethics have boiled down Kant, Bentham, and Mill leaving a residue of two thin and ostensibly self-evident principles - autonomy and utility. These can then be applied by a kind of bloodless accountancy of which it would seem, at least in principle, a computer would be perfectly capable. If anyone thinks this charge exaggerated I would invite him or her to survey a couple of issues of the more prominent bioethics journals (such as *Bioethics* or the *Journal of Medical Ethics*).

Against this background the present volume comes as a breath of fresh air. It is not written by automaton but by an author who introduces himself, and his story, as a way to explain his perspective. It was precisely as someone afflicted by severe illness (and given but a short time to live) that Nicholas Tonti-Filippini gained an interest in philosophy in general and in bioethics in particular. Later in the book Tonti-Filippini attributes to Charles Taylor the argument that, "reasoning in morality is reasoning with someone else" (p. 117), and it is very clear from the outset of the book that his reasoning has occurred within a particular tradition and been inspired by particular thinkers (living and dead). This is of course true of all philosophers, but not all philosophers are so aware of it or so candid about it.

The context in which Tonti-Filippini works is Australia, and this undoubtedly helps his perspective on both British and American public policy, of both of which he is knowledgeable and critical. He is also Catholic, and much of this book is an exploration of what it means to be a Catholic philosopher engaging in public policy in a Westernized secular state at the turn of the third millennium. As a Catholic philosopher he is sympathetic to the natural law tradition which he characterizes as seeking "to engage the secular world in argument based on pure reason and without assistance from revelation" (p. 66), but he is unconvinced that this can be effective in practise. On pp. 48-49 he does not mince his words:

"The UK probably provides the clearest example of a concerted effort by Catholic intellectuals to take that approach, and the UK probably leads the way in the Western world in terms of adopting evil public

policies that are aggressively bigoted in the active exclusive of religious views and of natural law concepts, particularly the rejection of the Pauline principle [not to do evil that good may come (Romans 3:8)] and moral absolutes that are at the core of natural law explanations. UK public policy also rejects any notion of sexual ethics other than that there be consent."

In defence of Blighty I should point out that, while Tonti-Filippini's accusation is undoubtedly accurate in relation to sexual health and ethics at the beginning of life (abortion and experimentation on human embryos), in relation to disability and to end of life care the picture is much more mixed, with many positive aspects to British culture.

Furthermore, while I agree with Tonti-Filippini that Christians bioethicists should not confine themselves to pure reason and the natural law, I think that his criticisms of the natural law tradition (and especially the new natural law theory (NNLT) of John Finnis, Germain Grisez, and Joseph Boyle) is not always accurate. For example, while I agree that the NNLT theory of action is problematic in relation to craniotomy, I do not think that John Paul II in *Veritatis Splendor* (who undoubtedly was aware of the NNLT) either intended to exclude this as a Catholic school of thought or actually did so (as is claimed on p. 96). I think that the Pope wisely did not wish to settle disputes among schools that accepted the central moral conclusions of the Catholic tradition, but rather wished to exclude only those schools (such as proportionalism, consequentialism and the fundamental option) that were being used to deny traditional Catholic moral teaching.

I also think it misleading to call MacIntyre "a contemporary defender of new natural law approaches" (p. 104). This conflates very different forms of natural law theory. Finally, in relation to accuracy I cannot leave unchallenged the interpretation of Thomas' dictum that the theological virtues are "from without" as meaning "that the theological virtues are revealed by God rather than the product of our own reasoning" (p. 62). To be a virtue (i.e. a principle of action) rather than a set of commands, the theological virtues must have an internal principle in the heart, not only an external one in revelation. Thomas states that the theological virtues come from without not because they are a kind of learned external law but because that internal new law, which is the life of grace, itself comes from without - as a gift from God (see *Summa Theologiae* 1a2ae 91.4 and 1a2ae 106-108). Thomas here, as elsewhere, is much closer to Augustine than he is to Aristotle.

If Tonti-Filippini despairs of convincing people by appeal to pure reason alone within a culture in which religion is increasingly marginalised from public life, what is his alternative?

In the first place he makes a good case for exposing the pretensions of aggressive secularists. The secular was once simply a term for the sphere of the worldly as opposed to the ecclesiastical, an area of activity rather than a philosophy. A tolerant secularism was one that allowed the public practise and expression of different faiths and denominations. However, in recent years this positive pluralism has given way to a form of secularism that suppresses religion and imposes a kind of state atheism, less Bohemian tolerance more Albanian tyranny. Tonti-Filippini expresses it thus, "a bigoted form of secularism has emerged as a form of belief that is intolerant of religious viewpoints and seeks to exclude them from the formation of policy" (p. 135). It is a theme he reiterates throughout the book. Anti-religious bigotry should be exposed and opposed.

The second, more positive, strand of Tonti-Filippini's approach is to be honest about one's background and presuppositions and to engage constructively with people of different backgrounds and viewpoints. This makes a virtue out of diversity, not hiding it but exploring it. "My own experience in working within a pluralistic environment towards an agreed policy on matters of public ethics is that each of us does bring our own culture and tradition and that is likely to include theological traditions.

What is spoken about, however, is not theology as such, but rather the search for a set of agreed and basic values upon which a coherent policy can be formulated" (p. 148). He suggests that bioethicists who are Catholics "should participate in public debate openly as Christians rather than trying to engage in pure reason. I would suggest that we should be open about our faith because subterfuge is beneath our dignity and in any case, would only breed suspicion" (p. 61).

The relationship of faith and reason is a ground that many have traversed before (from Karl Barth to Benedict XVI) but what is original here is the advocacy and exemplification of a constructive dialogue between traditions. Drawing on Alasdair MacIntyre, among others, Tonti-Filippini attempts to negotiate a middle way between Enlightenment rationalism and Postmodern relativism. His plea for education in construction of public policy on bioethics, as opposed to education that explores and reinforces divergence and encourages a tendency to "*slash and burn* alternative views" (p. 169), is as much a challenge for the Church as for the secular bioethical world. And it is this that makes this book truly prophetic, though in a paradoxical way, for, as the prophetic voice is conventionally portrayed - an uncompromising voice in the desert, bioethics "demands a voice other than the prophetic" (p. 145).

# Human Cloning and Human Dignity

PATRICK M. FLEMING

**The President's Council on Bioethics**, *Human Cloning and Human Dignity: An Ethical Inquiry* (Washington, DC, 2002, 299 pages).

In her introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley confesses that the idea for her monster came out of discussions, of which she was mostly a silent listener, between Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley regarding scientific experiments which attempted to replicate the "principle of life." As Mary Shelley relates it, the manufacture of life from its component parts is frightful - "Success [at such an endeavor] would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handywork, horror-stricken." Her novel was a reflection on what she considered to be a possibility of science.

One-hundred seventy years later, as the possibilities imagined by Shelley of creating life in a laboratory had become a reality, the United States President's Council on Bioethics was asked to reflect again on the question of the ethical implications of biotechnology. *Human Cloning and Human Dignity* was the product of this Council's first deliberations, and though disagreement between council members is evident throughout the document's pages, it is notable for its attempt to treat the issue of human cloning in a way that is comprehensive and accessible to the general public.

In the wake of Dolly the sheep's cloning in 1997 and the isolation of human embryonic stem cells the following year, national cloning legislation began to take shape. In 2001 the United Kingdom permitted research on cloned embryos up to fourteen days old. In the United States, cloning legislation stalled in Congress due to disagreement on two types of bans: a ban on all human cloning including the creation of cloned embryos for research; and a ban on so-called reproductive cloning, which is made effective by "criminalizing the act of implantation" of a cloned human embryo, or mandating its destruction (pp. 32, 290).

It was in this context that the President's Council on Bioethics was established by George W. Bush to "undertake fundamental inquiry into the human and moral significance of developments in biomedical and behavioral science and technology" (p. xvii). Chaired by Leon Kass, the seventeen-member Council included medical doctors, scientists, ethicists, and theologians who represented the spectrum of American opinion on bioethical issues. The council chose cloning as its first subject of debate, with the goal of providing a concrete policy recommendation for the President.

As a requirement for dialog, members of the Council first sought to find an agreed-upon terminology. As they put it, "Before we can get to possible moral or policy arguments... we need to agree about what to call that about which we are arguing" (p. 37). Some of the Council members (especially the Council's chair, Leon Kass) were acutely aware that the choice of terms would limit the types of questions that could be asked and, therefore, the answers that could be given.

An important contribution of the Council was a rejection of the popular phrases "reproductive cloning" and "therapeutic cloning". Reproductive cloning was considered inadequate because *all* cloning is

reproductive - a point that is simply descriptive and not normative. Therapeutic cloning was similarly found to be a misleading term: "cloning embryos may be undertaken with healing motives. But it is not itself an act of healing" (p. 44). Rather, it is an act that destroys the research subject for the benefit of a hypothetical patient. "Cloning-to-produce-children" and "cloning-for-biomedical-research" were the terms ultimately chosen by the Council's majority, in order to emphasize that these are the same acts with the same result (a cloned human embryo), simply undertaken with a different intention.

Some proponents of the activity called "therapeutic cloning" objected to this term as well - not because of the adjective but because of the substantive. Though it was proponents who originally coined the term, some now feared that the word "cloning" itself had become associated with fearful gut reactions. These proponents suggested the terms *somatic cell nuclear transfer* (SCNT) or *nuclear transplantation*. A majority on the Council rejected this description, however, finding it "obscures the immediate meaning of the act itself, the production of a living cloned human embryo" and reduces an act to its mechanism. In a moment of humor, the document noted that describing cloning as SCNT is analogous to describing walking as "sequential alternate leg advancement (SALA)" (p. 46).

For its defense of terms that accurately describe the act of cloning, as well as its refusal to rely on technical language that is empty of human or moral content, the careful discussion of terminology (pp. 37-56) represents a genuine contribution to public discourse.

The debate surrounding the two "types" of cloning, as described above, constitutes the bulk of the document's pages. The reflection on cloning-to-produce-children progressed almost immediately to an anthropological and philosophical level. Concerns were raised - regarding issues of identity, the manufacture of human beings, the frightful prospect of eugenics, the disruption of generational succession, and the broader effects on society implied by cloning - which were enough to cause each member of the Council to recommend a ban on this activity (pp. 87-115).

On the other hand - despite the fact that the act involved in cloning embryos for research is actually the same - the discussion of *research* cloning dwelled at length on a type of cost-benefit analysis, in which potential health benefits were weighed against what certain Council members called the "intermediate moral status" of the human embryo (pp. 128-149). The difference between the two discussions is striking. An indication of the difference in tone can be found in several personal statements written by members who wished to "speak in their own voice on one or another aspect of this report" (p. 245). One member likened cloning-for-research to fighting a war: "I hope [the President] decides to send in the stem cells to root out disease. In the spirit of these times, I too say, 'Let's roll'" (Gazzaniga, p. 257). Another finds that delays in the march of scientific progress try one's patience: "Our ignorance is profound; the potential for important medical advances is very great. We must remove the current impediments to this critical research... NOW" (Rowley, p. 293). It is as if the prospect of progress lobotomizes the capacity for deeper reflection.

The document does raise important anthropological questions with regard to cloning-for-research: the exploitation of women to procure a supply of eggs, instrumentalization of human life, the question of what is truly owed to the suffering, and the repeated warning that "a fundamental moral line is crossed" when human embryos are created for the sole purpose of research (pp. 123-127; 159-170). Nonetheless, the connection between all acts of artificial human "production" is not explicitly made by the document; nor is the possibility considered that cloning-for-research may in a sense be more horrific than cloning-to-produce-children, since cloning-for-research creates human embryos with the intention of destroying them (*Dignitatis Personae* 30).

Willy-nilly, some advocates of "therapeutic cloning" - in their attempt to show that cloning-for-research

does not cross any significant moral barriers that have not already been crossed - articulate the deeper relationship between all forms of artificial reproductive techniques. One member writes: "It is hard to see the moral difference between a practice that typically sacrifices embryos (by the tens of thousands, in the case of the IVF industry) and one that inevitably does so [as would occur with cloning-for-research]" (Sandel, p. 294). Or again, "I do not think there is any moral difference between a fertilized egg created in an in vitro fertilization clinic and one created by cloning an embryo. Both eggs are deliberately produced by scientific intervention and both (except for the IVF egg used to impregnate a woman) are destroyed" (Wilson, p. 297). Though this council member might not want to admit it, he is very near to the anthropology of the Catholic Church in this regard.

In the end, *Human Cloning and Human Dignity* is admirable for its comprehensive treatment of the issue of human cloning as it is debated in American society. However, this strength is also its weakness: the reader at times feels confronted by a cacophony of voices. It is in fact a testimony to the leadership of its chair, Leon Kass, that the council was able to author a single document at all.

The Council's recommendation to ban cloning-to-produce-children (unanimous) and place a four-year moratorium on cloning-for-biomedical-research (by a ten to seven majority vote) was, nonetheless, never enacted. Legislation to ban cloning was brought before Congress in 2001, 2004, and 2007, and each time foundered in the Senate due to disagreement regarding cloning-for-research. In 2005, Leon Kass stepped down as Chair to be succeeded by Edmund Pellegrino. In June 2009, the Council was disbanded by President Barack Obama. According to a White House spokesman, it would be replaced by a new commission whose purpose would be to offer "practical policy options" instead of philosophical guidance.[1]

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#### NOTE

[1] *New York Times* "Obama Plans to Replace Bush's Bioethics Panel", June 17, 2009.

# Dignity of Human Procreation

PATRICK M. FLEMING

**Pontifical Academy for Life**, *The Dignity of Human Procreation and Reproductive Technologies: Anthropological and Ethical Aspects* (Vatican City, 2004, 294 pages).

*The Dignity of Human Procreation and Reproductive Technologies* is an edited volume of sixteen essays presented at the Pontifical Academy for Life in conjunction with the tenth anniversary of the Academy's foundation. These essays are directed to an academic audience and would be appropriate for study in bioethics or moral theology courses at an undergraduate or graduate level.

While the essays tackle a number of subjects and do not attempt to form a single argument, together they provide a profound reflection on the human implications of artificial reproductive technology. The contributors to this volume come from a variety of fields - they are psychologists and directors of fertility clinics, bioethicists and professors of law, theologians and medical doctors. At the time of its publication, they included the director of the Linacre Centre in Oxford (now the Anscombe Bioethics Centre), the founder of Naprotechnology at the Pope Paul VI Institute, and the Vice-President of the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family.

Broadly speaking, the volume is structured around three basic questions: what is the vision of human sexuality, childhood, and parenthood implied by artificial reproduction (anthropological); what authentic treatment is available for couples who long to find "in their child a confirmation and completion of their reciprocal self-giving" (*Donum Vitae*, II, 1) (therapeutic); and what is the proper response of a Catholic citizen, and especially a Catholic politician, in the face of unjust civil laws in the realm of human artificial reproduction (juridical). The remainder of this review will be organized around these three types of questions.

## Anthropological

Taken as a whole, the essays of this volume paint a picture of two "logics" which are clearly alternatives at an anthropological level. For example, the reflection on the biblical understanding of human procreation (J. Lozano Barragán, pp. 21-32) stands in stark contrast to the dry and technical description of the history of ART, as it progressed from veterinary science to medicine (A. Bompiani, pp. 43-113). Rather than a vision of sexuality in which the gendered human body is seen to bear the inscription of the capacity to receive and to give love, with artificial reproduction "parents rightly perceive conception taking place in a way which excludes them as a couple," making superfluous their own act of bodily giving and receiving (Helen Watt, p. 33).

Along with these conflicting visions of human sexuality, Livio Melina (pp. 114-126) beautifully sketches how parenthood and childhood acquire different meanings under the logic of ART. "The essence of parenthood" - no longer seen as an obvious consequence of conjugal life, nor as an imploring waiting for a child - "...[is] made to lie in the decision to procreate" (p. 117). Accordingly, parenthood is

burdened with a sense of forbidding responsibility, "the myth of total parenthood." As Melina puts it:

"As a result [of the separation of sexuality from procreation], sexuality has fallen into the field of irresponsibility... In contrary fashion, procreation appears as a burdensome responsibility, indeed a grave responsibility: too grave for a man and a woman, who feel that they are alone..." (p. 120)

On the other hand, "the overburden of responsibility involved in taking the direct and total decision to give life... is taken away when at the origins of procreation there is an act of conjugal union" (p. 125). Inseparably united to sexuality, parenthood recovers an element of joy and light-heartedness, even play, just as sexuality recovers an element of responsibility. Parenthood, then, is not first and foremost "a project imbued with huge and daunting responsibilities, but is an agreement to a task" that precedes the parents (p. 125). To this task parents entrust themselves, responsibly, with the help of their child's ultimate Creator.

Similarly, the child herself takes on an alternative logic within the realm of artificial reproduction: that of manufacture, or of "a project to be built" (p. 124). In this regard, the systematic rejection of children who are conceived with detectable illnesses *in vitro* is not "a somewhat unpleasant episode but rather the consistent consequence of a logic that from the outset does not acknowledge the full dignity of the person of the child" (p. 125). Alternatively, the logic of procreation stands firmly with the words of the philosopher Gabriel Marcel: the child "is never here for me," does not belong to me, "just as I myself do not belong to myself and do not have the possibility of giving existence to myself" (p. 119). One can wish for a child only by "bowing one's knee" (Eph. 3:14). Rather than a project to be built, a child is here seen as a gift to be welcomed - a gift "by which we are the first to be... surprised" (p. 126). Far from being neutral, artificial reproduction implies an alternative vision of what it meant by human sexuality, parenthood and childhood.

### Therapeutic

It should not be a surprise, then, that this anthropology is deeply felt by women and families who undergo artificial reproductive treatments. This perspective is poignantly provided in the essay of Peter Petersen (pp. 166-177), who spent his career in a reproductive clinic in northern Germany. First documenting the psychological symptoms he has often seen, the tremendous economic costs of ART (about €40,000 per pregnancy), and the problems associated with a physician unwittingly becoming the architect of destiny (such as the time a father of IVF triplets, not financially well off, returned to the doctor and shouted: "I ordered twins at the most! I demand that you pay maintenance!"), Dr Petersen then asks a keenly perceptive question: "[Within ART] how far are we justified in speaking of strong ties of love and an intimate personal relationship? Can the procreating and conceiving partnership of love be attained in the absence of physical aesthetics? I don't mean these questions metaphorically - these are questions of reality." Though he is not Catholic, Petersen's experiences in an IVF clinic lead him to articulate the very questions that the Church persistently proposes to our culture.

Several essays are also devoted to the possibility of real and authentic therapies for some situations of infertility (such as M. Di Pietro and A. Spagnolo, pp. 211-223; R. Marana, pp. 224-231; T. Hilgers, pp. 264-274). These therapies, unlike ART, seek to heal the organic problems associated with infertility; their goal is to repair rather than substitute. In a beautiful essay on the history and purpose of adoption, José Ruiz-Calderón (pp. 249-263) shows how the social institution of adoption has developed with a dual nature: to provide a home for a child and to allow a married couple to receive the gift of being able to offer their love. In sympathy with spouses who are still unable to find a medical solution, the essay shows how conjugal love is always fruitful when placed at the service of the very many human situations in need of generosity and love.

## Juridical

The juridical framework supporting the advancement of ART represents a unique challenge for Catholic citizens, and especially lawmakers, who seek to act according to their conscience. What is the proper response? In a profound reflection on *Evangelium Vitae* n. 73, Ángel Rodríguez Luño (pp. 199-207) shows that in a situation where "it is not possible to entirely abrogate an unjust law" it is good for a Catholic lawmaker to work for its "partial abrogation" (p. 201). To assure that one's act is a partial abrogation, however, several conditions are outlined, including that "with one's vote one does not become responsible for the unjust normative dispositions which will still be present in the more restrictive law" (p. 203).

Accordingly, the response based on a "principle of pluralism" is inadequate (see also A. Grzésekowiak, pp. 178-198). This principle states, in brief, that though Catholics are absolutely opposed to every instrumentation of human embryos, other citizens are not opposed; and given that everyone participates in the State, it would be unjust to demand that the law wholly admit either position, since the law must be a mediation. This logic fails because the value of life, when it is put to popular vote, is already relativized: deference to pluralism in the context of ART "always means that the law doubts the absolute value of the right to life or relativizes it" (p. 197). Such a compromise would "jeopardize the fundamentals of social life by putting them up for debate" (p. 205).

While the advance of manipulative medicine may at times seem inevitable, the counterweight of Catholic anthropology and ethics is all the more urgent for physicians and couples who seek a real alternative. There is no denying that artificial reproductive techniques constitute the powerful current of the day but, to paraphrase Solzhenitsyn, living fish swim against the current, dead fish merely float with it. This volume of essays represents a bold attempt to swim against the current.

# Pandora's Baby

JULIANA WEBER

**Robin Marantz Henig**, *Pandora's Baby: How the First Test Tube Babies Sparked the Reproductive Revolution* (Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 2004).

Henig writes a journalist's history of the drastic transition in public opinion that in vitro fertilization (IVF) underwent from the heated initial public debates to the time when it became "no longer monstrous... almost mundane" (p. 233). The transition cannot be overstated: a 1969 poll indicated that "more than half of American adults believed... in vitro fertilization, artificial insemination, and surrogate mothering" were "against God's will" and would "encourage promiscuity" (p. 50); the same poll taken in 1978 after the birth of the first IVF baby indicated that sixty percent of adults thought IVF should be available to anyone who wanted it (p. 201). Truly, "for the general public... once baby Louise arrived, the case was closed. The moment she came out so pretty and pink, IVF had proved its worth" (p. 177). Such a volatile change in public opinion is obviously worth studying more closely.

The main strengths of the text are a colorful writing style, facile knowledge of the science of IVF and cloning, and a well-researched history of the characters who pioneered IVF and the times in which they lived. At first glance, there appears to be a major disparity between the attention paid to those aspects and the attention paid to the actual public debates, but Henig's point seems to be that, since the debates dragged on with no clear winner, public acceptance of IVF depended on the initial results of the treatment. Since the first baby appeared to be just like any other, IVF appeared to be just like the usual means of procuring children.

If the book illustrates one lesson in vivid detail, it is this: never use the slippery slope argument. It only takes one brave researcher to go ahead with experiments and to discover that your slippery slope was an exaggeration. Your slope is a guess beforehand and an almost certain mistake in hindsight, but it is regrettably easy to understand, to remember, and to retell in public debates. It assumes wrongly that people are logically consistent, that they will follow their own logic to its extreme conclusion, something people only ever do slowly. Most fundamentally, the slippery slope argument misses the point: whether there is something wrong with IVF in itself is an entirely separate question from the possibility that it could be used for a darker purpose sometime in the future. Slippery slope arguments stop just short of articulating the essence or inherent logic of the act in itself.

Henig mentions more thoughtful arguments including, among others, the separation of love from procreation (p. 174), the invasiveness of the technique into the intimacy of married life (p. 175), the question of whether IVF enhances the nature and life God has created (p. 174), the time of ensoulment and the predicament of what to do with unnecessary embryos and mistakes (p. 64, 81, etc.), Ramsey's qualms about the child's inability to consent (p. 71), and C.S. Lewis' fear that we might become petrified in time, no longer advancing as a species (p. 13). However, all of these are passed over quickly without discussion. The one pervasive argument presented against IVF is the slippery slope argument. The only pervasive argument in favor of IVF is the experience, hopes, and dreams of the persons she describes.

Without having done my homework, I'm inclined to believe that Henig truly represents the history of the "debate" as witnessed from outside academia.

Henig also offers some interesting asides. For example, she points out that the longer debates continue ambiguously without clear legislative restrictions and without federal funding, the *less* control over new technology society will have (p. 11). As a rule, private funds come with fewer ethical strings attached. As this trend continues, more becomes normal, even necessary in the minds of some citizens, than might have been the case otherwise. Now, any restrictions at all seem ludicrous to the general public.

I recommend this book highly to anyone wishing a vivid illustration of the problem with slippery slope arguments, the science behind IVF, the history of the general public debate, or who feel compassion for the couples who so desperately want their own children and for the scientists who want to help them. All of this is essential to thoughtful debate on the issue. And, while I have reservations about Henig's too-brief mentions of substantial arguments, even the oversight or unwillingness itself becomes instructive for the purposes of pastoral and cultural research.

# This Mortal Flesh

KATHLEEN CRANE VIDMAR

**Brent Waters**, *This Mortal Flesh: Incarnation and Bioethics* (Brazos Press, 2009, 208 pages).

In the Pio Christian Collection of the Vatican Museums, it is possible to encounter artifacts which represent the birth of Christian art. After the Edict of Milan in 313, the early Christians of Rome began to depict the story of salvation history on the sides of their tombs. In these freezes hewn out of tufa, the artists told the story of humanity beginning with Adam and Eve and culminating in the incarnation of Christ. While confronted by these tender depictions of our shared story of faith, it is striking to realize that there are no images of either the crucifixion or the resurrection. Why?

One possible explanation suggests that these facts were too much for an ancient Roman culture yet steeped in paganism to bear. While Christianity began to take hold, the pre-existing Roman culture perceived the body as a negative limit, an imposition on the soul only finally freed from this constraint through death. Why would the all-powerful God willingly accept these limits, allow himself to suffer and die in the most humiliating way imaginable, and then upon his entry into eternal life *return* to his body? Why would the God of the universe condescend to allow his autonomy to be defined by the limits of a flesh condemned to suffer and die?

In *This Mortal Flesh: Incarnation and Bioethics*, Brent Waters suggests that late modern man is equally scandalized by the proposition of the Incarnation. Through a compilation of essays and lectures which represent a distillation of this thinker's ideas over time, Waters claims we live in an age which fosters a positive hatred of the body and its limits. In and through the lens of a dualistic vision of the body and a technological ontology, we seek not to transcend these limits through death like the Romans, but rather to overcome them *technologically*. Waters asserts that it is only in a cultural/liturgical recovery of the Word made flesh that we will find an adequate frame of reference to enter into the complex questions posed by the multifarious bioethical issues of our day.

Waters does not seek to offer a programmatic response. Rather he seeks to pose questions regarding reproductive medicine, genomics, embryonic stem cell research, cloning, brain death, and the post-human movement in light of the fact that "our mortal bodies have been affirmed, vindicated, and redeemed by God in Christ." It is in Christ, Waters argues, that our understanding of the meaning of humanity can be recovered and our cultural vision can be restored. Without Jesus, we are incapable of affirming the value of human suffering, or of comprehending how our human freedom is discovered not in a rejection, but in and through an embrace of our being embodied, finite, and mortal.

The strength of Waters' work is that he begins far removed from any particular bioethical question, and seeks to develop a lens through which we might look upon current issues anew. Like George Grant and Aldous Huxley, he seeks to describe the underlying values and convictions of a society which has allowed technology thoroughly to inform the patterns of its daily life. With our smart phones in hand, Waters argues that late modern man values mobility, autonomy, and control over the many variables

of human existence. But at what cost? As the technological vision increasingly takes over, we are less and less able to give an answer to this question adequate to the truth of our humanity, a truth that is ultimately revealed in the person of Christ (ch. 1).

In his attempt to bring together works written at different times and to different audiences, Waters tends toward repetition, and the work as a whole perhaps lacks a sense of overall unity. That being said, the juxtaposition of the technological worldview against the incarnational one clearly runs throughout his text. The technological vision sees an embryo as a particularly potent conglomerate of cells theoretically useful for curing diseases; an incarnational view understands the embryo as a neighbor deserving of our respect, love, and hospitality (ch. 2). Attempting to assert greater mastery over nature and human nature, a technological culture wages war against aging and death; by contrast, an incarnational vision allows suffering and death to speak, while understanding that they do not have the final word. The "final word" is the Word made flesh, who points us beyond the sufferings and joys of our lives on earth to their fulfillment in heaven (chs 3, 5, and 7). A technological vision embraces the post-human project and its gospel of self-transformation; the incarnational perspective sees that all true transformation is accomplished by a liturgical encounter with Christ in the sacraments - with Christ at the foot of his Cross (chs 8 and 9).

Anyone who seeks to understand the significance of modern technical ambition upon the human person and community in light of Christianity will benefit from a study of Waters' work. His clear message is this: that Jesus Christ provides us the only adequate horizon by which late modern man can redefine the parameters by which he understands himself, the human community, and the world. Unless this horizon is recovered, all of our attempts to improve, sustain, or control our living and our dying will only end in a destruction of the very humanity that we hope to serve. Waters helps us to see that our task is perhaps not so much in arguing particular points of policy, but in providing adequate answers to late modern man to the same questions raised by ancient Romans. We must convince late modern man through our joyful witness that, after the model of Jesus Christ, we will find our happiness in an embrace of our being embodied, finite, vulnerable to suffering, and mortal.

# Who Am I? Where Do I Come From?

KATRINA TEN EYCK

**Elizabeth Marquardt**, *My Daddy's Name is Donor: A New Study of Young Adults Conceived through Sperm Donation* (a report released internationally by the Commission on Parenthood's Future ([www.familyscholars.org](http://www.familyscholars.org))).

**Joanna Rose**, *Who am I? Experiences of the Donor Conceived* (Idreos Education Trust, UK, 2006).

In recent years, conception through sperm donation, or donor insemination (DI), has received much publicity in the form of books, blogs, documentaries, films and interviews, both from its advocates and its critics. Rudimentary attempts at artificial insemination have, apparently, gone on for centuries. Modern methods were actually developed first for animal husbandry, where they were quite successful in animal breeding, and then transferred to use in humans by scientists, many of whom had a strong interest in eugenics.

The discovery that sperm could be frozen and thawed for later use allowed the development of sperm banks and the commercialization of the industry in the 1970s. Since then, DI has proceeded largely without regulation and without public debate. Currently in the US, self-regulating sperm banks and fertility clinics connect couples and women to anonymous men willing to give a sample of sperm with money being exchanged at both ends. This multimillion-dollar business has increasing acceptance as a "treatment" for male infertility, or as an avenue for single and lesbian women to achieve pregnancy. Experts estimate that in the U.S. about 30,000 to 60,000 children are conceived annually through DI. (The federal government does not require any reporting of the number of conceptions achieved through donor sperm, nor is it noted on birth certificates.)

The recent spate of coverage on DI has served to bring a practice marked by secrecy into the public eye. The two works reviewed here, *My Daddy's Name is Donor* - a study done by the Commission for the Future of Parenthood that can be found at [familyscholars.org](http://familyscholars.org) - and *Who Am I? Experiences of the Donor Conceived* - a small book that offers the first-hand account of three women who were conceived through DI as well as a Foreword and Afterword written by social researcher Dr Alexina McWhinnie - seek to bring the experiences of the individuals conceived through DI into the public conscience, a perspective that is often downplayed.

In *My Daddy's Name is Donor*, Elizabeth Marquardt and her fellow researchers compare the experiences of a large sample of young adults from three groups: those conceived through DI, those adopted in infancy, and those who were raised by their biological parents. By comparing the experiences of the three groups, *My Daddy's Name is Donor* is able to address many of the common ideas about DI: that it is much like adoption, that the parents are better parents because they intended the pregnancy, that the children and fathers have no difficulty bonding, and that because children do not know any different they are free from emotional suffering. The experiences of three women detailed in McWhinnie's book further illumines many of the findings that come out of *My Daddy's Name is Donor*.

In 2010, when Elizabeth Marquardt, Norval D. Glenn, and Karen Clark released *My Daddy's Name is Donor*, their express intentions were to bring DI out of its obscurity and to ignite "a national and international debate on the ethics, meaning, and practice of donor conception" (p. 6). Specifically, they chose to focus on the experience of the children conceived through DI, which tended to play second fiddle to the pain of the would-be parents grieving over their infertility. The comparative study (drawing from 485 donor conceived young adults between eighteen and forty-five, 562 young adults adopted as infants, and 563 young adults raised by their biological parents) is difficult to dismiss, given that it is the first of its kind and gives us the first glimpse into what adult children have to say of the manner of their conception. The study poses this question: given the suffering reported by the persons conceived through DI, should we not call a halt to a practice that experiments with the lives of the unborn for the sake of ameliorating the pain of the living?

The 15 major findings of the study (p. 7) give an outline of the nature of the suffering experienced by donor-conceived children. Among these findings we find the following: the donor conceived have "profound struggles with their origins and identities," their "family relationships... are more often characterized by confusion, tension, and loss," and they are "more likely to have experienced divorce or multiple family transitions." Donor offspring suffer confusion about who is a member of their family and "often worry about the implications of interacting with - and possibly forming intimate relationship with - unknown, blood-related family members." When compared to the other participants, donor offspring are more likely to suffer from "delinquency, substance abuse, and depression."

Nearly half of donor-conceived offspring have serious concerns and objections to DI, many are bothered that money was exchanged in their conception, and a substantial majority believe they have the right to know information about their biological father. Donor offspring are twice as likely to be in support of DI and "support...a strikingly libertarian approach to reproductive technologies in general." However, those donor offspring who do *not* support DI "are more than three times as likely to say they do not feel they can express their views in public." After reporting its major findings the study goes on to give more in depth explanations of the questions posed to participants, as well as analysis of the responses.

The findings challenge the idea that so long as a child is intended and wanted, genetic relation is insignificant. Rather, Marquardt *et al.* found that 65 percent of the participants in the survey agree with the statement, "My sperm donor is half of who I am." It is much easier for the adults commissioning the child to disregard the identity of the sperm donor than for the child who is formed from his genetic material, who has not only practical questions and concerns about his or her genetic history and genetic relations, but also express an emotional sense of loss at being denied a relation with the man who fathered them as well as their genetic relatives. The study found that these individuals commonly wonder about their unknown genetic family. Such wonderings are fraught with emotional baggage. Not only do these children need to navigate the emotions of their parents who might feel betrayed by their curiosity, but also they must bear the knowledge that their genetic father exchanged his sperm for money with, quite possibly, little to no thought of the consequent lives that would result from his actions. Certainly, not all of these individuals express a desire to meet their donor father, nor do all express the same experience of pain, and yet the numbers that come out of the study demand that we question the idea that genetic relation is incidental to a family, and furthermore, indicate that denying an individual any relation to their genetic forebears is a violence.

Adoption would seem to be a comparable situation. However, Marquardt *et al.* found that adoption and DI are significantly different in many ways (pp. 71-76). Adoption is usually a response to the need of a

child whose parents are no longer able to care for him. It is admittedly a backup plan for the child, whose needs guide the process from start to finish. Furthermore, the need for genetic continuity has long been recognized, leading to an emphasis on open adoption whenever possible. DI, on the other hand, sets out to mimic an adoptive situation (some have called the apparent father the "adoptive father") and to eliminate any relationship with the genetic father. Most importantly, it is the desire of the parent(s) for a child that guides DI; thus the "adoptive" parents are those who also bring the orphan into existence. The study also showed that adoptees have far less confusion about their identity and who is and is not a member of their family.

Interestingly, although often sharing many demographic characteristics (being middle-aged couples with a stable income), parents who choose DI have a much greater chance of divorcing than those who adopt. Marquardt *et al.* also point out that adoptive children often bear much emotional pain and have a higher tendency to substance abuse, depression and delinquency, which should give us pause before intentionally creating an adoptive situation.

*My Daddy's Name is Donor* strongly suggests that the child's experience of his or her family is deeply tied to his or her sense of identity, and that this experience of family begins at the moment of conception. The nature of the family is already present (or absent) at this moment, and already providing a space for the child to grow into him or herself. As Marquardt *et al.* emphasized in their conclusion, the absence of the genetic father generates a good deal of pain and confusion in large portion of this population. It is not enough to claim that some children are fine, for, clearly, many are not. The practice of DI cannot but be exploratory and experimental, and the risks involved are profound, implicating every dimension of the life of the child so conceived.

Hence it is no surprise that many donor-conceived individuals are calling for more regulation of the industry, particularly emphasizing the right of the child to know the identity of the genetic father. Several European countries have outlawed anonymous donor insemination, limited the number of children can be conceived from any one donor, and required that information about the identity of the genetic father be available to the donor-conceived child upon his or her eighteenth birthday. (However, any given child's knowledge of the terms of his conception still relies upon the parent's disclosure.) Regulation in these countries has brought about a decrease in the number of men willing to consign samples to sperm banks. Such regulation, were it to become the norm, could very well severely limit the sperm pool.

Although necessary and helpful, such regulation does not resolve all the negative issues connected to donor insemination, as is clear in *Who am I?* These women vividly and concisely describe some of their life experiences and the effects of being conceived through DI. Louis Jamieson describes the event of her conception: "My entry into the world was so anonymous. I am not merely referring to the protected anonymity of donors: I mean the physical absence of my natural father. How much in this I was picking up my mother's own feelings of confusion or ambivalence about my conception I shall never know. What I do know is that, since recognizing the event of conception as a source of trauma, I have felt much more solid and secure in my own self, and in my relationships with others" (p. 36).

Jamieson has come to believe that the very method of conception, which has separated love from biology, and in which the child is not the serendipitous result of an embrace of love but the product of an economic exchange and a medical procedure, is a source of trauma to the child, the pain of which is carried through life. Even were donor insemination to become a true act of donation, and not a financial transaction, and an open procedure, what cannot be overcome is the physical absence of the father, the fact that the form of conception is a procedure and not an act of love in which a man and a

woman give themselves over one to the other, and to lovingly receive each other. The pain of Jamieson, which she is not alone in expressing, suggests that the primordial experience of the child is bound to the form of its conception, and the presence of the dual relationship to the mother and the father that is always, already present to and affecting the child.

Unaware of the role DI played in her life, Jamieson had struggled with chronic depression for years, feeling as though she did not fully exist, as well as being troubled that she had so little in common with her father. Her experiences, although unique to her situation, echo those of the other two women: Joanna Rose and Christine Whipp. The testimonies of these women all indicate that their identity is inescapably bound to the identity of their biological father, much as adopted children wrestle with their identity and curiosity about their birth parents, and that his absence has left profound wounds.

The suffering is not limited to the experience of the child, but also affects the parents, as is clear in the stories of these three women. Rose, who knew of the terms of her conception, describes tip toeing around the fact of her father's infertility her whole life. DI does not cure male infertility; the father still bears the pain of his infertility and his longing to procreate remains thwarted. The presence of the child who is genetically related to the mother and the anonymous donor cannot be a sign of the unity and fruitfulness of the parents. The child has a potential to be a constant reminder of a suffering that is not simply resolved by the use of DI, but quite often compounded.

This confirms the finding of Marquardt *et al.*, who found that relationships in DI families are more likely to be characterized by confusion, tensions, and a sense of loss; possibly explaining the greater likelihood of divorce among these couples. Christine Whipp tells of her own mother's growing animosity toward her, which was only exacerbated when she was able to naturally conceive a child with her second husband. All three women speak of an ambiguity present in their relationships with their apparent fathers, and a certain distance that they now ascribe to absence of genetic relation.

These women also concur in linking their struggles with questions of identity to the feeling of being a product of their parents' planning, rather than a fortuitous fruit of love. The circumstances of their birth lead all three to express the judgment that they were obtained to fill a need, and thus the sense of the meaning of their existence depends upon the need of the mother and/or the father. They describe feeling like a product or a commodity. With this comes the realization that their own need to have genetic continuity and knowledge of any half siblings (sometimes numbering into the 100s, often of a similar age, and even living in the same neighborhood at times) has been wholly disregarded. No one, apparently, took into account the possible needs and pains that DI could create in donor offspring. Marquardt *et al.* sum up the experience of these women as a "feeling of being a product made to suit their parent's wishes - being made, not born" (p. 24).

*Who am I?* also touches on the question of gratitude. Should not these individuals simply be grateful to DI for giving them existence? Often such a question seeks to dismiss the pain of these individuals. It might seem ironic, but it is often those most actively opposed to DI who take most seriously the feelings, experiences, and personhood of those conceived in this fashion. All three of the donor-conceived women in *Who am I?* find the practice reprehensible. Christine Whipp perhaps best summarizes the position that both *Who am I?* and *My Daddy's Name is Donor* would seem to lead to:

"there is simply no way to adequately balance the parenting aspirations of adults who require donor gametes against the long term side-effects of family rupturing and identity deprivation for the resulting vulnerable and non-consenting party. The frustration of one generation does not justify the complications that donor conception bestows on the next.... We all thought slavery had died out... but in the twenty-first century we are allowing proto-people to be swapped, bartered, shipped across

international boundaries, experimented upon, defrosted, and sold like fashionable consumer commodities."

# Women and ART

MARY SHIVANANDAN

**Rita Arditi**, *Test-Tube Women: What Future for Motherhood?* (Boston, MA: Pandora Press, 1984).

**Gena Corea**, *The Mother Machine: Reproductive Technologies from Artificial Insemination to Artificial Wombs* (New York, NY: Harper& Row, 1985).

**Debra Evans**, *Without Moral Limits: Women, Reproduction and Medical Technology* (Wheaton IL: Crossway Books, 2000).

**Patricia & Steinberg Spallone**, *Made to Order: The Myth of Reproductive and Genetic Progress* (New York, NY: Pergamon Press, 1987).

Early in her book, *Without Moral Limits*, Debra Evans quotes Leon Kass on the real situation in providing a child by ART, while the woman herself remains infertile. "What is being 'treated' is her desire - a perfectly normal and unobjectionable desire - to bear a child." Instead of moderation and education of this desire - another name for virtue - the desire is indulged "beyond moral limits" to the detriment of the embryo/child and the womb/woman and society. In solving a mystery, the traditional motto is "*cherchez la femme*." In unraveling the tangle of who wants what in ART, the motto might be "search out the source of desire." Whose often quite legitimate desires are being satisfied and/or exploited, even self-exploited?

This can be a particularly useful method in looking at the various players in the ART arena, the scientists and physicians, male or female, who experiment and perform the operations, the men and/or women who seek the procedures, the victims who willingly or unwillingly are affected. In examining these books on women and ART, several desires were uncovered beyond the simple desire of a woman to have a child. Feminists, for example, want control of their reproductive processes through contraception and abortion but fear losing control to the medical profession in ART. Medical researchers are often motivated by an overweening desire for knowledge and control of reproductive processes, while masking it under the guise of helping the infertile woman/couple. This essay will consider the response of women to ART as presented in these four books through the lens of desire both ordinate and inordinate. Legitimate desires call for legitimate means to fulfill them. Central will be the question of whether the technology of ART is in itself destructive of human, especially woman's nature, or is it the use of technology in the grip of uncontrolled desire?

Michael Hanby elsewhere on this site has already outlined the destructive nature of ART for the child and the state of childhood or filiality, which is the foundation of personhood and constitutes the core of what it means to be a human being. This essay will not repeat that but rather turn to its effect on woman from alternately the radical feminist and Christian perspectives of these authors. Both are only too aware of the dangers to women. Feminist Gena Corea, who wrote one of the first books criticizing ART in 1979, at the close of an article for *Test-Tube Women* on "Egg Snatchers," confesses, "Sitting at my typewriter night after night, I see my writing on the new reproductive technologies as a scream of warning to other women" (p. 48). As Debra Evans learned more about ART and of its so-called "final

liberation of women" from their "biological destiny," she "often wept at the vision that emerged" (Evans, p. 14).

### Desire for a Child

Let us first look at the desire for a child. Evans tells the story of a couple, John and Doris Del Zio, who were the first to attempt in vitro fertilization (IVF) in the United States. She quotes Doris as saying: "I didn't do it to be first; I did it because I desperately wanted to have a baby." Evans then tells of the succession of difficult operations she endured before being offered the experimental procedure of IVF, which involved painful harvesting of her eggs, fertilization in a petri dish and implantation in her womb. Doris failed to get pregnant, but she represents thousands of women who will go to extreme lengths to have a child. Such a desire overrides all consideration of what the woman is doing to herself, to her marriage, to the child, both the one/s conceived, the ones "selectively terminated" or frozen for future use, not to mention the effect on family and society, when a sperm or egg donor or a surrogate mother are part of the picture.

It is not always the woman who desires the child. In a study in a Sydney hospital reported by Christine Crowe in *Made to Order*, the women experienced social disapproval and isolation from other mothers as a consequence of infertility leading to guilt. Yet even if the woman would accept adoption, the husband often preferred a biological child or none. Taking on both her own and her husband's infertility problem, the woman feels compelled to participate in ART, which makes acceptance of infertility difficult. Radical feminists approach the problem by claiming that women are programmed to desire motherhood and society itself must be changed to support gender-neutral parenting.

The desire to have the perfect child is also fed by these technologies, since sperm and egg donors can be chosen for desired traits and the embryo/fetus tested for abnormalities and aborted. Some 90 percent of children diagnosed prenatally with Down's syndrome and Spina Bifida are aborted. Further, the question is asked by feminists, "whose desire for a child?" They point out that while women in the industrialized West and the wealthy elites in developing countries have access to the latest ART, the emphasis in third-world countries such as China and India is on the limitation of births, even by harsh means. Third world countries instead become a source of surrogate mothers (*The Mother Machine*, 215)

### The Desire for Autonomy, Choice, Control

In *Test-Tube Women* Barbara Katz Rothman states the feminist case for choice, since choice and information have served as the cornerstones of the women's rights. "We are above all pro-choice," and without doubt, "contraception and abortion are the *sine qua non* of the reproductive rights movement" (pp. 23, 26). Rothman asks if some choices do not close down others. For example, while women must be free to control fertility, what of the choice not to control it? Women are losing the right *not* to abort and to have large families. Through prenatal screening women are also losing the right not to know and to accept the less than perfect baby, the Down's syndrome child for example. Information by itself, she says, does not guarantee whose choices will be met. She is troubled by the abortion of fetuses of the "wrong sex," overwhelmingly female. Rothman makes clear the contradictions of the feminist movement with regard to freedom and choice. She puts it starkly. "All [reproductive] techniques empower and all enslave women." Her solution is a politics of social control, hardly a prescription for freedom of choice, as the latest DHHS mandate on contraceptive coverage, which violates the freedom of religion clause of the US constitution, shows.

Unable to accept the contradictions, feminists lay the blame on patriarchy. Gena Corea points to the unwillingness of men to interfere with their own fertility in order to achieve this "brave new world." In

1974, 20 years after the first baby was conceived with frozen sperm, the procedure was still called experimental, while a mere four years after the first test tube baby was born, IVF was no longer considered experimental (Corea, pp. 34, 35). Referring to "the subversive sperm," she claims that artificial insemination with donor sperm (AID) is alarming men, since a wife could now get pregnant with another man's sperm. In a study on AID it was found that because husbands equate AID with infidelity and adultery, it led to family problems. Since 1976 both single heterosexual and lesbian women have availed themselves of AID, and inseminated themselves. This may be enough in itself to give a responsible pause to AID.

Corea sees patriarchy primarily at work. She charges that compared with women's continuous and men's discontinuous reproductive experience, men sense a lack of connection to the next generation, which they overcome by controlling the process itself. Later on Corea accuses "the patriarchal mentality," which views nature (and nature includes women) as a force to be controlled and mastered, of creating pesticides, contraceptives and herbicides that lead women to need ART, ignoring the fact that feminists consider access to contraception a fundamental woman's right

### The Desire for Power over Nature

Women are particularly conscious of the power of technology to transform nature. They see clearly the "logic of the machine" which objectivizes the woman's body so that it is treated like a thing that can be bought and sold. Rowland in *Made to Order* complains that women's "bodies are used as living laboratories (p. 74). Gena Corea (author of *The Mother Machine*) in *Test Tube Women* refers to "dismembered motherhood," charging that women are treated like animals (p. 47). Indeed along with Corea, Debra Evans in *Without Moral Limits* shows how animal breeding methods were transferred wholesale to women in ART Julie Murphy in *Test-Tube Women* describes women's bodies as "fertile fields to be farmed. Women are regarded as commodities with vital products to harvest, eggs" (p. 68). On the question of surrogacy, she asks: "Is the surrogate mother a prostitute or is she instead a modern extension of the wet nurse? Is it baby selling or organ selling?"

A particularly insightful and passionate article in *Made to Order* is contributed by Maria Mies. "Why don't you simply say... that this new technological development frightens you, that you don't need it, that it is inhuman and inimical to women and you won't buy it? (p. 35). Mies recognizes technical progress is not neutral but always based on the domination of nature. She sees the goal of the enterprise "to become independent of the hazards, the 'moods' of nature - and of the women out of whom life comes." To use technology well, she goes on, we must begin with "our relationship to nature, to other people, and we would first have to determine what the 'good life,' happiness without exploitation is." All routine work, which technology seeks to relieve, is *per se* burdensome and monotonous. But she sees a great difference between mindless factory work and the routine work of a woman looking after her children. "It is never only a burden but always a pleasure too." Mies is under no illusion that women can equally misuse the power of technology, citing lesbians, who support the idea of cloning to eliminate men. Mies also charges women with being complicit with the system, "glad that the system seems so 'powerful' and - apparently - gives them no chance [of change]."

### Desire for the Good Life

Both Debra Evans and Maria Mies argue that the good life cannot be achieved simply by technology. Technical progress, Mies says is supposed to create the "good life," but since what it produces are always "dead" products no "good life" results. She charges that the machine destroys creativity, epitomized by addiction to computers with a consequent loss of spontaneous human communication, and loss of thinking and feeling even of our bodies. Her prescription is to opt out of the consumer

society in favor of "the restoration of our capacity for subsistence production." In other words, our desire for ever-greater mastery over nature needs to be circumscribed by limits. Evans, coming from a Christian perspective, is more specific about the kind of limits needed. She refers to them as moral limits, which ensure the dignity of the human person and the fundamental relationships of the family. In discussing the limits that are being crossed she cites Dr Teresia Iglesias:

"It is clear that there are two fundamental and related assumptions underlying the current ethical guidelines and practice of IVF [and all ART]: The first assumption is that *the early human embryo does not enjoy full human status*; the second is that *the values and interests of science override the value and interests of the newly conceived human being*."

In an appendix, Evans gives the text of the Vatican *Instruction on Respect for Human Life and the Dignity of Procreation*, which was summed up in section no. 7: any medical intervention in human procreation "must be evaluated not only with reference to its technical dimension, but also and above all in relation to its goal, which is the good of persons and their bodily and psychological health... the dignity of human persons, of their sexuality and of their origin."

Feminists, as we have seen, have opposed in one way or another all forms of ART, but by endorsing contraception and abortion in the name of freedom and choice they have mowed down all moral limits to reproductive technology on the part of the medical profession and scientific research. Limits inevitably involve frustration of desire, and this is what our culture refuses to countenance. Limits to desire are met with more technology to mitigate the effects of uncontrolled desire, especially in the area of sexuality. When promiscuous sex leads to disease, or contraception leads to infertility, the recourse is to more technology, not to the recognition of limits. Perhaps here one can transpose a word from Wendell Berry, in his 2012 Jefferson Lecture sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities, deploring the disappearance of the small family farm in favor of the industrial plantation.

"The problem that ought to concern us first is the fairly recent dismantling of our old understanding and acceptance of human limits. For a long time we knew that we were not, and could never be, 'as gods.' We knew, or retained the capacity to learn that our intelligence could get us into trouble that it could not get us out of."

#### The Acceptance of Limits and the Education of Desire

Is there an alternative? In a second appendix Evans describes and testifies to "A Christ-Centered Approach to Infertility." "When it comes to bearing a child, in whom," she asks, "will we place our highest trust - in God or modern medicine?" She speaks from the perspective of a mother whose daughter gave birth to a baby diagnosed with Hydrocephalus and Spina Bifida. She speaks of both the pain and the joy of accepting such a child, who is one of the few to survive prenatal screening. Neither Evans nor the feminist authors of these books on ART make reference to a technology that respects limits and, at the same time, treats the *causes* of infertility, what is called Naprotechnology, pioneered by Dr Thomas W. Hilgers at the Paul VI Institute, Omaha, NE. Based on monitoring the fertility signs of the body, this arose out of the modern scientific methods of natural family planning (NFP), which give couples a joint method of spacing births. NFP, too little known and practiced, both calls for and teaches the education of desire and its joyful fruition on all levels, physical, emotional, and spiritual.

# Editorial: ART

STRATFORD CALDECOTT

The present issue is devoted to reviewing one of the most important controversies in the world today - that of artificial reproductive technology or techniques (ART). As far as bioethics is concerned, this is truly where "the rubber hits the road." The question is about technological intervention in human reproduction, which our society tends increasingly to answer purely in terms of practical results in the short term, and without any consideration of ontology or the "nature" of the human person either of the parents or of the offspring.

The Catholic Church's view on this question was summarized by Pope John Paul II on August 27, 1999, speaking to participants in an International Study Week of the Pontifical Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family:

"To eliminate the corporeal mediation of the conjugal act as the place where a new human life can originate means at the same time to degrade procreation from cooperation with God the Creator to the technically controlled 're-production' of an exemplar of the species, and thus to lose the unique personal dignity of the child (cf. *Donum Vitae*, II B/5). Indeed, only when there is integral respect for the essential characteristics of the conjugal act as a personal gift of the spouses, at once corporeal and spiritual, is the person of the child also respected and expression given to his origin in God, the source of every gift."

Michael Hanby's lead article expanding on the implications and foundations of this teaching is important and should be read in full. I do not plan to rehearse those arguments here. But it is worth noting that the controversy is not about the word "artificial" *per se*. In fact it is fairly clear to everyone where the difference lies between "natural" reproduction and the kinds of "artificial" intervention that go under the name of IVF or ART. The controversy is more about the significance of that difference, and this only comes into view when ontology is brought into the picture. It is about the *nature of the human being* rather than the *naturalness of the technique*.

From the books under review we hear in chorus that a host of practical problems and moral dilemmas arise from the use of ART, not least the psychological confusion of those who have been conceived in this way and denied access to their genetic parents.

More than eight years ago, in February 2004, the Pontifical Academy for Life issues its Final Communiqué on *The Dignity of Human Procreation and Reproductive Technologies: Anthropological and Ethical Aspects*. It noted that 25 years had passed since the first baby conceived by *in vitro* fertilization. More than a million children had already been born by this method.

While noting the understandable human reasons that had led many couples to resort to the new technology, the Academy noted with concern the growing sense that reproduction by ART constitutes a *preferential* method, compared to "natural" procreation, given the added possibility of "quality control." Of course, in reality this means the selection of a preferred embryo after screening, leading to the freezing or death of those not selected.

All such techniques, the Church asserts, are contrary to the inalienable dignity of the human being which it is our moral duty to affirm and defend.

"We thus state again our firm conviction that artificial reproductive techniques, far from being a real treatment for the sterility of a couple, in reality constitute an unworthy method for the coming forth of a new life, whose beginning thus depends in large measure on the technical action of third parties outside the couple and takes place in a context totally separated from conjugal love. In employing ART, indeed, the spouses do not in any way take part in the conception of their child through the reciprocal corporeal and spiritual self-giving of their persons by means of the conjugal act."

It is this rational conviction that you will find echoed again and again among our reviewers. But, as Professor Hanby points out, the pressure exerted by today's liberal and social elites and by our political journalism against the very possibility of thinking deeply - that is ontologically - about anything, especially ourselves, is hard to resist.

*Stratford Caldecott*

*June 2012*

NOTES

*The Dignity of Human Procreation and Reproductive Technologies* (2004) is available [here](#).

The earlier (1987) *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation* by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (also known as *Donum Vitae*) is available [here](#).

The 2008 *Instruction Dignitas Personae on Certain Bioethical Questions*, by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, is available [here](#).

