In “Immune to Life,” Andrew Kubick explores the suppression of fertility through the use of vaccines. Various biological targets in both men and women have been identified by researchers. Approaching the moral question from within the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition, Kubick affirms that antifertility vaccines violate both the totality and integrity of the recipient. The aim is to neutralize a healthy function of the body, which is a type of mutilation. In addition to other problems, Kubick warns of the potential abuse of the principle of informed consent. Social engineers may combine these agents with others that are routinely used to preserve health in larger efforts at population control.

The theory of natural law is central to the Catholic moral tradition and therefore also to its bioethics. Denis Scrandis, in “Maritain’s Theory of Natural Law,” focuses on the key role played by connatural knowledge. Our appetites, for example, are natural inclinations. The soul knows of these appetites and regulates their fulfillment. This relation between inclinations and reason is the essence of moral knowledge, within which we can find an ideal order that can serve as the guide to a moral life. These insights may be formulated into a set of practical precepts by us, yet the source of this law is not the human will, but nature as created by God.

We have two essays in this issue on Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato si’.* The first, by Rev. Nicanor Austriaco, OP, notes that Francis invites us to see ecology as an extension of the natural moral law. We have moral duties not only to God and our fellow human beings, but also to the wider creation. We are, in fact, a part of nature ourselves. As Catholics, we are called not only to perfect ourselves within the created order but to bring creation to its perfection. Austriaco concludes by showing how these new emphases are extensions of traditional Thomistic natural law thinking.

Our second essay on this encyclical is by Cory Andrew Labrecque. In “Catholic Bioethics in the Anthropocene,” Labrecque argues that we must understand more deeply the familiar biblical command to subdue the earth. Salvation history takes place within what Francis calls an “integral ecology.” Waste, compulsive consumerism, and a tyrannical anthropocentrism are incompatible with our dependence on
nature. The preservation of human health requires a healthy environment, which is evident in the degradation of the environment in our nation’s poorer communities. Francis thus echoes Van Rensselaer Potter, who said that bioethics is built on an ecological foundation.

William E. May, who passed away on December 13, 2014, was a principal contributor to contemporary Catholic bioethics. Austin Holgard, in “Contra Craniotomy,” explores May’s changing views on this topic throughout his career and defends his original position, namely, that craniotomy is morally unjustifiable. Although craniotomy is rare, it is still practiced in some developing countries. The topic is also important in Catholic bioethics because it crystallizes larger moral questions about what constitutes direct killing. Holgard is particularly interested in how reasoning about craniotomy applies to techniques used to manage ectopic pregnancies. Originally, May argued against the views of the new natural law theorists, affirming that removing a child from the uterus by craniotomy necessitated a direct act of killing. He later decided that what mattered was the interior intention of the agent. Holgard argues that the second view neglects the aspect of direct causality and that May had it right the first time.

How should we understand the place of technology within our lives? In “Thinking about Technology from a Catholic Moral Perspective,” Mark Latkovic offers us different models commonly cited as the correct way to view modern technological advances. He enumerates ten: technology as a neutral tool, as a savior of the human race, as intrinsically evil, as an ambiguous instrument, as a power that must be subordinated to ethics, as a liberating force, as a gift of the Holy Spirit, as a substitute for virtue, as a slave master or emancipator, and as an evolutionary artifact. Pope Benedict XVI viewed it as an ambiguous instrument. Technology is a profoundly human reality, he said, of which there have been far too many abuses. Pope John Paul II insisted that technology be subordinated to ethics. Our dominion over creation emphasizes the superiority of spirit over matter. When technology trumps ethics, the dignity of the person and of moral conscience is lost. Latkovic concludes by arguing for a moral partnership with technology: we must treat persons as ends and technology as means.

This journal continues to foster debate on the question of embryo adoption, making every effort to ensure that both sides are equally represented. In this issue, Elizabeth Bothamley Rex argues in favor of the practice. She begins “The Magisterial Liceity of Embryo Transfer” with criticism of an article by Charles Robertson, “A Thomistic Analysis of Embryo Adoption,” which appeared in the Winter 2014 issue of the NCBQ. Rex argues that the 1987 Instruction on bioethics, Donum vitae, is critical for resolving the question of embryo adoption and that we must see the 2008 Dignitas personae against the backdrop of the principles enunciated in that earlier work. After a critique of Robertson, Rex reviews the key teachings of Donum vitae and argues that, according to this magisterial source, actions taken on behalf of the life of the embryo are inherently moral while those that leave the embryo in its abandoned condition are clearly wrong.

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