



The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly has published numerous papers on the topic of nutrition and hydration. My strategy as editor has been to print a wide range of writers who take opposite and conflicting sides on this issue. Although the Church's teaching on the provision of food and water has become much clearer in recent years, it should not surprise us that there remains considerable debate about exactly how we are to apply this teaching.

Perhaps we have covered the topic too often, but I am continually concerned about readers who assume that if an article appears in the pages of this journal, it expresses established orthodox opinion. Although *The National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* will never print anything that is contrary to Catholic teaching, many subjects of moral concern have not yet been settled. The journal attempts to be completely faithful and also provide a forum for debate. This means that on unsettled questions, both sides deserve a hearing. I think that the reason why people so often look to this journal for direction on these questions is because so many writers present themselves as Catholic even as they reject the authority of the Church. The fidelity of this journal to the authority of the Church must seem a sea of calm to those who witness this dissent.

Thus we present in this issue another discussion of nutrition and hydration, this time by Stan Dundon. In "Denying Food and Water," Dundon argues that the Church's teaching on nutrition and hydration follows from the more general prohibition against euthanasia. He appreciates the legitimate fears and concerns about overly aggressive treatment at the end of life, but makes an excellent case for the view that providing food and water is often a most compassionate act of care for the dying.

Rev. Linus Dolce, OSB, in "Injustice Perpetrated on the Dead," argues that Body Worlds exhibitions, the displays of plastinated human corpses that draw thousands of visitors each year, dishonors the dead. The practice conflicts with the Christian understanding that the departed soul remains in communion with the body.

Christopher Hare, in "At the Original Position as a Fetus," examines the place of the fetus in John Rawls's political theory. Justice, Rawls says, requires us to imagine

a hypothetical “original position” prior to the political order. Hare contends that by Rawls’s own logic, the fetus must be seen as one of the participants in that original position, and so deserves a place in the distribution of fundamental goods. Given Rawls’s own political outlook, this is an ironic result.

Bishop Mark Seitz, in “Check Your Faith at the Door,” examines how contemporary politics lauds freedom of religion at the same time that it demands that all religious conviction be kept separate from public life. Seitz contends that this is a reversal of our nation’s founding logic, in which a religiously inspired moral consciousness informed all our public institutions.

Turning to our articles, Rev. Kevin O’Rourke, OP, in “Catholic Principles and In Vitro Fertilization,” reviews the Church’s objections to the practice of in vitro fertilization. The Catholic teaching on IVF is often misunderstood and underappreciated. O’Rourke reviews the clinical aspects of IVF, explains how an analysis of the elements of the moral act may be applied to this procedure, and contrasts the principles of Catholic moral reasoning with those of secular thinkers. The Church’s rejection of IVF rests on respect for three fundamental principles: the right to life and bodily integrity, the unity of the marriage bond, and the unwillingness to substitute technology for the natural process of procreation.

In “Creating Better People?” Rev. Grzegorz Holub, SDB, provides a wide-ranging, insightful, and fascinating look at the philosophical difficulties posed by genetic engineering, giving special consideration to what our world might look like if the more radical developments of this technology were to actually come to pass. Among the major difficulties faced in any discussion of this sort is the lack of agreement on what human nature is, how to properly assess the potential dangers of genetic enhancements in the absence of such a standard, and whether it is desirable or even possible to fundamentally change the identity of a person. Along the way, Holub raises such interesting questions as whether sports would still be enjoyable if athletes did not achieve their excellence through personal effort but because of their genetic engineering, and what social disadvantages would be experienced by the young and upcoming if death were abolished and the elderly never left their positions of power and prestige.

Deacon Tom Davis, in “Plan B Agonistics,” gives us a thorough and comprehensive analysis of the controversy over Plan B and similar products using levonorgestrel. These products are commonly used in rape treatment protocols. Does levonorgestrel not only suppress ovulation but also have an abortifacient effect? Davis examines a recent essay in *Health Progress* by Sandra Reznik, MD, and Ron Hamel, which argues that there is conclusive proof that these products have no postfertilization effect. Davis thinks the claim is premature. Of particular interest is Davis’s research on the package labeling of these products, indicating the clear possibility that levonorgestrel may indeed affect the receptivity of the uterine lining and thus reduce the likelihood of embryo implantation. Although these labels are often dismissed by defenders of Plan B as efforts to satisfy lawyers who are overly concerned about liability issues, Davis shows that the reasons for the warnings are genuine and serious.

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