



This issue begins with a case study in editorial bias. Charol Abrams writes of her inability to have a reply on embryonic stem cell research published in the trade journal of her professional organization. The reasons offered by the editors show that the rejection was based on ideology, not merit. On the major moral issues of the day, bias is rampant in the academic world and in the media. This essay simply serves as an example of that bias and the lengths that authors go in their efforts to achieve fairness.

James Delaney, in his “Wrongful Life and the Human Embryo,” rebuts an argument which claims that because embryos produced in vitro are generated in an immoral manner, we do not have the same moral duties to them as we do to embryos that are the result of marriage. Some think that if embryos do not have a proper origin, they are of less importance or value. Delaney explores this claim and shows how it fails to appreciate the fundamental dignity of all human beings, no matter their origin.

Rev. Kevin O’Rourke remains a lightning rod on the topic of nutrition and hydration for patients who are in a persistent vegetative state. His recent article with John Hardt, Ph.D., “Nutrition and Hydration: The CDF Response in Perspective” (*Health Progress*, November–December 2007), elicited a swift and critical reply from Cardinal Justin Rigali, J.C.D, and Bishop William Lori, S.T.D. (“On Basic Care for Patients in the ‘Vegetative’ State: A Response to Dr. Hardt and Fr. O’Rourke,” *Health Progress*, May–June 2008). Despite the controversy, Father O’Rourke makes a good argument here in “When to Withdraw Life Support?” namely, that one need not be imminently dying in order to have extraordinary means of treatment removed. This is a point that has been overlooked in current debates.

Stephen Heaney reminds physicians and other health care workers of their duty to resist efforts from the political and professional classes to violate their con-

sciences, and offers some practical advice on how to negotiate these difficult cases. He suggests that we need to reflect on the original aims of medicine. The essay, regrettably, becomes all the more relevant as the rights of conscience are increasingly threatened by the larger culture.

Sr. Renée Mirkes addresses a controversial question concerning the disposition of human remains. Is it morally permissible to use chemical means to dissolve the body into its more primitive elements in lieu of burial, or is this novel process an indignity to human remains? The Church permits cremation; should the Church also permit alkaline hydrolysis? The article is a troubling one because it touches on uncomfortable details. Mortuary science has never been for the faint-hearted. Sr. Mirkes reviews the facts objectively and recommends a cautious acceptance.

Grattan Brown's "The Social Responsibility of Catholic Health Care Institutions" explores the place of the Catholic health care system in the United States, its transformation through institutional mergers, and the ideas of conscience and responsibility as these affect corporate identity. Catholic health care institutions have the opportunity to display moral integrity by serving as an example within society of how to provide health care in a morally sound manner.

Stephen Long's "The False Theory undergirding Condomistic Exceptionalism" continues the sharp exchange over moral action theory that has developed between two distinct and opposite camps. William F. Murphy's "Developments in Thomistic Action Theory" appeared in our Autumn issue. This is Long's reply. How this debate is settled will have a direct impact on all other aspects of moral theology for decades to come. Although it is difficult to characterize the disagreement without entering into the debate oneself, it seems safe to say that the key question concerns the nature of the moral object (one of the three traditional fonts of moral action: intention, object, and circumstances) and whether it takes its bearings primarily from the mind or from reality. Murphy's article in the Autumn issue represented a more recent exposition, exemplified in the writings of Rev. Martin Rhonheimer. Long's view is the more traditional analysis. Both sides claim the mantle of Aquinas.

EDWARD J. FURTON, M.A., PH.D.  
Editor-in-Chief