



# Institute For Theological Encounter With Science and Technology

Volume 44 - # 1

Winter 2013 Bulletin

## Opening Message - 40 Years and Gaining

Over half a million people braved the winter weather to participate in the annual March for Life on January 25, 2013, in Washington DC. This is the 40th anniversary of the infamous Roe vs Wade and Doe vs Bolton Supreme Court decisions that legalized abortion – at any time during pregnancy, for any reason or no reason.

It is a very bleak reminder that we haven't been able to reverse that error in four decades, during which about 55 million babies in America have been executed. The death of Nellie Gray (founder and leader of the March for almost 40 years) was another sad thought about the day.

On the other hand, there was much to be optimistic about. The crowd in Washington DC numbered over ½ million, and there were comparable marches and demonstrations taking place in many other cities around the country. Most optimistic of all, the attendees were predominantly youthful – collegians and high school students who are going to be voters for a long time after the old guard has died off. The young people realize that they didn't have to be born, that their parents freely chose life, sometimes in difficult circumstances; and that realization makes them even more dedicated.

Another growing presence at the March for Life in recent years is the number of women in the “Silent No More” group, carrying signs that read “I regret my abortion.” Standing in front of the Supreme Court building in the central afternoon, one could listen to dozens of stories from consecutive women who step up to the podium and describe their past. Their stories are appalling, but inspiring too, as one after another they tell of turning to Jesus and seeking forgiveness, as well as the healing that followed.

Forty years ago, the Supreme Court probably figured it was just tidying up a patchwork of uneven state laws when they swept aside all restrictions to abortion. They didn't expect a protest, much less a protest that hasn't faded but instead has grown to encompass a majority of the American people.

The phrase “life begins at conception” has been familiar biology for centuries, but many people said “well, we really don't know.” Only in recent decades have scientific instruments come along to display [to everyone willing to look] the very obvious humanity of the unborn baby. When MRIs, CT scans and Ultrasound were pioneered in the 1970s, the scientists involved were not aware of the importance those instruments would have in changing the minds of ordinary citizens.

That's the way science works. Despite the common presupposition that science will undermine religious beliefs, the reality is that good science strives toward understanding reality, and the search for truth that religion pursues moves along a parallel path. When they merge in agreement, as in the case of discerning unborn human beings, we can all rejoice at the mutual success.

Director, ITEST

### *In This Issue...*

Announcements.....	2
<i>Evolution in a New Frame.</i> by Ronald A. Mercier, S.J. ....	3
<i>A Symphony of Theological Renewal</i> by Tracey Rowland .....	7
Letter to the Editor .....	15
<i>Papal Message for the 47th World Communication Day</i> .....	16

## Announcements



### Exploring the World, Discovering God

Progress on the marketing plan for the upper tier (grade 5-8) of **Exploring the World, Discovering God (EWDG)** is going quite well. In our quarterly report to *Our Sunday Visitor*, the granting institution, we detailed the three-prong approach we are using to provide a wider distribution of the faith/science modules from the local to the international level.

1) Securing the support of the Catholic Education Office of the Archdiocese of St Louis to facilitate our contact with the archdiocesan schools for more intensive distribution, promotion and testing of the EWDG modules for grades 5-8.

2) “E-blasting” our message on the project from our extensive database, since the lessons for 5-8 went on line in April of 2012, to all English-speaking countries. The response has been encouraging. Since EWDG went “live” in Dec., 2008 we have verified actual downloads over 330,000.

3) Creating a four-color brochure on the EWDG project for distribution and promotion electronically and in print for mailing to all school systems across the country. Quotes from Archbishop Carlson and from teachers who have taught the lessons add to the appeal and strength of the message. We would be happy to send hard copies of the brochures to any ITEST member for distribution to your colleagues, family and friends, particularly elementary school teachers. A digital copy is also available.

Personal contact and knowledge of a program often leads to “telling the teacher in the next room” about this unique way to study science and faith side by side. This could be one of the many effective ways of “mouth to mouth” communication even in today’s digital age.

### Faith, Science and Reason series

Father Kevin Vogel, a young diocesan priest serving as associate pastor at St. Columbkille Parish in Papillion, Nebraska, offered to make available an adult formation series he presented last year on Faith, Science and Reason. The average attendance at this six series presentation was 80 adults who were very interested in delving more deeply into the interaction of faith and science. You may access the following links which will take you to the homepage of the website and a page with the six finished presentations. <http://sites.google.com/site/basicfaithscience/>

If you would like to correspond as an ITEST member with Fr. Vogel, you can reach him at [vogelkw@gmail.com](mailto:vogelkw@gmail.com)

### In Memoriam

Father Angelo Serra, SJ, Italian native, internationally renowned geneticist, long-time friend and contributor to ITEST, died and rose to new life a year ago on the twentieth of January. In the early 1960s Fr. Serra worked as guest researcher at the Medical Research Council Population Genetics Unit at Oxford; then from 1964-65 he served as a Visiting Professor of Human Genetics at Harvard University. Father Serra held membership in the New York Academy of Sciences, the American Society of Human Genetics and the American Society for the Advancement of Science, among others. In 2007 Father Serra published an article in the ITEST Bulletin, Volume 38 Number 1, titled *The Eugenic Prospects of Technically Assisted Reproduction: The Pre-implantation Genetic Diagnosis*. (page 9-16.) You may access the article on the ITEST web site at [www.ITEST-faithscience.org](http://www.ITEST-faithscience.org) Then click on “Media” and “Bulletins.”



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ITEST Bulletin - S. Marianne Postiglione, RSM, Editor  
ISSN 1073-5976 • Copyright © 2013

## Evolution in a New Frame?

ITEST – Institute for Theological Encounter with Science and Technology  
October 13, 2012

by Ronald A. Mercier, S.J., St. Louis University

Man is not born free, but everywhere in biological chains. People of the world, unite. You have nothing to lose but your biological chains!

We stand at a turning point in human evolution. We have cracked the genetic code; translated the Book of Life. We will soon possess the ability to become designers of our own evolution.

There will be opposition from those who call for the abandonment of progress in subservience to nature. Let us not turn back now through fear.

*As humanism freed us from the chains of superstition, let transhumanism free us from our biological chains.<sup>1</sup>*

This short text, from Simon Young's 'Transhumanist Manifesto' bears striking – and deliberate – similarities to an earlier call for human freedom and progress, one written by Karl Marx. Written in a deliberately 'populist style', it seeks to evoke from its readers a profound and yet practical response. The vision sketched out in this presentation, while rhetorically extreme, touches upon one of the most important – and potentially transformative – movements in contemporary bioethics, the call for transhumanism.

Again, while this text may seem simply an exercise in rhetoric, its echoes in the philosophical and scientific communities are notable. Voices as diverse as Lee Silver, professor of genetics at Princeton University<sup>2</sup>, and bioethicists Julian Savulescu and John Harris<sup>3</sup>, from Oxford and Manchester Universities respectively, provide a much more nuanced but no less challenging perspective on how contemporary research and policy should approach the future. In philosophical terms, these authors move quickly and deliberately from a description of the state of genetics to a prescription of the categorical moral imperative facing humanity.

One could, of course, move quickly to a moral analysis of various genetic techniques or therapies as sketched by the authors, or turn to a review of their consequentialist philosophical roots.<sup>4</sup> One could also, as Donald Demarco did so well in the **ITEST Newsletter**, challenge the Promethean dimensions of such thought.<sup>5</sup> The questions raised in those two presentations already raise any number of red flags concerning the future of humanity.

My concern, however, focuses on a two-fold heuristic structure which shapes much of the discussion and which represents an odd – and partial – appropriation of traditional Christian perspectives. The difference between the two visions, however, puts into sharp relief the very possibility of setting limits to contemporary experimentation.<sup>6</sup> Boldly put, the understanding of evolution within this school of thought not only makes possible but necessitates the transhumanist embrace of any and all means of "human enhancement". I will put that assumption in dialogue with the work of Teilhard de Chardin for a very different conception of how and to what extent humans should proceed down the path of 'enhancement'.

Two related but distinct elements shape the evolutionary perspective of Savulescu and Young, in particular, but they find echoes throughout this philosophical vision. On the one hand, they embrace a deep sense of the critical value of our moment in history, one which represents a distinct end to one phase of the evolutionary process and the beginning of another. To some extent, we have already seen this in the opening citation from Young. He goes on to note that this period represents a change in our relation to Nature.

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*Our bodies were designed for the Stone Age – but we live in the Gene Age.*

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Our bodies were designed for the Stone Age – but we live in the Gene Age. If nature is creating prod-

ucts with built-in obsolescence, it is up to us to buy out the business and take over production. If nature refuses to invest in the new technology by which to improve her products, then we must take over the company and to the job ourselves. Homo sapiens requires a complete upgrade – a radical overhaul in design.<sup>7</sup>

One consistently discovers echoes of this throughout the transhumanist literature; it represents a foundational point of departure for the argument.<sup>8</sup> In religious terms, one might name it a *kairos*, a moment of ultimate significance.

Put bluntly, the course of evolution has consistently progressed along the path of reason; while they would deny that evolution in itself has any directing force, notably given the strong atheism usually linked to this position, the wonder of the moment lies in the fact that evolution has reached the transition point from random development to a focused and directed future, one placed in human, rational hands. Rationality itself provides the transition point.

Nor can one underestimate the importance of this perception of evolution; it exercises a central moral influence in the argumentation. It develops the position taken by E. O. Wilson in *Consilience* that

We are entering a new era of existentialism. Not the old absurdist existentialism of Kierkegaard and Sartre, giving complete autonomy to the individual, but the concept that only unified learning, universally shared, makes accurate foresight and wise choice possible.<sup>9</sup>

This new area, with its knowledge and technical ability can in fact make wise choices which can and must recast the world in which we live. Savulescu builds on this in an important way:

I believe one necessary (but perhaps not sufficient) condition of humanity is the capacity to act on the basis of normative reasons. Let's assume this quality is one of the essential elements of humanity. Let's call this the capacity to display practical rationality. Scanlon claims that what matters is the capacity to have 'judgement sensitive attitudes'.<sup>10</sup>

If humanity does, as is critical within transhumanist

thought, represent a kind of pinnacle of evolution on earth, an important sub-point in itself, this depends upon the ability to know rightly, to choose, and to act with practical effect. Humanity has, in a technological age, reached a threshold event, and this frame plays a significant role in the second moment in evolution.

One must attend to that distinction, of course, since not only reason but the ability to engage reason and effect practical change in evolution help mark this period as different. In evolutionary terms, the random now cedes to the deliberate and practical. Young, in typically rhetorical style, reshapes humanity from Homo sapiens to Homo cyberneticus (the human as 'steersman')<sup>11</sup>, moving beyond 'Dumb Design' of an evolution without rudder, as it were.

Morally, this provides the second 'threshold event' in that all beings which demonstrate reason and an ability to apply it deserve the foundational respect accorded 'persons'. One cannot overemphasize the implications for the system of this belief, notably as it underlies

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*The time of Homo sapiens at the top of the evolutionary pyramid has passed.*

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a second 'evolutionary' development. The time of Homo sapiens at the top of the evolutionary pyramid has passed. Beyond considerations of possible intelligent life on other worlds, perhaps far more intelligent, wiser and more benevolent than we, a necessary aspect of the evolutionary trajectory, one must consider the possibility that human agency could, indeed must, give rise to beings whom one could identify as 'transhuman' or 'posthuman'. The former arise from significant modifications and enhancements through 'significant non-human characteristics, e.g. chimeras, cyborgs'. The latter "originally 'evolved' or developed from humans but so significantly different that they are no longer human in any significant respect."<sup>12</sup>

We face a moral responsibility to help such new species develop. As he notes regarding the moral duty in dealing with procreation generally,

This principle tells prospective parents to aim to have the child who, given her genetic endowment,

*Continues on page 5*

can be expected to enjoy most well-being in her life. There may be more than one such child, but for simplicity's sake, we write as if there is a single such possible child, which we'll refer to as the most advantaged child.

PB (Procreative Beneficence) is at polar odds with the common anti-selection view, expressed by Sandel, that children should be accepted as gifts of Nature or God. But PB also conflicts with most pro-selection views. The vast majority of those who support selection deny that we ought to select the most advantaged child. Some believe that reproduction is a private matter, immune to moral scrutiny. Others think that morality allows people to aim at less than the best, or gives people complete freedom when making procreative decisions.<sup>13</sup>

While people may still choose to have 'normal children', by the nature of beneficence itself, parents – and society as a whole – have a duty to act so as to use technology to maximize possible good futures. The means used (PGD, embryo splitting, ...) represent at most a secondary consideration.

Considerations of any special moral status for Homo sapiens play little role here, other than a note that one must respect life which has crossed the threshold of 'judgment sensitive attitudes'. One should not devalue human life, challenging the concerns which Annas and Fukuyama have raised about the practical implications of such a technological development. What might prevent an 'underclass' from developing? What bond of solidarity would prevent this? Savulescu notes the need of such superior rational beings to respect other rational beings, though Sandel would note that nothing in our history gives ground for such optimism.

We see the age of 'natural evolution' passing away, and with it, necessarily, the age of 'Homo sapiens' having a particular and peculiarly determinative status. Practical reason, *techne* as Heidegger might put it, becomes the fruit of evolution and the departure point for the future. With this goes the ability to control, to give shape, i.e. to master, 'nature' as a wild and ran-

dom dynamic. John Harris notes that some (including Savulescu and Perrson) even opt for 'moral enhancement', which he finds unlikely. Instead he holds

A strategy that leaves us free to search for solutions to problems we cannot as yet even foresee, one that permits us to use techniques of cognitive enhancement to accelerate that process and one which leaves us free to find, and equipped to implement, those solutions as quickly as possible is a better bet. It is surely better to remain sufficient to stand and to hang on to our precious freedom to fall.<sup>14</sup>

For Harris, 'freedom' demands the full range of possibilities to realize the moral duty to enhance the human person in particular and in genere. The elegance of this evolutionary perspective stands out clearly. One not only encounters a consequential duty in terms of the greater good for all of nature but also the possibility of a 'good of virtue', the creation of virtuous beings, virtue itself having its ground in the genetic code.

Two different perspectives, then, interlock with dramatic results. The end of evolution – not Fukuyama's 'end of history' – has arrived, at least in terms of an end to its randomness; the phase of directed evolution begins. With it comes, though, the end of humanity as the pyramid of sentient, rational and creative being on earth, if not in the universe; the phase of human horizontal transcendence, toward the trans- and post-human begins with a powerful moral duty attendant upon it. In theological terms, this 'eschatology', like most, exerts a strong and in this case categorical imperative, even in a consequential analysis.

Were this merely a nice exercise of philosophical speculation, one could view it rather benignly; after all, as Sparrow and others note, it is merely the latest form of the eugenic dimension. Yet, the link to a technological determinism demands attention; we must act upon this vision, and such a demand provides a theoretical foundation for the 'freedom of technology to pursue its ends'. When linked to the economic dynamic which accompanies the power

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*Practical reason, techne as Heidegger might put it, becomes the fruit of evolution and the departure point for the future.*

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of technology, one faces an extraordinary inertia toward use of all the technologies at our disposal.<sup>15</sup>

Need this be so? Of course, as one of my students noted, the problem can be elegantly avoided by denying the reality of evolution itself. That would provide an easy solution, but would, in the long-run, merely allow the transhumanist position to avoid any engagement with the tradition. We would merely find ourselves in parallel discourses. It would reinforce the science-faith divorce and render the religious voice utterly meaningless within the context of the profound debates on technological engagement which we face as a culture. Moreover, within the Catholic tradition, and that of much of the Christian tradition, that position does not represent the only possible response. Much of the creative response to the challenge posed by transhumanism would be lost without exploration of a very different trajectory.

This paper will argue that the two fundamental assertions upon which transhumanism builds find notable and important alternative visions within the tradition, especially as it develops responses to a wide range of issues within the contemporary technological context.<sup>16</sup> First, using the work of Teilhard, notably as developed by others, it will question the radical division of periods envisioned in the work of Savulescu, King and others. Second, though, it will use the recent works of Benedict XVI, building on a long tradition, to question the understanding of the distinctiveness of the ‘human moment’ in evolution as presented, ‘judgment sensitive attitudes’ or ‘practical rationality’. This alternative vision would ask for a significantly different understanding of our relationship to the human being and to the evolving world as a whole.

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*Teilhard’s vision represented a first attempt to reconcile the realities of Christian faith with the emerging scientific perception of the world...*

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Teilhard’s vision represented a first attempt to reconcile the realities of Christian faith with the emerging scientific perception of the world, notably as captured by evolutionary theory and the parallel developments within genetics.<sup>17</sup> Far from setting himself in opposi-

tion to these movements, however, he saw them as compatible with Christian faith, provided, of course, that both sides of the conversation found a willingness to listen and to grow. His thought certainly provoked controversy, indeed consternation, within both the scientific and ecclesial communities, leading to his being silenced by the Society of Jesus at the insistence of the Vatican. Yet, increasingly many scholars find resonances in his thought of particular importance today, notably in the wake of the complexification of science itself.

As Christopher Mooney noted in his work on Teilhard, the profound tragedy at the heart of the lack of the discourse lay in a simple fact.

In regard to man [sic] especially, he never ceased pointing to a modern anomaly in the academic world: both the ‘materialists’ and the ‘spiritualists’ have managed to shut their eyes to the intimate connection between [the human person] and the concrete material world, ‘one group from fear of falling into metaphysics, the other from dread of profaning “the soul” by treating by treating it as a mere object of physics. The result is that the [human person], ‘in so far as he has something special to reveal for our experience, that is to say, in those characteristic qualities which we call ‘spiritual’, is excluded from our general constructions of the world.<sup>18</sup>

For Teilhard, the lack of discourse between science and metaphysics leads precisely to the emphasis on a kind of randomness to the world which seems to underlie the evolutionary vision of transhumanism. His vision does not arise, however, simply from the application of some kind of imposition of a religious vision or philosophical metaphysic but rather from pursuing the metaphysical questions which arise for him in the very relationship between reason and evolution.

Teilhard notes ‘a single pattern [that] runs through the whole of the universe, and that the dominant orientation of this pattern is toward [the human person].’<sup>19</sup> Of course, as Henri de Lubac pointed out in discussing Teilhard, this vision arises from an affirmation of the radical presence of God in the world, not simply as a ‘prime mover’ or a ‘final end’ but rather as a continu-

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ally dynamic principle of unity.<sup>20</sup> One does not have mere ‘materiality’ and randomness on the one hand and a realm of ‘the spirit’ on the other, but a more dramatic interweaving of the two with important consequences.

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Indeed, Michel Isoard, drawing on the work of Paul Ricoeur and Teilhard talks about the need to craft a new narrative for evolution, one beyond the narrow oppositions so common among us. We face the need to retell the story so that ‘individuals and events ... no longer simply float by each other as juxtaposed’, but rather find themselves within one narrative structure. Citing Ricoeur he notes that the ‘dissonance among explicating structures’ reveals the need to move beyond attempts to reduce history to ‘grand explicatory structures or laws’. We stand in need of a more supple and nuanced way of integrating the richness of experience, something Ricoeur and Isoard find in Teilhard’s vision.<sup>21</sup>

Callum Scott speaks of the ways in which for Teilhard both Darwin and Lamarck, both of whom he valued immensely, represent an insufficient understanding of the course of evolution. We stand in need of a newer and fuller narrative which can integrate our understanding of evolution and the place of the human.

Teilhard’s insights into the nature of organic evolution are given impetus by his detection of greater consciousness as time progresses. ... For Teilhard the relationship between complexity and consciousness adds to the grandeur of the continuous evolutionary event, being an ‘experimentally incontrovertible’ connection. Billions of years of cosmogenesis has birthed consciousness such that the self-reflectively conscious entity is able ‘... no longer to know something – but to know itself; no longer only to know but to know that it knows.’<sup>22</sup>

We encounter not simply a goal, a telos, to the cosmos, but a basic drive within the cosmos, not simply

randomness but a ‘fittingness’ to the rise of consciousness. In this, of course, he goes beyond both Lamarck and Darwin by focusing on a dynamic internal to evolution itself, a drive for ‘complexification and ultimately rationality’. Ironically, for Lothar Schäfer, a physical chemist, this perception parallels some of the most recent issues arising from Quantum Theory as part of the dialogue. In a recent article, he draws on this perspective to enhance Teilhard’s vision.

If reality is nonlocal, the nature of the universe is that of an undivided wholeness. Because our consciousness has emerged from this wholeness and is part of it, it is possible to conclude that an element of consciousness is active in the universe.<sup>23</sup>

He speaks of ‘the mindlike properties of elementary particles...’ as ‘rudimentary’, but nonetheless important. While he would not go so far as to suggest any kind of necessity in the movement toward consciousness in the human, again he challenges the mechanistic model so often present in the dual assumptions of randomness and the ‘threshold event’ in the rise of the human person. The reality we discover certainly remains far more complex and dynamic than what we have seen within transhumanism. How does one think

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*How does one think with the dynamism of the evolving universe rather than supplant it?*

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with the dynamism of the evolving universe rather than supplant it? The potential dialogue between science and faith in this context deserves further reflection.<sup>24</sup>

Granted, Teilhard’s vision goes far beyond this. He has a clear teleological aim, with all of creation ultimately moving toward the Omega Point in the Christ whose Spirit is the motivating force behind all creation. That Christological dimension remains the foundation of the whole structure, but not in a way which prevents his vision of a single, purposive dynamic to evolution from engaging science or raising significant questions. At the same time, the way in which his theory challenges the Second Law of Thermodynamics has prompted a certain skepticism among scientific read-

*Continues on page 8*

ers as well as a concern among many Christians scholars about the overly optimistic vision of the Omega Point as distinct from the Reign of God.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, his sense of the unity of evolution, its ‘consciousness’ and the place of the human within it plays a major role in the developing vision of ecotheology and provides links to ecological thought generally. Ursula King cites both Teilard and E.O. Wilson to speak of the ethical implications of such a unitary vision, one which both values and shapes the use of technology. She notes that a vision of a ‘holistic, ecological way of looking at the world’ rather than a ‘chaotic and destructive’ model might engender an imperative for new forms of cooperation across faith and ethical traditions. Citing Wilson she affirms a kind of optimism not engendered simply by a recourse to giving shape to nature ourselves. Rather Wilson affirms a biophilia, love of life, as the source of a great ethical task.<sup>26</sup>

This perspective redefines the ethical perspective from one that places ‘practical reason’ over and above all of nature, including the person, and instead begins from a fundamental insertion within nature. If the human person does constitute an important advance within evolution, a self-conscious, ethically reflective presence, concern for the good of the whole, not simply a radical dominance over nature and the humanity, becomes the normative ethical principle. Biophilia and its implications, concern for the survival and development of life as a whole, recasts the role of the human will and agency from being over to being with. The transhumanist perspective appears insufficient to such a broader vision of a complex, quantum, dynamic world, even without the intrusion of the explicitly theological, though, of course, the presence of God would add an important and supple added dimension. Ironically, in this light, the transhumanist vision appears to parallel exactly the kind of biblical triumphalism rooted in some interpretations of Genesis 1<sup>27</sup> so critiqued by ecological ethicists, or DeMarco’s sense of a Promethean hubris, as noted previously.

That touches on one part of the equation, of course, yet leaves aside the second dimension, namely the separation of the human from the rest of the cosmos. Still, the second aspect of the vision deserves some consideration, namely the vision of the human within

transhumanism, the focus on whether ‘practical reason’ provides the distinctive, even if not sufficient leap into ‘the human’, and the springboard for the next evolutionary movement.

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*In his reflection upon human social, economic and technological life, Benedict XVI engages the tradition in a new and distinctive way using the ‘logic of the gift’.*

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In his reflection upon human social, economic and technological life, Benedict XVI engages the tradition in a new and distinctive way using the ‘logic of the gift’. Admittedly, of course, this finds profound resonances within the tradition as a whole; as he himself notes, this does not arise whole cloth from his thought. Nevertheless, the role he assigns this perspective – and its possible link to a notion of *biophilia* – deserve attention.

He speaks of the logic of development within the contemporary world, one that echoes the principal themes of transhumanism, the sense of oneness with the dynamism of technology as an extension of practical reason, the new era in evolution. For him, Paul VI’s warning deserves close attention.

Paul VI had already warned against the technocratic ideology so prevalent today, fully aware of the great danger of entrusting the entire process of development to technology alone, because in that way it would lack direction. Technology, viewed in itself, is ambivalent.<sup>28</sup>

The question of the appropriate use of technology occupies central place within this reflection. The challenge, though, points toward any vision of the human person that would instantiate Marcuse’s sense of *Homo faber*, the productive person.<sup>29</sup> Ironically, as Sparrow points out, such a vision finds echoes in the ‘practical reason’ so championed by Savulescu, though always for the benefit of the human person. *Homo cyberneticus* looks very much like *Homo faber*.

Echoing much of Teilard’s work, Benedict XVI turns the perspective dominant in contemporary life on its

*Continues on page 9*



head, and with it the need for human re-tooling as distinct from humane transformation.<sup>30</sup>

Charity in truth places [man] before the astonishing experience of gift. Gratuitousness is present in our lives in many different forms, which often go unrecognized because of a purely consumerist and utilitarian view of life. The human being is made for gift, which expresses and makes present [his] transcendent dimension. Sometimes modern [man] is wrongly convinced that [he] is the sole author of [him]self, [his] life and society.<sup>31</sup>

Very much along the lines of Teilhard's thought, the fullness of human life and in some ways the trajectory of the human lie not in the ability to achieve mastery, which assumes a 'master perspective', so much as in a foundational sense of engagement with the other and ultimately with all of nature.<sup>32</sup> The perceived ability to stand over and against a sense of the human and of all of nature, as posited by transhumanism, raises exactly the kind of fears of eugenics which Sparrow and others note. At the same time, while one dwells in wonder at what 'evolution' has achieved, the 'moral duty' to critique rather than to be grateful for humanity and its place in the evolutionary sweep profoundly colors or limits any sense of gratitude.

The sense of relationality implicit in 'the person as gift' challenges the transhumanist perspective in two ways, and points toward links with the feminist and ecological perspectives. First, if the heart of the evolutionary dynamic noted in Teilhard places the human solidly within a dynamic moving toward greater complexity and consciousness, then this model anchors such a relational narrative; it would also open the sense of 'nature' (and the body) itself as gift, not merely as raw material to be used in whatever way human practical reason desires. One begins with attentiveness to 'being placed with', not over, the sweep of evolution.

On a parallel note, of course, the model of the human as characterized by practical reason and ability to effect one's will stands challenged as insufficient. Again, the dramatic sense of being moved by the other, almost along the lines of Levinas, challenges any sense of viewing the human as in some ways deficient. While the reality of evolution may well tend toward significant adaptations of the human within nature, still one

finds a foundational call to value and safeguard the human person and species. This would produce a non-consequential ethical model, and with it limits to the 'progress' one would wish to make.

Nevertheless, this does not necessitate a Luddite position, as Young would presume. Again, one would find either/or solutions wanting. **DP** does set stringent limits on the use of genetic technologies.<sup>33</sup> With respect to somatic cell gene therapy for disease, for example, it opens the door to significant experimentation, provided that sufficient safeguards are met and that no illicit means are used (cloning, ...). Similarly even for germ-line therapy, while one finds a much higher degree of caution involved, a foundationally similar principle emerges, namely one placed at the service of the person and the human community in terms of the progeny of the person. Given the risks, one would have to meet a far higher threshold.<sup>34</sup> Provided that one maintains that foundational perspective on the human as gift, something emphasized in the parallel document from 2009, and provided one fulfills the practical and prudential considerations, one finds significant possibilities. Of course, what constitutes 'medical care' (as in **DP** 26) represents itself a question worthy of further exploration.

When one crosses the line to the 'trans-' or 'post-human', however, two barriers arise. The first, already mentioned, pertains to the stance one adopts to the human, i.e. one of mastery not service. The second, of equal importance, touches upon the foundational sense of justice, which Savulescu dismisses, namely that certain members of the human community would find themselves 'lesser beings', and given the costs of such 'enhancement therapies', injustices already existing within the human community would multiply and find genetic validation.<sup>35</sup>

We began this journey with two perspectives which seemed to authorize a massive project of re-engineering the human, first a sense of the 'end of random evolution' and second the call to 'take charge of our genome' to transcend the human as we know it. Yet, on both sides, this exploration asks about the necessity of such visions. Rather than the 'end of evolution', much of the Christian tradition, and certainly Teilhard, sees the human as deeply embedded in a rich evolution or-

*Continues on page 10*

dered toward complexity and consciousness; we find ourselves placed with rather than beyond the mystery of evolution. Similarly, far from the critical perspective rooted in a vision of evolution having found its apex in ‘practical reason’, a variety of other positions ask about the relationality of humans, the mode of compassion, as foundational to what marks such an apex and frame for the future.

## Endnotes

- 1 Simon Young, *Designer Evolution: A Transhumanist Manifesto* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2006), 32.
- 2 Cf. in particular Lee M. Silver, *Remaking Eden: Cloning, Genetic Engineering and the Future of Human Kind* (London: Phoenix, 1999).
- 3 Cf. Julian Savulescu and Nick Bostrom, *Human Enhancement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) for a collection devoted to this school of thought.
- 4 This has been done with great care by Robert Sparrow, “A Not-So-New Eugenics: Harris and Savulescu on Human Enhancement,” *Hastings Center Report* 41/1 (2011), 32-42.
- 5 Donald DeMarco, “Contemporary Biotechnology in the Context of Conflicting Theological Perspectives,” *ITEST Newsletter* 15/2-3 (1984).
- 6 As DeMarco notes, of course, the work of Karl Rahner in “Experiment: Man” raises similar issues, though from a different context and exploring the range of possibilities within a Catholic perspective, a point to which we will return.
- 7 Young, 40.
- 8 Cf. in particular Nick Bostrom, “The Future of Human Evolution” in *Death and Anti-Death: Two Hundred Years after Kant, Fifty Years after Turing*, ed. Charles Tandy (Palo Alto, CA: Ria University Press, 2004), 339-371. The sketch of potential human futures deserves special attention, though that lies beyond the scope of this paper.
- 9 Edward O. Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge* (N.Y.: Knopf, 1998), 297. We will return to Wilson later in the paper, but even in this book, his strong emphasis upon the role of the cultural and the relational provides a link to a fuller vision of what ‘consilience’ might entail.
- 10 Savulescu, “Prejudice and Moral Status of Enhanced Beings” in *Human Enhancement*, 243.
- 11 Young, 32.
- 12 Savulescu, *Human Enhancement*, 214.
- 13 Julian Savulescu and Guy Kahane, “The Moral Obligation to Create Children with the Best Chance of the Best Life,” *Bioethics* 29/5 (2009), 275.
- 14 John Harris, “Moral Enhancement and Freedom,” *Bioethics* 25/2 (2011), 111.
- 15 Cf. C. Ben Mitchell, Edmund D. Pellegrino, Jean Bethke Elshtain, John F. Kilner, and Scott B. Rae, *Biotechnology and the Human Good* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2007), 17-21, for a sense of the intense pressure inherent in a ‘Second Creation’ narrative which grants significant power to technology virtually as an end in itself.
- 16 John Haught, *God and the New Atheism: A Critical Response to Dawkins*, Harris and Hitchens (Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 2008) raises important issues about the limited epistemological vision inherent in this position and seeks to develop a dialogue between faith and science which would honor the distinctive qualities of both. Cf. also his *Making Sense of Evolution: Darwin, God, and the Drama of Life* (Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 2010) in which he again deliberately avoids an either/or position on evolution, seeking God in and through evolution. His perspective informs much of my own quest. Cf also Stephen Pope, *Human Evolution and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), notably his chapter 4, ‘Faith, Creation, and Evolution’, pp. 76-110, for an excellent discussion of evolution and its relationship to the action of God in the world.
- 17 John Haught, “Science and Scientism: The Importance of a Distinction,” *Zygon* 40 (2005), 363-368 strongly urges a distinction between ‘the concept of science’ and ‘scientism, materialism, reductionism, secularism, and techno-secularism’. (364) Like Teilhard, Haught would emphasize that science per se stands open to other fields of human knowing; only a deliberate rejection of elements of human experience leads to the second set of perspectives.
- 18 Christopher F. Mooney, *Teilhard and the Mystery of Christ* (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1964), 37.
- 19 Mooney, 41.
- 20 Henri de Lubac, *Teilhard de Chardin: The Man and His Meaning*, trans. René Hague (N.Y.: Hawthorn Books, 1965), 156-157.
- 21 Michel Isoard, “L’histoire: pourquoi, vers quoi? L’aporie du temps: de la médiation à l’intégration,” *Théophilyon* 1 (1996), 344-345.
- 22 Callum D. Scott, “The Evolutionary Thought of Teilhard de Chardin: Meanderings at the Limits of Science and Metaphysics,” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 141 (Nov. 2011), 88, 90.
- 23 Lothar Schäfer, “Quantum Reality and the Consciousness of the Universe: Quantum Reality, the Emergence of Complex Order from Virtual States, and the Importance of Consciousness in the Universe,” *Zygon* 41 (2006), 508.
- 24 Cf. Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (Berkeley, CA: Shambala Books, 1975) represented an interesting first attempt to engage the implications of Quantum Science for a dialogue between science and faith.
- 25 Cf. Paul H. Carr, “A Theology for Evolution: Haught, Teilhard, and Tillich,” *Zygon* 40 (2005), 733- 738. Of particular concern to Tillich was the relative lack of place within Teilhard for the ‘entropy’ entailed in human sin. The redemptive work of Christ seemed underplayed relatively, a concern for the broader tradition and one which was involved in the earlier silencing imposed upon Teilhard. This article replied to an earlier critique of the work of Tillich by John Haught, “In Search of a God for Evolution: Paul Tillich and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin,” *Zygon*, 37 (2002), 539-553. Haught called for a ‘revolution in understanding of the real’ in order to engage contemporary evolutionary thought.
- 26 E.O. Wilson, *The Future of Life* (London: Little and Brown, 2002), cited in Ursula King, “One Planet, One Spirit: Searching for an Ecologically Balanced Spirituality,” *Ecotheology* 10 (2005), 79-80. Here also, Lewis Mumford argued that ‘technics, instead of benefiting from abstraction from life, will benefit even more greatly by its integration with it.’ Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization* (NY: Harcourt, Brace, 1934), 355, cited in Mitchell et al, 21.
- 27 Rosemary Radford Ruether, “The Biblical Vision of the Ecological Crisis,” *Christian Century* (November 22, 1978), 1129-1132, nicely sums up the ways in which this text has been used – and misused – and invites readers to a deeper sense of what thinking with ‘creation’ might mean.
- 28 Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate* ( June 29, 2009), no. 14, citing Populorum progression, 34.
- 29 Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

Continues on page 11

- 30 Note the parallel challenges to economic orthodoxy in Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Towards Reforming the International Financial and Monetary Systems in the Context of Global Public Authority*
- 31 *CV*, 34. The parallels to postmodern and feminist thought deserve attention, though that lies beyond the scope of this paper.
- 32 Cf. the concern in *Dignitatis personae* about 'an unjust domination of man over man' (27). Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction Dignitatis personae: On Certain Bioethical Questions* (Sept. 8, 2009) [hereafter DV].
- 33 Karl Rahner's "Experiment: Man: Theological Observations on Man's Self-Manipulation" would certainly pose different, more open, horizons, but even he subsequently reconsidered significant elements of this vision. Cf. *Theological Investigations*, IX: Writings of 1965-1967. (N.Y.: Herder & Herder, 1972), 205-2224. Also note his "The Problem of Genetic Manipulation," in *Theological Investigations*, IX, 225-252.
- 34 *DP*, 26.
- 35 *DP*, 27. A parallel concern arises within *CV*, namely how one uses the limited resources available to a human community. While the development of science and technology no doubt represents a good, the needs of vulnerable populations also exercise a claim upon us. In a world of limited possibilities, whose interests take center stage? For *CV* the primacy of the claim of the marginalized upon resources represents a duty far more powerful than some 'potential new race'.

"Faith and Reason are like two people  
who love each other deeply,  
who cannot live without each other."

- Archbishop Gerhard L. Muller

Prefect: Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith



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## A Symphony of Theological Renewal

by Tracey Rowland

Thomism is an intellectual tradition and as such is an umbrella concept for a variety of different schools of thought, each of which can trace its inspiration to the works of St. Thomas Aquinas. One comes across Leonine Thomism, existential Thomism, Lublin Thomism, River Forest Thomism, Fribourg-Toulouse Thomism, Whig Thomism, transcendental Thomism, Baroque and Suárezian Thomism, analytical Thomism, biblical Thomism, neo-Thomism, strict observance or fundamentalist Thomism and even hillbilly Thomism (Flannery O'Connor's description of the ideas underpinning her novels). In short, there are numerous species within the family and cross-breeding between them—leading to a fraught situation over who is or is not legitimately a Thomist. A helpful book for getting a handle on the different schools is Fergus Kerr's *After Aquinas: versions of Thomism*.

At Vatican II, strict observance Thomism (Aquinas and nothing but Aquinas, heavily filtered through the Baroque-era *commentators*, especially Spanish Jesuit theologian Francisco Suárez) suffered a defeat. The young *periti*, including Joseph Ratzinger, Karl Rahner,

Jean Daniélou, Henri de Lubac, Hans Kung and Yves Congar, among others, were all highly critical of it. The young Father Ratzinger almost failed his German habilitation thesis because he dared to question Suárez's account of revelation, preferring the approach of St. Bonaventure. In the 1950s, a preference for the thirteenth-century theologian St. Bonaventure (a saint and Doctor of the Church) over the sixteenth-century Suárez (neither a saint nor a Doctor of the Church) could merit an academic death sentence.

The Dominican historian Thomas O'Meara summed up the negative characteristics of strict observance Thomism as "a lack of sophistication in method, a questionable arrangement of disciplines, an absence of history, [and] a moralistic interdiction of other theologies even when based upon scripture and tradition." Serge-Thomas Bonino of the International Theological Commission has also used the expression "fundamentalist Thomism" to describe the following mentality: "This variety of Thomism is easily recognisable on account of its visceral reaction, against the historical approach to the Thomistic corpus and is easily irritated by what it considers to be the excessive attention given today to the historical and cultural conditionings of the intellectual life."

Support for strict observance or fundamentalist Thomism is rarely found in established academic circles, though it is popular in traditionalist circles where an attitude lingers that all was perfect before the council and one can just ignore the documents of the council and the magisterial theology of the pontificate of John Paul II and hold out for a restoration of the pre-conciliar order. Many young people feel angry with the conciliar generation for making such a mess of ecclesial life. They hope that the application of the old formulas might make ecclesial life functional again. It may therefore be helpful for those born after 1981 to understand what John Paul II and Benedict XVI thought was wrong with the pre-conciliar theological establishment. Neither John Paul II nor Benedict XVI was, or is, a restorationist.

The young Karol Wojtyla wanted to develop the

*Continues on page 13*

### Dr. Tracy Rowland Brief Biography

Dr. Tracy Rowland is the Dean of the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family based in Melbourne, and a Permanent Fellow of the Institute of Political Philosophy and Continental Theology. She holds degrees in Law, Politics and Philosophy from the Universities of Queensland and Melbourne and a Doctorate from the Divinity School of the University of Cambridge. She is a member of the editorial board of the international Catholic journal, *Communio*, and a member of the Commission for Australian Catholic women. Her current research interests include Theological Anthropology, the Philosophy of Language and its relevance to the New Evangelisation, The Thomist Tradition, Theological Critiques of the Political Philosophy of Liberalism, Genealogies of Modernity and Post-Modernity, *Communio Ecclesiology* and interpretations of Vatican II.

Thomistic tradition with reference to currents in French personalism and German phenomenology. His project became “Lublin Thomism.” Wojtyla was interested not merely in universal human nature but in that dimension that is unique and largely shaped and expressed in our relations with other persons. Wojtyla was interested not merely in universal human nature but in that dimension of each human being that is unique and largely shaped and expressed in our relations with other persons. Wojtyla was therefore interested in “being in time” issues, made famous by Martin Heidegger. In effect, he was addressing Jean Daniélou’s criticism of scholasticism for “locating reality in essences rather than in subjects, and by so doing ignoring the dramatic world of persons.” Wojtyla’s Thomistic personalism took seriously the impact of history on personal development.

Over coffee at a café in Cambridge in the 1990s, a priest who had attended the council looked at me somewhat paternally and said: “You do realize that Vatican II was all about the Heideggerisation of Catholic theology.” I think he could tell from my blank expression that this had never ever occurred to me. It is, however, not a bad way to sum up a central intellectual issue of those times.

The pre-conciliar theological framework had no facility to address the kinds of issues that preoccupied the existentialist writers who were exerting a stronger influence over mid-century European culture than that exerted by the typical Catholic scholarship of the day. A whole generation of Catholic priests felt frustrated because they could not engage with the wider intellectual world from within the boundaries of the officially sanctioned theological edifice.

The mere fact that a preference for St Bonaventure over Suarez could wreck an academic career speaks volumes about the narrowness of the boundaries in which Catholic scholars were forced to work at that time. Moreover, Heidegger had raised issues about the “mediation of history in the realm of ontology” that Joseph Ratzinger was later to say represented the most serious theological crisis of the twentieth century. The response of the fundamentalist Thomists was to say that if you go anywhere near that question you’re a modernist heretic.

At the council, a new generation insisted that the crisis be addressed. Those who worked outside the edifice

of strict observance Thomism included transcendental Thomists such as Karl Rahner, who sought to take on board elements of Kantian and Heideggerian philosophy, the French *ressourcement* types such as Henri de Lubac, who sought to draw a distinction between a good classical Thomism and a degenerate Baroque Thomism, and types such as the young Archbishop Karol Wojtyla from Krakow, who wanted to inject some personalist language and insights into the conciliar documents. As a consequence, the documents appeared at the end of the drafting processes embodying elements from a variety of different theological and philosophical traditions.

The theological framework most commonly presented to seminarians in the immediate post-conciliar era was provided by the *Theological Investigations* of Karl Rahner. Transcendental Thomism (so called because of its appropriation of the transcendental method of Immanuel Kant) replaced strict observance Thomism as the bread and potatoes in the standard seminary diet.

By the 1970s, however, it became evident that the conciliar *periti* were divided about the future directions of Catholic theology. There were differences between Kung and Rahner, for example, and there were even greater differences between Kung and Rahner on the one side and Ratzinger and de Lubac on the other. In 1972 Ratzinger, de Lubac and Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar founded the journal *Communio* to offer an alternative interpretation of the conciliar call for theological renewal from that found in the pages of the journal *Concilium*.

Whereas the *Concilium* scholars were open to the culture of modernity in its various manifestations, the *Communio* scholars were much more reserved and even critical. This was in part because of their different stance towards the philosophy of Kant. Von Balthasar suggested that it was because the German intellectual elite followed Kant that they found themselves caught in the scandal of Auschwitz.

By the 1980s the standard question tended to be : do you prefer Rahner or von Balthasar? They each had a different take on Kant and Heidegger and what came to be called “the culture of modernity,” and as a consequence they each had a different vision of theological renewal.

*Continues on page 14*

Both wished to retain elements of Thomist thought. It is often said that Rahner retained the scholastic language, the idioms, but gave them a new content. Von Balthasar was across the scholastic terminology but he rarely used it, preferring recourse to a more literary language and concepts borrowed from contemporary German philosophy. Nonetheless, von Balthasar believed that there were many elements of Thomist thought that were indispensable.

Wojtyla promoted the publication of a Polish edition of *Communio* and in 1978 he began a quarter-century pontificate with Ratzinger as his prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The magisterial theology of this pontificate could be described as a cocktail of Lublin-style Thomism mixed with the *ressourcement* ingredients of scholars such as de Lubac and von Balthasar. At the level of seminary education, however, Rahner tended to remain a dominant influence. It was far easier to present Rahner's ideas in a systematic manner than to attempt a systematization of de Lubac or von Balthasar.

Outside the seminaries, a new generation of lay theologians was growing up. Many pursued their studies through non-Catholic institutions where there was more academic freedom than in the Catholic academies where lecturers often seemed to be trapped in a 1960s time warp. Some because interested in Thomism but not the strict observance or fundamentalist variety. They wanted a Thomist *ressourcement*—a fresh engagement between the original sources and contemporary pastoral needs.

Some of the leading names in this contemporary revival include Matthew Levering, Daniel Keating, Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt, Rudi te Velde, Mark Jordan and Thomas Hibbs. While those in this list are interested in Thomistic theology, Alasdair MacIntyre and John Haldane led a revival of interest in Thomist philosophy. MacIntyre's name became synonymous with "virtue ethics" and Haldane's with "analytical Thomism." MacIntyre and Haldane gave the study of St Thomas a level of respectability in the non-Catholic academies that it had not enjoyed for some centuries.

None of these scholars begins to twitch if words such as "history" or "culture" or "heart" are used, or some name other than Aquinas is cited with approval. Aquinas may

be their favourite Doctor of the Church, but they do not spend their intellectual energy arguing that the Thomist edifices is all that is needed; that no other insights are possible; that there is no intellectual or pastoral problem that has not been anticipated by Aquinas; and that anyone who finds wisdom in, say, Blessed John Henry Newman, is unsound.

From the clerical stables, the leading names in the field of non-fundamentalist post-conciliar Thomism have included William Norris Clarke (metaphysics), Aidan Nichols, Fergus Kerr and Serge-Thomas Bonino ( Thomist historiography), Augustine DiNoia and Thomas Weinandy (Christology), Gilles Emery (Trinitarian theology), Servais Pinckaers, (moral theology) and Olivier-Thomas Venard (Scripture and linguistic philosophy).

Within the broader realm of theology a major issue for the post-conciliar generations has been dealing with the Heideggerian charge that Aquinas committed the error of "onto-theology" (the attempt to make the mysteries of divine revelation fit within an already existing philosophical world view). In *Truth in Aquinas* John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock sought to defend Aquinas against this charge. So too, in other works, did France's Jean-Luc Marion. John D. Caputo also mounted a defence of Aquinas by amplifying the more mystical dimensions of Thomist thought.

These dimensions were highlighted by Graham McAleer in his *Ecstatic Morality and Sexual Politics*, which seeks to construct a bridge between Thomist metaphysics and the nuptial mystery theology found in John Paul II's "Catechesis on Human Love." None of these authors normally carries the label of "Thomist" but they have made substantial contributions to the field of theology through their engagements with Aquinas with reference to issues in contemporary theology.

In the narrower academic territory of political philosophy, the Whig Thomist project is associated with scholars who want to synthesise aspects of American liberalism with Thomist natural law. The label "Whig Thomism" was coined by Michael Novak, who is one of its leading proponents, possibly because "liberal Thomism" would sound like an oxymoron. The opinion journal *First Things* has been the flagship for Whig

*Continues on page 15*

Thomism and the English edition of the *Communio* journal has been the flagship for those who are critical of the liberal metaphysics that undergirds the culture of America. The latter also believe, as a matter of intellectual history, that if Whiggery has any kind of Catholic pedigree, and that's debatable, it is to be found in the works of the Franciscan Duns Scotus, not the Dominican Thomas Aquinas.

Some five decades after the council, the key issue would seem to be not are you for or against Aquinas, but are you for or against Suárez and Kant. A second important question is: "How do you appropriate Heidegger?" In other words, if you are for Aquinas, do you want to take him neat or do you want to add other ingredients? And if you do want to add other ingredients, which ones do you want to take on board? Further, there is the issue of whether you want to convict or acquit Aquinas on the charge of onto-theology.

Benedict XVI is fond of saying that "truth and love are the twin pillars of all reality." *Veritas* without *Caritas et Amor* is a recipe for narrow nerdy-ness. It goes with the spiky "my intellect is sharper than yours" attitude that drives people away from not just theology, but Christ himself. Conversely, *Caritas et Amor* without *Veritas* is a recipe for wet dippy-ness. It goes with the "all we need is love" attitude of New Age nuns who know more about the Enneagram than the Catechism.

### Letter to the Editor

I want to point out something that is creeping into the language regarding embryos, including in the past ITEST bulletin (Fall, Vol. 43, No. 4). That is use of the term "fertilized egg." It is part of the dehumanizing terminology of embryonic stem cell research and abortion proponents. A fertilized egg has a very, very short life. That is because as Dr. Randy Prather, University of Missouri Curators' Professor of Reproductive Physiology and Molecular Biology—Transgenic Pigs, recounted at an ITEST program maybe about 10 years ago, the instant that a sperm penetrates and fertilizes the egg, the new entity immediately undergoes remodeling and reprogramming with its full genetic base contributed by both parents. That new entity is a human embryo at day one in the zygote stage--which lasts through day 3 of age. Calling that new human being a "fertilized egg" obscures and obfuscates its humanity. And it

A theology that only addresses one transcendental (for example, truth without goodness and beauty), or one faculty of the soul (the will without the intellect, the memory or the imagination) will offer a lopsided anthropology and a skewed vision of theological renewal. The conciliar generation was right to go to war against such narrowness. He way forward is not to go back to the 1950s but to overcome the dualisms.

As one of my doctoral students suggested, St. Thomas was interested in the objective side of objectivity, John Paul II was interested in the objective side of subjectivity and Benedict XVI, blessed John Henry Newman and others with a strong "Romantic theology" pedigree (in short-hand terms, an interest in love and beauty and the Christian memory and imagination) are rather excellent at analysing the subjective side of objectivity. A symphonic interplay of all of these perspectives is needed in the mission of theological renewal.

Printed with permission from *The Tablet* – November 17, 2012 – pages 16-17. To access their web site go to [www.thetablet.co.uk](http://www.thetablet.co.uk). We have retained British spelling in most cases, such as "analysing" "favourite," "defence" and others.

implies that not even an embryo yet exists. In 2006, we saw Amendment 2 proponents in Missouri improperly redefine what human cloning is, and then legalized that false definition of cloning. They called a human embryo in a later stage of development a blastocyst. Again implying that a human embryo does not yet exist. But it really is a human embryo in the blastocyst stage. This stage lasts until about the 150 cell-stage, which is right before implantation in the uterus. Thus, those proponents could extract that embryo's cells, thus killing it, and ostensibly not kill a human being, albeit in the embryo phase. Words do matter.

(*Dr. Alois F. Kertz, a long-time member of ITEST, is a specialist in animal nutrition. He served on the Advisory Board of Exploring the World, Discovering God (EWDG) and is active in promoting pro-life issues. His wife, Molly Kertz, served for twelve years as director of the Respect Life Office in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.*)

## Papal Message for 47th World Communications Day

January 24, 2013

Vatican City, (VIS) – “Social Networks: Portals of Truth and Faith;  
New Spaces for Evangelisation” by Pope Benedict XVI

(Following are excerpts from the letter written by the Pope on World Communications Day. To view the entire letter, go to the Vatican web site at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).)

“...I [Benedict XVI] would like to offer you some reflections on an increasingly important reality regarding the way in which people today communicate among themselves. I wish to consider the development of digital social networks which are helping to create a new ‘agora’, an open public square in which people share ideas, information, and opinions, and in which new relationships and forms of community can come into being.

The Pope explains how social networking functions in society today:

“...The development of social networks calls for commitment: people are engaged in building relationships and making friends, in looking for answers to their questions and being entertained but also in finding intellectual stimulation and sharing knowledge and know-how. The networks are increasingly becoming part of the very fabric of society, inasmuch as they bring people together on the basis of these fundamental needs. Social networks are thus nourished by aspirations rooted in the human heart.

Benedict urges inclusivity in sharing Jesus’ message

“...The challenge facing social networks is how to be truly inclusive: thus they will benefit from the full participation of believers who desire to share the message of Jesus and the values of human dignity which His teaching promotes. Believers are increasingly aware that, unless the Good News is made known also in the digital world, it may be absent in the experience of many people for whom this existential space is important. The digital environment is not a parallel or purely virtual world, but is part of the daily experience of many people, especially the young. Social networks are the result of human interaction, but for their part they also reshape the dynamics of communication

which builds relationships: a considered understanding of this environment is therefore the prerequisite for a significant presence there.

The Pope notes the benefits that can accrue from using social networks:

“...Social Social networks, as well as being a means of evangelisation, can also be a factor in human development. As an example, in some geographical and cultural contexts where Christians feel isolated, social networks can reinforce their sense of real unity with the worldwide community of believers. The networks facilitate the sharing of spiritual and liturgical resources, helping people to pray with a greater sense of closeness to those who share the same faith. An authentic and interactive engagement with the questions and the doubts of those who are distant from the faith should make us feel the need to nourish, by prayer and reflection, our faith in the presence of God as well as our practical charity: ‘If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal’.

The Pope sums up his message:

“In the digital world there are social networks which offer our contemporaries opportunities for prayer, meditation and sharing the word of God. But these networks can also open the door to other dimensions of faith. Many people are actually discovering, precisely thanks to a contact initially made online, the importance of direct encounters, experiences of community and even pilgrimage, elements which are always important in the journey of faith. In our effort to make the Gospel present in the digital world, we can invite people to come together for prayer or liturgical celebrations in specific places such as churches and chapels. There should be no lack of coherence or unity in the expression of our faith and witness to the Gospel in whatever reality we are called to live, whether physical or digital. When we are present to others, in any way at all, we are called to make known the love of God to the furthest ends of the earth.”