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Bioethics, authenticity, and community

Recently, the Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor, was awarded the Templeton Prize. His writings on authenticity and on community are well-known. Each year, the Church celebrates its 'birthday' at Pentecost. Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that day, the community of believers was renewed in their commitment to live out their faith in the risen Lord authentically.



Authenticity and community are indispensable to doing bioethics well.

At a colloquium held in Toronto in August 2006 on method in research collaborations in bioethics, participants expressed the vocation of a bioethicist in the heart of the Church in the following way: "To will and strive for authenticity in myself and my work, and, inasmuch as I can, to promote this in others so that they may realize, or help others to realize, vital values that respect the integrity of the scale of values (i.e., vital, social, cultural, personal, and religious values)." Whether basic human goods are commensurable or incommensurable is still a matter of dispute among Catholic bioethicists, however, being an authentic seeker after truth and goodness, with the help of a supportive community, is something to which all Catholics are committed in virtue of their baptism.



Authenticity for Catholic bioethicists entails, among other things, being attentive to data, including what the Church has taught, forming intelligent and reasonable judgments on emerging and controversial questions, and allowing oneself to be converted by "God's love poured into our hearts" through the Holy Spirit. This is often mediated by the listening, learning, and engaging in genuine dialogue that takes place within a dynamic community of "friends of the eternal Truth" (G.K.Chesterton's expression). The IACB

exists to foster such interactions, notably through its colloquia. Please pray for the success of the upcoming International Colloquium in the U.K. and for a more effective engagement of Catholic bioethicists in our "brave new world", particularly on behalf of the poor and vulnerable.

Bill Sullivan, director of the IACB.



3rd INTERNATIONAL
COLLOQUIUM FOR
CATHOLIC BIOETHICISTS

***Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine:
How Far Should We Go?***

**St. Mary's University College,
Twickenham (London), U.K.
July 1-5, 2007**

Details online: iacbweb.org/london2007
Registration is still open.

Papers prepared by Neil Scolding, Patrick Byrne and Michael Stebbins, Dame Julia Polak, and Daniel Sulmasy. Other speakers include David A. Jones, Helen Watt, Fr. Norman Ford and Margaret Somerville.

Some questions to be explored and discussed at the 3rd International Colloquium

An address by **David Jones** of St. Mary's University College, Twickenham, U.K. will open the colloquium.

Author of *The Soul of the Embryo* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), a highly praised study of the history of Christian reflection on the moral status of the human embryo, Jones recently participated in a meeting, at Cambridge University, of scholars who reflected on how to express an understanding of 'soul' today in ways that may correct the tendencies towards reductionism in science and body-soul dualism in Christian theology.



The first day of discussions will focus on research on human stem cells.

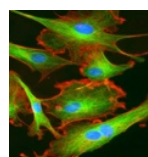
Neil Scolding's paper reviews developments in the scientific understanding of stem cells and the technology of producing stem cells. Because of ethical arguments against the destruction of human embryos for research and the reality of a short supply of human eggs and so-called 'surplus' embryos, the field is increasingly turning to alternative means of producing stem cells such as embryonic biopsy, parthenogenesis, altered nuclear transfer, and 'cybrids'. What ethical issues arise from these new approaches?

Patrick Byrne and **Michael Stebbins** distinguish, in their paper, between a 'descriptive' and an 'explanatory' approach to understanding human identity and personhood. They propose that explaining human development as a unified, self-modifying, emergent process may help to mediate current debates on the production and use of stem cells for research, including those entities created by new techniques.

In particular, whether creating stem cells by altered nuclear transfer is morally acceptable is a question that still divides Catholic bioethicists.

Presenting opposing positions on this issue at the colloquium will be **Helen Watt** and **Fr. Norman Ford SDB**.

Watt is the Director of the Linacre Centre for Healthcare Ethics in London, U.K. Ford is the Director of the Caroline Chisholm Centre for Health Ethics in Melbourne, Australia.



The second day of discussions will focus on the possibilities and goals of regenerative medicine.

Going beyond controversies concerning the sources of stem cells, what ethical issues are emerging in the rapidly developing field of regenerative medicine?

Dame Julia Polak's paper reviews the prospects of assisting and enhancing the regenerative capacities of human bodies. She points out, however, that considerable funding is required to produce cells and materials on a scale necessary for clinical applications. This raises the question of resource allocation in health care.

Daniel Sulmasy will explore the question of enhancement in regenerative medicine. Sulmasy has been working out a new approach to natural law ethics based on the notion of 'natural kinds'. How do we discern what can and should be changed in human bodies, and what should be accepted as a given?

Margaret Somerville of McGill University, Montréal, Canada, will examine what lies just beyond the present horizon, namely the possibility of regenerating our genetic selves. She will propose ethical guidelines for the development of law and policy regulating technobiology in a diverse society.



Participants in the 3rd International Colloquium

As of June 1, bioethicists from 16 countries have registered to participate in the 3rd International Colloquium: Argentina, Australia, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, India, Italy, Kenya, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Poland, Singapore, U.S.A., and the U.K.

Introducing some participants: A mix of the familiar and the new...



Margarita Bosch holds a doctorate in biochemistry from the Universidad de Buenos Aires and is working towards a second advanced degree in bioethics, while being a mother of four children. She teaches in the Universidad Católica Argentina Santa María de los Buenos Aires.



Fr. Ben Fanaye OP teaches at the Dominican Institute in Ibadan, Nigeria and is a member of the faculty of the West African Bioethics Training Program. Fr. Fanaye completed his doctorate at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, U.S.A.



Fr. Stephen Fernandes, a moral theologian teaching at St. Pius College, Mumbai, India, participated in the last two International Colloquia in Toronto and Melbourne. For the Melbourne colloquium, he prepared a paper on 'Ethical Challenges for the Christian Community in the Just Distribution of Healthcare.'



John Kleinsman is a moral theologian from The Nathaniel Centre, the New Zealand Catholic bioethics centre in Wellington. He has a background in supporting individuals with disabilities and those struggling with drug and alcohol addictions. He and his wife Kerry are the parents of three children.



Moira McQueen received a law degree from the University of Glasgow and a doctorate in moral theology from St. Michael's University College in Toronto. She worked in family law and in juvenile criminal law, and has taught bioethics for several years. She currently is the director of the Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute.



Fr. Kevin O'Rourke OP of the Neiswanger Center in Chicago was in the spotlight in the March-April 2007 issue of *Health Progress*, the journal of the Catholic Health Association of the United States. This special edition assessed the contribution of O'Rourke's 'prudential personalist' approach to health care ethics.



John Ozolins is Head of the National School of Philosophy at the Australian Catholic University. He is a fellow of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia, the vice-president of the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia, the editor of *Ethics Education*, and a member of the editorial boards of numerous other journals.



Fr. Noël Simard is Director of the Centre d'Ethique de l'Université St-Paul in Ottawa, Canada. He has addressed the Pontifical Academy for Life, the International Federation of Catholic Universities, and the International Catholic Centre for Cooperation with UNESCO.



Paulina Taboada is a specialist in internal medicine who also holds a doctorate in philosophy. She teaches at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago. She has participated in the work of the European Parliament's Temporary Committee on Human Genetics and Other New Technologies in Modern Medicine in Brussels, Belgium, as well as in several international research projects.



Fr Joseph Tham LC is a medical doctor on the faculty of the School of Bioethics at the Regina Apostolorum Pontifical Athenaeum in Rome. Fr. Tham recently defended his doctoral thesis on 'The Secularization of Bioethics—A Critical History'.

Associates of the International Association of Catholic Bioethicists (IACB)

Participants in the International Colloquium do not have to be Associates of the IACB but may apply to become Associates by completing a form and paying an annual fee of £25 (or US \$50). Associates of the IACB normally are Catholics who work in bioethics or a related professional field and who accept the IACB Statutes. They join a community of supportive peers, receive information relevant to their work, and participate in various colloquia and other collaborative research and educational projects. For information, email: secretariat@iacbweb.org.

Literature Scan: Forthcoming Books

Jones, David Albert. *Approaching the End: A Theological Exploration of Death and Dying* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, August 2007), 248 pages. [*Explores the history of Christian reflection on death in Ambrose, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Karl Rahner.*]

Pessini, Leo; de Barchifontaine, Christian. *Bioética na Ibero-América: História e perspectivas*. São Paulo: Edições Loyola, 2007), 392 pages. [*Highlights not only the evolution of bioethics in Latin America and the Caribbean but also discusses the distinctive contributions of this region to global bioethics.*]

Upcoming Conferences

June 21-23, 2007: Quarto Convegno Internazionale, Associazione Medicina & Persona, Milan, Italy. Details: www.medicinaepersona.org.

July 5-7, 2007: The Linacre Centre conference on "Incapacity and Care" at St. Mary's University College, Twickenham, U.K. Details: www.linacre.org/Incapacity&Care.pdf.

September 13-15, 2007: European Association of Centres of Medical Ethics (EACME) conference on 'Bioethics in the Real World' in Zurich, Switzerland. Details: www.ethik.unizh.ch/biomed.

December 6-8, 2007: Second National Bioethics Conference, Bangalore, India on 'Moral and Ethical Imperatives of Healthcare Technologies'. Details: www.ijme.in. (Click on NBC icon.)