BIOETHICS OUTLOOK

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Ethics and Bioethics the Catholic Tradition

Gerald Gleeson

In this issue

This year we decided to offer our annual *Intensive Bioethics Course* as a one-day intensive for teachers of both Stage 6 of the Studies in Religion course of the Board of Studies of New South Wales and Stage 6 of the Secondary Religious Education Curriculum of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney.

Though the emphasis of the day was on the bioethical teachings of the Catholic Christian tradition, we also asked Rabbi Franklin and Mr Abdo to outline for us the guiding ideas in the Judaic and Moslem bioethical traditions. Their contributions were splendid: course participants (who came from a wide variety of schools and school systems) expressed particular appreciation of their talks in their 'course evaluations'.

In this issue, we re-present two of the talks given at the IBC. The third will be found in the next issue of *Bioethics Outlook*.

In this first session we examine the way different religious traditions help us to reflect on ethical questions. Ethical questions are *practical* questions – questions about what we ought to do. They are *ethical* questions in that they concern what I as a *human being* ought to do if I am to act in a way that is appropriate for a *good* human being to act. To justify my answer to an ethical question, I need to engage - (implicitly or explicitly) in ethical *reasoning* – it is not enough for me just to follow the crowd, to make a blind choice, to act on spontaneous feelings, or to offer unthinking obedience to a superior. *Sound* ethical reasoning identifies the right and wrong ways to pursue good ends. As we will see, sound ethical reasoning will draw upon all aspects of a person's being, one's character and emotional dispositions, one's intelligence and moral seriousness, one's upbringing and openness to one's community's traditional wisdom.

The current context for "ethics"

There is a widespread feeling in the community today that although "ethics" matters greatly, no one in fact ever "really knows" what's right and wrong. On the one hand, most people agree that questions about euthanasia, genetic engineering, stem cell research and so on are deep and difficult, and yet, on the other hand, many think there's no right answer to these questions so that, in the end, people just have to do whatever *seems* right to them. Despite this pessimism or scepticism about ethical conclusions, our culture nonetheless offers various "short cuts" to ethical reasoning, popular philosophical advice about how to reason ethically. Some of the advice we hear is:

"Do whatever does the most good for the most people..." (cf. Utilitarianism)

"Be consistent... Do unto others..." (cf. Kantianism)

"Assert your rights..."

"Follow your conscience..."

"There's no right answer... it's your decision..."

Each of these slogans contains a grain of truth, but each of them is also inadequate on its own. How could we ever be in a position to know what really does "the most good"? How could "consistency" be sufficient in the absence of knowing what good people would be consistent about? How are conflicts of rights to be settled? How can the advice to follow one's conscience be helpful to a person wondering what he or she ought to do? To be sure, we are obliged to follow our conscience - but knowing *that* doesn't help answer ethical questions. It only shows I need to "form my conscience" so that I will be in a position to reach a conscientious judgment I can follow.

In the midst of these competing ethical claims, *religious traditions* are often thought to provide "absolute" or "objective" claims about what's right and wrong. The wider culture is sceptical about these claims, of course: critics will ask, how do the religions know what's right and wrong? How do they know "the will of God"? And in any case, the religions themselves often disagree.

Catholic ethical reasoning

In the light of these brief comments on our current ethical culture, I will outline some of the key elements in the way the Catholic ethical tradition advises us to approach moral questions.

Doing Good

A first principle is close to that of the Utilitarians: "Do and pursue what is good, and avoid what is evil". This principle is in many respects "self-evident" - of course we should be concerned to do what's good. What is not self-evident is what counts as good. Unlike the Utilitarian, the Catholic tradition holds that the good to be done should not be reduced to, or measured solely by, the "outcomes" or consequences or "happy states of affairs" produced by our actions. This is because sometimes, quite apart from their consequences, our actions *in themselves* may already involve doing something bad: e.g. *lying* to avoid embarrassment, *killing* one person in order to save another. The *good that ought to be done* in any given situation is that which promotes the total human good - the good of all people affected by an action, including, and primarily, the person responsible for the action; and the good that ought to be done will never involve deliberately doing evil by harming someone or something.

Becoming Good

A second principle, which helps explain the first, is that our actions reflect back on ourselves and shape our moral character. For example, if I lie to avoid embarrassment, I not only damage the grounds for truthful communication between people, I also damage my own character: I become, to some extent, however small, an untruthful person – and so I become someone less likely to tell the truth in the future. Likewise the mistreatment of animals or the destruction of the physical environment, while they obviously do damage to other creatures, and perhaps harm future human beings, also – here and now – damage (or "corrupt") the moral characters of those responsible for the mistreatment or destruction.

In other words, acting ethically is not just a matter of *causing good outcomes*, it is a matter of *becoming a good person in and by doing what is good*. Thus, a genuinely good teacher "gets good results" for her class by using good teaching methods. To get "good results" in other ways – by the use of rote learning or punishments, or worse, by obtaining the exam papers in advance – damages not only the practice of education, but also the person and character of the teacher.

Forming One's Character

Ethical questions are primarily "first person" questions – questions I must ask myself. They take two forms: *What should I do? What kind of person should I become?* The questions are linked because my actions shape who I become, and who I have become shapes my future actions. "Conscience" is simply the exercise of my capacity to know and to feel what I ought to do. Conscience aims at the truth – I want to know what is the right thing to do in this situation. But although conscience is measured by the truth, my only access to the truth is provided by my own moral character and insight. If I am a good teacher, I will be in a better position to know the right ways to help my students, and quicker to recognize the wrong ways (i.e. ways that are not appropriate even if they do produce "good results"). Forming my ordered conscience, therefore, is a matter of forming my *character*, so that my dispositions and attitudes, my judgments and regular ways of responding to situations, my awareness of ethical issues and their implications, are all in line with what are the right ways to act.

The importance of recognizing the "first person" character of ethical decisions is often crucial to resolving many bioethical questions. We need to be clear in any disputed case about *who* faces *what* decision. Thus patients, nurses, doctors, administrators and government bodies each have their own distinct ethical responsibilities. It is just as wrong for doctors to usurp patients' responsibilities (e.g. by not giving patients all the information they need to make wise decisions) as it is for doctors or nurses to shirk their own responsibilities (e.g. by simply carrying out a patient's wishes irrespective of whether they are reasonable, or morally or legally permissible).

Ethics and religious faith

So far I have not mentioned religion. We can, and need, to think about ethics independently of religious faith. However, there are both logical and historical connections between religion and morality. In almost all human societies ethical teachings have been situated within, and supported by, a religious tradition. Only in recent times, in the West, with the decline of religious practice, has "ethics" emerged in a freestanding form. Sociologists wonder whether a coherent moral education is viable in the absence of religious supports.

Logically, the relationship between religion and morality is complex. The problem was put clearly in Plato's dialogue *Euthyphro*, where Socrates' asks: "Is something wrong because God says it's wrong, or does God say something's wrong because it is wrong?" In the Catholic tradition, the wrongness of some actions is "intrinsic" to them – in the words of Pope John Paul II, some kinds of action are such that they are "not capable of being ordered to God and to the good of the person" (*Veritatis Splendor* 81). The examples given concern "whatever is hostile to life itself;... whatever violates the integrity of the human person;... whatever is offensive to human dignity". Murder, rape, torture, and racism are not simply wrong because God says so, they are "wrong in themselves".

The Catholic moral tradition emphasizes the "intrinsic" character of human ethics. Some kinds of actions are intrinsically good or bad for us as human beings. Actions that are intrinsically bad, e.g. speaking untruthfully, can't but damage us to some extent. Conversely, good actions done for the right reasons in the appropriate circumstances bring their own "reward", they are fulfilling and help us to flourish as human beings. This is the basis of the Catholic "Natural Law" approach to ethics: actions that are "against the natural law" (e.g. killing the innocent, lying, adultery, etc.) are actions that can't but be bad for us given that we are the sort of beings we are.

Ethics and Catholic faith

Hence in the Catholic tradition, being a good Christian builds on the idea of being a good human being, living according to "our nature". From the perspective of Christian faith, we think of *grace* and *revelation* as "elevating" and "completing" the natural order of things, including natural human goodness. Our relationship with God through Jesus Christ should deepen the ethical quality of our ordinary human living. Thus the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* speaks of our "Human Vocation" as our "Life in the Spirit" - to use the title of a major section (Part III.1). Acting rightly (i.e. ethically) expresses "love of God and neighbour", a love that aspires to be like the self-sacrificing love of Jesus himself ("love one another as I have loved you"). According to Catholic teaching, we are only able *consistently to* love one another in ethically upright ways if we are supported by God's grace - the Holy Spirit - who enables us to direct our actions to God as our ultimate end.

Christian faith thus provides a new *context* for ethical action - our relationship with God; a new source of *motivation* - the Holy Spirit; and new *implications* - for the failure to act rightly becomes "sin", the failure to order our lives in relation to God, the failure to acknowledge that we are *created* beings, not autonomous moral agents who are able to invent right and wrong for ourselves.

Christian faith in response to God's revelation also informs our ethical reasoning insofar as we draw upon the ethical wisdom of the Judeo-Christian tradition as a whole, the example and teaching of Jesus himself, the experience and teaching of the Church through the centuries, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, both to individuals and to the Pastors of the Church. This is why the formation of one's conscience as a Catholic depends on a willing *openness* to the Church's teaching. This openness does not imply that we must start off already accepting the truth of the Church's teaching (though often we do), but that - as in all teaching and learning contexts - we have "an *interest* in unfamiliar forms of knowledge cherished by good people and ... a desire to understand in genuinely deeps ways the convictions and practices that have shaped their lives" (Susan Moore, SMH, 10/4/98). Forming one's conscience means opening one's mind to sources of practical wisdom that go beyond one's own personal resources. For Catholics, this means a willingness to make one's own the wisdom and teaching of the Church.

Some key principles in Catholic ethical teaching

Finally, I wish to note some key principles in Catholic ethical teaching as these are reflected in the *Code of Ethical Standards for Catholic Health and Aged Care Services in Australia*. Part I of the *Code* lists seven basic principles whose application is wider than just health care. My gloss on these seven principles is as follows.

1. Ethical reasoning is built on respect for the human person and for the value of human life. We recognize that our lives are a gift, held in trust, for which we are accountable.

2. Right actions aim at the "integral" good of the person, as a physical, psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual being. Right actions will never directly damage any aspect of human life.

3. There are proper goals (or goods) that define our activities, and bring with them their own standards of excellence, be it in the practice of medicine, education, or parenting, or - more fundamentally, and at all times - the practice of just living a good human life.

4. Justice is the virtue governing our lives together. Justice means giving others what is due to them, e.g. in how we allocate and distribute benefits, goods, and opportunities, and in how we respect people's lives, relationships, and property.

5. Our actions always impact on our relationships with others, and often require collaboration with others, as well as the recognition of individual responsibility. Sound ethical reasoning is often a matter of identifying who is responsible for which decision.

6. Respect for personal embodiment means recognising that we are what we do in and through our bodies; our sexuality is a personal, not just a biological reality. It is our paramount way of being connected to others. Sexual activity that puts us "at odds with" our bodies, that contradicts the life-giving union of marriage, and/or that fails to respect others and their bodies, is wrong.

7. Suffering and death are inevitable features of every human life, and impinge on our ethical decision making in complex ways. For Christians, suffering and death are transformed by faith in the resurrection of Christ.

Space allows me only to draw these principles to your attention (and to recommend a close reading of Part I of the *Code*). The application of these principles will be explored in subsequent sessions in relation to particular ethical issues.

In conclusion, I have tried to show how and why Catholic ethical reasoning is as much *philosophical* as theological. When we are confronted with genuinely new ethical questions - such as those about stem cell research - we do not expect to find immediate answers in the Bible or in past church teachings. We rather seek to reflect on all we know about what is good for human beings, about the right and wrong ways of respecting our bodies and our lives, about what justice and equality between persons demands, and so on. We use philosophical reasoning about how we ought to act, reasoning that is informed by the dominant values, teachings and perspectives of our religious tradition, but reasoning that we trust is also accessible to people of good will who may not share our religious beliefs.

The beginning of life: Ethics and Bioethics in the Catholic tradition

Bernadette Tobin

In order to understand the teachings of the Catholic Church in relation to questions about the beginning of life, we need to identify and appreciate the one idea that informs all of these teachings. This is the idea that the life of every human being is, in and of itself, valuable (or 'sacred'), the idea that the respect due to every human being is such that there are things that we should never do to another (such as treat someone else as means to our own ends). A vivid way of expressing this idea is to say that our fellow human beings are a 'limit to our will'.

This idea - or cluster of ideas - is not in itself an essentially Christian (nor indeed an essentially Catholic) idea, even though it is often known as the 'doctrine' of the sanctity of human life. For one thing, it was articulated by the great Greek philosophers (Plato and Aristotle) whose lives and works predate Christianity. For another, one does not need to believe in the existence of God to see human beings in this way. (As the philosopher Raimond Gaita has put it, one does not need to believe in the existence of a Giver to be able to see human life as a gift, to appreciate it as something to be cherished in others as well as in oneself.) Admittedly, the Judeo-Christian tradition offers us especially beautiful expressions of the idea: 'You are precious in my eyes and I love you' said Isaiah (43.4). 'I shall not call you servants any more ... I call you friends' said Christ (John 15.15).

That said, not all versions of the doctrine of the sanctity of human life are identical to the Catholic Christian version. Though the differences are worthy of attention, in what follows I shall concentrate on elaborating the Catholic Christian version. But it is important to note that this ethic is said by the Church to be a matter of 'natural law', that is to say, recognition of its truth is in principle open to any person of goodwill. Recognition of its truth does not depend on prior acceptance of religious presuppositions.

Contrasting ideas

One way of appreciating the richness of the Catholic Christian version of the sanctity of life ethic is to see how it *contrasts* with some other ideas about human life. First, this Christian doctrine implies that the value of human life is intrinsic to it in two senses: (a) The value does not depend on the qualities a particular human being happens to possess (and so we may not say that some lives are more valuable than other lives on the grounds that some possess, and others lack, certain desirable characteristics). (b) The value of a particular person's life is not something which is given to it by others (and so we should not think of a life as lacking value on the grounds that no one happens to value it). Secondly, the value of a human life is independent of how it came to be (whether by loving intercourse between two people committed to each other in life-long marriage or, were it possible, by 'somatic cell nuclear transfer', the process of cloning that brought Dolly the sheep into being and which Professor Antinori of Rome says that he has perfected for human beings). Thirdly, the value of a human life is independent of the stage of development a particular human being has reached: the very youngest and the very oldest members of the human family are owed the respect due to a human person.

A counter-cultural idea

Now, it goes without saying that this background idea, which informs all Catholic teachings on the beginning of life, is a counter-cultural idea. That is to say, just about every aspect of it is today rejected, explicitly or implicitly, by many of our fellow Australians. Let me give just two examples of how people rely on the contrasting ideas just mentioned.

First, some think that the value of a human life depends on how others value it, that the worth of a human life is something that is given to it by others. The idea goes like this. Human lives are neutral in themelves. The more someone is loved and wanted and cherished by other people, the more valuable that person is. The less someone is loved and wanted and cherished by other people, the less valuable that person is. If someone is not loved or wanted or cherished at all, then that person's life is value-less. And indeed (it follows that) if someone is positively not wanted and not cherished, then that person's life may be thought to have a negative value: his may be thought to be a life 'not worth living' or it may be thought that it would be 'wrong' to support that life. This is how some philosophers talk about gravely-disabled newborn babies. It is how some people think about even perfectly healthy unborn children when their arrival would be an interference to the career or even the vacation plans of their prospective parents!

Second, some think that the value of a human life depends on the qualities it happens to possess or lack, that we can rank human lives according to their 'quality'. Not surprisingly, the lives of very disabled newborn babies, the very old, those who have become frail in mind or body are candidates for being thought to have less value or worth than are the lives of the physically and mentally fit. So, an important critical skill of anyone teaching or learning the Christian version of the sanctity of human life lies in the ability to recognize, in herself or in others, when her thinking has become infected by that 'quality of life' ethic which the philosopher Peter Singer recommends in the place of the 'sanctity of life ethic. (As we shall see, however, 'quality of life' considerations do have a legitimate place in bioethical thinking in the Catholic tradition: but it is not consistent with the principle of the sanctity of human life to claim that the value or worth of a life of one human being can be measured, or compared with that of another, or to claim that the value or worth of a human life can be in any way reduced by illness or disability.[1])

What, then, are some of the implications of a 'sanctity of life' ethic? I shall set them out as they apply to the use of reproductive technologies, prenatal testing, abortion and infanticide, and to the contemporary debates about cloning.[2] (And every now and again I shall note contrasting 'teachings' from contemporary secular culture.)

Responsible parenthood

Catholic teaching affirms only those sexual acts which are an expression of the love of a couple who are united in marriage. (It does not affirm extra martial sexual acts, whether they be heterosexual or homosexual.) Since the marital act is held to have both a unitive and a procreative significance, the use of any procedure or drug which deprives the act of its procreative potential is held to be wrong: so both sterilization and contraception are to be avoided.

The church teaches that conception should only take place within the security of a marital relationship, and that children ought to be able to look back to their origins in an act of loving intercourse by their parents. Married couples are invited to use their reproductive capacities responsibly. In circumstances such as those in which adequate care for another child seems impossible, or those in which there is a high risk of a very serious genetic disorder, couples may reasonably decide to avoid pregnancy. They are invited to acquire the knowledge and skills to enable them to take responsibility for their reproductive health and procreation, and to determine the times of fertility and infertility so that they themselves can decide when to engage in sexual intercourse.

The use of reproductive technologies

Recognizing that infertility can be a source of great suffering, the church encourages the use of procedures which, whilst respecting human life, increase the chances of conception. However, a distinction is drawn between procreative procedures which *assist* the marital act and procreative procedures which *replace* it: the former are held to be consistent with a respect for human life, the latter are not. For this reason, the church does not endorse in vitro fertilization (IVF), intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) and artificial insemination by donor (AID): in each case the church argues that a technological procedure replaces the marital act as the origin of life for a child and that a technological procedure is not a fit way of bringing a child into the world. In addition, some reproductive procedures fail in other ways to show the respect which is due to human life: for example, some involve the creation of additional embryos which are subsequently discarded or treated as experimental objects.

Abortion (and Infanticide)

A key aspect of the Catholic Christian version of the doctrine of the sanctity of human life is the idea that the respect due to human persons should be shown to human beings at every stage of their lives. In Pope John Paul II's encyclical *The Gospel of Life*, the Church affirms that 'right from fertilization the adventure of human life begins'. Even if the 'metaphysical' status of the human embryo is still a matter of some debate, the Church insists that we ought to give an embryo the benefit of any doubt and thus treat it with the respect due to a human person. For this reason the church teaches that abortion (whether at a very early stage or at a much later stage) is wrong: it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human life. And, of course, the same thinking informs the church's teaching of the wrongness of infanticide.[3]

Prenatal testing

Once a pregnancy is confirmed, it is possible to monitor the health of the embryo or foetus and the health of the mother. The church teaches that the proper purposes of such prenatal testing are to enable earlier and more effective forms of therapy and to help parents prepare for the birth of their child by providing them with information about his or her health status. Since the church also teaches that from conception the human embryo should be treated as a human person, it follows that prenatal diagnosis should not be undertaken with a view to aborting an embryo or foetus or unborn child deemed unacceptable for any reason.

Threats to the life and health of mother or child

One of the most misunderstood areas of church teaching as it relates to the beginnings of human life is what the church says about circumstances in which a woman develops a life- or health- threatening condition during pregnancy and the only effective and available treatment is one that would endanger the life or health of her unborn child. Contrary to what many people think, the church teaches that such treatment may be perfectly permissible - so long as the risks to the woman's life or health which are posed by her condition are at least comparable to the risks the treatment would pose for the life and health of her child, and provided the treatment does not involve directly harming or aborting the unborn child. Thus the Catholic Christian commitment to the sanctity of human life does not demand a 'prolong life at any cost' ethic. In addition, sometimes a treatment that offers a little hope of restoring a very sick child to health is legitimately refused by parents when they judge that the administration of the treatment would impose too great a burden of pain and suffering on their beloved child. For it is consistent with the principle of the sanctity of life to recognize that the burdens a life-sustaining treatment may impose on a person may be such as to make it permissible to omit that treatment.

Contemporary debates about cloning

Human beings generally begin life via the process of fertilization, that is, by the union of sperm and egg (whether that union of sperm and egg takes place inside a woman's body or in a petri dish). Identical twins have been the exception (or at least one of them has been: for the 'second' twin is formed by a natural (though unusual) process of one embryo splitting into two). With Dolly the sheep has come the potential for a new 'asexual' way of beginning life: by the process of 'somatic cell nuclear transfer'.

Somatic cell nuclear transfer consists in removing the nucleus of an egg (or 'oocyte'), replacing it with the nucleus of an adult cell and fusing the two together. The cytoplasm (a jelly-like substance which is present in the oocyte alongside the set of chromosomes containing the female genetic information) carries the factors that normally reprogramme the incoming sperm nucleus to become involved in the formation of an embryo. Since the cytoplasm also has the capacity to reprogramme an adult cell nucleus into the nucleus of an embryo, it is possible to generate a human embryo in this way.

This 'cloning' technology may be used for two different kinds of purposes: (1) to produce a new human being (so-called 'reproductive cloning') and (2) to create an embryo which will be a source of stem cells for possible therapeutic uses (so-called 'therapeutic cloning'). What is *common* to both purposes is the creation of a human embryo, one which would be allowed to develop into an adult human being in the first case and which would be dissected for its stem cells (and destroyed in that process) in the second.

Stem cells are cells that can be programmed to grow into the tissues of the human body. Though our knowledge of stem cells is still in its infancy, it is known that there is variety of sources of them in the human body including blood, skin, brain, bone marrow, retina, skeletal muscle, fat and the umbilical cord. Some of these cells are thought to be capable of turning into only some sorts of bodily tissue (they are thus called 'multipotent' or 'pluripotent') and others are thought to be capable of growing into every kind of tissue in the body (they are thus called 'totipotent'). Not surprisingly, the ones that are thought to be totipotent seem to generate the most scientific excitement.

Let us consider the second option first: so-called 'therapeutic cloning'. Given Catholic teaching about (a) the respect which is due to human persons and (b) the importance of showing respect for new human life from its very beginnings, it should be clear that 'therapeutic cloning' is not permissible. By creating an embryo for the sake of research and then destroying it in the process of experimenting on it, the procedure fails to accord due respect for embryonic human life. Embryonic human life is treated not as an end in itself but merely as a means to an end.

Incidentally, there seems to be good reason for thinking that it is not necessary to destroy embryos to obtain totipotent stem cells, for some stem cells from adult bodies have been found to be totipotent. On 26th January this year, the *New Scientist* reported that the 'ultimate' stem cell had been discovered in adults: a stem cell that can turn into every single tissue in the body! And indeed the therapeutic successes so far have come from the use of 'adult' stem cells: stem cells from his own bone marrow were used to cure Rhys Evans, the British child with 'bubble boy' immune deficiency.

What about so-called 'reproductive cloning'. Here we need to recall the distinction between procreative procedures which *assist* the marital act and procreative procedures which *replace* it. In Catholic teaching, the former are held to be consistent with a respect for human life and the latter are not. So circumventing infertility (or avoiding passing on a heritable genetic defect) by means of 'reproductive cloning' would not be (in Catholic teaching) consistent with a respect for human life. So far only a few maverick doctors (Professor Antinori in Rome comes to mind) have offered this service. But it is discussed widely in the bioethical literature, where it is recommended for a variety of reasons: as a way of 'replacing' a child who has died, as a way of growing up a foetus which can be a source of 'spare parts' for an existing child, as a way of having children without the involvement of a man, as a way of designing our descendants ...! The strongest arguments against so-called 'reproductive cloning' have been articulated by Leon Kass, the Chairman of President Bush's Bioethics Commission, in an article in which he identifies the wisdom in the repugnance most people feel for 'reproductive cloning': cloning (he argues) threatens confusion of both a child's identity and his or her individuality, it represents a giant step (though not the first one) towards transforming procreation into manufacture, and like other forms of genetic engineering of the next generation it would be a form of despotism of the cloners over the cloned and thus a violation of the meaning of the parent-child relationship.[4] All these objections to 'reproductive cloning' are consistent with the Catholic Christian teachings about the beginning of life.

Conclusion

Church teachings about the beginnings of life are best understood as expressions of a certain way of thinking about human beings, a way of thinking summed up in the 'doctrine of the sanctity of human life'. Given this way of thinking, certain ways of treating human beings at the beginning of their lives are required of us and other ways of treating them are ruled out for us. Of course, most of the genuine challenges fall somewhere between what is required of us and what is ruled out for us: that is why we need the kind of generosity, wisdom and patience revealed in the relationships between (on the one hand) good parents, teachers, doctors and nurses and (on the other) the very young children for whom they care.

References

1 Quilter, John: "Sanctity" and "Quality": where is the conflict?, *Bioethics Outlook*, Vol 11, No 2, June 2000

2 For a useful summary of these teachings, see *Code of Ethical Standards for Catholic Health and Aged Care Services in Australia*, Catholic Health Australia, June 2001

3 In philosophical discussions, there are four general approaches to the ethical evaluation of abortion and infanticide: (1) the approach which asserts that the ethical issues depend on the status of the embryo/foetus/unborn child, (2) the approach which asserts that the ethical issues depend on the rights of those involved, (3) the approach which asserts that the ethical issues are settled by reference to the character trait which leads the woman to have the abortion, and (4) the approach which asserts that the ethical issues depend on whether the act of abortion itself has any 'wrong-making' features. Catholic teaching about abortion has features of both the first and the fourth kinds of thinking: claiming that the embryo/foetus/unborn child is a human being, it treats abortion as a case of killing an innocent human being which (like lying, torture, breaking a promise, etc.) is a kind of act that is wrong in itself. See *Bioethics: an Anthology*, edited by Peter Singer and Helga Kuhse, Blackwells, 1999

4 Leon Kass: The wisdom of repugnance: why we should ban the cloning of humans, *The New Republic*, 2 June 1997

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