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Rethinking Peter Singer: The Absolute Uniqueness of the Human

by

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Introduction

At the crux of every bioethical discussion is the concept of *person*. Almost all agree that it is to persons that rights belong — at least the most foundational right: the right to life. Non-persons are under no obligations and do not enjoy rights, at least, not the most essential of rights: life.

The concept of person has undergone great distortion in recent years, especially due to Cartesian dualism and a post-Enlightenment emphasis on the individual, absolute autonomy and other related topics. In recent years, the position has been put forward that there are non-human beings that have the characteristics of persons, and thus should be accorded appropriate rights. It has also been argued that not all human beings are necessarily persons, and that only those who have the requisite characteristics are due any rights at all — most significantly, the right to life. Whether that human being in question is an embryo, mentally impaired, “persistently vegetative,” or brain dead, the response of those who argue in this fashion is always the same: there is no right to life for such as these. Accordingly, so the argument goes, there is nothing morally objectionable with ending their lives.

Given the significance of the concept of person, the purpose of this paper is to explore the modern conception of this word as it is understood by the controversial philosopher/ethicist Peter Singer, and how he applies this conception to bioethical discussions, especially to the status of the human embryo. This paper will begin with a brief discussion of two of Singer’s key presuppositions. I will then summarize his thought on person, specifically looking at his thought as it regards the right to life of all human beings *qua* human beings.¹ Secondly, I will examine the ramifications and

applications that these thoughts have for the human embryo, particularly regarding research on the human embryo. Thirdly, I will criticize Singer's position, especially by exposing his inadequate concept of person and the failure to make certain key distinctions in his definitions. Fourthly, I will reference the thought of Pope John Paul II and the Second Vatican Council to once again make clear the intrinsic value of human life, including the life of someone as small as a human embryo.

Peter Singer's Presuppositions

As of this writing, Peter Singer is a professor at Princeton University in New Jersey. He has attracted much attention in recent years, not only with his views regarding animal rights, but also, and more important, his view that euthanasia and infanticide should be allowed.² To Singer's credit, at least he comes right out and says what he thinks, rather than hiding behind euphemisms or politically correct slogans. He matter-of-factly says that it is time we abandon the concept that human life is sacred simply because it is human.³

In his *Rethinking Life and Death: The Collapse of Our Traditional Ethics*, he proposes five "new commandments" to replace five old ones.⁴ The last of these "new commandments" is that we should not "discriminate on the basis of species."⁵ He writes:

We cannot justifiably give more protection to the life of a human being than we give to a nonhuman animal, if the human being clearly ranks lower on any possible scale of relevant characteristics than the animal.... The right to life is not a right of members of the species *Homo sapiens*; it is... a right that properly belongs to persons. Not all members of the species *Homo sapiens* are persons, and not all persons are members of the species *Homo sapiens*.⁶

It is necessary, he maintains, to "recognize that from the point of view of the different beings themselves, each life is of equal value." While it is true, for example, that a man may be able to study philosophy, whereas a mouse cannot, this does not mean that the pleasures a mouse has are of less value to the mouse than the pleasures of the man engrossed in philosophy. The only way to determine the greatness of man over and against the mouse, he claims, would be to "find some neutral ground, some impartial standpoint from which we can make the comparison." While this may seem an insurmountable problem, Singer does not think it is. He proposes that we imagine a "peculiar property" that allows us to have the experiences, say, of a horse. Then, that same "property" enables us to have the experiences of a man. Finally, we are able to enter a third "state",

wherein we are able to recall what our experiences were like in both of the other "states." On the basis of this, he argues, "I think I can make some sense of the idea of choosing."⁷ And that choice, he will conclude, will not always come out on the side of the man.

Where do ideas like these come from? It is important to make explicit two presuppositions that are operative in his thought, and which give rise to ideas like the ones expressed above. The first key presupposition of Singer's is that there is no god.⁸ The world as we know it has not come into existence from some master plan, let alone from some loving and saving god. Instead, all is to chance, all is random.⁹ In an illuminating statement he writes

In what sense does rejection in belief in a god imply rejection of the view that life has any meaning? If this world *had been* created by some divine being with a particular goal in mind, it could be said to have meaning, at least for that divine being. If we could know what the divine being's purpose in creating us was, we could then know what the meaning of our life was for our creator. If we accepted our creator's purpose (though why we should do that would need to be explained) we could claim to know the meaning of life.¹⁰

Because there is no god, then, ultimately there is no point. "Life as a whole has no meaning."¹¹

The second presupposition, flowing logically from the first, is that human life is not unique. Since there is no god, there is no possibility of human beings created in that god's image and likeness. There is, in addition, no possibility of human beings participating in god's divine life, since there is no such life. And finally, there is no ultimate destination after this life.¹² Singer is a firm believer in Darwinism, *one* particular *theory* of evolution that claims life has evolved not simply within a particular species but trans-species.¹³ Darwin, Singer writes, should have given a "final blow" to any suggestion that human life is at the center of the universe. Darwin has "taught us that we too were animals, and had a natural origin as the other animals did...(t)he differences between us and the nonhuman animals are differences of degree and not kind."¹⁴ He continues

We like to think of ourselves as the darlings of the universe. We do not like to think of ourselves as a species of animal. *But the truth* is that there is no unbridgeable gulf between us. Instead there is an overlap...This is not my subjective value-judgment. It is a *statement of fact* that can be tested and verified over and over again.¹⁵

The theory of evolution, he says, is one that is "accepted by all serious biological scientists."¹⁶ Near the conclusion of his *Practical Ethics* he offers a summary of his thought: "Life began, as the best available theories tell us, in a chance combination of molecules; it then evolved through random mutations and natural selection. All this just happened; it did not happen for any overall purpose."¹⁷

It should not be hard to see, given all these presuppositions, why Singer thinks it is so illogical to discriminate on the basis of species. If we all came from the same primordial slime, and if it was only due to a matter of chance and happenstance that some of that slime evolved to a higher level, then there is nothing that marks us as distinct merely on the basis of our species. There must be something else, some other characteristics, whereby we can rank beings without discriminating. And these characteristics will not be unique to the species *Homo sapiens*. So, returning to our earlier example, perhaps the horse or the mouse will turn out to have greater value and worth than a particular human being, depending on crucial characteristics.

Regarding the concept of "person", the following can be offered as a summary of Singer's thought:

- 1) There are certain characteristics that are absolutely necessary to maintain that an individual (of whatever species) is a person.
- 2) An embryo does not have these necessary characteristics.
- 3) Therefore, the embryo is not a person.
- 4) Since an embryo is not a person it does not enjoy the right to life (which all persons enjoy).

Characteristics Necessary to Be a Person

Singer writes that the term "person" is one that is likely to mislead most people.¹⁸ This is so because we typically equate "person" with "human being." However, as we saw above, the two are not synonymous. There are persons who are not humans. And there are humans who are not persons.¹⁹ Who, then, is a person? What are the requirements for being one? These are crucial questions, he writes, since he acknowledges that the term "is no mere descriptive label. It carries with it a certain moral standing."²⁰

Singer offers a brief, and far from adequate, survey of the history of the term "person". He inaccurately notes that "person" has its origins "in the Latin term for a mask worn by an actor in classical drama."²¹ From this origin, he writes, the term was introduced into more common usage by the philosopher Epictetus, "who used it to mean the role one plays in life."²²

With Christianity, and the struggle to expound upon concepts like the Trinity and the Incarnation, the term grew in its meaning. From these discussions, Singer concludes, it became clear that “person” did not necessarily refer to a human, since it could also be used of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, neither of whom were human.²³ Looking to the *Oxford Dictionary*, Singer finds there a definition having “impeccable philosophical precedents”: a person is “a self-conscious or rational being.” Primarily, however, Singer sees John Locke’s definition of person as the crucial one. A person, according to Locke, is “a thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking being, in different times and places.”²⁴ Two notions come to the fore in this definition: rationality and self-consciousness. Indeed, he says, these notions are “the core of the concept.”²⁵

Starting with these thoughts, then, Singer writes that he will use the term “person” to refer to a “rational and self-conscious being”, and not necessarily a “member of the species *Homo sapiens*.” But there is more. Singer also draws heavily upon the thought of Michael Tooley.²⁶ According to Tooley, “the only beings who have a right to life are those who can conceive of themselves as distinct entities existing over time.”²⁷ This was tied, in Tooley’s original thoughts, to the possession of desires.²⁸ While he acknowledged that it is difficult to express the specific connection that exists between rights and desires, Tooley initially believed that “the possession of a right must in some way be linked to the capacity to have the relevant desires.”²⁹ Thus, “only a being who is capable of conceiving herself as a distinct entity existing over time — that is, only a person — could have this desire. Therefore only a person could have a right to life.”³⁰

However, Tooley’s initial position on this matter, as expressed in his 1972 article “Abortion and Infanticide,” changed. In a later book, with the same title, his thought was that an individual cannot at a given time — say, now — have a right to continued existence unless the individual is of a kind such that it can now be in its interests that it continue to exist.³¹ While one might be tempted to think that this will mean the fetus in the womb is thus to be considered a person under this new understanding, Tooley argues that it does not. Why? Because, as Singer explains

I am not the infant from whom I developed. The infant could not look forward to developing into the kind of being I am, or even into an intermediate being... I cannot even recall being the infant; there are no mental links between us. Continued existence cannot be in the interests of a being who never has had the concept of a continuing self.³²

To sum up, then, to be a person, and to have a right to life, "one must have, or at least at one time have had, the concept of having a continued existence." In this way, Tooley and Singer claim, the counterexample of a sleeping man is answered. This is so because the sleeping man has had the concept of having a continued existence.³³

Having started with Locke's definition, then, Singer has gone on to borrow two other characteristics (from Tooley) that must be present to consider one a person: the capacity to envisage one's future, and having desires and interests related to that future. To these he adds one other essential characteristic, that of autonomy. By "autonomy" Singer means "the capacity to choose, to make and act on one's own decisions." Relating this to the right to life, he writes, "only a being who can grasp the difference between dying and continuing to live can autonomously choose to live."³⁴

Singer also discusses the concept of consciousness, but this concept does not necessarily mean that the individual is rational or self-conscious.³⁵ Consciousness, or the condition of being sentient, means the ability to experience pleasure or pain. Such an individual is not necessarily a person. Many nonhuman animals fit this category, he says, as well as newborn and some mentally impaired humans. This ability to experience pleasure and pain, while not making the thing a person, and thus not giving it the right to life, does not mean, however, that it is never wrong to kill them.³⁶ The argumentation for his reasoning is that, quite simply, "a life without consciousness is of no worth at all." The same can be said about "a life that has no possibility of mental, social or physical interaction with other human beings."³⁷

In summary, then, looking at Singer's thought, the following can be said about the necessary characteristics of a person. A person must be rational and self-conscious. It must be able to conceive of itself as a distinct entity existing over time. It must be of a kind such that it can now be in its interests to continue to exist. It must have mental links between its experiences now and those from earlier times. It must have the ability to experience pleasure. These characteristics, it is claimed, are found in *some* — but not all — humans. Likewise, these characteristics are found in some — but not all — nonhuman animals.³⁸ If one does not have these characteristics, then one is not a person. And if one is not a person, then one does not have the right to life.

The Status of the Human Embryo in Light of These Characteristics

With the characteristics for being considered a person in place, then, I wish to address the status of the human embryo in Singer's thought. In the first edition of his *Practical Ethics*, Chapter Six dealt only with the issue of

abortion. However, with the advent of in-vitro fertilization (IVF) many things have changed and reproductive technology has opened up new vistas. Accordingly, in the second edition, Chapter Six deals with the human embryo in a larger context. He admits there is great need to address the status of the human embryo, for, in 1994, Singer estimated that there were as many as 11,000 frozen embryos in Australia alone. Given the potential for research that could be done with these human embryos, and the great benefits that could come to the human race, what are we to make of these?³⁹ Are they to be afforded special status? The key to answering that question cannot lie in the fact that they are human embryos, since, as we saw above, he rejects the claim that human life is sacred. Thus, there must be some other way of determining their worth.

Because the situation of the embryo is similar to that of the fetus, Singer first lays out the argument that is often used by “conservatives” to argue against abortion. This argument goes as follows:

- First premise: It is wrong to kill an innocent human being.
- Second premise: A human fetus is an innocent human being.
- Conclusion: Therefore it is wrong to kill a human fetus.

Usually, he writes, it is the second premise that is challenged or denied by those who are arguing for abortion rights, or for the ability to do research on an embryo.⁴⁰ In trying to determine whether there is a “morally significant dividing line” between the embryo and the child, those in favor of abortion rights often look to one of three suggestions for that “dividing line”: birth, viability, and quickening. However, in looking at each of these, Singer concludes that the “conservative” position is “on solid ground.” There is, indeed, evidence to show that “the development from the embryo to the infant is a gradual process.”⁴¹

Singer then examines common “liberal” arguments in favor of abortion (e.g., restrictive laws lead to back-alley abortions; the regulation of morality is not the law’s business; the feminist’s cry, “It’s *my* body!”).⁴² But here again, he writes (with the possible exception of Judith Jarvis Thompson’s argument, and even this he does not accept entirely⁴³) the “liberals” fail to offer a morally significant reason justifying abortion.⁴⁴

However, Singer argues, the problem lies with the fact that the second premise is not the right one to challenge. Instead, *the first one* is! Because of the sense of the sanctity of human life, this premise has not been challenged until now. But now, with the “collapse of our traditional ethic,” a new Copernican revolution is taking place.⁴⁵ “The belief that mere membership of our species, irrespective of other characteristics, makes a great difference to the wrongness of killing a being is a legacy of religious

doctrines..."⁴⁶ This religious sense, however, is now eroding and is being revealed as a bias due to "species-ism." The term "human" straddles two distinct notions: being a member of the species *Homo sapiens*, and being a person.⁴⁷ Since humans are not necessarily persons, they have no special right to life simply because they are human.

In making the distinction that not all human life is sacred simply because it is human, the second premise is also now open to challenge: the fetus is not a person (though it is a member of the human species). This is so because a fetus is not rational or self-conscious. Free from the bias of "species-ism", "we can now look at the fetus *for what it is* — the actual characteristics it possesses — and can value its life on the same scale as the lives of those beings with similar characteristics who are not members of our species."⁴⁸

Having said all this, Singer acknowledges that there is likely to be a cry that his arguments do not take into account the "potential" characteristics of the fetus, and thus is not sufficient. Indeed, "On the basis of its actual characteristics, some opponents of abortion will admit, the fetus compares unfavorably with many non-human animals; it is when we consider its potential to become a mature human being that membership of the species *Homo sapiens* becomes important, and the fetus far surpasses any chicken, pig or calf."⁴⁹

Singer agrees that the fetus is a potential human being. This does not mean, though, that the fetus "has a stronger claim to life. There is no rule that says that a potential X has the same value as an X, or has all the rights of an X." Further on he makes his thought more specific: "In the absence of any general inference from 'A is a potential X' to 'A has the rights of an X', we should not accept that a potential person should have the rights of a person, unless we can be given some specific reason why this should hold in this particular case."⁵⁰ But what could these reasons be? The characteristics that are necessary for one to be a person do not apply to a fetus, since a fetus "is not now and never... (has) been capable of seeing" itself as a distinct entity with a past and a future. Thus, Singer concludes, he has "no idea" what significance there could be in the fact that a fetus is a potential human being.⁵¹

What holds true for the status of a fetus is applicable as well to the status of a human embryo. The arguments are basically the same, though the wording is different. Singer states that those who oppose research on human embryos tend to argue in one of two ways, either 1) the embryo is entitled to special protection because it is a human being, or, 2) the embryo is entitled to special protection because it is a potential human being.⁵² However, the first argument can be attributed to species-ism, and thus discarded, and the second argument, since it did not apply when the object in question was a fetus, is even less applicable now that the object is an

embryo. "If the fetus is not a person, it is even more apparent that an embryo is not a person."⁵³

In an attempt to give further support to his argument against the special protection due a human embryo, Singer makes two additional points. The first has to do with the phenomenon of "twinning." His claim here is that a "person" is an individual, but the embryo is clearly not individual, at least not until after 14 days, at which point the possibility of "twinning" is over. Because of this factor, he claims, it is impossible for anyone to argue for a continuity of existence from conception into adulthood. The embryo is not an individual, but only "a cluster of cells."⁵⁴

The second additional argument has to do with the concept of potentiality. Whereas before IVF it was impossible to imagine an embryo existing outside a mother's womb, now it is. Is the status of an embryo in the womb and the embryo in a petri dish the same, with regards to potentiality? Singer seems to argue no. And if we are talking about potentiality, why do we limit the discussion to the embryo? Why not discuss the potentiality of the sperm or the egg alone? "If the embryo is a potential person, why are not the egg-and-sperm, considered jointly, also a potential person?"⁵⁵

Summary of Singer's Thought

At this point, before offering a critique of Peter Singer's thought, allow me to summarize what has been said. First, in Peter Singer's world, there is no god. Since there is no god, there is no plan, no purpose, no destiny, and ultimately, no point. Man, as he exists in this purposeless and pointless world, is but one species among many: he is not unique. All has come from the slime of the earth, some evolving this way, some that way. To the extent that man has certain characteristics — e.g. rationality, self-consciousness, having the concept of a continued existence with memory links — he is a person. But other species, too, can have members that meet these characteristics, and thus, there are persons who are not human. The human embryo, since it does not have any of these characteristics, is not a person, though it is a member of the human species. This membership, however, is no longer to be regarded as of great significance, since we have been freed from a religious sense that accorded special dignity to man being made in god's image and likeness. Since, then, the human embryo is not a person, it does not enjoy special protection; indeed, it does not have a right to life. In fact, there is great potential for using these embryos to further help those who *do* have the characteristics necessary to be persons. In this world of Peter Singer, then, perhaps one day we will use the stem cells or organs of a human embryo who does not fit the criteria for being a person, to help prolong the life of a pig or a chimpanzee, who does.

In critiquing the truly frightening thought of Peter Singer, I will take the following path. I will begin by looking at his definition of person, then move to a critique of his understanding of potentiality, offer a response to his views on "twinning", and finally comment on his presuppositions.

Person: Indebted to Christianity

As I mentioned above, Singer offers a truly inadequate survey of the history of the term "person." This is significant, since it will be on the basis of this term (and the essential characteristics entailed) that he will determine who has the right to life. The concept of "person" did indeed originate in antiquity, most probably with the Etruscans, where it had a religious sense. It later came to be used by the Greeks, who used it in the way that Singer mentions, and finally the Romans adopted it as a way of referring more to those with legal rights. However, it is impossible to overstate the debt that this concept owes to Christianity, and, in particular, to the thought of Christians regarding the Incarnation and the Trinity.⁵⁶ In his *Introduction to Christianity*, Joseph Ratzinger writes, "The concept and idea of 'person' dawned on the human mind in no other way than in the struggle over the Christian image of God and the interpretation of the figure of Jesus of Nazareth."⁵⁷ Singer entirely fails to pay attention to the significant contributions of Christianity to this term. Most particularly, he misses *the key contribution*: the notion that at its highest level, i.e., in God

Person is the pure relation of *being related*, nothing else. Relationship is not something extra added to the person, as it is with us; it only exists at all as relatedness... In this idea... Christian thought discovered the kernel of the concept of person which describes something other and infinitely more than the mere idea of the "individual."⁵⁸

In paying his respects to Christian thought, the only thing that seems to be significant for Singer is that Christianity concluded that "person" need not refer to a human being, since it was used to refer to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. There is no mention of the newness that the term took on, no discussion of the importance of *relatio*. In fact, there is no intellectual honesty at all regarding his discussion of the historical development of the term. In addition there is this note of inconsistency: Singer argues that the term "person" can refer to non-humans. The basis for this argument is that even Christians use the term to refer to the members of the Trinity. Singer, however, denies the existence of the Trinity, and, yet, he still uses this as his justification for saying we can use "person" to refer to non-humans.

Given his rejection of Christianity it is no surprise that Singer over-emphasizes the aspect of the individual as someone entirely distinct, almost entirely unrelated to any other. As Francis Martin ominously warns, without a conception of person that sees the importance of relation, as it does in Christian thought, "the person remains inchoate, the dignity of personhood remains insubstantial, and... the human person can find no other existential ground for the recognition of its dignity... This is the story of every totalitarian state."⁵⁹

There is more to critique in Singer's understanding of "person", however, than just his failure to recognize the debt he owes to Christian thought and its understanding of the essentialness of relation. Luke Gormally offers a helpful critique of those who commonly define person the way Singer does.

Such thinkers trade on the word "person", although they define it wrongly in terms of characteristics which may come and go and which are a matter of degree. For a person is a substantial individual being with his own identity, which he has as an individual of a particular species. In our case the species is "human being." Having named an individual human being we use the name with the same reference so long as it is the same human being we are talking about. A human being is a person because the kind to which he belongs is characterized by a rational nature... One is a person just by being of this kind, and that does indeed import a tremendous dignity.⁶⁰

This sense of the word, Gormally continues, is one that has long ago been "thrashed out", and it is not now possible to so casually define it anew. A person, he argues, is not like a piece of iron that can go through one process and become a magnet, and then go through another process and no longer be a magnet, though it is still the same piece of iron.

If indeed you explain the word "person" as meaning someone e.g. who can talk (has self-consciousness) and lead a social life (have inter-personal relations) you may say that someone can be the same human being but no longer a person. It does not come so easy to say "Since he can no longer do such-and-such, he no longer has rights, and it is in order to kill him."⁶¹

Patrick Lee, writing against the modern usage of "person", offers the following insight: "A person can be defined as an 'intelligent and free subject.' Every intelligent and free subject is an entity whom we ought to respect, and whose good or fulfillment we ought to will for his or her own sake, rather than treat as a mere means." In this definition, it is essential to understand that the words "intelligent" and "free subject" do not

necessarily mean that the entity is "actually thinking and willing", but rather "has the capacity to do so." Since human embryos have "the basic capacity" to think and will, they are persons. Certainly, it is true that it will be some time before they "exercise those capacities", but "they are actively developing themselves to the point at which they will perform such acts."⁶² On the basis of this, Lee argues that the claim of Singer and others (i.e., the claim that the fetus, or human embryo, possesses none of the necessary characteristics for being a person) "can be disputed." It is possible to argue that a human embryo has "the potentiality of exercising the functions referred to" in those characteristics.⁶³

In addition, Lee adds, "a human person is an intelligent and free, living, organic body." Against any and all claims of dualism,⁶⁴ Lee maintains that *bodiliness* is not some property that a person has; "being an organism is what a human person is." "As a consequence, the organism which a person is cannot come to be or cease to be at a different time than the time at which the person comes to be or ceases to be."⁶⁵

Perhaps most alarming about Singer's understanding of person is that his characteristics are "selective."⁶⁶ They are entirely arbitrary. Who decides which characteristics are significant? And to what degree must they be present? In such a system, ultimately, it will fall into the hands of those with the power to make such decisions. As Martin wrote above, this is the backbone of totalitarianism. Lee rightly adds that "the claim that only things which have certain traits are full-fledged members of the moral community is a substantive moral claim... (those who hold this) would have to show... why having those characteristics is a necessary condition for having basic moral rights."⁶⁷ Singer fails to do this.

Desires and Interests

We saw above that Singer draws upon the thought, even as it evolved, of Michael Tooley in expanding his definition of "person." Tooley initially emphasized the aspect of desire, specifically, in this case, the desire for the right to life. However, as Tooley saw that there were problems with this line of argument, he modified his position. His new view said that rights are based on *interests*. This does not mean, however, as we saw already, that the embryo has an interest in its life continuing. Why? Because "a thing can be in one's interests only if the possession of that thing makes possible the satisfaction of other desires existing at some time in that individual." Since, in Tooley's thought (upon which Singer relies) the human embryo and the child it becomes are not "identical subjects of experience" (since the embryo is not a subject of conscious experiences of any kind), the embryo has no right to life. There is, the argument continues, no psychological continuity between the two.⁶⁸

Lee responds to this nonsense in devastating fashion. First he attacks the way Tooley (and thus Singer) connects desires, interests and rights. Lee poses the scenario of someone who is enduring slavery. Why, he asks, "should the fact that enslavement frustrates desires for things *other* than freedom or lack of enslavement be the explanation of the essential wrong in this case? Doesn't that misplace the violation? Isn't the violation of freedom *in itself* a violation of rights, independently of whether it leads to the frustration of other desires?" Lee answers saying, "It seems more reasonable to hold that the violation of someone's rights is more closely connected with what truly *harms* the individual than with what he or she desires." The "decisive question" is whether or not an individual is harmed or deprived of something that is "truly" (i.e. independent of what I may think) a real benefit to that individual. Such real benefits include life, health, knowledge, and friendship. "One cannot, then, use the alleged connection between rights and desires... as a way of establishing the extension of rights."⁶⁹

Lee also attacks the argument that there is no psychological continuity between the embryo and the child it becomes. He does this in four steps that are directed against a dualistic view of the person and body. The first step "points out that it is the same 'I' which understands and which senses or perceives... It is the self-same agent which performs both actions."⁷⁰ The second step is to argue that perceiving is "a bodily act." By this, Lee means to say not that perceiving is done only "by 'a mere body' as opposed to a soul," but that "perception is an act performed by a physical organism by means of a bodily organ." This act of perceiving, contrary to a Cartesian understanding, is not "a purely mental act."⁷¹ The third step follows immediately from the second: if "perceiving is a bodily, organic activity, it follows that what does the sensing or perceiving is a bodily thing, that is, an organism."⁷² The last step is to say, "If that which understands and is self-conscious is identical with that which senses or perceives, and that which senses or perceives is a physical organism, it follows that that which understands and is self-conscious... is a physical organism."⁷³ As a result, the view of Tooley and Singer is mistaken, for they identify "the person as a subject of consciousness or experience, a subject that is somehow associated with the human organism but is other than it. But since the human person is essentially an organism, one cannot hold that the human organism comes to be at one time while the person comes to be at a later time."⁷⁴

Potentiality: Active and Passive

We saw above that Singer addresses, or at least claims to address, the argument that an embryo is a potential person. Tooley (Singer's influence

for this) had made the distinction between the kind of potentiality that a sleeping man has and that of a fetus (or embryo). Only that kind that a sleeping man has, he argued, has a right to life. What the sleeping man has Tooley calls "capacity", while what the fetus (embryo) has he calls "potentiality." The sleeping man has the "capacity" for being rational and self-conscious, except at the time of sleeping, when that "capacity" is "blocked."⁷⁵ "Potentiality", on the other hand, requires some sort of change to occur in the entity, which would entail more than just the removal of some "blockage."⁷⁶ So, as Lee summarizes Tooley's thought, "One must have the capacity for higher mental functions (rationality, self-consciousness) in order to have a right to life; those entities that have only the potentiality for such acts do not have a right to life."⁷⁷

However, as Lee writes, even Tooley came to see that there were strong arguments to show that his position was erroneous. For example, it would not be accurate to say that a person in an irreversible coma has had his capacity for self-consciousness blocked by some other factor. Lee points to the fact that often such persons have damage to the brain and require "self repair", and not a mere stimulus from outside. Such persons, Lee argues, "fit the definition of having a mere potentiality for mental acts rather than having a capacity for them."⁷⁸

Lee further doubts whether or not there is even any real "moral significance" in making the distinctions between these two terms.⁷⁹ Instead, what is of moral significance is the distinction between *active* and *passive* potentialities.⁸⁰ But before distinguishing between these two, it is worth asking why having the capacity, or active potentiality, for higher mental functions, like rationality and self-consciousness, is so important. It can only be, Lee says, for one of two reasons: either 1) because the capacity, or potentiality, is *in itself* intrinsically valuable, or 2) because the entity that possesses the capacity, or active potentiality, is itself an intrinsically valuable entity. If 1) is true, then that means that the organism having the capacity, or active potentiality, is something like "a vehicle", carrying the capacity. But this cannot be true, for a person cannot be a vehicle for something else of intrinsic worth. If 2) is true, then the thing "must be intrinsically valuable from the moment that it exists. Nothing can come to be at one time but become intrinsically valuable, and hence acquire rights, at another time."⁸¹

What of the pivotal distinction between *active* and *passive* potentiality? Tooley defines "active" potentiality as "a condition in which an entity has all of the positive factors necessary for an action, lacking only the appropriate circumstances for its exercise."⁸² Lee says it is more accurate to say that "active" potentiality refers to "the ability to do something", whereas "passive" potentiality refers to "the ability to undergo a certain change from another." And he continues

The potentialities specific to living things are active potentialities. They are potentialities of an organism to act not on another but on itself; in nourishment, growth, and self-motion, the object of the act, in the sense of what is developed or performed by the action, is the same as the thing that performs the action.⁸³

As specifically regards a human fetus (or embryo), it would be true to say, "There is a sense in which the fetus does *not* have an active potentiality to perform higher mental acts." To illustrate this, Lee uses the example that in the same way that a child cannot breathe until it develops lungs, so it cannot perform higher mental acts (e.g. self-consciousness) until the brain develops. This, however, is only half of the story.

But there is also a real and important sense in which the fetus *does* have the active potentiality to perform such acts. The human embryo is not in the same condition as, say, a canine embryo or fetus. The canine embryo never will perform higher mental acts, and does not have within itself the positive factor required for actively developing itself to the point where it will perform such acts, whereas the human embryo already has that positive factor within himself or herself. The living thing is dynamic, and it has within itself the source of what it will become. True, it needs food, a certain type of atmosphere, and so on. But given these materials, it actively develops itself to its mature size and structure.⁸⁴

As Lee continues, he argues that while it is true to say that in order for an embryo to be able to perform action Z, actions X and Y must take place, *but the embryo is already in the process of doing X.*

This notion of "potentiality" is a key one, since "our actions, our choices, primarily bear upon potentialities, on what can or would be."⁸⁵ Discussing the criterion for personhood, Lee writes, "(T)he goods which one must pursue and respect are fundamentally aspects of what persons *can be*; that is, they are various potentialities or possibilities to which persons are naturally oriented. Therefore, a person, a being with full moral standing, comes to be when a thing which has these potentialities comes to be."⁸⁶

So, then, both in the case of a human fetus and a human embryo, you are dealing with a person. Why? Because both are rational and free agents — not, as we saw earlier in that they are *actually* thinking and willing, but "because they are identical with the things which at a later time reason and freely choose, and they are actively developing themselves to the point where they will perform such acts."⁸⁷ Life is something that is a potentiality "for *this very being*, even though it may take this being many

years to actualize those potentialities. Indeed these beings are even now actively *developing* themselves to the point at which they will realize" this perfection.⁸⁸

This is not to say that such an individual potentiality has the necessary characteristics which would make it a person. If this were so, then this would simply mean that such a being is a potential person. But that is not the case. "Rather, being a thing which has the potentiality rationally to pursue these various goods (e.g. life, knowledge, friendship) is what confers *actual* personhood, and human embryos... have that characteristic actually, not just potentially."⁸⁹

Twinning

Singer, as we saw above, also argued that an embryo could not possibly be considered a person since a person must be an individual, and an embryo is not an individual until after 14 days. Until 14 days have lapsed, and the "primitive streak" appears, there is still the possibility of "twinning", i.e. that phenomenon whereby from one original zygote two or more human individuals could derive having the same genetic makeup. On the basis of this, Singer claimed it was absurd to argue for personhood, since you cannot argue for any continuity of existence.⁹⁰ "While this entity may be biologically and genetically human and distinct from its parents, it is not yet an ontologically distinct human individual person. Rather, it is a colony of individual cells, each capable of developing into a distinct human person."⁹¹

There are a number of responses that can be made with regards to the phenomenon of "twinning."⁹² However, for our purposes, I will rely only upon the thought of Patrick Lee as it is expressed in his *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*. There, he analyzes four different objections against the notion that the developing embryo is not a human person.⁹³ Each of these is worth reading. However, since Singer's primary objection has to do with the claim that the zygote is not an individual until the "primitive streak" appears, I will summarize only Lee's response to this issue.

Lee notes that the source of much of our confusion is that we fail to understand what exactly is being meant when we say that a person is an "individual." To say this, he writes, is not to speak physically but logically: an individual is one who is *logically* undivided.⁹⁴ The fact that the zygote can divide shows only that it is *physically* divisible; but all of us are physically divisible, at every stage of our life, and this does not call into question the fact that we are individuals.⁹⁵

From the fact that A can split into B and C, it simply does not follow, nor does the fact at all suggest, that A was not an individual before

the division. It may be that A ceases to be and B and C come to be from the constituents that once went into A (though this is not the most likely situation), or that A is identical with B or C. But the facts simply do not suggest that A did not exist or was not yet individual.⁹⁶

As William May writes, the objection of Singer, and others, is “based on appearances and alleged common sense, but it fails to prove what it claims to prove. It is far more likely... that identical twinning is a developmental accident and that the coming into being of identical twins can be explained reasonably as a mode of asexual reproduction.” Thus, while it may be true that “*some* human individuals begin to be between fertilization and implantation... *most* human individuals do come to be at fertilization/conception; it is reasonable to hold that they do and unreasonable to hold that they do not.”⁹⁷ Indeed, Lee adds, “Only at fertilization, with the fusion of sperm and ovum, is there any event which could be construed as imposing unity on what was previously manifold. In effect, the hypothesis (of Singer et al.) amounts to saying that fertilization is not completed until the primitive stage streak. But there is a wealth of evidence to go against this presupposition.”⁹⁸

Singer's Presuppositions

Peter Singer is representative of what Pope John Paul II calls “the heart of the tragedy being experienced by modern man: *the eclipse of the sense of God and man.*” Indeed, the Holy Father writes, “when the sense of God is lost, there is also a tendency to lose the sense of man, of his dignity and his life.” In such a situation

man is no longer able to see himself as “mysteriously different” from other earthly creatures; he regards himself merely as one more living being, as an organism which, at most, has reached a very high stage of perfection. Enclosed in the narrow horizon of his physical nature, he is somehow reduced to being “a thing”, and no longer grasps the “transcendent” character of his “existence as man.” He no longer considers life as a splendid gift of God, something “sacred” entrusted to his responsibility and thus also to his loving care and “veneration.” Life itself becomes a mere “thing.”⁹⁹

In looking at Singer's presuppositions, I wish to touch on three points. First, his thoughts on God, and His supposed non-existence, are not scientific ones; they are, rather, a philosophy, a worldview. In saying that he does not believe in “god,” Singer is not talking about Zeus, or Moloch, or Baal. His rejection of the existence of God is clearly directed at the God

of Judeo-Christian belief, and more specifically at the God of Jesus Christ.¹⁰⁰ But there is no basis upon which he can subject Christianity to a "repeatable experiment."¹⁰¹ The event that is the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ is unique. The point here is simply to make clear that Singer is speaking dogmatically about something that is in fact philosophical.

The second point regarding Singer's presuppositions has to do with his statements regarding man. As was noted above, Singer subscribes to Darwin's theory of evolution. This is something that he claims "all serious biologists" hold. Two things need to be made clear here. First, again Singer is speaking *dogmatically*. Darwinian evolution is not a science, it is *a theory, a worldview*, and one that is unabashedly rooted in anti-Christian thought.¹⁰² Second, it is quite simply not true that "all serious biologists" buy into Darwin's theory. In fact, the more that we come to know about genetics, the more it seems that Darwin's theories are absurd, at least so far as they involve evolution that takes place across different species.¹⁰³ Yet, Singer writes as if Darwin's theories are proven, and that if you think otherwise you are either ignorant, an imbecile, or holding on to some horrible religious superstition.

The last point, however, is perhaps the most important one to make. Singer seems to thoroughly misunderstand the nature of authority, whether that authority belongs to God (or "god" for him) or to man. "Authority", for the modern mind, has become synonymous with "domination." As such, anyone in such a position is seen as a threat to another's individualism and "freedom."¹⁰⁴ But authority (or "causality") is not equal to domination. God is the ultimate Authority; He is the First Cause. Contrary to Singer's understanding, this God always and only acts out of love and generosity.¹⁰⁵ Creation is not something that He "plays with," rather it is something that He loves, allowing it to share in His own divine life. It is indeed something that He died for.

It is similar with man's authority, which Singer is so intent on rejecting. Man has not received the right to dominate the earth, as Singer seems to think that the Biblical account of creation indicates.¹⁰⁶ Instead, man has received the *task* of stewardship. It is part of man's role on earth to be a visible representative of the One whose Image and Likeness he bears. And since that God is generous and creative and loving and compassionate, never arbitrarily making moral decisions, so too must man be. To the extent that man has failed in this task, he is guilty, and surely will be held accountable in some way (in fact we already suffer for it by the state of the earth).¹⁰⁷

In the end, the ultimate truth of man is this: he is "the only creature on earth that God has wanted for its own sake"¹⁰⁸; his dignity "rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God... as soon as he

comes into being"¹⁰⁹; his intrinsic worth is measured by the fact that he has "gained so great a Redeemer... (and that) God 'gave his only Son' in order that (he) 'should not perish but have eternal life'."¹¹⁰ When these are not recognized, or are ignored, as Peter Singer does, then there is ultimately no foundation upon which to build, no grounding of man's obligations and rights. Rather, all becomes arbitrary. And in such a world, ultimately, all becomes meaningless.

References

1. For the purposes of this paper I will focus on Singer's thoughts about *person* as they are expressed in two of his works: *Practical Ethics*, Second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and *Rethinking Life and Death: The Collapse of Our Traditional Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).
2. He suggests that it should be possible to terminate the life of a child up to the age of one month. See *Practical Ethics*, 169-174, esp. 172.
3. See *Rethinking Life and Death*, 181-183, 187-190.
4. These are not the Ten Commandments of Judeo-Christian tradition, though they do stem from them. The five "old" commandments are: Treat all human life as of equal worth; never intentionally take innocent human life; never take your own life, and always try to prevent others taking theirs; be fruitful and multiply; and treat all human life as always more precious than any nonhuman life. He suggests replacing these with five "new" ones: recognize that the worth of human life varies; take responsibility for the consequences of your decisions; respect a person's desire to live or die; bring children into the world only if they are wanted; and do not discriminate on the basis of species (189-206).
5. See 202-206.
6. *Rethinking Life and Death*, 205-206.
7. See *Practical Ethics*, 105-107. A little later, regarding the matter of exchanging our life as a human for the life of an animal, Singer writes that such a life is one "with which most modern readers would be quite comfortable"! See 108.
8. With all due respect to the Almighty, I spell this word with a lower case "g" because that is how Singer spells it. See *Practical Ethics*, 331.

9. See *Practical Ethics*, 331.
10. *Practical Ethics*, 331, italics mine.
11. *Practical Ethics*, 331.
12. See *Practical Ethics*, 88-89. See, also 102, where he writes that when we die "we cease to exist."
13. See *Practical Ethics*, 72 and *Rethinking Life and Death: The Collapse of our Traditional Ethics*, 169-172, 202. I wish merely to note that evolution, as Darwinism proposes it, is a theory. I will discuss this further in my critique of Singer.
14. *Rethinking Life and Death*, 171. As a response to this, see Mortimer J. Adler's *The Difference of Man, The Difference it Makes* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston: 1967), esp. 19-35.
15. *Rethinking Life and Death*, 202, italics mine.
16. *Rethinking Life and Death*, 172.
17. 331.
18. I wonder if only human persons are likely to be misled, or whether apes, whales and pigs would also be misled.
19. See *Practical Ethics Rethinking Life and Death*, 180-183.
20. See *Rethinking Life and Death*, 182
21. Accurate in that our word "person" most resembles the Latin *persona*, but inaccurate in that the term traces its origins back to the Etruscan period and the word *phersu*. See Kenneth Schmitz's "Geography of the Human Person," *Communio* 13 (1986): 27-48.
22. *Rethinking Life and Death*, 180.
23. *Rethinking Life and Death*, 180-181.
24. *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, bk I, chap. 9, par. 29, as quoted in *Practical Ethics*, 87.
25. See *Practical Ethics*, 87, and *Rethinking Life and Death*, 180.

26. See Tooley's *Abortion and Infanticide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) and "Abortion and Infanticide," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 2 (1972): 37-65.

27. *Practical Ethics*, 96.

28. Tooley's thoughts underwent a series of changes on this. For a great evaluation of this, and of the corners Tooley kept finding himself backed into, see Patrick Lee's *Abortion and Unborn Human Life* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), esp. 11-45.

29. *Practical Ethics*, 96.

30. *Practical Ethics*, 97.

31. See *Practical Ethics*, 97, where Singer discusses Tooley's thought on this.

32. See *Practical Ethics*, 97. In a statement revealing his dualism, Singer shows that he is in accord with this line of reasoning (or lack thereof!) when he says that it is true that he can say it is *now* in his own interests that his parents met, "because if they had never met, they could not have created the embryo *from which I developed*" (italics mine). But this is not the same as saying it was in his interests *then*. See 98.

33. *Practical Ethics*, 98-99.

34. See *Practical Ethics*, 99. He goes on to add, however, that not all ethicists respect the characteristic of autonomy, since some may consider that the desire of one to continue living may either be outweighed by other more important desires, or the one with the desire to go on living may be mistaken in his expectation of a happy life.

35. See *Practical Ethics*, 101-105, and *Rethinking Life and Death*, 190-192.

36. See *Practical Ethics*, 101-102. With great compassion (!), Singer writes that it seems terribly unfair, especially given how we humanely seek to kill animals when necessary, that we do not also seek to reduce the pain of the fetus in the womb in abortion, especially in the later months when the ability to experience pain is clearly present. See *Practical Ethics*, 164.

37. *Rethinking Life and Death*, 190-191.

38. *Rethinking Life and Death*, esp. 181-182.

39. *Practical Ethics*, 136-137.

40. *Practical Ethics*, 138.
41. *Practical Ethics*, 138-143.
42. *Practical Ethics*, 143-149.
43. See Judith Jarvis Thompson, "In Defense of Abortion," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (1970).
44. *Practical Ethics*, 149.
45. See *Rethinking Life and Death*, 187-189.
46. *Practical Ethics*, 150.
47. *Practical Ethics*, 150.
48. *Practical Ethics*, 150, italics mine.
49. *Practical Ethics*, 150.
50. *Practical Ethics*, 153.
51. *Practical Ethics*, 153-155.
52. *Practical Ethics*, 156.
53. *Practical Ethics*, 156.
54. *Practical Ethics*, 157.
55. *Practical Ethics*, 158-159.
56. For more on this, see Hans Urs von Balthasar, "On the Concept of Person," *Communio* 13 (1986): 18-26; W. Norris Clarke, "Person, Being, and St. Thomas," 19 (1992): 601-618; *ibid.*, "Response to David Schindler's Comments," *Communio* 20 (1993): 593-598; Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger's "Retrieving the Tradition: Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology," *Communio* 17 (1990): 439-454; David Schindler, "Norris Clarke on Person, Being, and St. Thomas," *Communio* 20 (1993): 580-592; Kenneth Schmitz, "The Geography of the Human Person," J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993).
57. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J.R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 130.

58. *Introduction to Christianity*, 131-132, italics mine.
59. Francis Martin, *The Feminist Question. Feminist Theology in the Light of Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 324-325.
60. *Euthanasia, Clinical Practice and the Law*, ed. Luke Gormally (London: The Linacre Center, 1994), 41.
61. *Euthanasia, Clinical Practice and the Law*, 41
62. Unless, of course, something happens that prevents or impairs that development. Nonetheless, the point remains.
63. Patrick Lee, *Abortion and Unborn Human Life* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 10-11.
64. And Singer clearly ascribes to dualism. See again the comment about his indebtedness to his parents having met and created the embryo *from which he developed*.
65. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 5-6, 58-62.
66. See *Euthanasia, Clinical Practice and the Law*, 29.
67. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 10-11.
68. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 16-18, 29.
69. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 30-31.
70. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 34.
71. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 34-6.
72. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 37.
73. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 37.
74. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 37.
75. See Michael Tooley, *Abortion and Infanticide*, 150.
76. See *Abortion and Infanticide*, 150
77. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 23.
78. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 23.

79. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 26.

80. This is so because “an active potentiality indicates that the entity which possesses it is the same entity that will later exercise that active potentiality. With a passive potentiality that is not so; that is, the actualization of a passive potentiality often produces a completely different thing or substance”(27).

81. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 27.

82. As quoted in *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 24.

83. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 24.

84. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 25.

85. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 61.

86. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 60.

87. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 61. Again recall that Singer had written if his parents had never met “they could not have created the embryo *from which I developed*” (italics mine).

88. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 61.

89. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 61.

90. *Practical Ethics*, 156-158.

91. This is how William May summarizes those who hold this view. He then goes on to critique the view, drawing heavily upon Lee’s analysis. See *Catholic Bioethics and the Gift of Human Life* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 2000), 169.

92. See, for example, Benedict Ashley and Albert Moraczewski, “Is the Biological Subject of Human Rights Present from Conception?” in *The Fetal Tissue Issue: Medical and Ethical Aspects*, ed. Peter Cataldo and Albert Moraczewski (Braintree: Pope John Center, 1994); Germain Grisez, “When Do People Begin?” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 63 (1990): 27-47; William E. May, 167-170; Antoine Suarez, “Hydatidiform Moles and Teratomas Confirm the Human Identity of the Preimplantation Embryo,” *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 15 (1990): 627-35.

93. See 90-102.

94. Lee refers to Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part 1, question 27, article 1.

95. See *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 91.

96. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 91. In answering the second objection, Lee notes that just as a flatworm, if cut in the right place, will not die but become two flatworms (not at all proving in the process that prior to the cutting the flatworm was a mere "aggregate of cells"), so the division at the early stages of the human embryo in no way indicates that "prior to such an extrinsic division the embryo is an aggregate rather than a single, multicellular organism" (93).

97. See *Catholic Bioethics and the Gift of Human Life*, 169-170.

98. *Abortion and Unborn Human Life*, 102.

99. See John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, (The Gospel of Life) (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), 21-22.

100. See, for example, the reference to Jesus in *Rethinking Life and Death*, 166.

101. Except for the tangible witness of millions of men's and women's lives through the centuries who have given evidence of the reality of God and His saving action in their lives.

102. See Charles Colson's *How Now Shall We Live?* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1999), esp. Chapter 9, "Darwin in the Dock", 81-90, and Chapter 10, "Darwin's Dangerous Idea", 91-100. It is essential to distinguish between evolution, which can certainly be maintained by a Catholic, and Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection, which cannot. This is because the latter is riddled with a materialistic conception of reality. See Pope John Paul II's Address to the Pontifical Academy of Science, October 23, 1996.

103. See, for example, Michael J. Behe's *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), Phillip E. Johnson's *Darwin on Trial* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993) and *Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997)

104. For more on this see Francis Martin's *The Feminist Question*, 196-197.

105. See Kenneth Schmitz, "Created Receptivity and the Philosophy of the Concrete," *The Thomist* 61, no. 3 (1997): 339-371.

106. *Practical Ethics*, 265-268, and *Rethinking Life and Death*, 165-166.

107. For three interesting essays on the task of man's stewardship, as well as a biblical explanation of the command to sacrifice and eat animals as a way of reminding man of his uniqueness, see *Environmental Stewardship in the Judeo-*

Christian Tradition: Jewish, Catholic and Protestant Wisdom on the Environment (Grand Rapids: Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, 2000).

108. The Pastoral Constitution on the Relationship Between the Church and the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, 24, in *Vatican II, The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, O.P. (Northport: Costello Publishing CO., 1974).

109. *Gaudium et Spes*, 19.

110. John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis* (The Redeemer of Man) (Milano: Scuole Grafiche Pavoniane, 1979), 10.