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Created in the Image of God: Man and Abortion

Robert Slesinski

In the Book of Genesis, we read that God created man in His own image and likeness (Gn 1:26f; 5:1; 9:6).¹ The inspired author of this book uses the expression, "image and likeness of God"² with a specific didactic aim in mind. His intent is to affirm that man is the apex of God's earthly creation, and has been granted a special place in the order of earthly creation; first, in relation to other creatures and creations, and secondly, in relation to God Himself.³

This vision of man is not unique to Genesis, but rather recurs in other books of the Old Testament as well. For example, the psalmist admirably expresses the relation of man to the world:

Yet you [Yahweh] have made him
[man] little less than a god,
you have crowned him with glory
and splendor,
made him lord over the work of
your hands,
set all things under his feet,

sheep and oxen, all these,
yes, wild animals too,
birds in the air, fish in the sea
travelling the paths of the ocean.

(Ps 8:5-8)

The psalmist, likewise, throughout his entire corpus, eloquently expounds man's manifold relationship with God. Reading and meditating on the psalms, we witness that a real, dialogical relationship obtains between man and God in prayer. In his prayers of adoration, petition, thanksgiving,

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and praise, man does not merely express a formal belief in the existence of God, but above all actualizes his faith by turning to God as existing for him.⁴ Man in prayer, as it were, reveals his person, confides his secrets, and entrusts his being to God.⁵

Elsewhere in the Old Testament, we are told in what the divine image consists. God has endowed man with an immortal soul (cf. Ws 2:23) and with an intellect and free will reflecting His own perfections of understanding and willing (cf. Si 17:7). Thus, on account of this divine image within himself, man enjoys stewardship over all other creatures and creations of the world (Gn 1:26-30; Ws 9:2f; Si 17:2ff). In addition, and above all, the fact that man is created in the image of God is the basis for the deduction that homicide is immoral:

He who sheds man's blood,
shall have his blood shed by man,
for in the image of God
man was made. (Gn 9:6)

The lofty, Biblical vision of man as created in the image and likeness of God has been the fertile ground and recurrent theme of Christian reflection from the patristic era to our own times. Accordingly, Christian thinkers have carefully distinguished and analyzed the two notions, image of God (*imago Dei*) and likeness of God (*similitudo Dei*), which constitute the essence of the Biblical doctrine. As these two elements are the integral features of

this doctrine, no comprehensive and just assessment of it is possible without a prior appreciation and true understanding of each component part.

The *imago Dei* refers to man's basic value as a *person*. It is a value realized by a human being's mere existence. In other words, we may say that the *imago Dei* constitutes, as it were, the divinely-willed "givenness" of human nature. This "givenness" essentially embraces man's endowment with an immortal soul and an intellect, reason, and free will, which found the dignity of the human person. These latter mental faculties are the cornerstone of man's spirituality, and give man a certain nobility that distinguishes him from all other creatures. He, unlike other creatures, is capable of becoming conscious of his own existence and discovering his unique existential state. Moreover, these gifts empower man to develop and fashion his environment—indeed, to "create" his own world. Thus, man truly reflects God and His perfections. Of course, it would be a gross exaggeration to state that man is, in a strict sense, the image of God. This overstates man's true importance, and obscures the central truth of man's creaturehood. Only Christ is the perfect image of God. Only in Him are all the divine perfections verified. Man is no more than a pale, analogous reflection of the divine image. Thus, Sacred Scripture merely states that man is created in the image of God.⁶

If the *imago Dei* constitutes the foundation of man's value as a person, the *similitudo Dei*, on the other hand, is the *raison d'être* or very goal of human existence.⁷ The *similitudo Dei* is man's free realization and actualization of his *imago Dei*. Man's reason and free will allow him to concert with moral values and to take an active role in the moral drama of daily life. On this level man actualizes his freedom in an incomparable way. He attains moral perfection through the realization of his potentialities, and achieves the most complete development of his personality. From Christian Revelation we learn, however, that man's *imago Dei* has been blemished by sin, and that a full realization of self depends on man's free cooperation with God's gratuitous grace. Man can participate in God's goodness, and have his nature transformed only if he is receptive to the curative and elevating activity of grace.

The Biblical doctrine of man as created in the image and likeness of God, a perennial object of Christian speculation, is, likewise, an optimum point of departure for synthesizing and evaluating many contemporary positions regarding the nature and moral significance of abortion. Our aim is no more than to demonstrate that a clear consonance exists between this doctrine of man and our reflections on abortion.⁸ The timeless value of the Bible's teaching and its total relevance and full applicability to today's world and its

problems come poignantly to the fore in the abortion controversy.

Erroneous understandings of the nature of man and abortion appear to fall into two categories. First, there are the errors which tend to overemphasize the *similitudo Dei* at the price of a total or partial neglect of the *imago Dei*; and, secondly, there are those which seem to misinterpret the nature of the *imago Dei*. These two categories of errors often are interwoven in contemporary speculations on abortion. Furthermore, both classes of errors are by and large the bitter outcome of the antimetaphysical thinking of the modern age.

The former type of error is typified by Daniel Callahan in his book, *Abortion: Law, Choice & Morality*.⁹ Dr. Callahan writes:

Abortion is an act of killing, the violent, direct destruction of potential human life, already in the process of development. That fact should not be disguised, or glossed over by euphemism and circumlocution. It is not the destruction of a human person—for at no stage of its development does the conceptus fulfill the definition of a person, which implies a developed capacity for reasoning, willing, desiring and relating to others—but it is the destruction of an important and valuable form of human life.¹⁰

The definition of the human person contained in this passage is of immediate interest and crucial import. It is a typically psychological definition of the human person, since it restricts its attention solely to those as-

pects of personal activity, which are the clear manifestations of a conscious human person. Dr. Callahan's definition, as can readily be seen, implies that a gradation exists among persons *qua* persons according to their "developed capacities" for distinctly personal activities. That is, it would seem that a person endowed with fewer intellectual gifts and less capable of social intercourse is, on this score alone, less a person. To continue in this line of reasoning, moreover, it would appear that if a particular human individual were to lack these capacities (e.g., a fetus, a severely mentally handicapped person, an aged senile person, etc.), "it" could not be considered a personal being. Therefore, its killing could not be properly considered a homicide.

This psychologistic conception of the nature of the human person, accordingly, necessitates a real dualism—as this passage from Dr. Callahan's book clearly demonstrates—between potential human life and fully human life or, to employ other terminology, between merely human life and truly personal life. Here, it is not a question of a simple distinction of different aspects contained *within* the human person himself, i.e., of those aspects of the human person more evidently personal (reason, free will, capacity for interpersonal relationships, etc.) from those more strictly animal¹¹ held in common with other animals (digestive and circulatory systems, for example). Rather,

we are presented with a manifest bifurcation between personal and non-personal life.

The psychologistic conception of the nature of the human person, however, is based on a fundamental misunderstanding. As Dietrich von Hildebrand in his *Ethics*¹² skillfully shows, it confuses and identifies the concept of the "person" with that of "personality." A personality is someone who more fully embodies the *idea* of man. Personality is a qualitative notion referring directly to those intellectual, moral, and social qualities and traits we like to see a man possess. But there is never a personality apart from an already existing personal subject, which is the essential precondition for the development of a personality. The range of possible development among personalities is considerable, and to classify all the diverse types of personalities is a formidable undertaking. At any rate, a personality, *par excellence*, is necessarily a saint, a person, who has fully cooperated with God's grace in realizing his *similitudo Dei*.

Notwithstanding the true importance and ultimate interest in saintly personalities, personhood is, nevertheless, the more foundational and basic reality as it is the ontological notion referring to the being all men share. In other words, the notion, "person" refers to man's *imago Dei*, while the notion, "personality" ultimately indicates the *similitudo Dei*. Accordingly, although a noteworthy gradation obtains among human

personalities—from the awe-inspiring, yet humble personalities of saints to the more superficial and bourgeois ones encountered in daily life — no gradation exists among human persons. All human persons, in that they are persons, are equal in the eyes of God.

The apparent, non-metaphysical approach underlying the psychologistic conception of the nature of man merits attention. This stance unilaterally emphasizes man's unique processes and activities, and neglects his more fundamental being. Consequently, its understanding and appraisal of the nature of man tends to remain on a purely functional level. This fact plus the concomitant failure to marvel at and appreciate the primordial aspects of the simple *being* of man not infrequently favor the drawing of an unwarranted conclusion: namely, only those human individuals actually engaging in these distinctly personal activities and functions or with the immediate capacity to do so are truly men or really human persons. If a greater attentiveness to man's being were present, on the other hand, one would be more reluctant to deprive a particular human being (e.g., a fetus or a senile man) of personhood merely owing to the lack of certain processes indicative of "functioning" human persons.

This same weakness also plagues the various sociologistic approaches to the nature of man. Ashley Montagu¹³ typifies this

school of thought when he writes:

... the embryo, fetus and newborn of the human species, in point of fact, do not really become functionally human until humanized in the human socialization process. Humanity is an achievement, not an endowment.

In a word, a person is no more than a function of society. Humanity is not an intrinsic dignity, but merely a dignity (like a trophy, perhaps) conferred by society to a possible human subject granted its sufficient social development. Before the conferment of humanity by society, presumably, the killing of this subject would not be a homicide.

Clearly, the same confusion symptomatic of the psychologistic conception is at work here. Personality once again is mistaken for the person. Once more, certain aspects of man, like his essentially social nature and his capacity to engage in interpersonal relationships, receive exclusive attention. However, these aspects, though undeniably true marks of the nature of man, nonetheless denote a more fully developed man alone. It is, therefore, invalid to give them the sole consideration and attribute an absolute value to them. Otherwise, a dualism analogous to the one implied by the psychologistic understanding of the nature of man obtains. Human individuals subsequently fall into two categories: those in a pre-social, and therefore pre-human or pre-personal state and those socialized, i.e., the "true

men" or "real persons."

The critique of the psychological and sociological conceptions of the nature of man is both simple and the same. Their dualistic separation¹⁴ of human individuals into pre-social, potential human persons, on the one hand, and fully humanized or true human persons,¹⁵ on the other, presents an inescapable and unsolvable dilemma. How does one know in a non-peremptory manner when the difference becomes manifest? That is, how does one fix the point between the two stages without arbitrariness? In short, is it not impossible to find a criterion to determine what is "authentically" human and "truly" personal which does not completely beg the question in the first place?

Finally, there are those erroneous views concerning the nature of man, which appear to refer more directly to the *imago Dei* in that they do not mistake "personality" for "person" in their treatment of this question. For syncretical purposes, we may designate these views the overly biologistic or mechanical conceptions of the nature of man. The center of the debate gravitates around one's particular interpretation of the phenomenon, life itself. To express this issue more immediately in terms of the abortion controversy, the chief question is whether the life present in the embryo and the fetus (at least in its initial stages) can be justly considered *human life*.

The following objection is fre-

quently raised: human life can not possibly be present in the zygote, the embryo, and the fetus (again, at least in its initial stages), since no brain is yet present.¹⁶ As this physical organ is the necessary condition for man's rational activity by which he is distinguished from mere animals, no human life obtains until the existence of a brain is verified in the fetus. This objection, however, is based on a faulty understanding of the process of growth witnessed in living phenomena as it presupposes a mechanical understanding of organic growth.

In this line, the noted abortion advocate, Dr. Paul Ehrlich states that a "fetus isn't a human being; it's a *potential* human being. Religious objectors [to abortion] are confusing the blueprints for a building with the building itself."¹⁷ This analogy, however, is fallacious. Insofar as a process of growth is described, no significant correspondence whatever is to be found between a blueprint and a fetus.¹⁸ A blueprint never transforms itself into a building; it never becomes an integral part of the building it represents. True, contractors do enlist blueprints as aids, but they construct buildings with timber, stone, mortar, etc. The zygote, on the other hand, does in fact organize, develop, and transform itself into an embryo. A comparable process of internal growth occurs in the embryo, the fetus, and the child until the adult individual results. Obviously, when we employ the terms, zygote, embryo, fetus, and

child in describing a process of growth, we are not referring to different individuals as such, but rather to different stages of growth witnessed in any one individual organism. All the material supplies used in constructing buildings, on the other hand, do enjoy separate existences before the construction of the completed building.

In sum, if a fetus is considered human in a later stage of growth, it is difficult to understand why it could be less human or not human at all in an earlier period of its existence. Considering humanity in an organic perspective, therefore, it is not evident why a special significance should be attributed to the appearance of the brain. Human individuals, after all, do not roll off a production line upon the assemblage of a brain.

Some authors¹⁰ sharing this interpretation and critique of the mechanical understanding of human life would use it to support the theory of the immediate animation of the human soul in the zygote, i.e., that there is truly human life in the zygote from the moment of conception. Others, notably Joseph Donceel, S.J.,²⁰ in an interesting twist of thought, see in this critique of the mechanical conception of human life a confirmation of its contrary, the theory of the mediate animation of the human soul. In other words, these latter support the position that the humanity of the conceptus comes at some later date.

Fr. Donceel favors a change in terminology, however. He prefers instead to speak of "immediate animation" and "delayed hominization."²¹ According to his usage of these terms, no one places in doubt the fact of the immediate animation of the zygote with life. The point in great dispute, on the other hand, is whether this living cell is immediately human. Fr. Donceel supports the view that the hominization of the conceptus occurs at a later date, i.e., is delayed.

In the various critical expositions of the mechanical conception of human life—be they those supporting immediate hominization or be they those upholding delayed hominization—however, there seems to be more or less universal agreement on one point, namely, that a Cartesian-dualist metaphysics implicitly underlies this view. This dualism holds that man is composed of two separate substances, the soul (the thinking substance of the mind) and the body (an extended substance). The interpretations of this dualism vary, however. On the one hand, employing the dualist schema of man as a mind in a machine, one could argue that such a dualist vision tends more to favor delayed hominization since the infusion of the human soul into a more completely organized body would be analogous to pouring gasoline into a completed motor, not yet in operation. Accordingly, the humanity or the "functioning humanly" of an individual can come about only once the

body is sufficiently organized physically and thereby capable of receiving the "fuel" of the human soul.

But, to go in the opposite direction, one could legitimately challenge the validity of this dualist argument, and, thus, deny the truth of its conclusion, delayed hominization by attacking and rejecting the soundness of the analogy employed to sustain it. One could object, as I do, that no analogy from mechanics can do complete justice to the phenomenon of human life or mere life (i.e., not qualified as human) for that matter, since it cannot sufficiently take into account the specific note of all living phenomena, their organicity. In this line, one could reasonably argue for immediate hominization by noting that a living human individual, on account of his organicity, is a continuum, i.e., a continuous whole whose stages cannot be radically separated and juxtaposed. Thus, an embryo is not merely an embryo, or a fetus nothing more than a fetus. In reality, an embryo or a fetus *is* what he is to persist to be and become.

On the other hand, one could argue, as in fact Fr. Donceel does, that the Cartesian view, on the contrary, more readily corroborates the theory of immediate hominization and not delayed hominization. The case for this position is as follows: in Cartesian dualism, the human soul may be considered the efficient cause of the human body. Accordingly, the

human soul as a separate, spiritual thinking substance is capable of inhabiting, as it were, an unorganized body (the extended substance of the zygote), and, then, proceed to develop this potential human body into an actual human body in much the same way as a sculptor molds clay into a statue. Clearly, the immediate hominization of the zygote is entirely plausible in this understanding of the relation of the human soul to the human body.

But, Fr. Donceel rightly counters this position by disclaiming the validity of the analogy that the soul is the "sculptor" of the body. In effect, it equates human beings with mere artifacts. Fr. Donceel instead upholds Thomistic hylomorphism and its teaching that the human soul is the formal cause or substantial form of the human body. In this system of thought, form (a structure or intelligible unity having no power as such) and matter are essentially correlative notions. The form, consequently, can emerge and exist only in matter sufficiently developed and disposed for it.²² In other words, the soul as a formal cause does not form or produce the body, but rather is the first act of this organized body. Applied to man, this means that the human soul can exist only in a highly developed body (i.e., one with a brain). The zygote and the embryo, therefore, cannot be animated by a human soul as their substantial form, since no highly organized body is yet present. At most, they

are animated by plant and sensitive souls later transformed into a human soul.

To clarify this complex, metaphysical thought, Fr. Donceel makes use of several analogies.²³ In Cartesianism, the soul as efficient cause is related to a body much like the sculptor is to a statue or an architect or a blueprint is to a finished building. Hylomorphism, however, in its conception of the soul as a formal cause, relates the human soul (whence humanity) to the body in the same fashion as the shape of a statue is related to the statue itself or the shape of a building (its "building-ness") to a completed building. In other words, just as the essences, "statue-ness" and "building-ness" are not realities apart from existing statues and buildings, so also "human-ness" or humanity is present only in sufficiently organized human bodies.

Thus, the zygote or the embryo with its virtual or potential human body possesses humanity only potentially. It achieves true humanity only after the development of an actual human body. To elucidate this point, a deflated ball analogy is developed by Fr. Donceel. His argument may be paraphrased as follows: just as a deflated ball contains merely a virtual sphericity, and acquires actual sphericity only after having been inflated, in a like fashion, the zygote and the embryo possess a virtual or potential humanity alone, and receive the sub-

stantial form of man (i.e., actual humanity) only upon the development of a highly organized body.

An objection to Fr. Donceel's thesis, however, must be raised at this point. Does Fr. Donceel, in fact, overcome the chief deficiency of the Cartesian-dualist view, namely, that it overlooks the organicity of man and mistakes him for a mere artifact? Has he actually presented an adequate account of the nature of man and the phenomenon of human life? I think not. The analogy of the statue, building, and ball are all borrowed from the inanimate world. Whatever may be the correct metaphysical interpretation of their reality,²⁴ it is an error to think an interpretation which suffices to describe inanimate phenomena is, likewise, adequate for explaining the nature of living phenomena. Life is a unique, irreducible phenomenon, and organicity is an univocal notion. No analogy to objects or realities in the realm of the non-living, therefore, can place the reality of an organism into proper relief. After all, the process of "growth," which occurs when air is pumped into a deflated ball to make it an inflated one hardly parallels the growth of a living human organism from an embryo into a fetus and a fetus into a child. The former process is no more than a mechanical procedure of an individual inflating a ball with a pump! But the latter, however, is an entirely immanent

process of growth of an actual human organism developing all its potentialities.

In the end, this approach for upholding the delayed hominization of the conceptus seems to hinge upon "appearances:" if the fetus looks human, it is human: otherwise, no. Moreover, how can it resolve the differences of opinion concerning the biologically edifying point marking the boundary between a potential and an actual human being? Some may say the traces of a rudimentary brain suffice for humanity. Others may argue for the presence of a structurally complete brain. Still others may prefer that the spinal cord also be present along with a complete brain. But then, are we not in the same dilemma that ineluctably confronted the psychologistic and sociologistic approaches? Does not any attempted solution necessarily entail begging the question?

No, the biologicistic, psychologistic, and sociologistic conceptions of the nature of man are artificial frameworks creating many, insolvable pseudo-problems regarding the line of demarcation between actual and potential persons or between merely human life and authentically personal life. In reality, no such line exists.

To conclude briefly, it appears necessary to reject the solutions offered by the biologicistic, psychologistic, and sociologistic attempts to explain the problematical nature of man, the person, and human life along with the theory of delayed hominization. In their

stead, I suggest that there is a strong need for the development of a personalist metaphysics,²⁵ which would be more consonant and faithful to the sublime, Biblical vision of man as created in the image and likeness of God. Two points²⁶ call for special development, first, the Marcellian notions of being and having, and secondly, the relation of potentiality to actuality. In a personalist perspective, certain pivotal insights are more readily grasped and capable of being deepened, as for example, the primacy of being over having, the fact that a person may or may not have a personality, the truth that potentiality is a kind of actuality, the fact that the zygote has the being of the brain which the fetus subsequently has, etc.

Simultaneously, one particular moral attitude must become more widespread and developed, namely, reverence.²⁷ Reverence is the response to the call of being itself, and only in a reverent attitude can one attain a true knowledge of being and grasp and appraise the values grounded in being. Reverence, moreover, is the most effective antidote to utilitarianism, since only in a reverent attitude does one realize that the value of being comes from God and is subtracted from the arbitrary, egoistic desires and utilitarian motivation of man.

In the abortion controversy, reverence to life acquires special import. No adequate assessment of the value of each individual human being is possible without

reverence. When confronted with the biologicistic, psychologistic, and sociologicistic conceptions of man with their dualistic separation of human individuals into potential and actual persons, one can not help but suspect that, in the final analysis, the really determining factors for deciding whether a particular individual merits humanity are more often than not utilitarian considerations alone. The only sure remedy to the abortion crisis is reverence.

REFERENCES

1. The exact meaning of the terms "image" and "likeness" has been the object of considerable exegetical research. Here, we shall limit ourselves to one observation. The Hebrew word for image, *selem* provokes the image of a "statue." In the ancient Middle East, a statue of a king could serve as a representative of the king in those regions of his empire where he could not be present personally. Accordingly, man, as God's image, is His representative on earth, and hence has the right to rule over creation. Cf., Eugene H. Maly, "Genesis," in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, edited by R. S. Brown, S.S., A. Fitzmeyer, S.J., R. E. Murphy, O.Carm. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1970), p. 11.

2. It is important to note that, properly speaking, only Christ is the image and likeness of God. All other creatures are created in and through Christ. This is a theme especially developed by St. Paul in his letters (Col 1:15; cf. 2 Co 4:4). Man has only been "created in the image and likeness of God;" he is not the image and likeness of God as such. Cf. John L. McKenzie, S.J., *Dictionary of the Bible* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1965), p. 385.

3. Flick, M., S.J. and Z. Alszeghy, S.J., *Fondamenti di una antropologia teologica* (Firenze: Libreria Editrice

Fiorentina, 1973), pp. 62ff.

4. von Hildebrand, Alice, *Introduction to a Philosophy of Religion* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971), p. 96.

5. The psalmist exclaims: "From the depths I call to you, Yahweh." (Ps 130:1).

6. The analogous character of man's image becomes evident when we compare divine creation with human creative activity. While God creates matter from nothing, man must use the elements of the material world before him when engaging in his creative activity.

7. von Hildebrand, Dietrich, *Ethics* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1972), pp. 129-39. The first edition of this book published in 1953 by the David McKay Co. bears the title, *Christian Ethics*. This latter title is more felicitous in my opinion considering the overall contents and intent of the book. *Idem*, "The Modes of Participation in Value," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 59. Sergius Bulgakov, *Agnetz Bozhij* (The Divine Lamb) (Paris: YMCA Press, 1933), pp. 169f.

8. It goes without saying, of course, that all anachronistic interpretations must be avoided. We cannot expect to find scriptural passages readily corroborating developed philosophical syntheses and mature Christian reflections of later epochs or biological discoveries made centuries later. Nor should we, on the other hand, be surprised that the Bible is not free of difficulties and does contain some at least apparent contradictions to more developed and mature Christian thought and scientific advances.

In this line, we may respond, for example, to the objection that Genesis 9:6 does not apply to the fetus in light of other scriptural texts like Exodus 21:22 where the penalty for abortion is a fine rather than the shedding of blood, which is imposed only if the mother dies. Thus, the question arises whether the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" (which is based on the

fact of man's value as created in the image of God) directly refers to abortion.

It is true that in a verse like Exodus 21:22 the underlying view seems to be that the fetus is not equal in dignity to a man, and, therefore, that an abortion should not exact the same penalty as a homicide. But, there are other scriptural texts in which a contrary current is present. If one appeals to texts like Psalm 139:13-15 or 2 Maccabees 7:20-29, for example, one could definitely sustain that a fetus, at least implicitly, is understood to be fully human and an image of God. In this line, the commandment against murder is directly relevant.

No explicit teaching on abortion and condemnation of it is found in either the Old or New Testaments. However, one can find the necessary foundations sustaining the later Christian condemnation of abortion in Sacred Scripture. Analogously, though there are many passages throughout the Bible either directly or indirectly referring to slavery, nowhere is slavery explicitly condemned. Nonetheless, all the essential underpinnings (e.g., all men as being created in the image of God, all men as children of the same Father, no essential difference between slaves and free men, etc.) of the later denunciation of slavery by the Church are present in the Bible.

9. Callahan, Daniel, *Abortion: Law, Choice & Morality* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1970).

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 497f.

11. We can only say that there are "more strictly" animal aspects of the human person, because all aspects of the human person are fully *person-al* owing to the essential unity of the human person. Nothing in the bodily dimension of the human person is merely animal. This fact is the very reason for the existence of the separate discipline, medical ethics.

12. von Hildebrand, D., *Ethics*, pp. 136f.

13. Ashley Montagu's position has been criticized by several authors. Cf.,

for example, Germain G. Grisez, *Abortion: The Myths, the Realities, and the Arguments* (New York: Corpus Books, 1970), pp. 277ff; Donald DeMarco, "The Philosophical Roots in Western Culture for the Pro-Abortion Stand," *Linacre Quarterly*, vol. 41, no. 2, p. 92; K. D. Whitehead, *Respectable Killing: The New Abortion Imperative* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Catholics United for the Faith, Inc., 1973), p. 54. The subsequent quotation can be found in Montagu's letter to the *New York Times*, March 3, 1967. It is quoted in its entirety by Grisez and in part by DeMarco and Whitehead.

14. It is rather significant that these positions, which basically are non-metaphysical approaches to reality, tacitly presuppose a dualist metaphysics of man. Christian philosophy, on the contrary, traditionally supports a unitary vision of man.

15. The exact terminology used in a given instance depends on the author in question. Certain authors use the terms "human" and "personal" interchangeably. Other authors, however, do not consider them to be synonyms. Therefore, in some writings, the term, "human" refers to a "person," while in others, it must be understood to mean "pre-personal."

16. After eight weeks, the embryo, now called the fetus, possesses a brain, but one not yet fully developed. The fetus' brain structure is completed after twelve weeks. Some authors, therefore, may choose to argue for the humanity of the fetus at the eighth week, but others may prefer to place it at the twelfth week. Deciding which is the really correct position is not relevant to us as our critique will attack this whole way of reasoning about human life.

17. As quoted in K. D. Whitehead, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

18. From another perspective, however, a certain analogy may be observed between a blueprint and DNA. The genetic code, which is contained in DNA, is the basic determining factor of a person's physical features, and

also appears to influence certain psychological aspects of the person. Nevertheless, the differences between the two are greater than their similarities. A blueprint never becomes a physical feature of an edifice, while DNA is a basic biological constituent of a human individual.

19. Cf., for example, Germain G. Grisez, *op. cit.*, pp. 275f, 283; Robert E. Joyce & Mary Rosera Joyce, *Let Us Be Born* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1970), p. 29ff.

20. Donceel, J., S.J., "Abortion: Mediate v. Immediate Animation," *Continuum*, vol. 5 (1967), pp. 167-71; *Idem*, "Immediate Animation and Delayed Hominization," *Theological Studies*, XXXI (1970), pp. 76-105; Patrick J. O'Mahony & Malcom Potts, "Abortion and the Soul," *The Month*, 224 (1967), pp. 45-50.

21. Cf. Donceel's *Theological Studies* article, p. 76.

22. O'Mahony & Potts, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

23. Cf. Donceel's *Continuum* article, p. 169 and his *Theological Studies* article, pp. 83, 94.

24. The Thomistic-hylomorphist metaphysics as presented by Fr. Donceel does give a sufficient account of inanimate reality, but it does not seem, in my opinion, to provide a convincing explanation of organic phenomena. A refined hylomorphism taking into account organicity may accomplish this task.

Another point is worthy of note. Fr. Donceel also makes use of a strictly theological argument from authority to help support his philosophical thesis (Cf. his *Theological Studies* article, p. 86). He draws our attention to the definition of the substantial unity of man by the Council of Vienne (Denzinger-Schönmetzer 902). This Council at once endorses the hylomorphic conception of man, and condemns all forms of Platonic or Cartesian dualism. Its primary purpose was to protect the reality of the human nature of Christ (DS 900) against the errors of Peter John Olieu, who admitted the

unity of the human person, but not the unity of the human nature. The argument is, however, of relative validity, as Fr. Donceel himself stresses, for the intent of the Council was not to define hylomorphism as such, but to define the essential unity of man by making use of the theory of hylomorphism.

25. Cf. Joyce & Joyce, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-24, 37f, 90ff for helpful indications.

26. Such a metaphysics would also have to be capable of responding to the objections from biology to the theory of immediate hominization, e.g., the problem of twinning or the formation of identical twins and the fact that a considerable percentage of fecundated ova never, it seems, become implanted in the uterus. It is beyond the limits of this brief study to treat these objections in detail. It suffices to note that reasonable answers to them have been suggested indicating that the difficulties posed by them are not insurmountable. Cf., e.g., Grisez, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-32, 274 and Joyce & Joyce, pp. 31-35. The development of identical twins seems to be a case of asexual reproduction, a possible example of parthenogenesis. It has thus been suggested that identical twins are, in reality, the grandchildren of their putative parents. Grisez refers to Luigi Gedda, *Twins in History and Science* (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1961), p. 125 on this point. The argument accrues added respectability with the imminent possibility of cloning human individuals.

Confronted with the fact of the large percentage loss of fecundated ova, one could point to God's inscrutable will. True, it would mean that many persons never are destined to achieve an adult existence. But, then, it would also appear to be a fact that a majority of men never become perfect similitudes of God, the very reason for their existence.

27. For a concise treatment of reverence, cf. Dietrich and Alice von Hildebrand, *The Art of Living* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1965), pp. 1-9.