Moral knowledge: some reflections on moral controversies, incompatible moral epistemologies, and the culture wars

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Abstract

An authentic Christian bioethical account of abortion must take into consideration the conflicting epistemologies that separate Christian moral theology from secular moral philosophy. Moral epistemologies directed to the issue of abortion that fail to take into account the orientation of morality to God will also fail adequately to appreciate the moral issues at stake. Christian accounts of the bioethics of abortion that reduce moral-theological considerations to moral-philosophical considerations will not fail to appreciate fully the offense of abortion, but morally mislead. This article locates the bioethics of abortion within the theology of the Church of the first millennium, emphasizing that abortion was prohibited, whether or not one considered the embryo or fetus to be ensouled.

Key words: abortion, moral epistemologies, Christian bioethics

Introduction:
Why There is so Much Disagreement

A striking feature of contemporary debates about the morality of abortion is that the disagreements cut so very deeply. Yet, few of the essayists in this issue are willing to acknowledge the depth of the gulf separating those in disagreement. It is as if they wished to pretend that all shared a common morality. Though the focus of the essays is on conceptual analysis, the assessment of arguments, and the interpretation of biological findings, the disagreements concerning abortion turn on competing appreciations of reality that frame such concepts, arguments, and findings. The disputants do not share the same basic premises and rules of evidence, because they do not agree about how rightly to turn to God (if they even recognize His existence).

As a result, equally intelligent groups of people take account of the same biological data, yet come to quite different conclusions. Some regard the zygote to be the earliest stage of the person to be born; others are moved by considerations such as the possibility of twinning, high early embryo loss, the later development of the neurological system, etc., to find nothing of the kind. More importantly, some see in abortion an act that liberates women from the tyranny of surd biological processes and patriarchal structures. Yet others recognize an act that aims one radically away from God and love of neighbor. In each case, there are different approaches to sorting information from noise. It is as if the participants in the debates lived in radically different worlds structured by incommensurable metaphysical, epistemological, and axiological commitments. And of course, this is the case.

The antagonists in the abortion debate are isolated within incompatible life-worlds articulated through different thought-styles, so that the denizens see and experience quite different realities,
to take a cue from Ludwik Fleck. Each group recruits philosophy to reconstruct the framework of the life-world they themselves embrace. The various positions (and there are many) are separated by more than intellectual mistakes.

Among the many things remarkable in this issue's essays is that so little effort is invested in stating a frankly Christian position (much less a traditional and authentic Christian position) concerning abortion, or in understanding why others do not concur with the essayists in this issue. The essays in this issue proceed as if one ought not acknowledge that the disputes about abortion are located in a fundamentally religious conflict: a conflict between traditional Christian culture and the emerging post-Christian culture with its collage of post-traditional Christian, post-Christian, and neo-pagan perspectives. To acknowledge the full force of this conflict would require admitting that many moral issues under debate in the public forum, including abortion, (1) are at their root religious, not merely secular moral, and (2) cannot be adequately appreciated save as religious. That is, it would require acknowledging that the core moral issues at stake cannot be appreciated without recognizing their religious presuppositions and implications. The unavoidability of the religious dimension should come as no surprise to those who acknowledge God's existence. After all, one would expect that the existence of a personal, omnipotent, creating, sustaining, and redeeming God would mark all being and morality. Insofar as this expectation is well-founded, it will not be possible to gauge the true evil of abortion without also recognizing the impact of this act on relationships with God. It is as if one would attempt to talk about the good life and human flourishing without acknowledging the central feature of the human condition: God's existence. This essay addresses this cluster of issues: the persistence of the controversies regarding abortion, and why so little is said about God and abortion in light of a rightly-ordered relationship with Him.

II. What Makes a Christian Philosophy and a Christian Bioethics Christian?

Among the striking features of Patrick Lee's essay is that it characterizes itself as the work of a Christian philosopher, even though (1) the only explicitly Christian elements are excerpts from Pope John Paul II's statements and a brief remark concerning Mother Teresa, and (2) the arguments are developed as if their soundness could be appreciated without rightly turning to God. None of the Christian material plays an essential role in the development of Lee's arguments, which Lee holds to rely solely on the light of natural reason. As Patrick Lee puts it, "reason is on our side. I am convinced that the light of natural reason is sufficient to defend the equal dignity and worth of every human being from conception to natural death" (Lee, 2004, ms 29). Presumably, he would concede that reason is darkened and nature distorted by the Fall.

This commitment to natural reason, characteristic of much of Roman Catholic bioethical analysis, tends to reduce moral theology and Christian philosophy to secular philosophy and to be distinguished by an accidental connection to the particularities of Christian commitments. Such bioethical analysis is of that genre of religion and of Christian bioethics that asserts the ability to support its central moral claims apart from faith and grace. In this fashion, Roman Catholicism embraces a robust ecumenical moral epistemological thesis: it claims that Christians do not have special moral knowledge nurtured in right worship and through grace, and therefore
that Christians should be able in principle to convince all regarding their moral norms without a recognition of God and His demands.

This paper's response to Patrick Lee, as well as to the responses to Lee, argues that a robustly Christian perspective cannot be eschewed. Unless one's heart is rightly open to the deep meaning of reality, the arguments advanced by Lee et al. against abortion will fail to be conclusive: others will not embrace the basic premises and rules of evidence assumed by Lee et al. Most importantly, it will be impossible to appreciate the core evil in abortion: that it aims one wide of the mark, that is, sinfully. This essay begins by addressing the impact of the Fall on natural reason, arguing that, outside of right worship and right belief, one will not rightly appreciate the significance of moral obligations in general and those regarding abortion in particular. Second, a brief account of the covenantal character of Christian morality is laid out to emphasize the relationship between the experience of God and a rightly-ordered appreciation of morality.

The essay concludes by showing that the morality of abortion can only be one-sidedly and incompletely appreciated apart from a rightly-directed sexual and reproductive morality, which itself is fully accessible only within a culture nurtured by right worship and right belief. In short, the argument is that Christians possess special moral knowledge, not available through natural reason unrestored by grace.

The force of this critique is fundamental. Patrick Lee and the other authors in this volume who approach the problem of abortion as primarily an intellectual failure to see rightly the facts of the matter and then to reason soundly to correct conclusions regarding abortion fail to appreciate the cardinal bioethical challenges of the age. They fail to recognize why their antagonists see the facts differently from them and why they come to quite different and morally misdirected conclusions. In this failure of diagnosis, these essays fail to be authentic instances of well-developed Christian philosophy and bioethics, able adequately to account for the spiritual and consequent moral shortcomings of the age with its blindness to the moral significance of abortion.

In this crucial shortcoming, these essays demonstrate the pressing need for approaches that take seriously the necessity of an authentic Christian philosophy and a Christian bioethics able amply to characterize the problems of, and speak to the reforms needed in, contemporary culture. Pace Beckwith (Beckwith, 2004, ms 21), a Christian bioethics should not seek to be accessible within the canons of a secular public forum to those outside that "tradition". Instead, it should seek to bring those in the public forum into a rightly-ordered theological discourse. Pace Lee (Lee, 2004, ms 29), one must take care as to which reason (fallen or restored by grace) is on one's side, so as to reason rightly and to place the cardinal accent of one's moral concerns not on secular goals such as equality, dignity, and liberty, but on that holiness in terms of which all goods should be appreciated.

An authentic Christian philosophy and bioethics must indicate to those outside why they must change their fundamental points of departure so as to come inside a context of rightly-ordered rationality. Taking the regnant canons of the public forum's moral rationality or sense of the reasonable as normative is to cede at the outset what is crucially at stake: to abandon the notion that a proper appreciation of moral issues requires a rightly-ordered recognition of God (i.e., that rightly-ordered moral knowledge can only be grounded in a life of right worship).
Patrick Lee assumes that natural reason after the Fall, without a rightly-ordered recognition of God, can effectively disclose the moral significance of abortion. This position flies in the face of the circumstance that the dominant secular culture simply does not appreciate the moral significance of abortion: some 35 to 55 million unborn children are aborted worldwide each year (Ewart and Winikoff, 1998), with much of this taking place without a clear appreciation of the enormity of the evils involved in these homicides, a point acknowledged by Chappell (Chappell, 2004).

Abortion has become an accepted, taken-for-granted element of the dominant secular culture, which, in its everyday practice, assumes a moral ontological distinction between human biological and human personal life. Secular moral rationality does not appreciate the evil in human feticide, much less embryocide.

The remarks of Leon Kass, the chairman of the President's Council on Bioethics, are exemplar of the moral appreciation of the embryo by a well-meaning member of the general culture. Granting that a human life begins at fertilization and develops via a continuous process thereafter, surely - one might say - the blastocyst itself can hardly be considered a human being. I myself would agree that a blastocyst is not, in a full sense, a human being?or what the current fashion calls, rather arbitrarily and without clear definition, a person. It does not look like a human being nor can it do very much of what human beings do. Yet, at the same time, I must acknowledge that the human blastocyst is (1) human in origin and (2) potentially a mature human being, if all goes well. This, too, is beyond dispute; indeed, it is precisely because of its peculiarly human potentialities that people propose to study it rather than the embryos of other mammals (Kass, 2002, p. 88).

As Peter Koritansky appreciates (Koritansky, 2004), Leon Kass is unable to regard early embryocide as murder. This would not appear to be a simple intellectual error. It is not as if Kass had failed to understand the claims advanced by Lee et al. Kass is intelligent, perceptive, and well-informed concerning the biological findings bearing on the status of the human embryo and fetus. Yet, to him all seems different from what Lee et al. recognize.

Beckwith attempts to bolster Lee's arguments by noting inter alia (1) how philosophical accounts of human ontogeny that support regarding the fetus as other than a person (i.e., having a status that renders feticide something other than murder) involve what are for Beckwith (and for traditional Christians) controversial premises and conclusions, as well as (2) how such accounts bring into question liberal commitments to equality (Lee, for example, argues against abortion by making the claim that, in no longer recognizing feticide as murder, "The proposition that all human beings are created equal would be relegated to the status of a superstition" [Lee, 2004, ms 14]).

Beckwith's first line of argument backhandedly acknowledges the obvious: those who disagree about the moral status of abortion are often separated by foundationally incompatible moral and metaphysical frameworks. The second line of argument regards secular moral propositions as more secure fulcra for arguing against abortion than the truth of the Gospel and the mind of the Church. Rather than offering a Christian theological perspective, Beckwith offers an unembarrassed invocation of a Thomistic philosophical perspective without acknowledging that
such a perspective will be perceived as covertly involving a particular genre of Christian religious commitment (few save Roman Catholics take Thomistic philosophical arguments to be conclusive). As Beckwith puts it, "Although the substance view is one held by many Christians, and especially those in the Thomistic tradition, it is offered in this article as an account of human personhood based on reasons publicly accessible to those who are outside of that tradition" (Beckwith, 2004, ms 21).

Beckwith thus advances a set of considerations that may be somewhat more accessible by the general secular public than traditional Christian considerations, but likely no more convincing. In short, for Beckwith, being philosophically sectarian is preferable to being religiously sectarian, though the difference in this case is far from significant. One would think it would in general be preferable to seek for a religious rather than a philosophical conversion.

Granted, philosophical clarity can aid reflection. For instance, many describe the status of the embryo imprecisely by asking when human life begins or whether the embryo is a human being. No one seriously denies that the human zygote is human life. The zygote is not dead. It is also not simian, porcine, or canine. It is human diploid life. Indeed, human sperm are instances of human haploid life. The difficulty is that many are ready to consider the status of early human embryos as morally analogous to that of brain-dead but otherwise still biologically alive humans (e.g., biologically alive as in the case of a male's reproductive ability surviving his whole-brain death).

They are forms of human biological life to be accorded respect, even if they are not instances of human personal life. Of course, some such as Peter Singer are ready to place human infanticide on the same moral level as the killing of equally developed animals (Singer, 1990, pp. 81-82). There is a willingness on the part of many to find wisdom in the ancient pagan practice of infanticide.

In particular, there is a recognition that humans who are self-conscious moral agents are significantly different from those who are not. In a world deaf to God, persons are the only beings to assess moral claims and confer moral authority. There is also a willingness on the part of many to impute some of the rights of such beings to infants, the mentally retarded, and those near brain death. However, when all is said and done, many, with Leon Kass, simply do not concur with treating the killing of a ten-day-old embryo as on a par with killing a ten-year-old child.

Over against all these accounts, there is traditional Christianity, which recognizes the status of humans as residing in their ability to worship God in this life and the next. It is for this reason that even infants are baptized, confirmed, and given Communion. Their status as full persons is recognized in their full liturgical participation. To address questions such as how early one may baptize and how late one may give anointing to the sick is to confront the question in Christian terms as to when a person comes into existence, as well as when death occurs. So, too, one must ask which actions, such as abortion, harm our ability to come into communion with God, a spiritual fact of the matter that carries considerable weight, whether or not the embryo is ensouled and despite a high natural loss of embryos.

The secular culture lacks the resources to appreciate why abortion involves the killing of an unborn child, especially why very early abortion is equivalent to murder. The contemporary secular culture in official action and ideology does not regard the unborn child as a person (Roe
v. Wade, 1973). In the absence of a recognition of the presence of God, the final arbiters of morality become human persons, who are not merely those who establish all accounts of morality, but those who are the cardinal source of mundane moral authority. In this context, humans have their cardinal standing only insofar as they show the marks of being moral agents. All other human life is accorded respect in a derivative fashion (e.g., as able to become persons or as having been persons).

An ontological account is then elaborated to justify a distinction between human biological life and human personal life, as one might distinguish caterpillars from butterflies. As a consequence, there is an insuperable challenge in general secular terms to make plausible the claim that early embryonic life represents the life of a human person, rather than a being that might develop into a person. In this context, it becomes impossible to make out the claim that the taking of early human embryonic life is equivalent to murder, unless one brings one's secular interlocutors into a moral context radically different from the one from which they started.

Instead of inviting the interlocutors into the context of traditional Christian epistemology, metaphysics, and axiology, Lee et al. engage their interlocutors in a set of moral reflections that took shape in the 13th century. Though Lee's exploration of whether personhood can be an acquired characteristic embraces a conclusion different from that of Thomas Aquinas (who held that early abortion was other than murder, in that early human embryonic life was not considered by him to be the life of a person [Aquinas, 1875, vol. 26, p. 484]), Lee raises Aquinas's question of when the embryo is a person, thus engaging the Western Christian disputes regarding immediate versus mediate animation (Donceel, 1967; Dorlodot, 1952).

In the case of Thomas Aquinas, reflections on the subject led him to engage the scientific and philosophical reflections of Aristotle (De Generatione Animalium, 2.3.736a-b and Historia Animalium, 7.3.583b) in the service of drawing a distinction between the status of the early and the late gestation fetus. In the case of Lee, this involves locating his argument against abortion in terms of a particular philosophical account of particular biological findings.

All this stands in stark contrast to the position of early Christianity that recognized the evil of abortion as having a moral and spiritual impact equivalent to homicide, whether or not the fetus is ensouled. As Canon II of St. Basil the Great specifies, "Let her that procures abortion undergo ten years" penance, whether the embryo were perfectly formed, or not? (Basil, 1995, vol. 14, p. 604).

Early Christianity was not concerned as to whether the early fetus is a person. As a result, though defenders of early embryocide point out that there is no serious concern on the part of any Christian body to prevent the high number of silent miscarriages that appear to occur very early in gestation, this state of affairs is not troubling to traditional Christians such as St. Basil the Great. On the one hand, St. Basil with the early Church recognizes that early embryocide has the same spiritual effect as murder; on the other, he does not commit himself to regarding the embryo as a small person in need of medical attention.

The approach of Lee and others in this issue may reflect an important misreading of St. Paul's appreciation of the possibility of non-Christians, non-observant Jews, and even non-traditional Christians comprehending the evil of a range of immoral actions. In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul states, "for when the Gentiles, not having the law, by nature [phusei] practice the things of the law [nomon], though they do not have the law, they are a law unto themselves. They show
the work [ergon] of the law written in their hearts, to which their own conscience [syneideseos] also bears witness" (Rom 2:14-15).

St. John Chrysostom emphasizes that the Gentiles, of whom St. Paul is speaking, are only those who, though not Jews, worship the true God. 'But by Greeks he [St. Paul] here means not them that worshipped idols, but that adored God, that obeyed the law of nature, that strictly kept all things, save the Jewish observances, which contribute to piety, such as were Melchizedek and his, such as was Job, such as were the Ninevites, such as was Cornelius.... For the conscience and reason doth suffice in the Law's stead? (Chrysostom, Homily V on Romans 1:28, 1994, vol. 11, pp. 363, 365).

One should note that the law that the Gentiles have to themselves is not one read off from nature around them or from reason, but what they find in their hearts. Moreover, reason is employed to derive moral canons not from nature or from itself, but from what is available in one's heart through one's conscience. As St. Paul emphasizes at the end of chapter 1 of Romans (Rom 1:19-28), the difficulty is that if one worships not God but instead His creatures, one's passions will be radically perverted, distorting one's conscience, and therefore one's reasoning. Knowing rightly requires rightly acknowledging and worshipping God.

The traditional Christian way of putting this matter appreciates that, with the Fall, human natural reason has great difficulty in discerning rightly where moral lines should be drawn and why. It is therefore not an accident that, outside of traditional Christian contexts many have significant difficulty in recognizing that the killing of a zygote is equivalent to the killing of a teen-age child (though the temptations are radically different in the two cases). Nor is it an accident that, outside of right belief and right worship, one will not see rightly what is involved in the moral life. In short, Christianity's epistemology of the first millennium appreciated the cardinal role of grace in allowing fallen reason to see rightly the nature of things.

The lack of a clear appreciation of abortion's evil is then not simply a function of an intellectual mistake. Nor is the failure to appreciate the evil of abortion just a failure to appreciate arguments such as those Patrick Lee et al. advance. Instead, it is the result of a thoroughly misguided moral epistemology grounded in a perverted conscience. Not worshipping God rightly, and surely not worshipping God at all, leads to an erosion of the capacity morally to see rightly, culminating in the establishment of a culture structured around an anti-morality. In terms of the premises of this culture, abortion is not just permitted, but the availability of abortion is to be praised. To counter this counter-morality, one must first appreciate this anti-morality as an integrated whole and then recognize its character as well as its roots.

The appropriate response to this state of affairs is not to call on the redoubled labors of academic philosophers, as this is understood by John Paul II in Fides et Ratio (1998, ? 106, p. 151), but on redoubling the labor of those true philosophers, who seek to change the world by opening their hearts through rightly-ordered Christian asceticism and worship. The key is that, if humans are beings created to worship God, they will not know rightly unless they worship rightly. An adequate account of moral epistemology must attend to the cardinal role of right worship and
asceticism. The Christian philosophical moral insight, as old as the first century, is that rightly-ordered moral knowledge requires not simply (1) recognition of the existence of God as a cardinal fact of the human condition, but (2) transformation of the knower (more precisely, the restoration of that knower) through a rightly-ordered relationship with God. The relationship between the knower and the known is such that the human knower is transformed by knowledge of God.

Lee's response to Judith Jarvis Thomson shows another dimension of the difficulty of attempting to appreciate the morality of abortion in isolation from the general human condition of persons created to worship God. In her 1971 article, Thomson explores the circumstances under which abortion could involve a justified refusal to sustain human life rather than a direct killing. Thomson's goal is to establish that at least some abortions do not involve the breech of a forbearance right, but rather a defeasible claim right to further nurture, so that an embryo or fetus under certain circumstances may be justifiably evicted from the womb (Thomson, 1971). A somewhat similar argument has been mounted in the Roman Catholic context in favor of a justification of abortion as a licit withdrawal of life-support. In rebuttal to such arguments, Lee hopes to provide an account of the obligation of parents to children outside of the context of any particular community and outside of the relationship of the human good and human flourishing to the existence of God.

Lee either begs the question by simply claiming that "the mother has a special responsibility to her child, in virtue of being her biological mother" (Lee, 2004, ms 20) or makes the thick assumption that particular acts of kindness by others generate obligations by mothers to render aid to their fetuses that would not be defeated by the burdens of a pregnancy, in particular, a pregnancy that imposes significant burdens on the mother (Lee, 2004, ms 25).

Lee's position must establish why obligations of mothers to their children would not be defeated so as to justify some abortions on the model of Thomson's and Nicholson's arguments. Lee does not recognize that, to give a rightly-directed account of status obligations (e.g., the obligations of wives to husbands, husbands to wives, children to parents, and parents to children), one must place the relationships within a recognition of a God-created order, which cannot be rightly understood outside of right worship.

Lee wants a thick concession of premises without recognizing that what he should really demand is a conversion of the heart, so as to secure an appropriate vision of moral conduct that can supply the premises he seeks. Once more, there is a failure to recognize the theological conditions for moral discernment.

IV. Morality, Divine Covenants, and the Euthyphro

Abortion is not only the taking of unborn human life, which is surely core to the offense, but an act that constitutes a radically disordered orientation towards God. It is the issue of orientation toward God that in the end places and gives full sense to all moral issues by orienting them beyond the horizon of the finite and the immanent towards the transcendent. In the light of this orientation, all moral issues are recast in robustly theological terms.

The recognition of the centrality of a theological orientation radically relativizes immanent moral
concerns. God intrudes and God requires, as God's command to Abraham to sacrifice His Son underscores (Gen 22:1-19). Because of this hierological orientation at the core of Christianity, it is misleading to fragment theological concerns (which concerns are about a proper relationship to the Persons of the Trinity) into isolated categories of dogmatic theology, moral theology, theology of the body, etc. Since God is one, theology is one and its unity should be underscored. For example, moral theology (rightly knowing morally) cannot be separated from liturgical theology (rightly worshipping God). It is even more distorting to attempt a separation of moral issues from theological concerns.

It is instructive that the Bible presents the canons of right conduct as disclosed in an encounter with and experience of God. As the Bible puts it, God talked and walked with Noah (Gen 6:9), Abraham (Gen 18:6), and Moses (Num 3:1), a point emphasized by St. John Chrysostom in his account of theological knowledge in his first homily on the Gospel of St. Matthew. For example, God does not give Noah a moral system, but a covenant. God, Who is the omnipotent, all-knowing Creator of all things, informs Noah how to deport himself over against other humans and nature. He is given the conditions under and through which he can please God. Though Noah could refuse God's offer, the covenant is not a negotiable contract, much less an agreement between equals. It rather announces the requirements for Noah's salvation. Not only is God's covenant with Noah not a contract, it is neither a philosophical system, nor a morality in the sense of a set of settled judgments regarding proper conduct. The same is the case with Abraham (Gen 15:18;17:1-22).

Surely, humans can reflect (and have voluminously reflected) on the significance, reasonableness, and implications of God's requirements. Yet, as such reflections proceed, they unavoidably encounter a difficulty: the requirements for approaching a fully transcendent personal God are at their core inscrutable. Man's encounter with the transcendent God is precisely an encounter with a Being Whose "being" and concern for creation lies beyond the horizon of all being. This becomes even clearer with the law given to Moses. The 613 requirements include obligations fully opaque to human rationality. The law lays out how the chosen people must act in order righteously to approach God, that is, to become a holy people (Ex 19:6). Again, God's covenant is not a philosophy in general, a moral philosophy, or a morality in the sense of a set of commitments reflecting settled human moral judgments about the good and the right. Instead, Israel is given canons of deportment to which their settled moral judgments must be revised so as to conform. They are given the Law, a set of requirements for righteousness in the very important sense of requirements for being able to approach the living God.

So, too, Jesus Christ did not come teaching moral philosophy, much less a philosophy in general. In fulfilling the Law and the Prophets, He showed the unity of the two great commandments, placing moral concerns within the hierological commitment to love God with all one's heart. One can make philosophical sense of this in the operational sense that, if human beings are by their very nature directed to loving and worshipping God, then the first of the two great commandments (Matt 22:36) is integral to any account of the good and the right, as well as to any appropriately directed morality. However, one then confronts the core difficulty: the God Whom Christians worship is a fully transcendent, personal God Whose ways are not ours, and Who requires, for example, the proscription of fornication and consensual sexual activities, even when these are undertaken in
circumstances such that they are highly unlikely to cause more harms than benefits (i.e., as understood within the horizon of the finite and the immanent). Moral proscriptions and requirements cannot be fully justified in general secular terms.

The divine-command character of Christianity confronts the secular moral-philosophical project to place the moral life within the constraints of rational reflection. Athens aspires to render Jerusalem plausible in terms laid down by Athens. In the Euthyphro, Plato can be interpreted as pressing the question as to whether God commands the good because it is good or whether the good is good because God commands it. Among Plato's agendas is the reduction of the holy and the good to the morally rational. For those who recognize that the authentic pursuit of holiness, leading to union with God, is the central and final goal of all human life and the core of human flourishing, both poles of Plato's dilemma present significant shortcomings.

If the good is good in itself apart from God (and therefore open to definition apart from God), one does not need to acknowledge God to live a moral life. One could then claim that one could make sense of human moral conduct and flourishing apart from the most significant circumstance of the human condition: God's existence. However, if the good is only good in light of God's commands, then God could command what could conflict with a reasonable understanding of morality, bringing the morality of God's requirements into question. Plato's dilemma can be recast by recognizing the God-centered character of all being. It is not simply that God approves of morality because morality involves pursuing the good and the right, which are good and right independent of Him (thus subjecting God to morality). Nor is it simply the case that that which is good and right is such only because God approves of it (thus denying the independent goodness and the rightness of the good and the right).

Rather, since the universe is created and sustained by a transcendent, omnipotent God, it is the case that all goods and right-making conditions, indeed human nature and all reality, can only make sense and have their goodness, rightness, and being in relationship to this Being.

In this account, God's presence is distantly analogous to the massive black holes in the center of galaxies, around which all of the stars of a galaxy revolve. The character of their motion can only be calculated by reference to this central reality that shapes and conditions space and time, while the black hole in itself is governed by states of affairs radically other than those of the rest of the galaxy. Like all analogies, this analogy is lame and inadequate, in that it can only very one-sidedly gesture towards Uncreated Being.

The first point is this: traditional Christianity recognizes that nothing can fully make sense without reference to God, though God in His nature is unknowable, even though He is experienced and recognized through His uncreated energies by those who turn rightly to Him. The second point is that an attempt to capture Christian moral insights in the anonymous terms of a general secular morality will either require discounting or recasting those insights (thus producing moral, doctrinal distortion, "moral theological development" or the articulation of a sectarian philosophy that purports to be fashioned within the general requirements of discursive rationality, but that in fact smuggle in Christian insights as if they were premises open to all regardless of their acknowledgement of God. In the first case, morality is distorted; in both cases, one ceases to appreciate why one's antagonists continue in disagreement by failing to recognize either the deep character of the moral disputes or where a solution lies (i.e., in conversion).
V. Abortion and the Moral Geography of the Contemporary Culture

The availability of abortion is integral to the dominant secular culture sustaining its cluster of moral concerns regarding equality, liberty, and human dignity. By placing persons in control of their reproductive destiny, abortion liberates women and their sexual partners from reproductive outcomes that threaten unacceptable burdens on life-plans and career commitments, and which burdens endanger the equal participation of women in careers. Further, abortion frees women from traditional patriarchal structures. Abortion has become a cornerstone of the dominant secular culture’s appreciation not just of reproductive morality, but in addition abortion is now integral to the dominant secular ethos of liberty and equality. Abortion recasts the moral experience not only of reproduction but of human flourishing in the service of a view of human dignity in which humans as persons are the final measure of all within the horizon of the finite and the immanent.

In contrast, traditional Christianity recognizes abortion as a moral offense even more significant than killing unborn children. Against the grain of the contemporary secular culture, traditional Christianity appreciates abortion as not only homicide, but as illicitly setting aside a cardinal element of human submission to the will of God, including the obligation to accept procreation as integrally bound to human sexuality. In the attempt to achieve a false equality of men and women, the appeal to abortion radically rejects the fundamental truth that childbearing can be a cross through which salvation is found, as St. Paul recognizes, when he emphasizes that women will be saved by childbearing if they continue with propriety in faith, love, and holiness (I Tim 2:15). St. Paul acknowledges and blesses a cardinal human vocation of love and sacrifice to others.

The liberty pursued through engaging abortion as an avenue of liberation from the blind forces of reproductive biology and as a support for equality between the sexes is recognized by traditional Christianity as an enslavement to pride and a failure to aim humbly at God.

All of this is to say that it is a mistake to assess the moral epistemology of abortion apart from a more general failure to orient oneself rightly in the universe. Abortion is at the core of the contemporary culture wars, because the force of the controversies can only be appreciated in terms of conflicting ways of regarding all of being and all of life.

Although many who appreciate the moral impropriety of abortion are not Christian, and although many of the defenders of abortion are post-traditional Christians, there are good reasons to hold that it is only traditional Christianity that in its fullness appreciates that which is at stake in this conflict of moral claims. Moreover, the persistence of the appreciation of the evil of abortion depends largely on remaining fragments of a collapsing Christendom. Where these fragments are obscured or non-existent, there does not appear to be a significant appreciation of the evil of abortion. Francis Fukuyama observes that this is the case, for instance, within many of the pagan cultures of the Pacific Rim.

It is especially difficult for those fully embedded within the emerging dominant secular culture to appreciate rightly the moral issues at stake in abortion. In particular, this secular culture places all reproductive choices within a horizon of meaning that forecloses transcendent truth through affirming three cardinal commitments:
The principle of cosmic disorientation - all cosmic and human history is interpreted within the horizon of the immanent and the finite: the universe, along with all humans, is construed as ultimately coming from nowhere, going nowhere, and for no final purpose (i.e., the immanentization of human and cosmic history);

The principle of discounting the transcendent - all moral concerns are placed within constraints that exclude transcendent interests (i.e., the immanentization of morality): all public religious concerns and expressions are to be reduced to immanent cultural and moral issues, in the process requiring all publicly to speak and act as if there were no God (i.e., the immanentization as well as the cultural and moral reduction of religion).

The principle of the secular sexual morality of consent, benevolence, and immanent beneficence - (a) human sexual activity is rendered licit by the effective consent of the participants as moral agents, with consideration given to achieving benevolently and prudently a positive balance of immanent benefits over harms; (b) human reproductive activity is rendered licit by the effective consent of the participants as moral agents, with consideration given to achieving benevolently and prudently a positive balance of immanent benefits over harms; and (c) human concerns with sexual and procreative flourishing are construed fully within the horizon of the finite and the immanent - human flourishing is fully immanentized and defined from the perspective of human moral agents.

This dominant secular moral-metaphysical understanding is in an antagonistic relationship with traditional Christian moral-metaphysical commitments that locate all reality and morality in terms of God and thus discount the role of human persons as the source and focus of morality. In contrast to the secular culture's moral-metaphysical understanding, Christian moral concerns are located in terms of the transcendent. All morality is placed within a web of interests that have their character because of the existence of a personal, omnipotent, transcendent God, thereby affirming

The principle of historical orientation - all cosmic and human history is recognized as proceeding from creation through the Fall, the Incarnation, and Redemption to the final restoration of all things;

The principle of the priority of the Holy - all moral concerns with the good and the right are placed in relationship to the holy understood as the transcendent, which is a Who, such that all elements of human life are of necessity directed towards a radically transcendent, personal God, Who is encountered and experienced as existing beyond speculative and/or discursive philosophical categories (Hierotheos, 1998);

The principle of the salvation-directed character of Christian sexual morality - the iconical relation of Adam and Eve is taken as cardinal, thereby requiring that (a) all human sexual activity be placed within the marriage of a man and a woman, and (b) all human reproductive activity be located within the marriage of a man and a woman, in that (c) human sexual and procreative flourishing be recognized as achieved only within and in terms of a rightly-directed pursuit of salvation.

The commitments of traditional Christianity are, in short, incompatible with those of the dominant secular culture. As a consequence, the dominant secular culture has grounds for considering the traditional
Christian secular morality to be an anti-morality:
(1) traditional-Christian, moral-metaphysical understandings will be judged by the dominant secular culture as wrongly moralizing areas of human life, which the secular culture will hold to be within the compass of licit choice by competent individuals (e.g., by condemning the -private' choice to have an abortion);
(2) traditional-Christian, moral-metaphysical understandings will be judged by the dominant culture as inappropriately bringing into the public space moral commitments held by the secular culture to be private (e.g., when bishops condemn politicians who vote to provide public funding of abortion);
(3) traditional-Christian, moral-metaphysical understandings will be judged by the dominant secular culture as immorally refusing appropriate recognition of freely and peaceably chosen sexual and reproductive lifestyles, thereby constituting a fundamentalist threat by showing significant disrespect of persons in their pursuit of their sexual and reproductive flourishing (e.g., by condemning immoral sexual and reproductive life-styles).

Of course, for its part, traditional Christianity has good grounds for recognizing the dominant secular morality to be an anti-morality:
(1) the dominant secular culture is recognized by traditional Christians as confusing a liberty in limited democracies to choose wrongly with a liberty to be secure from adverse moral judgments by others regarding lifestyles that, though freely and peaceably chosen, are morally perverse;
(2) the dominant secular culture is recognized by traditional Christians as imposing upon the public space a particular secular ideology, which inter alia would marginalize and silence the religious voice and presence (e.g., as when French secondary schools forbid Moslem girls to wear a veil or Christians a prominent cross; or when in the United States explicitly religious discourse is banished from the public forum);
(3) the dominant secular culture is recognized by traditional Christians as failing to respect persons as moral agents through seeking to prevent them from being confronted with adverse moral judgments regarding their wrongly-directed sexual and reproductive choices and lifestyles.

These two cultures, the traditional Christian and the emerging, secular, post-Christian culture, each dialectically defines its other as its anti-morality. Most significantly, each carries within it a metaphysics, moral epistemology, and an appreciation of values that is an other to the other. Between these two stark poles, there are numerous intermediate positions. However, these poles define and sustain the stridency, energy, and depth of the cultural conflict within which the abortion debates are lodged.

VI. Taking Christian Philosophy and Bioethics Seriously

An authentic Christian philosophy with its bioethics cannot define itself within the terms of the rationality of a secular culture. Such a secular culture is framed by an understanding of moral rationality radically at odds with that of an authentic Christianity. This is an observation as old as the diagnosis given by St. Paul in the conclusion of the first chapter of his letter to the Romans: a culture that worships creatures, including their creaturely equality, dignity, and liberty, but not the Creator, will always be perversely distorted.
The task inter alia of a Christian philosophy and bioethics is to diagnose how and why the reasons for moral action publicly accessible outside of a Christian moral and metaphysical vision will always to some extent lead one short of the mark. Indeed, it must diagnose how even a wrongly-directed Christian worship of God will distort moral perception. The task of a Christian philosophy cum bioethics is to provide an account of how to aim rightly despite the distracting and competing moral rationalities that define the controversies of our age.

In order for persons not to follow Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas in regarding early abortions, if not all abortions, as involving something other than murder, such as killing a caterpillar can be regarded as different from killing a butterfly, one will need to examine the metaphysics, axiology, and epistemology affirmed by an authentic, traditional Christianity and its differences from that of the surrounding secular and distorted Christian cultures. At stake are matters that reach beyond conceptual analysis and the assessment of arguments to a reexamination of moral epistemology and the source of moral premises. Here Christian philosophy with its bioethics makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution by disclosing that one will see truly only insofar as one orients rightly in worship to the source of all being, God.

References

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Endnotes

1. Chappell's opening quotation from Ronald Dworkin betrays an important difficulty marking the dominant culture of most of Western Europe and Great Britain (Chappell, 2004, ms 1): the Christian horror at the slaughter of millions of unborn children is muted, at least in the public squares of Europe. Pace Chappell, the North American public debate regarding abortion is not conducted unintelligently: the acrimony is in fact culturally instructive. A lively public presentation of the evil of abortion instructs those in the public square concerning the moral significance involved in abortion. As a consequence, the public culture of North America is at least rent by dispute and is unlike the abortion debate in Europe, where "outside the seminar room, it is not conducted at all" (ms 1). This is not to say that debates within the seminar room or the university generally should become shouting matches. Universities are places where the worst of evils should be calmly dissected. However, if in the public square there is not outrage over abortion, then the moral conscience of a society tends to go numb, a point that Chappell paradoxically appears to admit.

2. Ludwik Fleck appreciated that persons experience reality within and in terms of the metaphysical and epistemological expectations they bring to their encounter with reality (Fleck, 1935, 1979). Though Fleck was not a simple relativist, nevertheless, in recognizing the existence of an objective reality, he struggled with the problem of articulating the character of that pole of objectivity apart from its social constitution. In his attempt at solution, he shows strong similarities with Immanuel Kant.

3. A traditional, authentically Christian position is understood as one that accords with the beliefs, morality, and life of the Church of the first seven Ecumenical Councils. This Church lies at the foundation of views embraced by conservative Roman Catholics and Protestants, and continues in the Orthodox Church.

4. The term culture is richly complex. The Latin cultus compasses laboring on the land so as to produce crops, engaging in education and mental refinement, as well as adoring and venerating the holy. Culture thus brings together a concern for the land, the mind, and the holy. Culture compasses an integrated understanding of nature, right conduct, and ultimate reality. In one particular geographical location, there can be numerous cultures, each vying for dominance, so as to place its rivals as sub-cultures set over against the dominant culture.

5. The robust connection between contemporary Roman Catholic morality and secular philosophical reflection is grounded in an epistemology that inadequately appreciates the centrality of grace for rightly-directed moral knowledge. It thus fails sufficiently to comprehend how all moral reasoning requires reasoning from initial moral premises and facts, as well as how a passion-distorted heart will see and appreciate basic human goods, their ordering, and the human condition in a misdirected fashion. It will assess the facts and the moral issues wrongly. An uncritical embrace of rationality, and in particular a failure to appreciate how fallen reason sees wrongly, will bind rational reflections to a crucially distorted point of departure. An uncritical acceptance of the deliverances of natural rationality, which is now fallen rationality, opens Roman Catholic moral commitments to revision in terms of the requirements of a secular morality. Given its commitments to discursive moral rationality, Roman Catholic moral reflection runs the danger of being hostage to what that rationality requires. Theological reflections are thus placed under pressure by secular rationality to conform to a particular secular moral vision, because secular moral reflections always fail to present the requirements of reason sub specie aeternitatis. Instead, secular moral reflections and the moral theologies that embrace
them are shaped by the fashions of the age, with the result that moral theological commitments are revised in conformity with recent developments in secular thought. The final result of this commitment to secular rationality is a robust principle of moral-theological development through which the Church of the early centuries comes to be regarded as morally and dogmatically undeveloped, if not morally ill-directed. One might think here of a range of issues, from the place of women in the Church and the family, to capital punishment. For example, the Roman church in its current account of the family in its most recent catechism (Catechism, 1994, 2201-2232, pp. 531-539) makes no mention of the headship of the husband or a difference in duties defining the role of husband and wife, though such is articulated in the New Testament (I Cor 11:3-16,14:34; Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18; I Tim 2:11-15; Tit 2:4-5; I Pet 3:1-16). As to capital punishment, it is re-interpreted as a species of self-defense, raising the issue of whether one could ever, save in very bizarre circumstances, licitly employ capital punishment (2266-2267, pp. 546). However, no such restriction in the legitimate use of capital punishment is implied in Rom 13:1-4. Consider St. John Chrysostom's description of capital punishment as a fit recompense for sin, not as a form of self-defense.

As then he that taketh the sword in his hands and cutteth off the condemned, ministers to the judge that passeth sentence, and it is not he that is his destruction, although he cutteth him off; nay, nor yet is it he who passeth sentence and condemmeth, but the wickedness of him that is punished; so truly here also is not that [the Law] destroyeth, but sin. This did not destroy and condemn, but that by punishing undermined its strength, by the fear of the punishment holding it back (Chrysostom, Homily VII on 2 Cor 3:7-8, 1994, vol. 12, p. 310).

Doctrinal developments occasioned by the force of secular moral rationality mark a sea change in views separating the Roman church at the beginning of the 21st century from the Church at the close of Nicea II, the Seventh Ecumenical Council (A.D. 787). This latter Church spoke against doctrinal development. "To make our confession short, we keep unchanged all the ecclesiastical traditions handed down to us, whether in writing or verbally.... For we follow the most ancient legislation of the Catholic Church. We keep the laws of the Fathers. We anathematize those who add anything to or take anything away from the Church. We anathematize the introduced novelty of the revelers of Christians" (Nicea II, 1994, "The Decree", vol. 14, pp. 550-1).

6. Because the core evil in sin is that it orients us away from God, King David the adulterer and murderer states in Psalm 50:4, "Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil before Thee."

7. For an account of the contours of an ontology appreciated apart from God that distinguishes between human biological and human personal life, see Engelhardt, 1996.

8. The emergence of an independent philosophical perspective through which to reinterpret issues central to moral theology led the Roman church for a considerable period to lose the appreciation that early abortion constitutes homicide. As a result, from 1234 to 1869, save for the three-year period of 1588-1591 (Sixtus, 2585), early abortion was not canonized as homicide in the Roman church (Corpus Juris, 2585, p.1713; Noonan, 1971).

9. It must be underscored that Stephen Griffith claims to hold a position regarding abortion equivalent to that of Patrick Lee's (Griffith, 2004).

10. St. John Chrysostom is careful to point out that the true philosophers are monks who rightly pursue true wisdom, the Sophia of the Father, the Son of God (Baur, 1988, vol. 1, pp. 106, 123, 115). The Church of the first thousand years emphasizes that its theology transcends the bounds of discursive thought. Consider, for example, the Akathist hymn (written sometime in the 7th century, perhaps by either Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople or George of Pisidia; this hymn in
the Greek usage is sung on the first five Fridays of Great Lent) and its praise of the Theotokos: "Rejoice, O unifier of all antitheses into one state.... Rejoice, O thou who madest the philosophers appear as without philosophy. Rejoice, O thou who didst expose the teachers of dialectics as being those who have nothing to say. Rejoice; for those who were astute in arguing about thee were proven fools. Rejoice, because through thee the inventors of myths faded away. Rejoice, because thou didst tear apart the subtleties of the Athenians" (Nassar, 1979, p. 711).

11. Susan Nicholson comes to three conclusions for Roman Catholicism from arguments that have similarities with those of Judith Jarvis Thomson (Thomson, 1971). First, she holds that "the Roman Catholic condemnation of abortion of pregnancies resulting from rape is inconsistent with principles of Roman Catholic moral theology, as well as with the respect-for-life principle of secular morality which they clam to articulate" (Nicholson, 1978, p. 61). Second, she claims that "Pregnancy, of course, is a state in which a woman provides bodily assistance to a fetus. To require a woman to forego a therapeutic abortion is thus to require her to assist the fetus to the point of her own death. Even on the hypothesis that the fetus is a human being, this cannot, consistent with the principle of limited parental obligation, be morally required of her. Thus it would appear that the Roman Catholic doctrine of therapeutic abortion, in so far as it forbids any therapeutic abortions, is inconsistent both with other judgments of Catholic moral theology and with a secular understanding of the limited self-sacrifice required of parents" (p. 77). Finally, Nicholson also concludes "that if it is morally permissible for a parent to refuse mutilating surgery for a child while foreseeing that the child will die untreated, then it is morally permissible for a parent to request that a congenitally malformed infant be removed from an incubator in order that the infant die. But the case of the congenitally malformed infant was introduced as a parallel to fetal euthanasia. Hence if a parent may have a malformed infant mercifully removed from an incubator, then a woman may have a malformed fetus mercifully removed from her uterus" (p. 93). This whole line of reasoning is plausible for Nicholson because it is set within an appreciation of the wrongness of abortion radically at discord with the Christianity of the first millennium.

In contrast with Nicholson, Orthodox Christianity recognizes the evil (i.e., significant spiritual harm) of being closely causally involved in the death of another human. It is for this reason it appreciates all miscarriage as a form of homicide, for which absolution is required. Consider, for example, the absolution addressed not only to the woman but to all who are associated with her and therefore with her miscarriage, O Master, Lord our God, Who was born of the Holy Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary, and Who, as an infant, lay in the manger: According to Your great mercy, be merciful to Your servant, N., who is in sin, having been involved in the loss of a life, whether voluntary or involuntary, for she has miscarried that which was conceived in her. Forgive her transgressions, both voluntary and involuntary, and protect her from every snare of the Devil. Cleanse her stain and heal her infirmities. And grant to her, O Lover of Mankind, health and strength of soul and body. Guard her with a shining Angel from all assaults of the unseen demons; Yea, O Lord, from sickness and infirmity. Purify her from bodily uncleanness and the various troubles within her womb. By Your many mercies lead her up in her humbled body from the bed on which she lies. For we all have been born in sins and transgressions, and all of us are defiled in Your sight, O Lord. Therefore, with fear we cry out and say: Look down from heaven and behold the feebleness of us who are condemned. Forgive this, Your servant, N., who is in sin, having been involved in the loss of a life, whether voluntary or involuntary, for she has miscarried that which was conceived in her. And, according to Your great mercy as the Good God Who loves mankind, be merciful and forgive all those who are here present and who
have touched her. For You alone have the power to remit sins and transgressions, through the prayers of Your Most-pure Mother and of all the Saints (Monk, 1987, pp. 6-7). Among other things, Nicholson fails to appreciate that causal involvement in another's death is not to be considered in merely juridical terms, but in terms of spiritual harm (i.e., needing spiritual therapy).

12. For a criticism of the position advanced by Lee, see Nozick, 1974, pp. 93-95.

13. Emphasizing the importance of direct experience of God, St. John Chrysostom laments the circumstance that he with his congregation must rely on holy Scripture. It were indeed meet for us not at all to require the aid of the written Word, but to exhibit a life so pure, that the grace of the Spirit should be instead of books to our souls, and that as these are inscribed with ink, even so should our hearts be with the Spirit. But, since we have utterly put away from us this grace, come, let us at any rate embrace the second bes course. For that the former was better, God hath made manifest, both by His words, and by His doings. Since unto Noah, and unto Abraham, and unto his offspring, and unto Job, and unto Moses too, He discoursed not by writings, but Himself byHimself, finding their minds pure (Chrysostom, 1994, Homily on the Gospel of St. Matthew I.1, vol. 10, p. 1).

14. "Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, "I now establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you"" (Gen 9:8-9).

15. The primary sense of covenant at the time of the biblical patriarchs was one of a relationship between a superior and an inferior that established peace instead of war. "[T]he covenant was itself called a salimum; a "peace"" (Mendenhall, 1973, p. 15). Through a covenant, the pacified become vassals. "Since the fundamental function of a covenant was to establish a community of interest between a suzerain and his vassals, it was the covenant alone that distinguished between a group which must be dealt with by force (war), and a group which could be dealt with according to what we consider as normal, orderly, peaceful procedures" (Mendelhall, 1973, pp. 14-15). There was also peace established between equals (Gen 21:27) and royal grants of peace, as was given to Noah.

16. The Bible presents the transcendent character of God's concerns amid requirements. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

17. Among the Law's 613 commandments, there are a number that clearly cannot be grounded in natural law. Consider, for example, the injunction "do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material" (Lev 19:19). Though one can give to the injunction a moral sense tied to the importance of being separate from the world, nevertheless as Keil and Delitzsch observe, "all the symbolical, mystical, moral, and utilitarian reasons that have been supposed to lie at the foundation of these commands, are foreign to the spirit of the law" (1991, vol. 1, p. 422).

18. Francisco de Vitoria argues that a number of important Christian prohibitions cannot be established by natural law, that is, by discursive reflection and reasoning, but must be grounded in Scripture, "such as that usury and fornication and lying are evil" (Vitoria, 221, p. 221, Q 1, art 5).

19. The early Church recognized God's unknowability, that God's essence could never be understood. St. John Chrysostom, for example, states regarding those who attempt to scry the nature of God. "They are obstinately striving to know what God is in His essence. And I tell you that this is the ultimate madness. Do you wish to know why this is the very height of folly? I shall prove it to you from the prophets. Not only is it clear that the prophets do not what His
essence is but they do not even know how vast His wisdom is. Yet His essence does not come from His wisdom, but His wisdom comes from His essence? (Chrysostom, Homily 1, 1984, p. 59).

20. For a classical discussion of the distinction between the energy and the essence of God, see St. Basil the Great's Letter 234.

21. If one denies the existence of God, Protagoras is vindicated, in that, blind to God's existence, one is left only with the perspective of persons as self-conscious rational agents in terms of which all morality is by default constructed, applied, and critically assessed. Human persons by default become the final judges of the morally relevant; they become as if they were the gods of the universe.

22. As St. John Chrysostom observes, "As all men died through one, because that one sinned, so the whole female race transgressed, because the woman was in the transgression. Let her not however grieve. God hath given her no small consolation, that of childbearing. And if it be said that this is of nature, so is that also of nature; for not only that which is of nature has been granted, but also the bringing up of children" (Chrysostom, 1994, Homily IX on I Tim 2.11-15, vol. 13, p. 436).

23. Among the distinctive features of the traditional Christian approach to abortion is that no doctrine of double effect is employed, such that all abortions, even indirect abortions (i.e., not intended and only indirectly caused) undertaken to save the life of the mother, constitute a homicide. See Engelhardt, 2000, pp. 277-283.

24. The failure of those outside traditional Christianity to appreciate the evil of abortion attests to St. Paul's connection between right worship and right moral knowledge and action (Rom 1:22-28).

25. Fukuyama opines, "Much of Asia, for example, lacks religion per se as it is understood in the West - that is, as a system of revealed belief that originates from a transcendent deity. Consequently, practices such as abortion and infanticide (particularly female infanticide) have been widespread in many parts of Asia" (Fukuyama, 2000, p. 192). Without realizing it, Fukuyama advances the diagnosis articulated regarding wrongly-directed pagan reasoning given by St. Paul in his first chapter to the Romans.


27. The current dominant secular ethos is structured by postulates of practical reason incompatible with those Kant articulates in Kritik der praktischen Vernunft (1788) and thus represent a further radical secularization. The contemporary secular culture requires its participants publicly to speak and act (1) as if there were no God, and (2) as if there were no afterlife. In contrast, in the first and second Critiques, Kant recognizes that only by affirming God and immortality can practical rationality assume the harmony of the good and the right, as well as of the motivation and the justification of morality. As Kant puts it in both the first and the section editions of The Critique of Pure Reason, Now since we are necessarily constrained by reason to represent ourselves as belonging to such a world [a corpus mysticum of rational beings (A808=B836), the kingdom of grace (A812=B840) of Kant's intelligible world], while the senses present to us nothing but a world of appearances, we must assume that moral world to be a consequence of our conduct in the world of sense (in which no such connection between worthiness and happiness is exhibited), and therefore to be for us a future world. Thus God and a future life are two postulates which, according to the principles of pure reason, are inseparable from the obligation which that same reason imposes upon us (Kant, 1964, p. 639, A811=B829).
For an analysis of Kant's positions on these matters, see Engelhardt, 2000, chap. 2. The force of Kant's Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossom Vernunft (1793) is to reduce religion to morality, so as to reduce Christianity's doctrinal content to its inspiration of appropriate moral conduct, thus placing the philosophical significance of religion within the bounds of an immanent rationality. In this sense, for Kant there is only one true religion. Pure religious faith alone can found a universal church; for only [such] rational faith can be believed in and shared by everyone, where an historical faith grounded solely on facts, can extend its influence no further than tidings of it can reach, subject to circumstances of time and place and dependent upon the capacity [of men] to judge the credibility of such tidings. Yet, by reason of a peculiar weakness of human nature, pure faith can never be relied on as much as it deserves, that is, a church cannot be established on it alone (Kant, 1960, p. 94, AK VI, 102-3). Biographical evidence indicates that Kant himself was likely an agnostic (Kuehn, 2001).

28. Because the general affirmation of the good is integral to morality (i.e., acting morally involves at least affirming the good and the right), benevolence is integral to moral conduct. Nevertheless, interminable controversies arise as to the appropriate content of such benevolence.


29. Lee and Beckwith correctly appreciate that the liberal cosmopolitan ethic cannot be interpreted as committed to the equality of all human beings simpliciter, but only to those who are actual moral agents or who are socially accorded an equivalent moral status. Lee and Beckwith thus show why the secular liberal cosmopolitan ethos requires regarding human embryos and fetuses as not equal to human persons.

30. See, for example, St. John Chrysostom's Homily 20 on Ephesians.

31. The dominant secular culture confuses toleration (i.e., the forgoing of coercion against those with whom one does not agree religiously and/or morally) with acceptance of their positions (i.e., in the sense of affirming that the religious and moral views of others are on a par with one's own), so as to require that one respect not just the sinner, but also his sinful way of life.

Internet Resources

Yale Selected Library Resources for Bioethics
Bioethics -- Yale Selected Library and Internet Resources This guide was initially prepared for use by students of CSTS/TC 481 Bioethics, taught by Professor Arthur Galston in 1998 and 1999.

www.library.yale.edu/scilib/biol/bioethic.html

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... Course Title: Bioethics. Course Manager William F. May, Cary M. Maguire Professor of Ethics...

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Bioethics - A Third World Issue
Bioethics - A Third World Issue By Dr. Vandana Shiva NEW DELHI, India, July 30, 1997
(ENS) - In a recent article entitled, "The Bogus Debate on Bioethics," published in the journal
Biotechnology
online.sfsu.edu/~rone/GEessays/Bioethics.htm