



Junior Fellow, Jeremy Lagasse

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My name is Jeremy Lagasse and I am currently a senior enrolled at the Thomas More College of Liberal Arts in Merrimack New Hampshire. After completing sophomore year and the Rome Program I chose to become a Political Science major to study under Dr. Peter Sampo. As a native of the Granite State I find it a special privilege to find myself in Washington D.C. at the Culture of Life Foundation. As a Junior Fellow the work has been a means of supporting the understanding and defense of life in all of its stages, which is a deeply rewarding activity. The project that I chose to devote so much of my time to involves an examination of the history of ethics in medicine to better understand the origins of population control.

The Origins of Population Control

Part I: Ethics in Medicine: Shifting Regard for the Human Person

Ethics in medicine can be traced back to the ancient Greeks, since the Hippocratic Oath. Ethics in the practice of medicine has always had a sacred aspect to it which further developed with the rise of Christianity. For the Christian physician, whose prevalence increased with the burgeoning of the hospital after the Council of Nicaea,(1) the care of the patient is a directed expression of charity as a participation in Christ's example. There exists a profound relationship between Christ as the Divine Physician, who ministers to the whole person, and the human physician, who cares for the person in their bodily aspect. Acknowledgement of a person as a unity of body and spirit is a fundamental part of Christian consciousness.

The formulation of this perspective on the person gave rise to Personalism, defined as the acknowledgement of each individual human person as a being with both a material and a transcendent aspect different from all other entities. Man by virtue of his humanity is called to transcend the purely material realm, having been endowed with the ability to love and to be loved as "one which possesses a spiritual nature."(2) The Personalist school, which holds that inherent human dignity serves to ground the ethics of the physician, seeks to protect and preserve the whole human person. If man is regarded in his material aspect alone then he is regarded as without humanity, transcendence, and inherent human worth, i.e. dignity. Modern science tends to treat man as exclusively mundane, a practice which is inherited from a series of enlightenment and post-enlightenment thinkers. Thus in secularized medicine the question of the fullness of man's nature is no longer addressed.

When inherent human dignity is warped or disregarded, the door is opened to crimes against the human person for the sake of a "greater good." Many such crimes are the result of an active and demonic threat which man faces today,



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namely the ideology of population control, unleashed in various modalities throughout recent history. Despite the different forms, at its core population control makes manifest an understanding of the human person, which stems from a breakdown in the regard for individual human dignity observable in the history of ethics, especially in medicine.

If man, as a fallen creature, fails to acknowledge his own state he will inevitably try to mold an Eden tainted by concupiscence. To attempt to eliminate the fallenness in man is merely to attack its symptoms and remake the garden with feeble human hands in a twisted image of its former grandeur. Such an attempt would try to abolish weakness, illness, sin, and death. Even pre-Christian Plato points to a fall to explain the experience of frailty and incompleteness that are part of the human condition.⁽³⁾ As a fallen creature man is in need of care and of the modes of caring are medicine, therapy, faith and virtue. When the history of ethics in mainstream medicine is examined, with the exception of modernity onward, there is no desire to do away with man's fallen condition but rather an attempt to embrace the individual patient in all their weakness and vulnerability. The Hippocratic Oath, as the first organized ethical creed in medicine, emphasized the patient-physician relationship as something sacred, not as an act of idol worship but one of respect for human dignity.

The medical ethics tradition can be traced from at least 500 B.C. in Greece with the Hippocratic Oath,⁽⁴⁾ through Claudius Galen and the Roman Empire, Muslim medicine with Avicenna, the Hebrew tradition with Maimonides,⁽⁵⁾ medieval Europe, and Thomas Percival in England.⁽⁶⁾ In the East the Chinese Code of Lao Tse and the Hindu Code of Brahma also acknowledge the essential person-to-person relationship involved in the medical act.⁽⁷⁾ The West received its particular understanding of the principles of medicine, according to Dr. Edmund Pellegrino, the current Council Chairman of the President's Council on Bioethics, from the writings of Claudius Galen. Dr. Pellegrino points out that "He [Galen] essayed a synthesis of the Hippocratic teachings with elements of Christianity and the philosophy of Aristotle. This Hippocratic-Galenic system preserved in the monasteries of Spain, France, and Italy provided the raw material for the teaching of medicine when it emerged as a university discipline in the early Middle Ages."⁽⁸⁾

The Christian influence on ethics in medicine stemmed from the emphasis on healing in the gospels through the miracles of Christ and in the priestly vocation. Christianity was compatible with medicine because the body was viewed as a gift, united with the soul, and endowed by its creator with significance. Historically Christianity gave rise to the first hospitals and hospices with the understanding that all men must be treated as if each were Christ himself.⁽⁹⁾ This Christian interpretation of man's worth is not, however, mutually exclusive of a phenomenological understanding of man which helps to explain the dignity of the human person. As Kenneth Schmitz states "Just as the human person is not formless, so too, the human dignity that finds its source in the uniqueness of personal presence also contains the dignity of the human form."⁽¹⁰⁾ The substance of the human person, as an acknowledged reality, serves as the basis for the dignity



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of the individual human person. This understanding emerges in anthropology under the name “Personalism.” Personalism expresses, as Karol WojtyBa (Pope John Paul II) once said, “[A] belief in the primordial uniqueness of the human being, and this in the basic irreducibility of the human being to the natural world.”(11) Further, Thomas D. Williams states that “[A]n individual represents a single unit in a homogeneous set, whereas a person is characterized by his uniqueness and irreplaceability.”(12) Personalism, as part of the language introduced by phenomenology first through Edmund Husserl, speaks to the modern age which is almost wholly detached from the language of medieval thinkers like St. Thomas Aquinas.

Richard John Neuhaus, a proponent of Personalism, makes the distinction that “‘Human dignity’ may suggest the collective and include efforts such as taking technological charge of the evolution of the human species. ‘The dignity of the human person’ places the accent on the individual, albeit, to be sure, the individual situated in community.”(13) In the first portion of this quote a direct reference is being made not only to modern advances in science and technology but also to the questions of Darwinian Natural Selection and the pseudo-science of Eugenics. These attempts to explain and control the natural order are the result of an earlier shift in thinking toward positivism and empiricism. With the irruption of Newtonian physics the realm of the transcendent began to take a backseat to the revolutionary efforts to explain reality in terms of laws of causation. This new positivistic world-view took hold and eventually influenced thinkers such as Berkeley and Hume from the British Empiricist school and Descartes from the Rationalist school. Descartes put forth his guiding principle of certitude in his *Discourse on Method* which in effect states that anything that can be known must possess the like demonstrability of a thing known in arithmetic or geometry. The implications for such a view are staggering.

The effects of positivism also reached political thinkers such as John Locke and Thomas Hobbes. The common thread which can be traced throughout this very brief overview is the characteristic loss of transcendence that pervaded the thought of each of these men. Particularly relevant for this inquiry is the work of Thomas Hobbes who, in his *Leviathan*, proclaimed the life of man to be “[S]olitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.”(14) For Hobbes man is a machine with a soul that is just a gaseous component of the body and whose uncontrollable desire for power only ceases at death. Man for Hobbes was in the perpetual state of war “of all against all.” The solution he proposed was a society constructed for the protection of man’s individual good, no longer emphasizing the common good. This concept of the war “of all against all” and Hobbes’ proposed solution causes the world to no longer look for fulfillment in community but in the satisfaction of private desires and the “social good.”

The regard for the human person as once held in Greek medicine was preserved and elevated by Christian consciousness. Human dignity, best understood through Personalism, served as a central consideration in medicine because the person was the primary concern. The Personalist school was abandoned, however, because it could not facilitate the “scientific approach” to reality. The human person went



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from being understood as unique from all others, created in the image and likeness of God, to a machine whose origin is material. “Man” is no longer the word used to describe the being under whose dominion the world was placed but rather to describe mere members of a species. This distortion in the understanding of man can only be understood if it is seen as a movement in history and not a spontaneous event. Thereby the violent overthrow of the human good by the societal good can be followed to its origins. Tracing the distortion in the understanding of man by examining ethics in medicine and politics reveals the nature of the task ahead, namely to redeem the person in the eyes of the world.

In Part II the power orgy that erupted onto the world stage in the form of population control will be dealt with as a threat that can be overcome by a new commitment to Personalism. Observing the origins of population control is important as it will reveal the nature of this particular nightmare ages in the making.

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