



COLLOQUIA

Friday, November 12 | 10:45 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

The Joyful Light of the World: Catholic Social Teaching and Journalism

What does Catholic social teaching have to say to a secular culture? What does a distinctly Catholic journalism look like, and what is its relationship with the magisterium? This panel brings together contributors to *The Lamp*, a new Catholic magazine, to discuss the various overlapping dimensions in which the Church's social teaching can be brought to bear on the problems of modern life. The panelists will discuss the relationship between Catholic social teaching and journalism and address questions ranging from the nature and meaning of work to the problems of community and atomization.

Brandon McGinley, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

Mary Kate Skehan, Penguin Books

Robert Wyllie, Ashland University

Matthew Walther, *The Lamp Magazine*

Morality and the Social and Psychological Sciences

“The Neuroscience of Morality: Scientific Discovery and Social Construction”

Jeffrey Bishop, Saint Louis University

All science, especially human behavioral science, depends on the prior beliefs of the culture from which it emerges. This presentation emerges from a book project, *Biopolitics After Neuroscience: Morality and the Economy of Virtue* (Bishop, Lysaught, and Michel, Bloomsbury 2022), which won the Expanded Reason Award in 2021 from the Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI Vatican Foundation.

Biopolitics After Neuroscience argues that the neuroscientific study of morality—virtue and vice—must imagine morality to be a kind of economic transaction; moral behavior in neuroscience is akin to economic behavior. Put differently, the moral anthropology—the model for human behavior—that animates neuroscience began as *homo economicus*, and has mutated into *homo capitalus*—a being whose actions are the result of the “hidden side of everything.”

This presentation will argue that neuroscience is the fusion of two distinct sciences, neurobiology, on the one hand, and behavioral science, on the other. I will describe the philosophical foundations of all behavioral science to illustrate the implicit beliefs that animate the contemporary study of human behavior, particularly as it applies to “neuroscience.” When a neuroscientist says, “Neuroscience says

that human morality is X”, what is being said? Where does “neuroscience” exist? In the neuroscientist’s mind? In the neuroscientist’s papers? In neuroscience textbooks? This presentation will argue that neuroscience, indeed all behavioral science, is an emergent phenomenon of culture, and that the “discoveries” of the “neuroscience of human moral behavior” are not so much discovered, as they are constructed by the culture’s own values.

“Shifted Baselines for Human Moral Nature”

Darcia Narvaez, University of Notre Dame

Over the course of civilization, colonization, and capitalism, the dominant culture has shifted away from a wellness-informed cycle to one that induces psychological and physical trauma. Part of this is due to the worldview undergirding philosophical and political positions. Colonizing culture has imposed its domineering but narrow and life-degrading structures on virtually all lifeforms, thwarting the biodiversity that was the direction of evolutionary processes. Morality has also been degraded, particularly under western enlightenment preferences. Understanding the high malleability of the human organisms when young helps us discern the importance of restoring our species’ original cycle of connected cooperative companionship that not only ameliorates the destructive effects of competitive detachment but facilitates wellness, including optimal moral health.

“Humanity’s Evolved Nest: the Neurobiological Building Blocks of Sociomoral Development”

Mary S. Tarsha, University of Notre Dame

Sociomoral capacities such as compassion, empathy, and cooperative sociality are critical for both individual and societal thriving. Converging empirical evidence demonstrates that these capacities are not hardwired but shaped through early life experiences and supported by humanity’s evolved developmental system. When humanity’s evolved nest is provided, optimal normal neurophysiological and psychological development—including sociomoral development—takes place. The components of the evolved nest include soothing perinatal experiences; breastfeeding on request; affectionate touch void of harsh touch (corporal punishment); responsiveness from caregivers including multiple allomothers (frequent care by responsive individuals other than mothers such as fathers and grandmothers); multiage self-directed free play in nature; and high social embeddedness which includes a positive, welcoming social climate and nature connection. Data demonstrating effects of the nest on moral development are discussed. A wellness informed pathway that includes the evolved nest results in our species’ compassionate nature. A trauma-inducing pathway, such as that of the USA, results in sub-optimal psychological and physiological development, including alterations in sociomoral development. Returning to humanity’s evolved developmental system is an imperative step for fostering compassionate sociomoral development, the foundation of cooperative communities.

Death with True Dignity

“Death with Dignity? On the Form of Bioethics After God”

Ethan Schimmoeller, Memorial Hospital

The sense of human dignity invoked in favor of the right to die fits only too well with secular bioethics that has moved beyond good and evil. This paper will examine the typical end of life discourse bent on maximizing autonomy. With the liberal individual at its heart, bioethics envisions overcoming death and Christian morality through the triumph of autonomy, locating the dignified death close to that of Nietzsche’s overman. The form of bioethics thus appears to use institutional and intellectual clout to bend public discourse fully onto immanent, postmodern ground.

“Death with Dignity”

Randall Smith, University of St. Thomas

The term “death with dignity” has entered into common parlance in contemporary American culture. But what is commonly meant by that term in a culture devoted to autonomous, expressive individualism is very different from what would have been understood by that term in classical Greek and Roman culture or from the understanding held by the Catholic moral tradition.

In this paper, I examine some of the attitudes toward “death with dignity” in our contemporary secular culture and contrast these with the view of “a good death” that one finds in the Christian tradition, especially in light of the Church’s teaching about Christ’s death and resurrection. I will discuss practices that used to be common in Church communities to help provide the dying a good death, but sadly no longer are.

“Protecting the Dignity of Unrepresented Patients with Disabilities: A Second-Personal Approach to Surrogate Decision Making”

Audra Goodnight, Villanova University

In this paper, I reject the implicit assumption made by death with dignity laws, namely, that it is the autonomous decision making that makes dying an act with dignity. Instead, I suggest that to die with dignity involves dying as a human person whose dignity and worth is recognized by others through relationship with them. To argue for this relational account of human dignity, I explain the available options for unrepresented persons, who not only have no one to represent them but also have no advanced directives.

Being vs. Becoming Human: Bioethics and Dignity

“Healthcare, Dignity and the Incarnation”

Jose Bufill, Bur Oak Foundation

I would like to offer an overview of the evolution of usage of the term "dignity" - how the term has been employed over time - to help define the sources of current confusion / controversy in the use of "dignity" in contemporary bioethics.

“In Defense of Dignity in Contemporary Bioethical Discourse”

Timothy Furlan, University of St Thomas and Harvard Medical School

Given how important the concept of human dignity seems to be from a historical perspective, it may seem surprising that a number of contemporary ethicists have called for its removal from bioethics discourse. In this paper, then, I would like to present and critique the positions of Pinker, Macklin, and others and argue that bioethicists should not be too hasty in eliminating the concept from bioethical discourse.

“Human Gene Editing and Human Dignity”

Richard Doerflinger, University of Notre Dame

Some claim that human gene editing, including germ-line modification, will advance human dignity by enhancing our freedom to improve and remake ourselves. United Nations declarations warn that the opposite may be true, but they do not explain what they mean by dignity. That richer meaning is supplied and defended by some Catholic documents and the writings of O. Carter Snead, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Gilbert Meilaender. The report “Beyond Therapy” by the President’s Council on Bioethics also proposes ways in which more of what makes us human may be lost than gained by efforts to produce the “better” human being.

Dignity in the Dock

“A Jurisprudence of Human Dignity”

Thomas Donnelly, Loyola University, and Rev. Javier del Castillo, Vicar of Opus Dei (Midwest)

Respect for human dignity both limits society’s juridical actions and guides those actions. It delimits the boundaries of legitimate court action and gives direction to lawyers and judges. Upholding human dignity limits the “arbitrariness and the excesses of the agents of the State....” It also provides the “criterion for the prosecution and punishment of those actions which represent the most serious attacks against the dignity and integrity of the human person.” Human dignity is protected when (1) law serves humanity by safeguarding the dignity of the person and (2) it punishes no more than necessary.

“Reframing the Crime of Sex Abuse as an Offense to Human Dignity”

Rev. Jordi Pujol, Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

Pope Francis has recently promulgated the Apostolic Constitution "Pascite gregem Dei," reforming Book VI of the Code of Canon Law, which is dedicated to penal sanctions in the Church. There is one significant change on the classification of the crime of child abuse by priests from the “special obligations of clerics” into the section of crimes against "human life, dignity and liberty,” thus reframing the crime of sex abuse by priests as an offence to human dignity. I explore the itinerary of this change and show how it constitutes a mentality shift within the law of the Church regarding this crime.

“Human Dignity and Guns: A Catholic Moral Analysis of Guns, Their Use, Ownership, and Regulation”

Tobias Winwright, Saint Louis University

According to the Gun Violence Archive, there have been 260 mass shootings so far in 2021 in the US. Yet the increasing number of mass shootings are a fraction of annual gun deaths. There are almost 40,000 intentional and unintentional gun deaths annually, with roughly 90 daily and 10 of them being children, and around 2/3 of these gun deaths are suicides. There are at present more firearms than citizens in the US. This paper offers a Catholic moral analysis of guns—their use, ownership, and regulation—in light of human dignity, drawing on *Pacem in Terris*, *Dignitatis Humanae*, and other sources.

Are All Men Created Equal?

“Dignity Disputed: Gay Marriage, Fundamental Rights, and American Constitutionalism” **Connor Ewing, University of Toronto**

Even as the Supreme Court’s 2015 decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*—finding a constitutional right for same-sex couples to marry—marked the high-water point of its dignity jurisprudence, the case also brought the first dissenting opinion to explicitly take issue with the majority’s use and understanding of human dignity. Using this disagreement as a point of departure, this paper argues that dignity serves as a lens, at once revelatory and obscuring, through which the American constitutional tradition is rendered comprehensible. But far from speaking univocally, dignity supports multiple constitutional traditions that exist in considerable tension with one another.

“Advancing Dignity: The Civil War Amendment’s Contribution to Our Nation’s Creed” **Shawn Sheehy, Holtzman Vogel Baran Tochinsky Josefiak**

The Framers of our Constitution did much to advance the cause of liberty and dignity for all. The Civil War Amendments were that generation’s contribution to the constitutional task of advancing the cause of liberty and dignity for all. This paper examines the Civil War Amendments, the concept of liberty advanced in the Amendments, the debates surrounding the Amendments, and what we can learn from them today.

“Common Good Constitutionalism and Human Dignity: Which Common Good? Whose Human Dignity”

Rev. Stefanus Hendrianto, S.J., Pontifical Gregorian University

Adrian Vermeule’s proposal on “common-good constitutionalism” has provoked many critical commentaries. The crux of the matter is a lack of conceptual clarity on the meaning of common good constitutionalism. Moreover, it was not clear which “common good” that Vermeule was advocating. Whether it is Aristotelian-Aquinas tradition of the common good, or New Natural Law’s common good, this paper proposed that linking the proposal with the concept of human dignity might help to clarify the nature of common good constitutionalism. Nevertheless, there must also be clarity on whose concept of human dignity can be attached to common good constitutionalism.

The Glory of God: Dignity in the Church Fathers and Doctors

“Discerning the Majesty: St. Ephrem the Syrian on the Maturation of Human Dignity”

Andrew Hayes, University of St. Thomas

St. Ephrem the Syrian’s Commentary on Genesis, together with several of his other protological texts, develops the theme that the human person is made for the perception of the divine majesty. Human capacity to discern this majesty, and the creator-creature distinction it implies, turns out to be crucial for Ephrem’s understanding of spiritual maturation. Moreover, when applied to Ratzinger’s insight that errors about the divinity are also errors about human divinization, Ephrem’s position reveals a God capable of simultaneous intimacy and transcendence, and thus a humanity analogously capable of, and majestically perfected in, the same paradoxical combination.

“*Capax Dei*: Trinitarian Deification According to St. Thomas Aquinas”

Theresa Ryland, Pontifical Faculty of the Immaculate Conception at the Dominican House of Studies

What is the ultimate dignity of the human person? The ultimate dignity of the human person is to be *capax Dei*, that is, capable of receiving God. In the reception of grace, which is nothing less than the Triune Life of God, each human person becomes progressively likened to their Triune source and end in a movement called deification. In this paper presentation, I will explore the metaphysically thick conception of human dignity within the theological anthropology of St. Thomas Aquinas, showing that the full extension of a person’s perfectibility in second act amplifies the reach of their natural powers, bringing them into a perfective and connatural communion. With St. Thomas, I will argue that this likening to the divine nature in its full Trinitarian dimensionality is supremely fitting for the rational nature.

“The Patristic Roots of Human Dignity”

Nathaniel Peters, The Morningside Institute

The idea that all human beings—not just a certain caste or class of society—have a kind of sacredness or dignity appears first in the encounter between Christians and the Roman world around them. This paper will draw on the work of Kyle Harper and C. Kavin Rowe to show the Christian

roots of human dignity in that encounter, especially as it occurred in the sermons of the Cappadocian Fathers with respect to slavery, sexual morality, and the poor.