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Dignity of Life: Moral Values in a Changing Society

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from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things." Insofar as we conceive ourselves and other things of the world as part of a system that is infinite and logically connected, we know God. And this knowledge gives rise to satisfaction of mind. This pleasure derived from the idea of God as cause of himself is the "intellectual love of God." And intuition, Spinoza's "third kind of knowledge," is the sole source of such love.

Father Terrenal defends the thesis that intuition, as understood by Spinoza, is not simply more excellent than reason, but is qualitatively different inasmuch as the objects of the two activities are different. God as *natura naturans* is the object of intuition, and as *natura naturata* is the object of reason. The former is "cause of himself," is intuitively self-conscious, and possesses an "intellectual" love of himself. The finite mind is capable of reaching an understanding of God as *natura naturans* by way of arguments for God's existence, which are developments of an inborn truth. The latter truth is the universally intuited judgment that God is the *ens perfectissimum*. The elucidation of this generates in the finite mind the intuition of God as *ens realissimum*. And the finite mind possessing intellectual love of God becomes aware of its own eternity as part of God's own idea of himself, which is the mind of God precisely as cause of himself. This is the ultimate basis of the judgment that intuition is generically different from reason.

It is not difficult to predict that the sales of this book will be less than brisk. And the few who read the book will derive inspiration for their personal lives only at the cost of the hard work of study. In addition some might be more strongly persuaded than before that there were philosophers of high merit before Kant's revolution. Authors and editors might also take note of the excellent job of printing done by the Clavano Offset Press, Cebu City.

Francis E. Reilly

DIGNITY OF LIFE: MORAL VALUES IN A CHANGING SOCIETY.
By Charles J. McFadden, O.S.A. Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1976. 296 pages.

Charles J. McFadden, O.S.A., is well-known in the English-speaking world for his book on *Medical Ethics* for the nursing and medical professions, which reached a fifth edition in 1961 and went into many printings (fourth in 1966). Writing in the relatively peaceful climate of the pre-Vatican II era he was readily accepted as a spokesman for the traditional Catholic position. Before the age of pluralism his teaching reflected common Catholic thought on medico-moral problems.

In the limited areas of controversy that engaged the moral theologians

before Vatican II, his opinions were nearly always on the side of conservatism. However, the world of the moral theologian has changed so much since the Council that a book on medico-moral problems today becomes a challenge that should make even a veteran such as McFadden hesitate, especially if he intends to follow the well-worn traditional path.

His intention, clearly spelled out in the foreword, is *not* to write another text on ethics or morals, *not* to present a scientific and technical exposition of various topics in the fields of psychology, medicine, physiology or law. Rather he professes "to present on the reasonably popular level an adequate knowledge of the scientific nature of many acts that are literally tearing our society apart at this time and then to present an application of the moral principles that are relevant to an evaluation of these actions" (p. 10).

McFadden treats of the family, conjugal love, genetic engineering, family planning, abortion, sterilization, the problems connected with the preservation of life in a world where modern medicine can keep patients alive, in some fashion or other, almost indefinitely. The limitations on man's freedom vis-à-vis his own bodily integrity, the rights of the sick person, and the problems of terminal illness and death complete the table of contents.

Much research is evidenced and the book has a wealth of up-to-date information on various human experiments, cloning, test-tube babies, sperm banks, artificial inseminations, details on "How to Produce a Male Child," and "How to Produce a Female Child," Genetic Screening, on the current abortion controversy, etc., etc. For making this information available, all readers will be grateful to the author.

However, there is room for strong disagreement with the manner in which McFadden approaches the moral problems of family planning and sterilization. Nowhere does he indicate that there is a strong dissenting opinion which cannot be passed over in silence without the writer being accused of intellectual dishonesty.

He anguishes over the future of the poor in Bangladesh which he visited. He is frightened by the thought of Bangladesh near the year 2000 with a population bigger than that of the whole United States crowded in a space as big as Arkansas, with one-third of the land often under water. He is acutely aware of the danger of such an uncontrolled population growth, but when it comes to the means of solving the problem he finds himself in a terrible moral dilemma.

His honesty as a scholar leads him to admit that "various surveys show a very high rate of failure for all of the safe-period methods, used either individually or in conjunction with each other, as compared to any of the more commonly used contraceptives" (p. 95). He reports that one survey maintains that 38 percent of the women who rely exclusively on the rhythm method became pregnant within the first year. "But even if the above statistic is exaggerated, the unreliability of the safe-period methods is a fact

of life which undoubtedly accounts for an increasing number of Catholic women having recourse to contraceptives" (p. 96). McFadden is actually more pessimistic than other contemporary writers who believe that there has been a definite improvement in the scientific reliability of the safe-period methods. Dr. John Marshall, for example (*The Tablet*, 8 May 1976), stated, "As a result (of strict scientific trials) the International Planned Parenthood Federation now rate the temperature method as second after the pill and before other contraceptive methods in terms of reliability in the avoidance of pregnancy."

After this bad news about the unreliability and high failure of safe-period methods McFadden looks ahead and makes a very discouraging forecast, built on his research, to the effect that "just as the next decade will probably see no essentially new contraceptives, so, too, will there be little new knowledge which will help to establish a greater reliability for the safe-period methods" (p. 101).

McFadden is aware that with this additional discouraging forecast, "the reader may feel that this chapter has struck a rather pessimistic note on family planning . . . the relative unreliability of the various safe-period methods and the unlikelihood of any research which will benefit the latter method in the near future. But such are the facts. Our duty, as we see it (to use a popular expression), is 'to tell it like it is,' not to concoct fairy tales" (*ibid.*).

Such honesty is refreshing but it is very discouraging to discover that there is not an equally honest approach to the question of the morality of using artificial, non-abortifacient methods of avoiding pregnancy. McFadden takes the strict traditional position, ignoring all the controversy in the Church, passing over in silence the various pastorals of National Conferences of Bishops which interpreted or modified the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*, likewise ignoring the theologians who have questioned various presuppositions of the encyclical, including the difficulty inherent in reconciling it with the teaching of Vatican II (*Gaudium et Spes*).

More helpful in every way is the approach of the Irish theologian, Dennis Callaghan (*Furrow* 28 [April 1977]) on "*Humanae Vitae* in Context," wherein he condemns the "hardliners" who merely cite the negative part of the encyclical and do not consider the force of statements such as that of the French Hierarchy (N.B., he does not feel bound to follow the pastoral of the Irish Hierarchy!). The French Bishops allow a "lesser evil" approach to justify the use of artificial means of contraception for couples caught in a conflict situation, torn between the obligation of expressing conjugal love and the obligation of responsible parenthood which, for them, precludes another pregnancy.

Callaghan calls the French Hierarchy's approach "an authoritative part of the spectrum of objective or 'given' criteria which should guide Christian

consciences" (p. 234). He adds that "the person who denies this validity is not giving a fair picture of the whole context of the moral norm and does not really appreciate how moral norms come to be formulated in a community" (*ibid.*).

Moved by pastoral concern for the poor couples who have only the admittedly unreliable safe-period method permitted to them, McFadden makes three weak efforts to solve their terrible crisis of conscience. He first suggests that contraception might *only* be a venial sin; "certainly it does not come close to the degree of immorality found in the direct destruction of human life, as is found in abortion and murder" (p. 93). But this "only venial sin" approach does no honor to a moralist. McFadden then suggests that moral theology develop the principles relevant to the invincibly perplexed conscience. He ridicules the old textbook example and gives an "adult example" of a 38-year old woman with 6 to 8 children, existing close to the starvation level, married to a nonbeliever who will abandon her if she does not use contraceptives. He says that he has "seen the heartbreak and tears of mothers who wanted to remain in the Church and to raise their children in the faith but who were refused the sacraments because they had chosen what they (but not their confessor) thought was the 'lesser of the two evils'" (p. 94). At this point McFadden might have taken his stand with the poor woman, citing as authority the pastoral of the French Hierarchy who explicitly offer the "lesser evil" approach. Instead McFadden leaves the moral problem unresolved and ends by asking, "I wonder what Christ would have said to such a woman?" That is not very helpful in forming a conscience!

His third pastoral effort to solve the moral dilemma consists in asking for some "development of the commonly accepted principle in moral theology that when a person is in a sincere state of ignorance on a specific matter . . . we should remain silent. Interference will only place the person in a state of 'bad faith' and cause the presently 'material sin' to become 'formal sin.' There is perhaps some food for thought here for missionaries working in pagan lands" (*ibid.*). Two comments seem to be in order here. First, the doctrine on leaving people in good faith seems to be already quite well developed. Second, the mass media, as evidenced here in a part of the "third world," make it very difficult to find people, even in "pagan lands," in invincible ignorance about the official teaching so many years after the publication of *Humanae Vitae*. So, the third pastoral solution offered by McFadden appears rather pointless. He seems to lack the courage of his compassion.

It would have been very helpful to cite the words of the Congregation of the Clergy to Cardinal O'Boyle of Washington, as found in *L'Osservatore Romano* of 20 May 1971, apropos of the *Humanae Vitae* controversy. The Congregation, "acting at the instance of the Holy Father," made clear that the encyclical is "an authentic expression of this Magisterium and is to be understood in accord with the dogmatic tradition of the Church concerning

the assent due to the teachings of the Ordinary Magisterium" (ibid.). Then, the Congregation adds a very important statement with profound pastoral implications in full accord with the compassion that Paul VI showed touchingly in *Humanae Vitae*.

"Particular circumstances surrounding an objectively evil human act, while they cannot make it objectively virtuous, can make it inculpable, diminished in guilt or subjectively defensible" (ibid.).

Surely these words of a Roman Congregation, at the instance of Pope Paul VI, should be part of the decision-making process. Those who profess to help people form their conscience on this agonizing problem of contraception should aid them in weighing the particular circumstances surrounding their choice of contraception which might make it "inculpable, diminished in guilt or subjectively defensible."

This statement caused much surprise in ecclesiastical circles, but it was most welcome "as a balancing statement between two extremes" (Callaghan, ibid.). Spelling out in clear language the traditional distinction between objective wrongness and objective culpability, it should not have caused such surprise. But the fact is that many fastened on the negative aspect, the prohibition contained in *Humanae Vitae*, and forgot the Papal plea for compassion and understanding, and the centuries-old teaching of the Church on the complex question of forming one's conscience.

When McFadden equates contraception and sterilization he only muddies the waters, since all papal documents observe the distinction between the two. Pius XII called the anovulant pill's action "a temporary sterilization," but McFadden would say that "Withdrawal, a condom, or a diaphragm produces sterility for a brief period of a time" (p. 87). He insists that we should "no longer use the term 'contraception' . . . we should simply refer to STERILIZATION" (ibid.). There is enough confusion in the area of family planning and responsible parenthood without confusing the terminology.

The conservative position taken by the author ruling out all forms of artificial insemination even by the husband (p. 63) is predictable. His rejection of all contraceptive sterilization without exception is likewise predictable (p. 229) after what we have seen. Unfortunately, he is again unfair in failing to mention the dissent which is so widespread today that it can be said by one of the leading American moralists, Richard A. McCormick, S.J., that "most, or at least many, members of the theological community believe that direct sterilization is not always wrong. The official position, however, is that it is never justified" ("Notes on Moral Theology," *Theological Studies* 37 [March 1976]: 84). If this is also one of the issues that "is literally tearing our society apart at this time" the author should have indicated that many, if not most, of his peers offer a different solution. He could have indicated that we are dealing with non-infallible teaching of the official Church. As such it is not necessarily immutable and, as happened

in other areas of dissent down through the centuries, it might be revised.

When many theologians disagree with official non-infallible Church teaching, we should reflect on the words of Yves Congar, O.P. (*Theology Digest* 25 [Spring 1977]: 15–20) writing on “The Magisterium and Theologians – A Short History.” He concludes an authoritative and thought-provoking article by asking for a rethinking of the relationship between theologians and the magisterium to prevent the magisterium from being isolated from the living reality of the Church. The theologians have their own original charism and service to the Church that must be recognized. “Theologians should not be regarded only from the point of view of their dependence on the magisterium” (p. 20). There must be a hierarchy of values wherein we put the truth, “the apostolic faith which has been handed down, confessed, preached and celebrated, at the top, and under it, at its service, we must place the magisterium of apostolic ministry and the research and teaching of theologians, together with the belief of the faithful. In this way the differentiated, organically articulated work of magisterium and theologians reflects the life of the Church” (ibid.).

When the ecclesial role of theologians is thus recognized, an author such as McFadden will not hesitate to acknowledge their dissenting voices, which sometimes come through loud and clear as in the question at hand.

In spite of my serious criticism of the author, I still would recommend the book for the wealth of information on details of the research going on in modern medicine, in areas of overriding concern to all theologians.

Gerald W. Healy

DRAMATICS AT THE ATENEO DE MANILA: A HISTORY OF THREE DECADES, 1921–1952. By Miguel A. Bernad, S.J. Manila: Ateneo Alumni Association, 1977. 303 pages.

The Western concept of drama and theater entered the Philippines through religious hands in the late sixteenth century, and Wenceslao E. Retana, in *El teatro en Filipinas desde sus origenes hasta 1898* (Madrid: Librería General de Victoriano Suárez, 1910) credits the Jesuits with being “los verdaderos difundidores de cultura literaria,” since it was in their schools that theatrical presentations were first used as a means of instruction (p. 17). The development of drama in the Philippines has been definitely influenced by this, the fact that dramatics has always been a part of Jesuit pedagogy. This has determined not only the frequency of stage presentations and their purpose and role as co-curricular activities, but also the choice of plays read, performed, and used as models by students, as well as the theatrical styles and methods they learned or were exposed to. Since many of these students