articolo

A Response to Irreligious Bioethics

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Introduction

The relationship between faith and reason is a hot topic today. From the debates on evolution and the origin of the universe, to the question of cloning and the coverage of contraceptives, we witness heated debates on many fronts. Since the tragic event of 9-11, a number of writers like Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hutchings have targeted religion as the cause of existing woes and conflicts. In bioethics, the place of religion has also been questioned. I have described the early religious roots of bioethics and its eventual and gradual secularization[1].

Continually, there is a certain prejudice that religion is divisive and should be looked upon with a hermeneutics of suspicion. Timothy Murphy recently published the article "In Defense of Irreligious Bioethics" in *The American Journal of Bioethics*, and claims that bioethics should avoid religious input in its normative analysis[2]. In this number of the journal, Murphy's article was followed by over a dozen responses, which he ended with a rejoinder. He argues that bioethics can function with reason alone (irreligious bioethics) to the exclusion of religious methods.

This article will critique his proposal by situating "irreligious bioethics" in framework of faith and reason in bioethics. Murphy's position is an inheritance of an Enlightenment bias which considers religious input as detrimental to the well-being of society. His emphasis on irreligious bioethics as a normative approach is compared to the Catholic method of bioethics which begins with natural law reason and is later confirmed by faith. Murphy has put too much reliance on reason, and underestimates the presence of rationality within religion and theology. While he is correct that reason can have a function to check the possible pathologies of religion, we take him to task of not recognizing the possible excesses of reason and how religion can help purify it.

Faith and reason in bioethics

To better position irreligious bioethics, we can look at the figure below delineating the interplay between faith (religion) and reason in bioethics today[3]. In this Venn diagram, the two circles represent the place of faith and reason in bioethics. Methods that accept revelation and theology as the only source of bioethics would be religious bioethics in a pure form (F). This is the approach of some fundamentalist Protestant groups and Orthodox Christians and Tristram Engelhardt's approach after his conversion to Orthodox Christianity[4]. The two circles intersect, faith and reason meeting (F+R). The intersection represents the use of reason in bioethics without excluding the possibility of faith and theology. The Catholic approach based on Thomistic natural law is the prime example of the methodical synthesis of reason and faith. Other Christian and Jewish groups often argue with reason presupposing faith but are, in general, less developed and less successful in synthesizing the two, tending to one extreme or the other. Under this category are natural ethics, philosophy of nature,

virtue and Hippocratic ethics and casuistry which flourished in recent centuries. The virtue ethics of Pellegrino and Thomasma and the personalist approach of Elio Sgreccia are more recent attempts at reason-based ethics without an explicit appeal to transcendence while not excluding it either[5].

The exclusive use of reason without accepting the possibility of faith is properly the domain of secular or irreligious bioethics (R). It can further be classified under agnostic (?G) or atheist (~G), the former declaring that one can practice ethics as if God did not exist, the latter affirming the non-existence of God as a principle in bioethics.

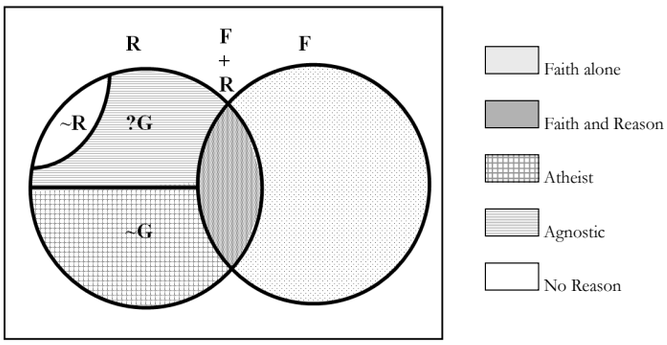

Fig. 1 Venn Diagram representing different secular and religious approaches to bioethics.
F = Faith, R = Reason, G = God, ?G = Agnostic, ~G = Atheist, ~R = no reason

Another possible division is along the lines of content-filled or content-less bioethics — the former corresponds with the ideals of secular humanism and its convictions on secularism, humanism and liberalism; the latter holds that secular bioethics is without content, purely contractual, procedural and minimalist. This latter approach originated with Engelhardt, who denies any possibility of rationally arriving at any consensus in bioethics and thus proposes a return to the faith-only approach (F). According to him, the search for a canonical, normative and rational grounding of bioethics has failed. He denies the role of reason as a means of achieving any consensus at all (~R). All that is left is a content-less neutral ground of agreement where consensus and procedural ethics take place. In this framework, tolerance and peace are the desired virtues, and the condition of possibility of agreement and principle of autonomy (permission) are the methods of engagement for moral strangers[6].

Correspondingly, irreligious bioethics can be defined as a methodological approach that rejects any role for religion or any reference to the transcendent. As seen, the belief that morality can be derived from reason alone, especially in contraposition to religion, is based on modern philosophical currents, at times derogatorily known as foundationalism, which include rationalism represented by Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz, the British empiricism of Hume and Locke, and to a certain extent, Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*[7]. Irreligious bioethics can be further classified into reason-based (R) and anti-reason (~R). The former is the product of the Enlightenment belief that one can arrive at some form of shared morality by human reason alone, while the latter is the post-modern, nihilist contention by Engelhardt and others that reason has failed to provide such a common morality.

Above all, irreligious bioethics is definitively suspicious of religious input. Two overlapping strains reject the contribution of religion in secular bioethics: the agnostic (?G), which posits that the question of God should not come into play in ethics, and the atheist (~G), which claims that the foundation of ethics is the non-existence of God. To agnostics, bioethics is secular in that its methodological approach should be *esti Deus non daretur* (as if God did not exist). In itself, it is not necessarily antagonistic to religion and is probably the attitude of most participants in the early days of bioethics, even after contemporary philosophical language was adapted. The agnostic position is secular in the sense that it believes in the separation of church and state, is neutral regarding the contributions of religion and demands that these be recast in the common language of philosophy. It is more indifferent than hostile to religion and is for those who prefer a bioethics independent of any special moral, ideological or faith tradition.

The Italian secular ethicist Lomardi Vallauri maintains that the question of God and his existence is irrelevant to ethics. He provocatively declares, "killing your son is always morally wrong, even if God commands it"[8]. Murphy follows this tradition of the Enlightenment when he writes,

"By comparison, if what is good because God declares it so, for no reason external to himself, then there really is no standard except God's choice, and human morality would depend on discerning God's fiats. On the former view, human beings might be able themselves to discern what morality requires of them, independent of God. On the latter view, it is not entirely clear that consistency would be required in human ethics, only conformity to divine fiats insofar as we can discover them in revealed truths. When it comes to this analysis, bioethics is in the same situation as any human being. Either bioethics does its work on the assumption of an independently discernible morality or it must attempt to discern relevant divine fiats, which are—as far as human beings can tell—entirely idiosyncratic"[9].

According to Italian secularists, "bioetica laica" would be defined as "that which the question of whether God exists or not has no relevance in ethics and therefore ethics can be determined—or should be determined—without any reference to revelation or belief in an author of nature, etc."[10] This coincides with methods based on philosophies where the question of God is irrelevant, as seen in Hobbes, Kant or Hume and in contractual, utilitarian and pragmatic approaches of many contemporary thinkers and writers.

While related to the agnostic position, atheistic bioethics goes a step further by stating that the *fact* of the non-existence of God is the only solid foundation of ethics. This is overtly antagonistic to religion and any absolutist moral or philosophical school and considers them to be authoritarian, restrictive, divisive and thus inimical to the ethical life. The atheist would affirm that religion in general has no right to interfere in matters of science and technology and should have no opinion on bioethical questions. For the atheist, religion is a human invention and a sociological phenomenon which may have some limited use. Secular humanism, with philosophical antecedents in the Renaissance, prefers to replace an archaic and non-rational God with the Goddess of Reason—while it promulgates a content-filled understanding of morality. Its anti-religious attitudes follow Holyoake's prescription for secularism: the separation of church and state, religion-free education and a non-sectarian public morality[11]. In exalting the humanistic achievements of the Greco-Roman civilization, secular humanism conceives well-being in horizontal terms and places a romantic faith in the technological panacea. Atheistic bioethics draws its inspiration from secular humanism's manifestos and other declarations.

Secular humanism was formed in the Enlightenment for the purpose of challenging the premises of the religious establishment. The establishment of a secular morality which brackets religious moral assumptions includes the French *laïcité* movement of Jules Ferry (1832-1893), the secularist movement of George Jacob Holyoake, and Felix Adler (1851-1933). With its creeds, "clergies" and rites of passage, secular humanism can almost be considered a "religion"[12]. The credos of these secular religions are exemplified in the American Humanist Association's *Humanist Manifesto* in 1933, 1973 and 2003. These manifestos provide the content of secular bioethics, such as the Italian *Manifesto di Bioetica Laica (Manifesto of Secular Bioethics)*.

The 1993 manifesto included John Dewey among its thirty-four signatories while the third manifesto boasts twenty-one Nobel laureates among its signatories. The three manifestos together with *A Secular Humanist Declaration* in 1980 can be considered as a whole in their application to bioethical issues. They all hold that truth can be discovered by reason alone, are opposed to "intolerant" religious claims and advocate a religion-free framing of public policies. Even if "religion may inspire dedication to the highest ethical ideals," it needs to pass the litmus test of scientific evidence and eliminate its dogma-

tic and authoritarian components which, as secular humanists assert, disfavor the human species. Religion is considered scientifically unprovable and ultimately a social invention; its authoritarianism and its focus on salvation and damnation do harm to human progress. Humanity is on its own and responsible for what it is or will become: "No deity will save us; we must save ourselves." Ethics stems from human need and interest and is tested by experience—it should therefore be autonomous, situational and free from theological or ideological sanctions[13].

Murphy's deep suspicion of religion's role in contributing to societal good could be traced to similar postmodern misgivings

Directly addressing bioethics is the *Manifesto of Secular Bioethics* issued by Italian secularists. It repeats many of the themes of the humanist manifestos and was probably inspired by them. The document's authors consider human nature not as static but as evolving and changing with the culture. The advancement of knowledge is the principal way of human progress and is in itself a fundamental ethical value. Therefore, the argument goes, unlimited liberty must be given to scientific research. The Italians hold that ethical intuitions and norms are in constant evolution, and it is not possible to have a universal moral canon valid for every individual. Accordingly, secular bioethics is based on reason alone without a religious contribution. In the interplay between ethics and law, morality must be separated from religious faith. In conclusion, secular bioethics is tolerant and, unlike religious ethics, has no fixed values[14].

Murphy's deep suspicion of religion's role in contributing to societal good could be traced to similar postmodern misgivings. His proposal of irreligious bioethics would be superior to any religious presupposition of afterlife which in his view, would take away the impetus to seek justice on earth:

"This view makes it possible to urge reform and work toward progress in bioethics in ways not entirely available to religions that hold that the most important justice available to human beings comes only after death… Some religions can therefore exhibit quietism toward social inequalities and the need for reform. By contrast, irreligious bioethics has no excuse for tolerating inequalities or delay in moral reform. As a normative discipline it looks to no world-yet-to-come or transcendent scales of justice that naturalize differences in access and equity here and now"[15].

So, Murphy's irreligious bioethics is indebted to a current of thought inherited from the Enlightenment which sees religion with suspect and antagonism. His definition of irreligious bioethics would be content-full with a reason-based normative methodology as opposed to Engelhardt's reservation of such a possibility.

Can reason and faith help each other?

Murphy's criticism of religious input to bioethics is indiscriminant between the faith only and the faith plus reason variety. The method that allows the interplay between faith and reason (F+R) is especially dear to the Catholic approach in ethics. Thus Catholic bioethicists, in contrast to those who advocate the "faith alone" approach, normally do not begin with revelation or Scripture but with reason just as any secularist would. The encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (1998) affirms that reason alone can arrive at most moral truths, without the necessity of recourse to theological, revelatory, dogmatic and authoritarian reasoning. All the same, faith itself is rational and provides the ultimate foundation for human reason because God has created the human mind in such a manner. Faith confirms reason and illuminates it in exceptional cases when clarification is needed[16].

Many bioethicists in the Catholic natural law tradition consider bioethics to be a rational enterprise with no distinction allo-

wable between religious-based and secular bioethics because both are founded on reason, whether natural law reasoning or secular philosophy. Bioethics is simply bioethics with no need of qualifying adjectives[17]. This perspective derives from the understanding that by reason alone, all persons could arrive at certain basic conclusions shared across the cultural divide.

When Catholic bioethicists mention reason, they invariably mean natural law which enjoys a long tradition derived from Aristotle and systematically summarized in the works of Thomas Aquinas. This approach has the advantage that it can dialogue with all people from different races, backgrounds or religions as well as engaging the scientific world. It can engage secular positions in public debate by presenting non-sectarian arguments, which are also directed towards the individual and common good. Grounded on our natural capacity to reason, it can concurrently counteract the claims of cultural relativism while permitting intercultural and interreligious dialogue[18]. Natural law, however, has certain challenges that it faces today. As I mentioned in an earlier article, there is the challenge of an understanding of nature as unchanging, especially with evolutionary theories, the difficulty of the language of nature, the challenges from positivism, physicalism and situation ethics[19].

When Murphy criticizes religion, he finds its methodology unacceptable because it contains "values and suppositions [that] are accessible only by logically prior commitments to certain theological claims" and "are typically unfalsifiable, infinitely mutable in the face of objections, rooted in personal experiences that defy independent analysis, or rooted in the murk of human history"[20]. I take issue with the claim that theological claims are "unfalsifiable" in the examples he gives in the article.

At one point, Murphy disapproves the religious belief that "pain and disease are punishments incurred as the wages of sin" and therefore not "an acceptable foundation for normative understanding of pain and disease"[21]. While Murphy is correct that this position is taken by some religions and religionists, it is by no means an undisputed dogma. In the Christian tradition, which I suppose Murphy is making the reference to, there are a variety of opinions. *Christian Bioethics* has run several numbers outlining the different take on this question[22]. I have also commented on the difficulties of this theological position analyzing the Book of Job. Once the nuances of the different stances are analyzed and explored, we see that theology has the capacity to correct its own excesses[23]. What is clear is that religious and theological claims are not immune to logical and rational critique, and faith can benefit from the aid of reason.

At another place, Murphy quotes from the Catholic Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's document *Dignitas Personae*, where he finds troubling the claim that marriage is instituted by God which would imply a negation of same-sex marriage (even though the original text is more focused on the question of fertility)[24]. If one analyzes this quote as evidence that religious bioethics appeal to theology makes it unfalsifiable, one can easily see that he has chosen the wrong religion and wrong texts to pick at. Once again, this is because Catholic approach typically does not begin with theological statements, but those of reason. Notice in Murphy's quote referring to marriage (italicized below), the original paragraph in *Dignitas Personae* states:

"Marriage, present in all times and in all cultures, '*is in reality something wisely and providently instituted by God the Creator with a view to carrying out his loving plan in human beings*. Thus, husband and wife, through the reciprocal gift of themselves to the other—something which is proper and exclusive to them—bring about that communion of persons by which they perfect each other, so as to cooperate with God in the procreation and raising of new lives'. In the fruitfulness of married love, man and woman 'make it clear that at the origin of their spousal life there is a genuine *yes*, which is pronounced and truly lived in reciprocity, remaining ever open to life... Natural law, which is at the root of the recognition of true equality between persons

and peoples, deserves to be recognized as the source that inspires the relationship between the spouses in their responsibility for begetting new children. The transmission of life is inscribed in nature and its laws stand as an unwritten norm to which all must refer""[25].

Hence, other than the initial mention of God, the reason given to justify this claim is based on natural law and not theology. It is easy to quote out of context and forget that the basis for the argument can be derived from reason. Murphy repeats this complaint about religion later regarding infertility treatments, referring again to *Dignitas Personae* regarding "the dignity of human persons [which] involves a vocation to the gift of love and life," which he finds difficult to falsify as a theological statement[26]. However, when careful exegesis is made on the original text, one can see that reference to God is not the starting point of the argument, but rather an ulterior confirmation. In fact, one can find secular authors such as Jürgen Habermas and Michael Sandel finding faults with certain techniques that debase human dignity and equality, employing similar rationale on the giftedness of life[27].

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That being said, Catholics should also be aware that natural law reasoning has a certain cultural baggage, and is not totally impartial in its conclusions. According to Giovanni Fornero, the Catholic approach is based on a metaphysical foundation and a religious vision of life—creaturely dependence of man, the sacredness of life, life as gift and not possession, the dignity of the person, and the pronouncements of the Church's magisterium—which influence its conclusions[28]. Nigel Biggar also noticed that the natural law of Germain Grisez has certain metanarrative background that shapes his vision of the human good. While it is founded on reason, Christian theological suppositions are not absent[29].

Alasdair MacIntyre terms this "tradition-constituted" moral inquiry. According to *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?,* one cannot be an independent observer beyond a particular tradition speaking to all parties, but can only inquire from within a particular moral tradition to which one belongs[30]. This contrasts with the customary mode of comparing different cultural or religious traditions from an independent perspective of natural law, as if one were exterior to these traditions rather than recognizing that every critique comes from a particular tradition. Macintyre claims that there is no such neutral ground, because even the natural law tradition is the product of a certain cultural heritage of the West[31].

In effect, any position, religious, irreligious or somewhere in between, is bounded by a certain worldview, metanarrative, or tradition. As we have seen, even the irreligious bioethics proposed by Murphy is not value free, but is bounded by the liberal heritage of the Enlightenment. As several critiques of his paper mention, irreligious bioethics cannot stand as the judge of other traditions or worldviews as if it were on neutral footing.32 As one of the respondents of Murphy commented, fairness requires that the hermeneutic of suspicion be applied not only to religious bioethics, but also nonreligious perspectives[33].

The pathologies of both religion and reason

So, while I disagree with Murphy that religious input to bioethics because of its theological base is unfalsifiable (at least in the examples he gave), he is correct in that irreligion as a normative approach can serve to ensure coherence in religious assertions:

"For one thing, irreligion can have a particular benefit in tamping down ideological

effects… By this standard, we all belong somewhere on the continuum of ideology, but some people are more prone to ideological excess than others, and religious believers can be vulnerable in this regard"[34].

In a way, "irreligious bioethics" as a methodological approach is not that far from the Catholic understanding of natural law, where rationality is necessary as our first and primarily approach to bioethical arguments[35]. Religion can indeed be pathological, as Joseph Ratzinger acknowledges this in a famous interchange with Habermas. He points out that secular rationality without any limits and is not comprehensible to all humanity. In this conversation, he emphasizes that faith and reason need one another, to purify one another from possible excesses.

"We have seen that there exist pathologies in religion that are extremely dangerous and that make it necessary to see the divine light of reason as a 'controlling organ'. Religion must continually allow itself to be purified and structured by reason; and this was the views of the Fathers too"[36].

Certainly we see this in different forms of fundamentalism or traditionalism, where a person hangs on to a certain idea or ideal and considers anyone who differs from this as a threat and an enemy. Hence, religious fundamentalism can sometimes fall prey to terrorism (e.g. 9-11), and prolife activism can mistakenly resort to violence by attacking abortion providers. The excesses of religious zealousness must be enlightened by reason. At the same time, the future Pope continues to warn of the exaltation of reason:

"There are also pathologies of reason, although mankind in general is not as conscious of this fact today. There is a hubris of reason that is no less dangerous. Indeed, bearing in mind its potential effects, it poses even greater threat—it suffices here to think of the atomic bomb or of man as "product." This is why reason, too, must be warned to keep within its proper limits, and it must learn a willingness to listen to the great religious traditions of mankind. If it cuts itself completely adrift and rejects this willingness to learn, this relatedness, reason becomes destructive"[37].

The problem with Murphy's irreligious bioethics lies with his overly optimistic view on the role of reason. He only sees reason's role in correcting the abuses of religion, but does not see the role of religion in correcting the abuses of reason. But as Ratzinger and even Habermas concur, reason has its limits too. While we would not accept Engelhardt's total pessimism, he is correct in the trouble that plagues secular bioethics where there are also many different models and disagreements. At the same time, Murphy claims too much when he considers religious tenets not to have a rational base. Religion is not irrational, but super-rational. That is, there are certain things that reason can only go so far in ascertaining. In the Regensburg address, Pope Benedict spoke on the need of rationality in religion to avoid extremism, fundamentalism and terrorism which is not only against humanity, but against God and truths about God. Faith and reason can purify each other in their attempt to find the truth, helping each other realize its limitations and hubris. In this way, fundamentalism and irrationality are not resolved by irreligiosity, but a healthy tension between faith and reason[38].

NOTE

[1] See J. Tham, *The Secularization of Bioethics*, UPRA Press, Rome 2007; Id, "The Secularization of Bioethics," in *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly,* 3 (2008), 443-454.

[2] T. Murphy, "In Defense of Irreligious Bioethics," in *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 12.12 (2012), 3-10. The responses are found in the same number, pages 11-32, W1-W5.

[3] See J. Tham, *The Secularization of Bioethics—A Critical History*, 223-234, 425.

[4] H. T. Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, Swets & Zeitlinger, Lisse (Netherlands)/Exton, PA 2000.

[5] See E. D. Pellegrino - D. Thomasma, *A Philosophical Basis of Medical Practice: Toward a Philosophy and Ethic of the Healing Professions*, Oxford University Press, New York 1981; E. Sgreccia, *Manuale di Bioetica*: *Fondamenti ed etica biomedica*, Vol. 1, Vita e Pensiero, Milan 20003, 60-62.

[6] See H. T. Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Bioethics*, Oxford Univ. Press, New York, NY 1996.

[7] See C. Hartshorne - W.L. Reese (eds.), *Philosophers speak of God*, Humanity Books, Amherst, NY 2000.

[8] He is referring here to the case of God ordering Abraham to sacrifice Isaac in *Gen*. 22. L. Vallauri, "Quale base comune per la riflessione Bioetica in Italia? Dibattito sul Manifesto di bioetica laica", *Notizie di Politeia* 12 (1996), 29.

[9] T. Murphy, "In Defense of Irreligious Bioethics," op. cit., 6.

[10] E. Lecaldano, "Bioetica Laica", in *Il Comitato Nazionale per la Bioetica: 1990-2005: Quindici Anni di Impegno*, Atti del Convegno di Studio, Roma, 30 novembre - 3 dicembre 2005, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, Dipartimento per l'informazione e l'editoria, Rome 2006, 200.

[11] See H. T. Engelhardt, *Bioethics and Secular Humanism*, SCM Press/Trinity Press International, London/Philadelphia 1991, 36-40.

[12] See H.T. Engelhardt - L.M. Rasmussen, "Secular humanism", in D. N. Cooper (ed.), *Nature Encyclopedia of the Human Genome*, Nature Pub. Group, New York 2003, 189.

[13] See American Humanist Association, *Humanist Manifestos I, II, III*, (1933, 1973, 2003), in www.americanhumanist.org (accessed November 18, 2013); Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism, "A Secular Humanist Declaration", *Free Inquiry,* 1 (1980-81), 3-7.

[14] C. Flamigni - A. Massarenti - M. Mori - A. Petroni, "Manifesto di Bioetica Laica", *Il Sole 24 Ore* (June 9, 1996). Http://digilander.libero.it/filosofiaescienza/manifesto_bioeticalaica.htm (accessed November 18, 2013).

[15] T. Murphy, "In Defense of Irreligious Bioethics," op. cit*.,* 9.

[16] See John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio: On the Relationship between Faith and Reason*, n. 1, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_15101998_fides-et-ratio_en.html (accessed November 18, 2013).

[17] See R. Lucas Lucas, *Bioetica per tutti*, San Paolo, Cinisello Balsamo 2002, 6.

[18] See International Theological Commission, "In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law", 2009, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20090520_legge-naturale_en.html (accessed November 18, 2013).

[19] See J. Tham, "Natural Law and Global Bioethics," in *Studia Bioethica*, 4/3 (2011), 7-16; Pontifica Academia Pro Vita, *Bioetica e Legge Naturale: Atti della Sedicesima Assemblea Generale dei membri,* Città del Vaticano, 11-13 febbraio, 2010, Lateran University Press, Rome 2010.

[20] T. Murphy, "In Defense of Irreligious Bioethics," op. cit., 8.

[21] *Ibid*., 9.

[22] See the articles in these numbers, which are summarized in C. Delkeskamp-Hayes, "Between Morality and Repentance: Recapturing 'sin? For Bioethics," *Christian Bioethics,* 11/2 (2005), 93-132; and Id., "Sin and Disease: An Introduction," *Christian Bioethics,* 12/2 (2006), 107-115.

[23] See J. Tham, "Communicating with Sufferers: Lessons from the Book of Job," *Christian Bioethics*, 19/1 (2013), 82-99.

[24] T. Murphy, "In Defense of Irreligious Bioethics," op. cit., 7; cfr. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Dignitas Personae*, 2008, n. 6 which quotes Pope Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae vitae*, 1968, n. 8.

[25] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Dignitas Personae*, op. cit., n. 6.

[26] T. Murphy, "The More Irreligion in Bioethics the Better: Reply to Open Peer Commentaries on 'In Defense of Irreligious Bioethics,'" W4; cfr. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dignitas Personae*, n. 12, which in turns is quoting Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Donum Vitae,* 1984, Introduction, 3.

[27] See M. J. Sandel, *The Case Against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering,* Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 2007; J. Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature*, Polity, Cambridge, UK 2003.

[28] See G. Fornero, *Bioetica cattolica e bioetica laica*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano 2005.

[29] See. N. Biggar, *Behaving in Public: How to Do Christian Ethics*, W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, Mich. 2011, 38-42.

[30] See A. MacIntyre*, Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 1988.

[31] See A. MacIntyre*, "*Incommensurability, Truth and the Conversion between Confucians and Aristotelians about the virtues," in E. Deutsch (ed.), *Culture and Modernity: East-West philosophic perspectives*, University of Hawaii Press, Hawaii 1991, 103-122.

[32] See C. C. Camosy, "The Role of Normative Traditions in Bioethics," in *The American Journal of Bioethics,* 12/12 (2012), 13–15; W. E. Stempsey, "Bioethics Needs Religion," in *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 12/12 (2012), 17–18.

[33] See C. Durante, "Extending the Hermeneutics of Suspicion Beyond Irreligiosity," in *The American Journal of Bioethics,* 12/12 (2012), 19–20.

[34] T. Murphy, "In Defense of Irreligious Bioethics," op. cit*.,* 6.

[35] Even Murphy sees this in his response to the paper by J. C. Claassen-Lüttner, "How Religious Ethics Can Be Intelligible and Compatible with Bioethics," in *The American Journal of Bioethics* 12. 12 (2012), 30–31. See T. Murphy, "The More Irreligion in Bioethics the Better…", W2.

[36] J. Ratzinger – J. Habermas, *The Dialectic of Secularization: On Reason and Religion,* Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2007, 77.

[37] *Ibid*., 77-78.

[38] Benedict XVI, *Address at University of Regensburg*, September 12, 2006, http://www.zenit.org/article-16955?l=english (accessed November 18, 2013).