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REL 358: New Reproductive Technologies  
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### An Reflection of Reproduction and Natural Law

I have been surrounded by much of the vernacular about natural law and dignity my entire life. From ages five to eighteen, I attended strict conservative Catholic schools in the southwestern suburbs of Chicago. And as I have grown up, I've realized the immense impact my upbringing had on my belief systems, ethical perspectives, and sense of morality. Attending college far from home gave me the space to delve into many of these perspectives, uprooting the rotten ones and bolstering others. Reading through these pieces allowed me to extend a critical eye, but an eye that I recognize has been heavily molded by its beginnings. In the subsequent summaries and reflections, I hope to provide more insight into the common themes of authority, human goodness, and respect.

Chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis in the Bible (NIV) recount the story of the beginning of the world, as well as the creation of the first humans. In Genesis 1, God creates the heavens and Earth, later filling them with plants, animals, and people. Later in Genesis 2, God creates the Garden of Eden and places Adam and Eve there. He instructs them to be fruitful and multiply and to tend the garden. He additionally warns them not to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. However, Adam and Eve disobey and are cast out of the Garden, initiating the nascent of humanity's struggle with sin.

Growing up in the Catholic Church, I was heavily exposed to the Bible and Genesis in particular. Not only did we learn about God's creation, but we learned about its goodness. Creation was good because it was God's own doing. I never questioned this: morality was presented before me, and I took it up as my own because wrestling with this morality proved

much more challenging than blissfully (and sometimes ignorantly) abiding by it. Here, God ruled the Bible, but so did my physical superiors that taught it: teachers, priests, Catholic monks.

In Genesis, God is the ultimate authority and created to prompt further creation: Adam and Eve are instructed to reproduce. Their assumption in their very existence is that they will create. In a way, have we, too, already eaten the fruit from the tree? In this generation, it almost seems we know too much: we know so much about the science behind reproduction and its ability to be manipulated. I wonder who we view as authority in these matters of reproductive technology, if not religious doctrine or governmental policy. I also am curious as to whether or not we prioritize the respect of the “sanctity” and goodness of human life or the authority surrounding these elements.

The “Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origin and on the Dignity of Reproduction” serves as a statement from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the respect due to human life from its origin and on the dignity of reproductive technologies. The Catholic Church's stance outlines the sanctity of life and human dignity, stressing that human life should be respected from conception, and that reproductive technologies should not be used to produce human life outside the context of marriage. The document also emphasizes the need for informed consent and solidarity in the use of assisted reproductive technologies. Finally, The document the Church notes how it does not condone manipulation of human life for selfish or utilitarian ends.

I personally do believe that all humans have an inherent dignity that cannot be removed, even by the cruel acts and abuses of others. This may be a religiously informed belief that stems from my childhood, but I do think that this perspective allows me to be a champion of human rights that extends to different marginalized groups across the world and across backgrounds.

When I think of the rather limiting nature of this doctrine, though, I struggle to see eye to eye with the Catholic Church. Particular statements about the sanctity for marriage, for example, seem aggressively specific and binding in a world that has, I think, grown more progressive and socially liberating in many ways.

The language takes on a very authoritative tone here. The document does outline the sanctity and goodness of life, but the tone and approach of it hinders me from fully sympathizing with the text. This realization makes me wonder about the most appropriate and effective ways to showcase doctrine, especially to different demographics of people. I am curious as to how language can best be molded to different people in order to respect variation in cultural and interfaith backgrounds.

Professor Seeman's analysis in "Ethnography, Exegesis and Jewish Ethical Reflection: The New Reproductive Technologies in Israel" underscore the options, implications and ethical challenges posed by new reproductive technologies in Israel. Specifically, the excerpt examines the use of in vitro fertilization (IVF), surrogacy, egg donation and posthumous reproduction, and their impact on the Jewish ethical tradition. Seeman argues that the traditional Jewish ethical framework must be adapted to account for these new technologies and the challenges they present. He further explains that traditional Jewish exegesis, along with an ethnographic approach, can help inform a modern Jewish ethical framework for reproductive technologies.

Although I am not as personally familiar with Judaism and Jewish culture, I can understand a bit of it within an Abrahamic context in relation to Christianity. Given these circumstances, I notice a few differences between Seemnan's approach and that of the authors of the Catholic doctrine above. In contrast to the Catholic doctrine, Seeman understands that traditional Jewish doctrine can shift and mold to the technological advancements in our society.

Doctrine does not seem as authoritative in certain regards; respect evolves. Ethnographic methods compound this shift into a comprehensive understanding of the simultaneous change of technology and social norms.

Policies and debates surrounding reproduction and natural law produce an immense amount of controversy in our world, especially within recent times given the overturn of Roe v. Wade. My hope is that even within policy implementation and difference in perspective, we can all turn inward to understand where our beliefs come from. Throughout college, I have found that opening myself up to a variety of perspectives allows me to work in communion with others, formulate new ideas, and significantly increase meaningful interaction with multitudes of diverse communities.