Donum Vitae Related Key Bibliography

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Background Pre-Donum Vitae (1987) bibliographic material


Janssens claims there are eight fundamental dimensions of the human person: (1) subject; (2) embodied subject; (3) part of the material world; (4) interrelational with other persons; (5) an interdependent social being; (6) historical; (7) equal but unique; (8) called to know and worship God. Classic article for the expression of the principle of totality in the personalist model. Janssens' personalist moral system is critiqued by Brian Johnstone, C.Ss.R. in the latter's "From Physicalism to Personalism," Studia Moralia 30 (1992): 71-96.


Examines the views of various churches on the subject, especially that of in-vitro fertilization. It is important to keep in mind that this book was written before the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued its 1987 Instruction Donum vitae which proscribed most reproductive technologies.

Some Key Bibliographic Material on Donum Vitae itself and/or its principal arguments

Magisterial Documents


Though approved by Pope Benedict XVI on 20 June 2008 and back-dated to 8 September, this Instruction was not actually released until 8 December 2008. It is meant to update and confirm the previous Instruction *Donum vitae* issued twenty years earlier.

*Reflections from Theologians*


Analyzes current uncertainty, arising from recent scientific and technological developments, about the "personhood" of life in the earliest stages of embryonic development, as well as to how human life should be treated in any possible prepersonal stages.

Cahill, a married Roman Catholic mother, 1993 President of the CTSA, and Professor of Theological Ethics at Boston College, studied under James Gustafson at the University of Chicago.


See paper by Msgr. Elio Sgreccia in the same volume.


Critiques the CDF argument against IVF as poorly based; a better argument would be drawn on the treatment of the embryo or future child, rather than stressing, as the CDF document did, the failure to respect the dignity of the parents as procreators.


Harvey is a medical doctor and ethician.


Johnstone, an Australian, was professor of moral theology at the Alphonsianum in Rome for many years and currently teaches at the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C.


Lauritzen is professor of religious ethics and director of the Program of Applied Ethics at John Carroll University in Cleveland.


Seminal article originally published in 1991 on ethical and theological issues involving ensoulment, personhood of the fetus, embryonic research, and the like.


Martin Rhonheimer is professor of ethics and political philosophy at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (Santa Croce) the Opus Dei school in Rome.

Taking the experience of infertility as a crisis of the self, the spirit, and the body, she argues for the place of reproductive technologies within a temperature, affordable, sustainable, and just health care system.


See response by Lisa Cahill in the same volume.


Reviews the scientific literature to help determine when the early human embryo becomes an individual, a single entity, and analyzes the claim to personhood in the light of these findings.


Shannon was professor of religion and social ethics at Worcester Polytechnic Institute.