THE UNIVERSITY
CONCOURSE
An Independent Journal of Opinion
Volume II, Issue 3 October 16, 1996

Changing the rhetoric in the abortion debate

by Irene M. Lagan

Last Sunday was Respect Life Sunday. As I stood along Sunset Boulevard I thought how remarkable it is that so many university students are willing to stand up for life—especially on a Sunday afternoon when they could engage in any number of alternative activities that are far more relaxing and fun.

As I stood praying the Rosary with several others, I began to consider what it must be like to drive by and to see the street lined with people of all ages holding signs saying, "Abortion Kills Children." I wondered what the effect, if any, the signs would have. What message would be heard? Surely, the message that we stand against abortion is one that must be pleasing to God, since we are trying to uphold and defend His beloved creatures. Yet, I began to wonder what effect such a sign would have on me if I had had an abortion and was well aware of the fact that I had taken the life of my own baby, especially if I were a non-Christian.

It seems that many, if not most, women who have abortions know that they are killing the children in their wombs. It is hard to believe that this is the case, since it seems to us obvious that if one were aware of the fact that she was actually killing her baby, she would surely not do it. However, it is a well known psychological fact that in moments of crisis or trauma, the human mind has an amazing capacity to shield itself from fully recognizing the implications of reality—as a measure of self-protection. And in this "abortion on demand" society, self-deception is made particularly easy for women who find themselves in a crisis pregnancy.

> If I were a woman who suffered the effects of abortion, I would feel accused and alienated by the signs: "Abortion Kills Children."

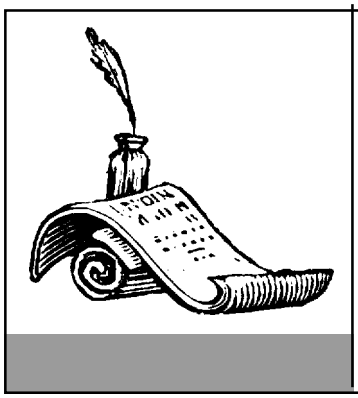
Imagine for a moment being raised in Steubenville in a poor home with little or no love, let alone a knowledge of Christ's living presence among us. What if, in addition to being poor, your horizons, mental and physical, extended only to the familiar surroundings of downtown Steubenville and the mall? How many of us, without the material means of raising an unwanted child, and having little or no emotional, psychological or spiritual strength, would have the courage to call a help line and confide our trouble to a stranger? Even if the stranger promised to assist us through pregnancy with prenatal care and maybe even a place to stay, it would take enormous courage and strength to trust such a person and to risk losing what meager security and stability remains in our life.

Where would you or I turn, really? What would I do if I found myself in the terrible position that so many women find themselves in when they opt for abortion?

Few of us, I think, can really know the terrible devastating loneliness and deprivation of such poverty. The material poverty that we see is often combined with a spiritual and psychological poverty that many of us cannot fathom. And this scenario doesn't even take into account physical or sexual abuse. We've heard "I was abused" so often that we are tempted to dismiss it as an empty excuse— "the boy who cried wolf" syndrome. But, unfortunately, many women *are* abused, and,

See **Pro-Life** *on page 9*

INSIDE:



EDITOR'S PAGE

When old ideas are breaking up

Something in Judith Bratten's letter in the Continuing Conversations section of this issue has made me think. She writes of her gratitude for being made "uncomfortable" by articles in the *Concourse*, and even, in a sense, for the tensions and divisions that have developed over the years in our communal life. She does not enjoy them, but she thinks they are healthy and fruitful.

Now that she has said it "out loud," I see the truth of it much more clearly.

We are prone to conceptual complacency and intellectual stubbornness—gross traits in university men and women, but not easy to escape, since they so often go about cleverly disguised as "faithfulness to truth." But if we look closely we can see the difference. Stubbornness will not listen to criticism, while genuine faithfulness always includes both a humble awareness that our human concepts rarely (if ever) do truth justice and a readiness to reject or adjust those concepts as deeper and broader experience of reality exposes their inadequacy.

This is not as easy as it may sound, because, in important matters, our concepts are not just concepts, but principles we live by. To adjust or reject these entails a certain dying-to-self. Especially if we have in any way invested ourselves in an idea—if we have made sacrifices for what we took to be the truth of a matter—it is very unpleasant indeed to find it publicly challenged by people not easily dismissed as enemies of truth.

If (for instance) I have been trying to serve the Church by writing and lecturing about the break-down of the family and the need for mothers to be at home full-time with their children, it might annoy but it would not surprise or upset me to find Eleanor Schmeal writing articles in *The New Republic* accusing me of being out of step with the times. She is not on my side; she is one of the opponents. But if, having in a sense (and with good reason) staked my life and career on the idea that feminism has been an unmitigated disaster for the Church, I one day pick up a letter by the Holy Father, whom I revere, and find him saying that feminism has been a "substantially positive" development in history, that women have been unjustly prevented from developing themselves fully, and calling on them—not to content themselves with homemaking—but to become *more involved* with all aspects of society,* what then? I am suddenly faced with a very deep struggle. Something I cherish has to go—even if it is only my long-standing self-assurance.

My point is not to settle the question of the value of feminism, but to highlight a phenomenon that seems to be happening all around us in the Church today. Conceptual frameworks that have served us well for decades seem to be crumbling. (I do not speak of the mysteries of the Faith, which are the same "yesterday, today and forever.") Things are no longer so simple as liberals vs. conservatives, communists vs. capitalists, feminists vs. traditionalists, bad guy against good guys. Black and white are blending confusingly. It is no longer so easy to say who is on whose side, or what makes each side what it is.

It is extremely uncomfortable. No wonder we are apt to be tense and querulous with one another. No wonder we are tempted to become recalcitrant—to prefer the old clarity and simplicity to the new depth and richness which threaten it.

But, on the whole, I think we have reason to be glad about what is happening. With Mrs. Bratten, I think the breakup of the old (painful as it naturally is) signifies that something bigger and better is coming. "The glory of this present house will surpass the glory of the former, says the Lord Almighty. And in this place I will grant peace." (Haggai 2:9) Let us begin building, and not be caught clinging and lamenting over the rubble of what has gone before.

Kathleen van Schaijik

* See John Paul II's "Letter to Women," issued June 29, 1995

THE UNIVERSITY CONCOURSE

An Independent Journal of Opinion

Editorial Policy

The University Concourse is a bi-weekly, independent journal of opinion, published by alumni and students of Franciscan University, but not formally affiliated with the University. It is designed to encourage fruitful discourse among members of the University community. The views expressed in this journal do not necessarily reflect those of the editors, nor those of the Franciscan TORs or other University officials.

We welcome submissions from faculty, students, administrators, staff, alumni, parents, trustees, benefactors and friends, on any topic of interest to a general university readership, provided they are courteously expressed and framed with a view to advancing the welfare of the University and/or Catholic culture at large.

We recommend opinions be kept to fewer than 1,500 words. Articles must be in no later than 5:00 pm Wednesday of the week prior to publication.

Contributions should be submitted on a 3.5" disk, either to *The University Concourse*, Box 27, University Boulevard, Steubenville, OH 43952, or sent to e-mail address: "UConcourse@aol.com"

Please include your full name, phone-number and e-mail address, if you have one.

We will consider printing submissions anonymously or under a pen-name; however, in general we wish to encourage open, "face to face" discussion. In either case, the editors require the full name and phone-number of the author of each opinion.

The downsides of capitalism

by Regina Doman Schmiedicke

I FEEL I SHOULD RESPOND TO MARTHA BLANDFORD'S THOUGHTFUL REMARKS ON THE BENEFITS OF CAPITALISM, IN VOL.II, ISSUE 1. WHILE I AGREE WITH many of her ideas—such as that the truth about the human person must be the basis of all thinking about economics—I take issue most emphatically with some of her conclusions, and especially with such assertions as: "the only economic system offering such freedom [of self-determination and free will to mankind] is laissez-faire capitalism."

It is true that the person—whom the Pope calls "the acting person"—must be independent in his actions, and clearly an "environment ... that ensures his liberty" is a necessary prerequisite for sound economics as well as moral economics. However, it is not true that the only system which allows such freedom is capitalism. If it were, how could we explain the Church's sustained critique of capitalism throughout its development (which took place in Protestant countries after the Reformation, incidentally)? How could we explain such harsh statements by popes as recent as John Paul II as "the Church ... has always distanced herself from capitalist ideology, holding it responsible for grave social injustices"?* And although the "neo-conservatives" such as Michael Novak (whom Mrs. Blandford cites) might claim that capitalism is the only model of economic organization, it is not.

Furthermore, while I would agree with Mrs. Blandford that freedom of the human person is an essential thing, I would point out (and I'm sure she would concede) that true freedom is not the ability of a person to do whatever he desires, without restraint of moral or civil laws. Indeed, such lawless "freedom" destroys true freedom. Unfortunately, laissez-faire capitalism results in such turbulence.

Although it is true that capitalism can allow some persons to exercise their "self-determination and free will," the fact remains that it will not freely allow every person that ability. Why? Because capitalism without restraints is essentially competitive. The "free market," which originates with everyone having the freedom to buy and sell as they choose soon degenerates into the strong prospering and squeezing out the inferior or the weak. The strong entities get larger, forcing their competition to get larger. Eventually, all that remains are giants slugging it out with each other, the smaller businesses and workers falling by the wayside.

Although it is true that capitalism can allow some persons to exercise their "self-determination and free will," the fact remains that it will not freely allow every person that ability.

The free market in practice is not "the vehicle which ensures that our liberties will be protected," as Mrs. Blandford claims. While the owners of corporations successful enough to weather the competition might indeed have their liberties protected by such a market, the workers for such companies are often reduced to "wage slaves" who might (for instance) become the victims of corporate downsizing at a moment's notice. This was brought home to our family recently when my father was notified of his probable discharge from the engineering company where he has worked for the past twenty-plus years. College students are well aware that the possibilities of getting hired for their professional skills in their fields—not to mention the possibilities of their remaining employed—are somewhat chancy these days.

In its present form as well as in a more "ideal" form, capitalism does not (and I would say cannot) fully allow the majority of men to experience the "power of self-determination." The hard, cold realities of working life in America (blue-collar or white-collar) speak for themselves.

Now, I am in full agreement with Mrs. Blandford that the emergence of what is termed "the welfare state" will not solve the problems inherent in a free market. It will not allow for the self-determination and free exercise of liberty of the individual worker and owner. It will bring about a form of communism which will be as deadening to the working person as it will be unsuccessful in helping society. But, unfortunately, it does seem to be our fate as a nation unless there is a radical change in our thinking about economics.

Like most people in America, I like capitalism for its most beneficient attributes: the protection of private ownership, the opportunites which it

promises for people who are willing to work hard and work well. However, the downsides of capitalism, which I have mentioned and which the popes have perenially criticized, should make us pause before canonizing it as the only economic system for a free people to live under. I believe there are economic systems which "fit" better with Catholic social teaching than capitalism, which can accomplish these beneficial ends while avoiding the pitfalls of championing individual freedom as the highest good. One of these, which was developed in response to the land-mark papal encyclical of Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, has been called "distributism" or "The Third Way." (Some *Concourse* readers may recognize the term if they are familiar with the writings of Catholic writers G.K. Chesterton and Hillaire Belloc.)

I believe there are economic systems which "fit" better with Catholic social teaching than capitalism, which can accomplish these beneficial ends while avoiding the pitfalls of championing individual freedom as the highest good.

Like capitalism, distributism places a priority on private ownership. This sharply, once-and-for-all distinguishes it from communism, where private property is considered evil and is thus put into the hands of the state. However, distributism favors not just private ownership but individual ownership. It operates under two main interlocking principles—subsidiarity and solidarity.

Subsidiarity means that when there is a need, society should first look to the smallest possible unit to meet it. If the individual worker (or family) cannot meet it adequately, the small business is allowed to handle it; needs that are beyond the abilities of the small business are given to the larger businesses, and so on up. It's obvious that this principal operates in many areas in a healthy society. The Pope heads the Church, but he doesn't pick out the hymns for noon Mass (to paraphrase Jim Hannink). The state government maintains highways, but it should not discipline our children for not doing their homework. In fact, a sign of an unhealthy society is one where big entities try to meet social needs that could and should be met by smaller social units or individuals. That is one reason why the growth of the welfare state is so abhorrent to most Americans. It offends our sense of balance in a primary way. Subsidiarity keeps a society in balance. And when the principles of subsidiarity are respected in economics, the economy is stable.

When subsidiarity is respected, solidarity occurs. Solidarity is a unity among members of society which makes sure that no individual "falls through the cracks." Solidarity ensures that the widow of a worker who dies is provided for. It watches out for the physically and mentally handicapped, the newly-arrived immigrant, the elderly or retired individual, to make sure that their needs are met. Today the government and corporations regularly promise to meet the needs of everyone, but it is a promise every thinking person can recognize as patently unrealistic. Why? Because of a lack of subsidiarity. Governments are too big and unwieldy to be humane. Corporations are too large to adequately care for all their workers. When things are small—when local governments and local businesses are strong—the individual person is more valued and more likely to be noticed and accomodated.

Now, while many of us may perceive this clearly in the realm of politics and ethics, we are blind to it in economics. Think about it. Why do we take our business to malls and chain stores, when we could patronize businesses owned by members of our community (often members of our parish) whom we know by name? McDonald's has served billions and billions—they don't need our money. The diner near your home owned by a local man may desperately need your business to survive. Why do we immediately drive to Kmart or Pharmor to pick up a hammer or fill a perscription, when local hardware stores and drug stores downtown are struggling to keep their doors open?

The exercise of capitalism is now erasing the opportunities that made America the nation it is. The Hispanic immigrant who comes here dreaming of opening his own restaurant will most likely lose his customers to Taco Bell. Ask any small business owner you know if the current market encourages small ownership. An entrepreneur recently told me that most small business owners marketing a new product actually plan on getting bought out by a major corporation after a few years, because they know that otherwise they won't survive in the cut-throat market of today.

In embracing laissez-faire capitalism, America's economic freedom has developed into the right of the strong to call the shots, unless stopped by the even bigger strongman of a bloated federal government. ■

Regina (Doman) Schmiedicke ('92) writes from Front Royal, Virginia.

* Interview, Sept. 9, 1993, quoted in *Caelum et Terra*, Fall 1994, Vol 4, No. 4, p. 3. Readers interested in the papal critique of the Catholic "neo-conservatives" should see the article by Dan Nichols in the same.

CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS

Thanks for discomfort

As a friend and observer of Franciscan University, I wish to commend all of you involved in the *Concourse* for providing a civilized forum for the exchange of ideas. When debate takes literary form, it allows for clearer thinking and more careful explanations than structured oral debate—and it certainly offers a more civil and tempered discussion than spontaneous sidewalk argument.

I have especially appreciated Kathleen van Schaijik's insights on the charismatic/traditionalist dichotomy that has developed on campus in the past six or seven years. In her article on liturgical music in Vol. 1, Issue 7/8 and in her editorial in Vol. 2, Issue 1, she gives an accurate description of what I also have seen. And her plea for openness echoes my own desire.

I came into the Church through the charismatic renewal. I have experienced the great joys as well as the abuses that have been part of the renewal. My spiritual journey did not stop there but carried me on to a great appreciation for tradition and orthodoxy. My love for the Catholic Church, which acknowledges that spirituality has many expressions, has grown deeper and stronger as a result. Thus I was saddened to find one portion of this wonderful family of Faith coming into conflict with another, causing heated arguments and divisions among us. Yet perhaps this "creative tension" is normal and healthy. As alumna Regina Doman Schmiedicke once wrote in another journal, Franciscan University is like a big Catholic family with its usual arguments and sibling rivalries. But if ever the family is attacked from the outside, all disagreements are put aside and a united front is presented to the assailant.

My husband and I brought our family to Steubenville because of the charismatic renewal over thirteen years ago. Even then, wise men realized that the Holy Spirit could not be limited. The late Father Jim Ferry, one of the founders of the Fraternity of Priests, once reminded me that charismatics must be prepared for new movements of the Holy Spirit and not hold on to that with which we have become comfortable. Father Michael Scanlan also warned us to beware of the "comfort Gospel"—that which fits like an old shoe and no longer challenges us or stretches us. Christianity should be consoling and strengthening, yes, but not comfortable. If we are finding it so, we can be sure that God will soon boot us out of our comfort zone. And so, rather than feeling upset that there is this charismatic/traditionalistic debate, I have become grateful for it. It keeps us on our intellectual toes, makes us rethink our positions and beliefs. And I thank the *Concourse* for being willing to air these differences, for making us a bit uncomfortable, for challenging us to think, and for allowing us to hear one another clearly.

Judith Bratten

Mrs. Bratten is the mother of Copy Editor Joanna Bratten and former Contributing Editor Rebecca Bratten. She and her family live in Hopedale, Ohio.

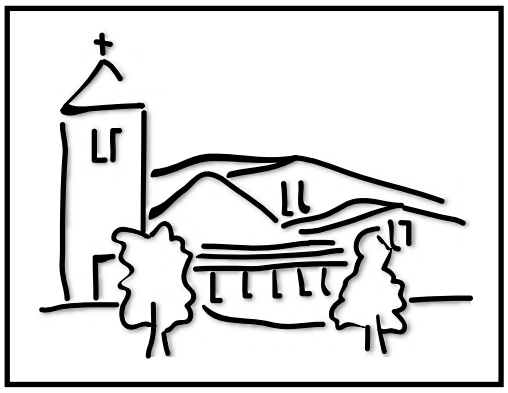
Scholarship at Franciscan University

Just a few words on scholarship and athletics at the university.

In my view, Joanna Bratten's attack on sports as virtually idolatrous was harsher than necessary—particularly at a university where athletics do not pose a serious threat to the academic welfare of the vast majority of students. Still, the failure of those who criticized her position to seriously address the issue of what a university should be in this area (i.e., the area of tension between athletics and academics) brings me to a position of defending Ms. Bratten to a limited extent. Even if sports do not seriously threaten studies here, certainly something does.

So far in this discussion, neither side has addressed without personal bias the question of what role athletics should play at a university. Ms. Bratten writes with a bias against athletics because of one particularly unpleasant incident, in which she was personally involved. Those who respond to her article write in defense of a sort of pet interest or favorite pastime that they prefer not be criticized. But the key question still stands: What role do athletics play in the ideal university? As both Maria Ellis and Ivan Ortiz state or imply in their responses of Vol. II, issue 2, and as Ms. Bratten concedes in her article, sports do without doubt have a legitimate place in a university setting. But this is not to say that the current role which athletics play in the life of the average student at the Franciscan University is perfectly unproblematic.

One would hope that a student enrolled in the Honors Program would actually want to attend the Symposium, which stands as a sort of celebration of the year's advancement in scholarship. Whether it is required is beside the point; it shouldn't have to be. If scholarship at the University were what it should be, students in the Honors Program would simply attend, even if they didn't want to. They would feel it part of their duty or role as Honors students. To say, as Mr. Ortiz does, that the Honors Symposium is merely another "extracurricular activity...[which] should take no higher importance than any other extracurricular activity, such as intramural sports," is to completely



overturn the ideal of the university, which is primarily an academic setting by definition. Ultimately, I would say, even an academic lecture should take precedence over an athletic competition; students should arrange their athletic schedules around their academic schedules and not vice versa. And the amount of time put into academics should by a large margin surpass the amount of time put into athletics or any other extra-curricular activity, and even all such activities added together. Otherwise, what makes a student a student?

As to the values gained through intramural sports (e.g., teamwork and respectful competition) which Ms. Ellis cites: these are important, but they should all be already well-ingrained in us; we are, after all, adults.

And thus the simple fact remains: sports are fun, and recreation is an important and healthy way to maintain that "tripartite composition of mind, body and soul" of which Mr. Ortiz speaks. But the fact also remains that sports are, in the end, "just games"; and the university is primarily an academic setting. Even the student attending college only through the aid of a football scholarship will, if he seriously wishes to study, place primary emphasis on his academic activities rather than athletic. And this is how the university should be.

Before I close, I would like to affirm that I do not find sports to be the "most insidious" threat to academics at Franciscan University. There are serious problems in various other areas and programs, which tend to distract the student from his studies even more than intramural sports do. For example, many students will actually forego the pleasure and duty of competing with their teams in intramural competitions when their studies very obviously demand their time and attention. But how many are equally willing to forego the pleasure or duty of going on a household or other university-sponsored retreat, or even to a household or other meeting?

I do not say that no student should ever go on retreat; I myself would not have survived my four years without such spiritual vacations. Neither do I make the sweeping generalization that no student should be involved in clubs, households or other organizations; nor that he should feel free to skip all the meetings. But the many long Saturday hours I spent virtually alone in the library during my undergrad years here proved to me that the average student does not suffer from an over-heavy burden of academics. The problem is more general than simply a tension between academic and athletics; it is a problem of tension between academics and many, many things. And, from my experience of four years here in Steubenville, I would say that all too often the academics lose.

Mary McElwee
Class of '96

Mary McElwee is currently working as a lecturer in the classics department at FUS. She is one of two Concourse *copy editors (who bear no responsibility for typos in the editorials, which have so far been completed too late to benefit from their able scrutiny).*

Last words on the core

Just one last word in my discussion with Mark Fischer on the core curriculum. I think it will be my last, because I do not see much to disagree with in his letter to me in the last issue of the *Concourse*. In fact I agree with him when he says that in trying to improve the core curriculum we need not disparage what has gone before. In my original piece on the core I was making a point of looking for the deficiencies of the core, just as a doctor at a medical exam is looking for signs of sickness. But it is undoubtedly the case that a great deal of serious learning has taken place within the core; what Mark Fischer tells of himself is surely true of others.

I would just say that the core can be made better. It can be revised to give our students more fundamentals and more first principles; it can do better in conveying to them a sense of the unity of all knowledge; it can give them more of the direction that I hear so many of them asking for; it can initiate them more effectively into the heritage of Christian culture. It is clear from our discussion that Mark Fischer and I agree about such potential for growth and improvement.

We will surely also agree on this: it is certainly no disparagement of the present core to say that it, after all the dramatic changes that have occurred in the University and in the student body in the 22 years since the core was established, can now be revised and adapted so as to serve our students better.

John F. Crosby
Professor and Chair of Philosophy

Disappointed with the *Concourse*

I am writing to express my disappointment with a recent issue of *the University Concourse*. In past issues, you have stated that your goal is to pursue truth and stimulate intellectual debate at Franciscan University. Unfortunately, in reading the two lead articles of your September 18 issue, it appears that you are straying from your purpose: the articles are less of informed intellectual argument and more of emotional and unreflective reaction.

In your article on polygamy, you seem to make sweeping generalizations based upon one discussion which you "heard took place." From this one instance, you immediately claim that "there evidently still exist any number of serious Catholic intellectuals (my guess is they are all men)," who would advocate polygamy. Just how do you know, from one discussion, that there are all these men out there arguing for polygamy? It is quite a leap. I have never, nor has anyone else that I have spoken to, heard of anyone arguing for polygamy based upon St. Thomas' precepts of the natural moral law. If you didn't want to let the remarks of these students pass without comment, you ought to have addressed yourself to those who made them, not to the entire readership of the *Concourse*.

This leads me to my second concern, which is that I would think you owed it to your readers to at least research into what Saint Thomas says on this subject. Your self-proclaimed ignorance in this area lessens your credibility in arguing against "these men," and gives the impression that instead of intellectual research, you prefer supposition. Perhaps a bit more research on the natural moral law might have helped you to refute those in the discussion.

I also have some concerns with Miss Bratten's article regarding sports. First, although there are quite many abuses of the athletic scholarship system, I do not believe it tends to render the scholarships themselves invalid—which she seems to imply. In fact, there are many financially disadvantaged student athletes with decent grades who would not be able to attend institutions of higher education if it were not for the use of their God-given athletic talent.

Second, in regard to her specific experience with the Honors symposium, the conflict she describes does not indicate that "something is rotten" in Steubenville, but rather that there is a mere scheduling conflict between two goods. It is well known that the intramural sports events are scheduled for set times at the beginning of the season. Thus, if there are students involved with both sports and the Honors Symposium, why not schedule the symposium meetings so that they do not conflict with previously scheduled games? It seems that Ms. Bratten wants to jump to a general conclusion based upon her experience. But if someone chooses a Frisbee game "over" an Honors symposium meeting, it does not necessarily mean he is selling out to the sports-god.

The point to be grasped in this letter is that these two articles do not encourage serious intellectual debate among students. Instead, they have the effect of decreasing the respect people have for your journal as a serious intellectual forum, and of questioning whether your motives are more emotional than intellectual. I am sure many would agree that you have done and can do *much* better. I pray and hope you will continue in your noble efforts and more consistently fulfill the stated purpose of your journal.

Steven J. Brust
M.A. Philosophy

Polygamy in natural law

Having known Katie van Schaijik for some time, I can understand her concern over any indication of chauvinism in Catholic academia. I also remember that during conversations with her over coffee she rarely paused to drink. Nevertheless, it is evident that a more in-depth reading of St. Thomas Aquinas is needed in order for us to be able understand the nature of marriage and spousal relations. After all, how would it be possible to attain "more depth and completeness" in our understanding of these mysteries without Thomas? The issue here is the Church's understanding of polygamy and marriage.

Polygamy (in both its forms) is forbidden according to the moral law of the Church. But there is a weak case to be made for polygyny in natural law, which goes as follows: It is critical for a child's self-identity to know who his parents are. Therefore, the practice of polyandry is unthinkable as "man naturally desires to know his offspring, and this knowledge would be completely destroyed if there were several males for one female. Therefore, that one female is for one male is a consequence of natural instinct." (*Summa Contra Gentiles* III. 124.1) In the practice of polyandry there is no certainty of family relations as the woman has sexual relations with numerous men. Simply put, according to Thomas, polygyny does not directly conflict with natural law because in it the child knows who his parents are. However, this is not where Thomas' discussion of marriage ends.

Relying on Aristotle, Thomas speaks of the need for friendship within the marriage covenant. Polygyny debases women because there is no opportunity for friendship. Friendship demands equality, and "the greater that friendship is, the more long lasting it will be, [and] there seems to be the greatest friendship between husband and wife." (SCG III. 123.6) An unfortunate type of abandonment takes place in a polygynous environment. A covenant of love is eradicated for the utility of a contract involving the breeding of offspring. If this were the precedent for marriage, then there could be no real friendship, and no effectual love for children coming from a plurality of wives. The wife (wives) would then be relegated to a position of servitude. (SCG III 124.4)

Throughout Church history the love of God for his people has consistently been in reference to the marriage of one man and one woman. Ephesians 5: 24-32 speaks of this and, indeed, the analogy is widely used in the Old Testament, as in Hosea and the Song of Songs. Holy Mother Church holds steadfast to the sanctity of marriage and has done so from its creation. Our Faith wrapped in the warmth of its living tradition edifies and uplifts both the man and the woman in a marriage covenant.

When the dignity of one spouse is gone, the unity of husband and wife suffers. This could hardly be contrived as chauvinism. St. Thomas Aquinas knew this because he studied nature, Scripture and the traditions of Holy Mother Church.

Eric M. Weldon

Eric Weldon is a seminarian for the diocese of Wichita, Kansas, studying at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus. He graduated from the University in 1989.

On dwarfs, giants and little boys

In Issue 2, Michael Waldstein expresses his regret that last semester's debate in the *Concourse* on the role of St. Thomas as teacher was "dominated by the question whether or to what extent one is free to disagree with him." He points out that given "the Church's recommendation of St. Thomas as the 'doctor communis,' the teacher of all ... the first question should not be 'Must I agree with him?' but 'How can I learn from him?'"

Dr. Waldstein is entirely right to urge us all to approach St. Thomas with an attitude of reverent openness and eagerness to learn. And I share, to some extent, his regret about the focus of the debate so far. But there is an important reason why it has been dominated by the question "Must I agree with him?" which, judging from his article, I'm not sure Dr. Waldstein fully appreciates. I think it is this: much of the devotion found in orthodox Catholic universities to St. Thomas as teacher is infected by something like a misplaced or excessive modesty, which not only undermines our intellectual well-being in general, but prevents us from being able to truly learn from Thomas. Let me try to explain what I mean.

Many students and teachers take the Church's recommendation of St. Thomas as meaning that we should trust him to be generally right (especially with respect to fundamental principles), and that if a certain teaching of his fails to convince us or seems false, we should humbly assume that we have not yet properly understood him. We should admit that our minds are infinitely inferior to Thomas' and that he knows better than we do. Their point is not that Thomas is infallible—that would be heretical—but that his mind is so much greater and deeper than ours that we are in no position to criticize him. In practice this means we never disagree with Thomas, except in the few places where his conclusions clearly contradict Church teaching.*

This not always explicit, but rather widespread way of thinking is attractive because it seems so humble. But the problem with it is that, in stressing the greatness of Aquinas, we make our own minds so insignificant that they can do nothing but 'float' (to put it perhaps a bit too strongly) in his thought. We lose confidence in our ability to think independently, and thereby cut ourselves off from truth—including the truth to be found in Thomas. We may be able to think the same thoughts as Aquinas, but we cannot know them as *true*. If we are in no position to criticize his thought, then neither are we in a position to evaluate it and hold it as true.

Thus, it seems to me that the frequent insistence on our freedom to disagree with Thomas is not so much an attempt to assert our autonomy and intellectual rights (though it is that too), as it is an attempt to safeguard our relation to truth itself.

Let me draw an analogy with the moral life. We are all aware that to be morally mature, our actions and choices must be our own. We cannot hand our consciences over to someone else, no matter how much holier he is than we. We may well be tempted to do this from time to time; it would be easy and seem humble, to say to another: "You are so much wiser than I am; you decide and just tell me what to do." But it would be wrong to do this. If we do not act out of our own consciences, we do not act morally well. It goes without saying that we should imitate the example of the saints and turn to wise men for advice, but if, in the end, we do not "stand on our own two feet," we condemn ourselves to moral backwardness and immaturity. The same is true intellectually. We must learn to relate to Thomas, not in a servile way, but as his fellow-laborers in the search for truth.

Now, I know Dr. Waldstein well enough to know that he would be among the first to acknowledge the centrality of truth in the intellectual realm, and the need for it to be individually appropriated. But, in my opinion, his article is likely to aggravate the problem I have tried to describe and force the debate exactly in the direction he knows it should not go. The fact, for instance, that he presents St. Thomas' third argument for monogamy (aware that this was just the sort of argument my wife's article had rejected) without any critical commentary on it or any attempt to justify it to her and other readers of the *Concourse*, leaves the impression that to have stated Thomas' opinions and arguments is enough to have settled the problem.

Even worse, I think, is his use of the analogy of "a boy sitting on his mother's lap as she traces the letters in the primer" to indicate our relation to the great thinkers of the past. This analogy leaves no room for exactly the kind of "critical independence" which I think is so necessary for a genuine, personal appropriation of truth.

I personally much prefer the dwarfs on giants' shoulders analogy (which Dr. Waldstein seems not to like very much). It expresses our awareness of the great teachers' superiority over us and the debt of gratitude we owe them for most of our knowledge and understanding, and at the same time, makes clear that we view the same reality they viewed, through our own eyes.

Jules van Schaijik
Class of '89

Jules van Schaijik is Academic

Secretary at the International Theological Institute for Marriage and Family in Gaming, Austria. He is also Managing Editor of the Concourse *and the fortunate spouse of Editor-in-chief, Kathleen van Schaijik.*

* People who think this way naturally look with horror on those (such as myself and my wife) who freely dispute with Thomas, as insufferably arrogant and presumptuous—as if, in criticizing this or that aspect of his thought, we set ourselves up as greater than he.

Polygamy and secular concepts

A Greek Orthodox friend of mine sent me via e-mail the following response to my article on polygamy, and, thinking it might be of interest, I asked for and received his permission to publish it in the Concourse. *K.v.S.*

My main question is: why do you rest your argument on "dignity"? In my experience, when someone argues from "human dignity" it is generally with the aim of undermining some traditional practice or belief. Most often there lurks in the background—though the person mounting the argument may be only dimly aware of it—the Kantian vision of man as an autonomous being subject to no law save that which he rationally chooses. Thus homosexual love must be respected because not to do so is to impugn the dignity of the homosexual; the right to abort must be respected because not to do so is to impugn the dignity of women; etc. In fact, the very notion that "choice" is some kind of absolute value derives from this conception of human dignity.

Christians, of course, see man's dignity as due to his being made in the image of God, and real freedom as conformity to His will. So there is a Christian as well as a Kantian conception of human dignity. But the two are so readily confused and so intimately linked in the popular mind that it is very dangerous simply to appeal to "dignity" without specifying what you mean. You are liable to be be taken as speaking the lingo and appealing to the assumptions of the enemies of the Faith.

In the present case, it seems to me that there is a much better route to the end you propose. This is the teaching of Our Lord on divorce (Mt 19 and Mk 10). He grounds the entire question of the nature and purpose of marriage on the creation account in Genesis, and though he does not directly address polygamy, there can be little doubt that it would fall under the same type of ban as that against divorce. I was greatly surprised that you did not refer to this fundamental passage. Your reason, I suppose, was that you are arguing about the content of "natural law" as against "the positive moral law of the Church." But doesn't this very case show how specious that opposition is? Here we have the Creator himself explaining the purpose and boundaries of human nature; how could what he says possibly not belong to natural law?

You seem to share with your opponents the assumption that natural law can be determined by looking at the present state of nature. Against this, I would urge that "nature" in its primary sense is what the Creator intended, and that the real dimensions of human nature are even now most clearly revealed in the lives of the saints. To look at fallen nature as a guide to natural law will inevitably mislead. I fear that your attempt to give a purely "natural" argument against polygamy also leads you into factual errors, or at least into painting with too broad a brush. You write:

"Polygamy degrades woman unspeakably because, rather than treating her as man's companion, equal in dignity and therefore worthy of his entire self, it subordinates her to him, making her one among the many objects of his pleasure and subjects of his dominion."

This is quite a sweeping claim! How do you know that it is true? If you were speaking only of harems I might be inclined to agree, but of course there are many other types of polygamous arrangement. Not long ago I read in the newspaper an interview with a dissident Mormon family composed (as I recall) of one husband and two wives. All three were adamant in defending their way of life against a charge of much the type that you make here. Now I do not assume that they were right; they might be self-deceived or fail to understand what a real companionate marriage is like. On the other hand, I hesitate to assume that they were wrong. People have very different conceptions of what companionship and dignity really are, and an arrangement that satisfies some will be found objectionable by others. Here again, our fallen nature deceives us, and we must turn to the Creator in order to discover who we really are. Only then will we know whether our feelings of dignity and worth are really well-founded or are mere self-deception.

To put my argument in a nutshell, it seems to me that the dichotomy of natural vs. revealed law is a misleading one, and that to attempt to flesh out the content of "natural" law by appealing to a vague and largely secular notion of dignity only compounds the error. What do you think?

David Bradshaw

Dr. Bradshaw is a Lecturer in Philosophy at Indiana University Northwest.

Pro-Life

Continued from page 1

though that doesn't mitigate the objective evil of abortion, it may in truth lessen the culpability of those who commit it. It should certainly lessen the severity of our condemnation of them.

After considering what it must be like to be "on the other side of the sign," and based upon knowing first-hand the situations of women who have had abortions, I began to realize that if I were a woman who suffered the effects of abortion, I would feel accused and alienated by the signs: "Abortion Kills Children." And my tendency would be to avoid the people holding up the

signs. The message would register as "you are a murderer, a baby killer." That message would be true. But the crushing weight of the accusation on top of my already guilty conscience would be far too much for me to bear.

As a non-Christian, or simply without the conviction of Christ's infinite love and mercy, where does one turn? None of us can bear the burden of his own sin. There is only One who is strong enough to bear that burden, and He is God. In His crucifixion and death, Jesus took upon himself all human sin and suffering. This means that He carried on His shoulders all those who are aborted, all those who choose abortion as a "way out," and all those who perform, procure or advocate abortion as an an acceptable procedure.

As a Christian, I am grateful for the knowledge of Christ's inexhaustible mercy and His love. As a Catholic, I am grateful for the Sacraments—for the knowledge that, no matter what crime or sin I commit, His grace is real, and His mercy is bigger than anything I may do.

Perhaps the element that is needed in pro-life advocacy is a more visible, tangible message of mercy so that our message is not one of judgement.

It is an undeniable fact that abortion kills children. It is even more alarming that many individuals in the pro-choice movement are well aware of the fact that abortion kills children, and of the fact that these children are themselves often not the real victims of abortion. It would be difficult for me to believe that President Clinton, in upholding the veto on the partial birth abortion ban, is not fully aware that the result of this procedure is the killing of a baby. Even Bob Dole's weakening of his position on abortion reveals that the real underlying issue is gross lack of respect for human life.

The abortion issue no longer centers on whether or not the fetus is a human life, but rather on justification for the killing of unwanted life. Last year an article entitled "Our Bodies, Our Souls" appeared in *The New Republic*. It was written by Naomi Wolf, a vocal pro-choice advocate. In the article, she suggested that the time has come for the pro-choice movement to "change its rhetoric." Wolf states: "Clinging to a rhetoric about abortion in which there is no life and no death, we entangle our beliefs in a series of self-delusions, fibs and evasions...I will argue for a radical shift in the pro-choice movement's rhetoric and consciousness about abortion: I will maintain that we need to contextualize the fight to defend abortion rights within a moral framework that admits that the death of a fetus is a real death; that there are degrees of culpability, judgment and responsibility involved in the decision to abort a pregnancy; that the best understanding of feminism involves holding women as well as men to the responsibilities that are inseparable from their rights..." Wolf is essentially calling pro-choice advocates to face the facts: fetuses are babies and we are killing babies. This, however, is, in her view, a "necessary evil," since "pregnancy confounds Western philosophy's idea of the autonomous self."

In light of the current situation, I would like to borrow Wolf's idea, and urge pro-lifers to "change the rhetoric." I do not suggest mitigating the reality, nor do I mean to say that the women who have abortions are not responsible for what they have done because of circumstances (although in some cases the full responsibility is not theirs.) But I do suggest changing our approach to the reality. Perhaps the element that is needed in pro-life advocacy is a more visible, tangible message of mercy so that our message is not one of judgment.

The most immediate victims of abortion are babies who are killed and the mothers who really don't know any other way out that seems reasonable or manageable. Abortion is very readily available, and the myth that it's over and done with in an hour is deceptive but powerful.

Perhaps in addition to "Abortion Kills Children" we could at least have signs which include phone-numbers for Project Rachel's hotline, Mary Cunningham Agee's Nurturing Network or Aim Crisis Pregnancy Centers. These at least would convey a measure of concern for those who have had abortions. Women who are considering abortion may be moved to reconsider. Even signs that simply say "Respect Life" or "Adoption, the loving option" might be just as effective in conveying the pro-life message.

Those who have suffered the effects of abortion, if won over, can become the most powerful pro-life advocates. Bernard Nathanson, the ex-abortionist, is one example. There are many, many others—mostly women who have been victims themselves—who can become powerful pro-life advocates, if we who are Christian and know the reality of Christ can make a stronger effort to temper our rhetoric so as to encourage others to seek His mercy.

The article by Naomi Wolf, the legalization of partial birth abortion, the laws making protesting outside abortion clinics more difficult, all point to a terrible reality: many pro-choice proponents admit that abortion kills, and they are finding new ways to rationalize and justify their position. It seems that we who are pro-life must also reach deeper into our own souls in our stand against abortion. ■

Irene Lagan is a student in the MA Philosophy program.

The persistence of "masculinism" at Franciscan University

by Elizabeth Magaletta

KATHLEEN VAN SCHAIJIK'S RECENT ARTICLE ON POLYGAMY SEEMED, AT FIRST GLANCE, OF QUESTIONABLE RELEVANCE. AFTER ALL, NOBODY HERE IN Steubenville is campaigning for a return to the harem. But does that mean that we have among us no threat to the freedom and dignity of women? Nobody can be found to say, "Men are superior to women." But I suspect that, to some readers, "perfect equality" will not mean what it does to Mrs. van Schaijik, and there lies the problem. My own comments are intended not so much as a response to hers as a seizing of the occasion they provide. What about the intellectual life of Franciscan University makes her piece relevant, as it indeed is, the non-issue status of polygamy notwithstanding?

Van Schaijik draws an analogy between polygamy and black slavery. The imaginary argument in favor of slavery runs thus: "Since the white race is on the whole more intelligent than the black, whites are evidently made to dominate, and therefore, according to natural law, there is nothing wrong with slavery." This is a rotten argument all 'round, but although whites are not, in fact, smarter than blacks, the hidden premise that the more intelligent are entitled to enslave the less so is by far the weaker point in the argument. Why? Simply because people of subnormal intelligence are human beings nonetheless. As a philosopher might say, they are equal to the rest of us, not with respect to intelligence, but rather *in metaphysical dignity*.

You have heard the phrase before. When making comparisons between women and men, people often say, "Men and women are equal in metaphysical dignity, but that doesn't mean they're the same." It is certainly true that men and women are not the same; but in light of the analogy with slavery, "metaphysical dignity" seems to say too little. The feminine nature is not some grave handicap, in the face of which we must be hastily reassured that its possessors are human beings, nonetheless. In fact, that men and women are equals is so perfectly self-evident that to discuss it as though it were one of the great discoveries or fine points of philosophy is an insulting condescension.

Why is whether women are men's equals a matter for discussion at all?

Notice that I say, "men and women are equals"—not "equal." This distinction is helpful in two respects. First: to say that men and women are "equal" might seem to suggest an equivalency and sameness between them. This is not my position, although I should like to stress the unifying power of common human nature as a corrective to the heavy emphasis laid upon "difference" and "complementarity" at the University. Second: "equals," as a substantive rather than an adjective, suggests acting persons in the real world instead of passive objects of intellectual comparison. Too frequently our actual experience of the range of human personality is abandoned in favor of abstractions which ultimately become caricatures of reality.

Take what is probably the complementarians' single greatest theme: receptivity. In two years here, I have passed no period longer than a week without hearing some mention of feminine receptivity. It is, obviously enough, an insight drawn directly from the realm of genital sexuality. This might not be so bad; it is precisely the sexual difference which is under discussion. But to take sexual intercourse as the paradigm for this difference is to consider woman, not only in the moment when her dissimilarity from man is most pronounced, but also from an exclusively male standpoint into which women themselves can enter only vicariously. The masculine experience is thereby given normative status, and women are measured against it. What seemed to be a discussion of the difference *between men and women* turns out rather as one of the difference *of women from men*.

Receptivity is a good thing, and it may seem strange that I complain of its being attributed to women. But in thought and practice, receptivity means more than receptivity. The stress on woman's capacity to receive obscures and belittles what she has to give. Similarly, the emphasis on her "subjective orientation" calls into question her fitness for objective achievement; her "nurturing" aspect is wielded in cutting her out of spheres where emotion is not of primary importance. And so forth. I do not mean that these observations about the feminine nature are (necessarily) wrong, but their use for the prescription of social roles depends on a false alternative.

One of the most striking things about women is the capacity for motherhood. While the father's role is of great importance, the maternal presence seems, somehow, to cut a wider swath through the lived experience not only of the individual child but of the family at large. Catholics of both sexes have watched with horror as the breakdown of the family has torn men from women and children from their parents, especially their mothers, even to the point of abortion. In response, there has been a reassertion of values such as family unity, parental authority and the strong, continuous presence of the mother in the home. Nobody doubts the immense value of these things. Yet somehow, in the midst of this commendable movement, many Catholics have developed the atavistic and wholly illogical notion that a traditional domestic role is the only one (short of religious life) for which women are, at rock bottom, really suited.

One cannot coherently admit that women have the intelligence, psychological stamina and so forth, which the various professions require, and at the same time maintain that they ought not to enter them. In order, then, to dictate to them an exclusively domestic role, it becomes necessary to paint up the kind of deficiencies which then require the metaphysical-dignity disclaimer. Men are claimed, for example, to be "more analytical" than women. But then how explain, for instance, the several girls I knew growing up who mastered calculus before they had finished middle school. Call such women "aberrations," if you like, but there is nothing normal about boys' doing higher math in middle school, either. Granted, there are more good mothers than women mathematicians; but that there are women mathematicians at all should settle the issue. By denying the full range of women's gifts, the Steubenville gender-difference enthusiasts are doing more than just reacting to feminism; their view is a clear and unmistakable *masculinism*.

I use "masculinism" expressly to designate that view of life in which the concerns of men subsume everything else. Male superiority is not so much a part of this view as its governing principle.

This is what I mean: feminism is a movement especially aimed at defending the rights and dignity of women against the aggressions of men. We take exception to radical feminism because in it the special focus on women has subsumed everything else. We have never needed a defense of the rights of men against the aggressions of women; and so I use "masculinism" expressly to designate that view of life in which the concerns of men subsume everything else. Male superiority is not so much a part of this view as its governing principle.

I do not bring this charge lightly. I realize that in discussions of the gender difference many good things are said about women. In fact, most of the things said are said about women; and the things said about men are only occasionally positive. This is a false humility, though. Masculinism survives only by disguising itself, and focus on masculine virtues would be glaringly offensive; only because women are already perceived as at some disadvantage can their "praises" be sung so loudly without anybody's thinking it an attempt to establish female supremacy. If we met a person who spoke with great admiration of black people's religious fervor, but who also let drop the occasional reference to their mental dullness, he would not impress us as someone with a great appreciation for blacks, but rather as a condescending bigot; and even his choice of religious fervor as the object of praise would become suspect.

The most hurtful aspect of the Catholic masculinism phenomenon is precisely, as Mrs. van Schaijik has brought out, its presenting itself as Catholic. Everybody acknowledges that the sexual difference is part of God's plan for creation; but Catholic masculinism has replaced, in that formulation, the sexual difference as such with a specific interpretation of the meaning and practical ramifications of the difference. The differentiation into two sexes is the very mystery into which we are, all of us, created; and by an appropriation and pretended intellectual mastery of it, the masculinists presume to lift themselves out of and rise above the mystery, dictating to other individuals and families their place in it. It is such irreverence, not respectful and serious discourse (and certainly not any family's chosen form of life) which I protest. ■

Elizabeth Magaletta is a junior majoring in philosophy and classics.