

## Abstract

The Biblical story of creation provides the metaphysical framework for the possibility of all existence, material and spiritual. The paper examines the Creation Story from the point of view of the relational character of consciousness. The direct termination of consciousness moves beyond reason to include creation as the objective correlate of consciousness. Assisted suicide is wrong because it moves beyond the elimination of consciousness to include the rejection of a metaphysical reality that has primacy over reason.

## The Creation Story and Assisted Suicide

Most arguments against assisted suicide are based on the sanctity of human life, pain management, the value of suffering, the primary purpose of medicine, the Hippocratic Oath. On the other hand, the arguments for assisted suicide include the rights of the individual, the avoidance of suffering, low quality of life, the progressive deterioration of the person and the loss of higher thought processes. All these arguments center on human consciousness. But this paper takes a different approach to assisted suicide by focusing on the Creation Story and the metaphysical foundation of the arguments. Consciousness cannot function without its objective correlate, namely being's unconcealment. Assisted suicide is morally wrong because it silences being's unconcealment. While God gives us dominion over creation, we do not have the right to silence being's unconcealment. Reason is impoverished without faith in the truth of the Creation Story.

The biblical story of creation<sup>1</sup> unpacks a metaphysical foundation that needs to be included in the definition of human death. Medical technology defines death as the irreversible cessation of all activity of the brain. But the quality of life argument centres on the death or near-death of the cortex as the seat of higher thought processes, or a variant of cellular death. This view of death is reductivist whenever it serves as a premise to legitimate assisted suicide. It moves reason on a slippery slope towards the misconception that we are free to accept or not accept the gift of creation. The deliberate action to end life is unacceptable because it moves beyond the death of consciousness to include a pseudo control over the fact that the world exists rather than not. The aim of this paper is to

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<sup>1</sup> All biblical references are to *The New American Bible*. Wichita Kans.; Catholic Bible Publishers, 1985-1986.

examine the phenomenon of human death from the point of view of the synchronous connection between the Creation Story in the *Book of Genesis* and the definitions of death found in medical technology. The benefit of an inclusive theological-metaphysical-medical view of death is that it promotes the sanctity of creation and human existence while providing solid grounds to refute the ethics of assisted suicide and other death causing actions such as euthanasia. We live in a secular age that appears to have forgotten that creation is a gift from God. We do not in our day possess a clear understanding that we exist in the presence of the mystery of being and that with the divine gift of existence as with the gift of talents lies the responsibility to use it wisely.

The biblical story of creation plays out through the love God has for us. Nothing surpasses the warmth that arises from hearing stories about our beginnings. As children, we share fond memories of ancestral stories told around the fireplace and dinner table about our origin; grandma and grandpa, and their roots, and therefore our roots. We reconnect with our ancestors as though cast in a Jungian archetypal spell about our beginnings, and our genetic link with ancestors. This explains the delight we take in reading about our creation story in *Genesis*. One of several anchor points of the biblical narrative is that creation unfolds as a process rather than as a single event. While science traces the existence of the universe to a 'big bang' explosion 13.8 billion years ago and our existence to some 10,000 years ago, the biblical account frames the process in simpler language while maintaining the sequence of events between matter and spirit; God first created the "heavens and the earth" (1:1), and the wind 'swept over the waters', then God created the light and "separated the light from the darkness" (1:3-4), and "God created a dome above the waters"; God called the dome 'the sky' (1:8), then God created the dry land; 'the earth and the sea' (1:10); then God created vegetation and "the earth brought forth every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it" (1:12). Each time God created "He saw how good it was". Then God made the two great lights, "the greater one to govern the day and the lesser one to govern the night" (1:16). God saw how good it was. Then "God created the fish and the birds" and God blessed them saying "be fertile and multiply" (1:22). Then God created man "in his image" (1:27). Then God gave man dominion over creation (1:28-30). Once again God Looked at everything he had made, "and found it very good" (1:31). The fact that God enjoys the goodness of creation is not to be taken lightly. It explains God's infinite love for us but it also serves notice that we ought not seek to undo what God has done in the creative act.

The Creation Story is the greatest story ever told because it provides an irrefutable answer to the profound mystery of human existence. It explains philosophy's biggest question 'why is there something rather than nothing'. The answer provided in the Creation Story is powerful; the existence of a world outside consciousness is a common-sense reality, but the fact that its existence is indemonstrable is significant. We stand in the presence of mystery. A Canonical text from the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) frames the consequence of ignoring this primacy in stronger language;

If anyone does not confess that the world and all things which are contained in it, both spiritual and material, were produced, according to their whole substance, out of nothing by God; or holds that God did not create by his will free from all necessity, but as necessarily as he necessarily loves himself; or denies that the world was created for the glory of God: let him be anathema.<sup>2</sup>

From the point of view of philosophy, 'anathema' translates into the strong sense of the Socratic principle 'the unexamined life is not worth living' meaning that it is better not to have been born than to go through life without using faith and reason to examine the mystery of human existence. Faith does not impoverish reason. On the contrary, the use of reason without the insight of faith impoverishes reason. The first insight is that existence, material and immaterial, is a gift from God. Three main observations follow from this claim. The first is that the Creation Story provides a metaphysical foundation for the possibility of objective truth, that is, it provides the basis for our deductive reasoning about the ways of ethical behavior. The theory of direct perception reminds us that the existence of things is a datum readily given to us through a conceptual union with the being of things. The distinction between the concept and the idea serves to explain the reality and primacy of the Creation Story: The conceptual union functions as the process of knowledge, namely as the means whereby the being of things (creation) presents itself to reason. The concept takes place before our idea of creation takes place. The idea refers to the examination of the concept and the production of something to its likeness. At the end of the day this first point suggests that the existence of things as given to reason through the Creation Story and that direct perception is based on faith because it is indemonstrable. Yet, no one doubts the existence of the world. The existence of

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<sup>2</sup> "On God the Creator of All Things." Canon 1.5. *First Vatican Council (1869-1870)*  
<https://www.ewtn.com/library/councils/v1.htm> accessed 13 April, 2017.

a world outside of consciousness is indemonstrable but it commands spontaneous assent. The Creation Story explains our origin and therefore adds to reason because science is limited by the methodology of observation and measurement. It can calculate a proximity to a point of origin but cannot move beyond the big bang. The belief in Naïve Realism does not weaken reason. On the contrary, reason is weakened without the perspective of faith. The Creation Story (and science) put the matter of human existence in clear perspective; we arrived last in the order of existence and depend on creation for our material and spiritual existence. The relative brevity of the human species on earth is simultaneously a source of empowerment and a source of embarrassment to philosophy. The embarrassment arises because the attempt to deduce the existence of creation from rationalist principles leads to several epistemological paradoxes, including solipsism and acosmism as the work of Emile Meyerson and other Rationalist philosophers illustrates. Further, the attempt to refute idealism by ‘kicking the tree in the quad’ proves the existence of pain and not the cause of this pain. The Creation Story provides empirical evidence that we stand in the presence of a first indubitable truth; a truth independent of reason and sense for its existence. God provides the ontological truth of being as an undeserved gift of faith to the human senses and intellect. The gift of creation moves philosophy in many ways, from speculation about the divine design of the laws and principles of the expanding and contracting universe discovered in big bang science, to Thomas Aquinas’s arguments for the existence of God. The discovery of the primacy of *esse* over consciousness leads some philosophers to scepticism and others to their knees as they give thanks to God for creation. The second point of inference from the Creation Story and the primacy of being or *esse* (the Latin word for existence) is that the light of *esse* determines the nature or species of things. In brief, think of the existence of things as a bright light in the dark of space. Each thing glows with existence while the density of its light determines its essence or nature (what a thing is). The Creation Story informs us about all the different kinds of existing thing. The primacy of *esse* over thought of *esse* suggests that the type of existence depends on the glow of each individual existent thing. A being’s essence is ultimately reducible to its existence. In other words, the nature of a species is ultimately reducible to its existential boundaries. In this perspective, the unexamined life functions the same way as a plant’s existence. This is not to cast aspersions on plants or to fail to recognize the beauty of all of creation, but it is said to put the matter into perspective, namely that the individual that fails to use the Creation Story as an opportunity for deep

reflection on the gift of human existence functions the same way as a plant deceived by the surface appearance of things. But how do we explain pain and suffering amid the gift of life? Biblical theology finds the explanation for the hardships of life in the human decision to sin or turn against the Creator. Philosophy, on the other hand, recognizes that the poverty of human understanding and the existence of error arises primarily because the light of creation is dimmed by original sin. Philosophy traces the ultimate root of error to the possibility of poor judgement since the language of creation (being's unconcealment) is now veiled in the garb of contingency. These two main points are used throughout the paper as a gateway to the study of assisted suicide.

In this paper, I draw upon a small slice of the gift of *esse* to argue that the primacy of creation (*esse*) provides the objective ground of the possibility of reflexive awareness and therefore of all human activity including human death. If human death arises because the condition of human sin casts a veil over being's unconcealment, it must be the case that death arises in part because of a process taking place within the same folds of being. In other words, the dialogue that takes place between *esse* and reason in the state of existence before original sin must undergo a radical transformation to explain the existing human condition. That this must be the case is clear from the fact that the Son of God found it necessary to redeem the world through his death and resurrection. No biblical scholar today doubts the historical evidence that Christ rose from the dead. The risen Lord appeared to many, including the eleven disciples, the crowd of 500, and Mary Magdalene who was among the first to see him rise from the dead (John 20: 11-18). The resurrection reverses the finality of death brought about by sin. The light of *esse* (creation) or the objective correlate of consciousness undergoes a change because of sin. The rupture in this dialogical encounter is healed through the death and resurrection of Christ.

The original state of creation is described briefly in the 'Second Story of Creation'

***Genesis 2: 9. Out of the ground the Lord God made various trees grow that were delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of knowledge of good and bad.***

The state of creation before original sin must have been wonderful. I imagine an idyllic state of bliss where nothing needs to survive because disease, destruction and death threaten nothing. My spiritual vision of this state is one in which we

peacefully coexist side by side with the cold, the hurricanes, the waters, the fire, and the laws of gravity. This is a world where the coyote and the lamb, the lion and the rabbit exist in peace with all living things. This is a world where you go naked into the cold of winter without freezing to death, or plumb the depths of the ocean floor without fear of drowning or of being crushed by water pressure; this is a world where no carbon atom is ever threatened by any other carbon atom; this is a world where all humans form a loving dynamic unit as each person is truly an extension of each person; this is a world where all things exist in peaceful relationship with our loving creator God.

We have six related perspectives on being that unfurl from *Genesis*. (1) God creates the world and all things contained in it out of nothing; (2) God creates man and woman and gives them dominion over creation, the trees are delightful, the food and water is abundant. (3) God instructs us not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and bad and (4) God is pleased with creation. (5) Sin enters the world as we eat of the tree of knowledge. (6) God sends his Son to redeem us.

***Genesis 3: 6-7. The woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.***

The delightful world of existence turns into the sour grapes of wrath, misery, suffering, violence, and death because of sin. We left the luminous garden of Eden to be at the mercy of the laws of gravity, and the seeming discord between humans along with the destructive force of hurricanes, floods, fire, and pestilence. The appearance of sin cast a veil over the intelligibility of creation and therefore on the human condition. **Flowers don't appear to be as bright to us as they did in Eden.**

***Genesis 3: 17-20: Cursed be the ground because of you! In toil shall you eat its yield all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you, as you eat of the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat, until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; For you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return.***

The Creation Story is a first indubitable truth for Christian philosophy, not to be outdone by any other story because it sets the metaphysical stage of our metaphysical and epistemic misadventure into the world of sin. Therefore, the human condition must be examined in the light of this primacy, now veiled in the garb of sin. We lost sight of the fact that creation provides the foundation for the possibility of life and non life (not non-life). In this paper, the distinction between non-life as the negation of life and non life as the removal of ground in which the possibility of negation arises **because of the decision to sin** sets the stage for the argument that God's creative act plays a major role in the states of consciousness. The distinction between the absence of life and the removal of ground of the possibility of absence introduces one of the axioms to flow from the primacy of *esse*. It provides a foundation for Christian philosophy to argue that assisted suicide is wrong because it aims to settle the condition of sin through technology rather than through contrition and redemption. The reason for this is quite simple: the direct or indirect death of consciousness takes place within the perspective of the turns taking place in being because of sin and the redemption from sin. Thus, the existing state of creation must be included in the definition of human death, on earth and in the afterlife state.<sup>3</sup> *Esse* maintains its primacy in the face of human sin because *esse* secures the metaphysical ground of the possibility of redemption. The claim made in *Genesis 1* that God sees creation as a good thing is repeated six times for good reason. **Our refusal of the gift of creation is a rejection of the original good God sees in creation.** The turn that takes place in creation is a consequence of this rejection, as is the redemption. The deliberate technological attempt to remove human life raises the bar of human ignorance to the next level because it translates into the attempt to move beyond consciousness to control the metaphysical ground of consciousness, namely creation. To create is to make something out of nothing, that is, the act of divine creation moves the world and all things contained in it out of the nothing of divine possibilities into the something of existence. The state of the universe before creation is explained as non-creation rather than non-creation (the negation of existence) because God is the ultimate root of the possibility of something rather than nothing. The sense of the nothing cannot function as the absence of something because this view gives rise to the absurd claim that the creative act pre-exists its own origin. The Greek view of the world as eternal is based on their inability to think freely about the Plotinian One and the world of eternal essences. The text of Elijah's meeting with the Lord confirms

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the afterlife state see footnote 9.

that nothing (nothing there) existed before creation.<sup>4</sup> Elijah did not meet the Lord in the noise of the wind, earthquake, or fire, but in the absence of sound in the 'soft whisper of a voice'.<sup>5</sup> However, the failure to root theology and philosophy in the Creation Story leads to the belief that the existence of the world is eternal. Aristotle's *Physics* reasons that a being must first exist in potency and privation before it can exist in act. This explains his belief that the human soul is reduced to the potentiality of matter at death because of the absence of God and the creative act. The ancient philosophers make no mention of a Creation Story and therefore their gods have no real interest in the fate of humans. But the God of biblical theology enters personal relationship with us through the Creation Story.

**In what sense is creation a good thing?** In raising the question, we look at the Creation Story in relation to the human appetite for the good. To observe that something is good is to affirm that it is pleasing to our affective and cognitive nature. The good is an intuited transcendental property of being which we predicate of anything that exists. This is to say that it applies to everything that exists along with other transcendental properties of being such as unity (things resist destruction), ontological truth (the conformity between the intelligibility of creation and the human mind), and the inclusive transcendental beauty that encompasses unity, truth, and goodness, along with the characteristic properties integrity, harmony, and clarity, respectively. The good is pleasing to an appetite because it freely gives itself to the human appetite for the integrity of human existence. What we find at the banquet of the creation story is that the world and all things contained in it gives itself freely to us. It feeds our spiritual appetite for the good;

**1 Timothy, 4:4. *Everything God created is good; nothing is to be rejected when it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by God's word and by prayer.***

But our appreciation of the goodness of things is marred by the selfishness of sin. We now see creation through the distortions of change. The truth of being now presents itself through a consciousness ravaged by the condition of sin. The fact that the dialogue with being's unconcealment continues after death is due to the redemption from original sin. The intellect applies itself to the development of moral habits as it discerns whether the perceived good use of creation is true,

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<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings 19:11-14.

<sup>5</sup> For additional details on this claim see my article Silence and Hebrew Meditation. In *AJBT*. 2009. 9:48.

that is, in agreement with the divine ontological truth of creation (the Eternal Law). The essence of the ground of truth as the German phenomenological philosopher Martin Heidegger claims, lies in *alētheia* which is the unconcealment of being. Heidegger's lectures on Anaximander, Parmenides, and Heraclitus when he was teaching at Freiburg University (1915-23, and 1928-45) discovers that the ontological ground of truth was known in Ancient philosophy. This perennial view of unconcealment appears throughout the history of philosophy from the Greek word *ousias* meaning unconcealment, to the English 'being's self-disclosure', the French concept 'le dégagement de l'être', and the German 'unverborgenheit' to convey the idea that the light of being or *esse* in the strong sense of the Creation Story sends us on an errand to discover truth. Biblical ethics expresses our relationship to the divine vision of being's unconcealment through the Ten Commandments. The redemptive suffering of Christ teaches a return to the original Creation Story in the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes (Matthew 5: 3-12) and in the Great Discourse (Luke 6: 20) "Blest are you poor; the reign of God is yours." We bring our thirst to the banquet of redemption and being's self-disclosure because the moral habits we develop in this life serve as an aperitif to the banquet of eternal life.

The story of creation explains why something exists rather than nothing. It secures the metaphysical possibility of attaining objective truth. The creation story has profound implications for metaphysics and ethics. It explains the primacy of *esse* as a first indubitable truth. Some modern scientists miss that point when they argue that the world exists eternally and that human values are relative to the developments taking place in science. The early Greek philosophers shared the view although they grounded their belief in the philosophy of nature rather than science. For instance, Aristotle's teachings on act and potency illustrates this view,<sup>6</sup> as we saw above. But Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) understood the centrality of the Creation Story because the existence of an eternal world still needs an explanation for the fact that it exists rather than not exist. Aquinas argues that the things of our experience do not have a sufficient reason to explain their real existence outside God's creative act. They could just as easily not exist as exist while existing, which is absurd. In the absence of the Book of *Genesis* to explain why the world and all things contained in it exist, and given the inability to pull the existence of the world out of rationalist

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<sup>6</sup> Aristotle. *Physics*. "The fulfilment of what exists potentially, in so far as it exists potentially, is motion...". Book 111. 10.

principles, we rejoin absurdist reasoning and paradoxically if not illogically, assent to the impossibility of knowledge.

Reason cannot function without the Creation Story because it would seek to proceed without the metaphysical foundation it provides for our epistemic deliberations. Descartes's (1596-1650) valiant effort to call all things into doubt proves this all too clearly as his mathematical logic locks us in the prison of a hermetically self-sealed introspective self without access to other persons, or the world of things. Clearly the denial of the existence of a world and its unconcealment outside of consciousness leads not to clear and distinct ideas but to the death of consciousness. The objectivity of knowledge depends on a theory of direct perception or realism. The attempt to reject the gift of creation leads to severe epistemological paradoxes as reason seeks in vain to pull the existence of the world of direct perception out of an activity of reason. In my opinion, this is but one of the many ways in which the condition of sin clouds judgement.

**Sin corrupts our view of creation.** The craving for truth we bring to the metaphysical table of creation and the primacy of *esse* is made even stronger by the awareness that we are insignificant and undeserving scoundrels as we often return God's gift of creation with sin. Fortunately, God loves us to the point that God allows us to reject the gift of life. Sin is a refusal of God's gift. The distinct object that truncates the first and second parts of *Genesis* is the movement from God's creative act to our free but mistaken decision to sin. The consequence of this grave decision is death; 'ashes to ashes'.<sup>7</sup> At this point the contrast between God's pleasure and displeasure is most alarming. Our reduction to dirt rewinds our status in the Creation Story **from having dominion over things to a spiritual demotion** as we are subsequently reduced to being carbon atoms along with other carbon atoms. Sin makes us like all the crawling things of the earth as they return to the earth at death. The condition is somewhat analogous to the Aristotelian reduction of the human soul to the potentiality of matter at death. For all of Aristotle's genius it amazes me that his metaphysics is rooted in the world of eternal essences rather than in *esse*.

Original sin delivers a death blow to the human species as the luminosity of reason and will are reduced to the light emitted by carbon atoms. At this point, there is nothing that distinguishes the human species from the light of any other inanimate carbon atom. Subsequently the human refusal to serve the Lord

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<sup>7</sup> *Genesis* 3, 19.

places us in the same category as other created things; good but incapable of attaining ontological truth. By our own choice, we moved out of the beauty and eternity of Eden and the gift of creation into the abyss of contingency and death. The contrast between the original state of Adam and Eve in Eden and the condition of humans after the Fall resurfaces in the biblical history of Noah and the flood, and again in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. This time the ongoing misplaced will of humans provokes God to anger and to the destruction of creation. From the point of view of metaphysics, the destruction of creation is a transformation in being's unconcealment that surfaces one final time at human death.

The metaphysical consequences of sin are devastating, not only because of human death and eternal damnation but because the process of discovering the truth of creation is now veiled in obscurity. The language and beauty of being is no longer disclosed in full but only piecemeal as each act of knowledge allows us to painfully disclose ontological truth, the truth of being's unconcealment on the installment plan, one byte of wounded insight at a time. The gravity of sin introduces the condition of obscurity in the world and the deception from Satan that material goods hold the promise of real happiness. The belief that science is the sacred cow of salvation is a consequence of this illusion. Satan is a deceiver and 'man' is doomed. We do not escape the condition of sin in this life, but the 'Good News' of the bible is that the death and resurrection of Christ redeems us from our broken self;

***Mark 16:15-17. After rising from the dead, Jesus, appeared to the eleven and said to them; Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned.***

We pray for the wisdom not to reject creation a second time! The light of the risen Christ changes everything. It restores the light of creation for humans. The evidence from scriptures informs us that Christ's luminosity exhibits properties that are human as well as divine. The duality of the risen Christ provides evidence that the original luminosity of creation that unfolds in the Creation Story returns to its original state as Christ now exhibits divine and human properties: Christ is incorporeal and appears to walk through locked doors, yet he is corporeal in that he breaks bread; his wounds neither heal or fester; his disciples

do not recognize him at first sight until they see/hear what they need to believe he is risen.<sup>8</sup>

The light of Christ introduces salvation into human history but the human sinful condition is an ongoing struggle between good and evil as the earthly journey remains marked by the contingent character of our dialogue with being. The following paragraph illustrates the closeness of the encounter between being's unconcealment veiled in the spatio-temporal garb of contingency, and consciousness;<sup>9</sup>

The behavior of subatomic particles in quantum physics invites an interesting connection between physics and metaphysics. We learn from quantum physics that a subatomic explosion creates two particles that fly away from each other with opposite spins going in one direction and the other. They separate from each other at a speed greater than the speed of light. The observation of one of the particles causes the spin of the other to change direction even at great distances. The phenomenon baffled Einstein who taught that information could not travel faster than light. He labelled it 'spooky action at a distance' (Kofler and Meyer-Streng, 2013). The fact that the simple act of looking at the spin of one particle causes a change in the spin of the other can be seen to add support to the dynamic nature of the metaphysical encounter between being and consciousness. The fact that information can travel at a rate faster than the speed of light is equally interesting. From the point of view of metaphysics, because the process of dying causes an irreversible change in the human brain, it seems possible to suggest that the nature of being's unconcealment must also change. To suggest that being's unconcealment is unchanged by the dying observer is to take a position that flies in the face of science. A change in the way consciousness focuses on being at death must be accompanied by an equally radical change in the way being appears to consciousness at human death. Given the objective character of knowledge, the final moment of dying must be accompanied by a radical change or spin in being's unconcealment as it moves beyond space and time, and beyond the speed of light, to enter into a new 'not so spooky action at a distance' quantum-spiritual state. While we still have to argue that this new state of dialogue between

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<sup>8</sup> I discuss the properties of the risen Christ in Christian metaphysics and human death. *Journal of Philosophy and Theology*, 27, 2 (2015) 259-288, and What we learn from the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In *Art and Realism* (Sztuka i realizm): (Festschrift) Commemorative Book, Jubilee Birthday, and Scientific Work of Professor Henry Kieresia at KUL), ed. T. Dumas, A. Maryniarczyk SDB, and P. Sulenta. Lublin: Polish Society of St. Thomas Aquinas and the Faculty of Philosophy—Catholic University of Lublin, 771-786.

<sup>9</sup> Bryson, K. Christian Metaphysics and Human Death. *Philosophy & Theology* 27, 2 (2015): 271-272.

being and consciousness is eternal we have reason from science to suggest that the change in the observer (consciousness) occasions a change in the observed (being). Further, the nature of the change in the dialogue between being and consciousness does not argue against the legitimacy of realism (that properties exist independent of being observed or not) because the claim to objective knowledge in Thomistic metaphysics is based on the immateriality of knowledge and on the nature of the conceptual union rather than on the separation of the concept from the idea.

**How this applies to assisted death.** The medical definitions of human death are incomplete without a reference to the metaphysics of creation because it provides the founding block of science. Human death is a process rather than an instantaneous event. It takes time to die. Even an extreme form of death such as death by decapitation takes place over time. Technically, decapitation places the victim in a condition that is incompatible with the continuance of life rather than in the state of death as such. At the end of the day medicine views death as being the irreversible absence of consciousness. In particular, the process of dying takes place through four stages from somatic death to the irreversible death of the cells of the body. Death is pronounced when this process is stopped somewhere along that continuum. Somatic death is the cessation of heartbeat and respiration. The process is reversible although the first definition of death occurs if the process is not reversed. The second and third definitions of death are based on brain death, the one centers on the death of the higher centres of the brain, while the other revolves around the death of the whole brain. Cortical death is the absence of higher thought processes such as reasoning and will. But the definition of death as the death of the whole brain is gaining acceptance worldwide in medicine. These three definitions of death share a common view of death as the absence of activity of the brain. A fourth definition of death proposed by David Lamb, a biologist, entails leaving the alleged dead untouched until putrefaction sets in. His suggestion is made to counteract the apparent urgency to pronounce death for the sake of the pressing need for donor organs. Philosophy introduces a fifth definition of death, namely the departure of the soul from the body. The soul is the principle of organization; its departure leads to the disorganization and decomposition of the organized matter (ashes to ashes). However, the Creation Story leads me to suggest a 6<sup>th</sup> definition of death that incorporates being's unconcealment. These definitions are interdependent as they view the process of death considering science, philosophy, and biblical theology. The Creation Story suggests that our understanding of death must

move beyond measurement and the loss of consciousness to include the objective correlate of consciousness because being's unconcealment and consciousness are necessary correlates of knowledge. Consciousness is the subjective correlate of the noetic encounter while being's unconcealment is the objective correlate. They form a unit which disintegrates at death as both correlates are irreversibly changed. The glow of being's unconcealment changes because of sin (ashes to ashes) and again because of the redemption (rising from ashes into eternal life). But agnostics and atheist that do not believe in eternal life nonetheless must acquiesce to the fact that CONSCIOUSNESS IS RELATIONAL and therefore that the irreversible loss of consciousness takes place in the context of the extinguishing light of being's unconcealment.

The definition of death based on the irreversible loss of consciousness only is reductivist because it ignores the necessary correlate of consciousness. Consciousness cannot exist without creation. The focus on consciousness only produces a definition of dying rather than of death as such, that is it explains death as the absence of consciousness (non-life) rather than as the removal of ground in which the possibility of consciousness arises (non life) as we incorporate the Creation Story into the definition of human death. The proof is that the definition of death as the irreversible cessation of some or all the components of the human brain views death as being a privation of activity. But this view only makes sense from the point of view of the living. It has nothing to do with the nature of death as such. An absence acquires its significance in relation to an anterior presence of which it is currently a privation. The exclamation 'I see nothing there' makes sense if the object that was once there or could be there is no longer there. Thus, science defines death from the point of view of the measurement of activity or more to the point as a failure to measure the presence of signs of life. This measure changes over time. The rapid progress of medical technology to measure the detect the presence of life has shifted our understanding of when someone is dead. Technically the same person can be pronounced dead in one part of town and alive in another depending on the sensitivity of measurement. The creation story must be seen in the same perspective as we move from the original order of creation to the appearance of sin, and to the redemptive suffering of Christ. The holistic view of human death includes all its components.

In brief, it seems possible to suggest that a qualitative change took place in the creation story when Adam and Eve sinned. The brightness of creation no longer

appeared as bright and peaceful because it was veiled in the garb of contingency, decay, and death. This proves that consciousness is relational. Human death takes place because of a metamorphosis in the objective correlate of consciousness caused by sin. The nature of death as such is not only the absence of consciousness or cerebral activity because this view fails to move beyond consciousness to include why space and time affect consciousness. However, the death and resurrection of Christ reopens the door to salvation. This is an important piece of information for peace of mind. It suggests that we not wallow in the despair of sin but rise again in the brilliant light of Our Lord. But Satan's efforts are untiring because Satan also works in our good actions leading us to wonder if what we do is good enough or if we are making the right choices in life. Satan strives to destroy our peace.

Being's unconcealment must undergo a radical transformation at human death. Human death is a reversal of the metaphysical ground in which the possibility of being alive or absent of life occurs. Death is the occasion for a resurrection to the other side of being's unconcealment where *esse* shall reveal herself fully to us in itself, from itself, as witness to the glory of God. It seems possible to think that the God of the New Testament is pleased with the beauty of creation but that our appreciation of this beauty is in process until our final decision at human death to side with the sacred good, or not. We catch glimpses of what the dead see through the Resurrection Story and other biblical passages such as the transfiguration, and the story of our ancestral saints such as Abraham, Moses, Isaac, who were privileged to catch a glimpse of the beauty of the Creation Story in their lifetime. We have much to learn from mystics who are privileged to see something of the beauty of God in this life. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, a prolific insightful angelic doctor of the Church stopped writing when he saw something of eternal truth. The experience happened to him during mass. The experience had a great impact on him as he now felt that all he had written was like straw compared to the reality of God and the Creation Story.

The Creation Story provides the metaphysical ground of a holistic definition of death because it incorporates *esse* as the ultimate ground of the possibility of presence or absence of consciousness. This view allows us to pull assisted suicide and euthanasia out of the technological closet to expose them as affronts to creation and the primacy of *esse*. In assisted suicide the death causing action is initiated by the patient whereas in euthanasia the physician brings about the death of the patient. In both cases the process of death moves beyond the death

of consciousness to reject the ground of the possibility of consciousness. The decision to remove the ground of consciousness is a solid repudiation of creation. While God gives us dominion over creation, God does not give us permission to deliberately conceal being's unconcealment. In my opinion, the action raises the bar of original sin to the rejection of the ontological ground of the possibility of existence. The death causing action to human life is a metaphysical sin against creation itself as the ultimate root of the possibility of life. The claim that God sees creation as good is made six times in the creation story. The repetition signals the importance of the creative act. **The direct termination of human life is therefore an intellectual sin against the goodness that God sees in creation and being's unconcealment.**

### **Concluding remarks**

We embarked on a brief journey to the Creation Story to observe the primacy of this reality over reason. Faith in the truth of the Creation Story does not weaken reason. On the contrary, reason is weakened without this act of faith because reason cannot function without its objective correlate. The relational property of consciousness signals the role of consciousness and of its objective correlate in the production of knowledge. They form a necessary unit. The perturbations in being's unconcealment explains the consequence of sin and of the redemption on a human life. The metaphysics of assisted suicide is morally wrong, therefore, because it moves beyond the rejection of human consciousness to include a rejection of the metaphysical primacy of being's unconcealment for consciousness.

It also seems possible to conclude that the environment is sacred. While the present paper does not deal with the spirituality of the environment, the argument is but a few steps away. The destruction of the environment is rooted in a failure to grasp the full metaphysical beauty of the Creation Story.