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—EDITOR

INSTITUTE OF SOCIETY, ETHICS AND THE LIFE SCIENCES: THE HASTINGS CENTER

by Susan L. Peck

Organ transplantation, human experimentation, the prolongation of life, the imminence of genetic engineering, the reality of genetic counseling, population limitation—the issues were proliferating, the most profound issues of human rights, human survival, and social policy. Unquestionably, many of the scientific breakthroughs could be deemed an improvement on the human condition, but these same remarkable advances could also pose a critical range of ethical and social dilemmas.

Early in 1969, under the leadership of philosopher Daniel Callahan and psychiatrist Willard Gaylin, an informal group of scholars, researchers, and others with a professional interest in the life sciences held a series of meetings to discuss a common concern: what ought society as a whole, and the professions in particular, do in the face of the remarkable advances in the life sciences? The outcome of these meetings was the establishment of the Institute of Society, Ethics and the Life Sciences, a nonprofit research group directed to the ethical, legal, and social questions arising from new bioscientific developments, especially in medicine, biology, and population.

New technologies had raised common questions and created an urgent need for a reappraisal of many traditional values touching on the nature of man, his dignity, and future. It was necessary to rethink the questions of how scientific research ought to be carried out, what the priorities should be, and how the results should (or should not) be used. How could ethical codes be devised and norms of professional responsibility be fashioned? The good of the individual had to be balanced against the requirements of the common good, necessitating a close examination of law and public policy in the light of new needs. To state it succinctly, How could advances in the life sciences be put in the service of human welfare?

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As these issues emerged, so did the problems. Too few people, either in the sciences or in the humanities, possessed the necessary training to cope with the issues in their full complexity; communication was sparse among those working in the field; few universities and professional schools provided a milieu for the training and research to develop needed cross-disciplinary skills. The gap between the widespread recognition of the problems and an orderly, sustained, and creative investigation of them was enormous. As one potentially effective way of organizing resources and developing those needed for the future, a decision was made to organize the Institute on an interdisciplinary basis. Thus, the first eighteen-member board of directors included scientists, ethicists, lawyers, and physicians, among others. Very little money for serious research was available, but early financial support was obtained from John D. Rockefeller III and Mrs. Elizabeth K. Dollard. Subsequent grants were obtained from the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Ford Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the New York Foundation, the Commonwealth Fund, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Science Foundation, enabling the Institute to initiate projects and programs.

The Hastings Center, the central research and administrative facility of the Institute, was established. From the first, it seemed evident that ways would have to be found to overcome the problems of bringing together an interdisciplinary group attempting to discuss issues which were often ill-defined, subject to intense controversy, intrinsically difficult, and lacking a history of research and discussion. While it was agreed that when seen in their full scope the issues were interdisciplinary, the American system of higher education had done little to provide training in the techniques of multidisciplinary work—not the least of which is simply developing the courage to leave the safe shelter of one's own speciality. Putting a scientist, a theologian, and a lawyer together, each with a different kind of training and methodology, frequently resulted in mutual confusion and incomprehension. Fellows and staff members were sought who had both the skills and the patience to talk with those outside their own fields in a productive way. But this did not magically happen overnight; it took frequent meetings over a long period of time to forge a group which could effectively work together and listen together.

GOALS

The Institute has established three broad goals:

It seeks to raise the level of competence and research in the examination of the ethical and social problems arising out of advances in the life sciences.

It aims to assist universities and medical and professional schools in the development of programs designed to make a consideration of ethical problems an integral part of the education process.

It strives to bring the importance of the ethical and social problems in the life sciences to the attention of professional and policy-making bodies and to assist them, when requested, by supplying technical advice and by making available the results of analysis, study, and research.

PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

As the Institute has developed, its primary activities have centered on a number of long-term research programs, a variety of teaching and

curriculum-development projects, and the establishment of a public information and publications program. In addition, the Institute provides consultation services, organizes conferences and colloquia, and compiles bibliographical and other research tools.

Cognizant of the need to concentrate on important problem areas for a number of years, research groups were formed for sustained, long-term work in those areas which seemed most pressing: behavior control, death and dying, genetic counseling and engineering, population limitation. Four years later, the structure of these ongoing research groups remains essentially the same. Each is interdisciplinary, with a fairly even mixture of those trained in the pertinent professions. Each group of from fifteen to twenty persons works on the premise that a serious treatment of the issues requires a balance between good theory and good practice. Hence, each has spent considerable time on the most theoretical questions of ethics and value and the most concrete questions of law and public policy. Membership in the research groups is drawn from the seventy-seven fellows of the Institute (all of whom have full-time professional occupations), together with a staff associate and researchers from the Hastings Center. Large blocks of time are devoted to frequent meetings at which commissioned papers are read and discussed, issues are painstakingly probed, opinions expressed, examined, and frequently rebutted. Emerging from the tedious deliberations of these research groups, albeit slowly, has been a cohesive ethical consciousness—ability to perceive the ramifications to society posed by new technologies.

The Behavior Control group, by means of a series of researches and conferences, has been attempting to define the general problems posed by new behavior-control technologies and to explore the specific ethical and legal issues raised. To date, the group has concentrated on psychosurgery and electrical stimulation of the brain, control of behavior through drugs, psychological and psychotherapeutic methods for modifying behavior, and behavior in "total institutions." The next topic for research is behavior control through the media.

A wide range of difficult questions has been studied by the Death and Dying group: How is human death to be defined and what criteria should be used for pronouncing death? When should treatment be terminated on a dying patient? And who should make the decision to terminate treatment? Will positive euthanasia become necessary with advances in life-prolonging technology? Increasingly, the group has been asked to provide consultative services on educational programs in the field and has been consulted on the administrative and legal questions which arise.

The Genetic Counseling and Engineering group has devoted itself to the immediate problems posed by the rapid development of genetic counseling and mass genetic screening programs. Preliminary research is also being carried out on genetic engineering—cloning, in vitro fertilization, and genetic surgery.

The research group on Population has worked on both national and international issues. In 1971 it completed a major study for the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future entitled "Ethics, Population and the American Tradition." Research has also been conducted on ethical issues of contraceptive testing, attitudes of physicians toward population limitation, and sociopolitical issues raised by international population aid.

Humanities and the Life Sciences is the most recent group established at the Institute. The first project was devoted to study and discussion of the

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relationship between technical expertise and ethical expertise. Thereafter, the group concentrated its attention on the meaning of "health," with a special focus on the adequacy of the World Health Organization definition of health. The current topic being studied is "individualism."

The Institute has developed a number of experimental teaching programs on ethics, law and the life sciences, and medical ethics, and has cooperated with a variety of universities in establishing such programs. Several one-week intensive postdoctoral workshops on medical ethics have also been given in the summertime.

A student intern program enables a number of graduates and undergraduates to spend from one to three months at the Hastings Center. Increasingly, the Institute will center its educational efforts on the development of curriculum models and intensive workshops for professors and teachers.

Under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute will provide four one-year postdoctoral fellowships for the study of ethics and the life sciences during the academic year 1974-75. The purpose of these fellowships is to permit both older and younger researchers to prepare themselves systematically for future productive research on ethical problems arising out of advances in medicine and biology.

The publications program, established in 1972, consists of a number of publications emanating from the Hastings Center: the *Hastings Center Report*, published bimonthly; provides short articles, new reports, and bibliographical leads on recent literature in the field; the *Hastings Center Studies*, appearing three times a year, publishes longer, more scholarly articles and, in particular, papers on single themes coming out of the work of the Humanities group. An *Annual Bibliography* of bioethics is also published.

To defray the cost of the publications program, the board of directors established an associate-member category. Members receive the publications and, when possible, assistance on particular issues which may concern them. Memberships presently number approximately five thousand. The cost is \$15 per year for individuals, \$25 for institutions, and \$10 for students.

The Institute is a tax-exempt (IRS 501 [c] [3]) organization and welcomes contributions. Such contributions can help to ensure the future of the Institute and can provide the support and freedom necessary to maintain high standards in its research and other activities. The Institute was established not only to do its own work, but to be a resource for others. That goal remains paramount.