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The Tragedy of Untethered Science — Chilling Examples

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Science and technology, once detached from moral constraints, can and will produce nightmares. Untethered from moral accountability, science becomes a threat to human dignity, rather than a means to knowledge and human happiness.

Consider these developments gathered from reports in major media in recent days. Standing alone, each would represent cause for deep moral concern. Taken together, these developments point to disaster.

ITEM ONE:

In Germany, a twelve-year-old boy was allowed to become the world's youngest transsexual. Tim, now known as "Kim," had declared himself a girl early in life. As *The Telegraph* [London] reports:

Tim was diagnosed as a transsexual two years ago, when doctors and psychiatrists concluded that his claims to be "in the wrong body" were so deeply felt that he required treatment. The therapy involves artificially arresting male puberty, with a series of potent hormone injections before the administration of female hormones to initiate the development of features such as breasts.

Now aged 14, and officially registered as a female, Kim looks like a typical girl of her age. She dresses in fashionable clothes, has long blonde hair and blue eyes and dreams of moving to Paris to become a fashion designer. Her parents, who initially assumed their son was going through a temporary phase, eventually grew accustomed to seeing him as a girl.

Der Spiegel [Germany] added further details:

Kim's is a classic case, according to Bernd Meyenburg. "Transsexual development is extremely rare, and very few youth psychiatrists have any experience with it. The families wander from one psychiatrist to the next" — until they wind up in his office, or in the office one of his colleagues at the university hospitals in Hamburg and the southern city of Ulm. Germany has only a few experts on child transsexual development, and Meyenburg heads the Psychiatric Special Outpatient Clinic for Children and Adolescents with Identity Disorders at the University of Frankfurt Hospital.

The doctor claims this to be a "classic case" but acknowledges that there is no scientific test for what is called transsexualism:

It's impossible to determine whether a person is transsexual by using standard diagnostic tools like hormone level testing or computer tomography (cross-section images of the body). Psychiatrists base their diagnoses on how long a person has been living as a member of the opposite sex and how convincing he or she is in that role. In adults, medical standards require years of psychotherapy and a trial run as a member of the opposite sex before hormone treatment can start. Children in puberty have little time to satisfy these requirements.

Even the doctor has doubts about the larger ethical issues:

Should doctors second-guess nature because of a teenager's wishes? Can't puberty change everything? And what if it all turns out to have been the wrong decision? Meyenburg has mixed feelings about the fact that more and more — and younger — patients are coming to him for advice these days.

"From a purely medical standpoint we are dealing with the mutilation of a biologically healthy body," says Meyenburg. "We face a real dilemma. If we do something about it, it's irreversible. And if we allow nature to take its course, that too is irreversible."

Welcome to the carnival of postmodern gender consciousness. This is what it comes down to — 12 year old transsexuals undergoing hormone therapy to switch pubertal development (at least partially). Once gender is separated from physical sex, anything goes. Add the age's unbounded commitment to personal autonomy — even for children — and Tim becomes "Kim," now waiting until 18 for sex reassignment surgery.

ITEM TWO:

In Spain, a 67-year-old woman who gave birth to twin boys last month now admits that she lied to the IVF clinic in Los Angeles in order to receive the *in vitro* treatments that made her bizarre pregnancy possible. Furthermore, she now realizes she needs help in caring for the boys and that the boys need a dad. Fine timing.

As *The Times* [London] reports:

Ms Bousada, a retired shop worker, had lived with her own mother all her life until her mother died in 2005, aged 101. She is said to have decided to get in-vitro fertilisation after seeing magazine articles about the success of increasingly elderly women in getting pregnant.

Ms Bousada told the News of the World: "I think everyone should become a mother at the right time for them. Maybe things shouldn't have been done in the way they were done but that was the only way to achieve the thing I had always dreamt of.

"I would have loved to have got pregnant with a man by my side but it didn't work out that way. Now I've got to look for a dad for the kids. I'd like to meet someone a bit younger than me. They'd have to like the children, of course."

Defying natural limits and lying to the IVF clinic, Ms. Bousada has the audacity to suggest that "everyone should become a mother at the right time for them." Well, not *everyone* can become a mother at any time — at least not yet. Her argument flies in the face of human experience, human development, and natural human ability. Ms. Bousada did not just decide to become a mother, she had to obtain the embryo or embryos from a clinic.

So here is the picture. A 67-year-old woman with newborn twin boys now looks for a (preferably younger) man to serve as dad to the boys. From a moral perspective, everything (yes, *everything*) is backwards here.

Ms. Bousada went through menopause 18 years ago. From the moment her pregnancy began, the boys were endangered by her advanced age. Doctors barely kept the pregnancy going long enough for the boys to be born seven weeks early, and barely over three pounds each.

News of the World [London] also reported this kicker:

Carmela, who speaks little English, went home to Spain to allow her body to get used to its new state before flying back to LA last May for the final stages of the process.

There, in a sterile doctor's office, she chose the donor parents — eggs from a pretty, brown-haired 18-year-old and sperm from a blond, blue-eyed Italian-American.

She recalled: "I picked them from photos in a catalogue. It was a bit like studying an estate agent's brochure and choosing a house. I wasn't bothered about what sort of jobs they had or how much they earned as long as they were healthy. I picked people who were different looking as I wanted a mixture.

Eggs and sperm chosen as if from a real estate catalogue. Scared yet?

These are but two examples of what science has now made possible. Where are the moral limits? If a twelve-year-old boy can declare himself a transsexual, why not a ten-year-old? If a 67-year-old woman can get away with having twin boys by IVF, why not an 80-year-old?

Once science and technology are untethered from moral constraints, the only question is when and where such things will happen. The Christian worldview understands that some natural limits are for our good. The fact that God made humans male and female is for our good, and for His glory. The gift of marriage is for our good, and the gift of pregnancy and children is to be received within that institution. Age is also a gift, and every age comes with its season — challenges and blessings together. Humans were not made so that 67-year-old women can become mothers 18 years after menopause. The human race is in big trouble.

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