

Neurobioetics Group Opening Seminar

Studies on Consciousness and the Dignity of Man



Pontifical Athenaeum Regina Apostolorum
September 18, 2009

Translated into English by Justin Rossi

What is Neurobioethics?

- The term neurobioethics* was introduced in 2005 by James Giordano, Ph.D., American neuroscientist and neuroethicist, Director of Neurotechnology Studies at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies in Arlington, Virginia, and a Fellow in Philosophical Psychology at Blackfriar's Hall, Oxford University.
- Underscored the role of humanities and social sciences in ethical questions raised by modern neuroscience.



*www.neurobioethics.org/

Our Definition of Neurobioethics

A scientific discipline that:

Derives a multi-disciplinary approach from bioethics then applies it to ethical questions of neuroscience with full respect to the Human Person—as understood in its ontological multi-dimensionality—and fully applies a teleological organicity to human life.

Avails itself of empirical science in a continuous and balanced dialogue with the humanities, having adopted a precise notion of the Human Person and having it as both the nucleus and the objective of study and research activities.

Turns particular attention toward scientific data, derived from the most recent studies on neurobiological dimensions, and toward implications for the aforementioned concept of the Human Person, inescapable social and legal implications of new types of knowledge, and their application to man.

Is distinguished from bioethics by a particularly critical and detailed reflection on the nature of the Human Person, its dynamism, and its capacity to relate to itself and its meaning that for us covers, in light of recent neuroscientific discoveries, an integral human development and better ways to realize it (i.e. “human flourishing”).

Who are we?

- **Date of Founding:** March 20, 2009
- **Place of birth:** Ateneo Pontificio Regina Apostolorum
 - **Defining Attributes:**

A multidisciplinary group of more than twenty professionals and scholars (including 3 foreign collaborators) that meet periodically, work in research groups, and contact each other frequently—sharing principals, values, interests and experiences...in a friendly environment!

Our Mission

- Create a forum of professionals and scholars from various backgrounds to adopt an authentically interdisciplinary approach to ethical questions of Neuroscience and “Neuroethics.”
 - Promote internal dialogue and debate about the prevailing arguments, availing ourselves of a deep and critical analysis of the scientific data.
 - Integrate methodology with the contributions of philosophical and anthropological principles.
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Our Mission

- Research forms of “integration” of knowledge and their applications, considering that each person is one unit and one totality of biological, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions, even when fragile, sick or near natural death.
- Ensure that the unrenounceable centrality of the Human Person be adequately developed in studies, research, publications, and in general in the neuroscientific communications, evidencing the risks of possible reductionism.

Our Mission

- Disseminate proposals and eventual guidelines during conventions and seminars, with publications, etc. privileging a terminology attentive to the intrinsic value and dignity of the Human Person in Neuroscience.
 - Create a network for supporting dialogue and exchange, including one on an international level.
 - Identify incentives so that cognitive scientists research points of contact between neuroscience and a philosophical-anthropological vision centered on the Human Person.
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Our Mission

Above All, to recognize

Charity in Truth

the “principal propulsive force”

Of our efforts!



Consciousness

Defined as awareness of oneself and one's surroundings.

Studied with the empirical (“scientific”) method.

A theme spoken of by philosophers and dear to journalists as well!



Pablo Picasso, *“Woman in white”* (1923). Metropolitan Museum, NY.

Dignity of the Human Person

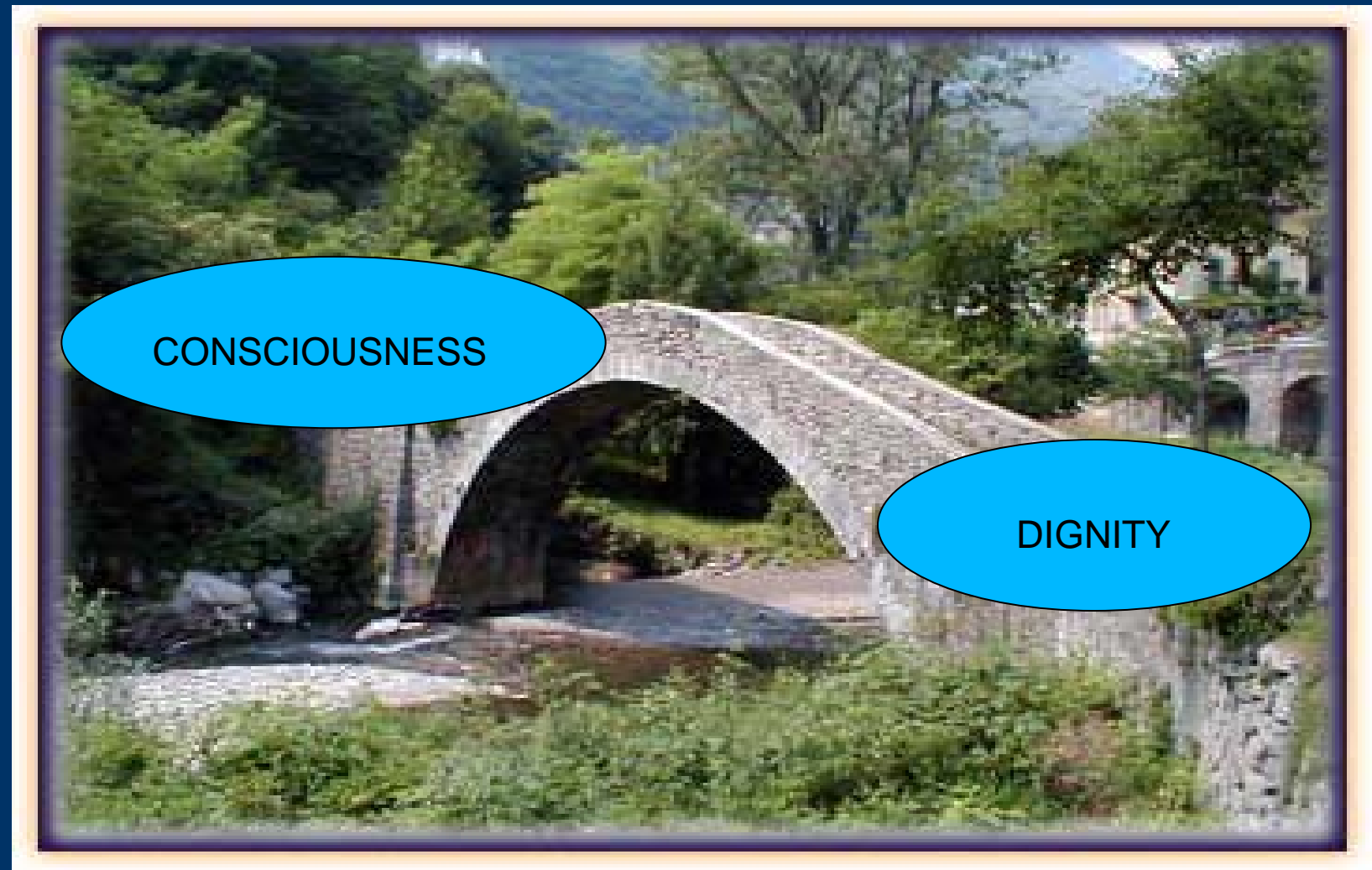
- **Necessary Concept**

“We feel that it is not an arbitrary, accidental, accessory, or unjustified idea.”

- **Advantageous Concept**

“A profound sense of human dignity serves us as judicial criteria; in the interests of all, we consent to establish a trans-cultural ethic.”

Bridging the gap between consciousness and human dignity



CONSCIOUSNESS

DIGNITY