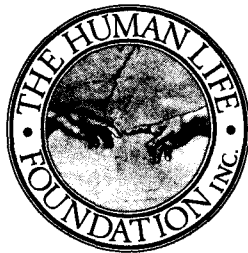


the HUMAN LIFE REVIEW



SPRING 1996

Featured in this issue:

William Murchison on Voters of Conscience
Lynette Burrows on 'Brave Post-Christian World'
Faith Abbott on The Right to Change
J. Bottum on Facing Up to Infanticide
Rebecca Ryskind Teti on The Calamity JANE
Maria McFadden on Motherhood in the '90s
Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits on The Jewish View
Dr. Margaret White on A Small Candle
John Muggeridge on 'Haven't You Heard?'

Also in this issue:

Dr. Richard Selzer • Helen Alvaré • Candace Crandall • Brad Stetson
David Klinghoffer • David Boldt • Armstrong Williams • plus
Firing Line (with William F. Buckley Jr. & Naomi Wolf)

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE . . .

. . . It is Spring of an election year, and abortion is one issue that, despite what many politicians would wish, just won't go away. Nor will we: we continue to bring you the best writing available on abortion and related issues, including much that you won't find in the mainstream press.

We would like to thank *First Things* for allowing us to reprint J. Bottum's article, which focuses on what is going on in the popular press—a new, and frightening, “philosophy” of abortion. *First Things*, A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life, is edited by Richard John Neuhaus (for subscription information, please write 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, N.Y. 10010).

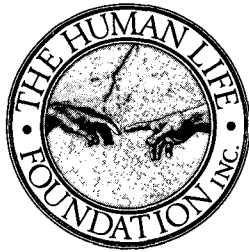
My own piece in this issue (actually written over a year ago; my beloved James Anthony is now 19 months old), is a chapter from a new book out from Praeger Press, edited by Brad Stetson, whose *Orange County Register* column is also reprinted as *Appendix E*. The book, *The Silent Subject: Reflections on the Unborn in American Culture*, has a foreword by Richard John Neuhaus, and is a fine collection of essays by such writers as Sidney Callahan, David Reardon, Frederica Mathewes-Green, and Clarke Forsythe. It is available in soft-cover (\$22.95) from Praeger Publishers, an imprint of Greenwood Publishing Group, 88 Post Road West, P.O. Box 5007, Westport, CT 06881-5007 (1-800-225-5800).

Dr. Margaret White's poignant article about her granddaughter Anna, who was born with Down's Syndrome, is also the story of the newly-opened London Lejeune clinic, devoted to research and care of Down's Syndrome children. For information, contact The Anna Fund, top floor, 7 Tufton Street, Westminster London, SW1P 3QN, tel. 0171-222-5845. Dr. White also mentions the Michael Fund, International Center for Genetic Research, which supported the late Dr. Lejeune's work and continues to fund such *pro-life* research today (the Human Life Foundation has awarded grants to this worthy organization); their address is 500A Garden City Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15146.

We'd also like to thank Candace Crandall and *The Women's Quarterly* for giving us permission to reprint “The Fetus Beat Us” (*Appendix D*). This lively quarterly is published by The Independent Women's Forum; for membership and subscription information, write to 2111 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 550, Arlington, VA 22201-3057.

There is no room this time to thank all the others who helped make this issue possible, but we do want to again thank *The Spectator* for providing us with the funniest cartoons found on either side of the Atlantic.

MARIA MCFADDEN
EXECUTIVE EDITOR



the HUMAN LIFE REVIEW

Spring 1996

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INTRODUCTION

We publish this issue (our 86th) in the midst of the political season, a time of “fast-breaking news” that is of course impossible for a thoughtful quarterly to “cover” like some ordinary magazine—it takes us considerable time to get our thoughts together. Even so, we think you will find much in this rather unusual issue that bears on what Mr. William Murchison, in our lead article, calls “The Meaning of It All.”

Murchison certainly gets you off to a fast start, waltzing you right past “balloons, hoopla, oratory” and the like to view the “vast impressionistic canvas” on which the players paint the presidential campaign, in search of such “evidence of attitudes concerning abortion and human life” as he can make out. Not surprisingly, he sees that the U.S. Supreme Court “cannot possibly have imagined what passion and resistance it was awakening” when it handed down its fateful *Roe v. Wade* decision 23 years ago, and asks the key question: How deeply does abortion divide the Republican Party, which “is increasingly the majority party”? Well, on the evidence of the primary campaign, the “pro-life” side is clearly the stronger, but the division remains real, with the *soul* of the Grand Old Party at stake. And the decision will be made in the hearts and minds of the millions of Americans who are only *now* facing up to what the abortion holocaust really means—in short, in what Ronald Reagan called “the conscience of the nation.”

Without question, that conscience has been dulled by the self-styled “free-thinkers” who have produced the climate of “political correctness” that plagues all current political debate, so it seems fitting that the ever-incisive Lynette Burrows should ask: “What are free-thinkers free of?” *Not* intolerance of dissent, she answers—*nor* an authoritarian bent that would use “government and the law to impose the biggest social and moral transformation that has ever been achieved in our society”—quite an indictment, but as you will see, Mrs. Burrows supports it with some common-sense wisdom about how societies actually work, or fall apart. As an extra bonus, she also provides a tour through the future as Aldous Huxley imagined it in his *Brave New World* with eerie accuracy. But then he based his prophetic vision on the conviction that it would be “the *inevitable* outcome of eradicating the family”—perhaps this year’s candidates should read Huxley before making more “family values” speeches?

Again without question, the traditional family has taken some devastating blows from “the Feminine *Mystique*,” as Faith Abbott once punned it in these pages. She returns now with another hard look at the current feminist scene, which

seems to be in some turmoil over the “defection” of noted author Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. Specifically, Mary Gordon, the well-known novelist, is angry about Fox-Genovese’s new book *“Feminism Is Not The Story Of My Life,”* which caused Faith to buy the book to find out what made Gordon write a “strikingly ill-tempered” review of it for the *New York Times*. The answer, it turns out, is right there in the book’s subtitle: “How Today’s Feminist Elite Has Lost Touch with the Real Concerns of Women,” a charge Fox-Genovese makes with impressive verve, as in this refutation of the “abortion mentality” that has warped orthodox feminism: “Throughout history, societies have regarded the birth of children as a sign of renewal and a cause for celebration”—that kind of thing is guaranteed to anger Ms. Gordon, who has written that “in real life” the birth of a child “is not always a good thing.” Abbott takes you along with her as she chases the arguments back and forth over this latest literary battleground of the Abortion War and, as usual, manages to turn some pretty heavy stuff into a very interesting story.

Whereupon we “pause” for something quite a bit heavier: Mr. J. Bottum recently wrote an essay on the philosophical contradictions inherent in legalized abortion: We were struck by how well he traversed what is generally considered forbidding territory, and thought you might also enjoy it, so we have reprinted it here as an *intermezzo* between our rather formidable array of articles.

Formidable is certainly the word for the women of “Jane,” described in another new book as “The Legendary Underground Feminist Abortion Movement” that provided illegal abortions to more than 10,000 women in the years just before *Roe*. We saw an ad for it, and wondered why such a book was being published now, more than 25 years after the “heroic” events described. So we asked our friend Rebecca Teti, who is involved in feminist concerns herself, if she would read it and provide an expert opinion. As it turned out, we were asking a lot: *The Story of Jane* is not an easy read, as you can tell from Mrs. Teti’s detailed recounting of some grim-to-sordid history. But she did find out why “Pro-choice” leaders laud the book as timely: they really do fear that, as one put it, “We are one president away” from the overturn of *Roe*.

Fittingly, we next have something from a new book that views the “fetus” from roughly the opposite perspective; it is a series of “Reflections on the Unborn in American Culture,” one of which, as it happens, was contributed by Maria McFadden, our executive editor, so it wasn’t difficult for us to choose it for reprinting here. But we think you will find it interesting, even absorbing reading; it focuses on the obvious unreality of the notion that the unborn child is “real” only if the woman *wants* to bear it. The truth is, pregnancy changes a woman irrevocably, whether she “keeps” the baby, or kills it.

Then we have another kind of pause; actually it’s a step back into the history of the abortion debate, which was already vexed (as Rebecca Teti’s article reminds us) in the Sixties, well before *Roe*. When we were planning this journal

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in late 1974, we looked for instructive examples of pre-*Roe* arguments; one repeatedly recommended to us was an article by Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits, then England's Chief Rabbi, which had appeared in the book *Abortion and the Law* (1967). We got a copy, and were so impressed that we called Dr. Jakobovits to ask if he would consider updating it for us. He most graciously did so, and we featured "Jewish Views on Abortion" in our first issue (*Winter*, 1975).

As our regular readers know, we devoted much of our last issue (*Winter*, 1996) to Naomi Wolf's controversial article "Our Bodies, Our Souls"—Ms. Wolf has already been cited several times in *this* issue, with more to come (see *Appendix B*)—Wolf is Jewish, and freely quotes her own Rabbi in support of her arguments. But there are obviously other Jewish views, which is why we thought this just the right time to reprint Rabbi Jakobovits' article. We think you will find it all the more interesting because it is "dated"—when he wrote "Clearly, any relaxation of the abortion laws is bound greatly to increase the rate of abortions" he could not have known how right he was. (The Rabbi, now retired, was made Lord Jakobovits by Margaret Thatcher—he was her favorite spiritual leader.)

The abortion holocaust has indeed proved to be the proverbial Slippery Slope down which many other Thou Shalt Nots have tumbled; the unborn are by no means the only humans at risk in our "quality of life" era. To be sure, our *rhetoric* exudes "compassion"—we no longer speak of dwarfs, or retarded children—they are merely "disabled" now. But as Dr. Margaret White makes clear, they are all nowadays at risk on at least two counts: abortion if their "imperfections" are discovered before birth, and "deliberate neglect" if they manage to survive the fetal-testing gauntlet (which she compares to military "search and destroy" missions). Dr. White should know; she was not only a "baby doctor" but also the grandmother of a Down's Syndrome baby, about whom she writes most movingly here.

We trust we've saved one of the best for last: our colleague John Muggeridge is good company, always ready for a laugh over the foibles of foes *or* friends—it's unusual to catch him out of sorts for long. But of course it's different when one's own children are involved, as his five have been in Canada's ultra-trendy "compulsory non-judgmental grading" system. The motto "Give students ownership of the learning process" is not something he is willing to knuckle-under to, as he explains in wry detail. In Muggeridge's view, the Educrats' *jargonese* is "the language of revolution" and must be resisted by all good parents, even at the cost of being considered fuddy-duddy by the victims themselves.

* * * * *

Our appendices in this issue are less numerous (only eight) but longer than usual, beginning with another piece (*Appendix A*) we previously published—or rather *most* of it—in our *Winter*, 1976 issue; it is Dr. Richard Selzer's description of an actual abortion, which he later enlarged upon, and included in a book.

It remains, in our judgment, unsurpassed by any other description in the 20 years since it first appeared. If you forget everything else in this issue, we doubt that you will ever forget this one.

In *Appendix B* you will find another document that belongs in our chronicle of the abortion debate; it is a transcription of the *Firing Line* program in which William Buckley Jr. discusses “The Rhetoric of Abortion” with two women who have become identified with the controversy. One is Ms. Naomi Wolf, who needs no introduction to our regular readers (see above), but you don’t need previous knowledge to appreciate *Firing Line*—Mr. Buckley is a master at making sure that his audience gets the full picture (speaking of unsurpassed performances, *Firing Line* remains the peerless TV “interview” program!).

The other participant was Mrs. Helen Alvaré, who represented the U.S. Catholic Bishops. After the program, we asked her if she would like to comment on it for us, and she agreed to send us her “second thoughts,” which you will find in *Appendix C*. Of course we made the same suggestion to Ms. Wolf, who said that she would prefer an interview, which took place later in Washington. Alas, we were unable to have it in time for this issue, but we expect to publish part if not all of it next time.

If you are still with us at this point (noble reader!), you may agree that the abortion debate has entered a new stage of “rethinking” on both sides; Ms. Wolf best personifies this fact on the “pro-choice” side, while her opposite is probably Prof. George McKenna (see our *Fall*, 1995 issue). Ms. Candace Crandall, whose essay explaining “why the pro-choice movement is suddenly playing defense” appears in *Appendix D*, shares that opinion. As you will see, she packs a wealth of solid information into a relatively short piece, ending with an interesting prediction about what may well happen in the elections next November.

In *Appendix E* the focus switches abruptly to a little-discussed “factor” in every abortion, the *father*, who is routinely excluded from the “choice” of life or death for his child. Mr. Brad Stetson argues that the “one-sidedness” of abortion has had a profound effect on men’s willingness to enter into fatherhood at all, thus contributing to the epidemic of “fatherlessness” that plagues our society. After all, if a man has no say in whether or not his “fetus” will be born, why should he be obligated to support it if it *is*? The peculiar sociology—as distinguished from constitutional law—that motivated the High Court’s *Roe* decision seems to have completely overlooked this “equal rights” problem, leaving men exiled to a kind of legal limbo.

Appendix F brings us back to the political scene, in which the accepted perception is that legalized abortion is a “liberal” thing. Indeed, before *Roe* the pro-abortion forces typically claimed that they sought only “liberalization” of harsh-archaic prohibitions (even they never *dreamed* that the Court would suddenly hand them the gift of total victory!). Well, Mr. David Klinghoffer makes bold to say that abortion has become the decisive difference between liberals

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and conservatives—it really is a “litmus test” that can accurately predict what a given voter “thinks about 20 apparently unrelated issues”—even whether he or she agrees that ours is “one nation under God” or *not*. Klinghoffer sums it all up in a line that may prove prophetic: “Forget the flat tax. Let’s talk about abortion.”

In another shift, we next hear from Columnist David Boldt (*Appendix G*), who begins “I have a generally high regard for Bill Clinton”—but it doesn’t prevent him from being appalled that the President would “veto the ban on brain-suction [i.e., “partial birth”] abortions” even though such late-term horrors violate Clinton’s “own considered moral judgment.” We’d say that Mr. Boldt provides the perfect “liberal” counterpoint to Mr. Klinghoffer: both see their mundane *political* positions compromised by a transcendent *moral* question that must be answered—as Boldt puts it, “Somehow, sanity has to be restored.” But is our “democratic process” capable of *doing* that? We began with Mr. Murchison’s assertion that the Supreme Court never imagined what its abortion *fiat* would do to the body politic; we end here with no answer in sight.

Well, not exactly: some Americans *are* attempting to “do something” about the abortion holocaust, even though they can save but one potential victim at a time. In *Appendix H* another columnist, Mr. Armstrong Williams, describes the efforts of the “crisis pregnancy” movement to help women *have*, not kill, their babies. Williams can’t see why “truly pro-choice” people wouldn’t gladly support such efforts: it would demonstrate that they do in fact support choice, *not* abortion. It’s hard to argue with that, of course. We certainly won’t: this journal is published by a Foundation that exists *primarily* to support precisely the kind of “baby-saving” groups Williams describes. As he says, they can help only “One helpless human at a time,” but then that’s the way we all live and die, one at a time, unique images of the same Creator the Founding Fathers appealed to when they promulgated an “inalienable” right to life.

The same Lord willing, we will be back soon with another panorama of images and impressions about “human life”—when we named this journal, we had no idea how accurate it would turn out to be—we thought abortion would be our “single issue”! But of course it has led us, as predicted, into all other life-related issues, the latest being “doctor-assisted suicide” which, in the opinion of a federal court, should enjoy the same constitutional approval that abortion is alleged to warrant. We expect to have in-depth coverage of this “new” challenge in the next issue.

J. P. MCFADDEN
EDITOR

Voters of Conscience

William Murchison

Political seasons are fun, and not just for the raw spectacle they provide: bands, balloons, hoopla, oratory, augurers consulting entrails and solemnly sharing with us *The Meaning of It All*. One can see at once why television loves such goings-on. It is the kind of pastime for which television was invented.

There is also high significance to it all, even above that which attaches to NFL football. This is the true fun: learning what we are all about as a nation and people. As a class, democratic politicians take a bad rap they surely deserve, on account of their thirst for power and the lengths they will travel to satisfy that thirst. Still, they deserve gratitude for a service they perform better than any other class of folk. They are flesh-and-blood seismographs. They record, in their discourse and diatribes, every social, cultural, and economic shift and tremor: each squiggle a sign of movement, each movement a potential opening to some underserved interest group. Not every political seismograph clicks on at just the instant the landscape starts to slip or buckle. The minute the media notice something new going on is the minute the needles start registering movement.

What is America happy about, fretful about, uncertain about? Keep your eye on the politicians, whose success or failure in their chosen profession depends on their ability to answer such questions. (Resolving them is another matter entirely.)

Moreover, everything you will hear a politician saying is an attempt at *feasible* remediation. You rarely hear politicians attempting to force-feed the voting public with unwelcome truths. That would be to court their own defeat, their exclusion from the select company of movers and shakers. The politician himself wants to move and shake. He has no incentive to rub the voters' noses in, er, doleful admonitions, unless he conceives it as his Churchillian duty so to do. If he does—well, that's additional evidence of what goes on: someone believes something strongly enough to risk ridicule and exhaustion in order to say it.

Change the metaphor for a moment, from scientific to artistic. A national political campaign, especially one in which the presidency is at stake, is one vast impressionistic canvas, rendered by a multiplicity of hands.

William Murchison, our contributing editor, is a nationally-syndicated columnist based at the *Dallas Morning News* and the author of *Reclaiming Morality in America* (Thomas Nelson Publishers).

Each painter, flailing about with his horsehair brush, is saying: Here is what we are, here is what we want (muttering at the same time, under his breath, "I think!").

Even when they think wrongly, it is useful to know what they think. We learn much by strolling, with hands folded behind us, past their joint depiction of *fin de siecle* America.

What do we see when we inspect this year's canvas for evidence of attitudes concerning abortion and human life? A sort of ground fog, as has been the case for a quarter of a century. The fog enshrouds legs, roads, foot paths. But above it rise certain protuberances worthy of notice. These, for instance:

- *The durability of the social fissure opened by Roe v. Wade.* The fissure is wide. There is no chance of evading it. Every presidential candidate, sooner or later, has to negotiate a path along this dangerous route. The U.S. Supreme Court, 23 years ago, cannot possibly have imagined what passion and resistance it was awakening with its serendipitous discovery of a new constitutional right—the right of a woman to control "her own" body.

How deeply abortion divides the Republican party, which is increasingly the majority party, is suggested by a *New York Times/CBS News* poll of late February. According to the poll, 24 percent of Republicans favor abortion on demand. Twenty-three percent, by contrast, think abortion should be prohibited entirely. These are the absolute positions. Almost half of Americans share one or the other viewpoint. Those who don't fall somewhere in between, which means nowhere special, just some place or other where the breezes of appeased conscience cool off the intellect. Fifty-one percent, the poll says, are not on the side of abolishing all access to abortion; neither are they on the side of allowing abortion in all circumstances. They waffle. They agonize—as well they might, when the topic under scrutiny is human life.

- *Political agony as an enduring feature of the abortion landscape.* Because so many voters agonize, the Republicans agonize. At the San Diego national convention this summer, as at the Houston convention in 1992, efforts will be made to strip the party's platform of its plank endorsing a constitutional amendment extending federal protection to unborn as well as mature life.

Tanya Melich, a pro-choice Republican, used the *New York Times* to spread out for us the kind of argumentation her side will use in pressing its case. Melich, author of a book provocatively titled *The Republican War Against Women*, urges the party's leading female U.S. senators—Kay Bailey

Hutchison and so on—to work for the separation of church and state: “They can organize the delegates to drop the anti-choice plank that has been in the platform since 1980. They can work to ensure that the vice-presidential candidate is not an ideologue beholden to one religious point of view. Without these actions, it is doubtful that the Republicans can win the general election.”

Melich fearlessly likens pro-life “demagoguery” to that engaged in by—can you doubt it for a minute?—Sen. Joe McCarthy. No doubt she would shake her finger in Bob Dole’s face: Have you, sir, at long last no shame?

Meanwhile, on the other side of the spectrum, Pat Buchanan—lightly regarded when he began his race, formidable and impressive after he crested in New Hampshire—cautions the party to disregard all such counsel. Jet-tisoning the human life amendment, says Buchanan, would be tantamount to writing off the pro-life vote.

As of this writing, Buchanan was dropping sledgehammer hints about withholding support for the presumptive nominee, Bob Dole. Not saying he *would* withhold support, mind, but leaving that door cracked. What gust of wind would throw it wide open? Not much speculation is required. One provocation would be a rout for the pro-life cause in San Diego: the nomination of an explicitly pro-choice Republican as vice president—say, Gov. Christine Todd Whitman of New Jersey, or Gen. Colin Powell. Or the watering down, not to mention the discarding, of that pro-life language with which the party has adorned every platform since 1980.

◦ *The political feature to which I would draw attention is the central one: the Republican party’s continuing commitment—so far—to the defense of unborn life, amid evidence that here is the wave of the future.* Let us see. The relative unanimity of the presidential candidates on abortion in 1996 is worth remarking. I say the *relative* unanimity, the *comparative* lack of fighting and biting. Not all contenders cared to condemn the exercise of this perverse constitutional right. Some—like Lamar Alexander, who would buck the matter to the states rather than overturn *Roe v. Wade* by amendment—perspired and spoke through clenched teeth whenever the topic arose. It was the wont of Sen. Arlen Specter to stick out his lip defiantly. There *should* be choice, Specter was proud to say, during the short span he said it before being chased out of the race by the sovereign voters.

You would think that if there truly were a strong pro-choice constituency within the Republican party, that constituency would have knocked itself out working for Specter’s nomination. This didn’t happen. If 24 percent

of Republicans are flamboyantly pro-choice, as the *Times/CBS* poll suggests, how come they let their man down? Don't they care? Or is it the relatively narrow question of abortion for rape or incest victims that stirs them? However that may be, the Specter candidacy withered before it ever blossomed.

Bob Dole, the certain victor as it appeared in late winter, stumbled over his tongue more than once when trying to lay out his pro-life convictions in such a way as to seem—well, what, understanding-of-other-viewpoints? Still, he declared himself explicitly “pro-life,” and pro-life voters responded in large numbers.

No candidate, to be sure, outdid Alan Keyes in exposing the fraud and cruelty of abortion. Keyes' whole campaign was based on the need for moral and religious recovery, Buchanan's campaign less so in that the candidate at times emphasized “populist” economics more strongly than social issues. The two, at all events, set a high standard for principled commitment to the defense of life.

It was plain to the candidates, all except Specter, that no one was going to get nominated on the Republican ticket by outraging the pro-life vote. Even moderately pro-choice Colin Powell—everyone's favorite cipher—may have been spooked by the prospect of trying to lead a pro-life political party.

Phil Gramm, who casts a reliably pro-life vote in the Senate, got himself in big enough trouble as it was by informing Dr. James Dobson, of Focus on the Family, that he, Gramm, was running for president, not for preacher, and therefore didn't plan to emphasize the social issues. As if the senator had never heard Teddy Roosevelt's encomium to the “bully pulpit” of the presidency!

It may be that Steve Forbes, a man even less identified with the social issues than Gramm, was the most interesting candidate to watch as his inner seismograph clicked on. No one was likely to confuse Forbes with Keyes. Keyes was in the race to preach the old-time religion. Forbes was in it to talk about measures of economic uplift, notably the flat tax. Of course cultural questions quickly arose. Forbes had to meet them. How? What had economic liberty to do with the right to life and the sanctity of family and the need for moral renewal? Forbes talked about the need to change hearts and minds on these questions.

Oh, oh. Hadn't we heard this hearts-and-minds business before, off the presidential trail? Wasn't it what various thinkers like William Bennett had been saying—forget the human life amendment, change (in various, unspecified ways) the culture? And wasn't it responsible for anger and

exasperation on the part of many who had diligently kept the pro-life faith during the darkest times? Hadn't even Bennett received strenuous criticism for his stance? True enough; the point, nonetheless, was what Forbes could do with it *politically*.

By late February, when Forbes addressed the Conservative Political Action Committee's annual rally in Washington, he had in hand a message compounded of considerable shrewdness and insight.

"I believe," said Forbes, "that this country is on the verge of a spiritual renewal, a New American Awakening that returns our nation to the well-springs of family and faith, that reinvigorates the strong moral values on which our nation was founded. But we need to get government out of the way . . ." Government, which "punishes the moral values at the heart of a free society and rewards the values that undermine a free society."

Yeah, yeah, but what about abortion? Glad-you-asked-that, Forbes almost said: "A couple of weeks ago, Pat Buchanan . . . was asked about abortion and said that, here are Pat's words, 'Steve Forbes does have a point to this extent. You can't get a constitutional amendment through both houses of Congress right now.' He concluded: 'There is a long education process.' And he concluded, 'We have to change the human heart.'"

"Well, as Pat said, that's exactly my position—the position I have held all along—which should be the position of all our candidates: I oppose abortion. Abortion is wrong, it's a terrible tragedy for the unborn, for women, for families, and for our country. We want to make it vanish from the land.

"But we agree we must change the culture before we can change the law . . . while we work to change hearts and minds, we must move immediately to do those things that we can do with the stroke of a presidential pen—end all federal funding of abortion; end fetal tissue research; end partial-birth and late-term abortions; support alternatives for single mothers who would carry their child to term; stand firmly beside the great moral authority of the Pope in international conferences; and, as I have said many times before, appoint justices like Justice Scalia to the Supreme Court."

Here, in other words, is where Forbes thinks we are as a nation: discontented with abortion; unready all the same to prohibit it outright by constitutional amendment; ready, very possibly, for some tutelage, coupled with political steps that might move the matter forward, pending the change of heart he recommends.

As it happens, that may be the size and shape of things. This is not to

credit Steve Forbes with extra-sensory perception or to say that pro-life voters should have found him to be of all candidates the most persuasive. It is to say that signs in the culture corroborate his analysis.

There are many such signs. Consider, for instance, Naomi Wolf. Ms. Wolf, on the strength of her personal assertiveness and writings (e.g., *The Beauty Myth*), would be classed as a feminist. She certainly calls herself such. Yet what she wrote about abortion recently in *The New Republic*, and what she said about it on *Firing Line*, undermines feminist analysis. She will go with the pro-choicers this far: Abortion is a woman's right. She will then spit in their eyes: Abortion is evil. A necessary evil, in her phrase, but also "a moral iniquity."

Confusion, thy name is Wolf! Abortion evil? And constitutionally guaranteed? That's the point surely—the growing confusion which the abortion culture sows. A good-bad thing, a bad-good thing, a thing we must love at the same time we hate it. Clear thinking you can't call this. But you can call it thinking: which counts immensely, after three decades of slogan-mongering over on the pro-choice left. Oh, the wonderfulness of choice, the sublimity of power in human relationships! Feminism emptied the abortion debate of moral content, like an apple corer. Naomi Wolf makes bold to restore that content, at least to a point. She would initiate a "movement drawn from pro-choice advocates and pro-life advocates who agree that they will join together on the common ground that they share in order to lower the rate of abortion while, I hope, keeping a constitutional right to abortion. And I am seeing on the right a response to this, and that is where we should go."

To what is Naomi Wolf reacting? And what is she furthering? Revulsion. Moral emptiness, it would seem, sweeps you forward only so long. There come times when lights are out and all is black and still, or when in mid-day a raindrop or a song stops the thought processes cold, and in the stillness something speaks. What kind of something? Hard to be sure. All one can be certain about is the urgency of its tone. There is of course a name for the thing that speaks, in whatever accents, with whatever measure of reproach or admonition. The name is conscience.

Conscience is awakening in America. Naomi Wolf's is yawning, stretching, wondering. The film called *The Silent Scream*; those black-and-white drawings depicting a partial-birth abortion; for that matter, simple observation—all of it takes a toll on the ability to view the choice between birth and abortion as hardly more meaningful than the choice between corn or flour tortillas.

The former ebullience of the pro-choicers becomes more and more poker-faced. Do the presidential seismographs pick up this growing ambivalence? They manifestly do. It registers even when the candidates don't know quite how to interpret the results.

Steve Forbes' confidence in cultural reform as the way to combat abortion stems from watching battles like the one raging inside Naomi Wolf's formidable cranium. The cultural-change movement—kill abortion by changing the way Americans think and feel about it—is seismographic data red and raw. The data can be, and have been, interpreted in more than one way: as craven accommodation to politics; as sensible recognition that no human life amendment stands a chance right now; as a part, but only part, of the ultimate solution.

The cultural change movement puts one in mind of a Vietnam-era argument—whether, to win the war, we had to change the Vietnamese people's hearts and minds, or whether we needed just to drop everything, including the kitchen sink, on Hanoi. We never made up our minds—and, in consequence of our vacillation, lost the war.

It seems plain enough to many of us that the answer is not either-or—work to change the law *or* the culture. The choice is *both-and*—treat the two as complementary. A congeries of pro-life leaders and spokesmen makes essentially this point in the *National Review* for March 25 (no bad date for a declaration, the Feast of the Annunciation). The signers—who include James Dobson, Charles Colson, Ralph Reed, Mary Ann Glendon, George Weigel, and Rev. Richard John Neuhaus—declare that “Legal reform and cultural renewal must both take place if America is to experience a new birth of the freedom that is ordered to goodness.”

The signers understand that no constitutional amendment extending protection to unborn life can be considered “a self-executing instrument that will end the debate on abortion. It will, rather, correct a gross misinterpretation of the Constitution . . . and require states to debate and adopt policies that do not violate the unborn child's right to life.”

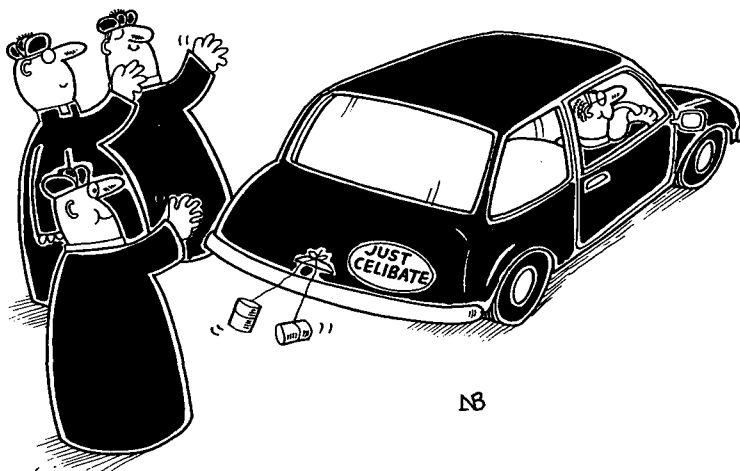
Pending the adoption and ratification of such an amendment, the signers affirm that “Legal reforms that fall short of our goal, but that help move us toward it, save lives and aid in the process of moral and cultural renewal.”

Some of the same signatories, urging the GOP to keep the human-life amendment in the platform, made the same point earlier in a letter to the presidential candidates. “To oppose abortion only on moral grounds,” said the letter, “is to effectively agree that *Casey v. Planned Parenthood* has

settled the issue that abortion is an expressly protected constitutional liberty . . . Would it not be more judicious to adhere to [a human life amendment] as a matter of principle while at the same time working to change people's attitudes? After all, in order to win the debate for the hearts of the people, one must maintain a commitment to principle."

Hearts and minds, along with constitutional bombs away—so the pro-life strategy evolves. Evolves? That may qualify as overstatement. From the start, the pro-life movement has sought to change hearts and minds. This was long before The Culture became the preoccupation of think tanks and policy wonks. The movement—even before it qualified for the name—played to conscience, to the inward perception that there exists a thing called "right," which thing is never to be confused with "wrong."

The labors of 23 years—hard years, bitterly frustrating years—are bearing fruit. The fruit is far from formed, but there on the branch it ripens, inviting inspection. More and more Americans are walking over: looking, smelling, tasting. Here comes Naomi Wolf. Others trail along. Even Bill Clinton, when obliged to voice an opinion, talks of making abortion "rare." The political seismographs chatter away as the visitors' footsteps sound louder and louder.



THE SPECTATOR 2 March 1996

Brave Post-Christian World

Lynette Burrows

What are free-thinkers free of? And if they are so free, why don't they have a better time than we do? I cannot remember the last time I got tipsy with a sociologist, or beat off the attentions of a vegetarian maddened by luxurious thoughts. Sad to say, a gathering of social scientists is more like a wake than a party. No smoking; no red wine; no funny ethnic jokes; no imitations of Uncle Fred combing seven hairs across his bald head and trying to shoehorn himself into jeans. If we could understand why this is so, we might begin to understand the phenomenon of liberalism—how it is a temperament even more than a creed.

It reminds one of G.K. Chesterton's observation that, although Christian asceticism is a very strange phenomenon, it is not excessive. It may refuse to eat on certain days and go bare-foot on pilgrimages, but it never involves putting large metal rods through the stomach or hanging oneself on hooks. Its purpose is as much to limit the desire to punish the self, as to honour God by mortifying the flesh.

Political correctness, the *lingua franca* of liberalism, would in these terms seem to be an utterly pointless form of self-denial that even a poor, benighted Christian would disdain. Unless it has all been a plot master-minded by right-wing humourists, designed to silence the Left on any subject which might be of interest to them, then it must be a means of limiting arguments which liberals think they cannot win by honest means.

This secular dogma, that is so deceptively called "liberalism," is actually an authoritarian, unrepresentative creed which is intolerant of dissent, and seeks to control expression and even the vocabulary we use. It does not represent universally-acknowledged rights, or protect generally-accepted beliefs. On the contrary, it has used government and the law to impose the biggest social and moral transformation that has ever been achieved in our society without the means of invasion and occupation.

We are multi-racial and multi-cultural; permissive on moral matters and liberal on crime. Our government is distant and becoming ever more so as it vanishes into the Euro-Hole in Belgium; we are not allowed to employ or to sell our property to whom we please. Children's Rights have been fraudulently asserted in order to crush parental ones, and the only freedom we have had assiduously pressed on us by educators, the media—even

Lynette Burrows, an English journalist, is a well-known TV and radio personality.

fiscal policy—is sexual freedom, an exercise that has been in inverse proportion to our political and social freedom.

The personal censorship enforced by political correctness has crept up on us rather slowly in England; even now no educated person would admit to taking its dictats seriously. However, they often find themselves conforming willy-nilly, at least publicly, and it takes an effort of will to resist the temptation to say the expected thing.

It took me years to realize that one avoids the hassle of “tact-fatigue” by replying to the accusation that one is a sexist by saying, “Yes indeed; but then one needs to be *retarded*, not to be; don’t you think?” And that the simplest and most effective response to a dark suggestion that one could be “Homophobic” is an enthusiastic “Rather!”

What is interesting about the phenomenon of PC is that it shows the extent to which the compulsion by some to impose their ideas on others dominates in some cultures. Maybe Anglo-Saxon ones are particularly bad amongst the Europeans. The French totally ignored their ban on smoking in public places and the Italians and Spanish wouldn’t even attempt one. They literally do not grasp what political correctness is; they prefer the honest lie which nobody believes!

However, this is the period we are in now. It is a half-way house between the old morality which was based upon the authority of God, as revealed by Jesus Christ, and a natural morality based upon what people instinctively believe and habitually want. The inescapable feeling is that this is not a situation which can endure. There must be a movement away from this trough of liberalism when the majority, driven mad by living with alien values, decide to go for what *they* want.

This is not, strictly speaking, a backlash—which could simply mean going back to values which have been recently abandoned. We are more likely to experience a desire to impose the order we want by means which are initially not Christian at all, but which will eventually restore a Christian order at the point where it could cope with human sin without the tremulous uncertainty of recent years.

In talking about morality, one very often finds the argument leads back to Germany during the 1930s. This is not out of a desire to insult present-day Germans with what their grandparents did, but rather because they are a good model for us because, in many ways, we are similar people. We share an Anglo-Saxon temperament in at least half of our make-up, and these things which are a temptation to them also tempt us. That is to say, we share an amused contempt for the kind of inefficiency and corruption

which is the common currency of public life in Mediterranean countries, and we don't in the least envy their ability to get on in the world by bribing people. On the other hand, our very efficiency and dedication to getting things done fairly and squarely means that, when we do go wrong, we do so with the same unnerving efficiency.

The Germans too were "post-Christian" during the decade before the Second World War, as we are said to be now. The question is, in the absence of specifically Christian principles, what is *our* guiding philosophy likely to be, and why are we so pleased about it?

Until Jesus came, with his extremely unnatural message that we have a duty to love everyone, even enemies, and that the strong must look after the weak, etc., etc., a natural order prevailed which was based upon sentiments conditioned by the family, and social organization based on cooperation and mutual protection. It was all quite simple because it was based upon practicality and the natural sense of equivalence which we call justice.

Before then—and in many societies since—there were no such things as "insoluble" social problems. If a problem began to get too big, it was tackled head on and, usually, put to death. Thieves would not be tolerated because they took the fruit of other people's labour and it cost money to treat them any other way. Rapists were killed—to protect women. The handicapped were killed, because they were handicapped, and the old and infirm were often left out to die. Enemies were either killed or, if they were foreign, pressed into useful service as slaves.

It is all almost cosily familiar to us and, indeed, any society which confined itself to these laws would, even today, be considered reasonably civilized. Certainly any tourists who visited them would feel safe—as they do in parts of the Far East today—and would ponder frustratedly, yet again, why it is that no one is so safe from being arbitrarily attacked in the so-called liberal democracies. What is the point, they muse through clenched teeth, of being liberal and democratic if you are not safe in the streets, your car, or even your own home?

They begin to hanker for the justice of the old order, and are probably largely unaware of the fact that, actually, Christian society, before it felt it had to compete in the liberal sweepstakes, operated on many of these principles. It could even cope with narcotic drugs. Heroin, cocaine and hashish were all legal in England until well into this century, as was the carrying of firearms and of course alcohol. They only became an issue if a person committed a serious crime through misusing any of them, in which

case they were hanged. However, it was also a crime to render oneself unfit to work and provide for one's dependents. Transportation to Australia's Botany Bay was the usual penalty in such cases which, then as now, was most people's idea of a dire fate!

Severe it may have been, but it was not unjust, and it protected innumerable other freedoms. The most important of these was, of course, the freedom from fear of murder, rape or robbery, and the figures for these were, by today's standards, unbelievably low. Certainly, most people supported the broad outlines of this social policy, and no amount of media propaganda has been able to shake their conviction that only malefactors should have any reason to fear for their lives.

In fact, death has always been a part of the due process of law in every society that could call itself civilized. As a last-resort deterrent, nothing more effective has been discovered. However, it must of course be said that it also comes rather too easily to all manner of societies and for the very reason that the leading feminist Naomi Wolf spelt out in a fascinating TV discussion on the subject of abortion.

When pressed as to why she considered that an "iniquitous" thing like taking the life of an innocent human being should be permitted by the law, she replied that, in human affairs, taking the innocent life of another was often the lesser of two evils. Quite so: Attila couldn't have put it better!

But isn't it funny that Christianity, which has had such a bad press in the matter of repression, should confine itself to condoning only the execution of those who were guilty of crime, and *that* only after having made every effort by precept and example to teach them morality. On the other hand, the liberalism which Miss Wolf supports is interested only in solving immediate problems by killing the innocent—the unborn, the handicapped, the old and the infirm. That is truly barbarian.

So how will those twin pillars of the liberal establishment, feminism and homosexual rights, fare in a post-Christian, neo-natural world? Not well, I fear. They are natural allies since they both, in their different ways, and for different motives, strike a blow against the family. Since the family is about the only institution we have never been able to live without, it will be defended in the end, before everything else.

The leitmotiv that binds them together is the business of rights. Both depend, for the attainment of their objectives, on a definition of "rights" that is almost entirely bogus. To them, a right is not something to which every human being is entitled by virtue of the consent of society and informed by whatever belief underpins that society. They assert a right to do, or be, or have, anything they feel strongly about and conveniently

ignore all those other groups who could claim the same but have had their rights denied; like racists, or polygamists, or even cannibals (why waste it!).

Homosexuals here like to cite the experience of blacks in America who were once denied civil rights; just as homosexuals are now denied the right to marry. Feminists make the same analogy; comparing the negroes' lack of control over their bodies with that of women before they were allowed abortion.

It is very interesting that the author Aldous Huxley prophesied something of their coming in his book *Brave New World*. He describes a new type of male and female, who have nothing in common but the misuse of their sexual function. The women are vacuous and entirely materialistic, concerned only with preserving the world as a clean and hygienic place, like an antiseptic hotel foyer. They love sex, and are rampantly promiscuous—which they equate with being their natural selves. They carry a large pouch of contraceptives always around their waists in case they meet a likely male, and they like their media to talk dirty all the time and to provide them with semi-orgasmic experiences as a spur to copulation. Despite their love of sex, they regard motherhood as disgusting and degrading to women, and are adamant that women who get off the track of their personalized life-plan by getting pregnant must have an abortion. Women who refuse are exiled and are never spoken of again. Tut, tut: this is getting almost painfully familiar!

The men complement them. They have no family responsibilities, spend their time working, or trying out new gadgets and forms of transport. They spend all their free time travelling and meeting sexual partners. They love pornography, cruelty, and drugs, and they have no love relationships. They too regard abortion as an imperative, since it prevents them ever having to contemplate the result of sexual activity which must be, for pleasure's sake, completely divorced from consequences.

It is eerie, isn't it, how accurate a picture this is of certain aspects of society today. So accurate that you wonder how on earth Huxley was able to construct it out of the debris of the decadent 1930s in France and Italy, where he had lived for more than ten years. His men and women were imaginative constructions which complemented and reinforced each other in their antagonism to procreation and their elevation of personal pleasure, based entirely on an ideologically-limited set of options.

Huxley thought his nightmare was a vision of what the world might become, with women giving their eggs and men their sperm to be experimented on and cloned by sinister ghouls in laboratories. With neither sex

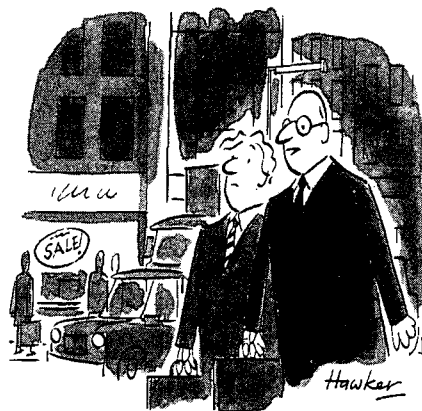
LYNETTE BURROWS

having any interest in the end result, but returning to their pursuit of pleasure in places which, in Huxley, are actually slightly less dreadful than the gay bars with which we are familiar. Both sexes were antagonistic to the idea that children had a natural right to be born because, to the pleasure principle, they were the enemy.

Where Huxley was wrong was that he thought the whole world would be taken over by this nightmare. He had seen a great deal of the heavily-homosexual culture of the Weimar Republic in pre-war Germany, and he must have seen too its subversive influence on morals generally. However, the ground-swell against them which was already arising in Germany, and which would sweep them into concentration camps before the decade was out, must have caused him to strike them off his list of players.

He produced instead a prophetic vision of where a materialistic, hedonistic society could lead if it excluded the awakening of emotions which comes from the acceptance and responsibility of new life. The flinty-hearted, sexually assertive women and the driven, empty men were, for him, the *inevitable* outcome of eradicating the family.

It is a horror story written about sex, drugs and rock and roll, and the hero killed himself rather than live in that world. Huxley, commenting upon the book fifteen years later, said that, were he to write it again, he would have allowed his hero to retire into the wilderness with a few others, to create a society based upon sanity, reverence for life and a metaphysical God. Now there is something which perhaps Miss Wolf and her sisters might consider supporting—as the lesser of two evils.



*'I just feel like coming right out of the closet
and admitting I'm anti-homosexual.'*

THE SPECTATOR 11 March 1995

The Right to Change

Faith Abbott

When we last left Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, at the end of *Feminism Without Illusions*, she was deploring people who “find it easy to blame feminism for some of the most disturbing aspects of modern life: divorce, latchkey children, teen-age alcoholism, domestic violence, the sexual abuse of children.” Five years later, it seems she has become one of the people she warned us about. It seems she’s had a conversion experience.

So begins novelist Mary Gordon’s review of Fox-Genovese’s new book, “*Feminism Is Not The Story Of My Life*,” in the January 14th New York *Times Book Review*. The title is in quotes because this is what the author has heard from many women she has interviewed; the subtitle is *How Today’s Feminist Elite Has Lost Touch with the Real Concerns of Women*.

The headline over Mary Gordon’s one-page review is “What Makes a Woman a Woman?” and the subhead is “Elizabeth Fox-Genovese says that feminists don’t have the answer.”

The “When we last left Elizabeth Fox-Genovese” doesn’t apply to me, since I wasn’t one of the “we” who had read *Feminism Without Illusions*. I did know that Fox-Genovese had written about “feminist issues”: I didn’t know that (according to Mary Gordon) “She used to be a Marxist too.” But, says Gordon, “Now she’s for church, home and family.” Mary Gordon is a celebrated writer whose novels and short stories often involve church, home, and family.

I went to our local Barnes & Noble bookstore and bought Fox-Genovese’s new book because I was curious about why Mary Gordon was so mad at her. (Actually, what really made me decide to buy the book was Maggie Gallagher’s *Commentary* in the January 19th New York *Post* about what she called Ms. Gordon’s “Strikingly ill-tempered” review.)

The book’s jacket informs the reader (as Mary Gordon does not) that Elizabeth Fox-Genovese is a professor at Emory University (in Atlanta) and founding director of the Institute for Women’s Studies there; that she has “published widely on women’s issues and culture in many magazines and newspapers,” and has written many books, including the “controversial” *Feminism Without Illusions*. In her “startling and provocative” new book, the jacket copy tells us, she “says out loud what many women have

Faith Abbott, our senior contributing editor, claims she was too busy having five babies to notice the Feminist Revolution when it began in the Sixties.

only whispered: 'Feminism is *not* the story of my life.' " Believing that "in pursuing issues that primarily concern upscale career women, the leaders of the national feminist movement have lost sight of the reality of most women's lives," she began conducting extensive interviews and conversations with women from diverse backgrounds—women who felt "excluded" from "traditional feminism." From listening to their stories, and "teasing out attitudes and information from polls and trends," she spells out a new feminism based on the *facts* of women's lives, and calls for a "family feminism" that brings women together rather than dividing them.

Professor Fox-Genovese writes, in her Preface, that for several decades she has called herself a feminist and, like many women of her generation, she has been puzzled that so many women reject the term even though they have benefited from the feminist gains of the past thirty years. "Hard experience" has also taught her that the "official" feminist movement "does not have much patience for women who do not support every plank in its increasingly radical platform." And it gradually dawned on her that even when the women she interviewed (and with whom she had been speaking informally) knew little or nothing about feminist positions, they had a gut sense that feminism was not talking about their lives: "Worse, they had a sneaking suspicion that feminists do not think that their lives are important."

So Fox-Genovese listened, and observed, and wrote a book. Mary Gordon thinks that there is something wrong with all this observing and listening—perhaps that's something only *fiction* writers should do? She writes that Ms. Fox-Genovese, in her book, "espouses a populist/communitarian model that assumes that the best way to understand people is to listen to their 'stories'" and "If you are using story as a basis for argument, you'd better be sure that your story is to the point." She is offended that Fox-Genovese has "chosen" the people and the stories—but wouldn't Ms. Gordon do the same? For Fox-Genovese, says Ms. Gordon, "feminists have the moral standards of a Stairmaster and a philosophy of personal freedom located, in the words of the hero of the film 'A Thousand Clowns,' slightly to the left of whoopee."

Perhaps I should mention here that the *New York Times Book Review* has a well-deserved reputation for running reviews that are really essays, often biased and tinged with elitism. Not that reviewers should (God forbid!) talk down to their audience or insult their intelligence, but isn't it a bit off-putting (or show-offy?) to equate something with "the moral standards of a Stairmaster" (I don't know anyone who *has* one) and to make readers who (like me) haven't seen "A Thousand Clowns" feel stupid because we don't know what is to the left of Whoopee?

Mary Gordon has determined that Fox-Genovese's book "is not really a sustained argument but a series of pronouncements reeled off at a manic pace." (More about this "manic pace" later.) She then proceeds with her own pronouncements, lots of them. "Her story," she writes, "needs a nameable, clear villain, and she's found it in feminism." But [Gordon pronounces] "as one's experience of stories matures, one develops a taste for those that are more complex, like 'Middlemarch' or the 'Odyssey' . . ." (Elitism, again? And is the issue really that "complex"?)

Maggie Gallagher, in her New York *Post* column, sheds some light on what's riling Mary Gordon. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's new book was, Gallagher writes, lying at the bottom of a pile of things she'd meant to get to, but then "a strikingly ill-tempered review of the book . . . by renowned feminist Mary Gordon pushed it front and center." What Maggie Gallagher (her column was titled "Men are not the enemy—nor are babies") derives from Mary Gordon's "foolish tirade" is that she ("like most orthodox feminists") sees the care of children as something unfairly imposed on women. Gallagher says that Fox-Genovese's book "is no conservative manifesto" but is one feminist writer's attempt to understand why, at a time when feminist ideas about work and equality are widely accepted, so few American women identify with feminism as a political cause. And, she writes, "Unlike most feminists, who prefer to locate the movement's troubles in mysterious media conspiracies, Fox-Genovese adopts a novel strategy for uncovering the answer to this perplexing question: She asks women themselves." And what she found, Gallagher says, is that (and here she quotes Fox-Genovese) "the average American woman does not recognize herself in the feminist stories of heterosexuality as a male conspiracy to keep women in their place. . . . As women who enjoy men and love the fathers, brothers, husbands and sons in their lives, they do not see men as The Enemy." "Ditto babies," she adds.

Fox-Genovese argues that much of the difference between men's and women's earnings stems not from discrimination but from women's continuing commitment to motherhood. "The hard truth," she writes, "is that women are disadvantaged in the work force not so much because of the behavior and biases of employers as because they have children." That "truism," says Maggie Gallagher, is what has Mary Gordon steaming. Ms. Gordon (who has a husband and two children) accuses Fox-Genovese of jumping from the fact that only women bear children "to the position that they should therefore have the primary or sole responsibility for their care." Gallagher mentions "the 50s Freudian ideal" which "warned women that

they must be continuously available to their kids 24 hours a day or their kids would grow up to be ax murderers: this was obviously wrong and harmful to women.” But, she says, “the feminist idea of McParenting that replaced it is even worse,” and gives credit to Fox-Genovese for understanding, “as few feminists have, that most women (whether we work or not) want to be ‘hands-on’ mothers.” She also credits Fox-Genovese for “upbraiding” orthodox feminists for their hostility to solutions like “the mommy track” which would allow working mothers to keep professional identities while still carving out large blocks of time for kids.

Gallagher ends her column with this: “Mary Gordon’s foolish tirade against Fox-Genovese, and by implication against all women who deliberately place family obligations above corporate ones, is itself one more proof, if we needed it, that orthodox feminists today just don’t ‘get it.’”

But Gordon thinks that Fox-Genovese “doesn’t get” a number of “its.” She zeros in on what she considers Fox-Genovese’s “assertion” that no woman has anything in common with any other except being the daughter of a woman and the ability of her own body to bear a child. “If we agree,” opines Gordon, “that men were also born of women and women are the daughters of men as well, we’re left with no clear difference except ‘the ability of her own body to bear a child.’ If Ms. Fox-Genovese believes this, she is trapped in an unhappy essentialist argument: if the defining quality of being a woman is the ability to bear children, then not bearing children (as, for instance, Florence Nightingale and Greta Garbo did not) is somehow a failure to fulfill your destiny.” (Was this, I wondered, a rather sneaky attack on Ms. Fox-Genovese herself? She had explained that her convictions about the importance of motherhood to feminism don’t directly derive from her own experience: she and her husband wanted children but were not “blessed with them.”)

Anyway, this seems to be a case wherein “He who says A must say B” doesn’t apply: I’d have thought Ms. Gordon was above such sophistry. But following that specious reasoning comes Ms. Gordon’s pronouncement that “The question of what makes a woman a woman, or womanly” (referring to the title of her review) “is a difficult one, and it absorbs much feminist thought.” Does it, really? I am reminded of a good friend’s now-deceased mother, who found many contexts useful in which to insert a pet phrase: “Don’t beat the hell out of the obvious.”

The *fact* is that, whether or not a woman bears a child, she has the *equipment* for it, and men do not. And whether or not a woman becomes a mother, she has maternal instincts; and if she becomes a mother she doesn’t need books to learn that maternal “nurturing” is a law of nature.

The physical bonding with another life during the nine months before birth becomes an eternal bonding: that mother and child should be together during the early years is a law written in the mother's heart. So perhaps what "absorbs much feminist thought" about What Makes a Woman a Woman is the attempt to re-invent Woman?

* * * * *

My awareness of feminism was belated, since during the Sixties I was happily busy being a housewife and giving birth to five children. The birth of our third child in 1963 coincided with the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique*, which I wouldn't have had time to read even if I'd known about it. And since we lived in a Manhattan apartment, I didn't know about those suburban wives and mothers who were so vulnerable to Ms. Friedan's suggestion that they suffered from "the problem that has no name"—that they were oppressed and depressed, bored and restless, perhaps even envious of their husbands' careers. With "domesticity" as their full-time occupation, they were being deprived of the "meaningful work" for which their educations had prepared them.

The solution to this newly-discovered angst, this new awareness of "oppression," was of course *liberation*; and soon "Women's Lib" became a household name, except in households like mine.

In the 70s, I was dimly aware of something called "consciousness-raising" but my involvement was with child-raising. Fox-Genovese writes that she and a friend—in the early 70s—began a consciousness-raising group: "Alive with the enthusiasm of discovery, we met faithfully . . . to explore our feelings and talk about our lives. . . . At first cautiously and then more boldly, we tried to help each other to become strong, independent women. We were encouraged to take these baby steps toward feminism by the knowledge that informal groups like ours were springing up all over America."

Springing up they were, and by the time I had some knowledge of the women's movement it had evolved into a revolutionary ideology, with its own orthodoxies and heresies, penetrating every level of society. Fox-Genovese says that "sometimes I think that those of us who, for the past three decades, have thought of ourselves as feminists do not begin to imagine what the word means to others . . . but then I remind myself that the heady innocence of the early years of the women's movement has evaporated in the jaded cynicism and violence that have engulfed so much of our culture in recent years."

It wasn't until the 80s that I thought I understood feminist ideology, but I was still naive: I hadn't taken seriously the radical feminists' scorn for motherhood. Besides, hadn't the women's movement changed since those early days when feminist writers were calling motherhood "a trap" and even a kind of enforced "martyrdom"? Many had become mothers themselves, and wasn't Betty Friedan herself enjoying her grandchildren? Well, now in the 90s, Professor Fox-Genovese can write, with authority, that "Feminists have sorely misunderstood the importance of motherhood to most women . . . [they] tend to see any talk of women's responsibilities to children as a male plot. . . . Early on, they launched a broadside attack on Mother's Day . . ."

Reading that in Fox-Genovese's new book reminded me of my surprise when I read, in 1988, a column by Suzanne Fields about how Mother's Day was being "feminized" again: for Mother's Day that year, frilly nightgowns were *in*: briefcases *out*, "Motherhood *is* being re-feminized." (That was the year, Fields noted, that Anne Archer—the sensual wife and mother—"beat out" Glenn Close, "The Other [career] Woman," in the movie "Fatal Attraction.") But in Fox-Genovese's opinion, in recent years feminists have been promoting a new substitution for Mother's Day, called "Take Our Daughters to Work." It is reasonable to conclude, she says, that feminists intend to free women from motherhood, but that that's not the whole story:

Some feminists are quick to defend the rights of mothers, especially single mothers and divorced mothers who are fighting for custody of their children. Many even defend the right of welfare mothers to stay home with their children. But the moment husbands enter the picture, everything changes. Wives, we are told, must be free to work as much as their husbands. So feminists can hardly complain when American women conclude that feminists see married women's responsibilities to children as another form of male oppression.

In her Preface, Fox-Genovese says that the mistrust of feminism angers many feminists, who "with good reason" argue that their movement has opened new opportunities for women; and it saddens other women, who would like to think of themselves as feminists even if they can't give a precise definition of what feminism stands for. But most of them assume that feminism is a broad, generous movement with room for a variety of women and with toleration for a variety of views on "difficult" topics. One "difficult" issue is of course abortion; she writes that "Many, if not most, of the women who see feminism as a broad movement that respects differences among women readily support the pro-choice position on abortion. *More than any other single issue, support for a woman's right to*

choose to have an abortion has become the litmus test of feminism." [Italics mine.] In her review, Mary Gordon referred only obliquely to abortion: actually, she and Fox-Genovese are not poles apart on the issue. They both believe that—in Ms. Gordon's words—it is "absurd to deny that a fetus is alive or that it is human." And they believe that the abortion debate should have to do with when "the termination of a pregnancy" becomes the murder of a baby. (Says Fox-Genovese: "The real debate concerns the moment at which our society regards abortion as the taking of a human life: At what point do we regard the fetus as a human being?") In other words, it's a matter of where you draw the line.

Mary Gordon aired her pro-choice position in April, 1990, in *The Atlantic Monthly*. In her essay, titled "A Moral Choice," she states her belief that examining a fetus' *ontology* is the crucial point. (Ontology, as you probably know, has to do with the nature and relations of *being*.) Gordon writes: "A pregnant woman has an identifiable, consistent ontology, and a fetus takes on different ontological identities over time." And "As a society, we are making decisions that pit the complicated future of a complex adult against the fate of a mass of cells lacking cortical development." For herself, she is "made uneasy by third-trimester abortions, which take place when the fetus could live outside the mother's body . . ."

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese doesn't go into "ontology" but she does mention the cortex. Scientific evidence, she says, confirms that from the moment of conception the fetus is a form of human life "albeit a very primitive one. . . . Scientists nonetheless argue that its humanness . . . lies in its verbal and intellectual abilities, which are located in the cortex of the brain and which do not develop until the twenty-fourth week." A fetus of three or four months, she reasons, "although it does embody potential life" cannot survive outside the womb; even the six-month-old fetus needs massive assistance to survive outside, and these facts "suggest" that a third-trimester abortion "closely resembles the taking of a human life, whereas the abortion of a first-trimester fetus does not." She writes that "respectful attention" to the two claims that clash over which constitutes the true victim of an unplanned pregnancy—the unformed fetus or the woman—"would suggest that the line for legal abortions be drawn at the fourth or fifth month." But her own preference "would be for the third or fourth, although Pope John Paul II makes a compelling argument that, with respect to life, the drawing of lines is inherently difficult."

Mary Gordon mentioned the Pope, too, back in 1987 in the book *Once a Catholic*, in which "Prominent Catholics and Ex-Catholics Reveal the

Influence of the Church on their Lives and Work.” (Alphabetical, from Jimmy Breslin through Frank Zappa.) Mary Gordon’s contribution examined the Irish influence on her life and on the “American Church” and she wrote that “I’m still practicing Catholicism, but I’m not sure the Pope thinks I am.” After saying “You have to be really suspicious of people who want to return incense and Latin, because they often have a political and a sexual agenda that’s really scary,” she says that on the other hand “the people on the Left who are doing all sorts of good works want to play Peter, Paul and Mary for you and have Sister Corita posters hanging on the walls. They kind of got stuck in 1965. I don’t know what there is to move forward to—you can’t replace Peter, Paul, and Mary with Prince. But when you get stuck in a not particularly distinguished historical moment, that’s a real tragedy.”

And then this, which surprised both traditional and modernist Catholics, and has often been quoted: “Better to get stuck in the thirteenth century than in 1965; better to get stuck in ‘Pange Lingua’ than ‘Blowin’ in the Wind.’”

. . . But back to feminism, the defending of which Mary Gordon appears to be stuck in. Toward the end of her review of “*Feminism Is Not The Story Of My Life*” she pronounces that what Fox-Genovese is really saying is that by their nature children restrict the freedom of their parents (who can be male or female) “but in practice it is the freedom of women that is restricted. *It is the desire to undo this injustice that is the root of the varieties of feminist critiques of parents and children.*” [Italics mine.]

Whereas Ms. Gordon could look with some objectivity at Growing Up Catholic, she seems to have abandoned objectivity in her critique of Fox-Genovese’s book. And, whether deliberately or carelessly, she gets some things wrong—as for example when she writes that “Ms. Fox-Genovese is a fatalist. She says that things have to be that way because they are that way, and that feminists are blind and cruel to suggest that they be otherwise.” I looked through the book again for that “feminists are blind and cruel” charge and could find only this: First she says that “Throughout history, women have combined work with motherhood. Contemporary American society is exceptional in making the combination so difficult and in tacitly suggesting that women should choose between the two. Most women simply cannot.” And then comes the “cruel” and “blind” part:

Only the cruel or the ignorant could charge working women with selfishly choosing “careers” and self-realization over the interest of their families. Only the ideologically blind could assume that they have embraced a feminist agenda that presents men and families as their oppressors.

As for Ms. Gordon's pronouncement that Ms. Fox-Genovese's book "is not really a sustained argument but a series of pronouncements reeled off at a manic pace"—well, that seems to me an apt description of Ms. Gordon's review. I remembered the calm, steady, measured manner of Professor Fox-Genovese's speaking during that Women's Debate on *Firing Line* in January, 1995. Just to make sure that my memory was accurate, I fast-forwarded (at a manic pace) my tape of that debate, hitting the Play button every time the camera zoomed in on Fox-Genovese. Sure enough, my memory hadn't betrayed me: her delivery was both forceful and slow—almost metronomic, especially when contrasted with Camille Paglia's hyper-manic, rapid-fire bursts. Paglia's writings tend toward the manic, too; but why *shouldn't* authors write the way they speak? I found the same calm tone and steady pace in Fox-Genovese's book as in her vocal prose on that *Firing Line* debate.

She had the last words, too. The debate had turned to "choices" and just after moderator Bill Buckley says "We have about 15 seconds to go" Professor Fox-Genovese is saying: ". . . in general I think most people are for a very wide range of choices for families, for individuals . . . but where abortion is different from everything else, whether you support its availability or not . . . the moment taking a life becomes a matter of individual choice, we are in a completely different realm."

Perhaps we will know more about the "realm" or realms of Mary Gordon when her memoir is published this Spring. (Wouldn't it be interesting if the *Times* assigned the review to Elizabeth Fox-Genovese?) I am still somewhat mystified about Mary Gordon's vituperative attack on Fox-Genovese's arguments for a new, uniting, "family" kind of feminism: Is it just a predictable reaction to an influential "feminist writer" who has departed from the politically-correct, orthodox Sisterhood? Or is there something more personal that rankles? I don't know the answer, but I do know that Mary Gordon is a good writer, and an honest one when she's not stuck in polemics.

But no one has to be "stuck" in an era: even language gets unstuck, and feminist rhetoric seems to have shifted since Mary Gordon wrote that *Atlantic Monthly* essay, wherein you will not find the words "pro-life" or "anti-abortion"—just "anti-choice," throughout. That was in 1990: now it seems "pro-life" has made the politically-correct grade; and "pro-choicers" say they're not "pro-abortion" but pro abortion *rights*. Mary Gordon's "A Moral Choice" essay has a lot about rights, but she doesn't mention "natural rights." Elizabeth Fox-Genovese *does*. Perhaps Ms. Gordon's Catholic

FAITH ABBOTT

upbringing didn't include the theology of natural law? Professor Fox-Genovese, who didn't have a Catholic upbringing, seems to know a lot about natural rights—and history, too. Mary Gordon had written in her essay that “One of the fears preyed on by anti-choice proponents is that if we cannot look at the birth of a child as an unequivocal good, then there is nothing to look toward”—whereas, she says, “in real life we act knowing that the birth of a child is not always a good thing.” To Fox-Genovese, the point is not fear but hope: “Throughout history, societies have regarded the birth of children as a sign of renewal and a cause for celebration.” Even though “most have also tacitly accepted various forms of population control, including abortion and even infanticide,” they haven't celebrated them. It is, she writes, “one thing to live with abortion or infanticide, another to establish them as legal rights, and yet another to try to assimilate them as ‘natural rights.’ Natural rights necessarily derive from the notion of a natural law that no legal system should violate. In principle, then, natural law upholds the dignity of the human being.” And she goes on:

The claim that abortion is a natural right derives from no discernible moral obligation. At most, one might argue that the human dignity of the mother requires that her right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness not be limited by the claims of the child. This position, however, simply invokes natural rights to individual convenience or the defense of one social policy against another. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a compelling argument for natural law that is not grounded in the Word of God, for without an appeal to God as an absolute standard for human dignity, the defense of natural rights simply embodies the preferences of individuals or groups.

God only knows what Mary Gordon would say to that.



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Facing Up to Infanticide

J. Bottum

Every philosopher knows, at last, that not all ethical systems are equally good. We demand that a general ethics conform, as philosophers put it, to both truth and logic—which is to say, we demand that it not contradict the facts we hold about the universe and that it not contradict itself. And to these difficult demands not all ethical systems respond equally well. Relativist claims such as *It's wrong to say anything is wrong* are simply incoherent; no grand talk of “embracing contradiction” or “containing multitudes” (à la Walt Whitman) is going to make a workable ethics out of them. The number of possible ethical systems is actually quite small.

For over twenty years in America, the legality of abortion has primarily been defended with an ethical system that most Americans now recognize as philosophically incoherent—a system based on taking the constitutionally acknowledged right to possess private property and translating it into rights of personal privacy and possession of the body. The system may originally have been forced upon abortion supporters by the Supreme Court's use of it in *Roe v. Wade*, but it has proved false in both the ways ethical systems prove false: as being both externally and internally inconsistent, as both contradicting what we know about human reproduction and contradicting itself.

And for these same twenty years, defenders of unborn children have battled abortion primarily by pointing out the inconsistencies of the ethical system on which abortion defenders rely: the notion of the body as a possession is meaningless; the fact that a fetus is a human life is medically demonstrable; the language of rights, extended to the taking of life, simply contradicts itself.

As the American public's faith in the “rights talk” of radical, Me-Generation individualism decreases, the pro-life movement has steadily advanced. Many Americans may still inhabit “the mushy middle,” as it was recently called by Norma McCorvey (the “Jane Roe” of *Roe v. Wade*, who defected last year to a pro-life position). But that middle has substantially shifted toward the limiting of abortions, and some abortion proponents

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have begun to change their ground, seeking a new ethical system with which to defend unlimited abortion.

What's frightening, and what the pro-life movement must face, is that they may find what they're looking for. Though it is true that there are not many possible ethical systems, the history of philosophy reveals that there is more than one. And in the stern philosophies of the ancient world—a world that accepted slavery, infanticide, and gradations of human life—the pro-abortion movement may find the coherent general ethics it currently lacks.

Since the 1970s, abortion rhetoric has been dominated by euphemisms whose dishonesty and disingenuousness increase with each new medical technique for saving prematurely born children. By displaying sonograms, heart-beat monitors, and even the corpses of aborted children, pro-life activists have been able to employ the simple strategy of exposing the truth beneath “pro-choice” euphemisms. And though this relentless exposure is called pornography by pro-abortion activists and strikes many in “the mushy middle” as distasteful, it has had its intended effect of revealing the willfulness of such terms as “potential life,” “product of conception,” and even “fetus”—and it leaves abortion rhetoric sounding increasingly heartless in response to America's million and a half abortions a year. After she was reported as saying “abortion is a bad thing,” Kate Michelman, the director of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, denied it utterly: “I would never, never, never, never, never mean to say such a thing.” In a high-water mark of moral and political inattention, the Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders declared, “We really need to get over this love affair with the fetus.” The refusal to admit any moral gravity to the act of abortion—a logical consequence of abortion taken as a right of privacy—has put pro-abortion activists outside the actual discussion of abortion in America.

Some liberal writers and analysts have begun at last to recognize this. In an essay last October in the *New Republic*, the well-known feminist Naomi Wolf asserted that abortion activists, by sticking to the old rhetorical lines, condemn their followers to “three destructive consequences—two ethical, one strategic: hardness of heart, lying, and political failure.” Only a month earlier, Peter Singer (the radical Australian activist for animal rights) suggested in the London *Spectator* that we acknowledge “the fetus is a living human being.”

Such suggestions are not entirely new. In the late sixties and early seventies, several future neoconservatives argued that true liberalism

requires the rejection of abortion: "The pro-abortion flag," wrote the then-liberal Richard John Neuhaus in 1967, "is planted on the wrong side of the liberal/conservative divide."

There were few on the left willing to listen to such an argument in 1967, and there are fewer now, when support for abortion has become *the* test for liberal credentials. Governor Robert Casey of Pennsylvania found himself barred from the dais of the 1992 Democratic Convention simply because of his pro-life position. The recently organized "Feminists for Life" was founded by a group of otherwise orthodox feminists who argued that true feminism ought to reject abortion and found themselves summarily ejected from the National Organization for Women. The various 1960s projects for radical liberation were perhaps correct, in terms of immediate results, to place sexual liberation at the center of their rhetoric: nothing was more likely to lure young converts or more pleasurably to satisfy the adolescent impulse to rebellion. But since the sixties, during the years in which radicalism hijacked liberalism, the task of maintaining the centrality of sexual freedom has condemned liberals to the uncompromising defense of unlimited abortion—in order to eradicate the costs of what used to be called "free love."

And if the tatters of the left have inescapably tied themselves to the abortion license, general American culture may have as well. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, though denounced by pro-life activists for her part in the 1992 *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* decision, was at least right when she observed that in the years since *Roe v. Wade* an entire generation has grown up expecting to be able to rely upon abortion to terminate not merely pregnancies resulting from rape or incest and pregnancies that threaten the life of the mother, but also pregnancies resulting from inattention or contraceptive failure and pregnancies that threaten a deformed child, an unwanted child, or even a child of the wrong gender. Any medical procedure performed a million and a half times a year—at a rate far outstripping any other developed nation—argues a cultural investment of enormous proportions.

Perhaps even the Republican plans for social renewal rely in some way upon the continuing reality of abortion. A conservative writer, Jerry Z. Muller, recently announced his defection from mainstream conservatism by publishing "The Conservative Case for Abortion" as a cover story last summer in the *New Republic*. His utilitarian argument that "the right-to-life position undermines [the] fundamentally conservative effort to strengthen families" is unlikely to persuade many on the right. It may be true, as Muller writes, that "conservatives have long assumed that government

should promote those social norms that encourage the creation of decent men and women,” but conservatives have long assumed as well that decent men and women don’t slaughter their young.

Muller’s “Conservative Case For Abortion” harkens back, in a perverse way, to the old liberals’ claim that the abortion flag properly belongs with the heartless Republicans. And yet, his point that “unsocialized children are at the heart of our social deterioration” deserves some notice. The disrespect for life engendered by an abortion culture probably deserves larger notice. But abortion (particularly when subsidized for the poor and unmarried) is in fact likely to decrease somewhat the risk to society, and the kind of quick social reform that the American public seems to demand from the Republican Congress may rely in part on plenty of abortions to decrease the number of unwed mothers and unsocialized children. Some rifts have already begun to appear between the economic and law-and-order conservatives, on the one hand, and the pro-life conservatives, on the other; not as many rifts or as important as the liberal press delights to claim, but real rifts nonetheless.

The current entanglement with abortion—by political liberals, the general culture, and perhaps even by political conservatives—is finally what distinguishes the recent essays by Naomi Wolf and Peter Singer from attempts in the late sixties and early seventies to speak honestly about abortion. Unlimited abortion is now the reality, and honesty about abortion’s murderousness no longer necessarily means its rejection. Some supporters of abortion, having rejected the old, incoherent ethical system of privacy rights, are now willing to acknowledge that abortion kills babies. But they are willing to claim the necessity for allowing abortion anyway.

The traditional pro-life strategy of exposing pro-abortion euphemism relies on the tacit assumption that under any Jewish, Christian, or even post-Christian ethical system, the knowledge that it kills a living baby would suffice to end the practice of abortion. That assumption may no longer be true. Certainly it is no longer obvious. The political scientist George McKenna claimed last fall in the *Atlantic Monthly* that a truly liberal position would agree that abortion is guaranteed by the Constitution, but nonetheless see it as a wrong that ought gradually to be eliminated—much as Lincoln before the Civil War acknowledged the constitutionality of slavery but sought through education, legal limitation, and moral suasion its eventual elimination. But Lincoln harbored some hopes of rescuing the generation then enslaved—and the living slave has some small chance of manumission, while the aborted baby has no more chances. Wolf tells the story of arguing, while she was pregnant, against an opponent of abortion

and snapping at last in frustration, “Of course it’s a baby. . . . And if I found myself in circumstances in which I had to make the terrible decision to end this life, then that would be between myself and God.” Her opponent, as she tells the story, was silenced because she had at last said something that made sense to him. But the truth is more likely that she had at last said what penetrates to so fundamental a clash between ethical systems that any sort of argument becomes impossible.

In the nineteenth century, Friedrich Nietzsche denounced the Victorians and “little moralistic females à la [George] Eliot” as “English flatheads” for thinking that they could preserve Christian morality without God. Nietzsche was no proponent of a Christian ethics, but he saw clearly that such ethics relies on the publicly held proposition of God’s existence. Neither Jews nor Christians have always lived up to their ethical systems, but the notion of reverence for individual lives is born (in the West at least) solely from a Judeo-Christian impulse. In his article entitled “Killing Babies Isn’t Always Wrong,” Peter Singer writes, “Pope John Paul II proclaims that the widespread acceptance of abortion is a mortal threat to the traditional moral order. . . . I sometimes think that he and I at least share the virtue of seeing clearly what is at stake in the debate.”

If we are so entangled with the practice that legal and probably common abortion is now inescapable, and if we acknowledge that abortion kills, then we live in the tragic, redemptionless sort of world imagined by the Ancients from the Greek tragedians to the Roman Stoics—a world which had at various times, we must admit, an ethical system consistent both externally and internally, consistent with the commonly accepted facts of the universe and with itself. In moves that ought to have been predictable, Wolf and Singer both begin to seek a way to accept infanticide by recreating, consciously or unconsciously, the stern philosophies of the ancient, pre-Christian world.

Wolf argues that pro-abortion rhetoric, by denying life to the unborn child and gravity to the act of killing it, has deprived women of a “moral framework” with which to understand abortion—and thus has driven middle America to embrace the pro-life movement that has monopolized all moral discourse. Feminists need to admit, she asserts, many of the perfectly true points they are foolishly committed to disputing: that the fetus is a child, that the current abortion rate is a terrible social evil, that “pregnancy confounds Western philosophy’s idea of the autonomous self, [for] the pregnant woman is in fact both a person in her body and a vessel.” The blind adherence to privacy rights and “the refusal to use a darker and sterner and

more honest moral rhetoric” have robbed women of a “sense of sin,” and consequently of the possibility of grief, atonement, and healing.

Some philosophical and theological naiveté seems inevitable even in otherwise well-educated writers nowadays—Wolf herself bemoans contemporary “religious illiteracy”—and it is perhaps unfair to complain about skewed uses of terms like “soul,” “sin,” “guilt,” and “atonement” in what is admittedly a popular essay. And yet, all the elements are present in Wolf’s analysis for a full-blown philosophical Stoicism and a Stoic acceptance of infanticide: not just the ethical elements of self-possession, resignation to a tragic world, and stern moral rhetoric, but all the metaphysical elements as well. When Wolf writes first of “what can only be called our souls,” but then later in her essay calls it “‘God’ or ‘soul’—or if you are secular and prefer it, ‘conscience,’” she is not simply confounding philosophical terms, but aiming in an untrained way at the metaphysical equations that stand behind the Stoic worldview.

Peter Singer similarly aims toward Stoicism. In the latter part of his essay, with his sketch of the history of infanticide, he indulges the jejune sort of cultural relativism which argues that if any culture anywhere once performed a practice, then the practice must be morally permissible. But he is a philosopher by training (and the author of the article on ethics in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*), and for the most part he sees clearly what sort of ethical system is necessary to defend abortion coherently. It is an ethical system admitting gradations in the worthiness and usefulness of life, and he argues that we have already adopted such an ethics in fact if not yet in rhetoric.

The recognition that there are “living human beings whose lives may intentionally be terminated” means abortion activists can “at last properly engage with the arguments of those opposed to abortion,” he observes. The real question proponents of abortion should ask is this: “Why—in the absence of religious beliefs about being made in the image of God, or having an immortal soul—should mere membership of the species *Homo sapiens* be crucial to whether the life of a being may or may not be taken?”

The sleight-of-hand in such a question is one that Americans have encountered so often it almost doesn’t bear mentioning: by fiat, religious belief—alone among beliefs—is prohibited from public discourse; by fiat, religious believers—alone among believers—are prohibited from employing in rational discourse the facts they hold about the universe. In Singer’s question, however, is also something Americans haven’t often encountered, for he sees clearly (as Nietzsche did before him) that the Judeo-Christian prohibition against baby-killing is a tattered, incoherent, and indefensible

ethical remnant when divorced from Judeo-Christian religious belief. We must stoically resign ourselves, Singer argues, to an unredeemed and overpopulated world in which we have to kill useless and unwanted human beings.

The strategy of refusing euphemism has, in one sense, won the day. The facts about abortion are now acknowledged even by solidly liberal and feminist writers, and the incoherence and social disaster of a general ethics based on the right of privacy are now taken for granted by thoughtful analysts. The pro-life movement must not imagine, however, that it has thereby won the abortion debate. There exist philosophically coherent ethical systems that grant no sanctity to all grades of human life, ethical systems to which ancient history repeatedly testifies.

Worse, beyond external and internal coherence, there are no rational, philosophical grounds—no “meta-ethics,” as philosophers call it—for judging between ethical systems. The proponents of abortion seeking a new, coherent general ethics seem to imagine that admitting the facts will allow a real discussion to begin between the pro-abortion and pro-life movements. Without such honesty, Singer concludes his essay, “people on both sides of the debate will continue to argue past each other.” But the truth is rather that an agreement that we share no fundamental ethical positions—that we are utterly divided, that belief in a root American ethics is a sentimental delusion—would mean the end of discourse.

It may even mean the end of the culture. Philosophical discourse is not the only way, or even the primary way, in which people are persuaded to change their ethical systems. There is social pressure and (many Americans still believe) conversion by the grace of God. And there is war. The pro-life movement is undoubtedly still correct that most Americans consider infanticide something worse than a stern necessity: no sane politician is on the verge of saying publicly, “Yes, they are babies, and we have to kill them anyway.” But the longer we live with abortion, the closer the day comes when all the supporters of abortion emerge from their fog of euphemism and incoherence to announce a fundamental rupture between ethical systems in America. The urgency to ban abortion is, of course, an urgency to save the four thousand babies it kills every day. But it is also an urgency to preserve—without civil war—an ethics that holds infanticide to be wrong.

The Calamity JANE

Rebecca Ryskind Teti

The new Congress elected in 1994 brought to Washington a Freshman Class that includes many opponents of legalized abortion. In quite a few cases, they replaced defeated pro-abortionists. The shift is so dramatic that Kate Michelman, president of NARRAL (the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League), has said publicly that “We are one president away” from the overturn of *Roe v. Wade*.

Other abortion “activists” have echoed Michelman’s admission that the pro-abortion movement is on the run—and knows it. One might be tempted to dismiss such statements as being in large part fund-raising rhetoric: sounding the alarm to rally the troops and raise more money. But a new book, Laura Kaplan’s *The Story of Jane: The Legendary Underground Feminist Abortion Movement*, may convince you that the fears are real. *Jane* hails itself as “a compelling testament to a woman’s most essential freedom—control over her own body—and to the power of women helping women.” It tells the history of a group of women in Chicago—“Jane” was their code name—who provided abortions to an estimated 11,000 women during the four years before *Roe v. Wade* legalized abortion on demand and rendered the service superfluous.

Histories usually have a purpose (else why write them?): either to warn against a particular course of action, or to recommend one. The central message of *Jane* is that abortion was not only available, but *also* in some ways *better* before legalization brought the meddlesome interference of medical and legal professionals (read *men*) into an unalloyed experience of sisterhood. It is clearly intended to offer a model for abortion activists who see the writing on the wall and yet, defiantly, “won’t go back!” Hence Katha Pollitt comments (on the dust jacket): “The lesson of Jane—that ordinary women can take direct action to transform their own and other’s lives—could not be more timely.”

It is a glib book, replete with the jargon of Sixties radicals, dated slogans, and the kind of generalization once described as “glittering.” (Statements such as these abound: “Authorities and once-accepted truths were challenged”; “Out of expediency, the power that knowledge held became more equal”; “Opposition to the Vietnam War had spread through every

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strata [sic] of society”; “My truth, too, is multilayered.”) In fact, the narrative is so filled with generalizations and even grammatical errors, it likely would not have been published were it about any topic other than abortion. Nonetheless, *The Story of Jane* should be required reading for anyone who wants to know what the abortion culture really thinks of women. The dedication and ingenuity of the women of Jane is inspiring. But Jane’s tunnel vision and its arrogant and manipulative treatment of its clients may cause many young activists to trade in their NOW memberships. It is a sad story.

In the first chapter, author Kaplan—a Jane member—presents the abortion service as a sincere attempt to help desperate women out of a bind. The group’s organizer, “Claire” (all names have been changed), responds initially to the furtive pleas of two women she cares about—and the word spreads in the Radical circles in which she moves that someone can help procure abortions.

Many of those who join Jane are angry because, while society at large claims to exalt motherhood, it treats them as non-persons; a woman in a crisis pregnancy can count on long stares and condescension, but little practical help. And so they resolve to do what they can to reach out a friendly hand to their sisters in need. They know that women get desperate, that some take terrible risks in order to get abortions and so—with a genuine urge to help—they step in. They research female anatomy and physiology to explain the procedure in layman’s terms so that their contacts will know what to expect. They search out the best doctors, weeding out the most seedy, greedy and callous of them. They work with doctors to keep prices low, and they collect money from wealthy clients to finance abortions for women too poor to afford them.

Most importantly, the women of Jane provide moral support. Each woman who passes through the service meets for tea with a Jane counselor before her abortion. Later, when the group begins to work closely with one abortionist, Jane counselors are able to hold hands and chat with their clients throughout their abortions. The result is that many of Jane’s clients think of their abortions as “surprisingly positive” experiences. As one woman says, “All these people willing to help me made me feel like someone special.”

If their work had been simply to steer women away from the worst abortion butchers and to offer emotional support to women who were determined to undergo illegal abortions anyway, one might find a grudging sympathy for the misguided charity of Jane. But Kaplan continually

insists that Jane is not about charity, but about a cause. To further that cause, Jane's visionaries—keen to prevent the exploitation of women by men—were themselves enormously manipulative. Early on (page 43) for example, the service makes a shift from abortion referrals to abortion promotion. In order to keep the price low, they have to guarantee the abortionists a certain amount of business. So instead of waiting for women to come to them, "they had to go out and find those women." Although the book pays lip-service to a woman's personal process of discernment—and is careful to say that women who seemed uncomfortable with the decision to abort were turned away—it is clear that the women of Jane had a vested interest in encouraging abortion. By chapter five, "their primary task was to increase the number of requests they got so they could lower the price for an abortion."

More than the abortion, however, Jane promoted a political agenda. From the outset, its organizers saw that the abortion service had "the potential to turn large numbers of women into activists," and the whipping of women's fears and resentments into a frenzy of political activism is a recurring theme of the book. Through pre-abortion "consciousness-raising" sessions, we are told, "Claire wanted them to address the political dimensions and give each woman a sense that her personal predicament was part of the larger socioeconomic-racial-sexual struggles that were going on at that time." "You wouldn't be in this situation if you weren't being exploited," counselor Jenny told her clients. Another organizer recalls: "I got angry whenever women didn't rise up angry." Far from sincerely (if misguidedly) offering help to troubled women, Jane members saw the decision to have an abortion as a necessary initiation rite into radical politics:

Counseling for an abortion was a time of crisis in a woman's life, when she was more open to new perspectives. They could use that opportunity as an educable moment to show her how her personal problems connected to a broader social picture and to orient her mind in a different and possibly radical direction. If she questioned society's attitudes about abortion, she might begin to question much more.

Once a woman had her abortion, "one of the counselor's tasks was to help each woman turn her depression about having to get an illegal abortion into anger at a society that forced her to break the law. Choosing an abortion might represent the loss of a possibility, that experience could be used to discover new possibilities." In perhaps the most blatant example of exploitation, one Jane member, a teacher, refers her high school students for abortions.

For the radicals of Jane, knowledge was strength. "If you don't know

things, you can't ask questions, you can't refuse. You're just taken advantage of and mistreated," one woman is told. Yet at the same time Jane counselors considered themselves entitled to complete information about every aspect of abortion, they made sure that the information the clients received suited radical purposes. Because many women did not want to examine their own genitalia before an abortion, Jane stopped offering the "choice"—counselors simply thrust mirrors into their hands and said, "look," insisting that a woman have knowledge she didn't want. By contrast, when Jane members discovered that their chief abortionist was not a doctor at all, they decided not to volunteer this information—and to keep on using him. One woman drawn to Jane recounts her friend's induced at-home abortion—and her decision not to tell this friend about the tiny, well-formed fetus she delivered. "I've got to protect Mary from seeing it," she said. In fact, while Jane's ideology holds that women are strong and independent moral agents, the women coming to Jane for abortions are described as "frightened," "terrified," "desperate" and are condescendingly "protected" from knowledge which might dissuade them from abortion.

Most astonishing, however, is that Laura Kaplan makes no effort to hide Jane's extremely cavalier attitude toward women's lives. In the early days, when Jane is simply a referral service, Jane members know that one local abortionist is often drunk and demands sexual favors of the women referred to him; another, fearing the law, would provide no medical follow-up; another is described as "a slick operator," someone they feared had mob ties. But women were referred to all these doctors *anyway*. Complications from abortions require Jane to obtain clotting agents and tetracycline from a sympathetic pharmacist, and to prescribe them to *all* clients, without concern for possible bad reactions to these drugs.

As mentioned, the abortionist the service comes to rely on most turns out not to be a doctor at all; indeed, he is revealed as a liar and a sham, yet Jane members trust him to train *them* to do abortions. With no medical training whatsoever—not even knowledge of Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation—some of the Jane counselors begin to induce miscarriages and to perform D&C abortions. The climax of Jane's story comes about during a complication from an induced miscarriage:

The last person that day was a nineteen-year-old woman who was about fourteen weeks pregnant. With forceps Jenny reached into her uterus and broke the amniotic sac, but, when she removed the forceps they held a very small, translucent limb. She stared at it while her mind raced. She knew that an exposed bone could puncture the uterus during labor.

Jenny was aware that this was a crisis situation: "As a pregnancy advances,

the muscular wall of the uterus gradually thins as it stretches, and that increases the possibility of excessive bleeding or puncture during an abortion.” Knowing this, knowing that the life of the woman on the bed was in jeopardy, and never before having performed a D&C by herself, wouldn’t any reasonable woman have realized she was out of her depth and called an ambulance? Not Jenny:

She thought, I’ve got to finish this abortion right now. . . . As she proceeded, she coached herself silently: “Okay, be cool. Reach in with the forceps, explore the uterine wall for material, gently twist to make sure it’s loose, now pull the forceps through the cervix.” When she was about three-quarters through there was a small gush of blood. She picked up the curette: “now scrape the placenta down off the wall so the bleeding stops.” When the bleeding subsided, Jenny switched back to the forceps and then returned to the curette to make sure the wall was clean. She could feel the woman’s uterus contract and become firm. When she removed the speculum and said “There, all done,” the room exploded in excitement. There was a gleam in Jenny’s eye while she was concentrating on the abortion. If she could handle a complicated one on her own, she could handle any abortion.

This incident is received with exhilaration—we are in control—instead of as a warning that they had strayed beyond laymen’s competence. Fortunately, this woman survived (we are not told whether any others did not). No thanks to Jenny, a rank amateur who indulged her private power game in order to experiment with a stranger’s life. What would Jenny have done if her client had hemorrhaged—as could have so easily been the case? This idea does not seem to darken the minds of those in Jane’s inner circle. When some members are unwilling to be a party to such recklessness and quit, this is interpreted not as concern for the lives of their clients, but as lack of enlightenment: “It was just not acceptable for women to take the power into their own hands.”

The concerns of many Jane counselors are sometimes bizarre and difficult to understand. Not only does Jane progressively take greater risks with the lives of the women it treats, but its lay abortionists seem obsessed with female genitalia and the abortion process itself. One woman cries in her car on the way home “because she had never seen her cervix.” “Deborah” reports feeling honored and “chosen” to be one of the abortionists, and describes her fascination with the process:

I was blown away by the blood. I’d never seen such a thing before. There was blood on the woman’s thighs, blood on Nick’s wrists, on the bed. It was dealt with in a certain normal everyday way, like you were cleaning up the kitchen, matter-of-fact. He could have been a bricklayer. He could have been doing any other seriously learned craft that was messy. It was the workerlike quality of the action which impressed me.

Moreover, there is an adolescent lack of analysis by the women of Jane: it never crosses anyone's mind, for example, to ask if abortion is the best answer to some of the legitimate questions posed by the radicals of the Sixties. During a "rap group" prior to Jane's formation, the women agree that "as much as society supposedly honored motherhood, it offered no help, such as day care or flexible work hours, to enable working mothers to support their families." Fair enough. But why didn't the women organize around those ideas?

One of Jane's chief abortionists, Jenny, came into the group because of a bad experience she had while she was simultaneously pregnant and undergoing treatment for lymphatic cancer. The doctors treated her like a specimen, not a living person. They decided—without consulting her—that in order to save her baby, they would not fight her cancer aggressively. Jenny had to convince psychiatrists that she would commit suicide in order to receive a "therapeutic" abortion.

This incident, like many in *The Story of Jane*, seems concocted. One could easily imagine that doctors might not consider performing an abortion. But that they would refuse treatment? (Even the Catholic Church—at which the book takes many potshots—does not require a pregnant woman to forego medical treatments. In Jenny's case, for example, she could have received radiation therapy even though there was a risk to her baby; it is simply forbidden to kill one's child outright. Is it probable that secular doctors would be so rigid? Certainly the law never set such a standard.) But taking the tale at face value, it is by no means unreasonable to insist that patients receive respect and tender loving care from their doctors and nurses.

But does it stand to reason that taking the law and women's lives into their own hands—and killing 11,000 infants—was the way to achieve good bedside manners in the medical profession? Did Jane think only women undergoing abortions were entitled to emotional support? Might not a person who cared seriously about reforming Medicine choose to continue her education and make alliances with like-minded persons in her field? Instead, some Jane members dropped out of college and graduate school in order to work for the service.

The willingness of Jane members to quit their studies bears on a running sub-text of *The Story of Jane*: an attack on the medical profession, which Jane considers "patriarchal" because doctors do not share information with laymen. Jane members do not mean by this that doctors should fully explain procedures to their patients; rather, they mean that doctors should train non-doctors in medical skills.

During a field trip to Philadelphia to observe a new abortion technique, for instance, the Jane women are furious with the abortionist because he trains two gynecologists, but leaves their volunteers out of it: "He actually gave them the information which he never did with us because he wanted us to be dependent on him because we were women." It's a revealing charge: if these women were so eager to have medical knowledge and skills, why didn't they go to medical school? The doctors didn't exclude them because they were *women*, but because they weren't *doctors*. This and many similar comments remind one of nothing so much as the irresponsible adolescent's complaint, "You don't treat me like an adult." These privileged women (for so they mostly were, although Kaplan takes pains to include at least one of everything—a black, a Jew, a lesbian, a hippie), like giddy teenagers, believe the rules of the world do not apply to them, that the knowledge and status they aren't willing to work for should be simply bestowed on them. (And if it isn't, it is because they are women.)

Jane was onto something, however; probably the most important line in the book is the comment from the woman who says "All these people willing to help me made me feel like someone special." It struck me particularly because I once heard a client at the Northwest Center (a crisis pregnancy center in Washington, D.C.), make precisely the same remark when asked by a reporter why she had decided against an abortion. When she came to the Northwest Center, she felt like a nobody, completely helpless. The Center volunteers offered a lot of practical help, she said, but more importantly, they made her realize she was not alone at a time when she felt particularly vulnerable: someone cared enough to stand by her through the entire experience. People speak readily about a woman's "choice" whether or not to carry a baby to term; but the testimony of the Northwest client and the Jane client suggest that the choice women make depends greatly upon the support they receive during that vulnerable period when they first realize that they are "expecting."

Once I returned from a late-night play rehearsal to find my college roommate convulsed in tears on her bed. She had lost her virginity and was overcome by both remorse and the conviction that she was pregnant. Protestations that it was too early to tell fell on deaf ears. Two of our close friends, hearing the news the next day, insisted that she go to the local Planned Parenthood clinic and take a morning-after pill. My roommate emphatically resisted this advice. Not only did her religious faith teach that abortion was wrong, she was by temperament one of those people college students describe as "granola" because she took an instant dislike to anything

she perceived as “chemical” or “unnatural.” Still, however, my roommate was plagued by the usual fears: How would she tell her parents? What would become of her?

Our two friends treated her as if she were a moron for having any moral qualms, and relentlessly reminded her that her life would be ruined if she had a baby. I, for my part, opined privately that she should not take the pill—as much for moral as for pragmatic reasons: I doubted she was pregnant. What I did not do, however, was reinforce—in the presence of our other friends—my friend’s decision not to visit Planned Parenthood. And in the end, she relented, went, and took the pill. She was physically miserable for the next twenty-four hours, and psychologically miserable for months and months afterwards.

At roughly the same time, there was a girl on campus who had the reputation of being a “swinger,” she was notorious for being involved in a torrid and public lesbian affair—but still evidently liked men well enough to become pregnant. Unlike my roommate, this woman was professedly “pro-choice” and had no moral qualms about abortion. But her lover and their immediate friends were intrigued by the idea of a baby: they offered their immediate support, and she carried the baby to term.

Two women in so-called “crisis” pregnancies: the factor which seems to have had the most effect on their decisions whether or not to abort—trumping even personal conviction in both cases—was the level of support—or lack of it—each got from her circle of friends. I do not know what became of the second woman or her baby (except that it was born). My roommate actually did get pregnant out of wedlock a few years after this incident—this time carrying the baby to term. She wrote me that she was surprised to find that having a baby not only did not ruin her life, but may have saved it: it forced her to evolve from a self-confessed “spoiled brat” into a responsible person.

Assuming that she was in fact pregnant back in our college days, might not that personal evolution have taken place a lot sooner? What if I had taken my friend’s moral crisis seriously, and helped her defend herself against the browbeating she was receiving from the rest of our circle? As Naomi Wolf put it—describing her own experience with the morning-after pill—“This was not my finest moment.” Nor my friend’s.

The tragedy of the Jane movement is that, in spite of their weird fixations, these lady abortionists were less addicted to the blood, the power of exercising a skill, the rush of adrenaline from doing something illegal, than they were to the sense of being needed, trusted, relied upon. Molly

testifies that she felt "like a much more competent person and I liked myself a lot better. Before the service I never thought that I had the concentration to do anything, but, as *Jane*, I would stay up and work all night."

They took responsibility for other people's lives, and it made them feel good about themselves. For all their protestations that women should not be bound to maternity, what the women of *Jane* most wanted was to have the satisfaction of caring for others. In other words, their greatest satisfaction was in exercising their *maternal* instincts. This they could have done—exercising no less responsibility, and indeed more—if they had rallied with such energy and creativity to provide real resources for women: a place to hide out from the abusive boyfriend, and the moral support needed necessary to leave him; the money to procure not abortions, but diapers and cradles and formula; tutoring to keep women from having to drop out of school; nutritional advice, and adoption services or baby-sitters. The kind of services the Northwest Center and thousands of crisis pregnancy centers like it provide every day.

In the end, for all their talk of sisterhood, what the women of *Jane* never understand is that the pregnant woman who approaches them shares the same basic need to take responsibility for her actions, to sacrifice and stretch herself, to gain a sense of accomplishment and self-esteem by meeting and mastering a challenge or even a crisis—to respond to the needs of a vulnerable stranger—that they themselves find so exhilarating. By taking advantage of a pregnant woman's momentary weakness, using her fears to insinuate themselves into her life and urge a life-threatening quick fix, *Jane* gave every woman who came through the service the degrading and demoralizing message that she was better off dead than pregnant, and utterly powerless to help herself.

That message is the same whether abortion is legal or not. Where is the empowerment? Where is the sisterhood? *The Story of Jane* is a tragic tale of the betrayal of women by women. It is as convincing an anti-abortion argument as one could hope for, and can only increase the revulsion against abortion that it was written to forestall.

Motherhood in the 90's:

To Have or Have Not

Maria McFadden

[Roe v. Wade] is alleged to have empowered women; in fact, Roe legally disempowered women from holding men accountable for their sexual behavior where that behavior had unplanned results.

Roe's cultural message has been even more potent than its legal impact, for it effectively eliminated any real world consequences for men who use women as mere instruments of male sexual gratification. . . . Roe not only changed our law; it changed the moral culture of America. And it did so to the great disadvantage of women.

—George Weigel¹

On September 15, I became a mother. Or, more exactly, my son was born on that day, lifted out of my womb via Caesarean. I became his mother long before that moment when I heard his first cry. Sometime in early December James Anthony's life began, weeks before I knew he was there.

This is actually the second time of motherhood for me: last year I lost a child in an early miscarriage. The embryo was hardly recognizable as one and perhaps the heart never did beat, but from the moment I knew I was pregnant, I was different—a mother. I was aware of sheltering a developing life within my body. When I lost that early life, the grief was unmistakably for the loss of a person. Not a person I really knew of course, but a person I hoped to meet, a person I imagined, and a person I already loved.

Were these beginnings of my children real, or mere romantic fantasies, because my pregnancies were wanted? And even if they were actual beginnings, do the rights of such beginnings take precedence over the rights of women who, unlike me, don't want to be pregnant? These questions are part of the great and emotional debate in our society over what it means to be a mother, of a fetus and of a child. Unfortunately, there is no consensus

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on the answers. While I firmly believe that the unborn deserve protection, and that motherhood is a central and positive event in a woman's life, there are many who view the fetus as disposable and question the positive nature of motherhood.

The abortion debate in this country is, or should be, about whether or not these beginnings of children *are* real: do the rapidly-developing cells deserve protection as persons, or are they, however regrettably, disposable, because they are *potential* people. Because abortion undeniably stops these beginnings, it should, as I say, matter mostly whether or not what is being destroyed is human. But the original question of whether the results of conception are human or a "clump of cells" has been overshadowed by "rights talk." Even if an embryo is human, do its rights outweigh those of the woman? Should women have the right to end pregnancies?

The prevalent answer in our culture and law, and in contemporary feminism, is yes, women should be able to control their pregnancies. Debate over whether or not the fetus is human has taken a back-seat to discussion of women's rights. The sexual revolution and women's liberation have made it easier to become pregnant accidentally and harder to make room in one's life for the accidental baby. So abortion is the only answer, the one that allows women to have sex without desire for conception and to keep jobs and careers without interruption, as men do. The ability *not* to be pregnant has become so crucial to some women's life-styles that feminists will go to any length to defend abortion, in the face of ever-increasing evidence from science and technology that the fetus is indeed human and even feels pain.

Denial of the humanity of the fetus allows women and men to act as if pregnancies are only the responsibility of a woman to herself. But what happens when a woman gets pregnant is that she becomes, willingly or unwillingly, responsible for *another* life. This doesn't mean it will be an easy situation or a desirable one—it does mean, however, that she can no more do away with that life than she could murder a baby left on her doorstep (and, except for a case of rape, the woman did have some responsibility in creating the baby).

In many ways, the responsibility for a separate life is more apparent than ever. In our super health-conscious days, pregnancy, if it is wanted, is a time full of restrictions. We no longer smoke, drink, or even take aspirin, for fear we will harm the developing fetus. A mother is expected to sacrifice her habits to give her child a good start. The focus of responsibility can even be seen and monitored, through ultrasound, for example, and the Doppler device for monitoring the fetal heartbeat.

For some who are fixated on the necessity of abortions for women, even this ability to monitor the fetus is a cause for anger. Katha Pollitt, a poet and feminist critic, wrote in an article for *Glamour*² that we as a society are unhealthily obsessed with the fetus, with our sonograms, advertisements using ultrasound photos, and theories on how parents can teach their children *in utero*. She sees, rightly, that these might be contradictory attitudes for a society of easily accessible abortion. Rather than reexamine the abortion question, she claims that all the attention given the fetus is detrimental to women: for example, the sonogram demeans the woman, by rendering *her* invisible. This idea is echoed by other feminists: Barbara Duden, a professor of social sciences in Frankfurt, Germany, wrote a book titled *Disembodying Women*. The entire book is dedicated to the idea that “ideological gynecology” has created, through ultrasound images which “skin” women, a “public fetus” whose rights supersede the woman’s.³ Duden concludes that in the face of these scientific developments, which she claims are nonetheless more about images and imagination than facts, a woman needs to be able to “ruefully smile at this phantom. Then one can speak an unconditional NO to life, recovering one’s own autonomous aliveness.”⁴ In a new American book, *The Myths of Motherhood: How Culture Reinvents the Good Mother*, author Shari L. Thurer writes: “Mothers are now being usurped in the public consciousness by their fetuses. . . . To doctors, the fetus is now an ‘unborn patient,’ and a mother a mere ‘fetal container,’ the empty place in the sonogram.”⁵

Focusing on the fetus, to these feminists, is anti-woman. But how can focusing on a woman’s unique ability to carry a child demean her? Isn’t motherhood a large part of the essence of being “feminine”? And what is a sonogram? A picture, produced by sound waves. It is a factual thing, a part of reality, difficult to manipulate. Which doesn’t mean that it doesn’t involve emotion. When I saw James’s first sonogram, at 41/2 months, I fell hopelessly in love. I could hardly feel him moving inside me yet, and I had been worried, after my miscarriage, that there would be something wrong. But on the screen my husband and I saw a perfectly round head, a beautiful spinal cord, little legs kicking, and hands grasping. As we watched, the baby (we didn’t know the sex) opened its hand and proceeded to suck its thumb. Incidentally, we also saw James kicking against *my* bladder—I was hardly rendered invisible. What makes sonograms so dangerous and emotionally troubling for abortion advocates is the obviousness of a *separate* life inside a woman’s body, not an appendage. The fetus seems so happy in its own little world, so safe and unconcerned in

a close, warm womb where all its needs are automatically met.

The view of the womb we get from a sonogram illuminates what ought to be the safest time in a human's life. Instead, the sanctuary of the womb is invaded routinely, with the support and even encouragement of society. The Planned Parenthood clinic across the street from our apartment offers abortions up to sixteen weeks—just about the age of James's first photo, which I have lovingly placed in his first photo album. In the sonogram, he held his hand with his thumb out and his fingers tucked in; he still holds his hand that way. In my womb he was active at night and had hiccups several times a day; he still does. His sonogram was simply an introduction to the person we are getting to know. How can doctors deliberately tear out little beings who are able to move around and suck their thumbs? And how can their mothers allow it?

There *is* an obsession with the fetus in our culture today: to have or not to have. The event of birth seems to be a matter of control and relativity. Ever since birth "control" became a right, we have sought to perfectly control whether and when to have children. We have an abortion about every 20 seconds in this country, and at the same time we have couples spending tens of thousands of dollars on medical procedures to conceive one biological child. The more frustrated we get at the lack of control, the more we try. Take, for example, a woman who has successfully *not* gotten pregnant for years, but cannot conceive when she wants to. This isn't what she expected. So she spends years and thousands of dollars and tons of emotional energy trying to conceive. The value of a fetus, or sperm or an egg for that matter, is relative, not judged by an objective standard of life or not-life, but by whether or not the people who conceived it want it. If a woman wants an abortion, she is ridding her body of tissue; if she desperately wants a child, the products of conception are precious, and she hopes for a birth.

But birth itself is only one point in the process of development from conception. When James was born, at that moment did all his organs and bones suddenly snap into place? Did he in a matter of minutes develop his father's chin or his uncle's forehead? Were his characteristics—facial expressions, for example—instantly infused? Of course not: all these things had been developing from the beginning. The development of the person from conception is an awesome series of events, and those who respect the process do not dare say a life isn't present. People try to manipulate this life in opposite ways: abortion and some other types of birth control prevent a conception from becoming a birth; in vitro fertilization and other procedures attempt to conceive and bring about a birth from a conception.

(The anti-birth procedures are much more effective than the pro-birth, as more and more women sadly know.)

Many think that we are not meant to have such control over life, which holds such mystery and wonder. Birth itself is often referred to as a miracle. When I looked at my baby son in his first weeks of life, I was amazed that his tiny body could have all its parts inside—it seemed impossible. The fact that he is here does seem miraculous, it has to be more than a result of a biological equation. It's as if he came to us from heaven, and he proves to us that there is a heaven, that there has to be more to this life than the physical. The proof is in the wonder of a whole new person, and how he can make his parents feel, that they alone couldn't have produced such perfection.

There isn't much time to reflect on the miracle of life when we are so busy pitting the rights of fetuses against the rights of their mothers. Questioning the worth of a fetus also has serious repercussions on how one views motherhood. It has become so important for women to have the right not to be mothers that even if they do decide to have a child it is not expected to completely change their lives. Women who are lawyers, ad executives, or bankers are described as such first, mothers second, and it is not the norm for motherhood to be a career, or for a career to be put on hold. Rather, one tries to squeeze childbearing in almost as an extracurricular activity. Making motherhood only one choice among many, however, leads one to believe that it isn't the all-encompassing thing it used to be. But it is! Pregnancy involves major changes, labor is painful and may involve complications, and motherhood is the most challenging, exhausting and rewarding job there is, especially if a first baby is followed by siblings. But most of all, it is important: we don't often speak about this, but our children are the world's future. Women who try to do everything as they did before they had a child end up exhausted and feeling cheated, or the children are cheated by spending more time in daycare than at home. In the name of women's fulfillment, we are skimping on the care of our most precious commodity.

We are also, ironically, skimping on the experience of motherhood itself, which can transform us. Now that I have James, I see myself quite differently. I have someone who thinks the world of me! I have someone who, as long as he lives, will be able to say "my mother. . . ." and mean me! I have someone who must be put *first*, and that's a relief. And I have someone who, God willing, will live beyond me, which makes the world seem a more comfortable place. And right now I have an adorable baby

whose smiles melt my heart and whose perfect little face brings tears of joy. I wouldn't have missed this experience for anything.

Many women who have missed the experience of mothering so far are finding, despite all the avenues they have traveled for fulfillment, that they don't feel fulfilled without a child, that not being able to have a child when they want to severely threatens their happiness and their life goals. They find that the career that was so important isn't enough to make their lives feel worthwhile, and that having a child is more than a career choice; they also find that, for reasons of infertility or lack of a supportive partner, it's not always that easy to have a baby when you want one.

The 1994 movie *Babyfever* gives an interesting look at these issues.⁶ The scene is a baby shower, and the documentary-style movie interviews the women attendees' attitudes about babies. Although the setting is fictional, the comments are real. The protagonist, Jenna, is agonizing over whether or not to have a baby, with a man she's not really in love with, because her biological clock is ticking (her friend's shower makes her agonize all the more). Some of the women present say they *don't* want children, and a woman who has two children frets about not having a chance to get her singing career off the ground before she had kids. But the majority of women interviewed, all seemingly in their late 30s or early 40s, are having problems having a baby: most have achieved a liberated, career-woman status, but find something missing. They now want a child, but either they haven't met the right guy, or they have, but he doesn't want children (perhaps he has some from a previous marriage and doesn't want more), or they have a medical problem with conceiving. Some without men discuss being impregnated with a friend's, or an anonymous donor's sperm, as does a lesbian couple. One well-dressed career woman talks about her demanding job and her loneliness. She says of the women's movement: "We have gotten so good at taking care of ourselves, but now we have no one else to take care of. We are highly evolved, sensitive . . . men."

That struck me as a profound comment: relentless "feminism" renders women anything but feminine, because it downplays women's need and capacity for relationships, and relegates mothering to a minor role in their lives, something to be planned only at certain times, to be put off, something not to be expected as a norm. As one woman in the film poignantly related, she expected to have a family someday, and, as her hopes for that fade, she sees other women leading the life that should have been hers. One day she looked around and it was too late. Maybe her story would have been different if the feminism she bought into had been more

affirmingly feminine.

Some female reviewers of *Babyfever* took issue with precisely the notion that it is natural for women to be essentially concerned with children. Like the feminists who complained of an “obsession” with the fetus, they saw the film as representing an unhealthy obsession with babies. Charla Krupp wrote in *Glamour* that “Babies are reducing sensible women to blithering idiots.”; she says that the idea that you’re not truly a woman if you don’t have a baby is “50-s think.”⁷ And Julie Salamon in *The Wall Street Journal* reported that her friend found the movie tiresome: “explaining that she had no interest in having children, she said she found nothing in *Babyfever* that appealed to her. ‘Watching this movie,’ she said, ‘was like watching a bunch of men talk about carburetors. Fascinating for them I’m sure.’”⁸

I suppose if we reduce babies to the status of carburetors it is easier to wonder what the fuss is about (and look the other way when they are destroyed). The message of Krupp and Salamon is that childbearing should be reserved for those women who are really interested, and even the subject should not be forced on women who are not. There are certainly women who don’t feel called to be mothers, and women who aren’t mothers who are truly fulfilled women. But this used to be the exception, not the rule. I suspect the distaste for *Babyfever* is another angry and fearful reaction to an uncomfortable picture. Like a sonogram showing a fetus as human, this film, in its own way, shows that making babies is a central part of the experience of what it is to be a woman.

I am sympathetic to the pressures, demands and desires of modern women in American culture; after all, it’s my culture too. I was lucky enough to get pregnant when I wanted to, and I have a husband and a job with flexibility. And even with a very-much-wanted pregnancy, I wasn’t prepared for how difficult pregnancy can be, and what a completely life-altering process it all is. Toward the end especially, when I was weary, anxious, and uncomfortable, I realized how hard it must be for women who didn’t want to get pregnant to carry the pregnancy to term, or how hard it must be for single mothers to have a baby alone. Pregnancy and childbirth are not meant to be easy or involve easy choices. Unplanned or planned, pregnancy is a major life event. Which ought to lead one to the inescapable conclusion that sex was not meant to be casual.

Sex without responsibility or without commitment does not help women; neither does abortion, nor a negative view of children. Women, and men, need to be encouraged in positive relationships, and supported in childbirth.

Frederica Mathewes-Green, in her new book *Real Choices*, found that the one thing that would have made a crucial difference to women who had abortions (and later regretted them) wasn't money, or shelter, or baby clothes, but rather the existence of at least one person to really support them, someone to say: "Yes, you can have that baby, and I will stand by you and help."⁹ This is all too often missing, as so many parents, boy-friends, husbands and friends buy into the abortion mentality: they "chose" a quick solution without thinking of the life-long consequences. Pope John Paul II, in his new best-selling book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, writes that the only "honest stance" in dealing with an unwanted pregnancy is "that of *radical solidarity with the woman*. It is not right to leave her alone." Although some situations can be extremely difficult, if a woman has support, "she is even capable of heroism."¹⁰

Women *are* capable of heroism, especially where their children are involved. As any new mother understands, there is nothing you wouldn't do for your child. You look down into a perfect little face and you think: "I would do anything for you, I would give my life for yours, I would protect you at all costs." This is the essence and the beauty of motherhood, this is the way it should be. It is unfair to tell women, before they get to hear a first cry or see a tiny flailing foot, that motherhood is about protecting yourself against your own new beginnings.

NOTES

1. George Weigel, "Women Reap the Rewards of Roe in Abuse," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 November 1992, p. M5.
2. Katha Pollitt, "Why Do We Romanticize the Fetus?," *Glamour*, October 1992.
3. Barbara Duden, *Disembodying Women: Perspectives on Pregnancy and the Unborn* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993). These terms are used throughout the book.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
5. Shari L. Thurer, *The Myths of Motherhood: How Culture Reinvents the Good Mother* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), p. 294.
6. *Babyfever*, directed by Henry Jaglom, written by Henry Jaglom and Victoria Foyt.
7. Charla Krupp, "Baby Mania," *Glamour*, June 1994.
8. Julie Salamon, "Bringing Up Baby, Again and Again," *The Wall Street Journal*, 5 May 1994.
9. Frederica Mathewes-Green, *Real Choices: Offering Practical, Life-Affirming Alternatives to Abortion* (Sisters, Oreg: Questar Publications, 1994).
10. His Holiness John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), p. 207.

Jewish Views on Abortion

Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits

In recent years, no medico-moral subject has undergone a more revolutionary change of public attitudes than abortion. What was previously either a therapeutic measure for the safety of the mother or else an actionable criminal offense is now widely and legally performed not only as a means to prevent the birth of possibly defective children or to curb the sordid indignities and hazards endured by women resorting to clandestine operators, but simply for convenience to augment other birth-control devices. Under the mounting pressure of this shift in public opinion, generated by intense agitation and skillful propaganda campaigns, the abortion laws have been liberalized in many countries, starting with the British Abortion Act of 1967 and culminating in the decisions of the United States Supreme Court of January 22, 1973. In effect, abortion is now—or, pending anticipated changes in existing laws, will soon be—available in most parts of the Western world virtually on request, or at least at the discretion of doctors within some general guide-lines.

Many physicians have, of course, always claimed that the decision whether or not to terminate a pregnancy should be left to their judgment—a claim already for some time asserted on a wide scale through the establishment at many hospitals of “abortion boards,” composed solely of physicians, charged with the responsibility of sanctioning all such operations.

In the Jewish view, this line of argument cannot be upheld.

The judgment that is here required, while it may be based on medical evidence, is clearly of a moral nature. The decision whether, and under what circumstances, it is right to destroy a germinating human life, depends on the assessment and weighing of *values*, on determining the title to life in any given case. Such value judgments are entirely outside the province of medical science. No amount of training or experience in medicine can help in ascertaining the criteria necessary for reaching such capital verdicts, for making such life-and-death decisions. Such judgments pose essentially a moral, not a medical problem. Hence they call for the judgment of moral, not medical specialists.

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Physicians, by demanding that as the practitioners in this field they should have the right to determine or adjudicate the laws governing their practice, are making an altogether unprecedented claim not advanced by any other profession. Lawyers do not argue that, because law is their specialty, the decision on what is legal should be left to their conscience. And teachers do not claim that, as the profession competent in education, the laws governing their work, such as on prayers at public schools, should be administered or defined at their discretion. Such claims are patently absurd, for they would demand jurisdiction on matters completely beyond their professional competence.

There is no more justice or logic in advancing similar claims for the medical profession. A physician, in performing an abortion or any other procedure involving moral considerations, such as artificial insemination or euthanasia, is merely a technical expert; but he is no more qualified than any other layman to pronounce on the rights or legality of such acts, let alone to determine what these rights should be, relying merely on the whims or dictates of his conscience. The decision on whether a human life, once conceived, is to be or not to be, therefore, properly belongs to moral experts, or to legislatures guided by such experts.

Jewish Law

Every monotheistic religion embodies within its philosophy and legislation a system of ethics—a definition of moral values. None does so with greater precision and comprehensiveness than Judaism. It emphatically insists that the norms of moral conduct can be governed neither by the accepted notions of public opinion nor by the individual conscience. In the Jewish view, the human conscience is meant to enforce laws, not to make them. Right and wrong, good and evil, are absolute values which transcend the capricious variations of time, place, and environment, just as they defy definition by relation to human intuition or expediency. These values, Judaism teaches, derive their validity from the Divine revelation at Mount Sinai, as expounded and developed by sages faithful to, and authorized by, its writ.

The Sources of Jewish Law

For a definition of these values, one must look to the vast and complex corpus of Jewish law, the authentic expression of all Jewish religious and moral thought. The literary depositories of Jewish law extend over nearly four thousand years, from the Bible and the Talmud, serving as the immutable basis of the main principles, to the great medieval codes and the voluminous rabbinical *responsa* writings recording practical verdicts founded

on these principles, right up to the present day.

These sources spell out a very distinct attitude on all aspects of the abortion problem. They clearly indicate that Judaism, while it does not share the rigid stand of the Roman Catholic Church which unconditionally proscribes any direct destruction of the fetus from the moment of conception, refuses to endorse the far more permissive views of many Protestant denominations. The traditional Jewish position is somewhere between these two extremes.

The Rulings of Jewish Law

While the destruction of an unborn child is never regarded as a capital act of murder (unless and until the head or the greater part of the child has emerged from the birth canal), it does constitute a heinous offense except when indicated by the most urgent medical considerations. The foremost concern is the safety of the mother. Hence, in Jewish law an abortion is mandatory whenever there is a genuine fear that a continued pregnancy might involve a grave hazard to the life of the mother, whether physical or psychiatric (such as the risk of suicide, following previous experiences of mental breakdown).

More difficult to determine—and still widely debated in recent rabbinic writings—is the judgment on abortions in cases of risks to the mother's health rather than to her life; of rape or incest; and of fears of physical or mental defects in children born to mothers who had German measles (rubella) or took certain teratogenic drugs (e.g. thalidomide) during the first months of pregnancy. Quite recently, several leading authorities have reaffirmed the Jewish opposition to abortion even in these cases, branding it as an "appurtenance of murder." But some others have lately given more lenient rulings in these circumstances, provided the operation is carried out within the first forty days following conception, or at least within the first three months. However, whatever the verdict in these particular cases, they are of course exceptional, and Jewish law would never countenance abortions for purely social or economic reasons.

Moral and Social Considerations

These conclusions, though deduced from ancient principles and precedents by legal reasoning, must be viewed in the context of Judaism's moral philosophy and against the background of contemporary social conditions. In Jewish thought the law, while legalistically constructed, is always but the concrete expression of abstract ideas, the vehicle to convey, as well as to implement, moral and religious concepts. Judaism uses the medium of law much as an artist presents the genius of his inspiration in colours on

canvas, in sounds of music or in the building-blocks of sculptured and architectural designs. Accordingly, neither the rationale nor the significance of the Jewish rules on abortion—as indeed on any other subject with social ramifications—can be properly understood except by enucleating the spirit, the moral ethos, from the somatic letter of the law.

The moral thinking set out in the rest of this article, especially insofar as it concerns abnormal births and the products of rape or incest, reflects in particular the majority view of the stricter school of thought which sanctions abortions only for the safety of the mother.

The “Cruelty” of the Abortion Laws

At the outset, it is essential, in order to arrive at an objective judgment, to disabuse one’s mind of the often one-sided, if not grossly partisan, arguments in the popular (and sometimes medical) presentations of the issues involved. A hue and cry is raised about the “cruelty” of restrictive abortion laws. Harrowing scenes are depicted, in the most lurid colors, of girls and married women selling their honor and their fortunes, exposing themselves to mayhem and death at the hands of some greedy and ill-qualified abortionist in a dark, unhygienic back-alley, and facing the prospect of being hunted and haunted like criminals for the rest of their lives—all because safe, honorable, and reasonably-priced methods to achieve the same ends are or were, barred from hospitals and licensed physicians’ offices by “barbaric” statutes. Equally distressing are the accounts and pictures of pitifully deformed children born because “antiquated” abortion laws did not permit us to forestall their and their parents’ misfortune. And then there are, of course, always heart-strings or sympathy to be pulled by the sight of “unwanted” children taxing the patience and resources of parents already “burdened” with too large a brood, not to mention the embarrassing encumbrance of children “accidentally” born to unwed girls.

There is, inevitably, some element of cruelty in most laws. For a person who has spent his last cent before the tax-bill arrives, the income tax laws are unquestionably “cruel”; and to a man passionately in love with a married woman the adultery laws must appear “barbaric.” Even more universally “harsh” are the military draft regulations which expose young men to acute danger and their families to great anguish and hardship.

Moral Standards in Society

All these resultant “cruelties” are surely no valid reason for changing those laws. No civilized society could survive without laws which occasionally spell some suffering for individuals. Nor can any public moral standards be maintained without strictly enforced regulations calling for

extreme restraints and sacrifices in some cases. If the criterion for the legitimacy of laws were to be the complete absence of "cruel" effects, we should abolish or drastically liberalize not only our abortion laws, but our statutes on marriage, narcotics, homosexuality, suicide, euthanasia, and numerous other laws which inevitably result in personal anguish from time to time.

So far our reasoning, which could be supported by any number of references to Jewish tradition, has merely sought to demolish the "cruelty" factor as a valid argument *per se* by which to judge the justice or injustice of any law. It still has to be demonstrated that restrictions on abortion are morally sound enough and sufficiently important to the public welfare to outweigh the consequential hardships in individual cases.

The Hidden Side of the Problem

What the fuming editorials and harrowing documentaries on the abortion problem do not show are pictures of radiant mothers fondling perfectly healthy children who would never have been alive if their parents had been permitted to resort to abortion in moments of despair. There are no statistics on the contributions to society of outstanding men and women who would never have been born had the abortion laws been more liberal. Nor is it known how many "unwanted" children eventually turn out to be the sunshine of their families. . . .

Abortion Statistics

There are, then—even from the purely utilitarian viewpoint of "cruelty" versus "happiness" or "usefulness"—two sides to this problem, and not just one as pretended by the pro-abortion lobby. There are the admittedly tragic cases of maternal indignities and deaths as well as of congenital deformities resulting from restrictive abortion laws. But, on the other hand, there are the countless happy children and useful citizens whose births equally result from these laws. What is the ratio between these two categories?

Clearly, any relaxation of the abortion laws is bound greatly to increase the rate of abortions, which was already high even under rigid laws. In England, for example, the figure shot up from a rate of 25,000 per annum in 1967 to 90,000 by 1971. On the apparently realistic assumption that the demand for abortions, in the absence of restrictive legislation, might be 500 or more per thousand live-births, it is estimated that the figure will approach three million in the United States by 1980.

Out of this staggering number of annual abortions only a minute proportion would be fully justified for the principal reasons advanced by the

advocates of liberalization. Based on the approximate rate of 30,000 abnormal births annually (as reliably estimated), and making allowance for the number of women whose hazards would be reduced if they did not resort to clandestine operations, well over 95% of all abortions would eliminate normal children of healthy mothers.

In fact, as for the mothers, the increased recourse to abortion (even if performed by qualified physicians), far from reducing hazards, would increase them, since such operations leave at least five per cent of the women sterile, not to mention the rise in the resultant mortality rate. One can certainly ask if the extremely limited reduction in the number of malformed children and maternal mortality risks really justifies the annual wholesale destruction of three million germinating, healthy lives, most of them potentially happy and useful citizens, especially in a country as under-populated as America (compared to Europe, for instance, which commands far fewer natural resources).

The Individual's Claim to Life

These numerical facts alone make nonsense of the argument for more and easier abortions. But moral norms cannot be determined by numbers. In the Jewish view, "he who saves one life is as if he saved an entire world"; one human life is as precious as a million lives, for each is infinite in value. Hence, even if the ratio were reversed, and there was only a one per cent chance that the child to be aborted would be normal—in fact the chances invariably exceed 50% in any given case—the consideration for that one child in favor of life would outweigh any counter-indication for the other 99 per cent.

But, in truth, such a counter-indication, too, is founded on fallacious premises. Assuming one were 100 per cent certain (perhaps by radiological evidence or by amniotic fluid tests) that a child would be born deformed, could this affect its claim to life? Any line to be drawn between normal and abnormal beings determining their right to live would have to be altogether arbitrary. Would a grave defect in one limb or in two limbs, or an anticipated sub-normal intelligence quotient of seventy-five or fifty make the capital difference between one who is entitled to live and one who is not? And if the absence of two limbs deprives a person of his claim to life, what about one who loses two limbs in an accident? By what moral reasoning can such a defect be a lesser cause for denying the right to live than a similar congenital abnormality? Surely life-and-death verdicts cannot be based on such tenuous distinctions. The only cases possibly excluded by this argument might be to prevent the birth of children who

would in any event not be viable, such as Tay-Sachs babies, if their foetal affliction is definitely established by amniocentesis.

The Obligations of Society

The birth of a physically or mentally maldeveloped child may be an immense tragedy in a family, just as a crippling accident or a lingering illness striking a family later in life may be. But one cannot purchase the relief from such misfortunes at the cost of life itself. Once any innocent person can be sacrificed because he has lost his absolute value, the worth of every human life would become relative—to his state of health, his usefulness to society or any other arbitrary criterion—and no two human beings would have an equal claim to life, thus destroying the only foundation of the moral order. So long as the sanctity of life is recognized as inviolable, the cure to suffering cannot be abortion before birth, any more than murder (whether in the form of infanticide, euthanasia or suicide) after birth. The only legitimate relief in such cases is for society to assume the burdens which the individual family can no longer bear. Since society is the main beneficiary of restrictive public laws on abortion (or homicide), it must in turn also pay the price sometimes exacted by these laws in the isolated cases demanding such a price.

Just as the state holds itself responsible for the support of families bereaved by the death of soldiers fallen in the defense of their country, it ought to provide for incapacitated people born and kept alive in the defense of public moral standards. The community is morally bound to relieve affected families of any financial or emotional stress they cannot reasonably bear, either by accepting the complete care of defective children in public institutions, or by supplying medical and educational subsidies to ensure that such families do not suffer any unfair economic disadvantages from their misfortune.

Illegitimate Children

Similar considerations may apply to children conceived by rape. The circumstances of such a conception hardly have bearing on the child's title to life, and in the absence of any well-grounded challenge to this title there cannot be any moral justification for an abortion. Once again, the burden rests with society to relieve an innocent mother (if she so desires) from the consequences of an unprovoked assault upon her virtue if the assailant cannot be found and forced to discharge this responsibility to his child.

In the case of pregnancies resulting from incestuous, adulterous, or otherwise illegitimate relations (which the mother did not resist), there are

additional considerations militating against any sanction of abortion. Jewish law not only puts an extreme penalty on incest and adultery, but also imposes fearful disabilities on the products of such unions. It treats relations as capital crimes, and it debars children born under these conditions from marriage with anyone except their like (*Deut.* 23:3).

(1) *The Deterrent Effect*

Why exact such a price from innocent children for the sins of their parents? The answer is simple: to serve as a powerful deterrent to such hideous crimes. The would-be partners to any such illicit sexual relations are to be taught that their momentary pleasure would be fraught with the most disastrous consequences for any children they might conceive. Through this knowledge they are to recoil from the very thought of incest or adultery with the same horror as they would from contemplating murder as a means to enjoyment or personal benefit. Murder is comparatively rare in civilized society for the very reason that the dreadful consequences have evoked this horror of the crime in the public conscience. Incest and adultery, in the Jewish view, are no lesser crimes; hence the juxtaposition of murder and adultery in the Ten Commandments, for it makes little difference whether one kills a person or a marriage. Both crimes therefore require the same horror as an effective deterrent.

(2) *Parental Responsibility*

Why create this deterrent by visiting the sins of the parents on their innocent children? First, because there is no other way to expose an offense committed in private and usually beyond the chance of detection. But, above all, this responsibility of parents for the fate of their children is an inexorable necessity in the generation of human life; it is dictated by the law of nature no less than by the moral law. If a careless mother drops her baby and thereby causes a permanent brain injury to the child, or if a syphilitic father irresponsibly transmits his disease to his offspring before birth, or if parents are negligent in the education of their children, all these children may innocently suffer and for the rest of their lives expiate the sins of their parents. This is what must be if parental responsibility is to be taken seriously. The fear that such catastrophic consequences ensue from a surrender to temptation or from carelessness will help prevent the conception of grossly disadvantaged children or their physical or mental mutilation after birth.

Public Standard v. Individual Aberration

In line with this reasoning, Jewish law never condones the relaxation of public moral standards for the sake of saving recalcitrant individuals from even moral offenses. A celebrated Jewish sage and philosopher of the fifteenth century, in connection with a question submitted to his judgment, averred that it was always wrong for a community to acquiesce in the slightest evil, however much it was hoped thereby to prevent far worse excesses by individuals. The problem he faced arose out of a suggestion that brothels for single people be tolerated as long as such publicly controlled institutions would reduce or eliminate the capital crime of marital faithlessness then rampant. His unequivocal answer was, "It is surely far better that individuals should commit the worst offenses and expose themselves to the gravest penalties than publicly to promote the slightest compromise with the moral law."

Rigid abortion laws, ruling out the *post facto* "correction" of rash acts, compel people to think twice *before* they recklessly embark on illicit or irresponsible adventures liable to inflict lifelong suffering or infamy on their progeny. To eliminate the scourge of illegitimate children more self-discipline to prevent their conception is required, not more freedom to destroy them in the womb. For each illegitimate child born because the abortion laws are strict, there may be ten or more such children *not* conceived because these laws are strict.

The exercise of man's procreative faculties, making him (in the phrase of the Talmud) "a partner with God in creation," is man's greatest privilege and gravest responsibility. The rights and obligations implicit in the generation of human life must be evenly balanced if man is not to degenerate into an addict of lust and a moral parasite infesting the moral organism of society. Liberal abortion laws would upset that balance by facilitating sexual indulgences without insisting on corresponding responsibilities.

Therapeutic Abortions

This leaves primarily the concern for the mother's safety as a valid argument in favor of abortions. In the view of Judaism, all human rights, and their priorities, derive solely from their conferment upon man by his Creator. By this criterion, as defined in the Bible, the rights of the mother and her unborn child are distinctly unequal, since the capital guilt of murder takes effect only if the victim was a born and viable person. "He that smites a man, so that he dies, shall surely be put to death" (*Exodus 21:12*); this excludes a foetus, according to the Jewish interpretation. This recognition does not imply that the destruction of a foetus is not a very grave

offense against the sanctity of human life, but only that it is not technically murder. Jewish law makes a similar distinction in regard to the killing of inviable adults. While the killing of a person who already suffered from a fatal injury (from other than natural causes) is not actionable as murder, the killer is nevertheless morally guilty of a moral offense.

This inequality, then, is weighty enough only to warrant the sacrifice of the unborn child if the pregnancy otherwise poses a threat to the mother's life. Indeed, the Jewish concern for the mother is so great that a gravid woman sentenced to death must not be subjected to the ordeal of suspense to await the delivery of her child. (Jewish sources brand any delay in the execution, once it is finally decreed, as "the perversion of justice" *par excellence*, since the criminal is sentenced to die, not to suffer. It should be added, however, that in practice Jewish law abolished the death penalty to all intent and purposes thousands of years ago, by insisting on virtually impossible conditions, such as the presence of and prior warning by two eyewitnesses.)

Such a threat to the mother need not be either immediate or absolutely certain. Even a remote risk of life invokes all the life-saving concessions of Jewish law, provided the fear of such a risk is genuine and confirmed by the most competent medical opinions. Hence, Jewish law would regard it as an indefensible desecration of human life to allow a mother to perish in order to save her unborn child.

This review may be fittingly concluded with a reference to the very first Jewish statement on *deliberate* abortion. Commenting on the *Septuagint* version (itself a misrepresentation) of the only Biblical reference, or at least allusion, to abortion in *Exodus* 21:22-23, the Alexandrian-Jewish philosopher, Philo, at the beginning of the Current Era declared that the attacker of a pregnant woman must die if the fruit he caused to be lost was already "shaped and all the limbs had their proper qualities, for that which answers to this description is a human being . . . like a statue lying in a studio requiring nothing more than to be conveyed outside." The legal conclusion of this statement, reflecting Hellenistic rather than Jewish influence, may vary from the letter of Jewish law; but its reasoning certainly echoes the spirit of Jewish law. The analogy may be more meaningful than Philo could have intended or foreseen. A classic statue by a supreme master is no less priceless for being made defective, even with an arm or a leg missing. The destruction of such a treasure *in utero* can be warranted only by the superior worth of preserving a living human being.

A Small Candle

Margaret White

I don't believe in presentiments, any more than I do in astrology. I have always thought it very odd that sophisticated up-market magazines for women, that sneer at the Christian religion and would not dream of printing even a one-line text from the Bible, always devote an entire page to tell their readers "What the stars say." Nevertheless, when my elder daughter told me that she was expecting her third child—although my mouth uttered the trite words "how lovely darling!"—I felt a cold clammy hand wrap itself round my solar plexus and squeeze.

Throughout her pregnancy I never ceased to pray for a healthy child. On a voyage up the Danube I lit a candle and prayed in every church we passed (Serbian Orthodox most of the way, Catholic in Hungary and Austria). I tried to convince myself that my fears were fanciful and foolish.

On Friday the 13th of January, 1989 (a day and date considered inauspicious by the superstitious!), my daughter went into labour. When I later telephoned the hospital the nurse who answered said "She's had her baby. I'll get the husband to speak to you."

Then I knew.

Having worked in maternity for many years, I knew that when all was well the nurse would tell the relatives all she could about the new baby. Bad news was left to the husband. My eighth grandchild, a little girl who was to be christened Anna, had Down's Syndrome.

In every case I have come across in medical practice, when a disabled child is born the main cause of distress is the one that was given by my daughter: "I will make sure she gets nothing but loving care, and I know the whole family will help, but what is going to happen to her when we are dead?" Christians find it difficult to accept Our Lord's instruction, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Even atheists ignore the sensible precept of not crossing bridges until you get to them. All parents of a disabled child fear for the welfare of that child after their deaths.

Fifty-two years after the war against the evil of Nazi Germany, fascism lives on. Disabled children are at risk on two counts. The first is from abortion: most western countries have a policy of what the Navy during the war called "search and destroy." They searched with echo-sounding

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for submarines and, if they found one, destroyed it. A very similar process occurs every day in our hospitals, where a multiplicity of blood-tests, ultra-sound scans and amniocentesis are used to find the pre-born disabled. Hitler called them “useless eaters”—our abortionists just call them “unwanted.” (Ultra-sound scanning was developed from the Navy’s war-time echo-sounding, by a brilliant pro-life gynaecologist, Professor Ian Donald of Glasgow. He believed that once he could show that the baby was a living moving child, the profession would be horrified at the thought of killing him or her. Alas, he was wrong!)

Hospitals do not succeed in finding all the handicapped children in the womb, partly because there has been an increase in the birth of babies with Down’s Syndrome to young women and the battery of tests is usually reserved for women over 34, and partly because an increasing number of women are now refusing these tests because of the anxiety they cause and the risk of miscarriage of a normal child. Statistically, for every Down’s child found and killed, slightly over one normal child is lost through miscarriage.

The second risk the disabled child faces is *after* birth, through deliberate neglect, over-sedation and under-feeding or even outright infanticide. On January 24, 1996, BBC Television broadcast an interview with Professor Peter Singer from Melbourne, Australia. The very deferential interviewer made no demur when the Professor said that although Down’s Syndrome was a “grey area” he felt it right ethically that these children should be killed after birth if the parents wanted it. On other, more serious disabilities, he totally supported infanticide.

Before legalised abortion became common in Europe there were seven research doctors working to find a way to treat children with Down’s Syndrome; afterwards there was only one—Professor Jerome Lejeune. Soon after Anna was born I wrote to him and asked if we could bring her to Paris. The visit my daughter and I made with Anna to his clinic was a watershed; he not only prescribed treatment for Anna but, almost as important, gave hope to her parents.

Until then they had received the impression that the outlook was very bleak. Professor Lejeune was the scientist who discovered the extra chromosome on the 21st pair (Trisomy 21) that is present in Down’s Syndrome. In spite of his eminence, and the considerable success his work had already achieved, all his research funds were cut off by the late President Francois Mitterand when he became premier of France; so this distinguished Professor of Genetics who had received honours and awards worldwide had been struggling to continue his work with funds given by the

Michael Fund of America and the educational and research trust of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) of Britain (of which he was President).

Four months after Anna's birth I was due to retire from the Croydon bench after 27 years as a magistrate, because I had reached the age of 70. I was asked by my colleagues what I would like as a parting gift. Completely out of the blue I heard myself saying "I want to set up an Anna Fund to raise money for research into Down's Syndrome." I was given a cheque for £200 (around \$300) and the Croydon law court became the first court in the country to launch a charity. I had no idea how to set about raising money, and even less about charity law, so it was a relief when the SPUC trust offered to adopt the Anna Fund and keep it as a separate fund under their umbrella. I was slowly realising that having started the fund on the spur of the moment I had got hold of a tiger by the tail and must learn how to control it. I persuaded four distinguished people to be Patrons (through my pro-life connections)—a duke, a baron, a knight and a professor of paediatrics. Because I felt so inadequate at running a charity, we chose as our motto the old Chinese saying "It is better to light a small candle than curse the darkness."

Anna grew and thrived. She was a happy child: at her visit to hospital for her six-month check-up the paediatrician declared her to be well up to the average developmental milestones. She cooed and babbled, blew bubbles and laughed—she was both loveable and greatly loved.

One evening in the spring she became feverish; she died before dawn the next day. The awful horror of her death was partially reduced by the kindness of everyone in the village, even from unexpected quarters. The coroner's officer showed both the compassion and empathy that had been sadly missing at her birth; the florist who made the single wreath for her funeral put her arms round my daughter and hugged her. Anna did not die from anything connected with her Down's Syndrome. The post-mortem showed that she died from toxic shock due to an overwhelming meningitis infection.

When the Anna Fund started we all agreed that when members of the family died, notices of their death would include the words "No flowers by request; donations to the Anna Fund." It was cruelly ironic that Anna herself was to be the first of the funeral fund-raisers; we had assumed it would be one of her grandparents. The florist went to enormous trouble to prepare a bouquet of flowers with dozens of coloured ribbons attached, to which cards were pinned with the names of all the donors. We were amazed

and comforted by their number. Because of her age, Anna's coffin was allowed in the sanctuary. The ribbons and cards attached to the flowers at the foot of the coffin were spread out over the sanctuary steps, looking like a beautiful peacock's tail. At her christening Anna had been given a candle and told she should light it every year on the anniversary of her Baptism. At her funeral, looking at the 60 cards attached to the ribbons, I thought "She has lit a candle all right."

In the past six years we have raised £60,000 for the fund. There have been a few generous donations from charitable trusts, but the majority of the money has come from the work of friends and supporters who have cooked, bowled, organised tennis tournaments, lunches, flag days, barbeques and even an opera evening. When I retired from medical practice at 66 I attended weekly art classes, something I had never had time to do before. At a friend's suggestion I had a two-day exhibition for the Anna Fund and raised £2000. Since then I have had two more, and a third is imminent. When he retired at 70, my husband went to classes in picture-framing, thus saving the cost of the framing. The last visit of Professor Lejeune to Britain was in the autumn before his death, when he came over to thank a junior boys school for a donation of £5000 they had raised on a sponsored walk (boys aged between 8 and 12 years old walked 18 miles).

The Anna Fund had three main aims. The first was to support Professor Lejeune's research and treatment programme. He had already shown that he could on average improve the intelligence quotient of his patients by five points. He gave large doses (up to 20 milligrams) of folic acid and vitamin B-12 and sometimes vitamin E. One of his most valuable contributions was to check the level of thyroid function (TSH) every six months in children under five (and afterwards annually). He found that twenty-five percent of the 8,000 children he treated were short of thyroid. It has been known for many years that Down's children tended to be also hypothyroid, but unless regularly checked it is often missed because the symptoms and appearance of thyroid deficiency resemble those of Down's Syndrome.

With the first gift of £5000 we gave to Professor Lejeune he went to IBM in Paris to buy a computer. To their great credit, IBM were so impressed with his work that they donated the computer, and our gift was used for software and programming. With help from the computer he discovered that Down's children were short of certain amino-acids (the building blocks of genes) and over-endowed with others.

One of those most deficient was serine, and with a later donation from the Anna Fund Lejeune bought a large amount and for over a year conducted a trial of its effect. He found that replacing serine made a negligible

difference because the children excreted it with great rapidity. He did however find that in those rare cases where these children become aggressive or difficult to deal with, serine was helpful in returning them to their normal placidity. Before his death he had started trials with the second of the deficient amino-acids.

The second objective of the fund was to pay the fares of Down's children and their parents to go to Paris for treatment. We sent children from all over the country; only those who could afford it paid their own expenses—Professor Lejeune charged nothing. The longest journey (apart from a mother from Australia who read about the Anna Fund) was made by a Gaelic-speaking Scot from the isle of Eriskay in the Outer Hebrides. His parents were so pleased with his progress that this tiny, underpopulated island raised £1000 for the Anna Fund.

Later Gaelic Television made a film of his trip to Paris. It was in Gaelic, but as it was networked all over Scotland, it had English subtitles—there was however an exception: when they interviewed Professor Lejeune the subtitles were in Gaelic because he spoke perfect English! The youngest mother we sent to Paris was barely 16, in this case we paid for the baby, the mother, and the grandmother.

After a few years we realised that it was necessary to get a centre in Britain where the children could receive the same loving care and treatment that they were given in Paris, and a centre where the research could continue. The first problem was finding a paediatrician who was prepared to run the clinic, and then a place where it could be located. It is not possible to get help from the National Health Service: discrimination against Down's Syndrome children is rife. They are supposed to receive regular hearing and vision tests, speech therapy and physiotherapy; in a few areas this is provided, but in most areas it is scanty or absent. Through the good offices of the Catholic Physicians Guild we were able to find Dr. Tony Cole, a consultant paediatrician who was prepared to give his time to run the clinic. He in turn found Dr. Pat Henshaw, an expert in checking the I.Q. of young children.

The Hospital of St. John and St. Elizabeth, a private hospital founded by Catholic nuns, agreed most generously to let us have a Saturday morning every six weeks. I asked Professor Lejeune if we could have his treatment regime and research results so that we could set up a clinic in London and he readily agreed. Shortly afterwards we heard that he was dying of cancer. A few days before he died we asked if we could call the clinic in London "The Lejeune Clinic" and carry on his work; he replied "Yes,

that is the best thing that could happen.” He knew that the professor who was taking his place at the University of Paris and the hospital for sick children was not at all pro-life; he did not know if his work had any future in Paris.

He died on Easter Sunday, 1994. I am sure that “All the trumpets sounded on the other side.” Since his death his assistant, Dr. Marie Peeters, and his widow have tried to carry on his work, but they are meeting great difficulties.

The Lejeune Clinic started in April, 1995; it is run as a separate charity funded half by the Anna Fund and half by the guild of Catholic doctors. The first patients were those whom the fund had previously sent to Paris. We spent time and money trying to get media coverage for the clinic, but received little except in the religious press. Yet word somehow got around, and there are 18 children already on the waiting list for appointments, so we must now look for more medical help. The regular haematology checks are already showing some interesting features, although the numbers so far are too small to draw any conclusions. It is planned to recruit a speech therapist, a physiotherapist and a paediatric cardiologist. They will not be treating the children, who will only attend every six months, but they will be assessing what treatment is necessary for each child in their own specialty. Every local authority in Britain has a statutory duty to provide these services where they are needed, and it is hoped that sending these assessments to the family doctor and local medical officers will act as a spur to the local authorities. Some are excellent in their provision of such therapies, but some are not.

A mission statement, drawn up by Dr. Cole before the start of the clinic, included the following objectives: “Individuals with Down’s Syndrome are to receive the fullness of care that is owed to all people. In offering medical advice to them and their families we will seek to be informed of *bona fide* established treatments. We undertake to engage in research approved by the appropriate authorities into further treatment methods which could enhance their well-being. We will seek to collaborate with other professionals concerned with their care and offer the Lejeune treatment protocol as follows:

- To offer an overview of their current medical care and, where appropriate, make suggestions to their general practitioner;
- To monitor basic thyroid function and other metabolic parameters and advise their current medical care-giver of any abnormalities;
- To provide a comprehensive report of our findings to the general practitioner and paediatrician involved and foster a constructive liaison;
- To provide B12 and folic acid in accordance with the Lejeune protocol;

- To give appropriate dietary and other general health advice;
- To look for atlanto-axial instability and give appropriate advice. All children of five and over will have an X-ray of the cervical spine;
- Psychological tests will establish a developmental baseline using established methodology and seek to introduce other home-based methods of assessing developmental progress for research purposes. Parents will be given a "Behavior check list" to complete and return.

On June 17, 1995, the *whole* pro-life movement was delighted to read an article in *The Spectator* by its then editor, Dominic Lawson, about the birth of his daughter Domenica with Down's Syndrome. The article received coverage in the press and radio; letters and comments were profuse and mostly supportive, but some were profoundly significant because they showed that those who shriek loudest for "a woman's right to choose" in fact don't believe it at all.

One well-known member of the media "chattering class" let the cat out of the bag when she wrote to a popular national daily paper that although a woman had the "right to choose" she had a *duty* [*emphasis mine*] to choose sensibly." She made it quite clear that she thought Domenica's parents had not chosen sensibly (as Samuel Johnson once said, "Why is it that the loudest cries for freedom come from the owners of slaves?").

Her attitude has no basis either scientifically or ethically. Properly treated, Down's children do well, most can go to normal schools, many can go to college. The fears expressed by so many parents about their future adult life are mostly unnecessary. Properly taught, they can live on their own and cope with the shopping and housework. In general they are happy and very loving. That is one of the characteristics for which they are often attacked, because when meeting people (even strangers) they will often put their arms round them and kiss them. This problem is easily overcome by teaching them who it is proper to kiss and who it is not (it is also possible to teach them to keep their mouths shut!).

There has been considerable discussion about the merits or otherwise of plastic surgery to alter facial appearances. Professor Lejeune believed it wasn't necessary, because after treatment children lose their Down's Syndrome faces and, by their late teens, are indistinguishable from their siblings. He found that they also lose the extra chromosome in some of their cells. Down's children who are "Mosaic" can lose all their cells with the extra chromosome by the time they are twenty.

The third objective of the Anna Fund is to inform doctors (who should know already but often don't) how much can be done to help these children.

The majority of parents also have a totally false idea at first of what their child can achieve. A recent (January 1996) article in *The Australian Magazine* claimed "More and more parents are choosing to terminate what they know or even suspect is a faulty foetus." The author quotes a woman who had aborted her Down's Syndrome child: "My young son needs my attention, he doesn't need a little sister who's going to be a vegetable for the rest of her life." The Frank Sinatra philosophy of "I did it *my way*" [*emphasis his*] is both false and fascistic. We can only control our own destinies marginally. We do not know what tomorrow will bring, and the belief that we can—with the aid of "science"—control the destinies of our offspring is a new and frightening heresy, inherited from the Margaret Sanger group of eugenicists. Because abortion is legal for the pre-born child with Down's Syndrome, abortion is now demanded for minor irregularities such as the easily-treated "hare lip." When the genome project is complete the situation will become even worse.

A survey of American women has shown that a fifth would abort a child whose genes showed that he or she would tend to be obese! Designer babies are horribly and ominously on the near horizon. Parents quite naturally want to bring a child into this world who appears healthy and normal in every way, but that is a useless indicator of that child's future. Psychopaths, drug addicts, and serial killers appear healthy and normal at birth. The *Australia* article alleges that "Research from Israel last year showed that ultrasound in early pregnancy using a probe in the vagina had led to an almost total termination of abnormal fetuses even for conditions some obstetricians thought minor." If this is true we are getting nearer and nearer to Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World."

The work of Dame Cicely Saunders, who founded St. Christophers Hospice, led to the development of hospices in every large town in Britain and has helped enormously to stem the legalisation of euthanasia (and improve the teaching of palliative medicine to medical students). In Holland, the euthanasia capital of the world, there is no proper hospice movement. I believe that the Lejeune Clinic (and its offspring already gestating) will help to slow down the killing of babies in the womb because they have Down's Syndrome. We hope to show what enchanting children they are: if given the chance, they can grow to be children that any parent would be proud of. It is the attitude of society that handicaps Down's children, not their extra chromosome.

Haven't you heard?

These are the Nineties

John Muggeridge

It was Parent-Teacher's Night, a few years ago. The young teacher sitting opposite me had given our ninth-grader a mid-term mark of 55 in geography. I asked the question such occasions had hitherto always called for: "What are we going to do about this?" "We don't have to do anything," he lectured me. "A student's happy with fifty-five? I can live with that." Then, turning on me the look of a man determined at all costs to do his professional duty, he added, "I have to live with it."

Here was something new. Our older children's teachers had at least paid lip service to the idea that idleness is a vice which only concerted campaigning by home and school could hope to keep in check. Hence such parent-teacher meetings, during which parents undertook to monitor their child's homework, and teachers to telephone them at the first intimation of indolence. But indolence, if I understood that geographer correctly, didn't count any more. Today's pupils are to decide for themselves how much effort to put into a particular subject. Tell them that they could do better, and you simply state a fact, innocent of all moral connotation. Even "Underachiever," for a generation the favourite euphemism of teachers who wanted to make censure sound pedagogically valid, no longer appears on enlightened report cards.

Indeed, it may well be against the law to put it there. At least here in Ontario, departmental regulations now *require* teachers to develop in their students a feeling of self-worth through "supportive evaluation." In other words, stroking has become compulsory. More, even parents who rub their children the wrong way could soon face court charges. Three years ago our provincial government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which obliges its signatories to "take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence or abuse . . . while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care" of the child.¹

Ontarians may legally reason with an offspring who chooses to watch

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the hockey game rather than learn his designated quota of French irregular verbs, but should they try confiscating the channel changer, for example, or applying the relevant circuit-breaker, he need not hesitate to dial 911. For what could more clearly inflict “mental violence or abuse” on a hockey fan than the use of force to prevent him from enjoying the third period? And, for that matter, what could more obviously fit the UN definition of “arbitrary or unlawful interference with” a child’s privacy than a phone call next day from his teacher to his mother complaining that in class that morning he had given *je suis* as the first person singular of *avoir*?²

The advent of compulsory non-judgmental grading should hardly have surprised me. For as long as I can remember, the mantra most often chanted at teachers’ conferences and departmental meetings has been “Give students ownership of the learning process.” And now, at last, they have got the title deeds to it. Today’s top curriculum designers consider the very act of teaching to be a classroom strategy unacceptably deficient in student-centredness. As things now stand in Ontario, for example, teachers who take it upon themselves to pass on knowledge to their students may well be skirting the law. I know at least one member of a junior-highschool English department in suburban Toronto who closes her door and turns off the P.A. system before embarking on a grammar lesson.³ Rather than teaching her students anything, she should, according to current government regulations, be helping them “develop a responsiveness to the dynamic processes of learning,” which processes are to include “observing, sensing, inquiring, creating, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating, and communicating”—but not remembering, and certainly not memorizing.

This is the language of revolution. To observe, sense, inquire, create, analyze, synthesize, evaluate and communicate, one needs a store of pre-existing knowledge. In today’s public-school classrooms this knowledge may not be supplied from the past. Thus have educational policy makers reduced our children to a state of terminal present-mindedness. Nor did they bring about this result inadvertently: proponents of contemporary pedagogy have never been simply concerned with reforming education. Their mentor is John Dewey, a life-long socialist who fostered democracy in the classroom not just as a way of making his pupils feel good about themselves, but in order to predispose them in favour of democracy in the workplace. And also to cure them of religious dogmatism. He envisaged a churchless world, populated by agnostic rationalists, in which opinion replaces conviction, science supersedes theology, and schools have a no more sinister purpose than that of preparing citizens for further schooling.

This really is the impossible dream—impossible because it contradicts itself. Pragmatism and idealism don't mix. Dewey is dogmatically opposed to dogma. So are the authors of *Living and Learning*,⁴ a government report on education (first published in 1968) which continues to be the definitive Canadian account of Dewey-eyed child rearing. The front cover of *Living and Learning* is a ten by twelve-inch colored photograph of elementary-school children running out of shadow into sunlight. As the text makes clear, they are fleeing superstition and heading for modernity. Moreover, in true Dewey fashion, they are doing so on their own. No master instructs them; no guardian angel hovers over them. They know, as if by instinct, in which direction the latest dawn is breaking.

But of course, it isn't instinct. Here is the brilliance of progressive education: it persuades children to think that they are thinking for themselves. The fact that the discovery method leads them to discover only liberalism in no way detracts from their image of themselves as Christopher Columbus. Year after year, our children use the CD-ROM's in their school resource-centres to unearth the same tired collection of lies and half-truths about abortion, pollution, homophobia, euthanasia, overpopulation, racism, neofascism, animal testing, the death penalty, the subjection of women, the exploitation of native peoples, and (for advanced students) the threat posed to democracy by the religious right,⁵ until political correctness becomes all but neurological for them.

Even field trips do nothing to shake their prejudices; rather, they strengthen them. Budding Greenpeacers use water samples from the Niagara River to prove that multi-national corporations really are out to poison the Great Lakes; junior animalists justify their vegetarian high-mindedness with photographs of the cruel veal carts used by local farmers. Only last January, Craig Kielburger, an eleven-year-old from suburban Toronto visited India to look into the evils of child labour. While there, he ran into Jean Chrétien, our federal prime minister, conducting a far-Eastern trade mission. According to the *Toronto Globe and Mail*, a closed-door summit meeting took place between them. No doubt he (the children's crusader) will get an "A" in social studies.

The classroom apostles of modernism face only one obstacle: parents. Impervious to CD-ROM's, unmoved by manipulative teaching strategies, parents dispose of the most powerful of all liberal antibodies—their children's preschool past. Parents did their living and learning in different times, under different rules. No good saying to them that the world has changed since their day; they remember what it has changed *from*.

Sometimes they are farmers who wonder why their sons should be doing research on animal liberation when the only book in the library on that subject is Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation*. Sometimes they are anti-abortionists puzzled by the absence of any criticism of China's population policies in their daughter's project on the UN's Beijing Conference on Women. Or perhaps they're veterans' children stung by the fact that at their own children's school the most-often assigned audio-visual on Canada's role in World War II should be *The Valour and the Horror*, a government-made movie which sets out to vilify the Royal Canadian Air Force for the part it played in bombing Nazi-held Europe.

Independently-exercised parental authority, then, can be death to progressivism, because the blandishments of liberal pedagogues make no impression on it. Farmers, anti-abortionists and patriots belong to a class of North Americans not to be tricked into surrendering intellectual autonomy. Only force can make them turn their backs on history. Hence the establishment in our public schools of what amounts to a North American version of the Red Guards. Anyone with children under thirty must have had some experience of teacher-fomented parent-baiting.⁶

Here are two local examples. One weedless Wednesday several years ago, the children in a third-grade class near here had to identify all family members who smoked; the girl with the longest list of nicotine addicts was then required to fetch her winter coat and pass it round for her fellow students to smell.⁷ Then there was the recent occasion when I phoned our highschool senior's guidance counsellor for help in persuading her not to drop an English course. "Dad," she angrily reported two days later, "the whole school is laughing at you." Instead of acting on my request, the counsellor had leaked it.

But in the game of turning children into jeer leaders, the most valuable player award must surely go to Planned Parenthood. John Dewey and Margaret Sanger were natural allies. Both saw themselves as liberators of children from ignorance and class oppression. Dewey wanted to emancipate them from the tyranny of authoritarian teaching methods, Sanger from sexual repression imposed on them by upholders of religious bigotry and compulsory child-bearing.

Above all, both saw education as a way not of implementing parents' designs for their children, but of undermining them. Robert G. Marshall and Charles A. Donovan in *Blessed are the Barren: The Social Policy of Planned Parenthood*⁸ describe how P.P. locals train young people to organize meetings of young people on school property at which anyone with parents opposed to sexual licence can expect to hear them pilloried as

busybodies and puritans. He can also, say Marshall and Donovan, expect to receive advice on where around the house his mother is least likely to look for condoms. Now there's a blow for progress and enlightenment! Steady. Crusaders for sexual liberation are not supposed to laugh—except at their benighted parents.

Ridicule, however, is never a final solution. Some people just don't submit to bullying. Parental obduracy, the last anti-modernist redoubt in secular society, will disappear for good only when parenthood itself has come to seem irrelevant. This is where social "scientists" come in. They have sought to discount independently-exercised parental authority by discounting its source, the family. Their argument is that the family, consisting of a husband and wife joined in life-long monogamy for the purpose of sanctifying each other and raising children in the fear and love of God, is *passé*—every bit as *passé*, in fact, as feudal vassalage or divine-right monarchy.

In order to prove their point, they invoke a bogus "history" of childhood. Here we get into what seems to me one of the most specious of academic disciplines, social anthropology. How do we *know* what people felt about children a thousand years ago, or five hundred, even fifty? For example, the French social anthropologist, Philippe Ariès, uses the fact that pre-nineteenth-century artists paint children wearing clothes cut on the same pattern as those worn by their parents to "prove" that the notion of childhood is a comparatively recent one.

Who says? Not *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary*, which traces "Childship," an earlier version of "childhood," back to 1626. And certainly not St. Paul, who more than fifteen and a half centuries before that, explained to the Corinthians that when he was a child, he spoke as a child, understood as a child, and thought as a child, but when he became a man, he put away childish things.⁹

No matter. What modernist "scholars" want from Ariès is not truth but ammunition. They want him as a footnote to their claim that the idea of childhood is ephemeral. It belonged, so they insist, to a period of history which is now over: we live in "post-childhood" times, in which sensible, healthy people think of children in the way their remote ancestors allegedly thought of them—as nothing more than smaller, weaker, and less experienced adults. That does it. No childhood; no family. Adults aren't tied to mothers and fathers, so why should little adults be?

If, as Hillary Clinton, America's most famous contemporary anti-family advocate, claims, there really is no such thing as other people's children,

then the parents who *do* put barriers of any sort around their own children are simply on a power trip. John Holt, a founding father of the children's liberation movement (and also, not surprisingly, a fervent supporter of John Dewey's teaching methods), put the matter most succinctly: "The family," he claimed, "was an institution in which some people were owned by others." Notice his use of the past tense.

Notice too how thoroughly the sentiment behind these words has taken root. In enlightened discourse, the word "family" can no longer stand alone. One has to qualify it with "nuclear" or "traditional," except of course when the thing being described defies conventional morality, in which case correct usage requires "experiment in family living." And invariably, contemporary arbiters of taste give their highest rating to experiments in family living.

The best nuclear families can expect is to be tolerated as an alternative lifestyle. But that doesn't remove the danger of a matrimonial Chernobyl. R.D. Laing, John Holt's fellow Sixties guru, called the nuclear family "the potential destroyer of young lives" and familial "love" [his quotation marks] "only veiled violence leading occasionally to madness." Three decades later, the phrase "family violence" is burnt into our collective consciousness. *Nobody* talks about experiments in family-living violence.

Meanwhile, pro-family advocates are looked upon as being every bit as untrustworthy as the families they advocate. They're rightwingers to a person, and what's worse, Christian rightwingers, self-righteous gun-slingers, in other words, liable at any minute to shoot up an abortion clinic or blow down a government highrise. At one point during the evening of the New Hampshire primary, CNN was discussing an opinion poll which had found that some fifty percent of local Republicans distrusted the Christian Right. One member of the panel, Senator Christopher Dodd, co-chairman of the Democratic National Committee, made a revealing slip of the tongue: he called the Christian Right "the Hard Right." Nobody took exception.

The silly thing is that Laing was dead wrong in associating violence with traditional family living. Indeed, it would be more accurate to label most of what we nowadays call "family violence" as broken-family violence. Study after study shows that couples who stay in traditional marriages live longer, happier and even wealthier lives than those who choose less conventional forms of cohabitation. Nor do you have to read George Gilder to conclude that what ails this country is not the persistence of monogamy but rather its disappearance as a social norm. Yet few of those in authority over us either listen to Gilder, or even look around. They

prefer to view reality through their modernist, virtual-reality helmets.

This particular headgear even blacks out the obvious anti-marriage bias of our governments' fiscal policies. The fact, for example, that a Canadian couple each earning \$30,000 a year pay \$4,000 less income tax than a husband supporting his family on \$60,000 leaves our most sensitive civil-rights activists unmoved. What they see in this statistic is not discrimination, but stupidity. Why on earth would living with a man impel an able-bodied woman to stay off the labour market? *She expects to have children?* All very well, but hasn't she heard of pregnancy leave and day care? Or, better still, doesn't she know how much she can save her overburdened fellow tax-payers simply by practising birth control? All of us have heard these arguments replayed *ad nauseam* on talk shows, in lunch rooms and at dinner parties across the continent. What a dozen years of collaborative learning does is stuff our children's heads with them.

There seems to be no escape. Small group discussions broaden one's definition of family. As our youngest put it the other day: "Sorry, Mom, but you don't have to stand around in the kitchen all day to be a good wife and mother." Or (this from a sophomore working part-time to help finance college): "I see gays at the mall all the time. They have to buy clothes too, you know. And what's wrong with them getting married? Shouldn't they have a chance at happiness like everyone else?"

Then—and this is the clincher—in reply to my suggestion that perhaps after all it might not be such a good idea to have so-and-so around to watch movies while her mother and I are away for the weekend, I get: "Come on, Dad; haven't you heard? These are the Nineties."

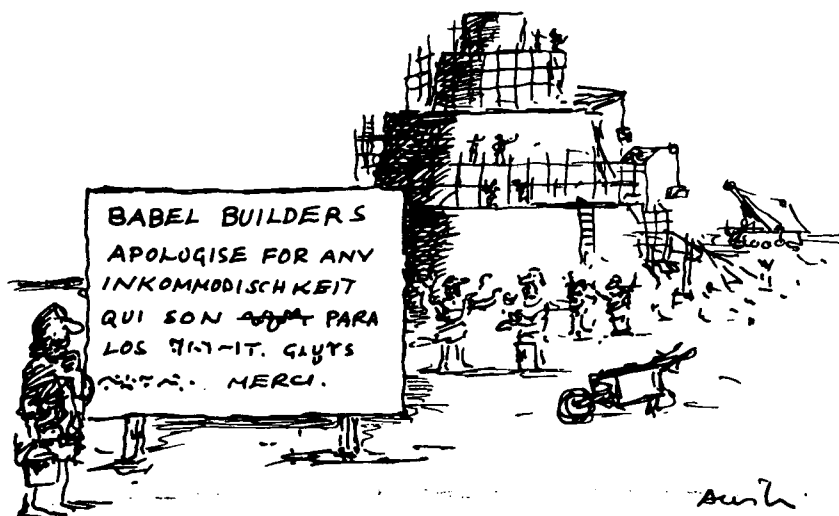
I have indeed, alas.

NOTES

1. Section 1, Article 19 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 20 November, 1989, and already adopted by 127 western and third-world governments, a larger number than have approved any other UN document. In Canada, Ottawa and nine of the ten provinces have ratified it, the shining exception being Alberta.
2. *Ibid.*, Article 16, Section 1. Ontario's *Freedom of Information Act* requires teachers to obtain written permission from students before posting their marks; the same law prohibits librarians from divulging the names of students with books on loan, and when it came into force some eight years ago, the administration of the college where I used to teach even refrained from publishing its annual Dean's Honour List for fear of legal prosecution.
3. The Ontario Department of Education grudgingly allows some class time for grammar instruction, but it must not exceed ten percent of the total course time, and data for such instruction must come from the students' own work. In other words, students in composition classes may not model their writing on that of the masters of English prose, the clear implication being that the language of Shakespeare, Milton, Austen, Dickens and even of Waugh and Greene is not theirs.

JOHN MUGGERIDGE

4. *Living and Learning: Report of the Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives of Education in the Schools of Ontario*, Toronto: Ontario Department of Education, 1968.
5. In my last semester of teaching college English, I marked some twelve hundred short essays on these topics, and not one of them deviated from the liberal party line. The combination of unpractised English and perfected political correctness is best illustrated by a sentence a first-year computer engineering student submitted to exemplify the use of the word *prejudice*: "I'm prejudice against homos."
6. One cannot help wondering how much blame should go to teachers for the current wave of violence in our classrooms.
7. Michael Medved quotes similar examples of in-school anti-parental *mau-mauing*. An official drug education study guide for the State of New Jersey, he tells us, requires fourth graders to wait until their parents are away from home before making "a careful inventory of the family medicine cabinets, registering the presence of all addictive substances from alcohol to tobacco to—heaven help us!—aspirin." He also points out that "sex education and abuse prevention classes in many public schools demand that children describe in graphic detail when and how their parents touch them and warn that displays of physical affection and corporal punishment are suspect" (see *IMPRIMIS*, the Monthly Journal of Hillsdale College, December 1995, XXIV, Number 12). My own gradeschool grandchildren had to be taken out of a "Touching" play, put on by the local Catholic School Board.
8. Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 1991. The step from child-centred learning to child-centred sex is an easy one. (Not surprisingly, Dewey sat on the Board of Directors of SIECUS.)
9. The parents of Gainsborough's "Blue Boy" are, alas, no longer available for comment.



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APPENDIX A

*[The following article appeared as part of a collection of essays by Dr. Richard Selzer, titled *Mortal Lessons: Notes on the Art of Surgery*, first published in 1976; it is reprinted here by permission of Georges Borchardt, Inc., for the author (© 1974-5-6 by Richard Selzer). For additional information, see the Editor's note which follows this article.]*

What I Saw at the Abortion

Richard Selzer

Horror, like bacteria, is everywhere. It blankets the earth, endlessly lapping to find that one unguarded entryway. As though narcotized, we walk beneath, upon, through it. Carelessly we touch the familiar infected linen, eat from the universal dish; we disdain isolation. We are like the newborn that carry immunity from their mothers' wombs. Exteriorized, we are wrapped in impermeable membranes that cannot be seen. Then one day, the defense is gone. And we awaken to horror.

In our city, garbage is collected early in the morning. Sometimes the bang of the cans and the grind of the truck awaken us before our time. We are resentful, mutter into our pillows, then go back to sleep. On the morning of August 6, 1975, the people of 73rd Street near Woodside Avenue do just that. When at last they rise from their beds, dress, eat breakfast and leave their houses for work, they have forgotten, if they had ever known, that the garbage truck had passed earlier that morning. The event has slipped into unmemory, like a dream.

They close their doors and descend to the pavement. It is midsummer. You measure the climate, decide how you feel in relation to the heat and the humidity. You walk toward the bus stop. Others, your neighbors, are waiting there. It is all so familiar. All at once you step on something soft. You feel it with your foot. Even through your shoe you have the sense of something unusual, something marked by a special "give." It is a foreignness upon the pavement. Instinct pulls your foot away in an awkward little movement. You look down, and you see . . . a tiny naked body, its arms and legs flung apart, its head thrown back, its mouth agape, its face serious. A bird, you think, fallen from its nest. But there is no nest here on 73rd Street, no bird so big. It is rubber, then. A model, a . . . joke. Yes, that's it, a joke. And you bend to see. Because you must. And it is no joke. Such a gray softness can be but one thing. It is a baby, and dead. You cover your mouth, your eyes. You are fixed. Horror has found its chink and crawled in, and you will never be the same as you were. Years later you will step from a sidewalk to a lawn, and you will start at its softness, and think of that upon which you have just trod.

Now you look about; another man has seen it too. "My God," he whispers. Others come, people you have seen every day for years, and you hear them speak with strangely altered voices. "Look," they say, "it's a baby." There is a cry. "Here's another!" and "Another!" and "Another!" And you follow with your

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gaze the index fingers of your friends pointing from the huddle where you cluster. Yes, it is true! There *are* more of these . . . little carcasses upon the street. And for a moment you look up to see if all the unbaptized sinless are falling from Limbo.

Now the street is filling with people. There are police. They know what to do. They rope off the area, then stand guard over the enclosed space. They are controlled, methodical, these young policemen. Servants, they do not reveal themselves to their public master; it would not be seemly. Yet I do see their pallor and the sweat that breaks upon the face of one, the way another bites the lining of his cheek and holds it thus. Ambulance attendants scoop up the bodies. They scan the street; none must be overlooked. What they place upon the litter amounts to little more than a dozen pounds of human flesh. They raise the litter, and slide it home inside the ambulance, and they drive away. You and your neighbors stand about in the street which is become for you a battlefield from which the newly slain have at last been bagged and tagged and dragged away. *But what shrapnel is this? By what explosion flung, these fragments that sink into the brain and fester there?* Whatever smell there is in this place becomes for you the stench of death. The people of 73rd Street do not then speak to each other. It is too soon for outrage, too late for blindness. It is the time of unresisted horror.

Later, at the police station, the investigation is brisk, conclusive. It is the hospital director speaking: “. . . fetuses accidentally got mixed up with the hospital rubbish . . . were picked up at approximately eight fifteen A.M. by a sanitation truck. Somehow, the plastic lab bag, labeled HAZARDOUS MATERIAL, fell off the back of the truck and broke open. No, it is not known how the fetuses got in the orange plastic bag labeled HAZARDOUS MATERIAL. It is a freak accident.” The hospital director wants you to know that it is not an everyday occurrence. Once in a lifetime, he says. But you have seen it, and what are his words to you now?

He grows affable, familiar, tells you that, by mistake, the fetuses got mixed up with the other debris. (Yes, he says *other*; he says *debris*.) He has spent the entire day, he says, trying to figure out how it happened. He wants you to know that. Somehow it matters to him. He goes on:

Aborted fetuses that weigh one pound or less are incinerated. Those weighing over one pound are buried at a city cemetery. He says this. Now you see. It *is* orderly. It *is* sensible. The world is *not* mad. This is still a civilized society.

There is no more. You turn to leave. Outside on the street, men are talking things over, reassuring each other that the right thing is being done. But just this once, you know it isn't. You saw, and you know.

And you know, too, that the Street of the Dead Fetuses will be wherever you go. You are part of its history now, its legend. It has laid claim upon you so that you cannot entirely leave it—not ever.

I am a surgeon. I do not shrink from the particularities of sick flesh. Escaping

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blood, all the outpourings of disease—phlegm, pus, vomitus, even those occult meaty tumors that terrify—I see as blood, disease, phlegm, and so on. I touch them to destroy them. But I do not make symbols of them. I have seen and I am used to seeing. Yet there are paths within the body that I have not taken, penetralia where I do not go. Nor is it lack of technique, limitation of knowledge that forbids me these ways.

It is the western wing of the fourth floor of a great university hospital. An abortion is about to take place. I am present because I asked to be present. I wanted to see what I had never seen.

The patient is Jamaican. She lies on the table submissively, and now and then she smiles at one of the nurses as though acknowledging a secret.

A nurse draws down the sheet, lays bare the abdomen. The belly mounds gently in the twenty-fourth week of pregnancy. The chief surgeon paints it with a sponge soaked in red antiseptic. He does this three times, each time a fresh sponge. He covers the area with a sterile sheet, an aperture in its center. He is a kindly man who teaches as he works, who pauses to reassure the woman.

He begins.

A little pinprick, he says to the woman.

He inserts the point of a tiny needle at the midline of the lower portion of her abdomen, on the downslope. He infiltrates local anesthetic into the skin, where it forms a small white bubble.

The woman grimaces.

That is all you will feel, the doctor says. Except for a little pressure. But no more pain.

She smiles again. She seems to relax. She settles comfortably on the table. The worst is over.

The doctor selects a three-and-one-half-inch needle bearing a central stylet. He places the point at the site of the previous injection. He aims it straight up and down, perpendicular. Next he takes hold of her abdomen with his left hand, palming the womb, steadying it. He thrusts with his right hand. The needle sinks into the abdominal wall.

Oh, says the woman quietly.

But I guess it is not pain that she feels. It is more a recognition that the deed is being done.

Another thrust and he has speared the uterus.

We are in, he says.

He has felt the muscular wall of the organ gripping the shaft of his needle. A further slight pressure on the needle advances it a bit more. He takes his left hand from the woman's abdomen. He retracts the filament of the stylet from the barrel of the needle. A small geyser of pale yellow fluid erupts.

We are in the right place, says the doctor. Are you feeling any pain? he asks.

She smiles, shakes her head. She gazes at the ceiling.

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In the room we are six: two physicians, two nurses, the patient, and me.

The participants are busy, very attentive. I am not at all busy—but I am no less attentive. I want to see.

I see something! It is unexpected, utterly unexpected, like a disturbance in the earth, a tumultuous jarring. I see a movement—a small one. But I have seen it.

And then I see it again. And now I see that it is the hub of the needle in the woman's belly that has jerked. First to one side. Then to the other side. Once more it wobbles, is *tugged*, like a fishing line nibbled by a sunfish.

Again! And I *know!*

It is the *fetus* that worries thus. It is the fetus struggling against the needle. Struggling? How can that be? I think: *that cannot be*. I think: the fetus feels no pain, cannot feel fear, has no *motivation*. It is merely reflex.

I point to the needle.

It is a reflex, says the doctor.

By the end of the fifth month, the fetus weighs about one pound, is about twelve inches long. Hair is on the head. There are eyebrows, eyelashes. Pale pink nipples show on the chest. Nails are present, at the fingertips, at the toes.

At the beginning of the sixth month, the fetus can cry, can suck, can make a fist. He kicks, he punches. The mother can feel this, can *see* this. His eyelids, until now closed, can open. He may look up, down, sideways. His grip is very strong. He could support his weight by holding with one hand.

A reflex, the doctor says.

I hear him. But I saw something in that mass of cells *understand* that it must bob and butt. And I see it again! I have an impulse to shove to the table—it is just a step—*sieze* that needle, pull it out.

We are not six, I think. I think we are *seven*.

Something strangles *there*. An effort, its effort, binds me to it.

I do not shove to the table. I take no little step. It would be . . . well, madness. Everyone here wants the needle where it is. Six do. No, *five* do.

I close my eyes. I see the inside of the uterus. It is bathed in ruby gloom. I see the creature curled upon itself. Its knees are flexed. Its head is bent upon its chest. It is in fluid and gently rocks to the rhythm of the distant heartbeat.

It resembles . . . a sleeping infant.

Its place is entered by something. It is sudden. A point coming. A needle!

A spike of *daylight* pierces the chamber. Now the light is extinguished. The needle comes closer in the pool. The point grazes the thigh, and I stir. Perhaps I wake from dozing. The light is there again. I twist and straighten. My arms and legs *push*. My hand finds the shaft—*grabs!* I *grab*. I bend the needle this way and that. The point probes, touches on my belly. My mouth opens. Could I cry out? All is a commotion and a churning. There is a presence in the pool. An activity! The pool colors, reddens, darkens.

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I open my eyes to see the doctor feeding a small plastic tube through the barrel of the needle into the uterus. Drops of pink fluid overrun the rim and spill onto the sheet. He withdraws the needle from around the plastic tubing. Now only the little tube protrudes from the woman's body. A nurse hands the physician a syringe loaded with a colorless liquid. He attaches it to the end of the tubing and injects it.

Prostaglandin, he says.

Ah, well, prostaglandin—a substance found normally in the body. When given in concentrated dosage, it throws the uterus into vigorous contraction. In eight to twelve hours, the woman will expel the fetus.

The doctor detaches the syringe but does not remove the tubing.

In case we must do it over, he says.

He takes away the sheet. He places gauze pads over the tubing. Over all this he applies adhesive tape.

I know. We cannot feed the great numbers. There is no more room. I know, I know. It is a woman's right to refuse the risk, to decline the pain of childbirth. And an unwanted child is a very great burden. An unwanted child is a burden to himself. I know.

And yet . . . there is the flick of that needle. I *saw* it. I saw . . . I *felt*—in that room, a pace away, life prodded, life fending off. I saw life avulsed—swept by flood, blackening—then *out*.

There, says the doctor. It's all over. It wasn't too bad, was it? he says to the woman.

She smiles. It is all over. Oh, yes.

And who would care to imagine that from a moist and dark commencement six months before there would ripen the cluster and globule, the sprout and pouch of man?

And who would care to imagine that trapped within the laked pearl and a dowry of yolk would lie the earliest stuff of dream and memory?

It is a persona carried here as well as a person, I think. I think it is a signed piece, engraved with a hieroglyph of human genes.

I did not think this until I saw. The flick. The fending off.

Later, in the corridor, the doctor explains that the law does not permit abortion beyond the twenty-fourth week. That is when the fetus may be viable, he says. We stand together for a moment, and he tells of an abortion in which the fetus *cried* after it was passed.

What did you do? I ask him.

There was nothing *to* do but let it live, he says. It did very well, he says. A case of mistaken dates.

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Editor's Note

[In our fifth issue, Winter, 1976 (Vol. II, No. 1), we published what we thought was a remarkable essay—certainly we had seen nothing else like it in those early years after Roe v. Wade—which had appeared in the January, 1976, issue of Esquire magazine titled “What I Saw at the Abortion.” Esquire described the author, Richard Selzer, as a contributing editor and “a surgeon attached to Yale University,” noting that the essay “will be included in a forthcoming book by Dr. Selzer”—as indicated above, it did, in a chapter titled simply “Abortion” that began with additional material, all of which is included here. The portion we originally published began with “I am a surgeon,” which you will find at the bottom of page 82 above. In the 20 years since, we still have not seen anything more remarkable than what Dr. Selzer wrote then, which is why we decided to reprint it again.—Ed.]

APPENDIX B

[What follows is the unofficial transcript of William F. Buckley Jr.'s Firing Line program, which was taped in New York City on January 24, 1996, for later telecasting on public TV stations nationwide. Firing Line is a production of National Review, Inc., and is produced and directed by Warren Steibel. This transcript is reprinted here with the permission of Mr. Buckley.]

The Rhetoric of Abortion

MR. BUCKLEY: The effort today is to look into the polarizing rhetoric we've become used to in the discussion of abortion. It is in some cases literally true that the parties won't even speak to one another, and for this reason among others, special attention focuses on the important essay written by Naomi Wolf for *The New Republic*, because in that essay Ms. Wolf absolutely defends the right of the mother to abort the fetus, but absolutely classifies the act as evil, deploring the right-to-choose movement for promoting the view that the fetus is merely a mass of protoplasm. Ms. Wolf was born in San Francisco 30-odd years ago, graduated from Yale, and was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. Her first book was the renowned *Beauty Myth*.

To affirm the more conventional pro-life position, we have Helen Alvare, whose title is director of planning and information for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Ms. Alvare acts as the public voice of the bishops on the abortion issue and regularly testifies on their behalf before Congress and the two political parties. She received her law degree from Cornell and before that, a master's from Catholic University.

Let me begin by asking Ms. Wolf whether the attitude of the pro-choice people she criticizes isn't in fact to be expected, even as views of other activity once thought aberrant becomes accepted, as for instance, divorce, homosexuality, pornography?

MS. WOLF: Well, let me first respond by recontextualizing what I said in the essay—

MR. BUCKLEY: Sure.

MS. WOLF: —and then answer your question, because I didn't say simply that abortion, which I passionately believe should remain a woman's legal right, is evil. That's, I think, a little reductive. What I said was that it is a necessary evil in many cases, and it's always a matter of deep, moral gravity, a transgression. And what I argue, and this is a somewhat more subtle point than one can usually easily get across in these sound-bite—what is too often sound-bite debates—is that I believe that the pro-choice movement would thrive by reclaiming the moral framework around abortion that recognize that there is a spectrum of culpability, of accountability, that is not uniform, but that recognizes that absolutely, following up to your second question, that the fetus should not be denigrated to the status of a dependent mass of protoplasm, that we should not have to, we must

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not, dehumanize the fetus in order to humanize a woman's right to reproductive access to—

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes, I use the word "evil," you use the word "moral iniquity."

MS. WOLF: Moral iniquity.

MR. BUCKLEY: That's less.

MS. WOLF: What I am trying to make a case for is that, like most Americans— It seems that most Americans believe that abortion should be a legal right but need to be free to recognize it or claim it as a moral iniquity and that we suffer as a society by devaluing the act by emptying it of moral content in order to defend abortion rights, and that it is a much more, I think, evolved and accountable state collectively for us to defend abortion rights to a basic point, but recognize that we must mourn the circumstances that give rise to this loss of life and never trivialize it, just like when you send— Sometimes there is need for war, and no one should trivialize the act of waging war, no one should treat our sons and daughters as cannon fodder. We would rightly feel revolted by a politician who used such language. By the same token, we who are pro-choice must stop trivializing the loss involved—

MR. BUCKLEY: But my question is—

MS. WOLF: making a decision to have an abortion.

MR. BUCKLEY: —why are you surprised by this, given that self-concern of an apologetic character is an aspect of misbehavior? Moynihan called it dumbing something down—

MS. ALVARE: Deviancy.

MR. BUCKLEY: Dumbing deviancy down, thanks. The homosexual community, for instance, wants more merely than the right, which I think they should have, they want the practice they engage in to be thought of as simply another way of doing things.

MS. WOLF: You and I feel very differently about the analogy that you have just made. I could never in a million years imagine having a moral universe in which two-adult people loving one another and, ideally, committing to one another through faith and love in an adult relationship as equivalent to killing a fetus. I think that that's a shocking analogy.

MR. BUCKLEY: I didn't equate it. I said that *pari passu* the tendency to self-justification operates at both levels. You can make it as trivial as you want— using company postage for your letters.

MS. WOLF: Right.

MR. BUCKLEY: My point is that people who practice abortion want more merely than the right to do so. Would you agree?

MS. ALVARE: Yes. My experience is that while it's wonderful to have a constitutional right that is also considered compelling or fundamental insofar as the Supreme Court that gave it to us said, they want more than that. They want moral approval, and they really don't want to rest until—

MR. BUCKLEY: And you won't given them that, will you?

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MS. ALVARE: —we not only—

MR. BUCKLEY: You won't give them that.

MS. WOLF: I think I am not clarifying adequately the position I am taking if you are getting from it that I think the act of choosing abortion is a—

MR. BUCKLEY: Moral iniquity.

MS. WOLF: I agree with most Americans that it is always a tragedy. I think it is always a loss and always an act that is destructive of something precious, always. I mean, the Dalai Lama said, Abortion is very sad. But I also think that the right of women to control their reproductive lives, including sometimes to make the terrible, heartbreaking, tragic decision to end the life within their lives is a fundamental necessity if women are going to participate equally in society. And what I am calling for—and again, this is something Americans tend to have trouble doing—is to keep in mind simultaneously the legal entitlement to do something—and now we are agreeing—while always feeling ourselves to be morally accountable, scrutinizing our motivations. And again, let's not talk only about women, let us talk about men—

MR. BUCKLEY: Sure.

MS. WOLF: —in a society that encourages men, young men, to act with absolute lack of moral accountability and respect for women and sexuality.

MR. BUCKLEY: Ms. Alvare, suppose we talk about divorce. Nobody minds if you say it's tragic that John and Lucy divorced, but nobody nowadays says that they haven't got a right to be divorced.

MS. ALVARE: Right. The difference between abortion and divorce just in a large sense and the reason, for instance, why the Catholic bishops and others who operate from a pro-life stance seek not only to make the moral case, but also to make a legal case, is because abortion involves the life or death of a third party.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes.

MS. ALVARE: It is not so private.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes, that's the basis of your position.

MS. ALVARE: Yes. And we are ecstatic to see some of the cobwebs being swept away in the rhetoric of this, and in that regard, Naomi's article, I'd have to characterize it as a relief. How many times have I debated an abortion advocate at a university campus and the a-word has never passed from her podium? And to be able to talk about abortion itself, to be able to talk about the life at the other end of the instruments, to be able to talk about it in moral terms, that in itself is wonderful.

MR. BUCKLEY: Which you are willing to do as long as you don't (feel?) threatened that the right is threatened.

MS. WOLF: I beg your pardon?

MR. BUCKLEY: You are willing to have that conversation that Ms. Alvare is talking about—

MS. WOLF: The legal right of—

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MR. BUCKLEY: —provided you don't feel that the right to proceed with abortion is threatened.

MS. WOLF: I would go further than that actually. What my article was, and the reason I am so glad to have the chance to talk with you and with other representatives of the pro-life movement, who I have to say, I had been raised all my life to demonize and to see as sort of these fanatical misogynists, I have to reckon with the fact that many of the people I have heard from on that side of the divide are thoughtful, ethical people who respect women and who believe that it is of deep moral concern and even deep religious concern to raise the status of women in society. What I want to have come out of this is more than just a truce with the right, where they leave our right to abortion alone if we say we feel guilty about it. What I want is something even more radical than that, and I am beginning to see a shift in the landscape that could make that possible.

MR. BUCKLEY: You want them to concentrate on the difference between evil and iniquitous.

MS. WOLF: I want to go further. I want to transform the way we deal with this problem in the United States. I want there to be a movement drawn from pro-choice advocates and pro-life advocates who agree that they will join together on the common ground that they share in order to lower the rate of abortion, while, I hope, keeping a constitutional right to abortion. And I am seeing on the right a response to this, and that is where we should go. I have heard from abortion providers who have said to me that they suddenly realized after 20 years that when a woman says, I need an abortion because I have no choice, they said, That's not what I went into this to do, to be in a situation where women have no choice. I have heard from abortion clinics— One abortion clinic in St. Louis started an adoption clinic down the hallway, and they had the highest rate of adoptions and of placement of minority babies in the state. And they tried to get funding from pro-lifers and the pro-lifers wouldn't fund them, I gather, because they did abortions. They tried to get funding from pro-choicers. The pro-choicers wouldn't fund them because they were recommending for those women who wanted it, adoption. So they had to close the adoption service. To me as a feminist, the thought that a 15-year-old girl with an unwanted pregnancy or an unanticipated pregnancy could walk down a hallway and have a place where she could get a safe and legal abortion instead of, God forbid, dying in a back alley, or choose adoption. That to me is a real choice and that is an ethical— That is the best we can do with this tragedy that we have.

MS. ALVARE: If I could jump in with one comment, the problem with where Naomi's article stops, with saying, as she rephrased here in a way, that to leave the right alone as long as we acknowledge that we feel guilty and that some of our reasons are worse than others for having abortions, that could never suffice, and in fact creates new kinds of moral problems if you have, say, what we have now, 1.52 million abortions a year. And in each case you achieve a situation, let's say, where you have the woman saying, "This is wrong; I know this is

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wrong. Not only is it wrong per se, because I am taking a life, but in addition to that, I am culpable"—you know, using the traditional moral distinction here of analyzing a moral issue—"I am also culpable because my excuse is not a good one." Then what you have is one woman after another saying, This is wrong, I'm terrible, it's killing, I'm doing it; this is wrong, I'm terrible, it's killing, I'm doing it. And then what you have is, instead of breeding what Naomi would say was a hardness of heart on the part of those who won't even consider the unborn a human being or who take life with impunity, you create a new kind of hardness of heart, of people who say now—it's even kind of a worse one—I acknowledge it's a human being, and I assume the power to take it.

MS. WOLF: I understand, Helen—

MS. ALVARE: That's a new kind of moral problem.

MS. WOLF: I understand your point, and it comes very much out of the Catholic theological tradition, which I respect. A Buddhist might look at it very differently.

MS. ALVARE: Not really actually. This analysis of moral problems crosses over traditions.

MS. WOLF: Actually—

MS. ALVARE: And in fact it's in the American culture as well, where we have in our penalties in law, for instance. We have things that we make illegal because they are per se wrong; they're understood as just naturally speaking, a violation of one person against another. But then we have levels of penalties for it, often based upon the culpability of the actor. So this is not particularly an imposition of any religious framework. It's really what you might call a natural law framework.

MR. BUCKLEY: No, but she said it was rooted in Catholic theology. What you said doesn't dispute that.

MS. ALVARE: Not that it is also in Catholic theology, but I would dispute that other—

MR. BUCKLEY: That it's uniquely there.

MS. WOLF: There are traditions—

MS. ALVARE: —religions, correct, and other secular thinkers don't agree with it.

MS. WOLF: Helen, there are traditions— For instance, a lot of Buddhists would say that it is legitimate and this is part of some doctrine, to do a destructive act if you are saving a larger—for the greater good, choosing a lesser of two evils. And I think that for many women and men—because I never want to talk about abortion as women's problem, disconnecting it from the fact that every one of those unwanted fetuses has a father who presumably behaved less than fully reverentially toward the possibility of creating life implicit in sexuality, that for many such women, it has to be a lesser of two evils to choose abortion. And your point is theologically rooted in your tradition. My tradition— Please listen for one second.

MS. ALVARE: Okay.

MS. WOLF: I speak as a Jew, as a conservative Jew. According to my rabbi,

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in fact, the Old Testament says that it is legitimate for a woman to choose abortion up to the 40th day, up to quickening. And so—

MS. ALVARE: I am familiar with both traditions but—

MS. WOLF: —people vary in their ethical framework—

MS. ALVARE: Transcending—

MS. WOLF: —around it. So it's right to have this discussion, but it's not monolithic.

MS. ALVARE: Transcending the religious framework even, just as a practical problem, anyone, with or without religion, could understand the moral problematic inherent in people saying, for instance: Rape is evil, but we don't want to make it illegal, we want to persuade people morally—

MS. WOLF: Not loving—

MS. ALVARE: —not to do it.

MS. WOLF: —your children is evil, but we don't outlaw it.

MS. ALVARE: Or taking a human life is evil, but we are going to leave either the right or the choice to do it, but we are going to continue to do it. Just as a practical problem, having a lot of people assert that something is wrong, and yet, not merely do they have the right to do it, but something that is called a fundamental constitutional right, which just practically speaking, people are rarely considered ashamed to exercise, that is a problem of hypocrisy in a society.

MS. WOLF: See, we have a very different idea of sin, you and I, and this comes from our different traditions. To you, the Catholic tradition, sin is something that, if you know it's wrong, you must never do it. You know, the intention matters. In the Jewish tradition, there is such a thing as—and again, I don't want to be too reductive about a very complex religious tradition—but there is a sense of a sort of—I don't want to say gentler, but a less black-and-white idea of atonement, that there are things we do that we know are not great. You know, they are not our best selves, but they are the best choice we can make at that particular moment in our lives, given, hopefully, deep soul-searching—

MS. ALVARE: Do you celebrate it as a right at the same time?

MS. WOLF: Did I say we should celebrate?

MS. ALVARE: Well, no—

MS. WOLF: Celebrate abortion? I said—

MS. ALVARE: —but even affirm it as a right—

MS. WOLF: —we need to maintain it.

MS. ALVARE: —leave it in the Constitution.

MS. WOLF: Here's why I think if you hate abortion you need to not criminalize it. If you really hate abortion, you don't solve it by criminalizing it. What you do is you get a whited sepulchre of the conscience. You feel good on the outside—

MS. ALVARE: But I think you bring—

MS. WOLF: Just hear me out, because this is an important point that has not entered the debate. I think that those who want to solve the problem by criminalizing abortion don't hate abortion enough, right— Wait. Please listen.

[laughter]

MS. ALVARE: I'm trying to get a word in here and there.

MS. WOLF: —because in the years and in the countries in which abortion has been criminalized, thousands and thousands, indeed tens of thousands, of women, and their fetuses of course, have died anyway. And if you really hate abortion, if you criminalize it, you may feel good superficially—you've had a shortcut to a clean conscience—but you're not solving the problem. The only way we solve this problem is to get at the root causes of the high rate of abortion in this country—

MS. ALVARE: My response to that—

MS. WOLF: —which includes a lack of access to contraception, disrespect for sexuality, disrespect for women.

MS. ALVARE: But a quick response to that, really, to be— That's a false choice to present, that if one really hates abortion, that one goes purely the moral route and not the legal. One goes both. Because it is frankly impractical, unrealistic and hypocritical to not follow one up with the other if the basis for your moral position is as it is with the pro-life position. And the majority of people agree, when asked a straightforward question about abortion, that not only don't they like most, but the only ones they would like to see remain legal—and this was just confirmed in several polls a few months ago—are rape, incest, and life of the mother. The majority have trouble with the other 99 percent. Let me finish.

MS. WOLF: Okay.

MS. ALVARE: It's the basis for the moral position is that it is taking of a human life. In other arenas in society where the taking of a human life is concerned, the law also enters. If it doesn't enter, that's the anomaly, that's the strange thing. So the very basis for the moral position leads, in order to avoid hypocrisy, in order to avoid a disjointed system, and in order to avoid bad example, where people say something is wrong but I am going to do it anyway, is not— Today it's abortion, tomorrow it's who knows what else. I am not saying the legal struggle will solve everything. The moral and legal have to go in tandem.

MR. BUCKLEY: You are familiar with the apothegm, Who says A must say B. And if the disappointment/sorrow/horror you feel when a fetus is aborted traces to the humanity of what other people would call simply protoplasm, does it not follow that as an inchoate human being, it should be entitled to the protection of the law, ineffective though that law may be.

MS. WOLF: I understand your reasoning and yet I'm going to say something very honest right now, which isn't clean but it's true, which is that I believe that abortion is more morally grave as the pregnancy progresses. And I am much less disturbed by the— In fact, I am not very—

MR. BUCKLEY: Like the 40-day business.

MS. WOLF: Well, in my personal value system, RU486, which aborts what is

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in effect—

MR. BUCKLEY: In a week or so, yes.

MS. WOLF: In a week. —Doesn't disturb me. A third trimester or second trimester abortion profoundly disturbs me. I've just said it, I know it's not a clean solution to the world's ills, but it's how I feel—

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, I think a lot of people feel that way, yes.

MS. WOLF: —and so I think our task is to make sure that if, God forbid, there have to be abortions, they're as early as possible and with as little destruction as possible. The second thing I want to say is that there is a profound hypocrisy, I feel, in what is many pro-lifers' position. Again, I say this with respect for the— I've received many letters since I wrote this article from pro-lifers who do something quite beautiful, which is they advocate a seamless web concept: Life begins at birth; they're against euthanasia, they're against war, they're pacifists—

MR. BUCKLEY: Begins at conception or at birth?

MS. WOLF: I'm sorry, that was a slip. Conception. Thank you. And that makes sense to me. What seems to me grossly hypocritical, grossly immoral, you know, if we are going to throw around moral language, I think it is despicable to say— If you're going to say something is a baby, right, it's a baby. The only reason to say abortion is okay in the case of rape or incest is pure misogyny. Why are those— You know, if they are babies, the only motivation you have for saying that is all right is simply to punish women for sexual desire.

MS. ALVARE: If I could respond first of all as someone who takes that label that may not be known to a lot of people outside maybe abortion or Catholic circles, of a consistent ethic Catholic. Just first, the point that even if a pro-lifer is what you would consider not morally together on other issues, still, to argue against their position on abortion because they are flawed in other arenas in your judgment does not work as a logical basis.

MS. WOLF: But this is about their abortion position. It's okay in the case of rape and incest?

MS. ALVARE: Oh, but with regard to abortion—

MS. WOLF: Why is that okay if it's not a misogynist position?

MS. ALVARE: Well, actually what goes as the pro-life movement does not take that position. The pro-life movement there takes the position—

MS. WOLF: —take that position.

MS. ALVARE: Well, but they are not the movement.

MS. WOLF: But they're endorsed by the movement.

MS. ALVARE: They are not the people making the policies. The position on rape and incest, and again, it was so gratifying, again, given the words in your essay talking about this is human life and so forth, we could even talk that way about rape-or incest-conceived children, that a child should not have the circumstances of his or her conception held against them.

MS. WOLF: Oh, I think that's preposterous.

MS. ALVARE: We recognize—

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MR. BUCKLEY: We certainly say that about bastards, don't we?

MS. ALVARE: We recognize—

MR. BUCKLEY: And correctly.

MS. ALVARE: —children born on the wrong side of the tracks economically and we say it about children born in poor countries—

MR. BUCKLEY: Hard cases make bad law, isn't that right?

MS. ALVARE: Indeed, the rape/incest question—they're about one percent of all abortions—dominates the discussion. It merits serious consideration.

MS. WOLF: It certainly does.

MS. ALVARE: But we feel that we have to speak out on behalf of those children as well, number one, but again, just to add this for your benefit, as a consistent ethic thinker, we feel morally obligated at the same time to the mother, to offer what we can to her for whatever it takes to ease her pain, and—

MS. WOLF: Well, one thing—

MS. ALVARE: —indeed, many of them think abortion merely exacerbates it.

MS. WOLF: Another place where you and I profoundly disagree—and I am sorry, a minute ago I misunderstood what you were saying—I do have to say that it is good to hear you essentially repudiate intellectually and emotionally the rape and incest—misogynist in my view—exemption, but I have not heard a lot of your cohorts repudiate it. I have heard a lot of— I believe President— I'm sorry, the aspiring candidate for the presidency endorses the rape and incest exemption—

MS. ALVARE: Well, the wonderful thing about—

MS. WOLF: —and that is not consistent with—

MS. ALVARE: —being the church is that we don't endorse or oppose politics, and so we never have to reduce religion to one candidate.

MS. WOLF: But when people like me—

MS. ALVARE: I love it. *[laughter]*

MS. WOLF: When people like me worry that what comes across very often as a fine, high-flown moral language is in fact old-fashioned misogyny and the desire to oppress women, I would love to believe that that does not motivate most of your fellow constituents, but when I hear the rape and incest exemption, I am thinking that is a millennia-old tactic of making sure that if women have pleasure, they suffer for it and they are punished for it.

MS. ALVARE: Well, if my empty press conferences are any sign, the press isn't terribly interested in many cases in what I have to say on that or other things, so you may not have heard it.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, let's pause for a moment on this "Hard cases make bad law." If less than one percent are central to many people's concern, i.e., rape and incest—quite understandably so in my judgment—is that any excuse at all for the attitude towards the others at the same time? It seems to me a person of philosophical exactitude would have to say, If I just finished saying that the fetus is a life, it's none of my philosophical concern how it became a life.

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MS. WOLF: I agree with you, and that is consistent with my position, which is that all fetuses, no matter how they were conceived, are equally—

MR. BUCKLEY: Whatever they are.

MS. WOLF: —the beginnings of human life, and that it's perverse to indemnify some of them at the expense of others, and that consistently, in my view—

MR. BUCKLEY: It's the Who says A must say B business.

MS. WOLF: —sometimes a woman needs to recognize that her life demands must override, or that she must have the choice to consciously, regretfully, and mournfully take a life.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, would you go so far in the third trimester to say you, Naomi Wolf, would vote to deconstitutionalize the right of abortion at that period?

MS. WOLF: You know, this is a very wonderful country—

MR. BUCKLEY: We've got 20 seconds. *[laughter]*

MS. WOLF: —in its reverence for personhood, but it's an unusual country in that in most other countries, you can have an abortion up to three months or four months and then that's it. I, as I said, am profoundly uncomfortable with late trimester abortions, unhappy about them, and I think we should make a world in which no woman has to choose such a disastrous outcome.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, thank you, Naomi Wolf; thank you, Helen Alvare; thank you, ladies and gentlemen.



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APPENDIX C

[After the *Firing Line* taping (see Appendix B), we asked Mrs. Alvaré if she would like to “add anything” for publication; in due course she sent us the following brief commentary. As noted, Mrs. Alvaré is the director of planning and information for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.—Ed.]

“For God’s sake, I know it’s hard . . .”

Helen Alvaré

It’s my all-too-often practice—put it down to an excess of enthusiasm—to respond to arguments defending legal abortion with a rapid-fire response to every large and small flaw they contain. This is not a pretty sight, much as it satisfies my need to demonstrate that the pro-life position is intellectually coherent. Also, in the case of Naomi Wolf’s important essay, “Our Bodies, Our Souls,” it seems ungracious. Therefore, in addition to the verbiage I had the opportunity to use during my *Firing Line* appearance opposite Ms. Wolf, I will speak to only two points.

God

Is God more than the One who swoops down at the end of all the action to offer unconditional love and redemption? It doesn’t seem so from Ms. Wolf’s essay. Before any abortion, God seems to have no particular opinion about it. God is assigned no particular role in the formation of conscience. With so little role to play, God is quite easily turned into nothing more than a verbal shield, employed by those like President Clinton, who wants to assure Americans that his decision to support abortion on demand wasn’t made without some prayer.

Giving it all up

At some point in every debate with an abortion advocate, everything in me wants to cry out, “For God’s sake, I know it’s hard, but isn’t it patently obvious that we’d all be better off if we renounced killing entirely?! Wouldn’t that kind of stunning moral leadership be fabulous? Come on, you know it would!” My gut response to Naomi Wolf’s piece was the same. She writes eloquently of the personal grief, the sense of moral failure, the natural repulsion that flows from abortion itself. Why won’t she go that extra step and simply renounce the “right” that grounds it all?

I don’t mean to sound ungrateful. As one who debates abortion on a regular basis, I can testify that Ms. Wolf has gone further than any abortion advocate I have ever encountered when it comes to calling abortion what it is; and expressing dismay over its fatal character. But of course, there is much that is unsatisfying about where she leaves off. In fact, Ms. Wolf herself ought to be less than satisfied with the conclusion that abortion is a “moral iniquity” but ought to remain a legal right. Because, until the right is renounced, the world Ms. Wolf wants—in which the loss of unborn lives is mourned and women are celebrated

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as an equal creation with men—won't happen.

I am not suggesting that the end of legal abortion is a panacea that will usher in moral perfection. But I do hold that supporting the existence of a legal right to kill certain members of the human race is indeed a huge obstacle to internalizing the fundamental equality of everything human.

Ms. Wolf would argue that being aware that abortion is wrong and seeking redemption is enough. Maybe just enough for the mother—but the baby is dead. There's no mending that in this world. And the community in which the abortion right exists is well aware that another mother and another could and will terminate her unborn child's life whenever she wishes. And the sibling or the father of an aborted child—will they fully mend in the permanent absence of a legally-destroyed child?

A large part of the reason why Ms. Wolf comes to different conclusions from mine in this regard is her understanding of the "freedom" within which she wants to preserve the abortion right. "Freedom means that women must be free to choose self or to choose selfishly," she says. In this particular instance, of course, she includes killing within "selfish choices." The potential for disrespect for life increases, not decreases. Every group with lesser power suffers disproportionately. Women won't fare well, and the unborn won't ever be really mourned. Not even if we give everybody the license and encouragement to regret their "selfish" choices and to try to mend them.

Only when freedom is understood very differently—in a way exclusive of any "right" to harm another—will the whole human project take a turn for the better. Only then will there be even a framework for truly understanding why we are sorry to kill the unborn, and why their mothers deserve a world better than the one that led them to do it. Authentic freedom, for example, is inherently communal, and thus exclusive of a "right" to abortion. This is so for a number of reasons: first, practically speaking, of course, there is no freedom for anyone if everyone is free to harm another. But second, and perhaps more difficult to grasp, human beings are inherently social creatures who derive a good deal of their happiness by giving themselves in some way to another. It's the old story of the volunteer who swears she gets more from those she serves than they ever get from her. Her freedom, her humanity, are enhanced by her self-donation. The better world Ms. Wolf has in mind for women and for everyone in the future won't be brought about coincident with the continued exercise of "freedom" exclusive of community obligation, and even personal sacrifice.

Furthermore, happiness and equality for the whole human community, including women, will not come about in a world where "freedom" is *not* understood as subject to truth. Human beings operate according to certain natural laws. This is understood by people of every faith and no faith, and popularized in best-sellers like *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* and *The Road Less Traveled*. Whether they eat or smoke too much and ruin their bodies, or whether they harden their hearts against the poor, human beings reap a loss of happiness,

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of fullness of life, of freedom. And when an abortion occurs, everybody involved loses some freedom in the long run.

Ms. Wolf knows that abortion itself is inescapably destructive. But by refusing to renounce the right, she leaves herself without a bold plan to remake us into a society on its way toward cherishing life. We have to *be* good to *have* a good society. We have to renounce evil means—even toward the good end of women’s equality. Every abortion partially makes us who we are. Renouncing the right will help make us better.

And will such unilateral disarmament seem foolish in a selfish culture, especially to women who have suffered disproportionately from it? Yes—if freedom really equals only “self first.” But not if freedom, for women and men, includes everybody and serves the truth about human nature.



'It's a subtle perfume, designed to drive men wild — but in a sexually responsible way.'

THE SPECTATOR 25 November 1995

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[The following first appeared as the lead article in the Winter, 1996 issue of *The Women's Quarterly* (published by the *Independent Women's Forum* in Washington, D.C.) under the headline below, with a subhead noting that the author "explains why the pro-choice movement is suddenly playing defense." Ms. Crandall is described as the "former communications director at *The Center for Strategic Studies*" in Washington, who "now writes for the *Science & Environmental Policy Project* in Fairfax, Virginia." Her article is reprinted here with permission (© 1996 by the *Independent Women's Forum*).]

The Fetus Beat Us

Candace Crandall

Over the past six months, the morale of the pro-choice side of the abortion stalemate has visibly collapsed. *Roe v. Wade* remains the law of the land, and 1.5 million abortions continue to be performed every year. But defenders of the right to an abortion—once so supremely self-confident—now express unprecedented doubts and misgivings about their cause.

In October, Norma McCorvey—the "Jane Roe" in *Roe v. Wade*—dramatically defected from the pro-abortion camp, overcome with guilt, she said, at the sight of empty swings in a playground. That same month glitter feminist Naomi Wolf published an anguished piece in the *New Republic*, warning abortion-rights supporters that they stood in danger of becoming "callous, selfish, and casually destructive men and women who share a cheapened view of human life." Only a few weeks before, the *Atlantic Monthly* had published an appeal to liberals by Professor George McKenna of New York's City College, urging them to recognize abortion as perhaps necessary, but certainly evil.

Two politicians who ventured into the 1996 race in the confidence that their records on abortion would win over the pro-choice majority alleged to lurk inside the Republican party—Governor Pete Wilson of California and Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania—ignominiously backed out. The Republican presidential nominee in 1996 will again be pro-life, as he has in every year since 1980.

The Congress, which battled only three years ago to junk the Hyde Amendment prohibiting federal funding of abortion, has likewise become inhospitable to abortion. Abortion opponents were permitted to display gruesome drawings during the fierce November debate over banning partial-birth abortions. Dozens of pro-choice Democrats, including House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt and former Commerce committee chairman John Dingell, joined Republicans in voting for the ban.

Even the Supreme Court speaks a little more diffidently on the subject of abortion. In a 1989 case, *Webster v. Director of Reproductive Health Services*, and its 1992 decision in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the Court permitted states to limit abortion rights, especially those of minors, without fear of falling foul of the Fourteenth Amendment. Indeed, the Supreme Court seems to be continuing

to uphold *Roe v. Wade* less because it believes that decision to have been correct than because it fears damaging its own authority by conceding that the decision was mistaken.

What happened? How did the pro-choice side lose its way?

The answer couldn't be simpler. Proponents of abortion rights overcame Americans' qualms about the procedure with a long series of claims about the benefits of unrestricted abortion on demand. Without exception, those claims have proven false.

Perhaps the most powerful of the pro-choice arguments was the claim that any infringement of the right to an abortion would return America to the dark ages when thousands of women died because of unsafe, back-alley abortions—between five thousand and ten thousand a year was the figure usually given by abortion proponents in the 1970s. In fact, it wasn't *Roe v. Wade* that made abortion safe: it was the availability of antibiotics beginning in the 1940s. And at no time could the number of abortion fatalities ever have come anywhere close to the five thousand to ten thousand number.

The National Center for Health Statistics confirms that 1,313 women died obtaining illegal abortions in 1940, most of them victims of infection. But as penicillin and sulfa drugs spread—and as medical techniques improved—abortion-related deaths fell off sharply: only 159 in 1966, forty-one in 1972.

Had pre-*Roe* abortions been so very dangerous, we would have expected a sharp drop-off in the death rate among women after *Roe*. But Centers for Disease Control statistics show no decline in the years after *Roe* in the death rate of women aged fifteen to thirty-four, the group of women who account for ninety-four percent of all abortions.

Nor were the abortionists of the 1950s and 1960s the untrained butchers of legend: Dr. Mary Calderone, a former medical director for Planned Parenthood, estimated (in the *American Journal of Public Health*) in 1960 that ninety percent of all illegal abortions were performed by qualified physicians.

Another persuasive argument put forth by abortion advocates was that by guaranteeing that every child was a wanted child, legal abortion would protect children from being born into poverty, reduce illegitimacy rates, and help to eliminate the horrors of child abuse. That argument too has been spectacularly falsified.

Child poverty? Abortion advocates like Senator Jacob Javits of New York darkly suggested in the 1970s that America could get rid of poverty by getting rid of the poor. He described New York's decision to legalize abortion as "a significant step forward in dealing with the human problems of our state."

The Commission on Population Growth established by President Nixon in 1970 agreed. In the second of its three reports, issued in March 1972, it called for Medicaid-funded abortions as necessary weapons in the war on poverty: "Unwanted fertility is highest among those whose levels of education and income

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are lowest. . . .”

But in fact child poverty rates have multiplied since then; the hope that America could abort poverty out of existence has not been borne out.

The commission also predicted that the legalization of abortion would reduce illegitimacy rates. That proved staggeringly incorrect. Only 10.7 percent of all births were to unmarried mothers in 1970. By 1975, after *Roe*, the illegitimacy rate had jumped to 14.3 percent. It now stands at twenty-six percent. Two-thirds of all black children are born out of wedlock.

Predictions of the alleviation of child abuse have proven no more accurate. The National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect reported 669,000 incidents of abuse in 1976 (the first year for which it has data) and three million incidents of abuse in 1994.

There was probably something disingenuous even at the time in abortion advocates' concern for children. Far more sincere—and passionate—was their argument that untrammelled abortion rights were indispensable to women's equality. In the early 1970s, abortion advocacy groups, such as the National Organization for Women, the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (later the National Abortion Rights Action League), and the President's Advisory Council on the Status of Women, insisted that any limit on abortion violated a woman's right to control her body.

Feminist author Shana Alexander expressed this point of view forcefully in an article in the October 2, 1972 *Newsweek*. She praised the demise of “Victorian sexual hypocrisy,” and divided women into three categories: the most enlightened, who were now “legally able to terminate unwanted pregnancies”; the semi-enlightened, whose divorces had helped them to “gain a new understanding of their property rights and the fact that, through the very act of marriage, they surrendered certain of their fundamental human rights, including even their name”; and, most backward of all, “the so-called happily married women” who failed to recognize their oppression.

Feminist advocacy of abortion was powerfully seconded by the terror incited by Stanford biologist Paul Ehrlich's bestselling book, *The Population Bomb*, published in 1968. All ocean life would die of DDT poisoning by 1979, Ehrlich warned. Nor would Americans be spared. Thousands would die in smog disasters in New York and Los Angeles. Life expectancy in the United States would plunge to just forty-two years by 1980, as pollution-induced cancer epidemics ravaged the population.

Ehrlich co-founded the group Zero Population Growth to save the world from such destruction. To the public, the forecasts of this scientist, reported and amplified in the media, seemed appallingly plausible. By 1971, the number of children desired by young married women had dropped to an average of 2.4, just shy of Zero Population Growth's recommended 2.1. The United States birthrate tumbled from its postwar highs, and population experts credited the new environmental

ideology as a factor in the decline. Press reports told of earnest young college girls having themselves surgically sterilized rather than bring any more children into an overcrowded world. In a controversial two-part episode of the popular CBS sitcom "Maude" broadcast in 1972, the title character chose to have an abortion to end an unplanned pregnancy: a *New York Times* reporter intimated that the show was prompted by a \$5,000 prize offered by the Population Institute for the best prime time script concerning population control.

Paul Ehrlich looks pretty silly now. Life expectancies in both the United States and the Third World are lengthening. Western European countries fret over birth-rates below replacement levels, and birthrates in Africa, Asia, and Latin America have been falling for twenty-five years. Economic growth has brought creature comforts and better health to an increasing fraction of the human population everywhere on the planet.

Perhaps the last of the abortion myths to tumble is the familiar refrain that abortion ought to be a matter between a woman and her doctor. More and more, abortion is a matter between a woman and a specialized abortion clinic that offers little support or counseling. Two-thirds of the obstetricians and gynecologists in practice in the United States refuse to perform abortions, according to a survey released by the Kaiser Family Foundation in September 1995. The reasons given by these doctors only rarely included pressure from anti-abortion activists. Most doctors cited religious scruples, or simply said they did not like doing them.

The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology found the same levels of reluctance in a similar study done in 1985. The college found that even of the one-third of obstetricians and gynecologists who perform abortions, most do four or fewer per month. A majority of the 1.5 million abortions in the United States each year are done by just two percent of all obstetricians and gynecologists.

Pro-choice groups now pin their hopes on RU-486 and other abortion-inducing drugs as a way of bypassing the need for physicians. But this type of abortion, in which the dead fetus may be passed in the toilet or shower, may be even more emotionally traumatic for women than current procedures. It certainly does nothing to reassure the public that abortion is humane.

Instead, abortion, in the public mind, has become linked to sexual irresponsibility and the degradation of sound values and human life. Women may be free from "forced" childbearing, but increasing numbers of them are bearing and rearing their children alone. And, contrary to pro-choice assertions, figures from the Centers for Disease Control show that many of those having abortions are using the procedure as a form of birth control: of those who opted for abortion last year, nearly half had had at least one previous abortion. Nearly one in five had had two or more previous abortions.

Further, that the nation should aim, as the Commission on Population Growth recommended in 1972, "toward the development of a basic ethical principle that

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only wanted children are brought into the world” is disturbing philosophically. Should a human being’s right to existence depend solely on how much it is desired by another? Does support for abortion on demand lead us toward eliminating all of the unwanted, those whose suffering, or potential suffering, we decide is too much for them (or us) to bear?

A September 1995 Gallup poll shows the United States divided between those who take the more liberal view that abortion should be legal in “any” or “most” circumstances (forty-five percent) and those who take the more conservative view that it should be illegal or legal only in extreme circumstances, i.e., rape, incest, or fetal deformity (fifty-one percent). But single-issue surveys are meaningless in gauging whether support for abortion is a voting issue. Increasingly, Americans say they are personally opposed to abortion, yet favor the availability of legal abortion for someone else. That kind of soft support is vulnerable to erosion in the face of pitched congressional battles over gruesome medical procedures.

We are now in an election year in which the much-maligned Catholics—one-quarter of the U.S. electorate—have been identified as the swing vote between solidly Democratic blacks and Jews and solidly Republican evangelical Protestants. Abortion-rights advocates (with whom I sympathize) should take heed. The debate over partial-birth abortions—a procedure in which the physician partly delivers the fetus, feet first, then kills it by piercing its skull with scissors, attaching a high-powered suction device and sucking out its brain—revealed not only a disturbing brutality toward the unborn, but also the prevalence of second- and third-trimester abortions. If abortion advocates remain rigid ideologues, unwilling to consider even the slightest restriction on a woman’s right to choose, it could be a tough year for them at the polls.



'Let's play Mummies and absent Daddies.'

THE SPECTATOR 24 November 1990

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[The following article appeared on the Op-Ed page of the Orange County Register (California) on August 9, 1995, and is reprinted here with permission of the author. Mr. Stetson, director of the David Institute, a social research group, is editor of the anthology *The Silent Subject: Reflections on the Unborn in American Culture*, which was published in January, 1996 by Praeger Publishers.]

Fatherlessness is born of the “choice” culture

Brad Stetson

It is now generally acknowledged that there is a crisis of fatherlessness in this country. Whether deadbeat dads, absent dads, or men who have never accepted paternity for their children, many American men have unilaterally decided that their acts of sexual intercourse do not in any way obligate them morally to the offspring that may result.

There has of late been a spate of detailed sociological studies documenting the personal and social destructiveness of this trend. Few, though, have broached the obvious but politically incorrect possibility that the withering of American fatherhood is significantly related to the social ethos erected the past three decades to support the culture of “choice.” If we consider the psychological effects on men of our culture saturation with the principle of “choice,” it’s not hard to understand why men are becoming “pro-choice” about fatherhood.

The ethical imperative of “my body, my choice” has meant that women can decide whether or not to give birth once they become pregnant. But this principle—that personal, bodily acts (like sexual intercourse) only require one’s moral commitments if one wants them to—has not stayed confined to the narrow preserve of abortion rights. Its prominent repetition through the years has caused it to become installed in the public consciousness as an all-purpose—but very low grade—ethical touchstone for determining what one’s moral duties are. So, women choose whether to become mothers, or more accurately, whether to give birth to the children they conceive. They choose whether to become mothers in the social sense. But men do not choose to become fathers. In fact, women—through electing either to obtain or not to obtain an abortion—choose *for* men whether men will become fathers and whether men will be legally obligated to pay, over the course of nearly two decades, a substantial amount of money in child support.

The one-sidedness of this decision power is patent. Men’s objections to it—which are rare because of the *de rigueur* assent to “choice” and the intimidating feminist scorn which awaits any objection—are met with the retort, “Don’t have intercourse if you’re not ready to accept the duties of a father.” But the same logic, “Don’t have intercourse if you’re not ready to accept the duties of a mother,” does not apply to women. They are allowed to choose whether or not to be a parent. Since men know that the women they’ve impregnated could just as easily

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obtain an abortion as give birth to the child, they reason that if she forgoes the abortion—and they do not wish to assume the varied and sustained obligations of fatherhood—then the women should have sole responsibility for the child. Why should I be responsible, a man thinks, when she could have had an abortion? If she wants to choose to be a mother, that's fine for her, but she should not be able to influence my social and economic future by choosing for me whether I am to be a father. My body, my choice. So fatherhood, and the obligations attendant to it, are optional. Men have learned from the culture of "choice" that children's interests can permissibly be subjugated to their own personal desires, should the two conflict. Thus, our cultural enthroning of "choice" communicates to fathers, as it does to mothers, that children need not really be our top priority.

But beyond fomenting fatherlessness, "choice" has also worked to disengage men from their offspring, since their offspring don't socially become their offspring unless the women want them to. Hence, some men are psychologically ill-prepared to participate in raising their children once they are born because they suspended the development of a parental sense within themselves, obviously not wanting to experience the pain of having emotionally embraced their child only to lose him or her to abortion. Indeed, the sustained uncertainty that the possibility of abortion presents can even subtly turn a man's offspring into a menace in his own eyes as its potential demise becomes the source of considerable anxiety. This uncertainty, plus the powerful cultural ascendancy of "a woman's right to choose," demotivates men from seeking to encourage the formation within themselves of emotional and psychological ties to their children. A man is understandably hesitant to embark down the existentially profound road of fatherhood if he is unsure—and utterly powerless to establish—that his child will actually be born.

I'm reminded of the neo-Marxist/eco-feminist man I knew in graduate school who informed me with genuine elation and humble joy that his fiancée (who was also manning the barricades) was pregnant. When I saw him a week later, his ashen face and seething rage underlined the anguish he said he felt at learning that his fiancée had just aborted their unborn child. He, like so many men today, learned that the law of "choice" is a great wall separating him from his nascent children. Of course, had he not wished to be a father, this wall would have become a passageway to the abandonment of his most profound purpose as a man. How tragic it is that what is thought to be the empowerment of women—"choice"—at the same time discourages men from entering into fatherhood, and so contributes to the profound social corrosion wrought by fatherlessness.

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[The following appeared in the Los Angeles Times (Sunday, January 28, 1996) as a "Column Right" opinion piece, and is reprinted here with the author's permission. Mr. Klinghoffer is the literary editor of National Review magazine.]

Abortion Is the True Test of Conservatism

David Klinghoffer

'Pro-life' and 'pro-choice' define how people
feel about God's place in modern life.

If you were to parachute a representative of any previous century of American history into these final years of our own, he would find it odd how distracted Americans are by abortion, a simple surgery of which only a small percentage of us take advantage. Certain phrases are offered to explain the centrality of abortion. Pro-choicers talk about "a woman's right to choose," pro-lifers about the endangered "life of a human being." Both of these, however, are mainly sloganeering, leaving the mystery unsolved.

Fortunately, the matter was clarified for me the other day by, of all things, a liberal Republican.

Oh, he denied that he was a liberal. He had called me because he was launching a Jewish Republican political action committee. Since I'm Jewish and work at a conservative magazine, he thought I could help him get some friendly publicity. He began by explaining that while he is interested in funding Republican politicians who support Israel, the group has other priorities: economic responsibility, entrepreneurship, welfare reform.

He kept describing the PAC as "politically conservative," and stressed his membership in the conservative Federalist Society and his friendship at Yale with several future right-wing journalists. Yet something about his summary of the PAC's main interests made me suspicious. It's one of the tricks of liberal Republican pols seeking to woo naive conservatives to invoke our favorite word ("conservative") and then talk about economics a lot. To clear things up, I asked this PAC organizer what view he took of abortion. After all, the abortion issue provides a useful service: Ask someone if he's "pro-life" and you can almost always guess what he thinks about 20 apparently unrelated issues.

The PACman on the other end of the phone became uncomfortable and started talking about economics again. He said his PAC didn't want to get involved in any "litmus tests." But I told him it was too late for that. Abortion is already such a test, just like the one we used to perform in high-school chemistry class: Expose litmus paper to an acid and it turns red, to a base and it turns blue.

Finally, the guy admitted that he was "pro-choice" and repeated his protest about litmus tests. I apologized for hassling him and admitted that I wasn't sure why conservatives like me have adopted abortion as a defining issue above almost all

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others. He knew. "I'll tell you why it keeps coming up," he said. "It's because of religion. All the people who are antiabortion are religious."

That isn't true, and neither is the converse, that everyone who is pro-choice is nonreligious. But I realized that my Republican acquaintance had put his liberal finger on something fundamental.

It is true that the only convincing arguments against abortion are religious ones. The nonthreatening rhetoric you sometimes hear about abortion as an act at odds with "nature" always sounds strained. Where is the imperative in nature? People do unnatural things, like smoking cigarettes and flying in airplanes, all the time. What sets abortion apart from the other political issues is that advocates on either side differ about no less weighty a question than the proper place of God in the governing of our lives.

As long as abortion has been a technological possibility, the historically monotheistic faiths have opposed it. The Pledge of Allegiance speaks of the United States as "one nation under God." That sentiment used to be a matter of consensus, but the consensus has begun to fall apart. It was inevitable that the resulting disagreement—*are we "under God" or not?*—would find a way to express itself in politics. No issue poses the question in a starker fashion than does abortion.

So it keeps coming up, and that is something we should be glad about, whether we favor free access to abortion or not. With the rise of liberal religion and the associated idea that God should be an object of strictly private devotion, his commandments never "imposed" on others, there is a danger that even nonliberals will slide, unreflecting, into a philosophy at radical variance with traditional thought about God and man. That is something it makes sense to do, if ever, only with all due deliberation. If we are to slide, let's think about it first. If on this fundamental question the America of today is to break with the America described in the Pledge of Allegiance, we had better consider very seriously what that will mean about us and our relationship to God.

Abortion is much more than a litmus test. The question it asks is whether God is sovereign over us or we over him. Forget the flat tax. Let's talk about abortion.

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[The following opinion piece first appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on February 9, 1996, and is reprinted here with permission (© 1996 by The *Philadelphia Inquirer*). Mr. Boldt is the paper's editorial-page editor.]

Clinton's folly about abortion

David Boldt

I have a generally high regard for Bill Clinton.

I am not one of those who have criticized him for demonstrating a certain, how shall we say, *malleability* in moving his agenda forward.

A certain amount of deviousness has always been an essential tool of the presidency. One of Franklin Roosevelt's cabinet officers once complained that FDR "never spoke with complete frankness even to his most loyal supporters."

That said, Clinton's announced decision to veto the ban on brain-suction abortions seems appalling, because here is a case where the President apparently violates his own considered moral judgment.

At the American Society of Newspaper Editors' convention in 1994, he was asked about U.S. support of family-planning programs in countries that encouraged abortions. "My position on this is pretty clear," he said. "At a minimum, we should not fund abortions when the child is capable of living outside the mother's womb."

Such abortions, he clearly felt, were wrong, and noted that they could be "criminalized" even under the terms of *Roe v. Wade*.

This seemed a good, forthright position that, happily enough, was congruent with my own.

I did wonder whether the President was aware that, although *Roe* permitted regulation of late abortions, such restrictions were unusual. The United States today is more permissive regarding third-trimester abortions than any other developed nation. Perhaps, I thought, I should drop him a note. He might want to do something.

Why the curious turn?

Later, I came upon evidence that the President's feelings about late-term abortions, as expressed that day, were not just a spontaneous reaction to an unexpected question. The year before, in a letter to Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua, Clinton said he did not support abortion "when viability has occurred."

Yet now he has said he will veto a ban on a procedure that has been used thousands of times, according to the doctors who employ it, for elective abortions of fetuses in the sixth month of development and later, many of which would be viable. He would do this, according to press secretary Mike McCurry, because enactment of the legislation "would represent an erosion of a woman's right to choose."

I don't pretend to know what's going on here. Apparently there is some Faustian

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political bargain that can only be darkly guessed at.

Public-opinion polls actually show overwhelming support for the ban, which has passed both houses of Congress, winning support from many usually solid abortion supporters such as Rep. Tom Foglietta of Philadelphia. (Pennsylvania's senators did split on the issue. Rick Santorum was a sponsor of the ban; Arlen Specter opposed it.)

A grisly procedure

Politics, of course, is being played on both sides. Abortion opponents have highlighted this procedure because of its sheer gruesomeness. In it, all of the fetus except the head is brought out of the birth canal. Then the point of a scissors is inserted in the back of the head, and the fetus' brains are extracted by suction.

Abortion supporters, for their part, have been willing to do anything to mitigate the horror. Kate Michelman of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League at one point contended that the fetus actually dies from the anesthesia administered to the pregnant woman, not the scissors.

This provoked an immediate response from Dr. Norig Ellson at Penn, president of the American Society of Anesthesiologists, who said that contention was simply untrue.

At some point, we all need to step back and recognize there is something very weird going on here, a schizoid imbalance of perception that goes beyond this legislation.

On the one hand, we have some couples having videos made, complete with background music, from sonograms showing their unborn child cavorting in the womb. Meanwhile, in other instances, fetuses at the same stage of development are being stabbed in the head and removed as non-malignant growths.

Somehow, sanity has to be restored. Enacting the proposed ban would be a step in that direction.

APPENDIX H

[The following column appeared in the *Washington Times* on November 5, 1995 (Copyright, 1995, Armstrong Williams; distributed by Los Angeles Times Syndicate, reprinted by permission).]

More Than Wishes on Pregnancy

Armstrong Williams

People on both sides of the abortion issue pay lip service to reducing abortions or providing abortion alternatives. Even “pro-choicers” are uncomfortable enough with abortion that they agree it isn’t simply a wonderful thing. By calling it a “difficult decision” or “intensely personal,” they show that they aren’t talking about an appendectomy.

Sometimes, in moments of unguarded candor, they let even more slip, such as the time Patricia Ireland, head of the National Organization for Women, inadvertently called abortion a “bad thing.” President Clinton even went further during a speech in Chillicothe, Ohio, delivered on Feb. 19, 1993. He said, “Very few Americans believe that all abortions all the time are all right. Almost all Americans believe that abortions should be illegal when the children can live without the mother’s assistance, when the children can live outside the mother’s womb.”

Even Mr. Clinton, someone who has done everything within his power to expand access to abortion, admits what we all know—that abortion takes the lives of children. Medical science is ever clearer about this fact.

But the question is not really about medical science. It is about the lengths we are willing to go to protect ourselves from the consequences of our actions. Children are a great gift, but they can also be a tremendous burden to people unequipped to care for them. While many who declare themselves pro-life rightly oppose abortion on principle, too few pay enough attention to the fact that once a woman or girl is pregnant, the moralizing doesn’t help.

That is where the people who work at crisis counseling clinics come in. They “put their money where their mouth is,” so to speak. They are not content to assert that abortion is wrong. Nor are they satisfied with pious and empty wishes that abortions were more rare, because in truth both the pro-life and pro-choice faiths are empty without works. Instead, they give witness to their belief that abortion harms both the child and the mother without discounting the harsh realities of bearing a child in difficult circumstances.

Often, the women who come to crisis counseling clinics are poor or under pressure from a family member or boyfriend. They usually feel very alone, and almost always they are scared. They don’t approach an abortion with the liberated enthusiasm of feminist mythology. They feel trapped and are overwhelmed, perhaps horrified, at all the options they can envision.

Crisis counseling clinics give them hope by offering other, realistic options

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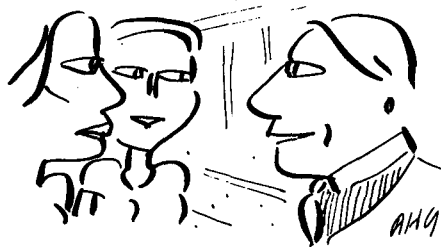
and assistance in realizing them. First, they provide information. Women seeking abortions are rarely aware of the emotional, physical and personal risks they could run. An abortion is a surgical procedure that can cause physical damage, sterility or even death. It usually damages the relationships it is supposed to save. Even if a woman decides to go ahead and have an abortion, she will be better off going into it without laboring under the delusions of rosy propaganda.

Second, crisis counseling clinics offer support for the pregnant woman in a variety of ways so she really does have a choice. When a woman is presented with real options and real hope, rarely does she opt for abortion. They help women find the services they need, such as housing or medical help. They offer emotional support. They can also address other problems, of which a crisis pregnancy is only a symptom.

Finally, they save the life of a child. Instead of oblivion, another person will experience the world and share the hopes and fears, tears and smiles, that are a part of life. One helpless human at a time, they lessen the carnage carried out in the name of human freedom and abetted by a soulless law. Because their services are free, crisis counseling clinics don't make money and rarely win admiration. Their only reward is seeing grateful women and their smiling babies who might not have been.

Everyone should support crisis pregnancy counseling clinics. Anyone who is truly pro-choice should advocate the other choices presented to women who most often would prefer not to have an abortion. Anyone who claims to want to see fewer abortions in the United States should support these organizations, which not only actually work to reduce the number of abortions but to lessen the burdens on women experiencing a crisis pregnancy.

Every choice every one of us makes every day stems from our mother's choice to let us live.



'Of course I didn't tell anybody. I didn't know it was a secret.'

THE SPECTATOR 11 May 1991

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