

ABORTION POLITICS & POLICY

THE NEED FOR MORAL TENSION

Marvin Rytting

HOW DO THE RIGHTS OF THE FETUS COMPARE TO THE RIGHTS OF THE MOTHER?

In his “Eschatological Laundry List: A Partial Register of the 927 (or was it 928?) Eternal Truths,” found in his book, *If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill him!*, Sheldon Kopp notes that “all important decisions must be made on the basis of insufficient data.”¹ This is certainly true of the questions surrounding abortion. The only thing that can be said with any certainty is that we do not know enough—and cannot know enough—to make an absolute judgment on the morality of a given abortion, let alone on abortions in general. This is only one of the dilemmas inherent in moral deliberations about abortion—a topic so incredibly complex that only a moral idiot can be content with a simple answer.²

The basic problem is a variation of the classic paradox of the bald man.³ If a man has only one little white hair on his head, do we say that he is bald? Certainly. What if he has two hairs? Yes. Three? Again, yes. What is the point at which he goes from being bald to not being bald? Is it between 371 and 372 hairs? Or between 754 and 755? Or 4,587 and 4,588? The only nonarbitrary point at which to divide the bald from the nonbald is between zero hairs and one hair. Yet the experience of the man with only one hair is obviously that of being bald and it would be absurd to maintain that he is not bald. Therefore, we must accept that the judgment of baldness is essentially an arbitrary one with no absolute dividing line to serve as a criterion. This is not

particularly difficult to accept because the judgment of baldness is not a crucial one (at least to those of us with hair) and does not need to be precise.

The same paradox operates with abortion—a crucial judgment which we would like to make precisely. But we cannot. Is it reasonable to call a single cell a person—even if it is a fertilized ovum? (Do we call a fertilized egg a chicken?) Do two cells make a person? How about four? Is the point at which we go from not being a person to being a person between 371 and 372 cells? Or 4,587 and 4,588? Or 3,547,943 and 3,547,944? The only nonarbitrary points are either the single cell moment of fertilization or the moment of birth.⁴ Many people have suggested other criteria for making the judgment about when the group of cells becomes a person such as the emergence of brain activity or the presence of individual differences (personality variables) or quickening or viability, but no single criterion is convincing—at least not to everyone, not even to every rational, moral, good person.

Some people have suggested that because the only nonarbitrary starting point is with the fertilized egg, the zygote should be defined as a person with full rights at that point.⁵ This, however, leads to many absurdities as ridiculous as saying that a man is not bald because he has one little white hair. The zygote certainly has nothing in common with a person—all it has is the potential to

become a person, if *many* things go right.⁶ There are many practical problems of considering the zygote to be a person. It would change the use of an IUD from contraception to murder, for example.⁷ There are also theological problems for Mormons. It would mean that the spirit enters the body at the moment of conception and would raise questions about the status of blastulas which do not implant. Does that satisfy the requirements for obtaining a body? And if that is all that "coming to earth" involves for untold trillions of spirits, why is earth life so important to the rest of us? Are we likely to arrive in the celestial kingdom and find dozens of little cells which we never knew were fertilized waiting for us to raise them? It is difficult to imagine the implications of this position as part of the Mormon vision of the plan of salvation and we should be wary of supporting a political position which makes this assumption.⁸

The rational conclusion is that we must accept the arbitrariness of the judgment of when a person becomes a person and live with ambiguity or not knowing the moral, legal, personal, or spiritual status of the unborn.⁹ Furthermore, the question of whether we define the fetus as a person or not is actually not the right one to be asking. It obscures the more important question for moral discourse, which is at what point the zygote or blastula or embryo or fetus—whatever it is at the time and irrespective of whether it is a person or not—acquires the rights which we accord to those of us who have already been born, particularly the right to life. Another way of asking the same question is at what point we value the unborn as much as we value the already born. The dilemma with this question is identical to the other paradoxes. There is no reasonable and nonarbitrary point at which the unborn go from a state of not being valued to being valued—from having no rights to having all rights. These questions are more useful than the question of when the fetus becomes a person because they lead us away from the distraction of trying to find scientific or theological answers and focus our attention on the moral issues involved.

I contend that the most reasonable way to consider the moral status of the unborn child is one of a gradual increase of rights over time. We value it more as it develops and grows and it increasingly becomes more deserving of the rights we accord to people. There are no points along the way, however, where there obviously should be dramatic increases in these rights.¹⁰ The problem is that we do not know how these rights increase. One possibility is a nonlinear increase which might approximate Figure 1. There would be a gradual increase during the pre-fetal phase with an accelerated rise during the period when the fetus is

developing recognizably human traits such as sexual differentiation, brain activity, and probably some personality characteristics. At the time of viability, the curve would start to level out and return to the gradual increase, which would continue with possibly a small jag upwards at the time of birth. An alternative possibility

THE IMPORTANT QUESTION IS AT WHAT POINT WE VALUE THE UNBORN AS MUCH AS WE VALUE THE ALREADY BORN.

would be a straight linear increase from time of conception until time of birth, but I prefer the first.

This conceptualization is a moral treatment of the issue. Legal treatments, however, require more clear-cut criteria for making decisions, so they have one or more arbitrary points at which there is an abrupt change in the legal status of the fetus. The current law, as mandated by the Supreme Court, has a **small increase** in the rights of the fetus at the end of the **first trimester** and a marked increase at the end of the **second trimester** with another increase at the time of **birth**.¹¹ The extreme right-to-life position would, by contrast, **legally** confer all rights at the time of conception and an extreme pro-abortion position (if one exists) would not confer any rights until the time of birth (see Figure 2). The legal position which most closely conforms to the moral curve is the Supreme Court decision of 1973, but it still is based on arbitrary points and will often deviate from the perfect moral decision made by an omniscient person.

At this point, there is still no moral dilemma because even a low level of rights—if it conflicts with no other rights—deserves to be honored, so, every fetus at every stage would have the right to live. There is, however, a potential conflict of rights. The woman within whom the embryo is developing has the right to some control over her body—the right to determine how to use her biological, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and financial resources.¹² To be a moral choice, the decision for or against an abortion must take into account the conflicting rights of the woman and the embryo. To ignore either is to dissipate the moral tension that a question as profoundly moral as abortion requires—a question which is both a matter of life and death and of free agency.

The addition of the rights of the potential mother increases the uncertainty because there is no absolute

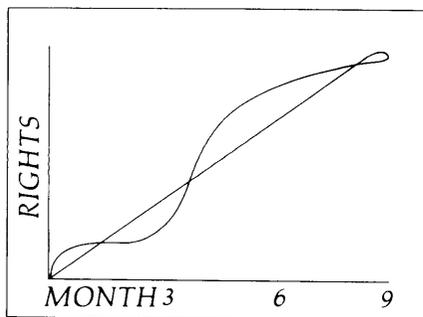


Figure 1

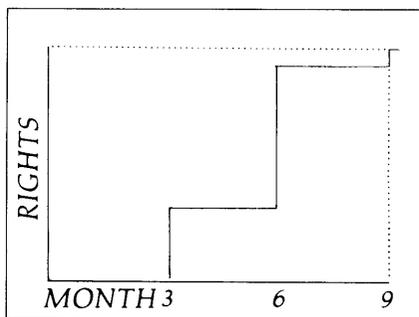


Figure 2

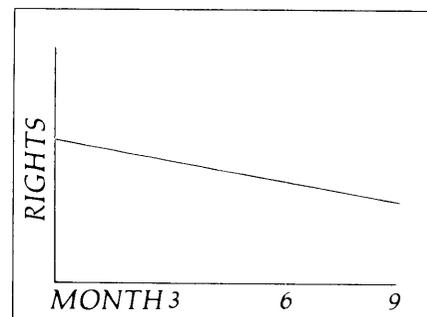


Figure 3

way of specifying how strong these rights are nor how they compare to the rights of the embryo. These rights also vary depending upon the circumstances of the woman, and they change over time.¹³ One possible curve for the general case would have a gradual decrease over time so that, as the woman delays the decision, her claims become less persuasive (see Figure 3.)¹⁴ The major variance in the level of these rights, however, comes from the situational variables rather than the change over time. This model assumes that the rights of the woman always start out superseding the rights of the zygote, but at some time between the second day of pregnancy and the last day, the lines cross and the rights of the fetus should take precedence. But there is no way of knowing when that happens. We do not know for sure when abortion is justified and when it is not.¹⁵

THE VIEW THAT DNA IS THE ESSENCE OF HUMAN LIFE IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE MATERIALISTIC THEORY OF HUMAN IDENTITY WHICH REJECTS THE EXISTENCE OF SPIRIT OR SOUL.

The ambiguity caused by this lack of knowledge has a paradoxical set of implications. On the one hand, we might be killing someone whose right to life (from an eternal perspective or even from a moral humanistic perspective) exceeds our rights to live the way we choose. This person, if allowed to develop fully, might make important contributions to humanity. We should therefore be very careful to weigh the moral implications of such an act. On the other hand, if we do not know how the status and rights of the fetus compare to the rights of the woman, there is no way for us to judge with certainty whether the abortion would be an immoral act or not, and we have absolutely no basis for making it a crime. Whereas from the moral perspective (particularly making a moral decision for our own behavior), we ought to give the benefit of the doubt to the potential life of the fetus, from the legal perspective, we should remember that in our society a person is considered to be innocent until proven guilty. If we cannot even prove that a crime has been committed, we cannot declare a person guilty, and therefore the benefit of the doubt should be given to the woman. It cannot be demonstrated that abortion poses a clear and present danger to the common good of society, and society's interest in protecting the ambiguous rights of potential members whom it does not recognize in any other way is unclear. Therefore, society has no right to interfere legally in a woman's private decision, except to insure the safety of the procedure.¹⁶

It is unfortunate that there is currently a very vocal and potentially successful campaign being waged to do precisely what this analysis suggests we ought not do—make abortion illegal. This is unfortunate. Not only would it be an unacceptable infringement upon personal freedom but the rhetoric is based upon sloppy moral thinking which ignores an important set of rights and therefore removes what ought to be a moral question from the moral arena, eliminating the moral tension

which should be part of the individual decision and replacing it with a political tension which polarizes the nation and causes those who favor the freedom of choice to concentrate on the political battle and neglect the moral tension which they too should feel. It is ironic that in so doing, the antiabortion movement might be actually encouraging abortion by making it a political symbol rather than a moral issue.¹⁷

As a Mormon feminist, this disturbs me. It concerns me both as a Mormon and as a feminist because from both perspectives the question of abortion raises value dilemmas for me; the polarization threatens to undermine values which I consider precious. Each end of the continuum denies important values and in the polarization process the truth is lost. It may surprise some people to hear that the value conflict is not between my Mormon values and my feminist values, but that within each set of values, I experience the same conflict. As a Mormon I naturally value life. In the case of abortion, the natural respect for life is augmented by valuing the process of parenting (both having children and raising families). I also value the experience of mortality and would hate to see spirits denied this experience, particularly the opportunity of progressing and developing potential. Therefore, the potential humanity of the fetus—even if it is not yet human—is a very strong value. At the same time, however, a dominant value in Mormonism is free agency; I vaguely remember fighting a significant battle over that value, and it seems to me that we won and established the importance of letting people choose between good and evil without being forced to do good. Thus I am alarmed at any attempts to deny the right to make moral decisions and free choices. This does not deny the right of society to pass laws to protect the common good, but it does suggest that we ought to look at laws very carefully to see if this is an area which should be a private moral decision. Abortion is just such an issue.

Feminism has the same value conflict, but the salience is reversed. Because women have been denied the right to choose (about many things, not only abortion), it is the salient value. But feminism also includes a profound respect for human life and individual rights and the development of potential. If feminism values helping people develop their potential, there ought to be a deep respect for potential life, and I sense in feminism a strong concern for the well being of the unborn. There is also in feminism an aversion to violence and a sensitivity which cannot be pleased with a complacent destruction of even potential life. As feminists, therefore, we should have a strong bias against abortion. There are alternatives which are worse, so the choice must exist, but we should never lose sight that abortion is always a negative choice—maybe the least negative, but still undesirable.

Someone ought to be pointing out the ambiguity of the abortion decision. Just as we do not know the true moral status of the fetus, so we do not know the future and what effect having a child will produce. It is not a given that an unwanted child cannot be accepted and loved, that a handicapped child cannot have a significant life, that a family which cannot afford another child is better off without it, that a premarital pregnancy will ruin the life of a high school girl, or even that a child conceived as the result of a rape cannot grow up to be a joy and comfort to the mother rather than the reminder of pain.

All of these can be true, and some of them may usually be true, but none of them are givens. There are no givens. Abortion is never the only answer—it may be the best solution in a specific situation, but it is not the absolutely obvious choice and should always be approached as a moral dilemma. We must not lose the moral tension that keeps us sensitive to the sanctity of life and the value of potential life.

It is difficult, however, to focus on this type of a moral awareness when we are threatened by a political assault upon the precious right to choose—to exercise free agency. Feminists have been fighting for this right for too long to give it up. How I wish that the political right-to-life movement had not polarized us and taken the discussion out of the moral arena. How I long for some honest, clear, rational moral discourse instead of the unthinking mouthing of slogans. Abortion needs to become truly a moral issue and for that to happen, we need to take it out of the political arena and accept the Supreme Court judgment of 1973. With its admittedly arbitrary dividing lines, this decision comes the closest to the moral model. “We must work together to create a moral climate rich enough to provide for abortion, but sensitive enough to life to accommodate a profound sense of loss.”¹⁸

LAWS REQUIRE CLEAR-CUT CRITERIA FOR MAKING DECISIONS, SO THEY HAVE ONE OR MORE ARBITRARY POINTS AT WHICH THERE IS AN ABRUPT CHANGE IN THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE FETUS.

The current antiabortion rhetoric bothers me for several reasons. I have already mentioned or implied that it polarizes society, misses the real moral issues, neglects the rights of women, keeps the prochoice people focused on the political fight rather than on a balanced moral discourse, and threatens a very important principle of free agency in an area where it is needed. In addition, it is an example of an irrational and negative use of power and a perversion of the political process by playing one-issue politics—the same perversion practiced by the gun lobby. Other areas of individual liberty are also threatened by this attempted imposition of one group’s moral code upon the nation. The antiabortionists also seem unconcerned about the negative social consequences of removing legal abortions as an option, such as increases in poverty, child and spouse abuse, organized crime, and the death and disease caused by unsafe illegal abortions.¹⁹

I am also bothered by a suspicion that the question of the fetus’s right to life is not the real issue, after all. Judging from the rhetoric of the fervent antiabortionists and the other issues they are interested in, it seems that the real reason they are against abortion is that it removes the punishment that the evil people who engage in premarital sex so richly deserve. If they were really concerned about preventing unnecessary killing, they would call for more and better sex education and dissemination of birth control information and materials to reduce unwanted pregnancy. But the current

coalition which is fighting abortion is also fighting birth control and sex education.²⁰ (They also ought to be against war, capital punishment, and handguns, but tend not to be.) The antiabortion movement seems to be part of a neo-Victorian antisex movement that has less to do with respect for the sanctity of life than with the need to keep women—and their sexuality—under control. This, of course, is just an impression, and I grant that some prochoice people may be for abortion as an escape from sexual responsibility rather than as a statement about freedom of choice, but that calls for a moral exhortation to them and does not justify the political excesses of the New Right.²¹

This is a personal statement about the moral issues and value conflicts involved in the abortion question. It is not presented as the Mormon view or a critique of the Mormon position. It is the perspective of one Mormon and is meant to illustrate only that it is possible to be a Mormon and have a reasonable moral position which calls for the continuation of legal abortions and that we, as Mormons, should be careful, lest in promoting one set of values too strongly, we overlook some which might be more important. I think it is important in this day of inflammatory rhetoric for a rational voice to be heard pointing out that while a blase use of abortion is immoral, denial of free agency is even more so. It could be a Mormon voice.

Notes

1. Sheldon B. Kopp, *If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him!* (Palo Alto, Ca.: Science and Behavior Books, 1972), p. 166.

2. There is, of course, personal revelation through which some might claim knowledge strong enough to make a decision, but such subjective knowledge is not an appropriate basis for making a general judgment—particularly a legal judgment which will effect others who may not share in that personal revelation. Such revelation is only for help with our individual moral decisions and should not be made binding upon others.

When I talk about morality, I am really talking about moral reasoning, not behavior. Thus, a moral idiot is someone whose reasoning is too simple to handle the complexity of the subject matter—someone who is thinking in terms of simple addition and subtraction when the problem calls for calculus. It is a judgment on the intellectual adequacy of the thinking, not the morality or worth of the person.

3. William Kneale and Martha Kneale, *The Development of Logic*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

4. And it is not even obvious that a zygote is all that different from a gamete, only that it has taken one more step along the path to becoming a person. Who is to say that fertilization is a more crucial step than implantation? They are both necessary; fertilization is merely antecedent. Maybe the unfertilized egg is a person, too, and all of those little sperm are really little people.

5. Actually, the moment of birth makes more sense than the moment of conception. For one thing, we can precisely determine when it happens and there are changes in many other things at this point. From a moral perspective, however, it is still an arbitrary point based upon mechanisms which we do not fully understand and which are not directly tied to any characteristics of the child. It is hard to deny the humanness of the unborn child the day before delivery when all that separates it from full humanness is a change in residence. The use of the moment of birth as the criterion is not widely advocated, however, so even though it makes more sense than the fertilization date, I focus on the latter.

6. When we consider all of the intricate things that must happen to that cell for it to become a person, it is a wonder that it makes it—it certainly is not a foregone conclusion that the potential will be realized. Not only are we not sure that the zygote will develop into a person, but at this stage, we do not even know if it will be one person or two persons, or a boy or a girl.

7. There are many potential complications. How do we fill out birth and death certificates for all of the little things that never implant? How can we tell if fertilization occurred in time to claim it as an income tax deduction if it happened just before the end of the year? Or can a woman who has a miscarriage claim an extra deduction for that year? Can the fetus demand a nonsmoking seat on an airplane even if the mother smokes? Can the government enforce this right on behalf of the fetus by making it illegal for pregnant women to smoke? Will genetic researchers working with “test-tube” babies be guilty of negligent homicide if the implantation is unsuccessful as it is 80 percent of the time? Some of these questions are facetious, but they illustrate the logical problems of considering life to begin at fertilization.

8. There is no established doctrine about exactly when the spirit enters the body—this for Mormons would be a key question, but we simply do not know. It

is popular to refer to Brigham Young's intimation that the spirit enters at the time of quickening, but he also suggested that if something happened between that time and the time of birth, the spirit would leave that body and have a chance to occupy another (see *Journal of Discourses*, 17:143 [July 19, 1874]), and the journal of Wilford Woodruff, October 16, 1857). This uncertainty is reflected in the instructions that records of stillborn children are to be kept in family histories but not in official church records nor genealogies. President McKay once offered the opinion that the Savior's visit to Nephi the night before his birth suggests that the spirit takes possession of the body at birth but that the Church has not made an authoritative answer. Joseph Fielding Smith expressed a personal opinion that stillborn children would be resurrected and be raised by the parents in the hereafter but has also admitted that the question "remains an unsolved mystery...." (See Lester Bush, "Birth Control Among the Mormons: Introduction to an Insistent Question," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* [Autumn 1976]: 42-43. Some details are from a draft manuscript, copy in my possession.) One biblical reference—that Adam became a living soul when God breathed into him the breath of life—can be interpreted as indicating that life starts with the first breath at birth. Irrespective of when the spirit enters the body, the Church has always regarded abortion as a sin and advised members not to participate, but we must maintain a distinction between a sin which might be immoral and a crime which ought to be illegal, with this judgment imposed upon non-Mormons as well.

9. Sheldon Kopp suggests that part of the dilemma that "we must live within the ambiguity of partial freedom, partial power, and partial knowledge" is that "we are [still] responsible for everything we do," and "no excuses will be accepted." This is a dilemma of existential proportions and "you can run [from it], but you can't hide." op. cit., p. 166.

10. Even after birth, we use the concept of increasing rights as the person develops the capacity for exercising these rights (e.g., the rights to drive, vote, use alcohol, etc.). Because this capacity develops gradually, logically the exercise of the rights should be granted gradually on an individual basis by ability. We are unable to make such precise judgments, however, so we have established arbitrary times for legally granting these rights. Legally, prenatal rights must also be granted arbitrarily, if at all.

11. See *Roe v. Wade*, 1973. Literally it is not the rights of the fetus which change, but the rights of the State—in the first instance to promote its interest in the health of the mother and in the second case to promote its interest in the potentiality of human life. It is at birth that the rights of the child officially are recognized.

12. Other rights are also involved, such as the rights of other family members, but for the purpose of this discussion, these will be considered as part of the rights of the woman.

13. It is important to note that most of the conditions under which abortion is most often said to be justifiable are irrelevant to the moral status of the fetus and change only the rights of the woman. The fact that the conception occurred during a rape or incest has no impact upon that embryo's right to live, nor does the health and life of the mother. The only factor which might possibly influence the right of the fetus would be the presence of birth defects and this is debatable. If the fetus acquires the right to live from the potential to become human, and if the potential is not going to develop, it may be argued that it has less of a right to live, having less to live for, but this is a difficult thing to determine and is not completely convincing. All of the other exceptions to a rule that all abortions should be prohibited admit that in some cases the mother's rights supersede the rights of the fetus. Once that is conceded, the ambiguity is admitted. There is a logical bind here because, using the rape example, we either have to admit that the embryo's right to life is not absolute, or we have to insist on the cruelty of forcing the victim of one of our most odious crimes to carry the reminder of that traumatic experience for nine months, which would have to be considered cruel and unusual punishment of the victims. The rape example brings in other ambiguity, also, because the logic of the exception can be based as much on the question of consent as of trauma. There are various levels of consent to sexual intercourse covering statutory rape (are minors ever capable or giving consent?), sexual harassment, sex with retarded women, and various levels of sex under duress which may not have been severe enough to get a rape conviction, but were coercive enough to make the sexual act less than a free choice and probably traumatic. We really do not know how to precisely define rape either, and my moral definition of rape covers much more than the legal definition. Is it moral rape or legal rape that qualifies one for an abortion?

14. A woman who has been pregnant for eight months, for example, and merely does not want to endure the final month because she is uncomfortable has less to lose by completing the pregnancy than a woman at two months who has another seven months to carry the child. Also, in most cases, the woman should have confronted the moral dilemma much earlier and either the reasons for not wanting to carry the child to term were not very compelling (unless they changed) or she has been negligent in resolving the moral question. There are, of course, circumstances, such as danger to the life of the mother, where such rights would outweigh the fetal rights even up to the moment of birth. On the other hand, even in the early weeks of pregnancy—when it is first discovered—the rights of the developing potential life should morally outweigh trivial preferences of the woman, such as questions of timing (e.g., not wanting the child to be a Virgo or not wanting to be pregnant during the summer) or of the sex of the child.

15. Judith Jarvis Thomson argues that even if we grant that the fetus is a person from the moment of conception, it is not obvious that its right to life outweighs the mother's right to decide what happens in and to her body. To illustrate the ambiguity, she suggests the following hypothetical moral dilemma: suppose that the Society of Music Lovers has kidnapped you and has had the circulatory

system of a world famous violinist plugged into yours because he has a fatal kidney disease that even kidney machines cannot handle. Now you cannot be unplugged from him or he will die and although you have the right to decide what happens to your body, his right to live outweighs your right. It is obvious that you *must* submit to this intrusion on your rights? It would be nice to do so and probably is the moral thing to do, but is it moral to *force* you to carry this burden? The details of the story can be changed to make it more similar to pregnancy or to change the balance of rights, but the point holds—irrespective of the details—that there may be occasions when the right to life is not absolute. Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* (Fall 1971).

16. Daniel Callahan, *Abortion: Law, Choice and Morality* (New York: Macmillan, 1970). The regulatory right of the state to require parental permission for dependent children, which was recently approved by the Supreme Court with respect to a Utah law, could be justified with this logic, but this question becomes clouded with the issue of the ability to give informed consent. If teenage girls cannot make the moral choice of abortion, they cannot give legal consent for sexual activity either. All teenage pregnancy would therefore automatically result from statutory rape and abortion would have to be allowed for all teenagers if it is allowed for any rape victims.

17. The rhetoric of the leading antiabortionists is extremely divisive and abusive. They abuse the language, they abuse science, they abuse logic, they abuse the truth. They consistently use the doublethink of propaganda. They claim to have scientific evidence that life begins at conception (a notion that the scientific community has soundly denounced) and insist that their perception is fact and everyone else is using only theory. They accuse the prochoice people of imposing their morality upon us (how can the position that we should choose for ourselves be an imposition of an unwelcome morality?) when they are so obviously trying to impose a restrictive morality on others. (The latest polls show that two-thirds of Americans are still against making abortion illegal.) In effect, they call white, black, and black, white. The rhetoric is so emotional and distorted that it is an embarrassment. Is this a group that we want to be classified with?

18. Bernard N. Nathanson, "Deeper into Abortion," *The New England Journal of Medicine* (November 28, 1974), pp. 1189-1190. This quote comes from an early abortion advocate who, when he realized that he had presided over 60,000 deaths, had to deal with the moral issues and concluded that abortion must remain a legal option, but must not be done as lightly as it sometimes is.

19. The political—and essentially amoral—nature of the antiabortion movement can be seen in the laws they support and the tactics they employ. They seem to be completely unaware of any moral implications. The only question is whether it will make abortions more difficult—any law or action which will do so is supported without regard to other consequences. One example is the current attempt to define life as beginning at conception. They refuse to deal with the logical extensions of this proposal—it is simply a political ploy. They ignore the fact that it will change some forms of contraception into murder. They ignore the pleas of the obstetricians that they will be saddled with the responsibility of choosing between two lives and be liable for prosecution for murder if someone decides that they made the wrong choice. Another example is the legislation forbidding the use of federal funds for abortions. They claim that as taxpayers they should not be forced to pay for what they think is immoral. But I believe that war is immoral. Can I stop the arms buildup on the grounds that I should not have to pay for something I think is immoral? The antifunding decision was clearly an emotional one geared to pacify this sentiment at the expense of the moral issue. Where is the morality in saying that abortion is acceptable for the rich but not for the poor? How is the common good served by forcing children to be born into poverty and crime-infested slums or violent homes where the two most probable outcomes for them are to be criminals or victims? Where is even the utilitarian value in saving \$300 and then spending thousands of dollars in welfare payments. It was an illogical decision based upon a blind drive to oppose abortion irrespective of the moral issues. For an example of the research which indicates a link between unwanted children and domestic violence, see Murray Strauss and Richard J. Gelles, *Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family* (New York: Doubleday, 1980).

20. Of course it is legitimate to be against both birth control and abortion—in fact much of the Mormon opposition may come from a bias against birth control of any type. But it is not legitimate to use the sanctity of life argument when the real reason is birth control, and I hope that we are not seriously considering an attempt to make birth control illegal again.

21. One indication of such sexual irresponsibility would be frequently resorting to abortion. Edna St. Vincent Millay wrote, "A man may go to war—go to his first war, that is, out of confusion, and to go to war twice indicates either callousness, or vice." *Conversation at Midnight* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1937). I feel similarly about abortion. A woman may resort to abortion because of unfortunate circumstances of many kinds, including mistakes that she made or factors which were not in her control, but that experience—if she is aware of the moral tension which should accompany the decision to end a potential life—should make her avoid the possibility of having to do it a second time. Granting that there can be contraceptive failures for which the woman is not responsible, to require a third abortion—except in extraordinary situations—reflects a certain callousness. If carrying a child to term would be so terrible that three or four potential lives must be sacrificed, why does she want to retain the possibility of having children at all? To resort to abortion simply because the timing is questionable, to have the timing wrong again and again is unconscionable. Someone needs to be saying this sort of thing, but it will not have an effect until the right to reproductive choice is secure.

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