

STIGMAS AS SOCIAL SUPPORT-STAKES

About a half century ago, Elton Trueblood was saying that what the Russians were doing by **design**--viz., destroying the basic social fabric--the Americans were doing by **neglect**. By century-end that's soon upon us, U.S. bastrady--for one example of social deterioration--is projected to be white 40%, "minority" 80%. We have the distinction of being the only place on earth ever to try to get along without the family (& we've even bastardized the word "family" to be "inclusive" of sociosexual arrangements other than father/mother/child).

This Thinksheet is a ramble on a necessity. The necessity is the (re)introduction of social supports for the family. (I say "[re]" to leave open two possibilities, [1] that we may not want to reintroduce every one of the old family-support stigmas, & [2] that we may want to introduce some formerly unused stigmas.) The necessity, increasingly widely granted, is going by the name **restigmatization**. The ramble is that what I have to offer you, at this point, is a jumble of thoughts which you just might find more helpful than if I'd sweated them into some semblance of order.

1 I begin with an image. Yesterday on the tube I saw a London RC priest being dragged into a paddywagon for violating the space in front of what he called "this abortion mill." In a heated speech, he said "The main reason for not killing abortionists is that they'd go straight to hell!" His stigma ran over his dogma: his urge to make a political point violated the RC doctrine of purgatory, the intermediate state of sinners who've not deprived themselves of sanctifying grace by consciously turning away from God & seeking satisfaction in a creature, both while knowing that the particular action entails guilt. In lumping together all "baby-killers," our priest was committing the sin of failing to treat human beings as persons with the dignity of being individuals. He called "monsters" all physicians who include abortion in the medical services they offer women. His general demonization made no allowances for differences among these physicians, whom he saw only as threats to the zygote/embryo/fetus. He's singlemindedly set to stigmatize such threats. Psychologically put, he's into fetal myopia. Let's call his kind "fetal myops."

2 Fetal myops would stake-support the family by (1) preaching that abortion violates "natural law," (2) using social sanctions to encourage pregnant to bear, & (3) trying to effect legal sanctions against the willful termination of pregnancy. To me, (1) is dubious theology, (2) violates the personal-decisional dignity of pregnant, & (3) is, as prohibition #2, as dismal in prospect as prohibition #1, viz. against alcohol, was in execution. But please note that what I've underlined in this § prevents my demonizing fetal myops! They are, after all, up to some good even if as an afterthought-support for their "natural law" doctrine, which I find depressing & even frightening.

3 The stigma against **nonmarital** (i.e., pre-, extra-, & post-) sexual intercourse operated to keep sex inside the marriage corral & was, all jokes & minor statistics aside, successful, the majority looking down on upper-&-lower-class violators. Note: From the viewpoint of family stability, sex outside the corral needed looking down on even at the price of the majority's temptation to self-righteous smugness.

3 **Language** was a stout support-stake for marriage-limited, corralled sex. You reacted, perhaps negatively, to my use, in this Thinksheet's introductory ¶, of the opprobrium-words "bastardy" & "bastardize." You don't want those born out of "wedlock" "illegitimately" (two more stigma-words) to be treated cruelly, as my father was, called a "bastard" though he wasn't (his mother having divorced her cruel husband). Another word: all unmarried who "commit" (another stigma-word!) sex with an unmarried are "fornicators." And of course Hester Prynne had to wear a big "A" in public both to shame her & to stigmatize "adultery," out-of-the-corral sex involving at least one married (or even, as in Hester's case, post-married). What has happened, in our liberal & permissive time, is that the stigmas have passed from the deeds to the words, thus effectively removing the negative-verbal support-

stakes for the family. Separating sex from family, the corral, breached the corral, letting the horses wander as they pleased. Society now sees what a fragile thing that corral is. The delphinium stem is fragile, needing stake-support: the family is a fragile thing that, without the traditional stake-supports, has collapsed. If you fight this degeneracy by using the old support-language, you're looked on as "old-fashioned" or worse. But what's the alternative? How now can language be used for family-support if not by reviving the old support-language?

4 **Peoplehood** is a fragile thing requiring the stake-supports of a common language, a common memory, a common ethos (customs/law/self-conscious identity), a common esprit de corps (inspiring spirit), a common vision/hope. The Yugoslavs were a people till the EC (European Community) & the U.S., in 1992, recognized "Bosnia," one province, as a nation (2/3rds Muslim, a neo-Muslims nation amidst Christians). (Sarajevo continues as a pre-'92 [pre-religious-war] enclave, Christians & Muslims living peacefully though not entirely comfortably together--on the pattern of the U.S., the nation best proving that a common religion is not necessary to peoplehood.) A common religion is not necessary to peoplehood, but a common language is: Down with "bilingual education" & "multilingual politics" (ballots printed not only in English)! The tyranny of minorities has now gone so far that perhaps one can no longer speak of "the American people," & the majority are in revolt, revolt-banners including proposed constitutional amendments against "flag-burning" & for "school prayer."

5 **Heterosexuality** is, along with monogamy (§3), fragile, requiring the stake-supports of social sanctions (stigmas, tabus, "prejudices") against bisexuality, which isn't disruptive of the societies of other mammals but manifoldly is of our more complex, more fragile society. A personal letter I got yesterday argues that bisex is the "natural" human condition, & monosexuality is "perverse"! As for homosexuality, I'm for both "gay rights" & protection of the young against homo solicitation.