

In the calendar USA, King Day & Roe-vs-Wade Day sit only with one day in between, and I'm in action to support both--ie, "King" and what that all means, and a parallel freedom, viz, pregnant's freedom from legal intrusion into their term/abortion decisions. Both Days should be seized on as opportunities to educate the public on the ranges and nuances of "Let freedom ring!"....This RvsW Day (22Jan86) I was on television to sustain my printed (CAPE COD TIMES 14Jan) accusation that the "pro-life" position is manifoldly immoral, an assertion calculated to incite rage, which I greatly prefer to silence. At 7:40am publication day, the screaming began on the phone; then came letters (complete with colorpix of abortion-fragmented fetuses) and literature; finally, an attack by a "Pro-Life" speaker in the vs. Demonstration/Rally in Hyannis on RvsW Day (CCT 23Jan: "A baby does not have to draw a breath of air to be a human being"--p.1, including colorpix of an aborted fetus with the legend "This is a pro-choice victim," behind with an ca.18' banner "Abortion is NOT the Answer"--the answer to what? what is the question? if the question is how to save the biosphere from humanity, abortion is part of the complex answer)....Why the rage response? Because pro-lifers, in their self-righteousness, count sacred not only the fetus but also their position! They are accustomed to fighting without having to defend the morality either of their position or of their fighting, and I'd penetrated both defenses as well as their taboo-defense of the fetus....I accuse my fellow pro-choicers of fighting too nice and so contributing to the hybris-piosity of the pro-lifers by leaving them to work themselves up into a lather of holiness and a crusade of closing abortion clinics (by bombings and by verbal mol-estation both of abortion-seekers and of physicians, called by the pro-lifers "abortionists," who provide legal abortions).... Pro-life rage is subverting reasoned discourse and therefore democracy both by eroding civility and by single-issue targeting, toward the Nov. elections, of "murderers," ie, politicians who oppose (as does USA law today) legal intrusion into pregnant's' term/abortion decisions. The bright side of the abortion issue is that it's an opportunity to improve our democracy: the dark side is that at present it's sickening the democracy we already have and that needs improving....How does religion scholarship figure in the issue? Religion scholars are professional students of the sacred, and the attackers of our present abortion law are trying to use the sacred as lever to remove a freedom the law gives. When the sacred is used against freedom, as it was in most white pulpits of the Great Southland against the freeing of the slaves, religion scholars should take to the field of conflict: that is what I do, not in nicely nuanced academese but in a way that "gets through."....The published letter I here reproduce is typical of the screeching I've been hearing over the phone, reading in the news, and finding in my mail. I could use any of these explosions in case method for developing critical consciousness (in both senses: analytical and political) on the abortion issue. Lets have a look at this one (CAPE COD TIMES, 24Jan86, by Inez M. Vespers of Sagamore MA):

## Letter wins prize for its stupidity

Recently a letter appeared in the Times by Willis Elliott on what he considered priority regarding abortion, indicating that a fetus is not a human being until it leaves the mother's womb, and "breathes air." That statement takes the blue-ribbon prize for the dumbest concept so far given for the pro-abortionists.

Elliott says he considers himself a professional Christian thinker, which I assume means he gets paid for handing out this kind of rubbish to unsuspecting and hopeful women who think by believing his so-called ideology, they will somehow avoid the stigma of guilt if they decide to have an abortion. He indicates a fetus is no more than a lump of clay unless it breathes air on its own. This air he speaks of is the same air we all breathe, and is filled with bacteria, viruses, radiation, dust, smoke, pollens and many other pollutants Elliott regards as "God's breath."

The moment the sperm and ovum make contact, conception takes place, and cells begin to divide and subdivide, until within a relatively short period of time, the heartbeat is heard. Those who saw the full-page (Massachusetts Citizens for Life) advertisement in the Times Jan. 20 had the opportunity of seeing a recognizable baby at eight weeks with heartbeat, brain waves, the ability to feel pain, suck the thumb, grasp an instrument placed in the hand and even swim with a swimmer's stroke in its protective fluid. This infant, or fetus, could not survive if it were not for the oxygen it receives from the mother through the umbilical cord. To deny the fetus this oxygen would mean sudden death. That unborn child may not, as yet, be breathing on its own, but it is breathing the necessary oxygen through its bloodstream as surely as the baby living outside the womb.

Elliott prates on immoral proposals. Let him study his own beliefs. Are they not a mockery to the God he professes to know so well? Could it be that he tries too hard to cover up his own guilt by twisting the Bible passages to assuage his own conscience? Whatever the reason, he utters idly to a pagan image.

OVER

1. My underlinings indicate the writer's use of what I call the semantic slur-effect. The longest word in the English language is azygote-anembryoafetusaneonateababyachildahumanbeinganindividualaperson (which you are the first ever to see: it just entered the English language in this sentence). Read backward and given, for the breaks, "=", it is a person=an individual=a human being=a child=a baby=a neonate=a fetus=an embryo=a zygote. You know how slurred becomes the speech of one who has "had too much to drink" so that the brain is not working clearly: as this writer (and ALL pro-lifers) uses these words, the brain is not working clearly not because of alcohol but because of ignorance, which in many people is harder to cure than alcoholism. In logic, this slurring is called variously (1) post hoc ergo propter hoc, (2) the genetic fallacy in reverse, (3) predifferentiated thinking, (4) prolepsis, and (5) anachronism--all logically bad, and rhetorically useful. So we see another slur (so common in preachers!): the blurring of logic and rhetoric, as if the slogans of the latter were of equal intellectual standing with the processes of the former. In all of this, the booboisie accuse me of smartassing, and I feel the chill of a new dark age. Toqueville was right on all scores, including the worry that egalitarianism would subvert (in the name of anti-elitism) quality of thought. According to my cal'ation, human beings are 4/5ths feeling and 1/5th reason, and the latter (in private and public life) is "normally" swamped by the former. "Thy Kingdom come, O Lord!"

2, 2 of our 52 states in the USA define the fetus so as to grant "it" rights, viz, as "a human being" (S.Carolina & MA). With the 50 states, I hold that the fetus has no legal standing, ie, no "rights." This is the descriptive level of the abortion issue, and it is purely semantic, ie, "hair-splitting." We pro-choicers call the fetus "human" and "human being" but not "a human being," for this last would position the fetus in a legally defensible category: the pro-lifers hair-split between the interests of the fetus and the interests of our fragile life-support system, viz, the biosphere (whereas we pro-choicers see the biosphere as a continuous flow, either theologically or vitalistically). The blurrings I indicate in section #1 are frightening because they appeal to precritical-or-noncritical thinkers (ie, "the masses," no derogation intended), so that we critical thinkers are finessed if we fail to develop a rhetoric that convinces the masses (as the German intelligentia failed to develop a rhetoric against Nazism). Please do not imagine I'm talking only about abortion! I'm talking also about the frightening phenomenon of Reaganistic rhetoric and its implicit chauvinism, and about the self-congratulatory rhetoric of most church pronouncements, and about the simplism of woodenheaded Marxist rhetoric such as the founding documents of the present Nicaragua government and about.... What, among human agonies, is not touched by the concentric waves of the abortion issue?

3. As to "breathes air," see my <sup>was</sup> #2024. My identifying <sup>of</sup> myself as "a professional Christian thinker" because pro-lifers imagine they have a corner on the Bible (as well as science). They believe their position intelligent because supported by religion experts and science experts, and conclude that people like me are ignorant: the intellectual strand of their arrogance. So many attacked my claim to be "a professional Christian thinker," challenging whatever the hell I meant by that! It's pathetic to see how they claim support from experts, especially scientists, who by trade can have nothing to say on the values-and-politics of the issue.

4. Self-contradictorily, the writer adduces air as now "filled with... pollutants." My argument is that this polluting of air-sea-water-soil will slow down if we shut down on the baby-faucet by morality, contraception, and abortion. We are to santify-hallow God, not the fetus!