

# ABORTION: A GRID FOR LOCATING THE POSITIONS ON

2337 26 June 89

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Yesterday someone amazed me with this: "There are only two positions on abortion. I know which side I'm on, so I never discuss it with anyone." Two errors, the first dialectical (as there are many "sides") & the second political (as in a democracy the citizenry have the choice of debating or losing their democracy).

This Thinksheet was written for that person, & the other someone who asked me yesterday to tell him my position, & with whom for that purpose I'm going for a walk today.

"Position" is a metaphor: a position is relative to other positions. You can't know your position except in relation to other positions. The exception is war (literal or metaphorical). Viewed as war, the present abortion controversy has banner-carrying partisans for the pregnant ("pro-choice") & for the fetus ("pro-life"). But viewed as conference it has many positions, as visible on this grid (R=right; G=good; S=sensible; W=wrong; E=evil, bad; I=inappropriate, unfitting):

Positions #1 & #2 are absolute, with no "give." All the other positions are relative, intermediate, complex (and so lacking the simplicity & instant power of positions #1 & #2)....I'll be upfront about my position. It's #8. Abortion is wrong (since life is good [G] & death is evil [1Cor.15]); but abortion is sensible (S) sometimes in specific cases (as the net good) & always vis-a-vis the biosphere.

**Position #1** is the positive shishkebob, Schopenhauerian misanthropic. Human life is a bad show, it's women's fault because they keep the relayrace going, so anything preventing human birth is good. Not to worry about this position: the sex drive keeps this form of misanthropy in check.

**Position #2** is the negative shishkebob, synonymizing right-good-sensitive, on the one hand, & on the other, wrong-evil-inappropriate. "The lust of the flesh" holds #1 in check, but "the pride of life" (making a godlike & God-sanctioned claim for one's position) has nothing "natural" to hold it in check--so a Boston prosecutor last week decided to pursue harassers of women entering abortion clinics as civil-rights violators (interfering with the civil right to have an abortion); & so the efforts of some in religion, including me, to deprive of God the "pro-life" position....This premodern position leans heavily on ultimate sanctions & lightly on sanctions of consequence. The history of jurisprudence shows the difference. Premodern (medieval & enlightenment) judges based their decisions on "natural law" (with various loads of tradition) & reason, claiming their warrants as discoveries (not, as modern jurists vis-a-vis codices, as inventions). Most current thinking on abortion, in the courts & other traditional institutions (esp. churches!), is premodern. Modern jurisprudence (esp. since Brandeis won his laundress case before the Supreme Court) puts the weight not on abstract principles but on social-policy considerations (economic, social, political consequences)--considering the pluralistic disintegration of "cosmos" (Jas. A. Sanders' the monotheistic "integrity of reality") & the rising power of various types of eudemonism (Bentham, Mill, Marx, Freud, Human Potential, New Age). To catch up without dismissing montheism, we need to give more weight to the third column, viz what's **sensible** (without falling into radical situationalism) vis-a-vis individual/society/biosphere (& without letting "sensible" completely define "right" & "good")....#2 is romantic, self-serving (species-myopic), idealistic, obscurantist (being totally prohumanity, which God--who will destroy us along with our planet--isn't)....All the other positions are nuanced, & I leave it largely to you (as I'm determined this'll be a 1-p. Thinksheet) to do the nuancing. As for naming them, I find this impossible without tendentiousness. Off the top of my head, the best I can do appears below--but my biases are showing, so maybe I should have parted from you with the numbers only....**Position #3**, political....**Position #4**, pragmatic....**Position #5**, cosmic....**Position #6**, moral....**Position #7**, legal....**Position #8**, biblical (yes, mine!).

1

R	G	S

2

W	E	I

ABSOLUTE

RELATIVE

3

R	G	
		I

4

		S
W	E	

5

R		S
	E	

6

	G	
W		I

7

R		
	E	I

8

	G	S
W		