

THERE ARE NO PREGNANT INDIVIDUALS

As pro-choice, I subscribe to

"A woman has the right to make decisions about her own body."

That is a political fight, on the battlefield of "rights." We Americans are the world's champion antagonists on that battlefield. Almost every standard, no matter its other details, when carried onto the field of battle has emblazoned the word "RIGHTS!" Right now, I'm carrying a standard that reads "RIGHTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT!"

But my anti-abortion enemies have the logical right to extend the question:

"While a woman has the right to make decisions about her own body, does she have the unlimited right to make decisions about the body within her?"

I've never heard it put quite that way, but it's what's worrying this Thinksheet. For this question is biosocial as well as political.

1. By bio-definition, a pregnant is a society actually consisting of more than one human being. By socio-definition, a pregnant is a society in process of becoming, for she is one actual individual + one potential individual. What both definitions exclude is the possibility of considering the pregnant an individual, a person.

2. To the extent that the laws are shaped for individuals, persons, they cannot apply simply & directly to pregnant. Pregnants are a unique category of humanity, the one category between the individual & society. As pregnant participate in both realities, they can be accurately visualized thus:

In eastern TN (with eastern VA, one of the Civil War's two most embattled

the individual    pregnant    society

territories) two days ago I completed an

Elderhostel course on the Civil War (alongside two other courses). Both sides were legally right, impeccably legally right. The South followed the Jeffersonian states'-rights (including the right of secession) tradition, without which we'd not have gotten our Constitution). The North was developing, on the Hamiltonian-centralist legal tradition, the legal doctrine that the individual (yes, the Emancipation Proclamation) has rights supervening states' rights. This legal battle continues: eg, Roe v. Wade may be thrown back to the states. Let's picture this legal dynamic to parallel that of the abortion-battle visual:

On this layer of our country's legal-cake tradition, in 1863

the central government    individuals    the states

a pregnant slave, if she were

in a Confederate state, was treated, by the Emancipation Proclamation, as an individual, a person--and thank God so! America's strong individualism--on which a generation earlier Toqueville had extensively remarked--was increasingly an energy in the North's religiomoral idealism.

3. Circumstances alter cases, & the globe is now in need of depriving pregnant of the simple "individual" status (though they should have almost all the rights men should) & granting them "social" status (with some rights men do not have). The world as humanity & biosphere urgently needs new mores & laws recognizing the bio-fact that women can bring forth out of their bodies children to bless & burden society: pregnant are individual-social, men cannot ever be anything other than individuals.

4. All God's chillun got rights: individuals, society, pregnant. As humanity & its technologies expand, some rights must expand and some contract. The right to get pregnant & the right to bring to term will have to be brought under sociopolitical, ie legal, control. If coercive conception-&-birth control seems inhuman, put it alongside present annual (UN) statistics: ½ million dead from pregnancy, 10 million infant deaths (malnutrition, disease, neglect & other forms of infanticide), barefoot-&-pregnant oppression, women's lower literacy & higher workload, environmentally unsustainable "development."

5. Antiabortion forces during the Reagan years convinced Congress to cease providing

**family-planning** support to UNFPA (UN Fund for Population Activities), on the ground that one of the 131 countries receiving support, viz China, was alleged (a never-proved allegation) to be practicing forced family-planning, ie **coercive abortion**. 130 countries shot-gun punished for an unproved accusation against 1! And now Sect. of State Baker has made it clear the present administration has no intention of reviewing this policy despite the urgent pleas of UNFPA & other agencies concerned about most women's present powerlessness to control their fertility.

6. A woman's power to control her fertility by refusing unprotected intercourse, marriage, & childbearing is, here, the **first-line defense** of human dignity, which in the West rests on biblical thinking & on the Enlightenment's "the rights of (sic) man." Against whom does she need this defense? Against custom, against religion, against law, against men & women who are for the old ways. "Freedom" is the positive of which "rights" are the negative: rights are over against what & whoever opposes them. Women should have some freedom men do not have (as well as vice versa), & pregnant should have some freedom (as well as some restrictions) nonpregnants do not have. All this needs careful, unemotional working out in our & every other society. I cannot surrender hope, even though merely stating what needs to be done seems to convey its extreme improbability even in the more "advanced" societies.

7. We need to lay to rest the chicken-&-egg circle-fight on population control--the one side claiming it'll take care of itself if we "improve conditions," the other countering that conditions can't improve without successful contraception & birth control campaigns (instance Japan, Singapore, Thailand, Republic of Korea). The truth lies on **both** sides: the world needs to work at the problem from both ends. Realism should dissuade anyone from arguing either that without population control an economy can be elevated to the point of "natural" population-increase decline or that a government with a depressed economy can sufficiently persuade/force to such a level of population-increase decline as will "naturally" improve the economy. Two straw men can't make a long enough fire to cook anything.

8. A **second-line defense** of human dignity, here, is at least as controversial as is coercive procreative control (governmental chemical restriction of conception; forced sterilization; forced abortion). Humanity should be worrying about the declining quality of its **gene pool** due to (1) increasing effectiveness in keeping the less fit alive & reproducing (a concern I first saw in print in a 1973 National Council of Churches committee report) & (2) the fact that lower-quality genes are now outreproducing higher-quality genes, a claim based on (a) the correlation of IQ & socioeconomic success & (b) the reversal of family size from large upperclass to large lowerclass (for a variety of reasons, including the easier availability, among the upperclass, of family-size-control facilities)--on all of which see "A Confederacy of Dunces: Are the best and brightest making too few babies?" 22 May 89 NEWSWEEK 80ff.

9. A **third-line defense** of human dignity is the negative correlation between quantity of human flesh & quality of the human environment, the biosphere. Theoretically, logically, technologically, our species has the power to achieve homeostatis with its biosupport system--in the current UN phrase, "sustainable development," which is a politically astute oxymoron for areas where any further "development" will only further foul & deplete the livingbase. Population-control services should be pressed especially upon those whose life-quality has already declined because they have overstrained their environment. This pressure for human dignity must, ironically, fight those who--in the name of human dignity!--call this pressure "genocide against the poor," "imperialism by another means," etc. These largehearted softheads confuse justice with fairness & love with equality, & even claim that justice (a characteristic of God) = fairness (which God, as can be seen in our unequal genes & equally unequal opportunities, does not practice).

10. It all depends on what THE SATANIC VERSES calls your "peeohvee" (point of view). View the pregnant as a society, & society as government has the right, perhaps the duty, to force the pregnant either to come to term or to abort. But that, this Thinksheet's peeohvee, is certainly not my only peeohvee on the abortion issue--though it's one of mine: I wrote this Thinksheet to own it.