



Life Matters Journal

V. 4, ISSUE 3 — FEBRUARY 2016

Provide a Safe Haven

The Case for Admitting Syrian Refugees

To deny refugees admission to the United States closes off only one, very inefficient route for terrorists to enter the country.

Suicide by Another Name

The Destructive Reality of Euthanasia

Advocates of assisted suicide insist that there are factors that differentiate euthanasia from suicide, but these arguments are not compelling for one vital reason: the goal of assisted suicide is to take life, not to protect or preserve it.

An Open Letter to Emma Watson

Feminist history contains countless examples of intelligent, hardworking, and independent women who fought tirelessly not only for their rights but also for the rights of their children.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,



I hope you had a chance to attend one of the many marches for life held across the country this past January. (The March for Life Chicago, which I attended, was an amazing display of courage by thousands of people who braved the below-zero wind chills.) But regardless of whether you were able to make it to one of those events, we are united. I believe the marches represent this overall unity of the pro-life movement, a symbol of how we're all dedicated to it despite the risks involved.

Though these massive marches of January are behind us, we must continue to strive for justice and build on that momentum, not just regard it with a "been there, done that" attitude. I encourage you to find both small and large ways you can stay involved in the pro-life movement. There are certainly many — some grand, some quiet. Side-walk counseling, volunteering, protests, writing letters to members of the legislature, or even "just" treating everyone you meet with respect, regardless of our differences, are ways of supporting the movement.

Life Matters Journal is holding one event which will allow you to stay involved in the pro-life movement: our Life/Peace/Justice Conference in April at Villanova University (check out the event website at www.lifepeacejustice.com). Hope to see you there!

For peace and all life,
Mary Stroka

Life Matters Journal

FEBRUARY 2016

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LIFEMATTERSJOURNAL.ORG

This journal is dedicated to the aborted, the bombed, the executed, the euthanized, the abused, the raped, and all other victims of violence, whether legal or illegal.

We have been told by our society and our culture wars that those of us who oppose these acts of violence must be divided. We have been told to take a lukewarm, halfway attitude toward the victims of violence. We have been told to embrace some with love while endorsing the killing of others.

We reject that conventional attitude, whether it's called Left or Right, and instead embrace a consistent ethic of life toward all victims of violence. We are *Life Matters Journal*, and we are here because politics kills.

Disclaimer: The views presented in this journal do not necessarily represent the views of all members, contributors, or donors. We exist to present a forum for discussion within the consistent life ethic, to promote discourse and present an opportunity for peer-review and dialogue.

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CORRECTION: In Volume 4, issue 2, there was a misprint at the beginning of the essay "Our Identity Remains the Same Throughout Our Entire Life" by Clinton Wilcox. The dedication before this piece was not intended for Mr. Wilcox's essay; it was accidentally carried over from a previous issue of *Life Matters Journal*. We apologize for any confusion this may have caused.



Why I'm Pro-life

By Evie Schwartzbauer

This is a pro-life response to the article from Salon, "I Am Pro-Abortion, Not Just Pro-Choice: 10 Reasons Why We Must Support the Procedure and the Choice" that came out on Friday, April 24, 2015.

1) I am pro-life because I believe women are empowered when they understand the consequences of sex and don't feel the need to run from their responsibilities or femininity.

A woman is naturally empowered when she can plan her family by understanding her own body and by knowing when she's fertile. Natural Family Planning is free, has no side effects or risks, helps a couple communicate better, increases intimacy, and engenders mutual respect. When a woman wants to avoid getting pregnant, she doesn't have to have sex when she knows she's fertile. When she does decide to have a baby, she can take part in an amazing life-giving act. Conceiving a child is not the end of her life, her career is not ruined, and her chances at happiness in life are not diminished. The society that makes a woman choose between her career and her child is not pro-woman. A woman truly has a choice when she can relate to her sexuality this way. A woman truly has the ability to stand on equal ground with a man when she can say no when she isn't prepared to conceive a child. The enemy isn't men, it isn't women, and it isn't abortion restriction — it is the system that does not respect mothers enough to offer them real choices. The societal worldview we have now treats motherhood as a burden to avoid and thus shuns the feminine genius that is motherhood. I am for uplifting women, mothers, and their families by saying motherhood doesn't ruin lives but creates new and beautiful lives!

2) I'm pro-life because every child is wanted.

It may not be by their biological parents who want them, but there are many infertile couples waiting to adopt. Some people give the either-or fallacy that abortion is a merciful good because they conflate adoption with foster care and assume that children created through unwanted pregnancies will have terrible lives. The

adoption and foster care system *is* in bad shape and *does* need reform — however, the solution to the problems of foster care should be reforming the system, not killing children. It shouldn't cost more to adopt a child than to kill a child.

No one is ever 100-percent ready to be a mom. No matter how financially ready you are, how many books or articles or classes you've gone through, actually being a mother is where you learn how to be a great parent. Many people delay having children or choose not to have children at all because society imposes this idea that you need to be wealthy or perfectly prepared for your child to live a happy, fulfilling life. This is a misconception. Waiting until you have the house and career you want before you have children is not a fail-safe. In fact, it's actually a pitfall. On a smaller scale, the later you have children, the harder it will be to conceive; additionally, the risk of miscarriage and fetal abnormalities will rise. Children aren't ever convenient, but ask any mother, and she will say they are worth it. Real love isn't supposed to be easy; it's desiring the best for your beloved, even at the expense of yourself.

3) I'm pro-life because I take motherhood seriously.

Going through a pregnancy and becoming a mother is one of the most positively life-transforming things a woman can do. To dismiss the amazing journey of motherhood by demanding birth control and abortion trivializes women and motherhood. Motherhood is a lot of work, but it is probably some of the most valuable work on this planet. The virtues that derive from motherhood don't only appear to those who were always completely on board with being a mother, had a blissful pregnancy and labor experience, or were ready to be a mother. The virtues you gain, the better person you become when you become a mother, come *when you become a mother*. They come whether the pregnancy was unwanted or wanted, whether the husband/boyfriend is supportive or not, with

wealth or without it, at 14 years old or 34 years old, ready or not. You don't go into parenthood knowing all the answers; you learn as you go. We shouldn't be tricked into fearing this journey of love that is motherhood.

4) I'm pro-life because humans are the greatest natural resource of our world. As Mother Teresa of Calcutta said, "It is a poverty for someone to die so you can live as you wish."

Families are the atom of society. When men choose to step out of parenthood, mothers are left in the dust. They are left with two choices: either become one of the 12 million single mothers out there or abort their child. We, as a nation, become poor when we snuff out our greatest wealth and abandon responsibility to children. Single mothers are among the poorest in our nation; compared to children raised by married husbands and wives, their children have a higher chance of being raised in poverty and staying in poverty. It is a big misconception that large families suffer. I know plenty of big families and they are doing fine and have incredibly fulfilling lives. The families that are suffering are not suffering because they have too many children, it's because their financial priorities are in the wrong place or they aren't in the right financial place due to insufficient jobs — and again, the solution isn't to kill our children but to fix the economy. You might find it hard to believe, but the women getting abortions are not among the poorest. Overpopulation isn't currently an issue because we aren't anywhere near it; what we have is a distribution problem. Also, if the contraception that is so highly praised is working, why were more than half of the women having abortions using contraception at the time of the conception of their child? I believe all life is precious and welcome — the right to life should not be reserved for only the wanted and the privileged and the healthy.

5) I'm pro-life because reproduction is a miracle — and miracles are a positive thing.

Reproduction is beautiful, and it gives back more than it takes. Nothing compares to the unique gift of a new human life. That being said, the miracle of life doesn't come easily for all women, as infertility is a huge cause of suffering for many. Miscarriages are incredibly heartbreaking for all involved. Some people perceive miscarriages and the fact that an estimated 6-8% of fertilized eggs (scientifically called *embryos* at that stage) never implant and become healthy newborns as "nature's way of weeding out imperfect babies." Be that as it may, those are not intentional decisions coming from the parent's will to end the pregnancy. To say that abortion complements a natural process is highly offensive to any woman mourning the loss of her miscarried child. Abortion is an intentional and deliberate act decided upon to end the life of your child. Intent is key. It makes all the difference in the world in a court of law to decide whether a death was in self-defense or pre-meditated murder! No mother of a miscarried child would wish that suffering upon any other woman — yet that is what women are wishing upon themselves when they have an abortion, whether they realize it right after the procedure or on their deathbed.

6) I'm pro-life because I believe in consistent morals that dictate ALL human lives are real, that each one matters, and EVERYONE deserves the right to life.

It doesn't matter if you're in a coma or in an airport, whether you're in a wheelchair or in a bed, comatose. It doesn't matter if you've just been conceived in your mother's womb or if you're on your deathbed. It doesn't matter if you're a pro basketball player or a person with a debilitating medical condition. I can say with confidence that my moral values are consistent. When we say we ought to (and do our darnedest to) practice love and respect towards everyone, we mean it. Do to others as you would have them do to you; it's called the Golden Rule for a reason, and gold always beats out silver and platinum.

7) I'm pro-life because I believe in the empowering act of planning out your family through Natural Family Planning.

Contraception is man-made and is bound to fail, like us. Like I stated, almost half of the women having abortions used contraception at the time of the conception of their child. So sex using contraception, whether it's used perfectly or imperfectly, can result in a pregnancy. It's simple. The idea that "slap on a condom or take a pill and you'll have safe sex!" is doing more harm than good because it spreads the false idea of consequence-free sex, separating the act of sex from its natural end: pregnancy/babies. And when people think sex is a free-for-all, having it for the sole purpose of pleasure becomes the norm and the babies that result from it are unwanted. Babies resulting from sex are not something gone wrong, something to fix — they are something gone right, a miraculous joy to welcome.

Because life begins at conception, *not* implantation (as defined by the abortion rhetoric after abortion was legalized), we know that the pill, other hormonal contraceptives, intrauterine devices (IUDs), and Plan B can be abortifacient. So, Plan B (a high dose of the birth control pill) starts to work by preventing an egg from being released. Secondly, it also causes a woman's cervical mucus to thicken, creating an inhospitable environment for sperm. *But* if those two effects fail to prevent conception, if the egg is released and is fertilized, these methods *inhibit* the implantation of the embryo by thinning the endometrium (the lining of the uterus). The newly-conceived child is sloughed off and dies. Any child's death, whether it be through a miscarriage, an abortion, or even through abortifacient contraceptives, is a tragedy, and I don't wish that pain on anyone.

8) I'm pro-life because I believe the answer to a crisis or unplanned (crisis) pregnancy is to eliminate the crisis, not the child.

The most merciful thing you can do for a woman in need is help her solve the problems in her life, not end the life of an innocent bystander. We, as pro-life sidewalk counselors, are prepared for any circumstances. I had the chance to talk to an abortion-minded

woman outside of an abortion clinic around a year ago. With tears in her eyes, she explained to me that she was actually homeless (she slept in her car the night before), she already had a baby that she was struggling to take care of, and she had a very unsupportive family — including the abusive father of her child. If she had just gone in for an abortion, the only thing that would have happened is they would have taken around \$600 from her to kill her baby. I helped her to the pregnancy center across the street, where she got a *free* ultrasound, *free* STD testing, and *free* counseling. They helped her obtain baby items for her child, gave her resources for finding a job and a place to live, and some of them became and are friends of hers for life. Now, can you tell me that abortion was the empowering and compassionate path? The choice that would have acknowledged this women's dignity, and needs? Abortion isn't a life-enhancing surgery like a knee surgery. It's the only surgical procedure that claims to fix something that isn't broken, and it intentionally ends a life. I can think of another story that illustrates the fruits of life vs. abortion where a young woman, proud to label herself as pro-choice, drove her friend to get an abortion and paid for it. That friend had become pregnant after rape, was living in poverty, had an abusive boyfriend, and was addicted to drugs. Later on, that very friend became pregnant again and this time chose life. She turned her life around for that child, and she is now clean, free of her abusive partner, and an amazing mother living a productive life. It only makes sense that choosing death would lead you towards darkness and choosing life brings you to the light.

9) I'm pro-life because one person can make a difference.

Yes, I believe in the butterfly effect that small changes can lead to huge ones that impact everyone's future. There are over 55 million people in America whose lives were snuffed out that could have been here on this earth changing the world for the better. Finding cures for cancer, winning Nobel peace prizes, changing lives, helping solve the social security problem. I know the pain in his heart of a special friend, who is so dear to me, who has a sister and three more siblings in heaven that he never knew here on earth. I know there are millions of fathers, mothers, grandparents, and siblings who have felt the loss of a person who has been snuffed out of this world through abortion. I can't believe how having those people (who died from abortion) here would have changed things for the worse as pro-abortion people imply.

10) I'm pro-life because I love everyone. I am standing in the gap for all those who are marginalized because society tells them they have to contribute something to be valued.

I'm so very heartbroken to hear the story of Brynn's sibling, the first child of the mother in the article, the one she decided to kill. The author, Valerie Tarico, claims that if she had not aborted her first child, Brynn would not exist. I still am baffled by how many people use this faulty reasoning. The child they aborted could have had the very traits they love in their other child(ren). They would still love them. They would still have had that second or third child. They have no idea what things would have been like! The birth of

the first child wouldn't have taken away the lives of those children living now, it would have added to them! It could have been a both/and, not an either/or!

We are finding more and more that prenatal testing is often inaccurate; doctors often suggest abortions when there isn't even a problem! There is story after story of women who were told by their doctors that their baby was going to live a terrible life or a short life so abortion was the best solution and the mother refused and gave birth to a perfectly healthy baby. I hope that wasn't Ms. Tarico's case, but either way, if her first child had fetal abnormalities, I'm sure Ms. Tarico would have loved him/her, and love is what makes a child happy, not perfection. My dearest friend has a brother with Trisomy 18 (who is now in heaven) who has positively changed everyone's lives for the better. Perfectly healthy children or not, perfectly stable living environment or not, all of us are glad to be living here on the earth and would choose life.

Having an abortion isn't what makes us love and appreciate people who we have in front of us, we can do that on our own — and love everyone born and pre-born. We don't, and shouldn't have to, choose between the pre-born or the born children we have — we can love them both!

In conclusion, women aren't empowered when they have abortions, they are empowered when they respect their innate capacity for the amazing gift of motherhood.

Note:

Please, do *not* take anything said in this article to mean that I think every single woman on the planet should push out lots of babies like a machine or be a stay-at-home mom. As someone who longs for motherhood, I just deeply appreciate the capacity we as women have to make, nourish, and raise children. Every woman should have a choice. But that choice cannot enhance her dignity if it takes the life of a child. Every woman should be able to choose whether she conceives, and she should be free to place her child for adoption if she does not want to take on the responsibility of motherhood.

Evie works in Graphic Design & Content Creation at Pro-Life Action Ministries in St. Paul, MN. She also does freelance illustration, animation, and face painting on the side. Evie is a weekly sidewalk counselor at abortion mills in Minnesota and is active in her parish community at St. Raphael's in Crystal, MN.

This article can also be found online at her blog: forricher4poore-rinsicknessandinhealth.blogspot.com/2015/05/why-im-pro-life-response-to-i-am-pro.html.





Suicide by Another Name: The Destructive Reality of Euthanasia

By Jacqueline C. Harvey, Ph.D.

The etymology of euthanasia, when translated from Greek, means “good death.”¹ In our present debate on euthanasia in the United States, the public policy arena is currently dominated by assisted suicide, a form of euthanasia distinguished only by the fact that the person committing the ultimate act of killing is the victim.² In spite of the presence of suicide prevention programs to talk the depressed out of harming themselves — and even involuntary commitment and suicide watch for those threatening their own lives — euthanasia by assisted suicide is slowly becoming sanctioned and commonplace.³ And therein lies the paradox: can a suicide, any suicide, ever be a *good* death?

Advocates of assisted suicide insist that there is a distinction that makes physician-assisted suicide somehow not suicide (and yet not homicide either) but merely “aid in dying” when employed by the terminally ill — even though it is the taking of one’s own life, which is the very definition of suicide.⁴ This insistence makes political sense: people recoil from the word “suicide” so much that polls on assisted suicide drop by twenty points at the mere mention of the word, which many associate with mental illness.⁵ Nevertheless, suicide (assisted or otherwise) is still suicide. The intent (to kill oneself) and the outcome (one’s own death) are identical when done by someone with a physical illness and someone with depression.

While those with physical afflictions may see an early self-imposed death as preferable to continuing to live a few more months

— even if it is fewer than six months — with their illness, they could fail to see how those who suffer with mental illnesses may see death as preferable to living *years* with their affliction. Whether those taking their lives are suffering from physical or mental pain, in both cases, it is equally suicide.

Advocates of assisted suicide insist that the presence of a physical illness differentiates “aid in dying” from suicide, but these arguments are not compelling for one vital reason: the goal of assisted suicide is to take life, not to protect or preserve it.⁶ Even in the direst of circumstances, suicide is almost always a sign that something is very wrong — that there is some fate worse than death compelling a person to eschew all the basic instincts for survival in order to escape that fate. Suicide typically means someone was coerced by fear into killing himself or herself prematurely. And while it may be comfortable and even pain-free, does this make such self-destruction good?

Philosophically, what tends to make an action good or bad is a combination of the intent behind it and the outcome. Consider an individual with severe depression who plans to commit suicide and intends to destroy a human life, his own, and dies of self-induced carbon monoxide inhalation: the outcome is exactly as he intended, the destruction of a human life.

Compare this to a soldier who hurls his body on a live grenade to protect his brothers-in-arms. Both committed an act with the same outcome: the intentional destruction of their own lives. Yet to say

Philosophically, what tends to make an action good or bad is a combination of the intent behind it and the outcome.

the soldier on the battlefield committed suicide would be incredibly offensive and misleading given his intentions: to protect human life at the expense of his own.

Did the soldier die a good death? Well, it could certainly be said that a soldier who sacrificed his life for the lives of his fellow soldiers did not commit suicide any more than someone who kills an attacker in self-defense committed homicide. The intent was to protect life against an imminent threat. Even though the outcomes for those who sacrifice themselves for the lives of others may be death, the intent is good: to preserve life. But in a suicide, the intent and the outcome are simply to destroy life.

Assisted suicide advocates compare their concept of “aid in dying” to the desperate acts of victims who fell to their deaths while fleeing the flames of the World Trade Center on 9/11 — a famous photograph of one of these victims became known as “The Falling Man.”⁷ They exploit the tragedy of “The Falling Man” and insist that simply finding a less painful death when already condemned to die is not suicide. But they miss a key distinction: in the World Trade Center, the victims jumping to their deaths likely did so not to die, but to seek survival. In their attempts to find smoke-free air to breathe and shelter from the encroaching flames, perhaps the only way to cling to life for a few more moments was to fall to their deaths.

The will to survive could have been manifest in their behavior, even if that behavior was purposefully stepping off a ledge to escape the imminent threat and succumb to death by gravity. This act presents itself as an instinctual attempt at survival and self-preservation, albeit short-lived. It does not necessarily mean that the action was a rational choice of a quicker, less painful death, as some suggest — as if remaining in smoke and the flames were possible. The goal could have been to breathe and to live, but the means brought death. If so, this would have been a tragedy, not a free choice.

People fleeing an imminent threat could absolutely jump from burning buildings, leap from moving vehicles, and otherwise do whatever it takes to survive, even when that action might also bring about their deaths. In that moment, there is no rational decision, just the instinct to flee a grave threat. Remaining in the World Trade Center as it burned was not a choice, so many were seen trying to get the air they required and sanctuary from the heat. Even those who deliberately chose to leap to escape the smoke and fire may have done so in order to breathe a bit longer.

Certainly, these deaths were not suicides, as those who died were just as likely not trying to end their lives but instead trying to preserve their lives from an imminent threat. While the outcome was that their actions resulted in death, the intent could have been to escape smoke and flames. In a suicide, attempted or otherwise, both the outcome and the intent of the act is the destruction of one’s own human life. A person does not intend death through assisted suicide as a means of self-preservation but self-destruction.

The excessive lengths assisted suicide advocates go to in order to rebrand assisted suicide as anything but suicide show just how much we recoil from self-killing. At its crux, the argument that assisted suicide is not truly suicide is both politically motivated marketing and also a deeply sanctimonious double standard when you consider that the brand of so-called compassion that prescribes

death for those with physical suffering is not offered to those with mental illnesses.

It is disingenuous, however, to present what we know to be an act of desperate and unnecessary violence as something acceptable. But violence, even against oneself, can never be an acceptable solution for pain. For those in any pain, physical or emotional, a good death is one surrounded by those who care and who ease suffering through legitimate medical treatments and real compassion.

No suicide, whether called assisted suicide, euthanasia, or anything else, can ever be a good death.

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Notes:

¹ John D. Papadimitriou, Panayiotis Skiadas, Constantinos S. Mavrantonis, Vassilis Polimeropoulos, Dimitris J. Papadimitriou, and Kyriaki J. Papacostas, “Euthanasia and Suicide in Antiquity: Viewpoint of the Dramatists and Philosophers,” *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 100, no. 1 (2007): 25, doi: 10.1258/jrsm.100.1.25.

² Rita L. Marker, “Euthanasia, Assisted Suicide & Health Care Decisions: Protecting Yourself & Your Family,” Patients Rights Council (website), updated December 2006, <http://www.patientsrightscouncil.org/site/euthanasia-assisted-suicide-health-care-decisions/>.

³ Jacqueline Harvey, PhD, “Delaware Doublespeak: The Mixed Messages of Assisted Suicide,” Catholic Vote (website), accessed October 13, 2015, <https://www.catholicvote.org/delaware-doublespeak-the-mixed-messages-of-assisted-suicide/>.

⁴ Jacqueline Harvey, “Euphemisms for Euthanasia and False Dilemmas: An Update on the Assisted Suicide Debate in the United States,” Witherpoon Institute (website), June 17, 2014, <http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2014/06/13332/>.

⁵ Lydia Saad, “U.S. Support for Euthanasia Hinges on How It’s Described,” Gallup (website), May 29, 2013, http://www.gallup.com/poll/162815/support-euthanasia-hinges-described.aspx?utm_source=alert&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=syndication&utm_content=morelink&utm_term=Politics.

⁶ Jacqueline C. Harvey, “California’s Assisted-Suicide Measure Would Mean Falsified Death Certificates,” National Review Online (website), May 20, 2015, <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/418623/californias-assisted-suicide-measure-would-mean-falsified-death-certificates?target=author&tid=1488766>.

⁷ See, for example, Benjamin L. Corey, “Brittany Maynard Didn’t Commit Suicide (What We Can Learn from 9-11’s ‘Falling Man’),” Formerly Fundie (blog), November 4, 2014, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/formerlyfundie/brittany-maynard-didnt-commit-suicide-what-we-can-learn-from-9-11s-falling-man/>.



Provide a Safe Haven:

The Case for Admitting Syrian Refugees

By John Whitehead

The United States' plans to admit 10,000 refugees from the Syrian civil war into the country has become the center of a major political controversy. The controversy began in the aftermath of the November 13 attacks in Paris by operatives of the Syria-based terrorist group ISIS that killed 130 people. The possibility that one of the attackers gained entrance to Europe posing as a Syrian refugee has provoked fears that Syrian refugees admitted to the United States may include ISIS agents ready to repeat the Paris attacks on American soil. Concern over this threat has prompted the U.S. House of Representatives to pass a bill prohibiting Syrian and Iraqi refugees entrance to the United States, while governors of 31 American states have declared that they will not allow Syrian refugees into their states.¹

While fear over a possible repetition of the Paris attacks is understandable, such fear should not prevent American policymakers from welcoming those fleeing the Syrian war and providing them with a safe haven. The risk of terrorists posing as refugees is certainly real but is also relatively improbable. As contemporary history shows, terrorists have a multitude of ways of entering the United States to carry out attacks, of which pretending to be a refugee is one of the most difficult and least efficient. Terrorists infiltrating

under the guise of refugees is among the less likely scenarios for attacks such as that in Paris. Barring refugees from entering the United States will not make the country significantly more protected from attack. It will, however, prevent the vast majority of Syrian refugees who are not terrorists from receiving the help they need.

To appreciate the improbability of terrorists posing as refugees, consider what is required to be admitted to the United States as a refugee. Refugees must go through an initial screening process usually administered by officials of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, a process that involves interviews, background checks, fingerprinting, and retinal scans. If refugees pass this rigorous UN process and are referred to the United States, American authorities conduct another round of screening, involving the Department of Homeland Security and other security agencies, before the refugees are admitted to the country. The entire process, from initial screening to final entry to the United States, may take a year, two years, or even three.²

Having to run such a bureaucratic gauntlet not only makes it more likely that terrorists or suspected terrorists will be identified, but it also makes pretending to be a refugee an unappealing option for terrorists seeking to enter the United States. Being admitted as



a refugee takes a long time and involves being the subject of considerable scrutiny that must be laboriously evaded.

A shrewd terrorist would seek entrance to the United States by simply coming here as a tourist or business traveler. Such an approach requires merely applying for a visa, which involves an interview and background check but takes at most a few months, sometimes far less.

Terrorists can also sneak into the United States illegally. For example, Canada has agreed to accept 10,000 Syrian refugees and has already welcomed about 1,000 into the country.³ If, as feared, agents of ISIS are hidden among them, these agents could slip across the border into the United States. American rejection of refugees entering the United States legally will not prevent this scenario, although it will prevent many innocent people from coming here.

Terrorists can get to the United States by a third method: by being born here or coming here as immigrants only later to be radicalized and embrace terrorist groups such as ISIS or al Qaeda. Blocking refugees from Syria or elsewhere cannot protect against this danger either.

This does not mean terrorists never enter the United States disguised as refugees. Two Iraqi refugees in Kentucky have been convicted of trying to send weapons to insurgents in Iraq, while an Uzbek refugee has been convicted of trying to send weapons to terrorists in Uzbekistan. Some other refugees have been arrested or deported on terrorism-related grounds, as well. The risk of terrorist infiltration is a real one.⁴

Nevertheless, the refugees charged or convicted of terrorism are

only a tiny handful of the roughly 750,000 refugees admitted to the United States since September 11, 2001.⁵ A review of recent terrorist attacks on American soil by Islamist extremists show the various alternative origins of such fanatics:

- Of the 19 men who hijacked four planes on September 11, 2001, all entered the country on visas of one type or another (tourist, business, or student). None were admitted as refugees.⁶
- Nidal Malik Hasan, an Army psychiatrist, killed 13 people in a shooting rampage at Fort Hood, Texas, in November 2009. Far from being a refugee or even an immigrant, Hasan was born in Virginia and had been in the US army since the 1990s.⁷
- Three men, Najibullah Zazi, Adis Medunjanin, and Zarein Ahmedzay, conspired to detonate bombs on the New York City subway during rush hour in September 2009. The men were all immigrants—Zazi and Ahmedzay are Afghans, while Medunjanin is Bosnian. They had all come to the United States in early adolescence, though, their ages at immigration ranging from around 10 to around 16. While their families

might have had refugee status—Bosnia was in the midst of a civil war when Medunjanin came to the United States—the three men presumably had not been covert terrorist operatives when they were admitted to this country. Only much later did the three conspirators become radicalized and join al Qaeda.⁸

- Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a native of Nigeria, attempted to blow up a Northwest Airlines flight from Amsterdam to Detroit on Christmas Day, 2009. He was able to board the flight to the United States on a tourist visa.⁹

- Faisal Shahzad attempted to blow up a car full of explosives in New York City's Times Square in May 2010. A native of Pakistan, Shahzad had come to the United States on a student visa more than 10 years earlier and had received a bachelor's and master's degree, married a native-born American, and become an American citizen before carrying out this terrorist plot.¹⁰

- Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev set off bombs at the Boston Marathon in April 2013, killing three and wounding more than 200, and later were responsible for killing a police officer. The two brothers were the children of ethnic Chechens who had a kind of refugee status: the parents had come to the United States in 2002 as tourists and subsequently been granted asylum. Tamerlan had been only about 15 and Dzhokhar about 8 years old at the time, however: like the New York subway plotters, their radicalization came after they arrived here.¹¹

• Husband and wife Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik killed 14 people in a shooting rampage at an office holiday party in San Bernardino, California, in December 2015. Farook was born in Illinois and grew up in Riverside, California. Malik was from Pakistan and came to the United States in July 2014 on a visa as Farook's fiancée.¹²

To deny refugees admission to the United States closes off only one, very inefficient route for terrorists to enter the country.

Barring refugees from the United States would not prevent terrorists from entering the United States as tourists, businesspeople, or non-refugee immigrants. Nor would it prevent native-born Americans from becoming radicalized and joining terrorist groups. Nor would it prevent terrorists from entering the country illegally.

In cases such as that of the Tsarnaev brothers, where the children of refugees subsequently became terrorists, barring refugees would presumably have prevented terrorist attacks; but such scenarios cannot be predicted beforehand with any confidence and denying refugees admission because their children might possibly become terrorists is hardly fair or humane.

To deny refugees admission to the United States closes off only one, very inefficient route for terrorists to enter the country and does not address any of the myriad other routes by which they might come here. Such meager results are a poor reason to deprive people a haven after war forced them from their homes. The American people and their representatives should not follow such a tragically misguided policy. The Syrian refugees deserve to be admitted to this country.

Notes:

¹ Jeremy Diamond, "Entering the U.S. as Refugees Would Be the Hardest Way for Would-be Terrorists," CNN, November 20, 2015, <http://cnn.it/219hJol>; Francine Kiefer, "Why the Syrian Refugee Issue Turned Partisan So Quickly," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 17, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1NU8nHj>.

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⁶ Thomas R. Eldridge, Susan Ginsburg, Walter T. Hempel II, Janice L. Kephart, Kelly Moore, Joanne M. Accolla and Alice Falk, *Terrorist Travel: Staff Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (Nashville, TN: Turner Publishing, 2004), 7 passim, available at <http://bit.ly/1T2A0he> [page numbers are for online version].

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Responding to Paris with Love in Action

By C.J. Williams

The terrorist attacks in Paris were tragic. That sentence cannot be followed by *but*. No tragedy can be used to make a point — no matter how true — without devaluing the dignity of those who suffered in it.

Let's follow it instead with *and*. Because *and* can lead us to steps that will perhaps — rather than discount the suffering — *more fully count* the suffering.

So the attacks in Paris were *and* are tragic; *and* what do we say to the fact that Paris brought to international light and attention

terror that happens daily; happens silently; happens unnoted and unmourned?

Is our understanding of and awareness of human dignity based mainly on the wild swing of the media spotlight? Do we care when caring is carried by the majority, when Facebook makes it easy to take note and change our profile pictures to make shows of solidarity? Do we notice human dignity when an event like the Paris attacks — a large-scale attack on humanity — occurs but not when it appears small-scale; for example, in the daily killing of individual preborn babies in abortion and in attacks on the women, their mothers?

Yet Paris illustrated something positive as well. The outpouring of solidarity and outcries over the violence against human lives showed a community of hearts that are open. We, as a community, value fellow human lives. We, as a community, have hearts for justice. We, as a community, acknowledge the preciousness of the human person — if we did not, why would Paris matter?

So why do we not go a step further? Why do we not mourn or revolt against the racism in our backyard? Why do we not swap our Facebook profile pics every morning for shots barred by baby blue and baby pink, to recognize the thousands of children's lives taken by the abortionist each morning? Why do we not decry the terrorism that downed a Russian jet; or post prayers for the Christians executed without a second thought in the Middle East; or weep on our friends' shoulders at the horror of child abuse, hidden by a cultural assent to broken families and a no-holds-barred surrender to sexual whims?

Why? Why do we have hearts so open and yet eyes so blind? Perhaps part of the contradiction lies in simple laziness.

We are spoon-fed values by our phones, by the media which we consume. Perhaps we are too used to going with the flow.

Or perhaps even, as Fyodor Dostoyevsky wrote in *The Brothers Karamazov*, *love in action is a terrible thing compared to love in dreams*. To decry Paris is the sign of an open heart; to miss or ignore the abortionist's violence is the sign of a lazy will, an unwillingness to work or suffer.

We Americans are excellent at care and compassion. But we do not suffer well.

So we cry over Paris — rightly so, justly so. But we weep little,

and act less over the fact that thousands of human lives are taken by the abortionist each day in our own backyard. Every day, abortion and sex trafficking take human lives and take human dignity, treating human life as a commodity, to be bought and sold as entertainment on the information highway.

So Paris was a tragedy. This is true. Can Paris also be — even in its horror — a moment to find our values, and make them active things, *terrible active things* that will not only cry out over the taking of human life, but will also *act out* to change our culture and our world into one that holds human lives as precious, in every circumstance?

Human dignity under assault in Paris became a news story; it became a movement; it exposed the preciousness of life by showing that life to be precarious. Is it just a news story? Or can it instead be the reality that we, personally, authentically, seek each day, act on each day, *defend* each day?

Dostoyevsky was right. Love in action is a terrible thing compared to love in dreams, if we take love in action to mean something active, alive, able to transform what it touches. But if love in action is terrible, then *terrifying* is lack of love in action, love in dreams, which responds with emotion, but has no will and allows terrorism to live in the dark that its fluffy pink dreams fear to enter.

We do have hearts. Paris showed us that. May we also have wills, and the courage to use them, so that Paris may be a tragedy *and* an opportunity.



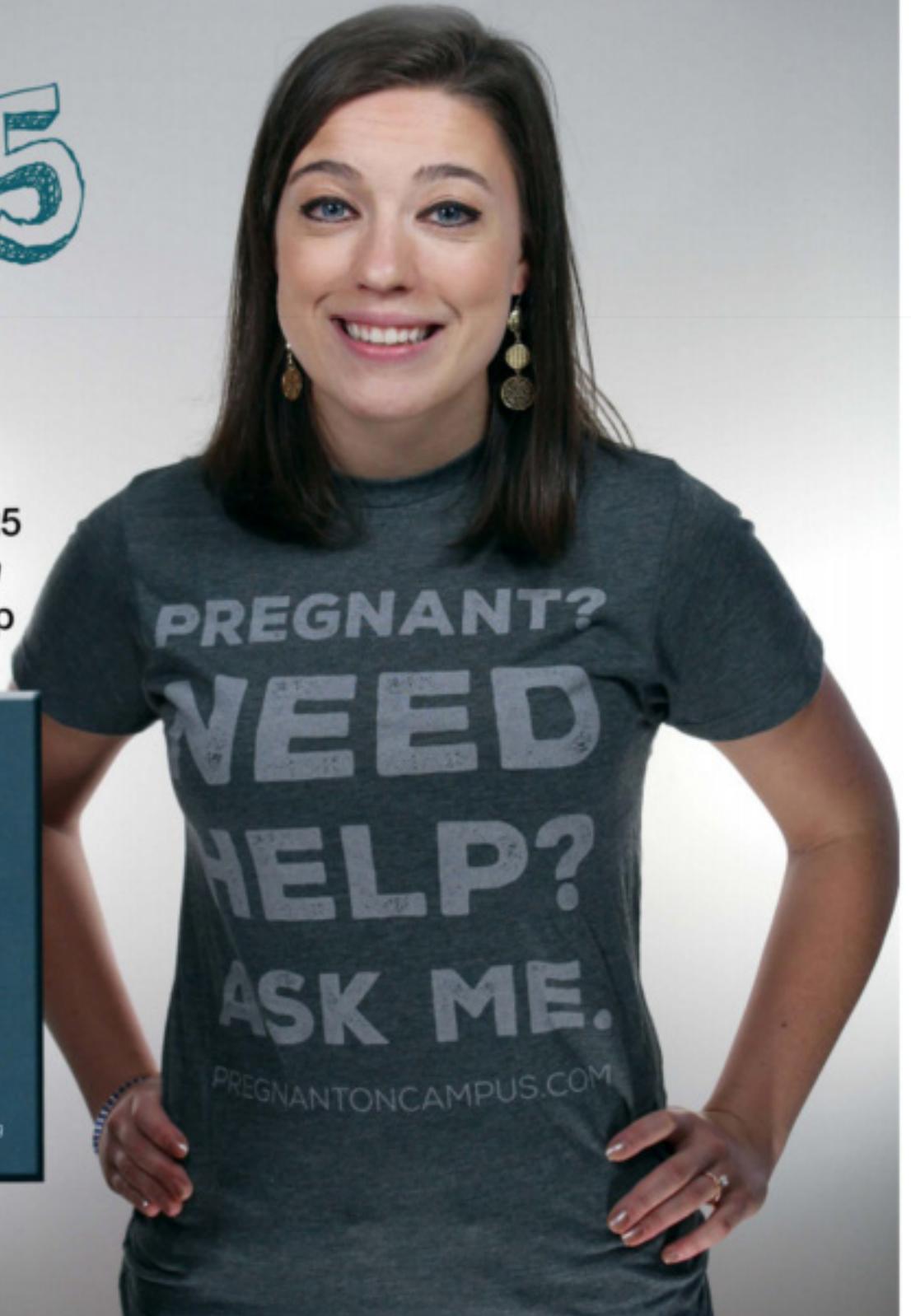
We do have hearts. Paris showed us that. May we also have wills...so that Paris may be a tragedy *and* an opportunity.

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An Open Letter to Emma Watson

By Anonymous

Dear Emma,

There's a truly touching scene in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* in which the character you played in the film, Hermione Granger, is consoled by her friends after being referred to as a

"Mudblood" by Draco Malfoy. This particular scene is incredibly powerful, as it reveals the ways irrational discrimination and hateful language can lead to dehumanization. The use of pure-bloodedness as a metric for an individual's worth is truly despicable; it is, in fact, emblematic of a cynical, antiquated mindset that values homogeneity and advocates violence against those who, through no fault of their own, happen to be different.

As I reread those pages in the book, I can clearly see how this episode managed to influence Hermione's thinking in later books in the series. Realizing that some would continue to judge her abilities based on an artificial and meaningless criterion, she became motivated to dispel the notion that, as a Muggle-born, her worth was less than that of a pure-blooded citizen.

In many ways, this scene from the second *Harry Potter* book bears a great deal of similarity to the struggles faced by the first-wave feminists who fought to guarantee women's suffrage in the United States, Great Britain, and numerous other countries. It also bears a great deal of similarity to the trials faced by pro-life activists who work to protect unborn children from the horrors of abortion.

As someone who admires you a great deal, both as an actress and as a person, I want to thank you for your efforts in bringing awareness to the experiences of women in less-advantaged countries. At the same time, I want to discuss the importance of pro-life feminism, as well as the need to include those who oppose abortion in feminist circles.

Last September, you delivered a speech at the United Nations in which you extolled the

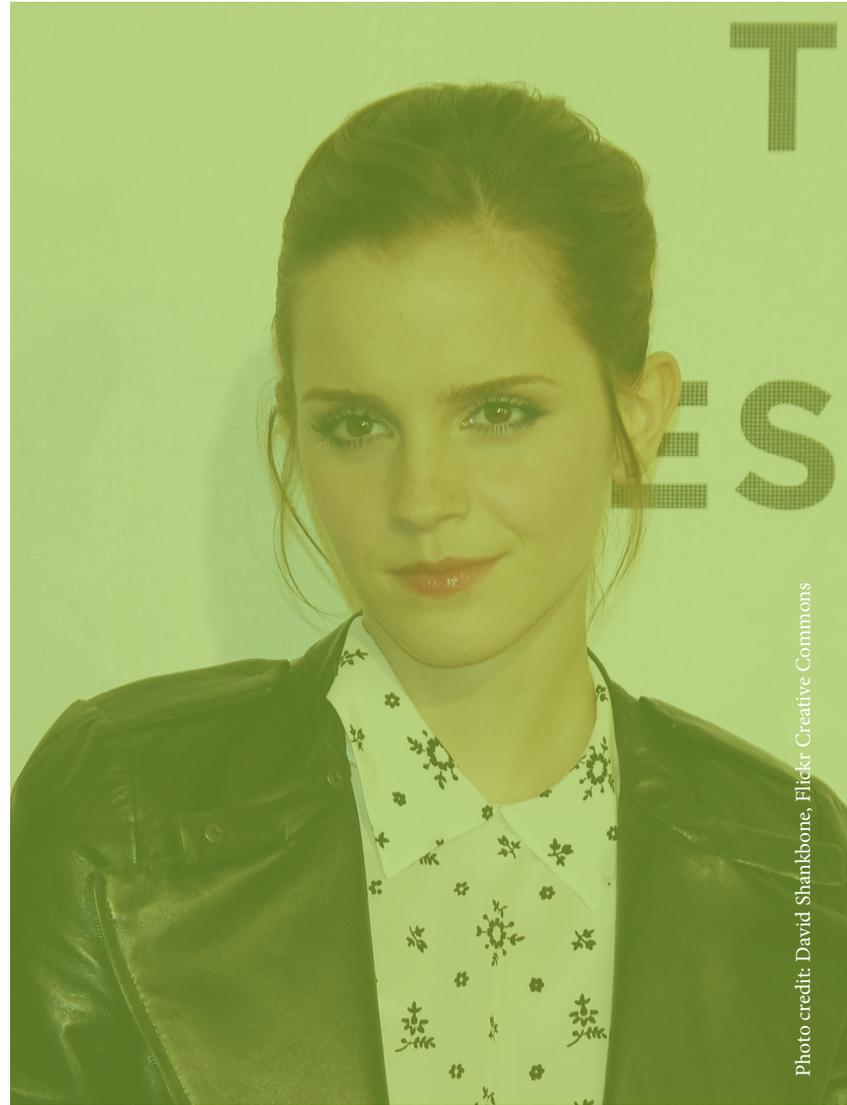


Photo credit: David Shankbone, Flickr Creative Commons

virtues of feminism and gender equality. For the most part, I found myself in agreement with much of what you said. You beautifully described the negative consequences of pigeonholing young girls with expectations that they conform to long-held stereotypes. Likewise, you pointed out the detrimental role that the media often plays in shaping girls' ideas of how they ought to behave. However, there was one line you delivered that I couldn't help but feel troubled by: "I think it is right that I should be able to make decisions about my own body."¹

Theoretically, that statement could have been in reference to any number of things. It could have been a condemnation of rape and sexual assault; a denunciation of female genital mutilation; a criticism of society's expectations regarding what women should be allowed to wear; or a declaration of support for the notion that women should not be objectified. And yet, I can't help but feel that my discomfort was justified. After all, such language has customarily been associated with support for legalized abortion and the destruction of preborn human life. In many countries, this destruction specifically targets girls, and girls lose their lives to abortion at a rate that surpasses any other cause of death.

As someone who has become increasingly invested in the pro-life movement this past year, I have met a number of women (many of whom are millennials) who oppose the idea that abortion availability is necessary in order to ensure gender equality. In fact, they argue that abortion is symptomatic of a worldview that continues to subjugate women and their children, while demanding that they embrace violence in order to reach the same political footing as men.

Feminist history contains countless examples of intelligent, hardworking, and independent women who fought tirelessly not only for their rights but also for the rights of their children. Elizabeth Cady Stanton recognized the patriarchal underpinnings of abortion; in a letter to Julia Ward Howe, she wrote, "When we consider that women are treated as property, it is degrading to women that we should treat our children as property to be disposed of as we see fit."² Stanton saw parallels between the devaluation of women and the devaluation of the preborn. She believed that, in arguing for the equal rights of women, women should not resort to the same violent tactics that men had employed in denying women their rights. Her colleague, Susan B. Anthony, agreed with her pro-life views, believing that abortion would "burden [a woman's] conscience in life."³ Yet Anthony also understood that men used—and continue to use—abortion to control women; she wrote that "oh, thrice guilty is he who...drove her to the desperation which impelled her to the crime!"⁴ Other feminists felt the same way: Alice Paul said that "abortion is the ultimate exploitation of women,"⁵ and Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell eviscerated the application of the term "female physician" to abortionists, who "filled [her] with indignation, and awakened [her with] active antagonism" through their "gross perversion and destruction of motherhood."

I, along with my pro-life feminist friends, absolutely believe that women should have the



Feminist history contains countless examples of intelligent, hardworking, and independent women who fought tirelessly not only for their rights but also for the rights of their children.

same rights as men. We believe that a woman should be allowed to vote, obtain an education, decide if she wants to get married, decide whom she wants to marry, dress however she wants, and pursue any career that she wants. But since, scientifically speaking, “fertilization (or *conception*) is the beginning of human life,”⁶ we oppose abortion because we recognize that it deprives another individual of not only *their* right to *their* body, but also *their* right to *life*.

Abortion runs contrary to feminism’s historic support for equality, compassion, respect for life, and opposition to violence.

Feminism should be inclusive, and yet thousands of pro-life feminists are labeled as “anti-choice” and excluded from feminist circles because they oppose violence against society’s most vulnerable and most voiceless members. This past June, you retweeted an article from *The Independent* about actor Mark Ruffalo. For the most part, the piece focuses on Ruffalo’s support for feminism, but in its final paragraph, it segues into an account of how the actor penned an open letter arguing that “women were considered second-class citizens” because his mother was “forced to have an illegal abortion.”⁷

Second and third-wave feminists must understand that opposition to abortion is based on an opposition to violence, not support for the subjugation of women. Not only is such an acknowledgement necessary in order to ensure feminism’s commitment to intellectual honesty, but it also allows others to feel as if they are welcome in the feminist movement.

In addition, abortion runs contrary to feminism’s historic support for equality, compassion, respect for life, and opposition to violence. When feminists argue that abortion is empowering, they encourage desperate women to view dismemberment as the key to their liberation. When powerful people like Hillary Clinton, whom you referenced in your speech, and Lena Dunham, whom you have referred to as your “favorite person in the world,”⁸ meet with abortionists to offer them praise and serve as spokespeople for Planned Parenthood, they glamorize violence. When they write and star in television shows that refer to unborn children as “balls of cells” and treat abortion as a lighthearted matter to be joked about, they dehumanize those whom they regard as inconvenient. When they joke about aborting the royal baby, they trivialize the greatest human rights abuse of our time.



Surely, feminism deserves better.

You once said, “If you stand for equality, then you’re a feminist. Sorry to tell you, you’re a feminist.”⁹ I agree. I believe that the only requirement to be a feminist should be credence to the notion that every human being has inherent value. No one should feel left out of the feminist movement because they logically extend that belief to preborn humans.

Just this past July, a video was released in which Planned Parenthood’s top doctor admitted that her organization was involved in the sale of organs stolen from aborted children. Feminists should be sounding the alarm on this revelation, as it transcends petty politics and demonstrates the tremendous damage that the abortion industry, in its single-minded pursuit of profit, has done to women. To be frank, “[i]f [abortion] were about women—if it were even, basically, about humans—reports of discarded babies in dumpsters, allegations of unsanitary clinic conditions, or horrifying videos of top doctors extolling the virtues of well-formed livers, wouldn’t exist.”¹⁰ Indeed, abortion deprives women of an ability that is uniquely theirs.

In becoming an avid member of the pro-life movement, I have had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with a number of women whose regard for all life is nothing short of remarkable. I regard these women as selfless individuals committed to life, nonviolence, and generosity. They support extending legal rights and personhood to preborn children. At the same time, they believe in helping pregnant women, especially those who are poor and disadvantaged. They believe that men should be actively involved in raising their children by providing financial and emotional support to pregnant mothers. These women subscribe to a belief in the consistent life ethic, a belief that all life should be protected from conception to natural death. These women include Aimee Murphy, Lisa Twigg, Mary Stroka, Maria Oswalt, and Rachel Peller, and I encourage you to reach out to them.

I also encourage you to engage with groups such as Feminists for Nonviolent Choices, Feminists for Life, New Wave Feminists, Secular Pro-Life, the Pro-Life Alliance of Gays and Lesbians, and (of course) *Life Matters Journal*. All of these groups defy traditional pro-life stereotypes by welcoming people from all backgrounds, and they would be more than happy to explain their views to you.

I applaud your support for gender equality and active engagement in feminism, and I hope that you will lead the charge in welcoming pro-life women (and men) to the cause.

Best of luck!

Notes:

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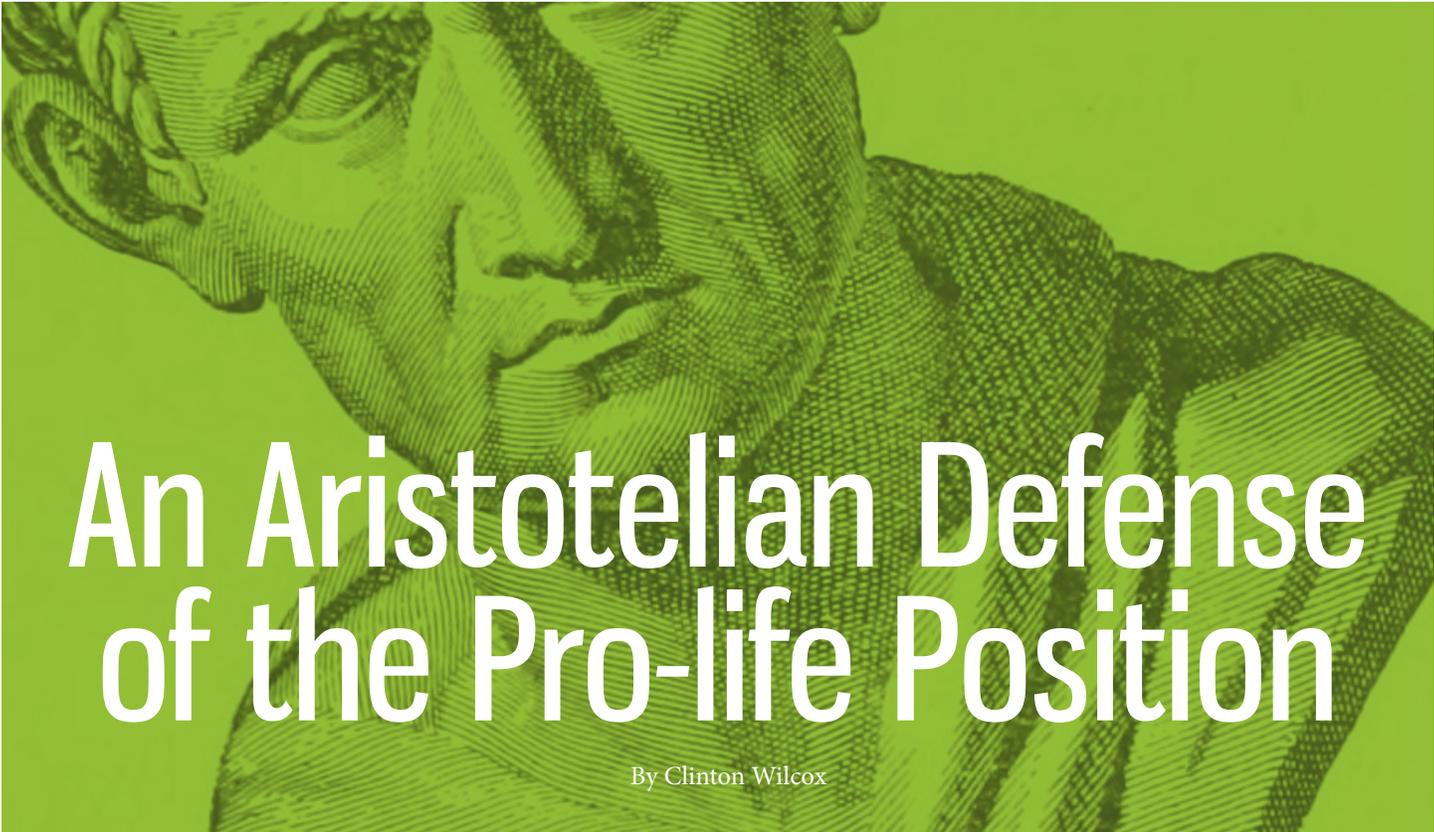
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⁷ Helen Nianias, “Mark Ruffalo Tells ‘Ignorant’ People Who Aren’t Feminists to ‘Kiss My A**,’” *The Independent*, June 2, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/mark-ruffalo-tells-ignorant-people-who-arent-feminists-to-kiss-my-a-10291291.html>.

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An Aristotelian Defense of the Pro-life Position

By Clinton Wilcox

Ancient Greek philosophy, which undergirds our western way of thinking, can provide insights into the current debate over the morality of abortion. There is a false idea prevalent in our culture today that science is the final arbiter of human knowledge.¹ Science, alone, cannot reveal knowledge to us, however. Science can only study and give us knowledge about the physical aspects of reality. It has nothing to say about the metaphysical aspects of reality or about whether there *is* a metaphysical reality or not.² Science is merely a tool to gain knowledge and insight into physical reality. In order to properly engage in a scientific endeavor, one must already have a worldview for interpreting scientific findings. Philosophy provides such worldviews. Philosophy has also given us logic—principles for reasoning—which science must assume and cannot prove. Philosophy is more fundamental than science, which is why science is also known as “natural philosophy.”

In philosophy, there are a number of so-called “problems” that are relevant to the abortion debate, such as the “mind-body problem.” However, as philosopher Edward Feser explains, these problems did not crop up until Aristotelian essentialism started to be rejected by philosophers.³ As Feser writes, rejection of essentialism was the “single greatest mistake ever made in the history of modern thought.”⁴ In fact, he tells us, without making the distinctions that essentialism makes, you can’t even fully understand the abortion debate.⁵

This essay will use Aristotelian essentialism to present a proof for the truth of the pro-life position.⁶ It’s important to point out that Aristotle was not pro-life in the modern sense of the term.

The ancient Greeks had different ideas about the value of human life than Christians do, and they practiced abortion and infanticide before the influence of Christianity ultimately ended the practice of infanticide in ancient western countries.⁷ But it’s undeniable that Aristotle’s metaphysics shows that human beings are human right from the start.

What is Essence?

The first step in our argument is to talk about essence. What is essence, and how do you determine the essence of a thing? A thing’s essence is essentially what makes that thing what it is, what differentiates it from something else. If we consider the abstract concept of *triangularity*, what is its essence? The essence of triangularity is that it has three sides and three corners that add up to 180 degrees.

Triangularity is a “universal,” meaning that there can be numerous instances of this abstract object; universals can be had by more than one individual thing at a time.⁸ An individual triangle is a particular instance of the universal abstraction triangularity. Such a particular instance of a universal is referred to as a “particular.” In the same way, the abstraction “redness” is a universal (there can be many red things), but a red apple is an individual instance, a particular, of redness.

Once we have determined a thing’s essence, we can then determine what properties are *essential* to the thing which makes the thing what it is and not something else. Since we know that triangularity means having three sides and three angles, three sides and three angles are essential to an entity being a triangle. If I draw a

polygon with four sides, it is not a triangle but a rectangle that I have drawn. Since three sides and angles are what makes a triangle a triangle and not something else, if I draw a figure with four sides and four corners, it cannot be a triangle. An *essential property* is any property of an entity that if the entity were to lose that property, it would cease to be what it is.

In contrast to needing three sides and three corners, what color the triangle is and what material it is drawn on are *accidental* to triangles. If I draw a red triangle on paper and a blue triangle on a chalkboard, both are particular instances of triangularity, despite being two different colors and being drawn on two different material surfaces. An accidental property is any property of an entity that does not affect what the entity is. Having or not having a particular color does not affect what a triangle is.

Having clarified what essence and essential properties are, we can now determine what makes humans what they are and what differentiates them from non-humans. In other words, what is the essence of humanity?

Humans are a specific kind of animal, the kind of animal that can engage in rational thought. The capacity for rational thought is what separates us from other animals, as well as other living things, such as plants and trees. Since what sets us apart from lower animals is our capacity for rationality, one can say that humans are rational animals. To be capable of rational thought is inherent in being a member of the human species. This capacity for rational thought is an essential property of humanity, and other things, such as eye color, skin color, or being conscious, are accidental properties. As long as an entity has this capacity for rational thought, that entity is a human being.⁹

The prenatal entity produced by a human woman and man is identifiable as biologically human once it comes into existence during the fertilization process. In other words, the unborn are biologically human from the beginning, which means that they have the inherent capacity for rational thought, which flows from the individual's rational nature.

To repeat, to be human is to have the essential property of having a rational nature, from which flows the inherent capacity for rational thought. It is this inherent capacity, not whether or not it is presently exercisable, that is necessary to ground one's identity as a human being. Being human does not depend on accidental properties such as higher thought, speech, movement, or the like.

Claiming that you are not a person until you possess certain accidental properties is to confuse what you are with what you can do. All members of the human species have rational natures regardless of the kinds of things they can do. Given Aristotelian essentialism, it is certain that the unborn are full human beings from fertilization.

Notes:

¹ This religious devotion to science by atheists has been called *scientism* by Christian thinkers.

² The term “metaphysical” simply means “beyond the physical.” It refers to those aspects of reality which are not immediately accessible to the five senses; it usually requires philosophical reflection in order to find truth in this area.

³ Edward Feser, *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2008), 51.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 57.

⁶ Entire books have been written in defense and explanation of Aristotelian Essentialism. This will only be a very basic treatment of these ideas. Essentially (no pun intended), I will only be talking about the portions relevant to the argument.

⁷ This is why certain philosophers, such as Peter Singer, argue that we should have legalized infanticide (on top of legalized abortion), to get away from “antiquated” views of human value.

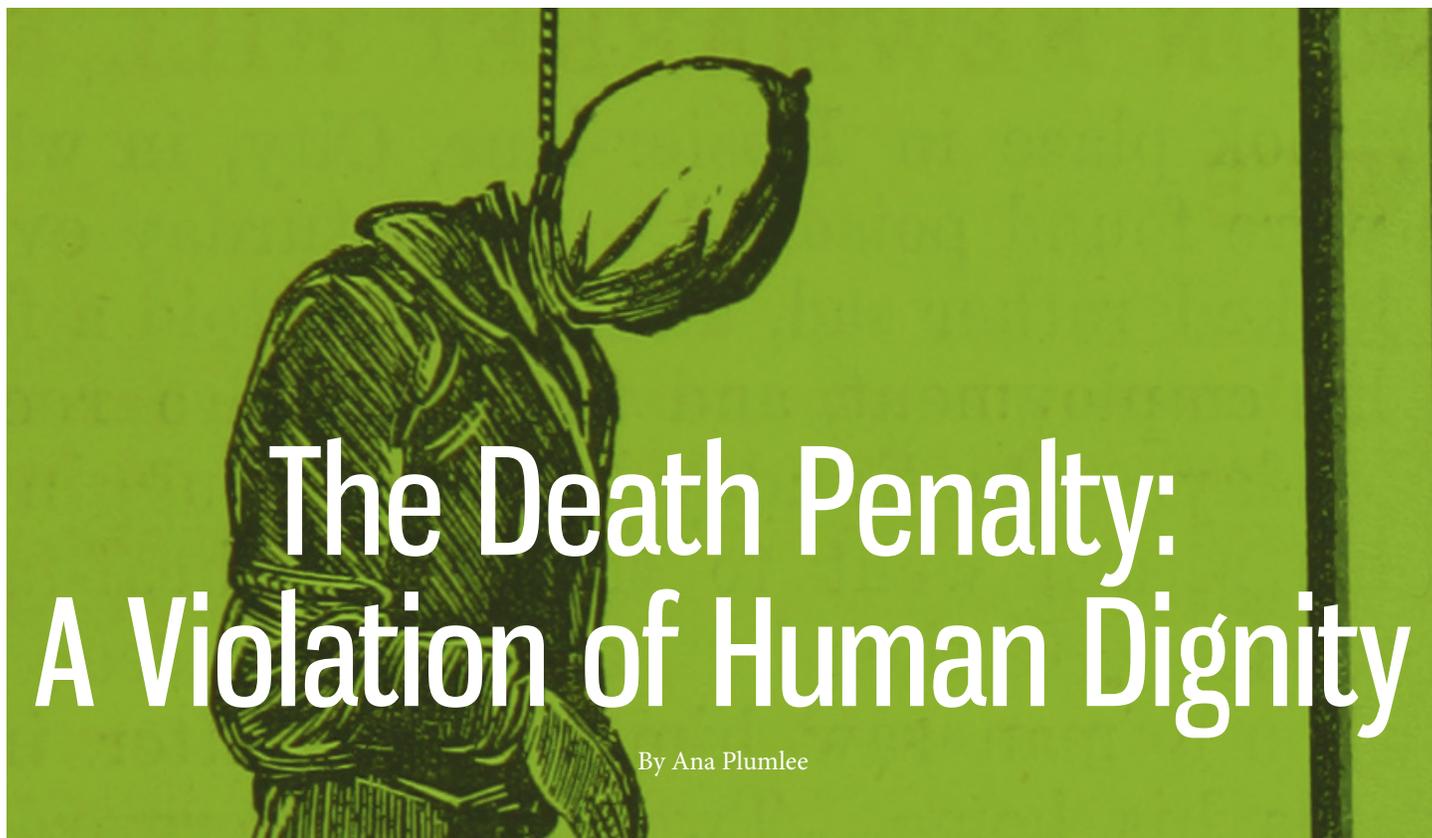
⁸ On the surface, it seems strange to refer to a concept as an “object.” However, Plato and Aristotle believed (as do modern Aristotelian philosophers like Feser and David Oderberg) that abstract things such as triangularity, justice, morality, and so on, are real objects that exist in reality. Plato believed these abstract entities (which he called “forms”) exist in some third realm beyond the physical and mental, the realm of forms. Aristotle believed that these forms did not exist in some third realm, but instead exist, in some sense, in the mind (which is perceived by human beings) and in the thing itself.

⁹ Here is where a clarification is essential. All human beings have the capacity for rational thought. There are certain extreme cases, such as anencephaly, which are appealed to in order to try and argue that not all humans have the capacity for rational thought. It is beyond the scope of this essay to go into detail regarding the different kinds of capacities, but suffice it to say that children conceived with anencephaly, or some other severe disability or defect, still have the inherent capacity for rationality by virtue of their human nature. This capacity is just tragically blocked by an external factor (injury

or disease). It is not possible today to restore a severely disabled child's capacity for rational thought so the child can actually exercise it, but it may be possible someday. Here's an example to illustrate this further: 100 years ago someone with severe damage to their corneas was blind and could never see again. As a human being is, by nature, an entity who can see, this inherent capacity was not

lost, but the presently exercisable capacity became blocked by an injury to the cornea. Today it is possible to give a cornea transplant to certain people who have gone blind, even though it wasn't possible 100 years ago. It would be silly to assert that the inherent capacity was lost 100 years ago but not today, when cornea transplants are a reality. Even so, just because humans do not have a way to restore lost brain function, it does not mean the inherent capacity for higher brain function—including the capacity for rational thought—has been lost due to severe brain injury or disease.

Claiming that you are not a person until you possess certain accidental properties is to confuse what you are with what you can do.



The Death Penalty: A Violation of Human Dignity

By Ana Plumlee

The United States was recently able to experience the presence of Pope Francis. During the pope's visit, it seemed that the American public became interested in all things Catholic, even if some people disagreed with Church teaching. The Pope showed that certain teachings of the Church offer practical wisdom on the life issues and the dignity of human life — not only for the religious, but for the secular world as well.

In his address to Congress, Pope Francis expressed support for the worldwide abolition of the death penalty. “The Golden Rule,” Pope Francis said, “reminds us of our responsibility to protect and defend human life at every stage of its development.” Since the beginning of his ministry, this conviction has led him “to advocate at different levels for the global abolition of the death penalty.” Francis goes on to say that he is “convinced that this way is the best, since every life is sacred, every human person is endowed with an inalienable dignity, and society can only benefit from the rehabilitation of those convicted of crimes.”¹

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) first called for the abolition of the death penalty about 35 years ago. More recently, the bishops wrote, in *A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death*, that, “Each of us is called to respect the life and dignity of every human being. Even when people deny the dignity of others, we must still recognize that their dignity is a gift from God and is not something that is earned or lost through their behavior. Respect for life applies to all, even the perpetrators of terrible acts. Punishment should be consistent with the demands of justice *and* with respect for human life and dignity [emphasis in original].”²

Pope Francis expressed his support for the American bishops' efforts, saying, “Recently my brother bishops here in the United

States renewed their call for the abolition of the death penalty. Not only do I support them, but I also offer encouragement to all those who are convinced that a just and necessary punishment must never exclude the dimension of hope and the goal of rehabilitation.”³ So both the pope and the bishops of the United States, who know what the Church's teachings on the death penalty are, advocate for the abolition of this unnecessary, aggressive violence.

To explain the reasons for the pope and the bishops' opposition to the death penalty, I will discuss what the Church teaches on the death penalty in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, papal encyclicals, and the work of prominent theologians such as St. Thomas Aquinas. Both the Catechism and St. Thomas Aquinas say that the state has the right to exact the death penalty, but neither the Catechism nor Aquinas nor any other text that puts forward Church teaching presumes this gives the state an unlimited right to make laws prescribing capital punishment and to carry them out. It is inherent in a just capital punishment law that there be proportion between the taking of the life of the criminal and the benefit expected to the common good.

In article 2267 of the Catechism, it is taught that “assuming that the guilty party's identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against an unjust aggressor.” But even if a criminal is identified and it is known that the said criminal committed the crime he or she has been convicted of, where does the common good come into play? How does an execution benefit the common good? One will ask those questions since the common good includes the criminal as well.

The Catechism also states, in article 2267, that “If, however, non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people’s safety from the aggressor, authority should limit itself to such means, as these are more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and more in conformity with the dignity of the human person.” Further, there are non-lethal ways of rendering a criminal unable to do harm. This is stated in the Catechism, as well as in John Paul II’s encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*. Article 56 of *Evangelium Vitae* says, “Today, in fact, as a consequence of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm — without definitively taking away from him the possibility of redeeming himself — the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity ‘are very rare, if not practically non-existent.’”

These statements from the Catechism and *Evangelium Vitae* provide one basis for Catholic opposition to the death penalty. In addition, the bishops of the United States and people such as Sister Helen Prejean, the author of *Dead Man Walking*, assert that the death penalty is a violation of Catholic Social Teaching. This assertion raises the question of which principles of Catholic Social Teaching are being violated and how these principles are being violated.

There are 10 total principles of Catholic Social teaching, of which three are violated by the death penalty:

The first principle being violated is that of the preservation of human dignity. This principle states that all life is sacred and that the dignity of the person is the core of a moral vision for society. As a USC-CB task force noted, “Our belief in the sanctity of the human life and the inherent dignity of the human person is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching.”⁴ Capital punishment takes away the life and dignity of a criminal. In a complete and total disregard for the sanctity of criminals’ lives, we kill them, because it seems like the right thing to do to them. The United Nations Universal Declaration on Human Rights includes in its list of the essential human rights that every human being has the right not to be tortured and the right not to be killed (Articles 5 and 3, respectively). The death penalty is just that: torture and killing. It violates one’s rights.

The second violated principle of Catholic Social Teaching is stewardship of creation. Stewardship of creation insists that we show our respect for what/whomever we see as a creator by caring for creation. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith (or lives in general, whatever we might believe), in relationship with all of creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored, and it also applies to the use of the death penalty. Instead of protecting people and the planet by means that preserve life, our use of the death penalty teaches that it is only possible to protect people and the planet by means of killing.

Although some could argue that the death penalty helps protect

the rest of society, capital punishment isn’t actually necessary. The prison system in place today, at least in the United States, is more sophisticated than the one we had in place 100-200 years ago, so people aren’t as much of a danger to society anymore once they are locked behind bars. While there is a possibility that the criminals could escape, there are more constructive alternatives to the death penalty. Tougher sentencing would discourage offenders from committing crimes. Longer jail times for felons and first-time offenders would keep them from entering into society until they are rehabilitated. Requiring inmates to pay for their time in prison would reduce the cost to taxpayers. Allocating a portion of a prisoner’s earnings toward facility expenses and programs would force them to “pay” for their crimes, literally and figuratively, making it cheaper to keep a convict in prison for life without parole. A portion of inmates’ wages should also be put into funds for crime victims and their families. Although money can never replace a loved one or completely heal the damage from the loved one’s loss, it could help families establish a new normal and get on their feet again.

The third and final violated principle of Catholic Social Teaching is providing options for the poor and vulnerable. This principle roots itself in Catholic teaching’s proclamation of a basic moral test, which is how we treat the most vulnerable members of society. We must put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. Christ said it himself in the Gospel of Matthew (25:40): “Whatsoever you do

for the least of my brothers, you do for me.”

The vulnerable person in situations where the death penalty might be used is the criminal. We as human beings are just so centered on being vengeful in response to the deaths of the victims and cannot summon enough love to forgive someone for the crime of murder, especially if he is not showing remorse. We already have power over this criminal, so why not use this power for good?

Different responses to murderers have been seen in multiple cases where the death penalty has been dealt. Some victims’ loved ones want the perpetrator to die. Others will find it in their hearts to forgive. But let me ask this: Is it really worth it, watching someone die in front of you, even if that person hurt you and your loved ones? I would have to say no, it’s not worth it.

Instead of protecting people and the planet by means that preserve life, our use of the death penalty teaches that it is only possible to protect people and the planet by means of killing.

Notes:

¹ Pope Francis, “Address to Congress,” Catholic News Agency, September 24, 2015, <http://bit.ly/1L8i19B>.

² United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), *A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death* (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 2005), 11, available at <http://bit.ly/1ZGUgJu>.

³ Pope Francis, “Address to Congress.”

⁴ “Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions,” Task Force on Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Education, United States Council of Catholic Bishops, accessed January 2, 2016, <http://bit.ly/110xjGC>.

Life Lessons with Josh

Question:

“One of the most common questions I get about being pro-life is ‘But what if the mother was raped?’ I stand for all life, even life that was created through rape or any other difficult situation. How can I explain that to a pro-choicer in such a way that I don’t come across as callous or uncaring about the mother’s situation?”

Sincerely,
Troubled in Tuscaloosa

Answer:

I love the way this question is worded. You clearly desire to show that you don’t only care about the child; you rightly care for the survivor of rape as well. Many pro-life people don’t communicate that very well when they talk about rape. They come across as if they have something we call “Fetus Tunnel Vision.”

I think rape is the most common example of this. Immediately we say, “*The child’s right to life shouldn’t be dependent on how it was conceived!*” I agree with that, but who does this skip? The mother.

As my friend Steve Wagner from Justice For All says, “When a pro-choice person brings up the issue of rape, they’re not terribly concerned at that point if the unborn is human. They want to find out whether *you’re* human.” Can you comprehend how horrible



rape is? If not, please don't tell people you're pro-life. I've trained people before who understood the *definition* of rape, but they don't understand *what rape is*. There are other pro-lifers who cannot hear the word "rape" and let themselves acknowledge how horrible rape is because they feel like they're losing debate points or time. There's too much of that out there and it's hurting our movement.

So, here's what we should do instead. *We should first acknowledge the horror of rape*. Please hear me. I'm not telling you to fake compassion. Rather, we should clearly express the genuine compassion we have for survivors of rape.

I was talking with a pro-choice woman in the Denver airport once, and it wasn't long before she asked me, "What about rape?" I took a cue from Steve Wagner and said this:

Rape is one of the worst things that I know about. Thinking about rape makes me feel really sad and really angry at the same time. I have friends who have been through that experience. Rape is horrific, and if she becomes pregnant, she's probably going to make the most difficult decision of her life.

She has three choices. She can either do what's right, which in my mind is carrying the baby to term, which includes nine months of pregnancy and a painful delivery. She can then keep the child which is a very expensive 18-year commitment; she can choose adoption, which I think is a very heroic and selfless act, but it's also very emotionally painful for most birthmoms; or she's going to make the wrong decision and hire a doctor to shred the baby to death.

I think the rapist should be punished for all of that. He has committed multiple moral crimes if the survivor becomes pregnant. He's not only forced himself on her sexually, but he's also forced her to become a mother. I don't think we should force women to become mothers.

Now, this is where I stop. You see, there are two challenges in front of me when someone brings up the issue of rape: a relational challenge and an intellectual challenge. We at the Equal Rights Institute believe that the most effective response is to first address the relational challenge and to only address the intellectual challenge if the other person brings us there. Some people only need to hear the relational part that day. When we talk to people, we are trying to love them, and loving people well is complicated. Sometimes loving people means making a good argument. Sometimes it means just listening to them.

Sometimes the other person does bring the conversation to the intellectual challenge. "Okay, I get it. You don't like rape. I appreciate that, I really do. We agree that rape is really horrible and since we agree on that, *can't we agree that at least in the case of rape abor-*

tion should be legal because rape is so bad?"

I'll tell you the response that has worked the best for me. I used it in a public debate with a leader from Georgians for Choice in front of a packed auditorium of pro-choice students. The issue of rape came up a lot, but it was only when I presented the following scenario that I could see light bulbs come on for some of the students. I said:

Let's imagine that a woman is raped and becomes pregnant, and she decides not to have an abortion. Some people do decide to not have abortions. Not every pregnant rape survivor has an abortion. So she's one of those who decides not to have an abortion. She gives birth to a baby boy. She is getting therapy, and the rapist's butt is in jail where it belongs. It's not easy, but for the sake of the argument, it's going as well as it could be. She's on the slow road to healing. And then, her son turns two, and, for the first time, he looks like her rapist. Her son got his looks from his biological dad, and now it's causing flashbacks every time she sees him, and she's having nightmares every night because she's around her son all the time. It gets to the point where it's really bad and she's starting to hate her son, to the point where she wants to kill her son.

We should surround this woman with love and the kinds of resources she needs. I'm not saying we fix it, but we do the best we can. Basically, we should be willing to do just about anything for this woman except kill someone.

I asked the audience, "Should she be allowed to kill her son?" Everyone in the audience said, "No." I said, "Why not?" Somebody said, "That's different." And I said, "Why is that differ-

ent?" And she said, "Because he's human." I said, "Precisely! And *if* the unborn is equally valuable as the toddler, then we shouldn't kill the unborn to solve an emotionally traumatic event."

We should surround this woman with love and the kinds of resources she needs. I'm not saying we fix it, but we do the best we can. Basically, we should be willing to do just about anything for this woman *except kill someone*. I won't cross that line. It doesn't mean that I don't care about her. I want things to be instantly better for her. But if people should be given an equal right to life because of the kind of thing they are, then the most rational conclusion I can come to is that we should not kill young people to help someone else feel better about a horrible situation.

I often summarize this point for the pro-choice person in the following way: "We both agree that rape is an act of violence that was done against an innocent person, the woman. We shouldn't try to fix the problem by doing another act of violence toward another innocent person, the child."

Josh Brahm is the president of the Equal Rights Institute, an organization dedicated to training pro-life advocates to think clearly, reason honestly, and argue persuasively.



The street is a bad place for this card. It's an even worse place to call home.

Did the battle follow you home?

You are never alone.

Pregnant?

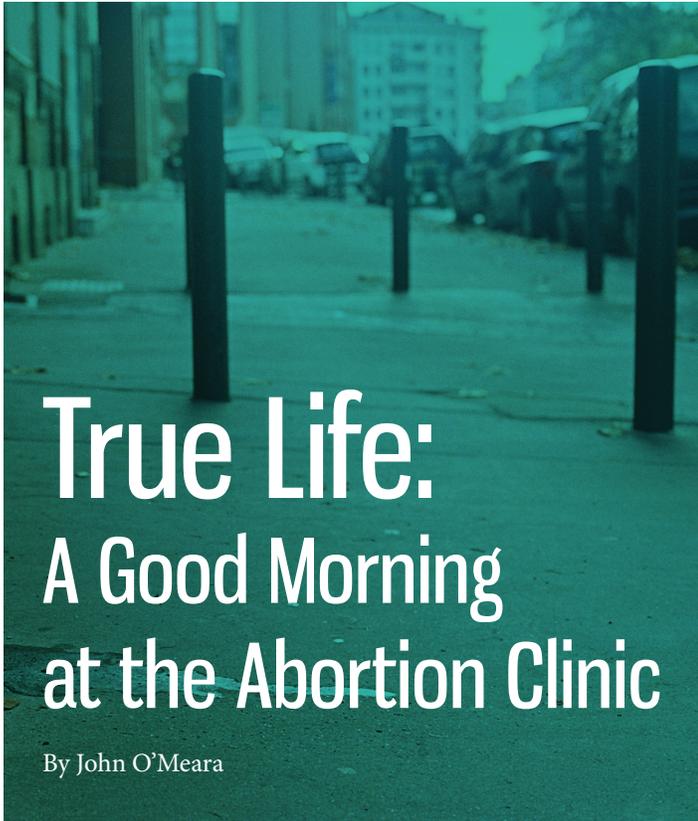
We have resources for nonviolent choices that everyone can live with.

I can't:

Sound familiar?

Have the information for life-saving resources at your fingertips. LMJ is selling these informational drop cards on the webstore—check them out at lifemattersjournal.org!





True Life: A Good Morning at the Abortion Clinic

By John O'Meara

The abortion clinic in Asheville, North Carolina, is located on Orange Street, a quiet street on the edge of the downtown area. It's only two blocks long and has mostly houses that were built in the 1930s and '40s and have been converted to office buildings for lawyers, beauticians, psychologists, and so forth. The abortion clinic is on the second block and it was built 30 some years ago. It's a one-story light brown brick building surrounded by a wood fence on one side and a chain link fence on the other three sides. It looks like one of those unattractive public school buildings that are all over the United States.

The preborn babies are killed on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday mornings. The pregnant women arrive periodically in a car usually driven by a man or another woman. Next to the sidewalk in front of the abortion clinic there is a car with a battery-operated speaker on the roof. It's connected to a microphone that's in a basket alongside the car. When a car pulls into the parking lot in front of the abortion clinic, a woman picks up the microphone and begins speaking when the pregnant woman gets out of the car.

Waiting for the woman when she gets out of the car is at least one escort and often two. The escort is a pro-abortion volunteer who wears an orange vest with silver stripes, sort of like what construction workers wear when doing highway repair. The escort greets the woman with a welcoming smile and talks to her as she goes from the car to the abortion clinic door. They want to put her at ease, but they also want to distract her from the voice of the woman on the microphone.

The woman on the microphone has very little time, less than a minute to plead with the pregnant woman to turn away, not go through with the abortion. She will talk about the unborn baby,

that it is a gift from God, that to kill the baby is a terrible evil. But she will also talk about the suffering this will cause the pregnant woman for the rest of her life.

Besides the woman on the microphone there are usually two other counselors on the sidewalk. One, usually another woman, stands at the driveway entrance with a handful of pro-life brochures and pleads with the occupants of the car to stop and take one. They rarely do. Another protestor, often a man, stands nearby with a pro-life sign of some sort that the car occupants will see as they come down the street and turn into the parking lot. While I am there, I hold up a sign that says "Let your Baby Live!, We Will Help"

The morning I'm going to tell you about was a beautiful fall morning, bright and sunny with low humidity. This morning, Helen is responsible for the microphone and I am at the driveway entrance with my sign and the brochures. We stand and talk for 20 minutes or so before the first pregnant woman arrives. It's a conversation we've had many times about how discouraging our work is, about how few people respond to the fact that a million preborn babies are killed every year, about how we try to save these precious lives.

Months and months go by without a woman turning away. I remember my first morning at the abortion clinic when I asked about pregnant women who don't go through with the abortion. A woman told me: "It happens, but it's rare." Well, she was certainly right about that. After spending over one hundred mornings at the abortion clinic, I still haven't seen a "turn away" for sure. A number of times a woman will go through the door, only to come back out in five or ten minutes. But we don't know why, because some of the women who go there are picking up contraceptives or have some other business in that building besides having an abortion.

The biggest problem that the woman on the microphone is up against is that the women who come to the clinic are mostly in their 20s or teenagers. They have the perception that they can "end this pregnancy" and that that will put this unpleasant business behind them. They think they can get on with their lives because they are deceived into thinking it just a "pregnancy," not a child. This view is reinforced by the Planned Parenthood counselors as well as friends or relatives and the people at the abortion clinic.

They couldn't be more wrong. Young people don't have much of a past yet and for them their focus is all on the future and the good life they are sure to have. What they don't know, and really can't imagine, is that everyone takes their past with them. The significant things in your life continue on in your memory and you revisit them over and over again until you die.

The sidewalk counselors know this from their own experience (most are in their 60s and 70s) but also from their time here on the sidewalk. Cars go back and forth on the street, and in the course of the morning probably a couple of hundred pass by, an average of one or two a minute. And some of the drivers react to what they see. The ones that are pro-life will smile and wave or give the thumbs up signal. Some will stop and say something like, "thank you" or "God bless you."

Some of the pro-abortion drivers will give a thumbs-down signal, or give you the finger, or yell something like "get a life" or "go work at a food bank." Then there are the screamers. The screamers yell whatever comes into their heads and they are distinguished from the others by the violence of their emotion. These are the women

who have had an abortion often or men who have been complicit in the abortions of their partners. And it is really something to see and hear.

One morning I arrived early with the microphone and speaker. I had set the speaker on the roof of my car and put the microphone in a basket near the rear tire. I was getting my foam-board sign out of the trunk when a woman came up the sidewalk behind me. She began screaming at me, “You don’t know what it’s like for these women who come here. You’re a man and you don’t know what they are going through.” She said this over and over. She looked to be in her early 30s, attractive, with light brown hair in a pony tail. She started to cross the street to her car, but stopped in the middle, turned and yelled at the top of her lungs, “You’re a man, not a woman; you have a penis, not a vagina!” (I’m not inventing this). Then she turned and walked to her car. She had probably had an abortion herself, and this outburst was the only way she could tell her story.

Then there is the man in the shiny black Lexus who drives by every couple of weeks or so. He stops his car, rolls down the window, and shouts “F--- you, f--- you” over and over. His face is so contorted with anger and hatred that I wouldn’t recognize him if I walked past him on the street an hour later.

One morning, a veteran in the sidewalk advocacy work told me about a note that was found next to a bush in front of the abortion clinic about ten years ago. It was pinned to the ground by four tooth picks. A man had addressed it to his aborted child, who, he wrote, was now in heaven with his mother. He said that it was not his idea that the baby be aborted, that he had pleaded that it not be done, that he now begged for forgiveness. The sidewalk counselors treated the note as something sacred, a sort of monument to the aborted baby, and wouldn’t touch it, although the husband of one of the women came to the sidewalk and photographed it. A couple of weeks later it was gone and then in the next week they found it across the driveway under another bush. It looked like a dried up leaf. One of the women took it home and preserved it between the pages of a book.

All of the protestors can tell stories about the screamers. They go by a few times a week, some new, some who have gone by before. What they shout differs from one to the other, but the furious outpouring of emotion is all the same. They have been not able to “put it behind them.” Instead, it has stayed with them like a wound that will not heal. Not that they think about it all the time, but the memory of their abortion comes back to them. Perhaps they lay awake in the middle of the night wondering where their child would be today: getting a driver’s license, graduating from high school, getting married. Maybe the memory would be triggered by a bumper sticker declaring: “It’s a child....not a choice.” Maybe it’s when they learn that someone they know is pregnant.

You see, pro-choice people, who are focused on expediency, still know that if the preborn baby is not killed, it will be born, have a

life, however short, however long. They know that however their abortion was justified, abortion takes a life. They know that if they had been killed before birth by abortion, they wouldn’t be here today. So killing the preborn baby is a horrendous thing for the woman and man, but especially the woman. This is not like killing your next door neighbor, or a bank teller, or even a relative. This is killing your very own child and it is something that — once it has been done — will never go away. For everyone but the most morally obtuse, it is an absolute horror. The English have a folk saying: “An old sin casts a long shadow.” That applies perfectly to those who have been complicit in killing their own preborn child.

Today, a dozen or so cars pull into the parking lot at the abortion clinic and, like the other mornings, the women pass through the door in a relentless stream. But then something different happens. A woman drives into the parking lot in a black SUV, and parks on

the right side alongside the building. She sits there for a few minutes and then gets out. But a couple who came in after her now stand at the top of the stoop near the door waiting to get in. (The abortion clinic has a rule that when one couple is inside going through registration and security, no one else can come into the building.)

So the woman with the SUV stands at the bottom of the steps for a couple of minutes, and then she turns and walks back to her car. We’ve seen this before plenty of times. I think that maybe she is just

going to sit in the car while she waits her turn, or maybe she forgot something. But to feel useful, I walk down the sidewalk until I am directly across from her. I hold up my sign (Let Your Baby Live!, We Will Help), which she can see if she looks out the passenger window of her car. I yell to Helen, who is 20 feet away: “She’s gone back to her car.” But Helen continues to plead with the woman at the top of the stoop, who has not yet gone inside.

So I continue standing there, holding my sign and watching the woman in the SUV. And then I see her lean forward and rest her head on the steering wheel. I walk back to Helen and tell her what I’ve seen. She immediately turns from the couple on the stoop to the woman in the SUV. She tells me to go back and to hold my sign up high. Helen then begins to speak to this woman. She starts with, “I can see that you are troubled” and goes on with non-stop pleas.

Now I’m standing there holding my foam-board sign high over my head, which is tiring even though it’s light. I try holding it with one hand and then the other. Then I see the woman put her hand to her face and I yell to Helen, “I think she’s crying.” Helen has real range and she adjusts her pitch to take this in.

Then I see the woman start up her car. I yell to Helen “I think she’s going to back up!” And she does, but she only goes a few feet until her back tire on the driver’s side jumps the curb alongside the building. Then she goes forward and backs up again and jumps the curb a second time. Finally, she backs up, gets it right, turns around, and crosses the lot to the entrance.

The English have a folk saying: “An old sin casts a long shadow.” That applies perfectly to those who have been complicit in killing their own preborn child.

By this time, Helen is there to meet her. The woman stops her car and Helen leans in and says something. Then the woman pulls out of the parking lot and takes an immediate left and parks on our side of the street, pointed the wrong way. Helen goes up to the driver's door and puts her head partway through the window and starts talking to the woman. I walk up the street past the car, go to the other side of the driveway, about 25 feet away and, with my back to the SUV, I hold my sign in front of my chest to catch the attention of the oncoming traffic.

Every minute or two, I turn my head and look back at the car. Helen is still leaning into the car, and now she has her hand on the woman's arm. About ten minutes later, I look back at the car and see that the brake lights are now on. The woman must have her foot on the brake pedal. Helen has moved away from the car, she's about 15 feet away and she is facing the chain link fence with her head bowed, and her hands clasped in front, apparently praying. So I start praying too. Like a lot of people with a Catholic background, I'm not good at extemporaneous prayer, so after a few "please God keep her out of there,"s I resort to a string of Hail Mary's and Our Father's.

After a few minutes, I look back and Helen is back at the car with her head in the window, hand on the woman's arm. Another couple of minutes go by ... and at last, the woman drives away.

I walk back to Helen and ask her what happened. Helen, who has been at her absolute top performance level for over half an hour, is exhausted. She starts with, "She..." but can't go on. I stand there for about twenty seconds and Helen starts again. "She said..." But still she can't finish.

So I wait until Helen can talk.

The woman is a college student from a nearby county. She found out that she was pregnant and told her father, who was furious. He demanded she get an abortion and kicked her out of the house. She spent the night in her SUV and a few nights with friends, and then she came here this morning to get an abortion. She had expected her father to be angry but was surprised that he wanted her to get an abortion, because he is pro-life. She said she didn't think she could face him again.

Helen's tack surprised me. Instead of taking sides against the woman's father, she said, "Your father is right. Of course he is angry and he should be. You did something very stupid. Your father loves you very much. That is why he is so angry. But don't compound this problem; don't make it worse by killing your baby. You and your father will always regret it; you will both suffer." And this is essentially what Helen told the woman over and over, but in different ways.

Then Helen told her to call her father and tell him where she was and that she couldn't go through with it. That's when Helen walked away to stand in front of the fence and pray and the woman made the phone call with her foot riding the brake pedal.

When the phone call ended, Helen had walked back to the car. "He told me to come home," the woman said. Then she started crying. Helen held onto her arm and told her about God's love for her, and they said a prayer together. On that prayer, the girl drove away.

We walk back to our cars. The morning is over, the escorts have come out of the building with their vests off, a sign that no more women will be coming for an abortion this morning. We are jubi-

lant as we part. We high-five. Helen says "I'm going to cook a great fish dinner tonight." I respond, "I'm going to buy an expensive bottle of wine."

Three hours later I am standing on our flag stone patio stacking firewood next to our cobblestone fire pit. I find that I am grinding my teeth, and I say to myself, "Calm down! Calm down! It's okay. She left and she won't come back." And I was just a bystander after all.

A few days later, I'm standing in the checkout lane at the supermarket. I look at the photos on the magazine covers on the racks. I see Oprah ("Express Yourself!"), Paula Deen ("Fabulous Chicken Pot Pie!"), and Tiger Woods ("I'm Not the Same Man"). And I think about them, some of America's stars and role models. No question that they have a talent of one kind or another, but on a moral level, they are likely to be quite ordinary.

But I'm thinking about the women with whom I stand every week on that sidewalk. There is nothing ordinary about them. They differ from each other in that one has been a pro-life activist for over 25 years, one teaches science to home-schooled children, one is a dentist, and one is the widow of a Baptist minister. Another one spent 23 years as a nurse missionary in Africa, mostly in the Congo. They range in age from early 50s to early 70s. They do have a couple of things in common: they are all grandmothers, they are moral stars, and they are all dedicated to saving the lives of preborn babies.

So when I think of the stars of the American culture, I think how shallow our values are.

So when I think of the stars of the American culture, I think how shallow our values are. If people really want to have someone to admire and look up to, they should come to the abortion clinic on Orange Street in Asheville and watch the woman on the microphone. Listen to Edie or Helen or Joann or Debbie or Miriam. Listen as whoever it is stands on the sidewalk and talks to the pregnant woman in the parking lot on the other side of the chain link fence. Listen to her as she pleads to save a life, pleads with everything she has for that woman and her preborn baby.

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Distorted Ethics: A Review of *The China Mirage*

By John Whitehead

The United States imposed an oil embargo in mid-1941 on Japan, which was then engaged in the military conquest of China and parts of Southeast Asia. As the United States was Japan's leading oil supplier, this embargo threatened the future of Japan's expansion, and the Japanese ultimately compensated for the loss by embarking on a comprehensive invasion of Southeast Asia and the Dutch East Indies (present-day Indonesia) in order to seize the region's oil and other resources. To protect their conquests in Asia, Japan also declared war on the United States and attacked the American fleet at Pearl Harbor.

Had the United States not cut off Japan's oil, Pearl Harbor would probably never have happened and the United States might not have entered the Second World War in the Pacific — or at least not at the time and way it did. James Bradley, author of *The China Mirage: The Hidden History of American Disaster in Asia*, argues that cutting off the Japanese oil supply was a tragic blunder and that American policymakers should have avoided war with Japan in 1941. He lays the blame for the fateful oil embargo on an attachment to China, on the part of American policymakers and the public, and on the desire to stop Japan's conquest of that country. This attachment was based on various false American understandings and expectations of China — the “mirage” of the title.

To argue that the United States should not have entered the Pacific War is a provocative thesis, given both the Second World War's status in American memory as the heroic “good war” and the degree to which involvement in the war shaped the course of subsequent American foreign policy. For American opponents of war and military intervention abroad, a well-argued critique of United States' policy in Asia that shows how an alternative to war was pos-

sible in 1941 would be extremely valuable. *The China Mirage* fails in this respect, however.

Bradley does not seriously engage the ethical problems posed by American relations with China and Japan in the lead-up to Pearl Harbor, and he does not provide a clear alternative course of action to the various American policies aimed at aiding China and checking Japanese expansion. Further, *The China Mirage's* ethical analysis is not merely inadequate but dangerously distorted, emphasizing *ad nauseam* the — real and significant — crimes and failings of Chinese President Chiang Kai-Shek and his American sympathizers while ignoring or explaining away the crimes of both the Japanese and Chiang's main Chinese rival, Communist leader Mao Zedong.

The China Mirage does not look only at the events leading up to Pearl Harbor — indeed, this is one of the problems with the work, which I address below — but those events are the heart of the book. Around half of Bradley's narrative is preoccupied with the period from Chiang becoming the preeminent Chinese leader in 1928 to the United States entering the Pacific War in December 1941.

During this period, Bradley argues, Chiang and his in-laws, the wealthy Soong family, waged a highly effective propaganda campaign directed at American policymakers and the American public and designed to encourage support for Chiang's rule in China. Building on long-standing American perceptions of China fostered by Protestant missionary activity in the Asian country, and aided by publicists such as Henry Luce, the publisher of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* magazines, Chiang and the Soongs led Americans to believe that the Chinese were essentially Americans in the making. China was on its way to becoming a Christian and democratic na-

tion where, as Bradley puts it, “the Chinese would pray to Jesus in white-washed churches and debate Jeffersonian principles in town-hall meetings.” Leading this (illusory) transformation of China was the heroic Chiang.

Through this propaganda campaign and cultivation of key American policymakers such as Henry L. Stimson, President Franklin Roosevelt’s Secretary of War, and Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Roosevelt’s Secretary of the Treasury, Chiang’s regime managed to wring hundreds of millions of dollars of aid from the United States, as well as military support against Japan, which had invaded China in 1937. Chiang and the Soong’s activities hid from many Americans such unpleasant realities as the regime’s repressiveness and corruption and comparative military incompetence in fighting Japan; it also hid the existence of a serious rival to Chiang in Mao.

Most significantly, Chiang and his American allies argued that an American embargo on Japan would halt Japanese aggression against China without serious repercussions for the United States. Despite Roosevelt and the State Department’s — justified — fears that an embargo would lead to Japan seizing Southeast Asia and the East Indies and might even draw the United States into war, 75 percent of the American public had come to support an embargo by early 1940. Further, Bradley argues that when Roosevelt finally did impose a limited oil embargo in the summer of 1941, lower-level government officials, led by the hawkish, pro-China State Department official Dean Acheson, enforced the embargo in such a way that it became effectively comprehensive. This provoked Pearl Harbor.

Much of Bradley’s account, including the Chiang regime’s cruelty and incompetence and the influence of a well-funded “China Lobby” that promoted American support for Chiang, is plausible and fairly uncontroversial. To lay most or all of the blame for the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States on Chiang and the China Lobby is overstating the case, however, and to dismiss the case for an embargo altogether, as Bradley does, fails to do justice to the complexity of the situation.

American concerns about Japanese conquest of China were based on more than sentimental attachments to an illusory Americanized China led by Chiang. As Bradley acknowledges, Roosevelt worried about Japan’s action not merely because of China Lobby propaganda but because he saw that Japan could use its position in China to conquer Asian territories to the south that were economically vital to the United States — as indeed, the Japanese eventually did. The Japanese government had already decided in July 1941 to expand to the south of China and had invaded French Indochina when Roosevelt imposed the limited oil embargo.

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Cordell Hull — consistently portrayed by Bradley as more cautious than hawks such as Stimson, Morgenthau, and Acheson — nevertheless took a hard line in 1941 diplomatic negotiations with the Japanese, insisting on Ja-

pan’s withdrawal from China. This suggests Hull was motivated by considerations other than propaganda put out by Chiang and his supporters. Moreover, the failure of Hull’s negotiations owed more to diplomatic misunderstanding than China Lobby activities. By placing so much emphasis on the China Lobby, Bradley may be giving them a more central position of policymaking influence than is warranted.

More important than this over-emphasis on propaganda and misguided beliefs in American-Chinese friendship, however, is Bradley’s refusal to engage the strongest argument made by embargo proponents: by selling Japan oil, Americans were literally fueling a barbaric and bloody war of conquest.

Comments such as Stimson’s challenge “Does the safety of the American nation...require that we go on helping Japan to exterminate by the methods she is daily employing, the gallant Chinese soldiers with which she is confronted — not to speak of the civilian Chinese population that she is engaged in terrorizing?” or the accusation made by a China Lobby pamphlet that America had a “Share in Japan’s War Guilt” are presented by Bradley as Chiang-sponsored propaganda, but they had more than a little truth to them.

The Japanese occupation of China was one of extraordinary brutality in which perhaps 14 million Chinese perished — more deaths than were suffered by any other nation in the Second World War, apart from the Soviet Union. For the United States to sell Japan the means to engage in such a crime against humanity should appall anyone concerned with justice and basic decency. Not necessarily to go to war with Japan but simply to cut off the resource that powered their war machine could reasonably be seen as a minimal ethical response to Japanese aggression.

As Roosevelt and others feared at the time — and is even clearer in retrospect — cutting off Japanese oil did not end the occupation of China but helped to escalate the war and pull the United States into it. Americans were thus faced in 1941 with an agonizing choice between helping Japan commit its crimes and provoking a wider conflict. It would be difficult to imagine a harder ethical dilemma. To identify an appropriate response or even to do justice to the stakes involved requires a more careful analysis than Bradley provides.

Indeed, Bradley scarcely even mentions Japanese crimes in China. He makes a single reference to one of the worst Japanese atrocities of the Second World War, the mass torture and slaughter of Chinese civilians in the city of Nanking — in what became known as the Rape of Nanking — and he mentions the incident mainly to highlight Chiang and his wife’s cowardice in fleeing the city. Otherwise, Japanese atrocities in China are ignored. The villains in *The China Mirage* are strictly Chiang and his American dupes.

As mentioned, Bradley’s — inadequate — discussion of events

American concerns about Japanese conquest of China were based on more than sentimental attachments to an illusory Americanized China led by Chiang.

leading to the oil embargo and Pearl Harbor is the heart of the book, but he covers other historical events as well. The treatment of these events is even more problematic. He begins his narrative with the first American contacts with China in the 19th century, covering such topics as British and American opium smuggling in China, early missionary activities in China, and the exclusion of Chinese immigrants from the United States in the 1880s. He also has an early chapter devoted to American-Japanese relations in the early 20th century and how President Theodore Roosevelt allowed Japan to annex Korea.

Much of this is interesting, but its relevance to American entry into the Second World War is tenuous at best. Some of this history illustrates themes that are important to the later discussion of Chiang and the China Lobby: illusions of a Christianized, Americanized China; Americans' limited contact with Chinese people; and the ways educated elites from another country can influence policymakers (as Theodore Roosevelt's attitude to Japan and Korea was influenced by the Japanese aristocrat Baron Kaneko).

Granting all this, however, most of this early material could be dispensed with or condensed to a few paragraphs without the central part of the book suffering. How important is it to American foreign policy in 1937-41 that Franklin Roosevelt's maternal grandfather made his fortune selling opium to China? This oft-repeated bit of family history seems to be included just to make Roosevelt look bad; indeed, making Americans look bad seems to be main function of most of the pre-1930s sections of the book.

The final 80 pages or so of the book are a digest history of United States-China relations during the Second World War and in the decades following Mao Zedong's eventual 1949 triumph over Chiang. A great deal of history, including the Chinese civil war, McCarthyism, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars are hurried through here, to make the point that the United States should have abandoned Chiang Kai-Shek and embraced Mao Zedong as the better leader of China and American ally.

These final chapters, as well as earlier portions of the book, contain the other disturbing distortion in Bradley's account: his apologetics for Mao. In *The China Mirage*, Mao is portrayed as a superior political and military leader to Chiang, the parts of China under Communist control are described in glowing terms, and Mao's offers to form a partnership with the United States are presented as sincere — and the American failure to respond is presented as a great lost opportunity. Some of these claims have merit, but Bradley leaves out the most salient fact about Mao — that once in power in China, he was a brutal tyrant whose policies killed millions of people. For the most part, Mao's crimes are either flippantly dismissed (in regard to the Communists' use of torture, Bradley comments that "After all, this was a Chinese civil war, and Mao was no saint") or buried in endnotes.

In one of these endnotes, Bradley says that he ignores Mao's crimes in *The China Mirage* because his focus is merely on how Mao was a more effective leader than Chiang. This claim is completely at odds with the highly moralistic stance he takes toward Chiang and the United States, however, who are repeatedly condemned for ethical as well as practical failures. Bradley recounts tales of torture and executions under Chiang, as well as the enormous degree of corruption in his regime, and draws more than one parallel between Chiang and Hitler. Meanwhile, countless lapses by Americans, whether selling opium to China, betraying Korea to Japan, or planning to bomb Japanese civilians in the Second World War, are condemned. Such condemnation is entirely appropriate, but greater consistency would have been welcome.

The China Mirage is a disappointing book. An intellectually and ethically careful critique of American involvement in the Second World War, or in Asian affairs in general, would be of tremendous value. Bradley, however, provides only some interesting history and highly selective ethical criticisms that he does not shape into a coherent argument.





On the Beauty of Each Wonderful Life

By Joey Garrity

Joey is a member of The Fellowship of the Geeks team, which is a project of Life Matters Journal dedicated to media reviews and discussion. To learn more about it, visit thefellowshipofthegeeks.tumblr.com.

One of the most timeless Christmas stories of the past century is Frank Capra's classic film *It's a Wonderful Life*. Initially a box office disappointment in December 1946, it has become nearly as universally associated with the Christmas season as Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, and it is watched by millions of people every December. The story centers around George Bailey, an everyman living in the small town of Bedford Falls, whose father owns the local Bailey Building and Loan. George has always dreamed of traveling the world, but upon his father's death he finds himself faced with the decision to either take up his father's position as head of the company or relinquish it to the miser, Henry Potter, who wants nothing less than ownership of the entire town. He becomes a local hero among many of the townsfolk, building homes and helping those in need. He soon marries his high school sweetheart and has three children, and they move into an old abandoned house in town, effectively rooting themselves — and George — in Bedford Falls for good.

But just when everything seems happy for George, disaster strikes. On Christmas Eve, his uncle and business partner, Billy, misplaces eight thousand dollars of the Bailey Building and Loan's funds. This disaster puts the Building and Loan at Potter's mercy and George at risk for arrest and prosecution for a misuse of funds. As a last resort, George stops by Mr. Potter's office to ask his archenemy for help — and mercy — where he reveals that the only money he has left that could possibly save the company is his ten thousand dollars of life insurance. Potter laughs, saying George is "worth more dead than alive." He then calls up the police to tell the tale, and they immediately issue a warrant for George's arrest on charges of misappropriation of funds, leaving George with two options: live and face federal prison and bankruptcy; or die and save the company and his family, as he believes that his life insurance will cover the debt. Feeling no hope, he drives to a bridge and prepares to jump, only to be saved by his guardian angel, Clarence, who offers to show him what the world would look like if he had never been born.

It's a Wonderful Life offered a life-affirming look at the issue of suicide at a time when it was still somewhat a taboo subject. But it is more relevant than ever with the rising rates of suicides among teenagers and young adults. When many of us first saw the film as

children, we likely echoed Clarence's initial commentary that money is a silly thing to kill yourself over. Upon reaching adulthood though, the realization hits us that the fear of debt is a real thing that affects many people, even young people with rising college tuition and a higher cost of living. But as Clarence shows George, each of us makes a greater impact on the world than we will ever know. In an alternate world where George was never born, his brother, Harry, a local WWII hero in the community, died at the age of nine because George didn't rescue him from drowning after he fell through thin ice. Because Harry didn't survive childhood to go to war, an entire transport of soldiers died. Many of the people George helped throughout his life were also in prison or struggling to survive in an alternate Bedford Falls, known as Pottersville, without George's influence through the Building and Loan. In this alternate world, Potter took control of the entire town and converted it into a commercialistic wasteland.

None of us truly know how many lives we have impacted or how much we have changed the world for the better. We also can never be certain that our conditions will not improve, as the film shows; ultimately, George's friends and family raise enough money to save the business and keep him out of jail. The only thing his death would have achieved would have been to leave his wife a widow and his children fatherless — and it would have left Bedford Falls without a wonderful human being.

One final note must be made about Mr. Potter's statement that George is "worth more dead than alive." Potter almost seemed as if he was encouraging George to take his life. Just as Susan B. Anthony's *Revolution* declared, "thrice guilty is he who, for selfish gratification...drove her to the desperation which impelled her to [abortion]"¹, just so is he who drives one to suicide or actively encourages it. In many places in today's culture, it seems popular to use "go kill yourself" as a retort against someone's unpopular opinion. This is an attitude that needs to end. Even in jest, this is a threat on par with any other threat of violence. No one is worth more dead than alive, because everyone's life is wonderful and worth living. Let us appreciate the impact of each and every individual life in our world.

¹ *The Revolution*, July 8, 1869.



The Ghost in the Garbage Can

By Acyutananda

There's a dumpster near my place
That smells bad
But it's shorter to the 7-11.

When it's dark
Misting a little
I hear a voice.

"I was small.
I was out of sight.
And I wasn't very smart."

It's always the same.

"I was small –
Like our earth from a space probe.
Invisible –
Like your hopes when you're deep asleep.
Not smart –
So what can I say?

"I wish – well –
If I had of been big
Like Serena Williams.
They wouldn't have messed
With Serena Willams."

It was fading.

"If I'd had some money..."

I rubbed the mist on my face
To come to my senses.
I always hear that voice in the garbage can.
That choice in the garbage can.

28 April 2015

Acyutananda has a pro-life blog at www.NoTerminationWithoutRepresentation.org.



The Psychological Morass of the Abortion Issue

By Acyutananda

morass: 2. a complicated or confused situation

Think of all the array of views related to abortion that you have ever encountered. It's a lot, isn't it? And now let's try to imagine all the array of contradictory views related to abortion as they have inhabited all the minds of all people through all of history. That array must be staggering. How could such a plethora of mutually exclusive ideas have originated? I think it is largely explained by the psychological morass on moral issues in general, and this issue in particular, that the human race somehow goes on living with. Recognizing and trying to escape this psychological morass can allow us to find the truth about the morality of abortion.

In making this assertion, I am assuming that there are indeed moral truths to be found about abortion and other moral questions. Certain answers to the question of whether abortion is right or wrong, just or unjust, can be identified as truer or better than

others. Further, I would argue that the answers to moral questions — the moral truths — must ultimately be found through our intuition rather than through intricate arguments or philosophies (although these are certainly a useful part of the process).

Psychology professor Paul Bloom, author of the recent *Just Babies: The Origins of Good and Evil*, has offered some justification for an intuitive basis of morality. In an interview, he commented that while some moral values “are the product of culture and society” and “aren't in the genes,” “there also exist hardwired moral universals — moral principles that we all possess. And even those aspects of morality . . . that vary across cultures are ultimately grounded in these moral foundations.”¹ With this kind of psychological understanding as a basis, I will make one further assumption to start with: that not only are there indeed moral truths to be found, but that identical truths are to be found deep within all of us.² In a sim-

ilar vein, the journalist Christopher Hitchens described his understanding of human moral intuition in his work *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*:

*Like murder and theft, this [incest] is usually found to be abhorrent to humans without any further explanation. . . . [the Golden Rule is] a sober and rational precept, which one can teach to any child with its innate sense of fairness [The Rule] is gradually learned, as part of the painfully slow evolution of the species, and once grasped is never forgotten. Ordinary conscience will do, without any heavenly wrath behind it. . . . [C]onscience is innate. . . . Everybody but the psychopath has this feeling to a greater or lesser extent.*³

Despite this conscience, or intuitive moral sense, that humans possess, an array of psychological factors obstruct our intuitive grasp of moral truths. This is a vast topic, but in this article I have selected 11 psychological factors that might work against our finding moral truth on *any* issue, as well as three factors that are specific to the abortion issue. I think of this article as sketching the broad outlines of how psychological factors interfere with moral intuition. My aim is to provide a basic framework to be filled out by further research.

The psychological factors are as follows:

1. The mental longing for simplicity. No elaboration is needed here. (I can keep it simple!)

2. Upbringing. In the long-standing nature-nurture debate, I would take the following position: we are born with intuitions of certain moral truths already within us in latent form, but various actions or inactions by parents and teachers can undermine the development of those moral intuitions, or create an overlay of false values, or both. Even a casual look is enough to show us the importance, in the development of our attitudes, of background and upbringing.

3. Tribalism. Even someone who switches, for example, from pro-choice to pro-life or vice-versa may immediately start demonizing the side they had just been on.

4. Projection. We expect others to view some things and value some things just as we do.

5. Neurotic emotional needs. Such needs can affect one's moral and political views in a number of ways. One way — certainly not the only way — is when the needs result in commitments, sometimes fanatic commitments, to groups or ideologies.

6. Lack of introspection. If it is true that intuitions of moral truths exist within us and that they began to form in us before we were capable of rational analysis, then it should be clear that to find them we must look within and that this search within will not be a process of thinking up new ideas but of rummaging through what is already there. We may need to make such efforts frequently, and with patience, over a period of time.

7. An excessive faith in the efficacy of logical argumentation to resolve moral issues. This faith seems to be borne out of a psychological need for an orderly understanding of our environment, perhaps borne in turn out of an illusion that such conceptual order gives us some kind of control over our environment. (This is certainly not to say that there is no place in moral investigations for logic. I think that all the thought experiments and probing for inconsistency and arguments that go on are indispensable, but they are indispensable because they nudge us toward more accurate moral intuitions, which are not essentially based on logic.)⁴

8. The manufacture of perceptions. As just one example, if you hear “My body, my choice” enough times, and are not presented with alternative views, after a while you will come to really believe that there is only one body involved in an abortion.

9. Doctrinal baggage that comes with the valuable elements of a religion. Atheism advocate Sam Harris has described a transcendent experience that he once underwent sitting by the Sea of Galilee. He writes

*If I were a Christian, I would undoubtedly have interpreted this experience in Christian terms. . . . If I were a Hindu, I might think in terms of Brahman. . . . If I were a Buddhist, I might talk about the “dharma-kaya of emptiness.”*⁵

The meditative and devotional techniques of various religions can bring about in us these transcendent states, arguably the most wonderful states we have ever experienced. Although Harris and others strive for totally non-religious forms of meditation, it must be admitted that *religions are, today, still ahead of conventional science in the knowledge of such techniques.* As a result, when someone experiments with such “religious” practices and discovers that they constitute a certain specialized wisdom that science seems to be lacking and that most directly leads to happiness, they are likely not only to adopt that valuable meditative practice but also to buy the whole religious package, including whatever that religion teaches about astronomy and evolution — and the ensoulment of a newly-conceived baby. If the religion teaches that ensoulment does not take place for the first three months, for example, and that abortion before that point is permissible, they will believe that.

This psychological factor is different from factor 5 above, in that I think it can occur even in a psychologically very healthy person.

10. Limited human intelligence.

11. Unlimited human ego. A big percentage of discussions about moral issues comes down to a garden-variety contest of egos. Discussions become more about winning, belittling, and mocking than about trying to understand clearly. People write on any topic partly because they

want attention. It has been said, “More people write poetry than read it.” Similarly, it may be that more people talk than listen.

Most of the 11 factors listed above can contribute to different

A big percentage of discussions about moral issues comes down to a garden-variety contest of egos. Discussions become more about winning, belittling, and mocking than about trying to understand clearly.



forms of cognitive dissonance: we sense a contradiction or incompatibility between the beliefs psychological factors move us toward and the beliefs our moral intuitions move us toward. We cope with cognitive dissonance by adopting ideas that violate our natural intuitions, and then shoring those ideas up with techniques such as confirmation bias.

Among the psychological factors that work against intuitively finding the moral truths within, there are also some differences of perception that do not come into play in relation to most moral issues but do come into play in relation to the abortion issue:

12. Incorrect intuitions about the unborn. Some people see the unborn, especially the early unborn, as a snapshot, and some see it as part of a process. If a small embryo were to remain just as it is, frozen in time (a snapshot) we would have to say quite fairly that its life would not have much value.

Both ways of looking at the unborn are scientifically useful for different purposes. It is not science but only pre-logical intuition that identifies the unborn as an organism with little moral value or an organism with great moral value. If there are indeed moral truths to be found, however, one of these two intuitions must be less correct than the other.

13. Incorrect intuitions about the importance of bodily rights. One important source of variations in intuitions about the importance of bodily rights is different cultural senses of the relative weights to be given to the individual and to the collective. Almost the greatest relinquishing of bodily right imaginable is when a person submits to being conscripted into an army, where he or she will risk all his body organs being blown to bits. Different cultures vary greatly in their acceptance of military conscription. Yet if there are indeed moral truths to be found, one particular moral truth about bodily rights must be correct — not all of the diverse intuitions about bodily rights can reflect that truth. (I have written elsewhere about bodily rights.⁶)

14. Incorrect intuitions about what's wrong with killing. Among all who get involved in discussions about moral issues, killing and violence seem to have, in general, a bad name. One would think that that would give us some common ground. But it turns out that although killing is universally disreputable, it's disreputable in a nebulous way. We disagree on exactly *what* is wrong with killing.

My moral intuition is that what is most wrong with killing is that it deprives an organism of its future life. But in discussions about abortion, I have often encountered expressions such as this one: "I can't imagine caring one way or the other being aborted if I didn't possess a fully functional nervous system." Here any harm to be done by killing seems to depend on the organism's caring, *at the time of the killing*, about its future life (this view does not, after all, contest the fact that a currently unconscious embryo will have a fully functional nervous system soon and will eventually care about its future life). This view seems to exclude the possibility that

any harm can be caused by depriving an organism of its future life, whether the organism deprived of life cares about it at this moment or not. Thus the only real harm that this view is willing to consider is the harm of frustrating a desire, on the part of the organism, to live.⁷

This is one example of how there are different intuitions about what is wrong with killing. Yet if there are real moral truths to be found, then not all the intuitions can be correct.

By identifying 14 different psychological factors that interfere with moral intuition, I have tried to develop a kind of checklist. I think that if anyone can go through the checklist and neutralize in themselves each of the above-mentioned psychological factors, their thinking will become clear. Their minds will become *cleared* of endless clutter. And when other people encounter a clear mind like that, they in turn become forced to clear their own minds.

This clarification process (along with scientific progress) will decide the abortion issue. The grip of all the psychological factors enumerated above will be loosened. Arguments, thought experiments, and other philosophical approaches will play a part in breaking their grip; I think that the part that they will play will be a significant one but not, alone, a decisive one.

Personally I expect that the truth that we will find through moral intuition will be mostly a pro-life truth. I expect that the issue will be decided to an important extent by the fuller recognition of the humanity of a previously dehumanized group. (The importance of psychological factor 12 above cannot be overestimated.) Do I expect all this due to some psychological blinders of my own? Time will tell.

Acyutananda has a pro-life blog at <http://www.NoTerminationWithoutRepresentation.org>.

Notes:

¹ Sam Harris, "The Roots of Good and Evil: An Interview with Paul Bloom," *Sam Harris* (blog), November 12, 2013, <http://www.samharris.org/blog/item/the-roots-of-good-and-evil>.

² I discussed this in "Moral Intuition, Logic, and the Abortion Debate," *Life Matters Journal* 4, no. 1 (2015): 24-29, also available at <http://www.NoTerminationWithoutRepresentation.org/moral-intuition-logic-and-the-abortion-debate/>.

³ Christopher Hitchens, *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2008), 53, 213-214, 256.

⁴ "Moral Intuition, Logic, and the Abortion Debate."

⁵ Sam Harris, *Waking Up* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014), 81-82.

⁶ Acyutananda, "Dismantling the Bodily-Rights Argument without Using the Responsibility Argument," *No Termination without Representation* (blog), July 8, 2014, <http://www.NoTerminationWithoutRepresentation.org/dismantling-the-bodily-rights-argument-without-using-the-responsibility-argument/>.

⁷ For a discussion of this issue, see Kelsey Hazzard and Acyutananda, "What Babies Don't Know Can't Hurt Them, Right?," *Secular Pro-Life* (blog), January 4, 2016, <http://blog.secularprolife.org/2016/01/what-babies-dont-know-cant-hurt-them.html>.

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