

ABORTION, WITHOUT EXTREMISMS

THE IMMORAL MANIPULATION OF A GRAVE PERSONAL PROBLEM.

"My mother is in the agonizing stage of an incurable illness that only prolongs her pain and ours. Should I, according to my Catholic morals, allow the artificial life support to be disconnected?" It would be criminal to intentionally manipulate, for ideologic or economic reasons, the tragic decision that faces this person. Yet something similar occurs today with abortion, causing confrontations between citizens.

IT IS NOT THE END OF THE WORLD. AGAINST THE FEAR THAT MAKES US IRRATIONAL.

We must remember history, so that we do not repeat it: men have fought and killed for the divine maternity of Mary or for forms of government such as monarchy or republic. If today we think that these wars were extremist and fanatical, it is because we know now that these ideas were manipulated by economic and political interests which deceived many people. Maybe now we will also be trapped by the blind pride of defending to the death "our" ideas, received by virtue of our birth or side, against all opponents. In so doing we are persuading ourselves that these ideas are the only true ones and that those of others are either immoral or stupid. Won't our children laugh or be ashamed of us, as we do at our ancestors, so fanatical, manipulated, and easily frightened? Some groups induce panic against the "bad people" (the culprit always changes) who would "destroy civilization". "How bad we become when we are frightened!" (A. France).

DEMOCRATIC RESPECT FOR OUR OPPONENTS.

"Democracy is uncomfortable, because it obliges us to respect, and even acknowledge the intelligence of people who do not agree with us" (E. Biagi). The abortion proponent who thinks that anyone who thinks otherwise must be stupid or asocial is not democratic, nor is the anti-abortionist who declares "murderers" without exception "those who don't subjectively perceive abortion as the elimination of an authentic human life". (P. Gaffo, Jesuit). There is an impulse towards "verbal terrorism" and there are nearsighted campaigns of one type or another, aggressive and limitless, that demonstrate our lack of respect for others, our pretensions of imposing ourselves on others, and our own insecurity (Forcano). Every doctrine that does not allow thought, reason and responsibility in each case, that causes one to feel superior and scornful of others, is immoral and pharisaic. In other words: a cannibal can be honourable, and someone who calls himself democratic can be shameless. One is not moral because of the ideas one has, but rather for the personal reasons for adhering to them, and the consistency of his behaviour.

THE FALSEHOOD AND IMMORALITY OF ABSOLUTISM.

All extremism, due to its absolutist nature, is false within the scientific domain and reprehensible within the moral one. For example, in the Darwin controversy, it is evident that the traditionalists were resolutely wrong, on the one hand, in their belief that one could not be both evolutionist and catholic at the same time, that is to say, that if one believed in the relationship between man and monkey, one would not be able to respect human life nor any other type of human value (this can be seen today in the belief that it is not possible to be both pro-abortion and Catholic at the same time, because it would be impossible to have respect for any life if any kind of abortion is accepted as a viable option). On the other hand, the extremists of the left who were ready "to die for Darwin" by trying to impose their views on others, were no more scientific, (nor modest nor charitable), than the traditionalists, and respectively believed that Darwinism obligated them to renounce all concepts of religion, etc.

THE EXTREMISMS OF ANTI-ABORTIONISTS

ABORTION IS NOT A RELIGIOUS PROBLEM

The largest religions, including the Christian churches, except the Catholic church, permit certain types of abortion: according to Catholicism, the majority of its faithful adherents, and a growing number of priests, theologians, etc. are opposed to the absolute prohibition on abortion which their hierarchy now maintains. This fact alone shows that this issue can not be considered fundamentally religious. It is only the interpretation of a specific point of morality, a interpretation that is very rigorous and hardly convincing. As a matter of fact:

1.- It is a new doctrine, imposed by Pío IX in 1869; before this time abortion was permitted up until 40-80 days after conception; and how could something which was accepted for nineteen hundred years be so severely condemned now? 2.- It is not a doctrine of faith nor infallible dogma that could not be changed again. 3.- In fact, many notable theologians are in disagreement about when the soul actually enters the body. 4.- Because the zygote is able to subdivide itself into twins at any point during the 7-14 days of fertilization, and as the soul can not divide itself, the soul thus can not exist before this period of time. 5.- Also, we know today that half of all embryos are miscarried just a few days after they are conceived, and it is absurd that God would create half of all souls to be left without the ability to live a human life (P. Gafo). 6.- If the person choosing to have an abortion is truly an assassin, then the Catholic teaching would have an enormous responsibility for opposing effective contraceptives (with the shallow excuse that they are not "natural"), as the lack of contraception leads many people to have abortions. 7.- Even the practice of the Catholic teaching shows that the Church does not believe that the soul is present in the foetus immediately after conception: a) the penalties for abortion are less under canonical law than those for homicide. b) it was forbidden to baptize and to bury the dead foetus in holy ground if the foetus did not have human form. c) if there were already a person in the moment of conception, given that half of all embryos spontaneously abort, all menstrual fluid, according to some theologians, would have to be baptized; and even, with a syringe, as Catholic gynaecologists do before operating on pregnant women, Catholics would have to baptize any possible foetus which may have resulted after every instance of intercourse.

ABORTION IS NOT HOMICIDE.

Those that support the contrary affirm that human life begins and is already completely personal at conception, where the individual originates with unique, genetic characteristics. But in reality, this moment is not so unique nor decisive: 1.- Life does not originate now, but rather it continues what began two thousand million years ago (one million years ago for the human species). 2.- The act of cloning permits reproduction to occur without any chromosomic variation, beginning with just one cell that is not necessarily one that is sexual. 3.- The act of parthenogenesis carries out reproduction without the fusion of the ovule and the spermatozoid and without creating a being with its own distinct, chromosomic characteristics. 4.- Reproduction, as such, is made respectively by men and women each in his or her own body, by the division of the sexual cell within each one. The sperm and ovule originate from this division and will unite perhaps some days after sexual intercourse, if the intercourse occurred after ovulation. 5.- Even with the union of the ovule and the spermatozoid, the resulting zygote is able to subdivide itself into twins any time in the next 7-14 days. 6.- The pregnancy does not begin until the zygote nests itself during these 7-14 days.

All these arguments have persuaded many biologists, including some Catholics, to sustain that the principle of the full and personal human life is not conception, but the time of implantation (7-14 days latter). Other biologists believe that there cannot be a personality without a material basis, the cerebral cortex, the central nervous system, etc. (2 to 3 months). Before, the encephalogram line is straight (which is a criterion of death). And many schools of philosophy also think that there can not be personality without human form. A long tradition, as well as a legal one, applies the principle of life when the movements of the fetus are noticed (4 to 5 months). Some of these schools rank this principle of personal life with the probability of life of the fetus or the capacity of independent life (today, with help, 7 or even 5 months). Finally, the most common criterion places the beginning of personality in the parting and separation from the mother, as many laws and even the language reflect (the word "mother" only applies to the women that have given birth), and the social ceremonies (birth-days not conception days are celebrated), etc.

Therefore, we are far from arriving at unanimity about the moment in which human life begins. There is at least a half a dozen different biological criteria, sustained by groups and arguments of unquestionable validity. The problem is, therefore, complex, and the supporters of one or another opinion cannot employ any particular scientific fact to impose their criterion absolutely.

THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF THE ANTI-ABORTIONISTS.

History shows that restrictions on abortion are readily accepted and considered reasonable when it is a question of restoring the diminution of the population caused by wars, epidemics, or famine. But abortion has also been restricted during periods of overpopulation, by governments that wanted to increase the crisis of overpopulation so that people would accept their program of "salvation" through expansion, wars for "vital space", etc. Far from being strange that some who have defended life (interuterine) and prohibited abortion were cruel butchers like Napoleon or Hitler, there is a tragic coherency: they need a greater birth rate for power after destroying those lives in the "deferred abortions" that are the deaths of soldiers in war and the exploitation of labour.

Those populationist politicians, like the capitalists before them who wished for more hands for cheap labour have lost the battle against contraceptives; because of this, they have now mounted exaggerated anti-abortion

campaigns at an international level, so that this weapon of dominion will not also escape their hands; a weapon which maintains the (level of) life enjoyed by the exploiters of others.

ANTI-ABORTION AS SEXUAL REPRESSION.

In the patriarchal system, the male made sure that his wife, like his hen, would have the largest number of offspring possible, for his profit, as the children would begin to work when small. Making a woman give birth often was also an easy method for keeping her occupied, pregnant, ignorant, weak, and dependent. The woman was denied all non-reproductive sexuality, which was considered improper, and for this reason, abortion was also denied.

The repressive systems which followed learned these mechanisms of domination and exploitation. They exalted the fertility of the poor (proletarians, prole meaning offspring), who gave children to serve the master. A father of many children is reliable, won't run away, works hard, and doesn't strike. For this reason, the sexuality of men was also declared reserved for procreation: all that was sexual beyond this was not decent and cast doubt on their "manhood". The reality was that if the right to pleasure was recognized, this would question the entire labour structure, economic and cultural. The need for pleasure and its realization would lead to a level of life, liberty and freedom which would damage the interests of the exploiters (W. Reich). That explains the prohibition of contraceptives and, over all, the prohibition of abortion which breaks up absolutely the relationship between sexuality and reproduction, and therefore constitutes an essential element in the fight against social and sexual repression.

THE EXTREMES OF ABORTION PROPONENTS

ABORTION IS NOT A PROBLEM OF ANTIRELIGIOUSNESS.

More than a few extreme abortion proponents, irreligious but unsure of their "conversion" to atheism, blame the entire problem on religion, without understanding that there are other interests involved, and that only part of the Catholics, with their hierarchy, absolutely reject all forms of abortion even for other people. Without a doubt and precisely as it is not, as we see, a religious problem, this intransigence objectively aids the development of some mechanisms of oppression. We have to fight against the predominance of millenarianist spirituality which, remembering how the church was filled in times of war, hunger and misery, believes good all that contributes to converting the world into a valley of tears. This mentality aids the development of overpopulation, the repression of abortion, etc.

THE DEBILITY OF AN INDIVIDUALIST LEFT.

The left was born as a counterculture to the bourgeoisie, and in its opposition, in a similar way as Christianity, became sometimes millenarianist, and attempted to find in overpopulation, and the consequent confusion, salvation through revolution (against all objective analysis and all historical experience about the conditions necessary for a progressive revolution). Marx, for his part, confused Malthusianism with the real population problems, and transmitted this blindness to the left, which remains ignorant of the social worth of population factors. There is a paradox that while the right opposes abortion with collective arguments (today unfounded) of the necessity of a greater population, the left frequently ignores the value of demographic arguments in the defence of abortion, and supports it only in the name of abstract personal rights, individualism, and liberty, which because of their incompleteness, weakness and exclusiveness, are wrong.

SEXUAL REPRESSION OF THE LEFT.

It is very difficult to be a complete and total revolutionary. Marx, Engels and Lenin wanted to be revolutionaries in terms of economics and politics, but "decent" when it came to matters of family and sexuality (as today, officially at least, many leftists continue to profess). The result was the calamity of the sexual revolution in Russia, where puritanism, stajanovism etc. were reinstated. Abortion was permitted in conformation to the criterias of power, without consulting the "heroic mothers", who were decorated in communist Russia in the same way as by Hitler or Franco. In regard to women, leftists are still too macho and give women even less power than the rightists give them. This is logical, as those on the right have dominated "their" women, but the leftists fear, because of their bad conscience of sexual oppression, that women would use this power to protest their marginalization. For this reason, they sacrifice the political opportunity for a real solution to the problems of contraception and abortion.

FEMINISM AND "FEMALEISM" AGAINST ABORTION.

Feminism is one of the most important and promising movements of our age. Because of this, its progress is slow and marked by frequent regressions. The crisis of political participation and the economic crisis, which most affect

women, have led to extremisms which further aggravate the problem. Certain groups of women with elite bourgeois or even feudal prejudices have adopted a ideology that is similar but opposite to the patriarchal ideology. This new system, "femaleism", scorns the "irrational mass" of women and tries to manipulate them against men rather than against patriarchy, which in reality they admire to the point that they want to supplant it, instituting their own tyranny, no less fascist and racist than patriarchy. Some of them, when they don't completely scorn the abortion debate, considering it "a just punishment" for fraternizing with the enemy, men (their obsessive lesbianism, though understandable, is as binding as exclusive heterosexuality), are more interested in the legalization of abortion for their personal utility, than in the problem which in most countries is more general and severe, the lack of access to contraceptives. Their extremism, intolerance and eagerness for protagonism frequently presents a grave obstacle in resolving the problem of abortion and the progress of feminism in general. These kind of women insist that, without exception, "women decide" about abortion, ignoring men and maintaining an individualistic conception of the problem. They insist too much in abortion as "the right to a free sexuality", which separates them from other women less overly conscientious about sexuality and indirectly helps those who want to discredit abortion proponents.

CONCLUSION

THE LEGAL SETTING OF OUR SOCIETY.

A large part of the population is in favour of some depenalization of abortion, for themselves or because they are against imposing their morals on others. But even in the hypothetical situation that almost everyone believed abortion morally bad, it would not always have to be punished by law, as the Catholic doctrine itself says, according to the principle of the lesser evil, that many bishops don't apply here, and when they are strong enough, these bishops ask the state to impose their opinion as if it were the only moral possible. But, an elemental law of democracy requires that the personal right to an abortion (and divorce, etc.) has to be respected even when the majority is not in agreement.

In addition, the law that punishes abortion is inefficient, as it doesn't take into account, prevent nor punish the many actual clandestine abortions which are dangerous for the health. This unpopular inefficiency also results in a loss of prestige for the administration of justice. We must add that it is also discriminatory in respect to the poor.

IN FACE OF THE CONCRETE PROBLEM OF AN ABORTION.

We have seen that neither science nor custom give us a secure "natural border", from which to make a decision in all cases. The Nobel prize winning doctor, J. Jacob said: "The human-being doesn't come into existence in a precise moment. There is a progressive evolution, a series of jumps, of reactions and of synthesis, which little by little form the son of man. Who would be in a condition to decide when one can interrupt a pregnancy? Certainly not the biologist, even less the bishop or the judge. I don't see anyone else who could have this right if not the parents".

In the first days of pregnancy, nature causes half of embryos to be aborted for reasons of health, and these spontaneous abortions continue for weeks due to genetics, psychic influence, etc. In that period, it is natural to act as nature does and abort for these reasons. After this time, the reasons for abortion must be less numerous and more serious, as is also true in nature, and each time more weight has to be given to a life which at each step seems more similar to our own. We always have to respect this life, even if it is not exactly equal to our own, and avoid inflicting it any unnecessary pain, as we do with animals and even with corpses.

We conclude, as did the biologist and Jesuit, P. Gafo, by noting that it's possible that we will be accused of confusing and weakening "clear" positions. Like him, we remember the words of A. Koestler: "Never have I seen some problem, as complicated as it may be, which to be correctly resolved must not be complicated more"; and of Gluckman: "The strength of our affection for learned and theoretical definitions is in direct proportion to our disregard for the suffering of others."

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