

On the Deceptive Parlance of Abortion: Some Answers

*John F. Gaski**

ABSTRACT: This brief essay, offered from the pro-life perspective, summarizes, deconstructs, critiques, and rebuts some of the more fatuous of the pro-abortion pseudo-arguments. A common characteristic of pro-abortion rhetoric is seen to be shallow, flimsy, and diversionary content putatively justifying the legal or moral right of women to utilize the abortion procedure. An understated subtext of this note, however, is that many pro-life anti-abortionists appear to be dysfunctionally self-satisfied and morally complacent, despite their cause's lack of success.

*John F. Gaski is Professor Emeritus of Marketing at the University of Notre Dame. His degrees include a BBA and MBA from Notre Dame, and an M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He is the author of over 200 published articles, papers, and monographs which have appeared in numerous professional journals, as well as proceedings of leading professional associations. Primary research interests are social power and the societal impact of marketing activity. Courses taught by this award-winning teacher include Marketing Management, Marketing Strategy and Planning, Marketing Research, and Distribution Management, at both the graduate and undergraduate levels.

HAVE WE SUFFERED ENOUGH DEFEAT YET? The pro-life movement has been losing the war on the abortion issue for half a century, and it seems far too comfortable with that status. From unlawful abortion to *Roe v. Wade*'s trimesters, from "safe, legal, and rare" to discretionary on-demand, late-term, and partial-birth abortion, and now post-partum mass murder of the innocents, the abortion scourge marches on relentlessly. With close to a million abortions per year in the United States

and over 60 million in total since 1973 (Guttmacher Institute 2019), only scant progress has been made in terms of restricting the procedure (mainly a lower rate relative to total population and total pregnancies). The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* is not a panacea, because the return to state jurisdiction will just create an anything-goes abortion climate in the blue states. (So the pro-choice side need not have been so concerned about the fate of *Roe*.)

To their credit, in one respect, the pro-lifers always predicted that permissive U.S. abortion law would someday lead to widespread acceptance of infanticide (cf. Giubilini and Minerva 2013). How prescient they were, although the substantive vindication does not redeem the normative and operational failure. “Slouching toward Gomorrah” indeed (Bork 1996), while the pro-life side appears too content with “virtue signaling.”

In 1983 I did an op-ed column in the *Chicago Tribune* titled (by an editor) “The Terminology of Abortion.” (My own original title was “The Abortion Question—and Answer,” and the reader will see why.) One theme of the piece was that the pro-abortion side uses red-herring, diversionary language such as “pro-choice” to disguise the sinister and gruesome reality of abortion. The rhetorical landscape has only grown more disingenuous, by quantum levels, over the intervening 40 years.

Yes, the radical abortion apologists, almost exclusively leftist, still use the consciously anodyne “choice” branding to whitewash what the choice is, i.e., their cherished form of mass butchery, and thereby desensitize the practice through public disinformation-based conditioning. But they also have designed other euphemistic tropes for propaganda effect, such as the following favorite talking points, each accompanied by author commentary. The purpose of this exposition is to provide forensic ammunition to help the pro-life case compete more equitably in what remains a hostile information environment even after *Dobbs*, or especially after *Dobbs*.

The Deceptive Parlance: Some Prominent Examples

“A woman has the right to control her own body.” Surely, and if this spurious smokescreen were the only issue, there would be no controversy. But it is not. Hers is not the only body involved. There is another human life at stake, a different life with a different nervous system and DNA, a life that is barbarously sacrificed in abortion. (Human life, that is, apart from the question of ambiguously defined “person.”) The pro-abortion side is literally

elevating a pregnant woman's discretion and convenience over another human life's existence—essentially the tradeoff involved in nearly any act of murder. No wonder that view's patrons work so hard to mask the truth, but the pro-life side should not let them get away with it. On this point, decisive rebuttal could be a walkover, as above.

“The abortion decision should be made only by a woman and her doctor, not politicians.” Sorry, but if law is involved, if there are legal or societal aspects to an issue, then politicians (legislators) are typically and properly involved also—and the pro-choicers are usually pleased that they do intercede in this context! The pro-abort camp has generally benefited from legal/political involvement (which renders this objection an instance of bald hypocrisy on their part).

Specifically, the U.S. Constitution does not confer on women and physicians the unfettered power over another's life and death, or special license to commit homicide, and never did, even when under the 1973 Supreme Court decision that divined a constitutional “penumbra” covering abortion privacy. Life should still trump privacy in a sane world. And politicians do have a legal obligation to defend the Constitution, including its 14th Amendment right-to-life provision, no matter how much they resist. Therefore, abortion oversight by “politicians” is inescapable. Unfortunately, the wrong kind of oversight has dominated so far in the U.S. and throughout the world. (On rhetoric and terminology, for a suitable semantic counterpunch, the anti-abortion side should make some use of the more generic “homicide” term, particularly for late-term abortion and the even more grisly born-alive abortion initiative now popular in liberal Democrat circles. “Infanticide” has already been somewhat neutered through its mainstreaming by the abortionist left. “Murder in the first degree” also fits the circumstances, sadly.)

An especially tedious and sophistic perennial is that “men have no business” commenting on abortion or opposing it because it is strictly a female issue physiologically. So, some future female HHS Secretary may not weigh in on funding for prostate cancer research? Women must not be television commentators for NFL football? By this faux reasoning, a woman's abortion of a male fetus would be proscribed—by abortion proponents, incongruously. And are we to believe that a man has no rightful

interest in the life and death of a biological son or daughter? Our pro-abortion friends need to be told to “get real” and get coherent.

Representing the archetype of extreme political sophistry is the notoriously specious camouflage contrived by the late Mario Cuomo and others, to wit: “Although I am personally opposed to abortion, I have no right to impose my own morality [*qua* religion] upon public policy.” This crude cop-out is customarily proffered as if personal morality does not already inform public policy positions routinely and even legitimately. What, we are not allowed to oppose murder or slavery politically just because of the material overlap with the moral teachings of some religions?

The *reductio ad absurdum* extension of the canard is this: If you believe in “thou shalt not kill” as a religious commandment, then you cannot oppose war or support laws against homicide—or favor firearm regulation—because that would mix religion and vital public policy! Likewise, with “Thou shalt not steal” and laws against larceny. (So, the Cuomo-type pro-abortionist would be compelled to support larceny, to be consistent.) Or if Abraham Lincoln’s opposition to slavery was grounded in religious principle in any way, that would make the Emancipation Proclamation illegitimate. This is Alice-in-Wonderland territory, the frequent refuge of degenerate hypocrisy.

Moral philosophy clearly does permeate law because law is society’s formal consensus about right and wrong. In turn, there is abundant inherent intersection between moral philosophy and religious teaching, thus considerable commonality between religion and public government. QED. Pro-abortion politicians are anything but reluctant to cite religion and morality to justify their stances on such issues as the death penalty, welfare, the minimum wage, military policy, and marriage. Low-grade hypocrisy reigns—but with ready rebuttal available, the defenders of life should not cede the playing field to the opponents.

Yet the pro-life forces also need to select their battles judiciously. For example, why not just explain, publicly, how abortion is immoral according to the two leading ethical systems on grounds of both means and ends? Why not display the principles of utilitarian teleology and Kantian deontology ubiquitously on billboards and TV screens? Answer: Pro-life proponents evidently realize that those who support a 60-million-victim holocaust, and the public that tolerates it, are not likely to be moved by ethical theory. Instead, they need to be hit with a rhetorical sledgehammer. (The latter

proposition is the part the pro-life side appears not to have internalized.) See Marquis (1989) for a hard-hitting moral value treatment that could conceivably resonate with the layman.

“Reproductive health” is another gross misnomer for a procedure that is contra-reproductive for the abortion service recipient and anything but healthy for the doomed abortion victim. Further, to summon an instructive corollary out of respect for those victims and to benefit readers who may not have heard: Many women who have experienced abortion report feeling what some sonograms have shown—the fetus, the tiny baby, trying to fight back during the horrific procedure. Yes, let us also use the accurate “baby” term more often in this resistance against enduring atrocity (cf. Chan 2017). A poignant exhibit in the appendix illustrates this point.

Returning to the opposing verbiage, why would abortion supporters need to resort to such chronic equivocation? For the same reason demagogues have always done so: malice aforethought. If their position were sincere and benign, the dissembling tactic would not be necessary. The pro-aborts thus reveal that, deep down, they know their position is wrong.

After being justified initially on grounds of defending the mother’s life, abortion’s cover story then became “life or health,” which finally morphed into inclusion of “mental or emotional health.” Because of the virtual certainty of finding some ersatz medical “professional” somewhere who will so certify, this tactic is ensuring nearly unrestricted abortion on demand, late-term or even after-term, as we are now witnessing tragically.

Of course, the latest postpartum abortion law gambit (i.e., intentionally allowing the newborn to expire), as legislated in New York and Virginia, makes liberal use of the elastic “medical professional” designation—perhaps because abortion advocates are not quite confident of finding enough genuine physicians willing to commit infanticide. By the way, is there not already a law against conspiracy to commit mass homicide? Why haven’t the recent governors of New York and Virginia been arrested, along with many in their states’ legislatures?

More broadly, life advocates need to stop playing patty-cake with kid gloves while the pro-abortionists practice rhetorical street-fighting with brass knuckles, including their defamatory accusations of sexism and misogyny. In defending the defenseless, pro-lifers must embrace unvarnished reality and brutal honesty in shaming the perpetrators. (Graphic billboard pictures have

been a good start.) Some tactical guidance can also be lifted from life opponents who audaciously operate at the wholesale level, e.g., by pressuring and intimidating institutions such as big business. Consider a relatively mild hypothetical sample of prospective message copy for use on the side of life to rebuke one recent provocation:

Disney, the company that gave the world Mickey Mouse and *Snow White*, has joined the baby-killing brigade by hypocritically boycotting the state of Georgia in protest of the state government's modestly restrictive abortion legislation. (No Disney boycott of the mass-murderous Chinese regime, in contrast.) What would Walt think, not to mention the slaughtered innocents?

The ring of truth can be satisfying as well as effective. It is past time to respond more aggressively. Quoting renowned libertarian Barry Goldwater, "Moderation in pursuit of justice is no virtue." Nor is it virtuous to remain too passive when fighting for life.

Concerning ultimate strategic value, inept or timorous right-to-life proponents may be missing the kill shot, so to speak. Recognizing the disproportionately high minority abortion rate in the U.S., the correct word for it is genocide (just as Margaret Sanger of the eugenics movement may have originally intended; 1920; Latson 2016). Aside from being a combustible attention-getter, the term also is freighted with the truth, unfortunately for the abortion promoters who suppress this revelation. It is long-overdue for the pro-life side to make more campaign use of this little-known racist aspect. The traditional pillow-fight approach certainly has not succeeded.

Scientifically, there is no question that a human fetus embodies human life from the moment of conception. (What other variety of life could it be?) So, the abortion lobby has needed another distraction, which it gained (as early as 1973 in *Roe*) by creating the sham debate over when official "personhood" is earned by a fetus—all of which is not exactly a news flash for readers. One other feature of my 1983 column was address of that posture with the following argument, which I hope, after the passage of decades, is finally ripe for public acceptance and impact:

An answer will be proposed that is properly simple, symmetrical, and seemingly self-evident. Medically and legally, it is now almost universally accepted that the cessation of brain activity constitutes the conclusion of an

individual human's life. To be consistent, then, should not the incipience of brain activity define the beginning of human life? In other words, to accept brain function as the boundary of human life [i.e., personhood] in one direction but not the other would be somewhat erratic. In the human fetus, brain waves can first be detected, on average, at about the 38th day of pregnancy. Any abortion committed after the 38th day, or whenever brain activity begins in a particular fetus, therefore, is the willful, premeditated termination of a human [person's] life, and must be defined as first degree murder.

Although personhood-at-conception may be a superior position morally and biologically, I offer the 38th-day rule as tactical incrementalism, because it would be a major interim advance toward saving countless lives amidst our country's lamentable contribution to the world's ongoing Holocaust II. The key or jiu-jitsu fulcrum is that even the pro-abortion philosophy, such as it is, acknowledges that the killing of a person is wrong. A 38th-day convention may also prove to be more viable legally than the current legislative efforts in some conservative states to equate fetal heartbeat with personhood—primarily because of the precedent in science and law to recognize brain waves (or their absence) as determinant of the life-death threshold for a human person.

Conclusion

So far, the pro-lifers have failed abjectly in a noble campaign largely because their maladroit, flat-footed rhetorical efforts are up against expert pro-abortion propagandists who run rings around them, easily although illegitimately. The American left is just better at mass politics than the right, which roughly demarcates the ideo-alignment on this issue. (More than a few pro-life advocates are otherwise left-of-center politically, but the pro-abortion side aligns with the left almost uniformly.) The pro-life movement owes the cause, and the abortion victims, better marketing communication performance. Its opponents, who now reveal their morbid true colors more and more, are no less than a ruthless death cult responsible for engineering far more carnage than the last century's first holocaust. Hence, this bit of strategic public communication coaching in the form of an exposé of abortion double-talk. In practice, the next step would be to experimentally test alternative message executions for effectiveness. However, one established

mass communication principle does not require testing: Allowing false propaganda to stand without rebuttal is not an effective strategy.

Any reader who does not have the stomach to fight harder against abortion through improved promotional devices truly has the blood of innocents on his or her hands. Let us be stronger, without further delay.

The author's primary fields of study are social and political power and conflict, and business ethics. He has been a long-time registered Democrat and long-time registered Republican—intermittently, not concurrently or sequentially—which should dispatch any erroneous impression of partisanship.

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Appendix Exhibit.

Hand of a Fetus.

A picture began circulating online early in the new millennium, that of a 21-week-old unborn baby named Samuel Armas, who was being operated on by surgeon Joseph Bruner.

The baby was diagnosed with spina bifida and would not survive if removed from his mother's womb. Samuel's mother, Julie Armas, was an obstetrics nurse in Atlanta. She knew of Dr. Bruner's remarkable surgical procedure. Practicing at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, he has specialized in performing these operations on babies still in the womb.

During the procedure, the doctor removes the uterus via C-section and makes a small incision to operate on the baby. As Dr. Bruner completed the surgery on Samuel, the little guy reached his tiny but fully developed hand through the incision and grasped the surgeon's finger. Dr. Bruner was reported as saying that when this happened, it was the most emotional moment of his life and that for an instant during the procedure, he was just frozen, totally immobile.

The accompanying photograph captures this amazing event with perfect clarity. The online editors titled it "Hand of Hope." The text explaining the picture begins, "The tiny hand of 21-week-old fetus Samuel Armas emerges from the mother's uterus to grasp the finger of Dr. Joseph Bruner as if thanking the doctor for the gift of life."

Little Samuel's mother said they "wept for days" when they saw the picture. She said, "The photo reminds us pregnancy isn't about disability or an illness, it's about a little person."

The account of the photographer, Michael Clancy:

Out of the corner of my eye I saw the uterus shake, but no one's hands were near it. It was shaking from within.

Suddenly, an entire arm thrust out of the opening, then pulled back until just a little hand was showing. The doctor reached over and lifted the hand, which reacted and squeezed the doctor's finger. As if testing for strength, the doctor shook the tiny fist. Samuel held firm. I took the picture. Wow!

The nurse standing next to me asked, "What happened?"

"The child reached out," I said.

"Oh, they do that all the time," she responded.

Samuel was born in perfect health, the operation 100 percent successful.

The actual picture:



Source: Davis, Robert (2000), "Hand of a Fetus Touched the World," *USA Today* (May 2), p. D8.

