

Abortion and Slavery

The ancient democratic regimes could never withstand an assault on their right to define certain classes of humans as non-persons, especially their slaves. But then, neither can the modern democracies. For the ancients, the slightest admission before the law that a slave was capable of such things as stealing, or committing adultery, would be to treat him as a free human being, a citizen, and therefore as someone with full legal protection against slavery itself! Such an admission would have brought down the entire slave-system, and that is why certain overly-affectionate masters could be punished at law for daring to consider their slaves in terms too human. Cato ate and drank with his slaves, and his wife suckled slave children, but he strictly bought and sold them just the same.

The importance of such category law (and of the category psychology with its attendant propaganda) to the ideological purity of all political systems, should not be underestimated. The ancients used it to justify slavery and massacres. Modern campaigns of genocide such as in Cambodia, or Africa, use it to liquidate whole races. And of course the sophisticated and highly educated Nazi policy-makers understood intimately the reason non-personhood was a necessity: It enabled the murder of the disabled, infanticide, and extermination of all undesirables by otherwise moral citizens. Category law is a technique intended to transform human subjects into objects without rights (or with special, subordinate rights only) for the purpose of sustaining one kind of ideological regime or another. Modern liberal democrats, and their blue-liberal brethren have embarked on the same course.

The searing modern battle over abortion “rights” has become a watershed issue in all modern democracies for a reason: the modern egalitarian mother-to-be seeks the unencumbered egalitarian right to the sexual and economic freedom of the male, and cannot have it without an absolute control over the fruit of passions that she cannot bear to see form her fetters. Therefore, unwilling to admit to killing, she throws her considerable ideological weight into making her unborn child disappear legally, in what history will show to be the most radical and pernicious expression of raw democratic rights ever manifested in human history.

This struggle is not about unborn babies. It is about a feverish, near-theological defense of egalitarian democratic ideology against the counterclaims of human biology and the natural society that springs from it spontaneously. In short, the abortion rights argument bears the same urgent relation to the ideological maintenance of egalitarian democracy, as did the right to own slaves to the maintenance of ancient democracy - or the right of Aryans to liquidate Jews. The paradox - and irony - for most modern liberals (especially for Jewish liberals) is that while they unanimously condemn slavery with a haughty scorn, they as vigorously defend the right to abort with the blind zeal typical of all who rely on category law.

The key issue is said to be the conflict between the rights of the individual woman, and the

rights of the unborn child. But that is to miss the point. The conflict is not between the rights of two individuals, but between the expressed right of the woman, and the higher right of the community to defend the unexpressed right of an unborn citizen. In the pregnant woman both these rights are physically and symbolically resident in the same body. But because modern democracy has reduced itself to a simplistic struggle between the competitive rights of individuals only - in this case, the mother and the child - and recognizes no higher moral authority, the strategy has been to invoke category law to deny the humanity of the helpless protagonist. Now this is just Plato's slave metaphor (which describes how each of us in danger of enslavement to our own passions), in new garb: this inner slave is not a passion, but the fruit of passion conveniently transformed by law into a slave.

In short, the ideological necessity for a category-law definition of the unborn child as a non-person has evolved from our increasingly feverish need to sustain egalitarian democracy, in the same way that the ancient defense of non-personhood of the slave was essential to maintain slavery - and ancient democracy. Most ancient philosophers from Plato onward insisted democracy was not possible without slavery. Neither is democratic egalitarianism. An inescapable conclusion is that modern nations are annually liquidating about twenty per cent of their potential native-born citizens in the name of rights and ideological purity.

Of course the category of the non-person (in its origins likely a device of war) is a legal expression of a more fundamental insider/outsider moral framework by which humans have historically banded together against their perceived enemies. It has been widely used by totalitarian States of this century in order more easily to jail their own citizens (as internal enemies), gas and burn them, starve or work them to death, or simply to liquidate them.

The Need For Substitute Judgement

This exclusionary strategy is of profound ideological and economic importance to the modern welfare State because non-personhood leads immediately to the need for so-called "substitute judgement", whereby an official of the State or some other licenced professional may make crucial decisions concerning the education, treatment, medication, life, or actual killing by euthanasia of the designated non-person objects. Non-personhood and the strategy of substitute judgement it permits are essential to every political system as a means to avoid the powerful counter-arguments presented by nature to ideology. Nature calls the mother to her task, while ideology calls her away from it to the army or the office. Nature says no two human beings are the same. Egalitarian ideology tries to make them so. Due to the fact that in every welfare democracy of our time increasing aspects of private life are governed publicly, everything falls into a budgetary competition for scarce resources, and ideological coherence cannot be sustained unless these key spending decisions are taken from private hands and controlled centrally by the State. This means that whole classes of citizens potentially may fall into the victim category of the non-person on whose behalf the State will exercise its judgement to balance its budgets. For example, in simple economic terms the argument for abortion of the non-person child is

overwhelming. It is simply far cheaper to abort than to spend public dollars on a single mother on welfare. About \$400 as compared to five years welfare maintenance of a single mother at \$10,000 per year.

Already, rather than allow the ideological crumbling of a publicly-funded service such as universal medicare, desperate citizens are made to wait months for treatment. Many worsen and die as they wait. I have known people in Canada - where to contract for private medical care is illegal - in this predicament, who offered to pay from their own pockets. They were refused, and died. A queue for public service is a way of refusing treatment in order to sustain the public illusion of egalitarian service. Thus do welfare democracies quietly sacrifice their citizens to sustain their ideal. Likewise for the old. The State will from economic desperation strive to categorize increasing numbers of the infirm and the frail as in need of substitute judgement in order to submit them to State-licenced killers under a "euthanasia" policy. This is more staving off the erosion of egalitarian ideology. It is the prototype of all budgetary warfare inside the welfare State, and it has profoundly to do with slavery in the real sense that no one is more a slave or victim of the State than someone first defined as a non-person then handed over to government for final disposal.

The Philosophical Effect - The Great Irony of Our Time

Wherever democracy has erupted it usually began as a practical political theory advocating greater control, by more people, and more freedom from external constraints, the most intractable of which are the constraints of nature. Initially democracy meant freedom from kings, or feudal, or political masters. In the recent past it has meant freedom from oppressive laws, class control, and religious traditions.

In its contemporary egalitarian form, especially as expressed in sexual liberation theory, it has even come to mean freedom from any imposed moral restraint whatsoever. It may now mean the freedom to choose our own moral "life-style" regardless of, or even in opposition to the normative values of our community. Indeed, under the reign of such democratic pluralism the values of others are depicted as "judgemental," an effort to morally enslave the free and, by implication, inherently good individual. At the extreme of such modern freedom language (though it could be found, much scorned, in some ancient libertines as well) it is possible to read manifestos promoting incest, pedophilia, and inter-generational sex as techniques for the social and moral "liberation" of a "sex-negative" society. Clearly, this notion of democratic freedom moves only in one direction - toward extreme autonomism of the individual, and near anarchic repudiation of collective morality. But where will it end?

Ancient morality has by now been stood on its head. For the ancients, freedom of soul came only from self-mastery and control. The external world, mostly made of accidents such as birth,

war, and death, was incidental to, and could not, in principle should not, influence this power of control. Self-control is freedom.

For moderns, so lulled by the democratic conceit, freedom is said to come from self-release and self-expression - from a repudiation of control, both by oneself (otherwise there's the risk of being thought "up-tight"), and especially by others, who by admonishing certain behaviours are said to be "imposing" their social, moral, or political authority.

Yet the crowning irony of modern times - and one of the great paradoxes of contemporary democracy - is that although modern man imagines himself socially, morally, and politically free, he blithely converses with the universe in wholly deterministic terms that almost without exception describe him as a slave or "product" of some force beyond his will. For example, he is relentlessly described as a product of social conditioning, and this belief underlies almost all modern social science research. Or, he is said to be the plaything of inner, psychological forces (Freudian psychoanalysis); or, in the eye of the pure physicist, he is seen as but a quantum combination of pure matter; or, for the biologist, a product of the random natural selections of Darwinian law. Of late, the wealthiest societies on earth are said to be overflowing with hundreds of millions of helpless "co-dependents" in need of immediate counselling.

The same is true for the entire modern "progressive" political monologue, in which more millions of heedless victims of social and economic "conditioning" are considered ripe for re-education, or therapy, or in need of another special "policy" to be crafted and administered by educated specialists. These latter form the clerisy of modern secular fundamentalism, and typically see themselves as having escaped - by virtue of their special knowledge - the false-consciousness of the conditioned state of mind they deplore (one they unfailingly characterize as a form of slavery). They are elites - no longer slaves - by virtue of their own flattering self-definition.

So too, for Marxism, that most widespread and pernicious of conspiracy theories, according to which the entire developed world has been described as a slave-like victim of an inevitable historical process and an oppressive capitalist class system that exploits the bulk of the people. Modern so-called "deconstruction" theory, by now a pervasive and debilitating intellectual shadow of the Marxian story, basically argues that power systems of one sort or another permeate every level of human society, and that even professed altruistic motives are in fact strategic designs to entrench such systems, and to hold masses of humans enslaved to them. They urge the "liberation" of humanity by blanketing society with coercive and expensive programs of redistributive and "substantive" justice meant to reverse the effects of nature and society by mandating the differential treatment of human beings officially considered equal.

How bizarre and ironic is, that in this time of widespread celebration of democratic freedom,

our supposedly uncontrolled man envisions himself, utterly, a submissive product - or victim - of the physical processes and orderings of the world more absolutely than at any time in history.

© William Gairdner