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Sophisticated Barbarians

By Douglas A. Sylva

It is getting harder and harder to keep up with all the ways in which unlimited abortion perverts the West, turning its civilization into sophisticated barbarity.

Two recent examples illustrate that the pace of this decline appears to be accelerating. The first comes from Great Britain, where the brightest lights of the medical profession and of medical ethics, are preparing protocols for the killing of newborn babies with disabilities.

According to the *Times* of London, the idea "was also welcomed by John Harris, a member of the government's Human Genetics Commission and professor of bioethics at Manchester University. 'We can terminate for serious fetal abnormality up to term but cannot kill a newborn. What do people think has happened in the passage down the birth canal to make it okay to kill the foetus at one end of the birth canal but not at the other?' he said."

Of course he is correct, there is no moral distinction in killing babies at different ends of the birth canal. But instead of this logic resulting in a universal protection — kill them nowhere — Harris uses it as a universal permission: kill them here, kill them there, kill them anywhere.

Even when the *Times* uses the well-worn hardship justification, the barbarity proves impossible to hide: "The college is arguing that 'active euthanasia' should be considered for the overall good of families, to spare parents the emotional burden and financial hardship of bringing up the sickest babies." Barnyard morality, which teaches that the smallest or the sickest of the litter do not warrant an investment in food, should now apply to humans.

The second example comes from last week's oral arguments at the Supreme Court over the national partial birth abortion ban. The Solicitor General, speaking in favor of the ban, stated that, "Congress was entitled to make a judgment in furthering its legitimate interests that they were going to ban a particularly gruesome procedure that blurred the line between abortion and infanticide."

But Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg quickly responded by saying that, "couldn't a similar record be made with respect to what is the more common procedure, the D&E, that involves dismemberment of a fetus inside the womb. So assuming you're right that it is constitutional for Congress to ban the D&X proceeding, wouldn't the same reasoning apply, couldn't Congress make similar findings with respect to what is the most common method for second trimester abortions?"

What this means is that if "gruesome" is allowed as a valid measure for prohibiting any abortion method, it could be used to prohibit all abortion methods. She went on, saying that "the procedure is basically the same," or, in other words, partial birth abortion and the most common methods of abortion in the second trimester are equally gruesome; there is no distinction between dismembering a baby inside the womb or outside the womb. Here we find the same argument that Professor Harris used in England for the legalization of infanticide. In the end, a logically consistent pro-abortion ethic calls for the elimination of mercy.

According to Justice Ginsburg, we are "not talking about whether any fetus will be preserved by this legislation. The only question that you are raising is whether Congress can ban a certain method of performing an abortion. So anything about infanticide, babies, all that, is just beside the point because what this bans is a method of abortion. It doesn't preserve any fetus because you just do it inside the womb instead of outside."

Once a baby is marked for termination, the method of termination does not matter. This is worse than barnyard morality, where means do matter, where farmers are obliged to kill their cows and chickens and pigs as quickly and as painlessly as possible.

Justice Antonin Scalia, whose legal brilliance often embarrasses colleagues such as Ginsburg, said nothing scintillating that day last week. In fact, what he said seemed silly at times: "When it's halfway out, I guess you can call it either a child or a fetus." Or, when the Court was informed by the legal counsel for the abortion industry that it is often the case that, during an abortion, a leg or two of the baby dangles outside of the woman, Scalia replied, "But we don't talk about a leg dying. We talk about the fetus dying, I think, and I think that's not the leg."

Scalia kept trying to return to the basic reality of who is being killed, and how. He finally dared the Court to ponder the ultimate application of the unlimited abortion license: "Would it, would it be lawful or would it be infanticide to deliver the fetus entirely and just let it expire without any attempt to keep it alive?"

After learning what is happening in Great Britain, Scalia, and all of us, should fear how the sophisticated barbarians who run our society would now answer that question.