

After-birth abortion: why should the baby live? An Answer

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According to Julian Savulescu, Editor of the Journal of Medical Ethics “Giubilini and Minerva extend the long running debate on infanticide to ask: if abortion is permissible both for social as well as medical reasons, why is infanticide permissible only for medical reasons? What is the moral difference between a fetus and a neonate that justifies this difference? Both have similar capacities and if one is permissible, why not the other?”¹

The logic expressed in the above reference is beyond reproach: it is almost impossible to make a distinction between a fetus and a neonate from the philosophical point of view, and this is the reason why many oppose abortion.²

The point we need to focus on is the reasons why abortion, as well as infanticide, should be permissible. Giubilini and Minerva claim it in a very simple sentence “for both social as well as medical reasons”.³

They refer to the official definition arising from WHO “A state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing”. “The absence of disease and disability” was the previous pragmatic definition of Health that was discarded in order to bring about a utopian dream that is draining the finances of the States of the entire western world.

The change of Health definition was brought about during the reign of Brock Chisholm as Director General of WHO (1948-1953) and, according to James Larson, changing definition was necessary to make a paradigm shift from a spiritual to a social orientation.⁴ “Absence of disease and disability” as definition of Health that can hardly be interpreted in spiritual sense. Apparently the shift took the wrong direction. Besides the philosophical arguments, the economic one is also at stake according to Giubilini and Minerva:

“The alleged right of individuals (such as fetuses and newborns) to develop their potentiality, which someone defends, is over-ridden by the interests of actual people (parents, family, society) to pursue their own well-being because, as we have just argued, merely potential people cannot be harmed by not being brought into existence Actual people’s well-being could be threatened by the new (even if healthy) child

¹ Why Did the Journal Publish an Article Defending Infanticide? J Med Ethics. 2012 Feb 23

² Hare RM. A Kantian approach to abortion. In: Hare RM, ed. Essays on Bioethics. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993:168e84.

³ After-birth abortion: why should the baby live? J Med Ethics. 2012 Feb 23.

⁴ James Larson The World Health Organization’s Definition of Health: Social versus Spiritual Health Social Indicators Research 38:181-192 1996 Kluwer Academic Publishers. Printed in the Netherlands.

requiring energy, money and care which the family might happen to be in short supply of.”

Helping the families with economic problems could also represent a way out if the only problem to keep the baby is of economic nature.

Finally, it seems that, in this dispute, we are dealing with the relation between might and right. Either the fetus in the womb, or the newborn infant, happen to be the weak part in a situation of conflict of interest (since probably the interest of the fetus is to be born and the one of child to live).

As Sigmund Freud reminds us: “conflict of interest are resolved, in principle, by the recourse to violence. It is the same in the animal kingdom, from which man cannot claim exclusion” (<http://sometimesagreatnotion.tumblr.com/post/367233982/the-einstein-freud-correspondence-1931-1932>)

Therefore we may conclude that, in the case of abortion and infanticide, violence is the rule to be applied, since human beings are part of the animal kingdom, a position that Giubilini and Minerva probably agree upon.