



Thank you for making the effort to read and carefully consider this issue. The positions we take on our Defining Issues are intended to counter one or more negative effects of *The Most Insidious Lies*. We strive for accuracy as to facts and reasonableness as to conclusions. Both compliments and critiques are welcome responses.

If you think we have a fact wrong or a fault in our logic, please write to us explaining your position. We will publish your comments so long as they are clear, succinct, and polite.

Of course, we love to hear from those who agree with us. May we please count you as a supporter of Spirits at Play? There is no cost involved, at least for the moment. All you need do is send us your e-mail address so that we can notify you of changes to this site and other events of interest.

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## Abortions

### Plan, Don't Punish

As controversies go, this might be unique in that it only has one side. Many folks are adamantly anti-abortion, but no one is pro-abortion. No one believes that abortions are nice to have; only that they are sometimes preferable to the alternatives. Also germane is the historically proven fact that no law can stop abortions from taking place. An excellent book on that history is *When Abortion Was a Crime* by Leslie J. Reagan. See the box below for a much briefer look at the most critical developments.

The 1973 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *Roe v. Wade* allowed for abortions without restriction during the first 3 months (trimester) of pregnancy, and with some restrictions, during the second trimester also. The court said that the states could outlaw abortions during the third trimester unless the woman's health was endangered. This landmark decision was based on the ability of the fetus to survive outside of the womb. At that time, viability was determined by whether the fetal lungs were developed sufficiently to breathe on their own — a condition that generally occurred after the 6<sup>th</sup> month. Other candidates for making the determination have been: how human-like the form; when the mother first feels the fetus move (known as "the quickening"); and when the soul enters the physical body.<sup>1</sup>

In 1990, *Parade* magazine published an article by the famous astronomer Carl Sagan and the science-writer Ann Druyan, in which they suggested that, since the ability of a fetus to survive in the hard, cruel world would vary from year to year depending on the technology and equipment available to sustain it, a better criterion would be the earliest onset of human thinking. They concluded: "Since, on average, fetal thinking occurs even later than fetal lung development, we find *Roe v. Wade* to ... strike a fair balance between the conflicting claims of freedom and of life."

In the ensuing quarter century, I have not heard a more reasonable attempt at compromise. Unfortunately, there are powerful forces that see no advantage in compromise; forces which are vested in keeping the argument — and the fundraising — going on forever. So, there is no resolution in sight.

Yet, there is much that can be done to reduce the number of abortions that take place each year. Better sex education and easier access to effective birth control are two of the most effective approaches. It is more than ironic that the groups most vocal against abortions are often the ones trying to limit efforts to supply the information and the means that could prevent so many fetal deaths. Planned Parenthood, is now, and from

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<sup>1</sup> For the latest spirit testimony concerning ensoulment, see pages 197-200 in *The Realities of Heaven*.

the beginning always has been, far more dedicated to promoting sex education and birth control than providing abortions, yet it is the prime focus of the anti-abortionist's wrath. Clearly, this opposition is rooted more in an intolerant religion's fear of sexual activity than in compassion for young women and fetuses.

Underlying the whole problem are the Most Insidious Lies: that the physical world is inferior

to the spiritual, and that our corporeal bodies are an innate impediment to obtaining salvation. Please help *Spirits at Play* shine the light of truth upon these falsehoods, while giving whatever support you can to Planned Parenthood and other such organizations.

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## Abortion In American History

From colonial times to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the choice was the woman's until "quickening" (when she is first able to feel the fetus stirring within her). An abortion in the first or even second trimester was at worst a misdemeanor. Convictions were rarely sought and almost impossible to obtain, because they depended entirely on the woman's own testimony of whether she had felt a quickening, and because of the jury's distaste for prosecuting a woman for exercising her right to choose. In 1800 there was not, so far as is known, a single statute in the U.S. concerning abortion. Advertisements for drugs to induce abortion could be found in virtually every newspaper and even in many church publications — although the language used was suitably euphemistic, if widely understood.

But by 1900, abortion had been banned at *any* time in pregnancy by every state in the Union, except when necessary to save the woman's life. What happened to bring so striking a reversal? Religion had little to do with it. ... One of the most significant [forces] was the medical profession. Up to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, medicine was an uncertified, unsupervised business. Anyone could hang out a shingle and become a doctor. With the rise of a new, university-educated medical elite, anxious to enhance the status and influence of physicians, the American Medical Association was formed. In its first decade, the AMA began lobbying against abortions performed by anyone [especially midwives] except licensed physicians. ...

Their assault on abortion was motivated not by a concern for the health of the woman but, they claimed, for the welfare of the fetus. You had to be a physician to know when abortion was morally justified, because the question depended on scientific and medical facts understood only by physicians. At the same time, women were effectively excluded from the medical schools, where such arcane knowledge could be acquired. So, as things worked out, women had almost nothing to say about terminating their own pregnancies. It was also up to the physician to decide if the pregnancy posed a threat to the woman and was entirely at his discretion to determine what was and was not a threat. For the rich woman, it might be a threat to her emotional tranquility or even to her lifestyle. The poor woman was often forced to resort to the back alley or the coat hanger.

This was the law until the 1960s, when a coalition of individuals and organizations, the AMA now among them, sought to overturn it and to reinstate the more traditional values that were to be embodied in *Roe v. Wade*.

— Adapted from an article by Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan, *Parade Magazine*, 22 April 1990, p. 8.