Contraception and Abortifacients

Eugene F. Diamond
Contraception and Abortifacients

Eugene F. Diamond, M.D.

The crucial context for the discussion of abortion involves questions of life and death. Notwithstanding tangential issues of population, public health problems, felonious intercourse, the woman's right to privacy, etc., it is obvious that the abortion lobby has worked very hard to separate the idea of abortion from the socially abhorrent idea of killing. As has been pointed out in a recent editorial in California Medicine, "The result has been a curious avoidance of the scientific fact, which everyone really knows, that human life begins at conception and is continuous whether intra- or extra uterine until death."

The very considerable semantic gymnastics which are required to rationalize abortion as an "inert" but taking a human life would be ludicrous if they were not often put forth under socially impeccable auspices."

Similar to this attempt to separate abortion and killing, is the attempt to dissociate abortion from those contraceptive methods such as oral progestins and intrauterine devices whose effects are abortifacient in that their action occurs after conception by interference with implantation in the uterine wall. Arguments which have been advanced are those which suggest that the definition of "conception" should be extended to include those stages of intra-ovulopetal development which precede the development of the blastocyst. Some have suggested that life should be redefined as beginning with implantation. The basis for this new definition would be the observations regarding twinning and "recombination" of zygotes. It is well known that the fertilized ovum can divide, during its early developmental stages into identical parts which become identical twins. Since identical twins have identical genotypes, the original zygote can still be said to be determinative and complete.

The very considerable semantic gymnastics which are required to rationalize abortion as an "inert" but taking a human life would be ludicrous if they were not often put forth under socially impeccable auspices.

Similar to this attempt to separate abortion and killing, is the attempt to dissociate abortion from those contraceptive methods such as oral progestins and intrauterine devices whose effects are abortifacient in that their action occurs after conception by interference with implantation in the uterine wall. Arguments which have been advanced are those which suggest that the definition of "conception" should be extended to include those stages of intra-ovulopetal development which precede the development of the blastocyst. Some have suggested that life should be redefined as beginning with implantation. The basis for this new definition would be the observations regarding twinning and "recombination" of zygotes. It is well known that the fertilized ovum can divide, during its early developmental stages into identical parts which become identical twins. Since identical twins have identical genotypes, the original zygote can still be said to be determinative and complete.

The very considerable semantic gymnastics which are required to rationalize abortion as an "inert" but taking a human life would be ludicrous if they were not often put forth under socially impeccable auspices.

Similar to this attempt to separate abortion and killing, is the attempt to dissociate abortion from those contraceptive methods such as oral progestins and intrauterine devices whose effects are abortifacient in that their action occurs after conception by interference with implantation in the uterine wall. Arguments which have been advanced are those which suggest that the definition of "conception" should be extended to include those stages of intra-ovulopetal development which precede the development of the blastocyst. Some have suggested that life should be redefined as beginning with implantation. The basis for this new definition would be the observations regarding twinning and "recombination" of zygotes. It is well known that the fertilized ovum can divide, during its early developmental stages into identical parts which become identical twins. Since identical twins have identical genotypes, the original zygote can still be said to be determinative and complete.

The very considerable semantic gymnastics which are required to rationalize abortion as an "inert" but taking a human life would be ludicrous if they were not often put forth under socially impeccable auspices.

Similar to this attempt to separate abortion and killing, is the attempt to dissociate abortion from those contraceptive methods such as oral progestins and intrauterine devices whose effects are abortifacient in that their action occurs after conception by interference with implantation in the uterine wall. Arguments which have been advanced are those which suggest that the definition of "conception" should be extended to include those stages of intra-ovulopetal development which precede the development of the blastocyst. Some have suggested that life should be redefined as beginning with implantation. The basis for this new definition would be the observations regarding twinning and "recombination" of zygotes. It is well known that the fertilized ovum can divide, during its early developmental stages into identical parts which become identical twins. Since identical twins have identical genotypes, the original zygote can still be said to be determinative and complete.

The very considerable semantic gymnastics which are required to rationalize abortion as an "inert" but taking a human life would be ludicrous if they were not often put forth under socially impeccable auspices.

Similar to this attempt to separate abortion and killing, is the attempt to dissociate abortion from those contraceptive methods such as oral progestins and intrauterine devices whose effects are abortifacient in that their action occurs after conception by interference with implantation in the uterine wall. Arguments which have been advanced are those which suggest that the definition of "conception" should be extended to include those stages of intra-ovulopetal development which precede the development of the blastocyst. Some have suggested that life should be redefined as beginning with implantation. The basis for this new definition would be the observations regarding twinning and "recombination" of zygotes. It is well known that the fertilized ovum can divide, during its early developmental stages into identical parts which become identical twins. Since identical twins have identical genotypes, the original zygote can still be said to be determinative and complete.

The very considerable semantic gymnastics which are required to rationalize abortion as an "inert" but taking a human life would be ludicrous if they were not often put forth under socially impeccable auspices.

Similar to this attempt to separate abortion and killing, is the attempt to dissociate abortion from those contraceptive methods such as oral progestins and intrauterine devices whose effects are abortifacient in that their action occurs after conception by interference with implantation in the uterine wall. Arguments which have been advanced are those which suggest that the definition of "conception" should be extended to include those stages of intra-ovulopetal development which precede the development of the blastocyst. Some have suggested that life should be redefined as beginning with implantation. The basis for this new definition would be the observations regarding twinning and "recombination" of zygotes. It is well known that the fertilized ovum can divide, during its early developmental stages into identical parts which become identical twins. Since identical twins have identical genotypes, the original zygote can still be said to be determinative and complete.

The very considerable semantic gymnastics which are required to rationalize abortion as an "inert" but taking a human life would be ludicrous if they were not often put forth under socially impeccable auspices.

Similar to this attempt to separate abortion and killing, is the attempt to dissociate abortion from those contraceptive methods such as oral progestins and intrauterine devices whose effects are abortifacient in that their action occurs after conception by interference with implantation in the uterine wall. Arguments which have been advanced are those which suggest that the definition of "conception" should be extended to include those stages of intra-ovulopetal development which precede the development of the blastocyst. Some have suggested that life should be redefined as beginning with implantation. The basis for this new definition would be the observations regarding twinning and "recombination" of zygotes. It is well known that the fertilized ovum can divide, during its early developmental stages into identical parts which become identical twins. Since identical twins have identical genotypes, the original zygote can still be said to be determinative and complete.

The very considerable semantic gymnastics which are required to rationalize abortion as an "inert" but taking a human life would be ludicrous if they were not often put forth under socially impeccable auspices.

Similar to this attempt to separate abortion and killing, is the attempt to dissociate abortion from those contraceptive methods such as oral progestins and intrauterine devices whose effects are abortifacient in that their action occurs after conception by interference with implantation in the uterine wall. Arguments which have been advanced are those which suggest that the definition of "conception" should be extended to include those stages of intra-ovulopetal development which precede the development of the blastocyst. Some have suggested that life should be redefined as beginning with implantation. The basis for this new definition would be the observations regarding twinning and "recombination" of zygotes. It is well known that the fertilized ovum can divide, during its early developmental stages into identical parts which become identical twins. Since identical twins have identical genotypes, the original zygote can still be said to be determinative and complete.

The very considerable semantic gymnastics which are required to rationalize abortion as an "inert" but taking a human life would be ludicrous if they were not often put forth under socially impeccable auspices.

Similar to this attempt to separate abortion and killing, is the attempt to dissociate abortion from those contraceptive methods such as oral progestins and intrauterine devices whose effects are abortifacient in that their action occurs after conception by interference with implantation in the uterine wall. Arguments which have been advanced are those which suggest that the definition of "conception" should be extended to include those stages of intra-ovulopetal development which precede the development of the blastocyst. Some have suggested that life should be redefined as beginning with implantation. The basis for this new definition would be the observations regarding twinning and "recombination" of zygotes. It is well known that the fertilized ovum can divide, during its early developmental stages into identical parts which become identical twins. Since identical twins have identical genotypes, the original zygote can still be said to be determinative and complete.

The very considerable semantic gymnastics which are required to rationalize abortion as an "inert" but taking a human life would be ludicrous if they were not often put forth under socially impeccable auspices.

Similar to this attempt to separate abortion and killing, is the attempt to dissociate abortion from those contraceptive methods such as oral progestins and intrauterine devices whose effects are abortifacient in that their action occurs after conception by interference with implantation in the uterine wall. Arguments which have been advanced are those which suggest that the definition of "conception" should be extended to include those stages of intra-ovulopetal development which precede the development of the blastocyst. Some have suggested that life should be redefined as beginning with implantation. The basis for this new definition would be the observations regarding twinning and "recombination" of zygotes. It is well known that the fertilized ovum can divide, during its early developmental stages into identical parts which become identical twins. Since identical twins have identical genotypes, the original zygote can still be said to be determinative and complete.
Errors during early embryogenesis such as chromatid non-disjunction or loss. The XX/XY type of mosaic is very difficult to explain in this way. It would theoretically be possible through chromatid loss in an XY zygote resulting in an XO/XY embryo. The XO cell would then undergo a duplication of the X chromosome with loss of the complementary O cell as follows in an oversimplified diagram.

Sub duplications are, however, not known to occur in man. This has led to the development of alternative theoretical mechanism whereby the XX/XY type of mosaicism might be explained. These explanations have sought to explain the existence of genetically balanced cells with the genetic equivalent of two zygotes. A very apt title for this condition, coined by Chown, is "geminism," i.e., twins in one capsule.

Mechanisms proposed for human geminism in the literature have been as follows: 1) Fertilization of an egg with two nuclei by two sperm. 2) Fertilization of the ovum and a retained polar body.* (Fertilization of two mitotic products of a single ovum.
4) The phenomenon of "immediate cleavage" whereby the first meiotic division results in two equally sized cells (rather than a large oocyte and a small polar body) both of which may be fertilized. 5) Fertilization of two ova by two sperm followed by cell fusion. Six instances of human geminism have been reported in the literature. Although the precise mechanism involved in these reported instances is, in each instance, obscure, the authors have speculated as to the most likely mechanism favored by their findings. Their conclusions are summarized as follows:


As can be noted, all of the authors favored explanations number 1, 2, or 3 (above) and none favored the explanation of "recombination" or fusion of two separate zygotes (formed by the fertilization of two distinct ova by two dissimilar spermatozoa).

The inference to be drawn from these reported cases is that, while recombination remains a legitimate speculation, it is by no means confirmed nor even strongly supported by the demonstration of the existence of XX-XY types of chimeras.

Even if recombination is accepted as an established fact, it is difficult to see the relevance of this fact of twinning to the issue of the beginning of life. Surely the fertilized ovum is no less human or no less alive before twinning or recombination than it is obviously alive and human after either of these phenomena. The only difficulty, it would seem, arises from the question as to how these phenomena relate to ensoulment. If there is a discrimination to be made between the "animated" and "non-animated" embryo as regards the right to protection against death from abortion, some problems appear. If ensoulment is envisaged as occurring at conception in a manner somewhat like a ghost coming to take possession of a haunted house, then some sticky arithmetical situations develop. Was there one soul which multiplied with twinning or two souls which combined with fusion of fertilized ova? Such equations are insoluble if one attempts to reconcile certain types of theological speculation with biological observations. If the term "soul" is accepted in the sense of a vital principle which exists in all living persons, the above numerical problems are most likely irrelevant. Where human life exists, a soul exists including a supernatural destiny. Where human life exists, certain inalienable rights accrue including the right to life. Human life is no less present in the zygote than the blastocyst, given current biological insights. The distinction between the zygote and the blastocyst does not relate to the current movement to change abortion laws since implantation has obviously occurred before the woman is aware of pregnancy and, therefore, before the abortion decision arises. This distinction is

*The polar body is a minute cell produced and usually discarded during the development of an oocyte. It contains one of the nuclei derived from the first or second division of meiosis but has practically no cytoplasm.
clearly germane, as previously mentioned, to the pill (including the "morning after" pill) and the intrauterine device.

Agonizing inconsistencies do arise among the various people of good will involved in the abortion discussion. Can we reject abortion and embrace abortifacient contraception? Can we develop a pro-life program which implicitly excludes new life? We certainly do not wish to make an endorsement of Humane Vitae a prerequisite and embrace abortifacient contraception? Can we develop a pro-abortion team even if we recognize that no one ever arrived at a pro-abortion position except by way of a contraceptive mentality. The weight of present information however would seem to preclude any "anti-abortion pro-contraception" position not structured around an underlying acceptance of the notion that life begins at conception.

REFERENCES


BOOK REVIEW

Fabr icated Man:
The Ethics of Genetic Control

by
Paul Ramsey
Yale University Press, paper 174 pp., $1.95

Dr. Paul Ramsey is a christian ethicist who is willing unashamedly to combine the Science of Ethics with a biblical and theological approach to modern and future problems. It is a rare scholar today who is willing to meet the modern, agnostic or atheist, and not be content to join battle on his ground but rather to insist that faith has an important input which can alter the conclusion.

For those who have been trained in logical progression where the basis for the argument must be a known principle and where the conclusion need not control the terms of the argument, this will be a refreshing book. One need not agree with Ramsey's conclusions but he presents a cogent argument and must be attacked in an equally professional way in order to substitute a different set of principles and conclusions. This method of argumentation is almost lost today: debate and logic have given over to charism and intuition. The change was brought home to me some 10 years ago when at a meeting I was publicly accused of being "logical"; an accusation which must end all rational discussion.

Ramsey presents three essays. The first two have been published elsewhere but the third is new. The first essay takes on the Nobel Laureate, H. J. Muller, and his predictions of man's future. Muller's recommendations to use frozen sperm (AID) from 'good