

God on Abortion

Two worlds formed, if they were not already apparent on January 22, 1973, the day *Roe v. Wade* was decided. The pro-choice group, advocating for a woman's liberty to decide for herself whether to terminate a pregnancy had won a battle, but the war over abortion was no longer confined to states and localities. It became more of a national concern, a subject of moral, theological, and political debates. The Supreme Court of the United States decided that although the text of the federal constitution did not expressly mention a right to an abortion, nor a general right to privacy, the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment subjected state laws against abortion to a trimester framework governing the validity of those laws depending on the stage of a woman's pregnancy.

Against the pro-choice advocates, the pro-lifers believed that life should be respected and protected against unnatural termination. When the challenged abortion statutes were declared unconstitutional the pro-life movement suffered a setback, but its arguments and convictions are as compelling as when the case first came before the Court. While cases addressing issues other than that presented in *Roe* have decided the United States Constitution contains a right to privacy, a woman's right to an abortion has not been secure.

This is because the questions at issue in *Roe* touch humanity's existence. One envisions a woman unwilling to be a mother, but forced by the will of the state to give birth. On the other hand are thoughts of a beginning life, needing and deserving protection as it continues its natural path. Since *Roe*, the pro-choice group has held a belief that a life has not begun at fertilization, and appeals to the concept of liberty which it says should provide women in the United States a constitutionally protected liberty interest in their bodies, and a reciprocal right to an abortion. The pro-lifers would have *Roe* overruled, and a judicial interpretation of the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to not provide a right to an abortion, allowing the decision to return to state governments for regional majorities to influence the politics and laws related to abortion. Both groups, mutually at odds with each other, cannot succeed in accomplishing their objective of ensuring that the law of the United States related to abortion reflects their viewpoint.

Despite the distance between the groups, one may recognize some commonalities. Both pro-choice advocates and pro-lifers have strong convictions, desire freedom from oppression, and are parties in the process of shaping the world that people live in. Such a debate is the product of a society where people are able to express themselves and attempt to persuade others towards adopting a certain point of view. This freedom of thought and discussion, along with a free press allows for opinions to be published. It is one of the liberties guaranteed to the people against the government and reflected in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

As interpreted by the United States Supreme Court, a principle behind the drafting of the First Amendment was to serve the effect of allowing an opportunity for thoughts and opinions to develop. With an absence of governmental repercussion to forms of speech that have been accorded protection, individuals can freely exchange ideas. New thoughts are conceived and the general public becomes a free market for ideas and discussion where people are able to listen and decide for themselves which opinions, if any, they will adopt.

This is the process of changing opinions in a free society, including that of public perception, the cumulative climate of thought as it relates to a particular issue that can influence politics, laws, and society. When a new idea is proposed that deviates from the public perception, it is for the proponent to persuade his listeners of its substance, and people are able to hear arguments so they may decide its merits for themselves. For a proposition that the public accepts, public perception adjusts to reflect it. For a proposition that the public does not accept, there is no adjustment of public perception, but people who are persuaded may continue to pass it on for it to gain as far ground as it can.

Apart from an idea that is not well-received, a false opinion is also protected. A false opinion that is submitted to the public is another idea that people are able to hear and decide upon its merits. When a false opinion is proposed to the public, the knowledge available to the public may not have developed to a point which recognizes the false opinion to be false. If this is so, and the public accepts the false opinion, public perception will include a reflection of the false opinion. This will be the case until reasoning, experience, or the combined basis of knowledge evolves, and an idea closer to the truth is submitted to the public forum, where people can determine whether the newly proposed idea should replace a formerly accepted one. If this decision is made, the false opinion will be recognized as false, and in theory, another attempt to propose it to the public will be met with arguments from people who represent the latter idea, closer to the truth. In this way, publicly accepted opinion moves closer towards truth, and progress is made.

Even so that progress is made once an opinion is appropriately recognized as false, the false opinion warrants the ability to enter the public forum. The public forum, where people can find an idea and meet it with arguments for members of the public to hear, is the only setting capable of passing judgment on the merits of an opinion. The government, included as a part of the public, can listen to the ideas that are proposed. A time it can intervene and prevent a traditionally protected form of speech from entering the public forum is if it meets a burden of showing that an imminent detrimental societal consequence will result directly from dissemination. This threat outweighs allowing the speech to enter the public forum, and justifies a restriction prior to publication. In the role of interpreting the First Amendment, courts determine if a form of speech is not protected, and

whether the interests at stake are such to allow the government a restraint prior to publication.

Like the First Amendment, laws have principles behind them. Abortion questions these principles perhaps unlike any other issue thus far encountered.

A basis for influencing opinion as it relates to abortion has been whether God has addressed the issue. One who follows the Old Testament finds the word of God in that source and one who has been convinced Jesus was from God finds God's word from the utterances of Jesus Christ in the New Testament as well. One attempting to apply the word of God to abortion may distinguish between the beginning of life and an act of abortion.

Traditionally, one who has sworn allegiance to God and attained requisite knowledge has been one to determine whether the word of God governs the beginning of life. Instruction can influence opinion as it relates to abortion to not conflict with God's word on when life has begun.

Distinguished from life's beginning, one who traditionally interprets the word of God has been one to determine whether God's law governs the act of abortion. One who knows God's law may decide what, if anything should be done with it.

Another basis for influencing opinion as it relates to abortion has been the manner one has thought about morality. One who thinks the moral permissibility of an action is determined from reason by a rational being has thought a principle one acts from should itself be a law. One acting on behalf of law has been one to think law that is universal in nature is the moral law and tends to act from a principle that could be willed a universal law. This way, an action complies with the moral law.

One who attempts to will a universal law from the principle of aborting pregnancy is not able to unless aborting pregnancy is necessary for the health of a child bearer. As a result, aborting pregnancy complies with the moral law only when it is necessary for the health of a child bearer.

Another way one has thought about morality represents another basis for influencing opinion as it relates to abortion. One who thinks the objective of action is promoting a consequence has thought action should produce happiness in the greatest possible overall sense. Happiness is pleasure and the absence of pain. The greatest happiness develops with standards recognized and adopted promoting it.

Might division succumb to peace.

About the Author

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