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Abortion as Killing by the Numbers: An Immoral Approach to Sanctioning Political Violence

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Title: Abortion as Killing by the Numbers: An Immoral Approach to Sanctioning Political Violence

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Abstract. This article critiques one quantitative approach to morally supporting violence tolerated and/or approved by a formally constituted authority.

Formally constituted authority tolerates and/or approves certain kinds of political violence. These include aggression by (1) military personnel in the context of maintaining or furthering national security, (2) law enforcement personnel in the context of maintaining or furthering domestic security--through targeting domestic and foreign adversaries, (3) citizens and residents in the context of self-defense, and (for some authorities) (4) those who seek to keep the unborn from being born through abortion.

A very significant quantitative approach to morally defending political tolerance and/or approval of abortion--as formidable as this approach may appear in various abortion discourses--suffers when it is applied to other kinds of political violence. This approach entails a comparative analysis between the number of fetuses intentionally aborted and the number spontaneously aborted. For example, advocates of early abortion but not late-term abortion may found their advocacy on the relatively high-spontaneous rate of fetal demise of the former versus the latter. The rationale of this advocacy based on comparative demise is that the lower the disparity in incidence and prevalence between "natural" loss of life and intentional, the less ethical challenged is intentional loss of life.

The moral quality of this advocacy would logically impel military personnel to more easily kill citizens of Third World countries who are socially constructed as lower caste and class. Law enforcement personnel to more easily kill the denizens of inner city ghettos and rural pockets of misfortune. Citizens and residents to more easily kill real and imagined threats who are of poorer health, education, and welfare.

Applying this sort of quantitative approach to the various kinds of political violence suggests that more is at work in such advocacy than arriving at the True and the Good. Of high salience seems to be the grasping at moral straws and trappings for rationalization of a decision that has already been made. This decision is based on individual convenience (ultimately egoism) that is itself a moral stance but when usually avoided in moral discourse. That the subterfuge of moral dilemma is indulged by such advocates suggests that many people--in their hearts of light and darkness--believe there is some higher secular or sacred power that is unappeased by Caesar's political tolerance and/or approval. (See Bogg, R.A. (1999). Dostoevsky's enigmas: An analysis of violent men. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 4, 371-386; Brush, L.D. (1997). Harm, moralism, and the struggle for the soul of feminism. *Violence Against Women*, 3< 237-256; Darley, J.M. (1999). Methods for the study of evil-doing actions. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 3, 269-275; Easterbrook, G. (January 31, 2000). Abortion and brain waves. *The New Republic*, pp. 21-25; Narvaez, D., et al. (1999). Individual moral judgment and cultural ideologies. *Developmental Psychology*, 35, 478-488; Roth, B.E. (1997). Violence the Western way. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 84, 743-751.) (Keywords: Abortion, Ethics, Political Violence.)