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A New Vocabulary
for
the Culture of Life in Europe

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The abortion question is one that most clearly reveals the growing cultural gap between Europe and the US. In the US, the pro-life movement has made very significant gains in the last 15 years: the big Gallup poll of 2009 showed that pro-lifers (51%) outnumbered those holding "right-to-choose" or pro-abortion views (42%) for the first time; in 1996, the ratios had been 33% (pro-life) and 56% (pro-abortion)¹.

In our continent, by contrast, the Sofres Institute survey on "European Values" (2005) indicated that 62% of Europeans supported the view that "if a woman doesn't want children, she should be able to have an abortion"; 34% did not approve of it. In the Czech Republic, 81% upheld the legitimacy of abortion; in France, 78% did; in Germany, 64%; in Spain, 59%; in Italy, 53%; in Poland, 47%².

Trends are as important as the brute figures: the pro-life camp is advancing in the USA, while it slowly recedes in Europe.

Abortion was legalized approximately at the same time (the 70s) in the USA and most of Western Europe. Laws have a "didactic" aspect ("the law teaches", Abraham Lincoln famously said): the law does not just *reflect* the dominant moral convictions of society and evolves with them; there also exists the opposite phenomenon, whereby the law *shapes* the moral beliefs of people. The law is constantly sending moral messages to society (by imposing or lifting bans, by subsidizing or taxing certain activities, etc.)³. This "pedagogic" side of

¹ "More Americans "Pro-Life" than "Pro-Choice" for First Time" (<http://www.gallup.com/poll/118399/more-americans-pro-life-than-pro-choice-first-time.aspx>).

² TNS Sofres, "European Values" (2005) [<http://www.thebrusselsconnection.be/tbc/upload/attachments/European%20Values%20Overall%20EN.pdf>].

³ "For good or bad, government, law, and the other agencies of the state are as much the repositories, transmitters, even the creators of values as are the culture and the institutions of civil society. Legislation, judicial decisions, administrative regulations, penal codes, even tax codes are all instruments of moral legitimization or illegitimization. [...] It is often said that we cannot legislate morality. Yet we are constantly doing just that. The most dramatic example is the civil rights

laws is particularly relevant in societies where there is no unanimously recognized hierarchy of values; anomic societies, where ethical dissent prevails and where it is increasingly difficult to find common standards⁴. In default of other references, people tend to turn to the law as a source of moral certainty. Many will think in this way: “I’m not quite sure if X [e.g., abortion] is right; but X is legally permitted; then, X must be right”.

We find, thus, that whereas, in the US, four decades of legal blessing of abortion have not sufficed to eradicate the widespread belief that abortion is wrong, in Europe, legislation has succeeded in shaping people’s consciences and in casting off pro-lifers to the status of a dwindling and usually silent minority. The American society has exhibited an ability to withstand the moral diktat of “all-knowing” legislatures (or, rather, the “all-knowing” Supreme Court) that Europe has sadly failed to show. In the US, abortion is still a bleeding and open question (candidates are forced to take a stand on the issue, and the stand they take does involve gains or losses of votes); in much of Europe, the debate on abortion seems closed: the issue has ceased to have a relevant place in the political agenda (especially in the more secular countries [Netherlands, Scandinavia, France, Great Britain] and –with the notorious exception of Poland- in post-communist countries, where abortion has already been legal for more than half a century).

legislation of the 1960s, which illegitimized racist conduct. The welfare system, for example, by subsidizing out-of-wedlock births, implicitly legitimizes such births. Or local ordinances requiring a school to distribute condoms may be said to legitimize promiscuity. [...] Law can change incentives, and incentives can shape behavior” (HIMMELFARB, Gertrude, *One Nation, Two Cultures*, Random House, Nueva York, 2001, pp. 62-63).

⁴ “Until quite recently [...] [i]t was understood that the law did not create or transcend manners; on the contrary, it derived from them and reflected them. Indeed, it relied upon them for its own efficacy. Today, in the absence of any firm sense of manners and morals, the law has become the only recognized authority. Just as the state often acts as a surrogate for the dysfunctional family, so the law is a surrogate for a dysfunctional culture and ethos” (HIMMELFARB, Gertrude, *One Nation, Two Cultures*, cit., p. 67). “Hoy las leyes son consideradas la principal fuente moral de la sociedad. [...] [C]on la desaparición de la moral compartida de la sociedad, se tiende a identificar lo que es legal con el bien” (MIRÓ i ARDÉVOL, J., *El fin del bienestar ...y algunas soluciones políticamente incorrectas*, Ciudadela, Madrid, 2008, p. 155).

This greater docility of Europe to the implicit moral indoctrination of laws could be due to several factors. For example, the US was democratic from its very inception; in the US there is a longer tradition of free discussion and criticism of the government; in Europe, authoritarian states existed until much later (in some cases, until few decades ago), and people are historically more accustomed to submission to power. Besides, the US is much more religious than Europe⁵.

But the most relevant factor may well be cultural hegemony, which seems to be held (rather) by the conservative camp in the US since approximately the 70s, whereas it is undoubtedly monopolized by “progressivism” in Europe.

[It is interesting to know that the American ideological landscape in the age of the “New Deal consensus” –the 40s and 50s- was somehow similar to the European current one: a culturally hegemonic social-democratic Left, flanked by a Right intellectually on the defensive; a Right that sold just “efficiency” and lacked a worldview of its own. Republican President Eisenhower took pride in having no ideology (“his smile was his philosophy”). This began to change in the 60s, due to factors that we cannot analyze here in depth (shift of the country’s centre of gravity from the northeast to the south and west; exponential rise of public expenditure linked to the “great society” programs of the Johnson administration; response of the American society to the consequences of the “counterculture” of the 60s [increase in divorce, abortion and out of wedlock births; rising crime and school failure rates, etc.]). From the 70s onwards, the situation of the 50s was inverted: a motivated and well organized cultural Right (fuelled by dozens of influential think tanks like Heritage Foundation) won the hegemony and put the Left on the defensive. The key to its success lies, maybe, in the (sometimes difficult) cooperation between its three branches: economic conservatism (whose major concern is tax relief and the fight against the Big

⁵ I dealt with the “religious exceptionality” of Europe in this paper: CONTRERAS, Francisco José, “Return of religion and western cultural divide” [http://www.europeanideasnetwork.com/files/2010/seminar_9juin/M_CONTRERAS_intervention.doc]

Government), social conservatism (more focused on values: preservation of the family, right to life of the unborn, role of religion in public life, etc.) and national defence conservatism (concerned by military and foreign affairs issues: preservation of the global hegemony of the US, globalization of democracy and free markets, etc.)⁶.

A matter of framing?

Cognitive psychologist and linguist George Lakoff seems to be the great guru of discussion techniques and political argument nowadays; his theories could be of interest to us Europeans struggling to spread the culture of life in a mostly pro-abortion continent. Because Lakoff's position is somehow symmetrical to ours: he is an American "progressive" struggling to convey liberal messages to a society mostly pervaded by conservative assumptions; we are European conservatives attempting to carve a crevice in the wall of "progressive" cultural hegemony.

In Lakoff's opinion, we should do away with the "Enlightenment myth" whereby "if we just tell people the facts, since people are basically rational beings, they'll all reach the right conclusions"⁷. Lakoff argues that people do not examine facts one by one; people, rather, think "in packets": they are previously committed to general intellectual frameworks, and they analyze facts on the basis of their compatibility with such frameworks. If the new piece of information cannot possibly be reconciled with that framework, it will be rejected (the person will think that particular piece of information is a slander or an exxageration fabricated by the enemy). If a fact does not fit our previously

⁶ On the American conservative movement, see MICKELTHWAIT, John – WOOLDRIDGE, Adrian, *The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America*, Penguin, New York, 2004.

⁷ "The myths began with the Enlightenment, and the first one goes like this: *The truth will set us free. If we just tell people the facts, since people are basically rational beings, they'll all reach the right conclusions.* But we know from cognitive science that people do not think like that. People think in frames. [...] To be accepted, the truth must fit people's frames. If the facts do not fit a frame, the frame stays and the facts bounce off" (LAKOFF, George, *Don't Think of an Elephant!: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate*, Chelsea Green, White River Junction, 2004, p. 16).

held ideological mould, it is simply cast out by our mind: denying the fact is more “economic” than reconsidering the mould.

The “frameworks” in question do not have to be complex philosophical systems: according to Lakoff, they consist, rather, in metaphors and subconscious associations of ideas. Sometimes a single word connotes a whole conceptual landscape (Lakoff proposes expressions like “war on terror” or “tax relief” as examples⁸: they automatically imply a hermeneutic background; in Lakoff’s opinion, when the Bush administration succeeded in getting them widely used by the American media, it achieved to frame the discussion on the intervention in Iraq or fiscal reform in the terms that most benefited the government [any criticism of the Iraq operation would be perceived as unpatriotic, etc.]).

Lakoff’s main point, then, is: “increasingly, political forces will clash less over reality than over how it’s shaped”. The ideological battle will centre on coining efficient metaphors and frames, and instilling them into people’s minds. To Lakoff’s mind, American conservatives have proved more skilled in this task than American progressives in the last 30 years: they have managed to permeate the American subconscious with frames that favour the conservative worldview. The golden rule that Lakoff proposes to his left-wing peers is: “Never use their language! Avoid getting trapped by their frame!”⁹. One should not even try to rebut the opponent’s frame (negating a frame activates that frame); one should,

⁸ “When the word *tax* is added to *relief*, the result is a metaphor: Taxation is an affliction. And the person who takes it away is a hero, and anyone who tries to stop him is a bad guy. This is a frame. Soon the *New York Times* is using *tax relief*. And it is not only on Fox; it is on CNN, it is on NBC, it is on every station because it is “the president’s tax-relief plan.” And soon the Democrats are using *tax relief* —and shooting themselves in the foot” (LAKOFF, George, *Don’t Think of an Elephant!*, cit., p. 4).

⁹ “Richard Nixon found that out the hard way. While under pressure to resign during the Watergate scandal, Nixon addressed the nation on TV. He stood before the nation and said, “I am not a crook”. And everybody thought about him as a crook. This gives us a basic principle of framing, for when you are arguing against the other side: Do not use their language. Their language picks out a frame —and it won’t be the frame you want” (LAKOFF, George, *Don’t Think of an Elephant!*, cit., p. 3).

on the contrary, assert an alternative one, and patiently wait until it pervades the consciousness of the public¹⁰.

Well, I sense that, without having read Lakoff, the pro-life movement already applies the rules of framing instinctively: we must avoid the linguistic-conceptual framework of our opponents (“reproductive rights”, “woman’s control of her body”, “product of conception”, “expansion of rights”, etc.) and assert ours (“mother” instead of “woman”; “baby” or “unborn child” instead of “product of conception”; “right to life” instead of “reproductive rights”; “abortion” instead of “voluntary interruption of pregnancy”, etc.)¹¹.

On the other hand, Lakoff’s perspective –which identifies the persuasiveness of an argument, not with its intrinsic truthfulness or reasonability, but with its ability to dialectically frame reality- is characterized by a relativistic, “post-modern” tone that we do not have to accept. In fact, Lakoff is somewhat of a contemporary sophist. The sophists of ancient Greece presented themselves as “masters of rhetoric” and boasted their being able to convince any audience that *any* thesis be right (regardless of whether it was actually right or not)¹². Socrates and Plato stood against them: in Plato’s

¹⁰ “In this struggle to control political reality through language, you don't dispute specific words or rebut the facts; you don't even attack your opponents' frames. What you do is assert your side's frame, making it so big, so omnipresent, so unavoidable that it's as natural as talking about the roundness of the Earth. Disputing such a fact seems counterintuitive. Even heretical” (ERARD, Michael, “Frame Wars” [http://www.chelseagreen.com/bookstore/item/dont_think_of_an_elephant:paperback/associated_articles#valuewords]).

¹¹ For example, the pro-life philosopher John FINNIS thinks we should avoid the term “fetus”; he says it is a “F-word”: “[A] website describing ultrasound for expectant mothers doesn't talk about her fetus but her baby, and so do her doctors unless they're her abortionists or think she has been or is interested in abortion. [...] [T]he phrase “the fetus” [...] is offensive, dehumanizing, prejudicial, manipulative. [...] [I]t is an F-word, to go with the J-word, and other such words we know of, which have or had an acceptable meaning in a proper context but became in wider use the symbol of subjection to the prejudices and preferences of the more powerful” (FINNIS, John, “The Other F-Word” [<http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2010/10/1849>]).

¹² “*Sócrates*: Dime en qué consiste lo que llamas el mayor bien del hombre que te vanaglorias de producir. [...] *Gorgias*: A mi modo de ver, el de ser capaz de persuadir con sus discursos a los jueces en los tribunales, a los senadores en el Senado, al pueblo en las asambleas; [...] *Sócrates*: [...] si te he comprendido bien, dices que [la retórica] es obrera de la persuasión, ya que tal es el objetivo de todas sus operaciones, y que en suma no va más allá” (PLATÓN, “Gorgias, o de la retórica”, en PLATÓN, *Diálogos*, Espasa-Calpe, Madrid, 1980, pp. 195 y 199).

opinion, the purpose of a discussion does not lie in “winning whatever it takes” or “being able to convince anybody of anything”, but in cooperatively advancing towards truth. If one does not have the truth, one had better be defeated in the discussion (and so become aware of being wrong). And victory in debates does not go to the one who employs sophistic dialectic tricks most efficiently, but to that who has (a bigger share of) the truth. Truth does count.

If we are Platonic rather than sophistic, we European pro-lifers should not throw in the towel. For, however thick the maze of self-deceptions, euphemisms and sophistries woven by the culture of death over the last 40 years may be, we have a fundamental asset: truth. One can only remain a “pro-choicer” through systematic self-delusion¹³: by trying to convince oneself that the baby *in utero* is not a human being, but just a cluster of cells”¹⁴ and/or that “abortion will continue to be practised whatever the legal regulation: the question is if it’s going to be underground and dangerous for the woman, or legal and safe”. These self-deceptions are tenable only on condition that both things (the awesome reality of the child *in utero* and the appalling reality of the abortion methods) are covered with a veil of physical and conceptual opacity¹⁵. The few centimetres of skin that cover the uterus are the key of the social

¹³ I think the root cause of this self-deception is the connexion between abortion and sexual freedom. Abortion is an indispensable “safety net” in a sexually permissive society, where casual dating is frequent: “Given the possibility of contraceptive failure, a world without the availability of abortion is one in which people must either practice sexual self-restraint or risk finding their lives dramatically altered by the responsibilities attached to having an “unwanted” child”. Such a situation is simply unacceptable on liberationist terms” (GEORGE, Robert P., “Religious Values and Politics”, en *The Clash of Orthodoxies: Law, Religion, and Morality in Crisis*, Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2001, p. 253). “[A]ccording to Senator Diane Feinstein, *Roe v. Wade* is critically important because “women have come to depend on it”. [...] [T]his precious right that women “have come to depend on” is the right to have sex with men they don’t want to have children with” (COULTER, Ann, *Godless: The Church of Liberalism*, Three Rivers Press, New York, 2007, p. 84).

¹⁴ Carol EVERETT, former abortion clinic owner, explains the following: “Every woman who walks into the clinic has two questions: “Does it hurt?”, and “Is it a baby?”. No, the counselor assures her. It’s a blood clot or ball of cells. Even though these counsellors see six-week babies daily, they lie to the women. How many people would have an abortion, if we told them the truth?” (EVERETT, Carol, “A Walk Through An Abortion Clinic”, *About Issues Magazine*, August-September 1991, p. 117).

¹⁵ “El drama moral, la decisión por el bien o por el mal, comienza con la decisión de contemplar, o no, el rostro del otro. ¿Por qué hoy en día se rechaza casi unánimemente el infanticidio, mientras casi se ha perdido la sensibilidad ante el aborto? Quizá sólo porque en el aborto no se contempla el rostro de la criatura que jamás verá la luz” (RATZINGER, Joseph, “El derecho a la vida y Europa” en *El cristiano en la crisis de Europa*, trad. de D. Mínguez, Ed. Cristiandad, Madrid, 2005, p. 61)

acceptance of abortion: were the mother's womb transparent, no woman would be capable of aborting, and no minimally civilized person would be capable of approving of such practice.

Abortion is sustained by systematic lying about the human nature of the foetus¹⁶ and prudent concealment of the macabre details of the techniques employed in it. "We tried to avoid the women seeing the foetuses"¹⁷ [both when they were still alive and when they had already been shredded to pieces], declared Norma Eidelman, former owner of abortion clinics. Abortion necessitates darkness; by contrast, the *visualization* of what is concealed always benefits the pro-life cause. Our best propaganda asset is the simple image of a 10 week foetus (the laws of most European countries permit abortion at least until the 12th week), still small, but already endowed with an unequivocally human shape: arms, legs, fingernails, a beating heart, electric activity in his brain¹⁸ ...During a TV debate in Spain, a representative of the pro-choice side physically fled the TV set when her pro-life opponent showed her the picture of

¹⁶ Former abortionist Carol EVERETT avowed: "I cannot tell you one thing that happens in an abortion clinic that is not a lie" (Vanderbilt Students for Life, "Abortionists Speak: Personal Stories: Carol Everett" [http://www.vanderbilt.edu/SFL/carol_everett.htm]). Abortionism is the empire of deceitfulness: abortionists lie about the supposed "danger" that affects the woman's health (in the countries where "danger for the woman's health" is a statutory precondition for abortion); they lie to the mothers, assuring them that what they carry in their wombs is "just tissues"; they lie to the public, inventing absolutely fantastic figures of underground abortion (in the countries where it's illegal); even the famous Norma McCorvey ("Jane Roe") case –that opened the gates to free abortion in the US- was based on a lie (McCorvey was induced by her lawyers to say she had been raped by a gang): "I'm sorry to admit that I'm the Jane Roe of *Roe v. Wade*. The affidavit submitted to the Supreme Court didn't happen the way I said it did, pure and simple. I lied! [Lawyers] Sarah Weddington and Linda Coffey needed an extreme case to make their client look pitiable. Rape seemed to be the ticket. What made rape even worse? A gang rape! [...] Since all these lies succeeded in dismantling every state's protection of the unborn, I think it's fair to say that the entire abortion industry is based on a lie" (McCORVEY, Norma, "Testimony given to the Senate Subcommittee on the Constitution, Federalism and Property Rights" [<http://www.nrlc.org/news/1998/NRL2.98/norma298.html>]).

¹⁷ "We tried to avoid the women seeing them [the fetuses]. They always wanted to know the sex, but we lied and said it was too early to tell. It was better for the women to think of the fetus as an "it"" (citado en BURTCHAEILL, James Tunstead, *Rachel Weeping and Other Essays About Abortion*, Andrews & McMeel, Kansas City, 1982, p. 34).

¹⁸ "A major part of this educational [pro-life] campaign should be pictures of the child. In so many cases, seeing is believing. If a woman sees her child, she may change her mind about having an abortion" (SCWHARZ, Stephen D., *The Moral Question of Abortion*, Loyola University Press, Chicago, 1990).

a baby in the mother's womb¹⁹. In Italy, the Institute for Publicity Self-discipline (IAP) condemned –in January 2005- the display of an echography of a 15 week foetus sucking her thumb in the posters of a pro-life association: the beautiful image was defined as “objectively shocking and distressing”²⁰. Antonio Socci has spoken of “an implicit taboo” in our times, that would ban the display of images of prenatal life²¹. Abortionist societies refuse to look their victims in the eye.

The “truth display” of a decapitated, dismembered or burnt alive (“saline abortion”) foetus may be even more efficient and questioning. Pro-lifers often omit these ghastly realities, as they fear to wound people's feelings. But the specification of the details of the procedures employed in abortion is a legitimate card that the pro-life movement cannot disdain.

In this field, like in others, the pro-life movement has the impression that “time is on our side”. And rightly so: technology renders the mother's womb ever more transparent, offering stunning pictures of the early stages of human life²². Any of these images suffices to demolish the heap of half-truths and outright deception abortion rests on. Therefore, one of the claims we should lay most emphasis on is that the mother who demands an abortion be obligatorily be shown a picture of the human being she bears in her womb. Many would surely change their minds.

¹⁹ Vídeo: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ENkgL9GQ4E> [minute 2:35].

²⁰ Above the picture of the fetus, these words were printed: “Mum, I love you. Don't kill me. If you are in trouble, ring SOS VITA” [and then, a phone number] (SOCCI, Antonio, *El genocidio censurado*, trad. de L. Sanz, Ed. Cristiandad, Madrid, 2007, p. 59).

²¹ “Esos seres humanos destinados a ser matados en el seno materno son el único, el verdadero, gran tabú de nuestra sociedad sin tabúes. En la sociedad de la imagen y de la pornografía de masas, donde el dominio de la vista se extiende a todo, sólo sobre estos pequeños pesa una formidable prohibición de mirar. Un gran y tácito tabú impone que la reprobación moral golpee a quienquiera ose “mostrar” las imágenes de esos pequeños cuerpos. [...] Los rostros de estas criaturas son la única imagen considerada obscena y prohibida” (SOCCI, A., *El genocidio censurado*, cit., p. 57).

²² <http://www.windowtothewomb.co.uk/>

(Actually, society “knows” that what’s in the mother’s womb is a developing human being, and not “uterine material”. Society acknowledges this implicitly in many ways: by advising (and, sometimes, even compelling) the pregnant woman not to smoke, drink alcohol or take drugs²³; by developing a whole industry (stethoscopes to hear the baby’s heartbeat, books on “how to communicate with your baby in the womb”, etc.) allowing the mother to love and take care of her child during pregnancy²⁴; by developing an intrauterine surgery that can correct serious malformations (like spina bifida) of the baby *in utero* (sometimes, the same surgeon will either heal or kill the child, depending on its parents’ wish)²⁵; by doing its utmost to save premature babies who are naturally miscarried ...).

Science is also definitely on our side. Embriology is our ally. Any scientifically literate person knows that human life begins at conception, when the zygote is defined by the 46 chromosomes characteristic of the human species (the features of the individual are codified in those chromosomes: his/her hair and eye colour, the height he/she will attain, even some of the diseases he/she will suffer from)²⁶. The zygote has the ability to develop quickly into a baby: it

²³ “[I]n Illinois a pregnant woman who takes an illegal drug can be prosecuted for “delivering a controlled substance to a minor”. This is an explicit recognition that the unborn is a person with rights of her own. However, that same woman who is prosecuted [...] for endangering her child is perfectly free to abort that same child. [...] In America today, it is illegal to harm your preborn child, but it is perfectly legal to kill him” (ALCORN, Randy, *ProLife Answers to ProChoice Arguments*, Multnomah Publishers, Sisters (Or.), 2000, p. 97).

²⁴ Often, the (enlightened and well-off) people who buy such books and machines, then turn out to be pro-abortion:: “The *Well Baby Book*, the kind of whole-grain holistic guide to pregnancy and childbirth that would find its audience among the very demographic that is most solidly prochoice reminds us that: “Increasing knowledge is increasing the awe and respect we have for the unborn baby [...]”. So, what will it be: Wanted fetuses are charming, complex REM-dreaming little beings whose profile on the sonogram looks just like Daddy, but unwanted ones are mere “uterine material”?” (WOLF, Naomi, “Our Bodies, Our Souls”, *New Republic*, 16 October 1995).

²⁵ “Dr. Joseph Bruner [...] has performed eighty in utero spina bifida operations. [...] Yet the fact is, Dr. Bruner [also] aborts children with spina bifida. He is paid to either save or kill children with the same condition, at the same age of development, according to the desires of the parent. He says this is “an increasingly difficult position to be in [...] [S]ociety is going to have to take a good, hard look at itself, because it is untenable to hold both views”” (ALCORN, Randy, op. cit., p. 94).

²⁶ “A living being’s designation to a species is determined not by the stage of development, but by the sum total of its biological characteristics –actual and potential- which are genetically determined. [...] If we say that [the fetus] is not human, e.g. a member of *Homo sapiens*, we must say it is a

just needs (a little) time and not being destroyed (that's what philosopher John Finnis calls "radical capacity")²⁷. The only reasons pro-choicers could argue against the humanity of the embryo are his/her transitory dependency on the mother's organism, his/her little size, and his/her still not characteristically human shape. Now, if human dignity depends on size, shape or degree of dependency²⁸, we could as well deny the dignity of newborn babies (they are small too), or that of mutilated people (they have lost the "human shape"), or that of the disabled and comatose (they are also extremely dependent)²⁹. The slippery slope leads inevitably to a Nietzschean society in which the strong arrogate to themselves the right to decide on the life of the weak.

The considerations I just expounded on are based on reason alone; they are independent from any religious creed whatsoever. We must be prepared to refuse fallacious allegations of confessionalism (of the sort: "prolifers try to impose their private religious beliefs on the whole of society")³⁰.

member of another species. But this cannot be" (NARDONE, Roland M., "The Nexus of Biology and the Abortion Issue", *Jurist*, Spring 1973, p. 154).

²⁷ "The key concept here is radical capacity. The early human embryo has the radical capacity to think and laugh and pun; all it (he or she) needs is time and nourishment, no more: the *actual* and active second-order or radical capacity, written into its molecular and cellular constitution, to develop first-order, promptly usable capacities such as to learn a language here and now" (FINNIS, John, "The Other F-Word", cit.).

²⁸ On the contrary, it was always taken for granted that the most dependent (children, elderly, disabled) deserve, not less, but *more* protection, and that the degree of civilization of a society can be measured through the way it treats its weakest members: "Cualquier sociedad se identifica a fondo por cómo trata a sus individuos más indefensos y su propia regeneración vital" (LÓPEZ LÓPEZ, Pablo, "El abortismo como ideología y estrategia mundial y la alternativa humanista", p. 3).

²⁹ "Age, size, IQ, or stage of development are simply differences in degree, not in kind. Our kind is humanity. We are people –human beings. We possess certain skills at differing degrees of development. [...] But none of these make some people better or more human than others. None make some qualified to live and others unqualified" (ALCORN, Randy, *ProLife Answers to ProChoice Arguments*, cit., pp. 75-76).

³⁰ We will not go here into the other aspect of the question: the secularist who accuses Christians of "trying to impose their beliefs" ... has (materialistic-atheistic) beliefs of his own, even if he's not aware of them. And he feels perfectly entitled to impose them on the whole of society. The secularist has a "religion" (in the broad sense of the word) too: "[A religion] is a set of beliefs that explain what life is all about, who we are, and the most important things that human beings should spend their time doing. For example, some think that this material world is all there is, that we are here by accident and when we die we just rot, and therefore the important thing is to choose to do what makes you happy [...]. [T]hough this is not an explicit, "organised" religion, it contains a master narrative, an account about the meaning of life along with a recommendation for how to live

Antiabortionism is not (necessarily) a religious belief³¹, but a rational conclusion that is accessible to whoever examines impartially the scientific and anthropological data³². The pro-abortion industry is interested in framing the abortion question as a religious issue; we pro-lifers should avoid this trap, and show that the right to life of the unborn is defensible on premises independent of religion³³. Agnostic philosopher Norberto Bobbio memorably declared: “I’m astonished to see secular people leave to religious people the privilege and the honor of claiming that killing is wrong”³⁴.

The other “frame” that proved decisive for the success of abortionism is the concept “woman’s interest – woman’s control over her body”. Feminism is an unbeatable dialectic trump in contemporary culture: a dogma of political correctness, an unsurpassable frame; no one can stand against feminism and survive. Our strategy can only be one of proving that abortion hurts women, and

[...] [I]t is a set of faith-assumptions about the nature of things. It is an implicit religion. Broadly understood, faith in some view of the world and human nature informs everyone’s life” (KELLER, Timothy, *The Reason for God*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 2008, p. 15).

³¹ And, in those cases when a person is against abortion out of religious belief ... what difference should that make? Are religious people to be treated as second class citizens? Are all moral and political stances that are suspected to have a root in religion to be excluded from the public square?: “The Bible says: “You shall not steal”. Should we get rid of our laws against stealing because they impose a Judeo-Christian morality? Shall we invalidate all moral standards that are founded on religious principles? If we did, what standards would be left?” (ALCORN, Randy, *ProLife Answers to ProChoice Arguments*, cit., p. 167).

³² As attested by the fact that abortion has been condemned by famous atheists, like Pier Paolo PASOLINI: “Sono però traumatizzato dalla legalizzazione dell'aborto, perché la considero, come molti, una [legalizzazione dell'omicidio](#). [...] Che la vita sia sacra è ovvio: è un principio più forte ancora che ogni principio della democrazia, ed è inutile ripeterlo” (PASOLINI, Pier Paolo, “Sono contro l’aborto”, *Corriere della Sera*, January 19, 1975 [<http://www.europaoggi.it/content/view/1358/45/>]).

³³ In the US, the first statutes banning abortion resulted from the pressure of scientists (not of religious groups): “The U.S. statutes against abortion have a non-sectarian history. They were put on the books when Catholics were a politically insignificant minority [...] even the Protestant clergy was not a major factor in these laws. Rather, the laws were an achievement of the American Medical Association. [...] In 1827, Von Baer determined fertilization to be the starting point of individual human life. By the 1850s, medical communities were advocating legislation to protect the human unborn. In 1859, the American Medical Association protested legislation which protected the human unborn only after “quickening” (NATHANSON, Bernard, quoted in MURTI, Vasu, *The Liberal Case Against Abortion*, R.A.G.E. Media, 2006, pp. 7-8).

³⁴ “E mi stupisco a mia volta che i laici lascino ai credenti il privilegio e l'onore di affermare che non si deve uccidere” (BOBBIO, Norberto, *Entrevista en Corriere della Sera*, 8 de mayo de 1981 [<http://aconservativemind.blogspot.com/2008/01/i-laici-la-vita-e-laborto-ecco-come-la.html>]).

we pro-lifers are therefore the true feminists. We can employ at least the four following arguments:

1) Abortion is physically and psychologically dangerous for the woman: physical risks include hemorrhage, embolism, a higher likelihood of being affected by breast, liver and ovary cancer, risk of uterine perforation, etc.³⁵. Mental harms include “post-abortion syndrome” (endured by a significant proportion of the women who aborted: depression, remorse, longing for the lost child, suicidal tendencies, etc.)³⁶.

2) The famous pro-abortion claim that “abortion will continue to be practised anyway; its banning can only lead to the proliferation of back alley abortions that endanger the woman’s life” is a fallacy. When abortion was illegal, the pro-abortion movement fabricated absolutely fantastic figures of underground abortions and women’s deaths in them³⁷: for example, the Brazilian newspaper *O Globo* mentioned in 1988 the figure of “400.000 Brazilian women dead in back alley abortions”; actually, the World Health Organization statistics show that just 2.166 mothers’ deaths occurred in Brazil that year, and only 371 of them in abortions³⁸. The truth is: 1) the banning of abortion does make plummet down the number of abortions³⁹; 2) the equivalence “legal abortion =

³⁵ Cf. HOWE, H.L. et al., "Early Abortion and Breast Cancer Risk Among Women Under Age 40", *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 18(2):300-304 (1989); REMENNICK, L.I., "Induced Abortion as A Cancer Risk Factor: A Review of Epidemiological Evidence," *Journal of Epidemiological Community Health* (1990).

³⁶ Cf.: http://www.afterabortion.com/pass_details.html

³⁷ In the 60s, the American pro-abortion movement often used the figure “10.000 deaths a year in underground abortions”. In fact, American health statistics prove that the real number of deaths due to abortion oscillated in the 60s between 90 and 150 per year. Former abortionist Dr. NATHANSON has revealed that his fellow pro-abortionists lied consciously and unashamedly: “I confess that I know the figures were totally false and I suppose that the others did, too [...]. But in the morality of our revolution, it was a useful figure, so why go out of our way to correct it with honest statistics?” (NATHANSON, Bernard, *Aborting America: The Case Against Abortion*, Doubleday, Nueva York, 1979, p. 193).

³⁸ Cf.: <http://www.vidahumana.org/vidafam/aborto/estrategias.html>

³⁹ And, viceversa, legalization shoots up the number of abortions. In the US, the number of yearly abortions prior to Roe vs. Wade (1973) was estimated to be around 150.000; since the 70s, it has oscillated between 1.200.000 and 1.600.000 a year

safe abortion” is false, as proved in the previous paragraph. The example of Poland confirms our case: the passing of a new and much stricter regulation in 1993 (which brought an end to the previous “free abortion on demand” regulation) resulted in the figures of abortion sinking from 59.417 (1990; down from a peak of 168.600 in 1965)⁴⁰ to 253 (1998) a year; and the number of deaths associated to abortions also went down (from 90 in 1990 to 0 in 1998)⁴¹.

3) Abortion does not liberate women, but men. Abortion absolves males of all responsibility for their sexual conduct⁴². The existence of legal abortion encourages the use of women as “sexual objects” by men (they can indulge in casual sex with women, and then induce them to abort, should they be pregnant). Abortion implies, not the liberation, but the reification of women.

4) Abortion hurts women in the plainest way: sheer extermination. On a global scale, abortion decimates disproportionately female babies. In countries like China or India, the population pyramid exhibits a meaningful leaning towards the males’ side: in China there are 37 million more males than females (notwithstanding the fact that women live longer), as admitted by government sources⁴³. The “single child policy” drives couples to abort their baby if it’s a

[<http://www.abortiontv.com/Misc/AbortionStatistics.htm>]. In France, the number of abortions rose from 60.000 a year (before the legalization, 1975), to some 220.000 a year nowadays (after having attained 260.000 a year in the 80s). See: <http://www.survivants.com/esppublic/chiffreivg.php3>.

⁴⁰ Although free abortion was still in place, the number of abortions declined considerably in Poland during the 80s, probably due to the influence of Pope John Paul II.

⁴¹ JOHNSTON, William Robert, “Abortion Statistics and Other Data”, September 2005 [<http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/abortion/ab-poland.html>]. “If abortions are again forbidden, will illegal abortions, with all their alleged tragic consequences, take their place? Certainly in Poland the answer is a resounding “no”. In fact, the women in Poland are clearly healthier now, from a gynecologic and obstetric standpoint, than they were when abortions were legal” (WILLKE, J.C., “Clear Evidence: If Forbidden, Abortion Will Not Return to the Back Alley”, *Life Issues Connector*, April 2000, 1, p. 3.).

⁴² “[E]l aborto no defiende la dignidad de la mujer [...]. [E]l aborto es en verdad una cruz que los varones echamos sobre los hombros de las mujeres, que son las que engendran y experimentan el problema: ahí te quedas con tu problema, mujer, con tu peso en la conciencia difícil de olvidar” (SANTIAGO, Manuel de, “Prólogo”, en SOCCI, Antonio, *El genocidio censurado*, cit., p. 20).

⁴³ See SOCCI, Antonio, *El genocidio censurado*, Ed. Cristiandad, Madrid, 2007, p. 40.

girl. The UN recognizes that 163 million women are “unaccounted for” in the world⁴⁴.

Beside (false) feminism, *neomalthusianism* is the second frame abortionism draws its inspiration from. Neomalthusianism implies the belief in a demographic explosion that supposedly endangers the future of mankind. It thrived in the 60s and 70s (the two decades of fastest increase of world population): the publication of *The Population Bomb* by Paul Ehrlich (1968) and that of the Club of Rome’s report *The Limits to Growth* (1972) constituted significant landmarks.

Neomalthusianism is easily refutable through statistics. Thanks to Norman Borlaug’s “green revolution”, the agricultural output has grown faster than the world population, and the proportion of people who starve in 2010 is much lower than that of 1968. The doomsday predictions of the Club of Rome have recurrently been ridiculed by evidence. The global fertility rate has gone down to 2.7 children per woman, and keeps sinking. The UN Report *Population, Environment and Development* (2001) foresees that the world population will attain a 9.000 million peak about 2050, and then will start a soft decline.

To put it once again in Lakoff’s terms, we should struggle to replace the obsolete “population explosion: too many people in the world” frame by a “ageing of population: unsustainability of welfare systems” one. Not because the latter serves our cause better, but because it is true, especially in Europe. Birth rates oscillate between 1.3 and 1.5 children per woman in many European countries, far below the replenishment rate (2.1). This will result in economic decline and unsustainability of the retirement pensions system. The dependency ratio (the number of persons over 65 divided by the number of persons between age 15 and 64) was, according to the 2007 Eurostat, 24.8% in 2005; if present trends continue, in 2050 it will have risen to 52.8% (less than two active

⁴⁴ See: <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90882/6212115.html>

persons per retiree)⁴⁵. Grey Europe is doomed to decay and unsustainability. Immigration will not be the solution, because: 1) the economic gap between developed and developing countries is, fortunately, narrowing; 2) birth rates are also falling in poor countries.

And now, suffice it to remind that one in every five pregnancies in Europe ends up in abortion. Our birth rates could have been 20% higher (and our demographic situation would have been less desperate).

Work in stages

The pro-abortion mentality is deeply entrenched in much of Europe; undoing this fact will not be an easy task. In my opinion, the pro-life movement should be aware that it will be a long battle; therefore, it is reasonable to adopt a gradualist strategy. Partial claims that may sound at first blush blatantly insufficient (for example, the administration of anesthesia to the foetus who is to be aborted), could prove, however, very efficient, insofar as they maintain the issue in the political agenda and force the public to face the horror of abortion. Following Stephen D. Schwarz⁴⁶, I'll suggest a list of provisional conquests that would be very valuable for relaunching the culture of life:

1) A law that bans the most cruel methods of abortion (burning the baby's skin with a saline solution, or extracting her brain in a "partial birth abortion")⁴⁷. Even those who refuse to admit the humanity of the foetus can understand "the horror of doing this to any living creature, for whom the evidence (presence of nerve endings, etc.) is overwhelming that it feels excruciating pain" (Schwarz). Many people who support abortion are, nevertheless, revolted by vivisection and other painful experiments with

⁴⁵ "European Union Public Health Information System: Population Projections" [http://www.euphix.org/object_document/o5117n27112.html]

⁴⁶ See SCHWARZ, Stephen D., *The Moral Question of Abortion*, cit.

⁴⁷ Video: "Partial Birth Abortion Illustrated" [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6vnOaq7nWU>]

animals. Here, we would be merely asking them to feel for the human foetus the same compassion they feel for guinea pigs.

2) Demanding that anesthesia be administered to the child from the moment that nerve endings (and hence, the ability to feel pain) appear.

3) A ban on all third trimester abortions, whatever the pretext (the case when abortion is required to save the mother's life is absolutely exceptional in modern medicine⁴⁸; and it can be solved through the doctrine of "acts of double effect": the mother, for example, may receive chemotherapy to stop a fast-spreading cancer, even if this results –as an *unintended* secondary effect- in the death of the child. Most third term foetuses are viable anyway: if the mother's life is really in danger, birth can be induced and the baby saved). And then, a ban on all second trimester abortions. And so on. Any shortening of the time limits of legal abortion will save many lives and will force the public to keep thinking about the question.

4) Replacement of the "time limit" regulation (free abortion within a certain number of weeks) by a "hard cases" regulation (abortion is permitted only in certain difficult situations: typically, rape, incest, malformations in the foetus and/or *real* danger for the mother's health). The passing of such a reform in Poland (1993) pushed down the number of abortions by 97%.

5) A law requiring that all women who demand an abortion be previously informed (through an interview, not through the delivery of a sealed envelope that will probably not even be opened) about the following: a) the stage of development and appearance of the human being she bears in her womb; b) the methods that are used in abortion, and the probability of pain for the child; c) the physical and psychological risks for the woman (uterine perforation, post-

⁴⁸ When he was United States Surgeon General, Dr. C. Everett Koop stated publicly that in his 38 years as a pediatric surgeon, he was never aware of a single situation in which a preborn child's life had to be taken in order to save the life of the mother. He said the use of this argument to justify abortion in general was a "smoke screen" (see ALCORN, Randy, *op. cit.*, p. 221).

abortion syndrome, etc.); d) the alternatives to abortion: adoption, welfare benefits for single mothers, etc.; e) the existence of support groups ready to help the woman continue a difficult pregnancy.

6) A 72 hour waiting period before the abortion is performed. Many women change their minds in the interval.

7) Parental consent for minors, as usually required for all other treatments. Making an exception for abortion (as established by the new Spanish law) is outrageous.

8) Right of legal intervention for the father. The father can be obliged legally to help support the child, once he/she is born. Shouldn't he also be accorded the right to stop him/her being killed?

9) A ban on government participation in abortion. Exclusion of abortion services from the public health care system.

10) Staunch defence of the right to conscientious objection of medical staff (the “turnover” of the McCafferty report⁴⁹ by the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe represents a very significant and hopeful milestone in this struggle)⁵⁰.

11) Support mothers with difficult pregnancies. A huge range of measures are thinkable, legal (economic subsidies, flexible work schedules, tax cuts, free day-care centres, etc) and “human” (solidarity networks, etc.).

12) Development and encouragement of adoption as an alternative to abortion.

⁴⁹ “Council of Europe for Freedom of Conscience!” [<http://www.europeandignitywatch.org/day-to-day/detail/article/council-of-europe-for-freedom-of-conscience-2.html>]

⁵⁰ Luca VOLONTÉ said this about the turnover of the McCafferty Resolution: “From our work, a truly positive revolution might be born for Europe. It has been both a concrete as well as symbolic victory. [...] [T]he culture of life is the only reasonable hope of future life for the European continent that is experiencing a suicidal demographic crisis. Hence, there are good reasons to hope and much work to be done; we are only at the beginning but, as pilgrims of all times teach us, the journey begins with one step. *Sursum Corda* (Lift up your hearts)!” (“Culture of Life Scores at Council of Europe: Interview with Luca Volonté” [<http://www.zenit.org/article-30731?l=english>]).

13) Aid to women who aborted and suffer from it (post-abortion counseling groups, etc).

The last three frontlines are, in my opinion, extremely important, as they confer the pro-life movement an affirmative side. The pro-life movement should not be perceived as merely *anti*-abortion. After all, we are *against* abortion because we are *for* the child and his mother.