

People are People

(Impromptu Conversation-Part One)

I had a lengthy and pleasantly-civil conversation with an abortion advocate the other day, whom I'll call Gina. When she asked me what I did for the non-profit I worked for, I prefaced my answer by saying that I knew we were in different camps, but was confident that we could still dialogue respectfully. I then set out to find common ground on which to build a foundation for expressing my pro-life views. For instance, we both care about women and their welfare. We just may define what's "best" for women differently.

The first point of discussion was the humanity of the child, which I stated was at the point of conception. Her response, "Well of course it's human; I mean, it's not a watermelon." The inference here being that the child's humanity is not the point. So what is? Since she is a dedicated social worker, her concern revolved primarily (and understandably) around women's "rights" and family dynamics. I mentioned that the cure for a broken foster care system is not abortion, but reform. What I have noticed is that when science confirmed that life begins at conception, abortion advocates moved the goal posts to, "But it's not a sentient being." "It's not a 'real' person." "It's only a 'potential' person." Scientific research is on the verge of proving this wrong as well. We have known for years that babies in the womb feel pain as early as 20 weeks, and perhaps as early as 15. However, in January 2026, an international gynecology journal published the review of a study by Carlo Bellieni, entitled, "A Rudimentary Consciousness Appears in the Late Fetal Period."

One paragraph discusses fetal perception:

"Bellieni gives an overview of 15 studies that focused on fetal and neonatal perception, including studies of fetal responses to sound, taste, and touch. Apparently, for example, fetuses like carrot-flavored amniotic fluid more than the kale-flavored kind (*Duh!*). They also respond more to "face-like" visual stimuli (light shown through the uterine wall) than other kinds, and they touch the inside of the uterine wall longer when their mother is touching the outside." What could be more "person-like" than dietary preference and responding to human connection?

Another paragraph addresses fetal memory:

Bellieni reviews six studies that used magnetoencephalography, which measures brain activity through sensors that pickup changes in magnetic fields when neurons fire. They found that fetuses at 7-8-month gestation could pick up on relationships between events. One experiment played 4 tones and measured brain activity. If the 4th tone broke a previous pattern, brain activity increased. Other research found that newborns reacted differently to stimuli they experienced in utero than newborns who had never experienced it. These studies show that an unborn child is cognizant of external stimuli, arguably as much as, if not more than, comatose patients. If a coma doesn't rob one of personhood, why would the womb?

Regarding the development of human cognition, many accept first-semester elective abortion on the grounds that embryos do not possess protective instincts at this stage (that we know of). Some favor legal cutoffs based on when a fetus can demonstrate sufficient cognitive ability to count as a person. However, the cognitive abilities that tend to define us as human, e.g. moral reasoning, metacognition, or narrative self-identity don't begin until well after birth. By this definition, aborting a "non-person" in utero would extend to killing an infant, or even a toddler. Neurodevelopment shows us that cognition begins early in pregnancy, continues rapidly in toddlerhood (90% of brain development occurs in first 5 years), then extends slowly into adulthood when the brain becomes fully development in our twenties (which would explain why teenagers sometimes think like aliens). The rationale for aborting a child at an arbitrary point of gestation, or that a child magically becomes a person at birth, is neither logical nor supported by science.

Tune in next time for Impromptu Conversation-Part Two: "Agree to Disagree."

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