

# The Trojan Cavalry

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ABSTRACT: Certain ideas and thinkers widely respected in the academic world may actually prove to be Trojan horses who inadvertently undermine the pro-choice worldview. Beverly Mitchell's book about slavery and the Holocaust, for example, is likely to receive a positive review in progressive academic circles, even though the book's analysis of dehumanizing rhetoric applies seamlessly to abortion. The psychological insights of Søren Kierkegaard, Scott Peck, and Chantal Delsol are also considered. They constitute a deep critique of certain facets of modernity that feed into the practice of abortion. This essay also considers Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer* and argues that it shines a very disturbing light on the pro-choice worldview through its analysis of lethal forms of sovereignty in the modern world. Scholars who read Agamben may not have "connected the dots" in that regard.

WE ARE ALL FAMILIAR with the story of the Trojan Horse, and with its use now as a metaphor. One side in a conflict accepts what it thinks is a gift, but the gift brings about its undoing. It strikes me that this metaphor is particularly apt when applied to the abortion debate, because the pro-choice position is like a besieged city that is accepting many, many gifts all the time.

In the abortion debate, there are several different avenues that pro-life advocates can develop along these lines. (1) There are ideas that are broadly accepted in modern Western culture that serve to undermine the pro-choice way of thinking. (2) Certain thinkers are widely respected in the academic world. They are not viewed as particularly friendly to the pro-choice cause, but the fact that they are respected grants their message a hearing. That these authors are part of the canon that intellectuals are expected to be familiar with functions as a modern-day example of a Trojan horse. (3) Certain thinkers have followers in the academic world who are likely to be pro-choice, but these followers have not grasped how the ideas of the thinkers undermine the pro-choice position. Under the first heading I will discuss a book about slavery and the Holocaust by Beverly Mitchell; under the second heading I will

discuss Søren Kierkegaard, Scott Peck, and Chantal Delsol; under the third heading I will discuss Giorgio Agamben, whose book *Homo Sacer* shines a very disturbing light on the pro-choice way of thinking and acting.

Beverly Mitchell

A professor at Wesley Theological Seminary, Beverly Mitchell, has written a book entitled *Plantations and Death Camps: Religion, Ideology, and Human Dignity*.<sup>1</sup> The book compares the experiences of slaves in the United States before the Civil War and the experiences of Jews in Nazi Germany. Mitchell is careful not to conflate the two situations. She is trained as an historian and is sensitive to differences in historical context. She finds, however, many clear similarities in the patterns of mistreatment that were suffered by the victims of slavery and Nazism. Her central theme is the notion of “defacement,” which is present when human beings do not recognize and protect the dignity of other human beings. To be defaced is to be humiliated, degraded, and treated as a lower form of life in relation to the oppressor, who falsely exalts him or herself to a superior station in his or her own imagination. The sin of defacement rejects “the commonalities that bind us together as members of one human family.”<sup>2</sup> Further, she writes: “The absence of empathetic imagination – the inability to see members of the ‘pariah’ group as being like oneself – is the psychological foundation for participation in dehumanizing a fellow human being.”<sup>3</sup>

Mitchell states clearly what she sees as the correct stance to take: “Human dignity is given to *all* humans, regardless of abilities, capabilities, or disabilities, physical or mental. This dignity is not mitigated by our economic, social, or political status or gender. This dignity is granted to us from the beginning of life and follows us to the grave.”<sup>4</sup> She refers positively to Emmanuel Levinas, a Jewish survivor of a German prisoner-of-war camp, who went on to become an

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<sup>1</sup> Beverly Mitchell, *Plantations and Death Camps: Religion, Ideology, and Human Dignity* (Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Mitchell, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Mitchell, p. 44 (emphasis in original).

influential post-war philosopher. Levinas spoke of the “face” as the primal ethical reality; the face of the other human being speaks to us wordlessly, saying: “Do not kill me.” To not see this face and hear this message is “an erasure of their presence and a challenge to their right to exist.”<sup>5</sup> And again: “In the context of an understanding of human dignity in theological terms, defacement is a denial of the goodness of God’s handiwork. It renders us judges over who is allowed to live and who must die.”<sup>6</sup>

In the concluding chapter of the book Mitchell turns from historical commentary to ethical exhortation. “If we realize what is truly at stake in the matter of human dignity, we can no longer afford to be indifferent about defacement... Conversion from indifference to defacement involves the recognition of one’s alienation from God, the created order (including human beings), and ourselves. It involves a complete reorientation of our priorities. It requires modifying our notions of self-interest.”<sup>7</sup> We need, according to Mitchell, a renewed level of respect for the command “Thou shalt not kill,” for it will cohere with an awareness that we ought to say to all other human beings: “You are connected to me.”<sup>8</sup>

A pro-choice advocate could read Mitchell’s book and agree wholeheartedly with all of the ideas which were just summarized, without realizing that Mitchell has produced a very powerful critique of the pro-choice way of thinking. This critique is actually strengthened by the fact that she does not mention the topic of abortion even once. Mitchell has produced this critique, *regardless of whether or not she supports the pro-choice cause*. Mitchell has done a superb job of summarizing the moral lessons that can and ought to be learned from slavery and the Holocaust. She has brought into articulation ideas about the importance of protecting human lives from oppression and violence that are now widely accepted in Western culture.<sup>9</sup> This is the sense in

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<sup>5</sup> Mitchell, p. 51.

<sup>6</sup> Mitchell, p. 52.

<sup>7</sup> Mitchell, p. 113.

<sup>8</sup> Mitchell, p. 115.

<sup>9</sup> In *Rights from Wrongs: A Secular Theory of the Origin of Rights* (New York NY: Basic Books, 2004) Alan Dershowitz makes the case that we know what rights are because of our experience of historical wrongs such as slavery

which her argument is a Trojan Horse if it is received in academic circles and given respectful consideration.

From the pro-life point of view, the practice of abortion is an example of defacement; it is rooted in a refusal to see a human face coming into existence in the womb. The pro-choice position is a fruit of Enlightenment individualism, which is predicated on a vision of reality that sees human beings as *disconnected* from each other rather than as woven together within the tapestry of being. The pro-choice position sees the inhabitant of the womb as a piece of property that can be disposed of at the will of the owner of that piece of property, which is a parallel with the worldview that made slavery possible. The pro-choice position defines human beings before birth as “not persons before the law,” to paraphrase *Roe v. Wade*’s message. This is a clear parallel to the process through which the Nazi regime altered the laws of Germany, step by step, to strip Jews of any legal standing, any “face” before the law, so that they could be killed with impunity. We are forced to conclude, then, that Mitchell’s message is in line with the idea of a “consistent ethic of life,” which is the struggle against a broad range of forms of violence (war, economic injustice, racism, abortion, etc.). A pro-choice reader of the book who gives it two thumbs up has not understood that Mitchell’s message undermines the culture of abortion-on-demand that is now hegemonic in Western culture. I am at a loss, however, if I try to imagine how a “progressive” reader of the book could write a negative review of it.

#### Søren Kierkegaard

Between 1842 and 1855 Søren Kierkegaard wrote about twenty-five books (depending on what you count as a “book”). His thought, however, did not become widely known and influential until the twentieth century. He is now a fixture on the academic scene, with scores of dissertations and books written about him, in a multitude of languages, every year.

What is the central message in his writings, the heart of the core,

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and the Holocaust. I can imagine him reading Mitchell’s book and giving it a positive review, even though he does not express his own ideas theologically, as Mitchell does.

when everything is distilled down? It is this: *We human beings are psychologically immature and we insist on remaining that way; that refusal to grow is the deepest root of our violent actions.*<sup>10</sup> God is continually seeking to create human beings, to draw us forward toward greater maturity, but we find the process of growth to be anxiety-producing and uncomfortable. Therefore we cut ourselves off from God and seek to tightly control our own existence; we want to manage our anxiety on our own. We stunt our own growth and resist God's efforts to draw us forward. We become "closed-up" in our own little worlds. Kierkegaard describes this as not willing to become oneself before God.<sup>11</sup>

While human beings in general exist in the sinful state of refusing the possibility of growth, there are particular social and political consequences. Immature individuals form crowds, mobs, alliances of falsity and violence. Kierkegaard states very forcefully that "the crowd is untruth."<sup>12</sup> Fallen human beings form lynch mobs and kill victims as an active expression of their refusal to move forward in the event of creation.

Kierkegaard's vision of human health begins with the idea that human beings need to be disentangled from the falsehood of whatever "crowd" they belong to. Sinful alienation from God leads a person to try to hide from God in a crowd, a mass, a numerical conglomeration, as if God were incapable of seeing individuals and calling them to account if they formed a huge group. The default position of human sinfulness is living on the horizontal plane of social relations in this condition of falsity and violence. When individuals are given the strength, by God's grace, to disentangle themselves from the crowd, then they can develop a vital relationship with God, the power that constitutes their being. They can develop the courage to move through the experience of anxiety so that they can grow in maturity as persons. In this way they are

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<sup>10</sup> I elaborate on this idea at length in my book *The Genealogy of Violence* (New York NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death* (Princeton NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 67 ff.

<sup>12</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View* (Princeton NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1998), pp. 106 ff.

transformed from narrow, immature egoism, into the adventure of becoming true human beings who live before God. The person who grows in this way gains the ability to hear God's voice speaking the command: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The person is sent out onto the horizontal plane once again, not to participate in its falsity, but to speak to people the words of grace that will give them the strength to disentangle themselves from the crowd. In this way, believers can become co-workers with God in the transformation of human culture.

Kierkegaard's overall vision of human life can thus be compared to an oscillating fan. In their fallen default position, human beings live falsely and violently on the horizontal plane. The event of spiritual growth lifts a person off that plane, opening up the event of growth in personhood and drawing the person into a vertical relation to God. The person is sent back to the horizontal plane, changed, and able to be a change agent. The turn from one way of living to the other is *conversion*, which is the central theme in Kierkegaard's writings. He never tires of pointing out how the Western world, which is supposedly a sphere of Christian culture, is a place where people are particularly adept at avoiding genuine conversion.

It is not difficult to see how the respect that is given to Kierkegaard as a thinker functions as a Trojan Horse for the pro-choice way of thinking. Abortion is a symptom of human psychological immaturity, and the killing of the inhabitant of the womb involves *the politics of uncreation*, for it is an expression of our refusal to grow into the loving and non-violent persons that God wants us to become. Without mentioning Kierkegaard, this idea is at the heart of Paul Swope's important article "Abortion: A Failure to Communicate."<sup>13</sup> A sample of his argument:

Unplanned motherhood represents a threat so great to modern women that it is perceived as equivalent to a "death of self." While the woman may rationally understand this is not her own literal death, her emotional, subconscious reaction to carrying the child to term is that her life will be "over." This is because many young women of today have developed a self-identity that simply

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<sup>13</sup> Paul Swope, "Abortion: A Failure to Communicate," *First Things* 82 (April 1998): 31–35.

does not include being a mother. It may include going through college, getting a degree, obtaining a good job, even getting married someday; but the sudden intrusion of motherhood is perceived as a complete loss of control over their present and future selves. It shatters their sense of who they are and will become, and thereby paralyzes their ability to think more rationally or realistically.

When these women evaluate the abortion decision, therefore, they do not, as a pro-lifer might, formulate the problem with the radically distinct options of either “I must endure an embarrassing pregnancy” or “I must destroy the life of an innocent child.” Instead, their perception of the choice is either “my life is over” or “the life of this new child is over.” Given this perspective, the choice of abortion becomes one of self-preservation, a much more defensible position, both to the woman deciding to abort and to those supporting her decision.

Swope’s argument, which focuses on the lack of openness to psychological growth that fuels the demand for abortion, works very effectively as a demonstration of the relevance of Kierkegaard’s thought today.

It also needs to be mentioned that M. Scott Peck’s book *The Road Less Travelled*, which has sold more than ten million copies since its publication in 1978, is a particularly creative and winsome popularization of the central idea in Kierkegaard’s thought. Dr. Peck, a psychiatrist, begins the book with the statement that “life is difficult.” Life presents human beings with challenges and hurdles, which may be health issues, financial problems, dysfunctional relationships, and so on. These difficulties call us to grow psychologically, to adapt, change, and “evolve.” The heart of our falsity as human beings, the “primary basis of all human mental illness,” is our “tendency to avoid problems and the emotional suffering inherent in them.”<sup>14</sup> The substance addictions that we fall into, and the forms of behavior that are harmful to ourselves and others, are all fruits of our “laziness,” our refusal to grow psychologically and spiritually, to become what God is calling us to become. Laziness is the opposite of love, which Peck defines as “the will to extend one’s self for the purpose of nurturing one’s own or another’s spiritual growth.”<sup>15</sup> When individuals are open to growth, they

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<sup>14</sup> F. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Travelled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values, and Spiritual Growth* (New York NY: Simon & Schuster, 1978), p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Peck, p. 81.

not only benefit themselves but also society in general. On the other hand, the refusal to grow of individuals poisons the atmosphere of society. Peck introduces stories from his psychotherapy practice throughout the book, such as the woman who abruptly quit therapy when she started to understand herself and her relationships better. The woman was “terrified of the demands that mental health would require of her.”<sup>16</sup>

This refusal to grow characterizes most people most of the time, but it is not so severe that we cannot function in our daily lives. Peck notes, however, that when this refusal is intensified and becomes demonic, it leads to violence. Evil is laziness carried to an extreme. When human beings become violent, “they will take any action in their power to protect their own laziness, to preserve the integrity of their sick self. Rather than nurturing others, they will actually destroy others in this cause. If necessary, they will even kill to escape the pain of their own spiritual growth.”<sup>17</sup> Peck is here summarizing (whether consciously or not, I do not know) the core theory of violence that was laid out so brilliantly in Kierkegaard’s thought. Consider this passage from Kierkegaard’s journals:

*How Did It Happen That Christ Was Put to Death?*

I can answer this in such a way that with the same answer I show what Christianity is.

What is "spirit"? (And Christ is indeed spirit, his religion is of the spirit.) Spirit is: to live as if dead (to die to the world).

So far removed is this mode of existence from the natural man that it is quite literally worse for him than simply dying.

The natural man can tolerate it for an hour when it is introduced very guardedly at the distance of the imagination—yes, then it even pleases him. But if it is moved any closer to him, so close that it is presented in dead earnestness as a demand upon him, then the self-preservation instinct of the natural life is aroused to such an extent that it becomes a regular fury.... In this state of derangement he demands the death of the man of spirit or rushes upon him to slay him.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Peck, p. 303.

<sup>17</sup> Peck, p. 278.

<sup>18</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, trans. Howard and Edna Hong (Bloomington IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 1975), vol. 4, p. 4360.



The crucifixion of Christ reveals the human condition with utmost clarity, because in that event the call of God to spiritual growth was directly rejected, through an act of killing.

#### Chantal Delsol

Even though Chantal Delsol's *The Unlearned Lessons of the Twentieth Century: An Essay on Late Modernity* is not about abortion *per se*, it accomplishes a devastating critique of the deep assumptions that have made the pro-choice way of thinking possible. Her basic message is this: "late modernity has rejected the terrorist aspects of totalitarianism, but it has not abandoned the ideological underpinnings of totalitarianism itself."<sup>19</sup> We think of ourselves as having left totalitarianism behind, as having triumphed over it. But we do not realize the extent to which we agree with the ideological assumptions that made totalitarianism possible. We are indignant, for example, regarding the way the Nazis dehumanized the Jews, but we are blind to our own practices of dehumanization. "Dehumanization begins with the denial of human status, with the expulsion of certain humans beyond the frontiers of the species. One cannot brand others as 'undeserving' of human dignity without first branding them as 'subhuman' – that is, without first dismissing them as radically other."<sup>20</sup> That philosophical move is the beating heart of the pro-choice worldview.

Delsol points out the obvious, that utopian schemes sow death. We are so slow mentally that we have to see the truth of that statement actually demonstrated before we acknowledge it. Utopian dreaming is premised on the idea that human beings are self-sufficient self-creators. The belief that there are no limits to our ability to refashion the world leads to violence without limits.

Ideologies such as Nazism and Communism sought to break down traditional ties between people, such as family and congregation, where personal virtue was nurtured, to replace those ties with worship of the state that would be enforced through suspicion, threats, and informing

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<sup>19</sup> Chantal Delsol, *The Unlearned Lessons of the Twentieth Century* (Wilmington DE: ISI Books, 2006), p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> Delsol, p. 13.

on others. The nihilistic culture that we foster today also seeks to break down traditional ties that nurture virtue, even though the means used, such as ridicule, sarcasm, and ostracism, are less brutal. It is as if we feel a need to finish the uncompleted work of the ideologies.<sup>21</sup> The idea that we cannot fit into our heads is that a false concept of “freedom” is at the root of both the totalitarian ways of thinking and our own. For us, “freedom” means that human nature is completely malleable; reality is simply clay that we shape and reshape according to our will. That act of shaping can take place at the political level (Nazism and Stalinism) or at the individual level, which is our preference today. But in either case, violence against life will be the tool that we use to reshape reality according to our desires. We call what we are doing “exercising our liberty” and we call the result “progress,” because the modern religion of “progress” is our animating faith, whether or not we acknowledge that we are “religious.”

It is not uncommon to think that progress means the sweeping away of all scruples. Scruples, in this sense of the word, are those cultural memories that prod us to defend the dignity of each human being; they are the voice within us that resists the destruction of morality. Our finest eugenicists are sometimes plagued with scruples; they realize that the rational course of action is to eliminate the substandard beings, but they hesitate. After we have “progressed” further as a race, Delsol suggests, they will no longer hesitate, emboldened, perhaps, by reading Peter Singer. It will go without saying, because it cannot be said, that at that point we will prove ourselves to be the true spiritual heirs of Hitler, the one who burned scruples at the stake.<sup>22</sup> The totalitarian ideologies destroyed traditional moral selfhood and the common world of neighborliness that it made possible. *We have decided that we like living in that destroyed world.*<sup>23</sup> Another way of expressing this thought is to

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<sup>21</sup> Delsol, p. 39.

<sup>22</sup> Delsol, p. 54.

<sup>23</sup> Exhibit A for this point may be Peter Singer: “To think that the lives of infants are of special value because infants are small and cute is on a par with thinking that a baby seal, with its soft white fur coat and large round eyes deserves greater protection than a gorilla, who lacks these attributes. Nor can the helplessness or the innocence of the infant *Homo sapiens* be a ground for preferring it to the equally helpless and innocent fetal *Homo sapiens*, or, for that

say that totalitarianism erased the Tablets of the Law; we now rejoice in that erasure because it gives us “freedom.” We value most highly of all the liberty that flows out of no longer having to be constrained by “Thou shalt not kill.”

In our world people are afraid to ask deep questions about the meaning of humanness. We withdraw from the activity of questioning that is our true path toward wholeness and transcendence. We think that there is no need for questioning and growing because we are automatically self-sufficient as individuals. We think that we are capable of inventing ourselves and of governing ourselves; we presume that we are the gods of our own individual worlds.<sup>24</sup> The utopian dream sought god-like power to achieve the goal of “saving” society. By embracing individualism we think that we have rejected that dream, but we are actually prolonging that nightmare. We seek to be individualist gods instead of collectivist gods. That is the “change that we can believe in.”

When we do venture out of our individualistic psychic cocoons, we join collectives of “like-minded” people who share our “identities.” In this way our individual narcissism is lifted up to a social plane where we think that we have strength in numbers if we participate in a “march.” It is often the case that these collectives seek to outdo in each other to see who can make the strongest claim to being victims of tyrannical oppressors. These identity collectives arise out of the psychology of the self-sufficient isolated individual who is seeking to reinforce his or her inner convictions. This individual wants to join in a group that consists of mirror images of him or herself. A true subject, on the other hand, a growing person who is open to transcendence, is more open to genuine diversity and pluralism, because he or she is not narrowly self-interested but is seeking to foster a common world in which all can participate.

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matter, to laboratory rats who are innocent in exactly the same sense as the human infant, and, in view of the experimenters power over them, almost as helpless. If we can put aside these emotionally moving but strictly irrelevant aspects of the killing of a baby, we can see that the grounds for not killing persons do not apply to newborn infants.” Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York NY: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2011), p. 152.

<sup>24</sup> Delsol, p. 61.

Giorgio Agamben

I suggest for your consideration that the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben can be seen as a high ranking officer in the Trojan Cavalry. He begins his book *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*<sup>25</sup> with the observation that the ancient Greeks had two words for life, *zoe* (the physical life of plants and animals) and *bios* (a human life in community). The fact that human beings participate in both of these forms of life renders us ambiguous. We arise out of *zoe*, the natural realm, and enter into communal life, but we can also be pushed out of the community and thus back down into *nuda vita* (bare life, *zoe*). Movement back and forth across this threshold is the primary focus of the book.

Agamben takes his title from an ancient Roman legal text that says that the sovereign authority can declare a criminal to be a *homo sacer* (sacred human) “who *may be killed and yet not sacrificed.*”<sup>26</sup> The one declared an outlaw is thrown out of the community, the milieu within which human lives are meaningful and protected by law. The outlaw is not suitable to be offered to the gods as a sacrifice but can be killed by anyone who wishes to do away with him, without the killer being viewed as breaking the law against homicide. While Agamben begins with the ancient Greco-Roman world, his main concern in the book is to comprehend the traumatic events of the middle of the twentieth century, Nazism and Stalinism. He traces the notion of sovereignty down through the centuries, while noting that the sovereign has always been understood as the one who has the power to declare a particular human being to be bare life, one who can be killed with impunity. In the middle ages this role gained particular notoriety in the figure of the Grand Inquisitor; in the French Revolution the king became the victim of the same dynamics of power that he had previously controlled.

Agamben leads his reader to consider the idea that the diffusion of sovereignty into “the people” in the modern world has produced a disturbing result. Whereas in ancient societies there was a tendency for

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<sup>25</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1998; Italian original, 1995).

<sup>26</sup> Agamben, p. 8.

cathartic scapegoating violence to be on a small scale, in our age it has become more and more common for large groups of people to be declared outside the protection of the law. This is precisely what occurred in the Nazi elimination of the Jews as “lice,” in the Stalinist treatment of “counter-revolutionaries,” in the massacres in Cambodia, Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and so many other places. He says:

If it is true that the figure proposed by our age is that of an unsacrificeable life that has nevertheless become capable of being killed to an unprecedented degree, then the bare life of *homo sacer* concerns us in a special way. Sacredness is a line of flight still present in contemporary politics, a line that is as such moving into zones increasingly vast and dark, to the point of ultimately coinciding with the biological life of citizens. If today there is no longer any one clear figure of the sacred man, it is perhaps because we are all virtually *homines sacri*.<sup>27</sup>

Agamben argues that to treat other human beings as instances of the bare life that can be killed with impunity is aptly called *biopolitics*, and the zeal with which the totalitarian regimes embraced biopolitics is found also in the parliamentary democracies that we usually contrast with those regimes. The real question, he claims, is “which form of organization would be best suited to the task of assuring the care, control, and use of bare life. Once their fundamental referent becomes bare life, traditional political distinctions (such as those between Right and Left, liberalism and totalitarianism, private and public) lose their clarity and intelligibility and enter into a zone of indistinction.”<sup>28</sup>

If modern democratic societies, as Agamben claims, do not alter the concept of sovereignty but simply reconfigure it by diffusing it into every individual person, thus making each of us sovereigns and each of us potential victims of someone else’s sovereignty, then it seems that the chief vector of biopolitics in our age is abortion. Those who have been born and have grown up are now in a position of sovereignty in relation to those human beings who are gestating in wombs. The unborn are *homines sacri* in that they are not sacrificed in religious rituals, but they can be killed with impunity, without breaking the laws against homicide.

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<sup>27</sup> Agamben, pp. 114-15.

<sup>28</sup> Agamben, p. 122.

In the terms set up by Agamben's analysis, this situation is directly parallel with the way the totalitarian regimes treated those human beings who had been reduced through political rhetoric to "bare life." The victims were stripped of the rights entailed by citizenship in the community, in preparation for being killed. A clearer and more succinct summary of *Roe v. Wade* and its European parallels could hardly be imagined.<sup>29</sup>

While Agamben does not address the topic of abortion, I was able to find two articles, both written by women academics, that connect him with this issue. The first says that she can see how "extreme anti-abortion activists" could read Agamben and think that his thought was lifting the veil that currently prevents us from seeing the connections between the practice of abortion and "the specter of the Holocaust." Such zealots are "highly attuned to ruses for the politicization of the threshold of life," and they would naturally think of the inhabitant of the womb as our era's *homo sacer*. The woman who has decided to prevent her child from coming into the world would be seen as a "sinister sovereign."<sup>30</sup> My response, as such a "zealot," is to suggest that politicizing the threshold of life is precisely what was accomplished by *Roe v. Wade*, and entrenching the woman's rights as a sovereign in relation to her child is the core message of the *Casey* decision. I cannot refrain from noting, with reference to Wittgenstein, that what looks like

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<sup>29</sup> Pro-choice author Marjorie Reiley Maguire illustrates the point that drawing a parallel between the Holocaust and abortion cannot be waved off as an example of pro-life advocates "demonizing" their opponents. She writes: "even if the fetus is a person and thus does have a moral right to bodily integrity, the fetus is beyond the protection of the law. The fetus can be compared to a citizen of a totalitarian state whose freedom is taken away by the government. As a free society we would like the inhabitants of foreign countries to experience freedom. However, because we do not want to destroy our own society by imposing democracy on another government, we tolerate systems of government which are different than our own, and even governments we abhor. Similarly, a woman's body is like the borders of a foreign country." Marjorie Reiley Maguire, "Symbiosis, Biology, and Personalization" in *Abortion Rights and Fetal "Personhood,"* ed. Edd Doerr and James W. Prescott (Long Beach CA: Centerline Press, 1989), pp. 12-13.

<sup>30</sup> Penelope Deutscher, "The Inversion of Exceptionality: Foucault, Agamben, and 'Reproductive Rights'," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107/1 (Winter 2008): 66.

a duck to me looks like a rabbit to her.

The second commentator I found asks why Agamben does not discuss the issue of abortion anywhere in his writings, when he shows no hesitation in speaking about many other salient topics in contemporary culture. She suggests that the *homo sacer*, the one who is reduced to bare life and killed by the sovereign power, is voiceless. The word “infant” literally means *a human being who cannot speak*. By bringing his reader into a space in which they are on the brink of seeing the unborn child as *homo sacer*, and then turning mute, Agamben enacts the muteness of the victim; he bears witness to the sheep that is silent before its slaughterers. Agamben’s thought is – in her carefully chosen phrase – a “silent scream.”<sup>31</sup>

Agamben’s *Homo Sacer* seeks to change our way of living by clarifying the roots of the Holocaust – almost as if he were assuming that we had not fully learned the moral lessons that history teaches and applied them to our culture today.

This essay could have drawn also on pro-life feminism (which is at its core a Trojan Horse strategy), moral injury in soldiers, John Locke, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Simone Weil, Eric Voegelin, Richard Weaver, Philip Rieff, René Girard, and Kenneth Burke. I am claiming, in sum, that the pro-choice way of thinking and acting will always be a besieged city, surrounded by the voices of truth that are continually speaking from all sides. From time to time, the city will accept a gift, not realizing what consequences will flow from that acceptance. The city will fall one day.

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<sup>31</sup> Melinda Cooper, “The Silent Scream – Agamben, Deleuze and the Politics of the Unborn” in *Deleuze and Law: Forensic Futures*, ed. Rosi Braidotti (New York NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 142-62.