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Book Review by David F. Forte

LIFE AFTER ROE

Tearing Us Apart: How Abortion Harms Everything and Solves Nothing, by Ryan T. Anderson and Alexandra DeSanctis.
Regnery Publishing, 256 pages, \$29.99



Medea and Her Children: engraving by Gustave Doré

RYAN T. ANDERSON IS A COURAGEOUS man. President of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, he has long defended traditional marriage and has unveiled the transgender movement's pernicious harm, all the while eschewing combative rhetoric in favor of appeals to unblemished fact. As a backhanded tribute to his success, Amazon stopped listing his bestselling 2018 volume, *When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment*.

His new book, *Tearing us Apart: How Abortion Harms Everything and Solves Nothing*—co-authored with Alexandra DeSanctis, a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and staff writer at *National Review*—details the social and moral disaster that abortion has wreaked upon the social and body politic of America. Created by an act of judicial will at the height of the modern judiciary's foray into social reconstruction, the right to abortion has dissolved the categories of human life that nature itself established.

Each chapter of the book examines a casualty of Justice Harry Blackmun's *Roe v. Wade* (1973) decision: not only the unborn child, but also women and the family, the medical profession, the rule of law, the demo-

cratic process, and media and popular culture. Written before the Supreme Court's *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision but anticipating the outcome, the work is a handbook for action in a post-*Roe* world. After documenting how thoroughly abortion has corrupted our nation, Anderson and DeSanctis seek to show how a virtuous society could be rebuilt on the ruins wrought by *Roe*.

THE BOOK'S GREATEST CONTRIBUTION is in explaining the interrelationship between the dissolving forces *Roe* let loose. At the same time, the book exposes how egregious *Roe*'s harms have been. The authors' description of the moral degradation of the medical profession, for example, is particularly dismaying. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), founded in 1951, eventually became an all-out advocate of "therapeutic" abortions and the physician's unencumbered determination of abortion's propriety. The American Medical Association underwent the same transformation.

Surveying the mad rush of physicians to embrace fads forces one to wonder at the lack of moral grounding in medical education. We need not travel back to the heyday

of the eugenics movement in the early 20th century to see how imprudently much of the medical profession has faddishly pursued dangerous conceits: lobotomies for mental illness, "repressed memory" of child abuse, mass estrogen prescriptions for post-menopausal women, opioids for any manner of pain relief, experimentation and over-prescription of psychotropic medicines with serious aftereffects, and, now, "sex change" surgery and administration of puberty-blocking drugs. After all this, should courts ever pay attention to briefs submitted by medical "experts"?

The "rule of law" chapter describes how *Roe* was fashioned. The issue brought before the Court was the validity of federal jurisdiction over state crimes. Even though the Texas brief presented a convincing justification for the regulation's reasonableness, Justice Blackmun's original draft found the Texas law void for vagueness. But upon reargument (held after two new Justices were seated), at the urging of Justice William Douglas and following Justice William Brennan's cynically placed dictum in *Eisenstadt v. Baird* (1972) describing a right "to bear or beget a child," Blackmun resorted to the "substantive due process" right of abortion in his final *Roe* opinion.

THIS CHAPTER AND THE FOLLOWING (on *Roe*'s harms to the political and democratic processes) ably describe the Democratic Party's growing radicalization and the corruption of the judicial nominating process. But the book's true power centers on its treatment of the harms done to the unborn child and to women and the family. The unborn's independent biological status is explicated clearly. As the authors write, the unborn child is a separate "being," dependent on its own organs for continued existence, as well as on the assistance of its mother now, and on many others later, for sustenance and development. To see the unborn child as a parasite, as abortion advocates must necessarily do, is to deprive the mother of the most intimate relation there can be between humans. To break that relationship and substitute a woman's right "to designate" whether the being within is human or not is to acknowledge a power that moral philosophers, religions, and, indeed, the international order had heretofore deemed unconscionable.

Nor is the woman "free" to make that awful decision. Contrary to what abortion rights proponents imagine, the pregnant woman does not engage in an Aristotelian deliberation among means to a desired end. For some, abortion is undoubtedly a snap decision without much deliberation. In other

instances (some surveys say two thirds of the time), the woman labors under psychological pressure from others. Most women who abort receive no counseling—certainly abortion clinics don't provide adequate advice on alternatives. Persevering through decades of abortion on demand, over 2,500 pregnancy help centers across the country have attempted to provide true alternatives, along with material, psychological, and medical aid. Abortion advocates would rather see them closed.

Though the physical and psychological harm to women who abort is well-documented, the moral harm is much greater. To abortion advocates, the woman is an atom, opting for (or out of) relationships by choice, never *necessarily* connected with others. In denying the humanity of the unborn child, abortion proponents cannot avoid impoverishing the humanity of the mother. DeSantis has described in an essay for *National Review* how second-wave feminists made the woman's body her own enemy. What's more, by giving women the exclusive right to determine the fate of the child, *Roe* freed men from responsibility.

THE AUTHORS ANTICIPATED *ROE*'S END, but they could not have foreseen how thoroughly Justice Samuel Alito's opinion would debunk it. No essay, to my

mind, equals Alito's opinion in laying out the callous and cynical use of contrived history and false statistics that the Court relied upon for five decades. The strength of his opinion explains the hateful rejection it has met. It is so completely grounded in logic, history, and text that little persuasively can be said against it. The pallid content of the *Dobbs* dissents testifies to that.

Decades of pro-life legislation, besides attempting to save lives, had a dominating purpose: to affirm the unborn child's humanity. Fetal homicide laws; heartbeat bills; ultrasound requirements; informed consent regulations; mandatory waiting periods; born-alive acts; prohibitions on partial birth abortions, "pain-capable" abortions, and abortions that discriminate by sex or disability, all affirm the same thing: there is a human being within the womb.

The abortion advocates' answer is that the unborn child's humanity doesn't matter. A woman's bodily autonomy trumps any moral judgment of, or legislative interference in, what she chooses to do. Ultimately, it is a nihilistic position. After the *Dobbs* decision, and this well-researched and well-argued book, the sheer poverty of that argument is clearer than ever before.

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