

Consistent Life 25th ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE

Consistent Life (CL) was founded in 1987, under the name the Seamless Garment Network, at a conference of peace, justice and life groups. This means that 2012 will be our 25th anniversary. We will mark this occasion with a **25th Anniversary Conference** in the Washington, DC area, tentatively set for **March 9-11, 2012**.

The main purposes of the Conference are to:

- Publicize the Consistent Life Ethic (CLE) and foster its growth in the area, the nation and the world;
- Bring together a diverse group of CLE supporters nationally/internationally for mutual support and encouragement, and to consider ways to forward the CLE message; and
- Reach out to the metropolitan Washington area about CLE.

The CL Board has established a 25th Anniversary Committee at the national level to oversee planning of the Conference. We also hope to establish a local committee to focus on local outreach and logistics. We have a commitment from one foundation to provide some seed money for the Conference, although we anticipate needing additional funds for this purpose.

SEE WEB SITE FOR UPDATED INFORMATION

To find out if we are still seeking a Coordinator and for any other updated information, see our Conference Web page at www.consistent-life.org/cl25th.html or follow Conference developments through our weekly e-mail newsletter, Peace & Life Connections (subscription button and past issues with index at www.consistent-life.org/weekly.html).



CONFERENCE COORDINATOR(S) ARE NEEDED. CAN YOU HELP?

A great deal of effort will be needed to bring about a successful conference. Therefore we have been seeking a Coordinator (or possibly 2 to share the work) to do much of the ground work and coordinate the efforts of volunteers. We would like the Coordinator(s) to begin work in the near future. By the time you read this, we may or may not have selected the Coordinator(s).

We invite interested people to send a resume to:
P.O. Box 9295 Silver Spring, MD 20916-9295, or
e-mail us at cl25@consistent-life.org

View Coordinator job description at:
www.consistent-life.org/cl25thcoorddescr.pdf

YOUR HELP AND INPUT WANTED

This Conference needs to be a cooperative effort of the CL community, both member groups and individual supporters. We want your ideas for topics, speakers, workshop leaders, logistics, etc. for the Conference.

If you have skills you might be able to make available in the planning or implementation of the Conference, or could be part of the local effort to provide support for the conference, we'd also appreciate that.

To provide input or offer support, please e-mail us at cl25@consistent-life.org. We also could use your financial support.

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- CL Member Activities
- Protesting the Iraqi War
- Ancient Roots of Consistent Life
- March for Life Events
- ...and much more.

DOROTHY DAY CATHOLIC WORKER COMMUNITY

CL member group, The Dorothy Day Catholic Worker Community, organized a full day of activities including a march to the White House in Washington, D.C., to mark 20 years of war in Iraq and to call for peace. CL was a co-sponsor, along with other local and national peace groups. See full description in a separate article in this newsletter.

REMEMBERING SARGENT SHRIVER

CL remembered with gratitude the life of Sargent Shriver, who died on January 18. He was a strong supporter of CL, and was dedicated to civil rights and racial equality.

He served as the first Director of the Peace Corps, led the War on Poverty and was President of the Special Olympics. Thanks to this great man who lived the consistent ethic of life.



MARY MEEHAN

CL endorser and supporter Mary Meehan recently published a new piece, "Outfoxing the Grim Reaper", in Human Life Review. The article discusses new work in the area of suicide prevention and has suggestions for helping those who are inclined toward suicide.

SHELLEY DOUGLASS

CL endorser Shelley Douglass announced a conference in Birmingham, AL, called Matters of Life and Death. The conference topics surrounded alternatives to the death penalty.

PAX CHRISTI USA

Pax Christi USA, a CL member group, published a statement calling on President Obama to negotiate with Russia to end the "launch on warning" policy and take nuclear weapons off alert. The statement was signed by hundreds of people, including many CL supporters.

FEMINISTS CHOOSING LIFE

CL member group Feminists Choosing Life participated in the Judicial Process Luncheon opposing the death penalty in May. The group passes out CL materials at each event in which they participate, such as a conference at the University of Rochester in April.

SOJOURNERS

CL member group Sojourners led over 3,600 people in a group fast to protest congressional budget cuts that harm the poor. Founder Jim Wallis said, "Our endless military spending has gotten a free pass while those who can least afford it are getting cut."

SCOTT SCHAEFFER-DUFFY

CL endorser (and former CL Board member) Scott Schaeffer-Duffy made a fact-finding trip to Afghanistan in March 2011. He reported on a visit to the Aschiana Camp for displaced people outside Kabul. He asked Camp elder Rahamat ola Rahomi, "How did you come to be in this camp?" Rahomi: "The US/NATO bombed our village many times. In one night's bombing, 90 of the 1,000 villagers were killed. In my house, my parents were killed and two other relatives were injured. We [finally] left our village in Kandahar because of a very dangerous US bombing. Twenty houses were destroyed, killing most of the residents." Schaeffer-Duffy asked him: "If you could, what would you say to President Obama?" Rahomi replied: "Put yourself in our place and think. Stop bombing innocent civilians! You are killing women and children! We want all governments to stop killing children." Scott also visited Afghan groups working for peace, democracy and human rights.

JUBILEE PARTNERS

An urgent alert from Jubilee Partners, the CL member group founded by CL endorser Don Mosley: They request donations to avert starvation for 2,089 children in seven orphanages, because of the food crisis in North Korea caused by flooding, livestock disease and unusual cold weather. Jubilee Partners has long been noted for its care and support for refugees.



Don Mosley has forged connections with North Korea (DPRK). He has been leading a joint project to build housing for farmers in a village north of Pyongyang, where a typhoon destroyed 30,000 homes. The DPRK government provides land, workers and heavy equipment.

At a ground breaking last November, Mosley and his companion, University of Georgia Professor Han Park, were warmly welcomed by the farmers. This is a unique project, building much needed peace and trust between people of the US and the DPRK.

CL ENDORSERS RESPOND TO THE CELEBRATIONS OF THE KILLING OF OSAMA BIN LADEN



JOHN DEAR, SJ: "I had just finished a weekend retreat on the Sermon on the Mount in Los Angeles when I heard the news that the U.S. had killed Osama bin Laden. Unlike the president, the U.S. military, and the hundreds who cheered and waved flags, I did not celebrate. I do not support or cheer the killing of anyone. As a Christian, I am not allowed to retaliate, seek revenge or to kill. I'm supposed to love enemies, do good to those who hate, and bless those who persecute. This news only leads me further into grief, prayer and repentance."

JIM WALLIS: "He was truly an apostle of hate, a dedicated purveyor of violence in response to every grievance, a manipulator and distorter of religion for political purposes, and a man responsible for the deaths of thousands of people. Nevertheless, it is never a Christian response to celebrate the death of any human being, even one so given over to the face of evil. Violence is always an indication of our failure to resolve our conflicts by peaceful means, and is always an occasion for deeper reflection."

BRIAN MCLAREN: "Joyfully celebrating the killing of a killer who joyfully celebrated killing carries an irony that I hope will not be lost on us. Are we learning anything, or simply spinning harder in the cycle of violence? ... As you talk about this news, I hope you will consider how your response can counter rather than reinforce the cycles of violence that spin around us. And please God, help us bring healing beauty to the ugliness of violence in whatever small way we can. Today."

GLEN STASSEN, (Professor of Christian ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary): "I am not in favor of killing anybody. ... I wish we had negotiated with the Taliban after 9/11 to get him to a trial in a Muslim country." Instead of turning bin Laden into a martyr, Stassen would have preferred seeing the terrorist condemned by a Muslim court and a religion whose followers had turned hostile to the terrorist's cause. "Osama bin Laden is not a Muslim leader; he is a mass murderer of Muslims," Stassen said. "I'm trying to help Muslim leaders separate the extremist from the sensible Muslims." Stassen said bin Laden's life should never serve as an example of the faith of Islam or any faith. "Hate is not a Christian or a Muslim virtue."

MARCH FOR LIFE EVENTS

Consistent Life had a contingent at the **38th March for Life**, held annually in Washington, DC on or near January 22, the anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision. Four Board members were present this year: **Rob Arner, Tony Masalonis, Bill Samuel, and Richard Stith.** Richard received permission from **Fr. Frank Pavone**, National Director of Priests for Life and Missionaries of the Gospel of Life, to hold a "Pro-Life, Pro-Peace" sign (as seen prominently in the picture) in front of the Supreme Court steps at the conclusion of the march, where marchers convene and listen to testimonies from people who have been involved in abortion and suffered regret and remorse. Others who helped hold our banner or their own signs, and/or pass out literature, included **Rosemarie Stith, John Whitehead,** and folks from **Dorothy Day Catholic Worker** (a **CL member group**). We connected with a number of others at the March who had consistent life ethic signs but had not previously heard of CL, some of whom joined our contingent for varying periods of time. We got a number of thumbs up and positive statements about our banner.

After the March, about ten people attended a post-March gathering at William Penn House on Capitol Hill, including one person who we'd just met at the March. Participants were from DC, Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Indiana. We talked about how to network locally for consistent life ethic education and activities, shared ideas about what CL could do nationally, and discussed the possibility of forming local chapters and faith-based CLE-based action or prayer groups (the idea of forming chapters and small groups is still on the table; please contact info@consistent-life.org with questions and ideas). A subgroup of the post-March meeting attendees went out to dinner together.

As is the case every year, a number of meetings and conferences took place in the DC area around the time of the March, and CL was involved.

Rosemarie and Richard Stith met with **Democrats for Life of America** (a **CL member group**) before the March to share ideas. Tony Masalonis attended the Students for Life of America conference, the world's largest pro-life conference with 1,800 attendees. Member groups **Feminists for Life** and **Secular Pro-Life** had tables at this meeting, as did **Priests for Life** who have a new pamphlet containing a strong statement in support of the CLE. One speaker quoted Richard Stith in a positive light but also implicitly denounced the CLE as a distraction. There is work to be done. A speaker from the **Whole Life** movement discussed the link between abortion and global poverty and got a good reception. CL had inserts with a FAQ and listing of our resources in the packets for the **Students for Life** conference, for a separate Students for Life rally on the day of the March, and for the Cardinal O'Connor Conference, an annual event which in past years has featured CL member groups such as Democrats for Life and Feminists for Life.



PROTESTING THE IRAQ WAR



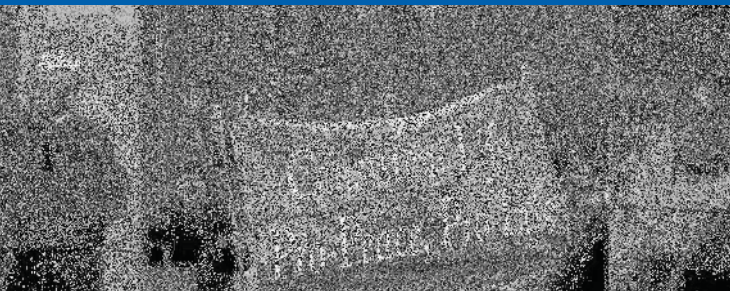
PICTURED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Sr. Mary Clement (regular at weekly vigil, recruited for banner-holding) and John Whitehead at Planned Parenthood.

CL member group **Dorothy Day Catholic Worker** initiated a protest in Washington, DC on January 15 to commemorate and mourn 20 years of war on Iraq, and to re-commit to living out Martin Luther King's dream of abolishing war and injustice. CL co-sponsored the event. Other member groups co-sponsoring: **Jonah House, Maryknoll Office for Global Concern, and Pax Christi Metro DC.** CL members **Bill Samuel, Tony Masalonis, and John Whitehead** participated in a vigil at Planned Parenthood, then joined the march activities with CL signs along with **Mary Grace, Charles McCarthy,** and other CL supporters.

The march to the White House went back past Planned Parenthood, providing an excellent witness to both pro-lifers and pro-choicers gathered in front of the clinic. A rally at the White House followed, then a teach-in at Foundry Methodist church, and finally a candlelight vigil back at the White House.

The teach-in featured rousing talks from some of the aforementioned CL member groups, CL endorser **Liz McAlister** and many other peace activists. **Bill Samuel** spoke on CL's witness to the truth that all violence is wrong – toward Iraqis, Afghans, Pakistanis, unborn children of any nation, the disabled, and criminal offenders, as well as those at the bottom of the social ladder for reasons such as poverty and racism. His brief talk was well received, with a number of attendees coming up to express support for the consistent life ethic.

CONSISTENT LIFE MEMBERS. CONSISTENTLY ACTIVE.



PICTURED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: CL endorser Liz McAlister at teach-in; Charles McCarthy and John Whitehead hold banner at march assembly area; and CL President Bill Samuel at teach-in.

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ANCIENT ROOTS OF THE CONSISTENT LIFE ETHIC: GREECE

BY MARY KRANE DERR

Editor's Note: Mary Krane Derr is a leading scholar on pro-life feminism and related nonviolence advocacy of yesteryear. She co-edited the book *ProLife Feminism: Yesterday and Today*. Here we excerpt a section on ancient Greece from "Activism Throughout the Centuries," Chapter 13 of *Consistently Opposing Killing: From Abortion to Assisted Suicide, the Death Penalty, and War* (now out in paperback).

The ancient Greek mathematician, musician, vegetarian, and spiritual teacher Pythagoreas (580? BCE-??) taught a nonviolence ethic rooted in the kinship of all living beings. Pythagoreas' ethic did not exclude or denigrate women. Most unconventionally, Pythagoreas defined only sexual misconduct, not intercourse itself, as polluting. He accepted women equally as his students.

Women originally created the Eleusinian Mysteries, and today these rituals deeply fascinate feminist goddess spirituality devotees. According to local custom, celebrants did not sacrifice a victim to the goddess, but offered her grapes, other cultivated fruits, honeycombs, and wool. The women had a special feast of grains, with perhaps a little fish. Although today's vegetarians or vegans may find fault here, these rituals were certainly more peaceful and life-affirming than those added on following the Athenian occupation. The Mysteries were changed to begin in Athens with pig and other animal sacrifices. These changes suited Athens' ruling elite, who regularly devoured multi-course flesh meals, considering sow's womb after (induced?) miscarriage to be a delicacy. They ranked women as little better than animals.

Although his legacy has literally come down to us in fragments, one direct contribution of the Pythagorean ethic does remain a cultural presence: the Hippocratic Oath. Some life-respecting provisions of the Oath are still widely held up as integral values of medical practice. For example, the commitments to "do no harm;" to observe confidentiality; and to refrain from sexual abuse of patients, even one's social "inferiors." A single provision, however, has in recent decades occasioned fierce controversy: "I will not give a lethal drug to anyone if I am asked, nor will I advise such a plan; and similarly I will not give a woman a pessary to cause an abortion."



The controversy refers little or not at all to the expansively life-revering ethic in which this provision originated. Some right-to-lifers treat it as an ahistorical mandate requiring instant, uncritical obedience. Thus they do not apply it to physician-assisted state-sponsored execution. Some prochoicers seem similarly unaware of the Pythagorean source ethic's character, let alone its resonance with present-day values and norms they may aspire to themselves. Thus they find this provision at best irrelevant today, and at worst hostile to sick or disabled persons, and women.

THE REAL MEANING OF MOTHER'S DAY

BY ROB ARNER

Mother's Day is the singular day when the culture turns its attention to honor the mothers among us - our own, or those whom we admire. It's nearly impossible to get a table at a nice restaurant to take your mother out without reservations far in advance. Hallmark and other greeting card companies make a killing by selling us \$5 cards with sweet poems and flowery pictures on them. And we all go along, because we all agree our moms are special and that motherhood is a vital role in society with responsibilities that extend well beyond the nine months of pregnancy (and interminable hours of labor!) Mothers are special, and setting aside a day to honor them just makes sense.

But what is the origin of the modern observance of Mother's Day? Where did it come from? The answer may surprise you, because it comes from a woman of remarkable determination and conviction whose experience of human cruelty caused her to initiate the Mother's Day movement as a prophetic form of social protest against the savagery of war.

It all goes back to the woman who is most famous for writing the song that became the de facto war anthem of the Union Army during the Civil War: "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Julia Ward Howe, New England socialite and social reformer, was a thoughtful woman of deep moral convictions whose campaigns on behalf of the abolition of slavery, women's suffrage, and economic justice are well known. Her passion and devotion to her causes is undeniable. But less well-known is her dramatic change of heart with respect to "righteous" warfare.

In the run-up to the Civil War, Howe was one of the most ardent and vocal abolitionists. In 1861, the first year of the war, the song "John Brown's Body" (about the radical abolitionist who had raided Harper's Ferry, MD in 1860) was quickly becoming a popular marching song for Union troops. But their commanders, while loving the catchy and inspiring tune, were less enthusiastic about the effect on morale of their troops singing about how "John Brown's body lies a-moldering in the grave."

Howe heard the soldiers singing this song as they marched by her home one day in November 1861, and her companion, a Christian pastor, the Reverend James Freeman Clarke, suggested to her that she write new lyrics for the song to make it more uplifting and compelling as a battle anthem. After a flash of late-night inspiration, Howe composed the text of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" in order to inject her fervent abolitionist cause with a militant Christian spirituality about the righteous vengeance of God upon the wicked. Perhaps most compelling, certain stanzas of the Battle Hymn of the Republic are written to foster a sense of the soldiers' cooperation with God in this holy cause. For instance:

*"In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me:
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on."*

This tune is thus reminiscent of a holy war paradigm, or a crusade, completely identifying the singers with God's righteous cause. So sure was Howe that the Union cause was holy, justified, and righteous that her theology injects this passion and fervency directly into the hearts of those soldiers who would sing the inspirational tune.

But this was not the end of Howe's writing career. In the aftermath of the devastating American Civil War, in which well over 600,000 lives were lost, as well as the carnage of the Franco-Prussian War soon thereafter, Howe was horrified at the human toll these conflicts exacted. In the 1870's, Howe began a one-woman peace crusade, having repudiated the militancy of her optimistic self-righteous "Battle Hymn" years. She saw the effect of actual human combat and came to see war as just as devastating, if not more so, than the other human social evils she had previously dedicated herself to fighting.

Particularly devastating to Howe were the cries of the grieving mothers she met. These women, who had lost their sons in the senseless carnage of the Civil War, were her inspiration. In 1872, Howe set about campaigning for a "Mother's Day for Peace" as a way of raising awareness of the fact that every nameless soldier and civilian who had lost his or her life in the horrors of the war had left behind a weeping mother.

The day was, however, mainly intended as a call to unite women against war. It was due to her efforts that in 1873, women in 18 cities in America held a Mother's Day for Peace gathering. Howe rigorously championed the cause of declaring Mother's Day as an official holiday. She held meetings every year at Boston on Mother's Peace Day and took care to see that the day was well-observed. The celebrations died out when she turned her efforts to working for peace and women's rights in other ways. Howe failed in her attempt to gain the formal recognition of a Mother's Day for Peace. Her remarkable contribution in the establishment of Mother's Day, however, remains in that her Mother's Day dedicated to peace was the precursor to the modern Mother's Day celebrations. To acknowledge Howe's achievements, a stamp was issued in her honor in 1988.

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A COURAGEOUS WOMAN: Elizabeth Anscombe (1919-2001)

BY JULIANNE WILEY (A.K.A. JULI LOESCH), excerpted from a paper (For the full paper, send a request to Julianne at: jlw509@embarqmail.com)

In the fall of 1939, shortly after England declared war on Germany, the Royal Air Force was openly promoting a counter-city bombing strategy against Germany. They were preparing to carpet bomb entire cities. Their first target in each city would be the city water-pumping stations, and then they would wipe out, not just the military assets, but the entire city of Dresden, Cologne, and Hamburg, together with all their civilian inhabitants.

Elizabeth Anscombe and a fellow student, barely out of their teens, wrote, printed, and started distributing a brief, powerful essay entitled "The Justice of the Present War Examined." Not on the basis of pacifism, but by the application of traditional just-war principles, she argued that the British government's plan to incinerate large numbers of civilians by means of indiscriminate obliteration bombing, was not an act of Just War, but an act of murder.

But before Anscombe's essay could be widely disseminated, her own bishop, the Bishop of Birmingham, told her to withdraw it from publication. He said it was not the job of undergraduates to judge their nation's military policy, and that she had a lot of learning to do before she could make complex judgments. She agreed that she had much learning to do, and she withdrew the pamphlet. But it is her words, rather than those of her bishop, which remain in our memory and were later echoed by the Second Vatican Council.

Anscombe's responsibilities [as a philosophy professor] in Oxford in the 1950s did not include teaching ethics, which was covered by her friend Philippa Foot. But at one point Foot took a sabbatical and asked Anscombe to fill in for her. When Anscombe started to organize her thoughts by reading the usual texts of modern moral philosophy she was flabbergasted.

Despite the differences between them, all the 20th century authors she encountered shared one thing in common: they had no moral absolutes. None. There were no actions that could be ruled out if you were aiming at a good enough result. Not rape, not torture, not abortion, not murder. They said it could all be justified by circumstances. And this was an absolute break with 20 centuries of Western Civilization with its basis in Judeo-Christian moral teaching, and even a break from the teachings of Aristotle and the greats of pagan Greek and Roman civilization.

Anscombe knew this was wrong. Two years previously, in 1956, Oxford University had decided to grant an honorary degree to Harry Truman, who, as US President, had been responsible for the deliberate massacre of hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. She contested this honorary degree, but she was told that she was the only one who found it objectionable. She forced a vote, but only four faculty members were willing to say that a man who authorized the deliberate killing of innocent human beings ought not to be given public honors. Her essay, "Mr. Truman's Degree," makes exceedingly interesting reading even today -- especially in the light of much more recent controversies about a much more recent U.S. president, Barack Obama, being awarded an honorary degree at the University of Notre Dame.

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Anscombe's reflections on moral absolutes developed into her 1958 paper 'On Modern Moral Philosophy.' She boldly challenged the sheer relativism of almost all 20th century moral philosophers. Standing practically alone against the entire academic philosophical establishment, she defined, described, and pulled apart 'consequentialism,' the view that there are no acts, no matter how evil, which cannot be justified if one is aiming for good consequences.

Although Oxford was still, in the 1960s, a place of considerable outward conventionality, it was inwardly shaken by the moral confusion of the Sexual Revolution. Undergraduate women often got pregnant, but never had babies, if you catch my meaning.

Once Professor Anscombe was sought out by a young woman who was pregnant --pregnant by a professor 30 years older than she, and this young student was quite upset and unsure what to do about it. She confided that this professor, who was in fact the father of the baby, thought abortion would be the obvious solution. "And why does he think that?" asked Anscombe. The girl replied, 'Well, the first problem is, he doesn't entirely accept the full humanity of the un-born.'"No," Anscombe shot back, "His first problem is that he doesn't even accept the full *humanity of the undergraduate.*"

Although Anscombe's stand against the atomic bomb was widely reported at the time, when she decided to personally and nonviolently intervene to stop the dismemberment of living babies, the coverage was practically zero. A newspaper photograph that her family cherishes shows her being hauled away from the abortion clinic doorway by two policemen, but she is not even identified in the caption or in the article. This, despite the fact that at the time she was arguably the world's most prominent living philosopher.

In 1970, Elizabeth Anscombe was appointed to the Chair of Philosophy at Cambridge. She spent the next 10 years doing more original work in philosophy, writing, speaking, and striving to empower women --- particularly young women --- with the intellectual strength to resist conformism, to seek and love the truth, and to accept no substitutes.

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THE CREATIVITY OF THE FORECLOSED OPTION

BY RACHEL MACNAIR

Adapted from her book, *The Psychology of Peace: an Introduction* (Praeger, 2003), pp. 99-100

In an episode of *Star Trek, The Next Generation*, the Klingon Worf was in an accident leaving him paralyzed. According to Klingon tradition, this meant he should commit ritual suicide, and he was intent on doing so. The doctor was appalled. She tried to research Klingon physiology to find treatment, but Klingons had no advice to give. Since they always committed suicide on such occasions, they had no information. Various creative things were tried for allowing him to live and function with dignity even if not with full use of his legs, and finally a procedure which cured him was found. Solutions could be found because one option – the option of suicide – was foreclosed in the doctor's mind.

When a specific option is unavailable, others must be sought. When the option is made unavailable because it is undesirable, the alternatives may be preferable. Medical breakthroughs, along with treatment options and other caring options for those with disabilities, require that the option of suicide be off the table.

Once a violent solution is on the table, it precludes the development of alternatives. Violence as a problem-solving technique has the apparent advantage of being quick and efficient. One need only ignore the long-term aftermath and other negative impact on society. Nonviolent alternatives must of necessity take more care, attention, resources and time. They have obvious advantages in the long run, but the short-term consequence is more work.

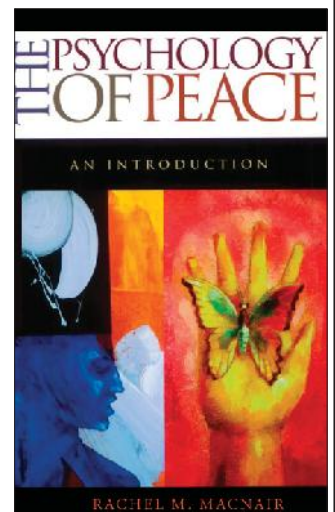
This leads to the ironic outcome that foreclosing an option means more options available, rather than fewer.

Vegetarians, for example, who foreclose the option of eating meat, actually have more variety in their diets than those eating standard fare. There is no reason in theory why those who eat meat cannot also eat the variety of vegetarian options. Often they do, but excluding meat seems to open up creativity in the diet. Those who oppose abortion have a much more extensive and complex set of services offered through crisis pregnancy centers, maternity homes, mentoring, and government social services than the relative simplicity of the abortion clinic. Those who oppose nuclear energy propose a wide variety of alternative energy options.

In the case of war, those who by definition foreclose it as an option entirely – pacifists – have offered a wide array of ways of dealing with problems of violence and injustice. People inclined to resort to weapons are less likely to be creative in finding alternative ways of resolving problems. Those who oppose war must of necessity come up with such alternatives. Therefore, creativity is another of the side-effects of assertive nonviolence. In the psychology of creativity, this is called divergent thinking. Many possible solutions are generated when people do not limit themselves to the obvious or conventional.

Editor's Note:

The second edition of this book is due out on November 30, 2011.



ANCIENT ROOTS: GREECE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

In his *Roe v. Wade* ruling, Harry Blackmun states that Pythagoreans, in a "spirit of uncompromising austerity," "frowned upon" suicide and opposed abortion as "a matter of dogma," the "dogma" that "the embryo was animate from the moment of conception, and abortion meant destruction of a living being." He notes the commonplace practice and advocacy of abortion and suicide in the ancient Greco-Roman world. Thus the Oath's Pythagorean values represent not "an absolute standard for medical conduct," but a minority, sectarian, largely unpersuasive view that survived only because Christians adopted it. Blackmun staunchly defended *Roe* for the rest of his life, despite his famous announcement in a capital punishment case that he was done "tinkering with the machinery of death."

"Frowned upon," "dogma," "uncompromising austerity": might not Blackmun be projecting a late 20th century stereotype of grim, rigid moralizers with peculiar opinions onto people it probably does not fit? And even if a position is in the minority – why and how should that in and of itself invalidate it? Large numbers of Americans have looked with disfavor on death penalty abolitionists like the later Blackmun – yet that by no means invalidates his decision to take up their cause.

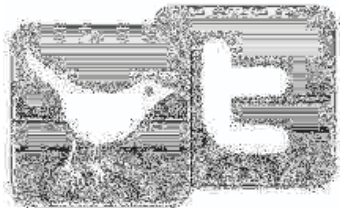
But what makes Blackmun's concern for life on death row qualitatively different from Pythagorean or present-day concern for fetal life? What if he had known that Pythagoreans – and other abortion opponents from antiquity to the present – aspired to respect for all lives, including women's?

Curiously, Blackmun then concludes "ancient religion did not bar abortion." Did he mean the state religions of Greece and Rome? These also did not bar – and even outright sanctioned – many practices that today's prolife and prochoice persons alike would likely agree were oppressive and undesirable of repetition. For example, the Roman *paterfamilias*, or oldest male in the household, legally claimed not only all its property, but *vitae necisque potestas*, the power of life and death over its members, "free" and slave. He could force a woman to undergo an abortion, or her baby to undergo infanticide.

Disability, female gender, or non-marital birth usually doomed newborns. He could sell displeasing older children into slavery or have them executed. The state made regular public entertainment spectacles of violent mass human and animal killings. Small wonder that Martin Luther King, Jr. offered early Christian resistance to officially sanctioned violence in ancient Rome as a model for the African-American civil rights movement.

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www.consistent-life.org/weekly.html

Consistent Life

OUR MISSION

We are committed to the protection of life, which is threatened in today's world by war, abortion, poverty, racism, capital punishment and euthanasia.

We believe that these issues are linked under a 'consistent ethic of life'. We challenge those working on all or some of these issues to maintain a cooperative spirit of peace, reconciliation, and respect in protecting the unprotected.

OUR PURPOSE

We serve the anti-violence community by connecting issues, building bridges, and strengthening the case against each kind of socially-approved killing by consistently opposing them all.

