

DEGREE OF DEPENDENCY

One of the favorite rationales abortion advocates have for stripping embryos and fetuses their rights of personhood is this issue of dependency. "Since a fetus can't survive on it's own," they argue, "it has no inherent right to life". What's the problem with this argument? It could just as easily be extended to cover the whole of humanity. There isn't a person alive anywhere who is radically independent from this biosphere in which we live. We are all dependent beings. Some of us are less dependent than others, but we are all dependent. The differences in dependencies that separate fetuses from the rest of us are differences of degree, not of kind.

We must never forget that newborn babies, too, are utterly dependent upon their parents for survival. They are helpless and will die if left to themselves. Such dependency doesn't make them non-persons, and it shouldn't make unborn children non-persons either. Human beings *outside* the womb who must rely on kidney machines or pace-makers or insulin shots for their survival do not lose their rights of personhood for such dependency. Neither should human beings *inside* the womb lose their rights of personhood for being dependent upon an umbilical cord for their survival.

What is most absurd about this whole line of thinking is the fact that dependency should merit more protection under the law, not less! This kind of reasoning is an utter perversion of the natural parental instinct. The younger and more dependent a child is, the more care and compassion we have for them. *The U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention* expresses it well when they say, "Homicides are always tragic, but our sympathies are heightened when the victim is a young child or adolescent. Thus, the deaths of juveniles raise understandable public concerns." The nation is far more outraged at violence directed towards children than at violence directed towards other adults. The reason is simple. Children are more helpless, and less capable of defending themselves. And the younger the child is the truer this becomes. How we ever got to the place of using dependency against children rather than for children is a tragedy of staggering proportions.