



I write these lines against the counterhand, because I thought that at this stage of the debate, after so many articles, letters, replicas, some of them very bright, the moral concept of therapeutic abortion would be reasonably clear, and it would be idle to abound about such a trite affair. But neither ignorant nor specialized audience (students from two or three universities) tells me that the term seems increasingly confusing. I do not offer a luminous or original idea, but I do offer the same nuances that I have orally exposed to them, in the hope of greater clarity.

I will start from a vague but common notion: therapeutic abortion would be the one that, to save the life of the mother, sacrifices the fetus, an act that some do not consider worthy of the criminal sanction because it has been said, would be equivalent to punishing the captain as guilty of the murder of a ship that, unable to save two castaways, chooses only one.

But there is a question pending, which is decisive: what does the captain do with the other castaway? He shoots him, beats him and drowns him? For what is done with the fetus is not to "choose it", but to destroy it directly with deadly instruments within life itself, as if it were a tumor. Of "therapeutic" that has only good intentions, and it is not only good intentions that morally define our actions but also, and essentially, their intrinsic content, their object, their objective nature.

Well, that act of destruction is a dry abortion because, despite its intention and its consequences, it consists objectively of killing the innocent neighbor. As we know, the progress of medicine has made this dilemma extremely low between the life of the mother or that of the child. On the other hand, the legalization of this "therapy" (which is not such) easily becomes the open loophole or door for other increasingly permissive laws regarding abortion causes: for example, the "psychological" danger to the health of the mother, resulting in easily in a legal abortion by simple demand.

What, on the other hand, would be a therapeutic intervention? I will take a figure as slim as it is drastic, which will serve as a conceptual model for answering this question. Suppose a mother, in her early pregnancy, is found with very malignant cancer. The oncologist prescribes, along with strong drugs, radiation therapy, and

warns him that such treatment (anticancer therapy!) will end the life of the fetus. The woman is free to decide whether or not to radiate, depending on the malignancy of cancer and the gestation time of the fetus. If you decide to do it, are you killing your son?

Let's look at the act of radiation. With her, the woman has no intention of making her creature die. But not only that (that wouldn't be enough): the very nature of the act of radiating is abortion? It is therapeutic concerning the mother and her cancer, and as far as the fetus is in any way, it cannot be compared at all to the act of mechanically breaking into the maternal uterus to eliminate it. It is a curative treatment, however much its inevitable consequence is the death of the fetus: it is a therapy of its lawful when the severity of the conditions, in this case, the intensity of cancer and the remaining time of pregnancy, prescribes it.

It will be said that in both interventions, abortion or radiation, the fetus also dies. But this consequence does not in any way equal to the two acts. Taking justice to the alleged offender by own hand or resorting to the authorities are acts that may have the same consequences, but no one would match them. The same goes for acts of stealing or honestly procuring much-needed money, even if they have the same intention and result. Popular wisdom expresses this moral difference with the saying that the end does not justify the means. In the case of radiation, the fetus dies despite treatment; in the case of abortion, the fetus dies from it.

About terminology, the real "therapeutic abortion" is the one I have simply called "therapy", because only very, very indirectly is an "abortion" ("indirect abortion"). I prefer not to call it abortion, and to reserve this word for abortion to dry, because I have well experienced that the noun is eaten at the adjective, creating in ordinary people the vague impression that there are "good abortions". I say this with all respect for traditional terms (therapeutic, indirect). The important thing is that the concepts are well defined.

Between the two figures raised here, abortion and therapy, there are many other possible ones, which doctors have hard listed these days. All of them have in common the good intention of saving the life or health of the mother. But some are therapeutic or curative, and others are larval or disguised ways of killing the innocent. True therapeutic abortion does not need to be legalized; The another, badly called that, should not be.

These distinctions may seem subtle. But if in moral and legal matters we do not want to paint with a flat brush, the brushstroke can only be subtle.