

Alternatives to Biological Conceptions

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Full Text: Better Than Divinity The sign hanging in the waiting room of the oldest and most respected in vitro clinic in the United States reads, "They say that babies are made in heaven-but we know better." For a generation raised on the science-fiction of Buck Rogers, Frankenstein's monster and Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the modern turn of events is hardly surprising. We now have our own versions of E.T. and Star Wars technology right at home in our imaginal legacy. It is an easy jump from comic book to genetics laboratory, gothic novel to doctor's office. If it can be imagined, it can be genetically designed. In a free country whose ethic no longer is backed by real gold, we find the standards of medical engineering of human life to be expedient for big business. People who want to be parents are big business. In fact, parents are the largest target group of "consumers" our free enterprise system preys on. The epidemic of infertility presently claims more than one in ten couples. By the time couples have been labeled "infertile," usually after one year for "younger families" and two or more years for "older families," they have been subjected to a set of medical rituals rivaling the best of Buck Rogers. Desperation. Sheer desperation. That can be the only motive for using some of the modern alternatives to biological conception. It is not merely a matter of dignity. Several of the medical procedures to "cure infertility" are painful, iatrogenic and expensive beyond the means of most people. If the "infertility" cannot be "cured" the options for "alternative gestation" are as provocative as E.T. in Peyton Place. Dignity in that scene is the least of the problems. A new morality is being added; the afterthought of evolution. Apollo's Hand What of the children who come to life assisted by Apollo's hand? Their geneology now includes the stainless steel organs of creation. What if my dedication in the book had to include an anonymous donor as my biological parent? Ancestors praised in family prayer with blanks and "John Doe" intoned and honored. Imagine if your life would never have come-to-be were it not for medical technology and the gestation in a surrogate mother's womb. Would you be happy, knowing that your folks went that extra mile to bring you planetside? What would it feel like if "Mother's Day" and "Father's Day" were celebrated with impostors? Stand-ins for a medical incorporation, these loving people wanted you "no matter what the cost." These questions are of course real for many people. (It is estimated that over six million adopted and otherwise are in this category). Adopted children are the most studied so far of those children who have multiple identity options. Lately children who would like to track down their biological parents are receiving help from organizations. This search includes not only adopted children but those whose fathers were "anonymous semen donors." Donor's Offering¹ is one such organization. It has multiple goals which include highlighting the "abuses of Artificial Insemination as it is usually practiced." The International Soundex Reunion Registry encourages all children of Artificial Insemination to learn about one another and who their parents are. One reason for this is to avoid incest. Candace Turner, who was conceived artificially herself in 1948 and who founded Donor's Offspring, told me that almost all their contacts, that is children of artificial insemination, had found their lives very difficult. The unexpected repercussions were problematic not only for the children begun through the miracle of technology but for the social fathers. Only one of the myriad problems, legal questions make the transfer sticky. And when the family divorces (all the families Candace Turner contacted had parted) who pays child support? Should the responsible party be the biological parents or parent, the donor, the surrogate, the medical lab or the donor? "Unless handled correctly, artificial insemination can be a nightmare, not a panacea." Ms. Turner speaking from the wisened perspective adds that "Conscious conception is of primary importance. This is heightened by Faith. . . . Spiritually, there are a lot of problems with A.I.D., A.I. of surrogates and A.I.H.2 as well as physically, etc.

But until more evidence is in, Donor's Offspring is taking a middle of the road approach and wants to be a resource for all infertile couples, offspring and all others with questions. Confidentiality can be maintained and a telephone network is spreading across the world as folks reach out to others in similar circumstances." One problem with a middle of the road approach is that sometimes you get hit from both directions. Ms. Turner in a later letter shared more of her personal story. "After weeks of effort to plan a conception by my husband's and my bio-rhythm charts with potential for good health, intelligence and stability, I gave up. Only one night a year would be perfect and it was already doubtful we could conceive with my husband's low sperm count and years of effort wasted. "I always wanted a 'conscious conception' but until one's partner is in total understanding and sympathy, how can one? So it seems that the first step in achieving such a conception is instruction on how to get relationship communication going. Of course, reading your book together should be a help. ". . . Legal matters seem so unimportant if that is all the space you're giving to the subject of divorce. I don't care about legal issues and divorce. It is the emotional ones; the love forsaken! The BIG lie that the medical professions says, 'A.I.D. saves marriages!' Ha! It destroys them! If a couple is going to divorce, why not do so beforehand. Therefore she can marry someone fertile and he can marry someone with children already. What is the number one thing that donor's offspring want in their parents? That they be married, even if not genetic parents! So we want the single girls thinking of A.I.D. to talk to us and reconsider the pain they cause us children, doubly, not to have a father or to know a father. . . . I've been raped and brutalized by people (who happened to be men and perhaps people I was looking for a father in) but that doesn't turn me against all men and the truth that children need good men in their conceptions and lives." The plight of people who want to be parents, but their bodies aren't cooperating is not an easy one. The core issue however is the parent's response to their uncooperative bodies/minds. Infertility is not just a personal concern, it is symptomatic of our culture. The many alternatives to biological conception are metaphors of our culture's sexual malaise and anti-life attitudes. Unlike fairy tales of ancient times, our modern medical responses to infertility deny the magical, the interface between body/psyche and tool. Instead, artificial insemination attempts to fix the problem, rather than promote the crisis in order to get at the source of the suffering. The person suffering is compartmentalized. The body goes to get fixed up in this clinic and the mind is sent to another place and the soul of course is often left on its own. If there be no religion practiced in the infertile person's life, the soul will seek healing in surprising ways. Depression, which is so common with infertility, is one example of the soul's desperate bid for attention. It is better to be wanted by the police than not at all. Infertile Triad The infertile couple is a dyad. There is no such thing as just one person in a couple being fertile while the other is not. This is not to say that recoupling might not produce different results. Often times both partners can conceive when with different, more fertile partners. Or sometimes the relationships themselves might be more conducive for conception. But in any given couple, there is oneness and hence infertility cannot be borne by just half of this oneness. In a dyad, what affects one affects the other. Since the incoming soul counts too, we should actually talk of the triad of infertility. There is no blame from the incoming soul's point of view. Blame has no place in the infertility relationship. The otherside of blame, guilt, is debilitating and an obstacle to healing. Sometimes repentance is appropriate as a precursor to atonement and healing. Yet no blame, no guilt will support the healing to its fullest. Infertility is an official epidemic. As with all epidemics, a certain panic prevails. This panic is natural. It is the soul's way of getting us to explore the borderlands. The edges, the fringes of soul, Pan's wild habitat. Getting pregnant is such an exploration and infertility is preparation for this greater unknown. Gestation (for both the mama and the papa) demands surrender to the unknown, the stretch of boundary. And an eventual letting go which is out of this world. Our bodies, by not cooperating with our plans, are forcing us to humility and that desperation the soul sometimes needs to accept something new. Let us be wary of the immunization program against the epidemic of infertility. The toxic thoughts injected into the body politic suggesting that things are more important than people. A reaction formation to infertility is the attitude that children decrease our resources. Infertility serves the larger cultural program which sees a competition between having more things vs. more children. Yet at the same time,

we are purposefully "educating" our children to be consumers in the American Dream. This is perhaps sour grapes for a dying culture, the sterile pursuit of things, wealth and power. As infertility touches someone, the ideosphere shifts for them into a childless reality. Out of compassion, sympathy, collusion we hide children from our infertile friends. It might be better if we helped them appreciate the reality, appropriateness, maybe even preference of their situation rather than tacitly support their fears with silence. Environments which are man-made are not "child-proof." Public territories are often a hazard to our children's lives. Parents are held responsible for any damage our children might inflict on the "real" world. Infertility is not something borne alone. The American dominant culture is a conspiracy of infertile dreams. Children somehow still are a sophisticated adult's embarrassment. They say that we are blatantly sexual. If they are our third or more child, then we can expect many to see us as selfish, sloppy or both. Children as Nuisance For a large segment of civilization in the Western world, children are a nuisance. Can we therefore make the connection between literal infertility and the barrenness of a culture without children? Yes. In these ways: The American Dream allows for 2.2 quota of children (two kids and one abortion?). Those that exceed or fall short of that ideal are penalized by the prevailing attitudes of society. However, the social environment at large makes it untenable for adults with any children to participate very fully. There are many rewards for being childless. Access and mobility are increased. The need to substitute things for the space in life children usually fill is also increased. And part of the American Dream is to own things. The time spent on tending children, instead, is given over to the maintenance of our possessions. And then we buy more things to take care of other things. This absurd extension creates robot butlers and replicant, pneumatic prostitutes. What are children all about from the soul's point of view? What meaning does this desire to sire have for modern humanity? Down to the bone-seed we are urged to procreate. "Be fruitful and multiply." Psychologically we see ourselves fresh in our children. Yet this urge is more than a conspiracy of chromosomes, a larger issue than our second chance. With so many mixed messages from our culture about fertility, from the "tax breaks" defining parents as a "special interest group" to the classy restaurants for adults only, it is no wonder our bodies are confused. If we are expected to become parents, we are also condemned, at the same time. To add insult to injury, there is a current myth that people who have babies become stupid. We all know the promising and brilliant young feminist who became a boring mother. No support for the great sacrifice people make to have babies is meager in the day to day world. But the soul knows of this sacrifice, even if the conscious mind does not. The soul understands that sharing life with children will exclude us from a multitude of social experiences with other adults. No wonder we panic. Why is a woman "barren" and not merely called infertile? Our bodies are so connected with the Earth, as Earth, that being childless is an outrage, an affront to our very substance, our grounding, our primal matrix. A "barren" woman not only panics herself but all of us! We are shaken to our cores when confronted with a sister's infertility. You see each woman is also our sister and our mother. An infertile mother is paradoxical and frightening. What if our primal mothers are infertile and our matrix barren? The end of creation is portended in mass infertility of the Earth, of the daughters of the Earth. When the women are no longer fertile, the Earth will likewise be sterile. The Oedipus story tells that when he was infertile so was his kingdom, both agriculturally as well as in human reproduction. He was being punished for the sin of incest. Incestuous Elements Perhaps there is value for our soul in looking imaginally at the dilemma of infertility as it relates to incest. When we get artificially inseminated, "the father" is often involved on the imaginal or mythical level if not literally as Donor's Offspring has found. If a turkey baster is instrumental in the process, even this says something imaginally about the patriarchy. Especially if Apollo in some form or another (surrogate father, i.e. the doctor) is involved, then we are participating mythically as well as socially in a conception with incestuous elements. Identity crises parallel the infertility epidemic. When one's father is "anonymous," or when one's conception involves a medical team, each leaving his psychic imprint on the process, no wonder identity lacks stability, lacks grounding. Some doctors allow the legal father to be present when they artificially inseminate or implant a baby in the legal mother. Other doctors, (male prostitutes) do not let the husband (legal father) participate even if by sight or sound, much less

touch in the conscious conceptions of their babies. Some of Apollo's sons are scientists who are combining big business with genetic engineering. They hope to relieve the suffering of infertility scientifically, manipulatively and no doubt for a big fee. The fathers of our babies are seeds. As women we have the power to discriminate which of the multitude of seeds we let into the egg-self. If we are assisted in the judgment mechanically, artificially, anonymously, etc. this imprint is passed on to our babies. We birth as we conceive. If we ask and receive assistance artificially in conceiving our babies, we might need like assistance in giving birth. The means is the ends in matters of fertility. All life processes each moment are a hologram for the entire experience. There are critical times however. Like conception and birth. And so at these times manipulating life carries that imprint of force forever. To what lengths will we go to fulfill our genetic contract? The procreative force is powerful-yet a woman's will and desire are just as strong. If we could just let be and surrender to the sexual force of the universe. It isn't about babies after all! Getting pregnant and having babies emphasizes the power and control aspects. We thereby reduce the procreative allied forces into something more akin to materialistic buyers, turning people into things for manipulation. In truth we cannot ever have our children anyway. Approaching the universe with our buyer's card, trying to get pregnant, rather than to just be who we are is problematic. God is not the wholesaler of babies and heaven's discount outlet the infertility clinic. Rather, we can take that strong desire to mother and be that mother now. We can care and tend many babies right now, rather than avoid them as painful reminders of our own infertility. I used to pray and pray over my babies, hoping nothing would ever happen to them. They were so precious to me and I begged God to let them be with me always. Well, something did happen to them, all of them. They grew up. And so might the infertility problem. It could always grow up. Pre-Baby Dialogue Conscious conception emphasizes the imaginal dialog with the prebaby. Even before physical incarnation takes place, we can meet our babies and get to know and love them. This pre-baby is only your imagination and it is actually the spirit of the child-to-come. Ask your pre-baby how it feels about any form of artificial insemination. Be honest with the answer. While you are dialoguing with your pre-baby, ask how being infertile truly serves you. All things on Earth serve. There is a purpose for your infertility. And actually all people are cyclically infertile, some more than others. The big problem with using medical rescues for infertility is that its meaning, its purpose sometimes lays hidden. Ask yourself honestly how being infertile serves you before you seek prescriptions for the body (M.D. Doctor), mind (Psychiatrist/Counselor), or soul (Priest). It is easy to feel like a victim when caught in the problem of infertility. In one sense we are most likely the victims of technology divorced from ethics and morality, but of course this realization does us no good if we are not able to learn how to avoid further problems. One rather obvious approach would be to avoid as much as possible the institutions that are part of the problem in the first place. Certainly the scientific medical establishment falls into this category in most cases. Men are particularly sensitive to infertility. It appears that most men have to assume such a rigid stance in order to fulfill the standard image of masculinity that in their minds infertility equates with loss of virility. The women's liberation movement has had many ramifications in the male psyche. One seems to be the fear that women will make good their threat to create without them. In fact this is now a real technological possibility. Sometimes it looks like men are trying to keep their bodies in a perpetual state of erection. To soften up might be equated in their minds with losing their erection. Men would benefit from more relaxation in this sense. This is a complex interaction. Certainly the men suffer from their roles also. One direction for both men and women which we haven't considered too much follows this train of thought. Perhaps it is difficult to say and hear with the universe whispering sweet reproductive nothings in our ears, but it is still an alternative to consider. Much of the energy to be a parent can be redirected into other channels. Creativity and nurturance can assume other forms. No doubt this will not be the interpretation that many will choose for alternatives to biological conceptions. We do want to emphasize the many problems that have arisen from technology's entrance into fertility. It is quite likely that A.I. and many of its technological offshoots will be looked back on some day with the same eye that remembers the I.U.D. Sidebar From Conscious Conception: Elemental Journal Through the Labyrinth of Sexuality. Footnote Notes 1 Donor's Offspring is an organization

emphasizing the perspective of the offspring caught in this technological maze of artificial alternatives to biological conception. see appendix for list of many such organizations. If you are considering A.I. or any other artificial forms we strongly recommend contacting Donor's Offspring first. They have much information about what to avoid and how to make the experience the most positive one possible. 2 A.I. stands for artificial insemination, A.I.D. means artificial insemination by donor, A.I.H. by husband. Another form is A.I. of a surrogate.

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