

ABORTION AS AN IMPERATIVE: the beginning and end of life**Cristina Burneo Salazar**

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The debate about decriminalizing abortion in Ecuador was censored by the nation's executive power in 2013. The national government and its agencies working in public health, women's rights and gender issues have isolated this subject and its complexities, to work toward an agenda deliberately "edited" in terms of women's rights that will always exclude abortion.

This reflection intends to reconsider arguments about abortion, including its criminalization and decriminalization within a broad framework that links it to other discussions about the beginning and end of life. Abortion forces us to reconsider what life is, when it starts, when it ends, in what ways we understand life today while living in a modern society marked by technological progress. If we want to understand the problem of abortion, we must think about technology when it's administered by the State and its correlations with the human body, as well as the State and modes of production that have historically sought reproduction of life to guarantee the reproduction of forces of labor. All these factors lead to new conceptions of what life is and how it should develop in relation to law.

It is not possible to talk about abortion without talking about euthanasia, suicide, artificial insemination, egg transfers, fertility treatments, organ transplant, and blood transfusion. All these circumstances of human life have forced us to formulate new questions and modify our answers about what life means, how it is administered, and how we intervene in its beginning and end. The abortion debate is not an isolated one, therefore, and includes all of these other discussions—they are all critical to thinking about life in relation to law.

If we agree, for example, that life is gradually gestated until there is a human being after a process, it is necessary to think if that gestation can be only "natural" or if it is legitimate to provoke it technologically. If you cannot terminate a pregnancy through technology, is it permissible to start one? If Ecuador is allowed to freeze eggs or keep sperm banks open, does that mean the State is allowing some to profit from the potential to generate human life?

Regarding other aspects of this subject, in some countries of the world certain cases of suicide have been seen as labor accidents when they are caused by conditions of poverty generated by the capitalistic model. Every time the debate about life moves backward, societies lose the possibility of thinking of scenarios never considered before that would promote a progression of rights, which would dignify human life. By prohibiting the debate on abortion, the issue of assisted suicide and passive or active euthanasia should also be banned, and that, of course, is absurd. These are problems that cannot be disassociated when talking about the law. In all these cases, it comes to life, the right to human dignity and integrity.

In the case of Ecuador, if the State prohibits free and safe abortion, will it also prohibit fertility clinics; organ donation or transplant? If the ban is coherent, States should think of administering the sexual act, as it generates loss of genetic material every time it takes place. Clearly, isolating the abortion debate contributes to maintaining its stigma and therefore perpetuating its criminalization.

Ignoring abortion in the context of a discussion widely supported by bioethics and bio-law and deliberately staying out of this discussion prevents the progression of rights of the population and the decriminalization of abortion. For decades, bioethics has raised the debate on abortion in relation to life and death. The diversity of the experience of people, their very existence, cannot be ignored; on the

contrary, this should be incorporated into the legislation, because only then can we aspire to a fair and renewed relationship between the state, women's bodies, and law.