
PHYSICAL AND PSYCHIC BIRTH COINCIDE. ABOUT BIOETHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE BIRTH THEORY (1972)

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After refusing the belief that a voluntary interruption of pregnancy (VIP) must necessarily lead to depression, the paper reports the clinical observation according to which, after a VIP, guilt feelings leading to depression *may* but do not have to inevitably arise in women, in their partners, in medical staff.

These kind of guilt feelings are centred on the self accusation of having taken away the possibility of a life to a child. So the point is whether the embryo and the fetus can be considered scientifically human life.

Surprisingly, it was psychiatry that gave an important answer to this relevant issue. As a matter of fact, the so-called Birth Theory - which has been laid down by the Italian Psychiatrist and Psychotherapist Massimo Fagioli since 1972 – is hard-and-fast as to this point; human life presupposes a psychic activity which is absent in the fetus.

According to this theory, the fetus is a biological existence which becomes a potential human being from the 22nd/24th week of pregnancy only. Such a potentiality of the fetus can occur only at the very moment of birth when the first stimulation of the retina, caused by the light, originates a transformation of the brain functioning, generating the beginning of its psychic activity in a specific form defined by the author as 'imaginative capability'.

It is even more surprising that the Birth Theory, initially elaborated on the basis of clinical observations and deductive reasoning, has recently received important, increasing backing from fetal and neonatal neurology.