

How to Understand the Cultural war Between Proponents of Pro-choice and Pro-Life Attitudes in Eastern European Countries



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Abstract

Background: Today in various countries around the world there is a dispute on the acceptability and legality of abortion. In Poland in October 2016, the contestation between the proponents of so-called pro-choice and pro-life attitudes took the form of mass street protests. Understanding the causes of a violent reaction of women facilitates comprehension of the essence of the dispute. Data on these social changes can be helpful in analyzing and subduing similar controversies in other countries.

Main Body: In our opinion, understanding the causes of the ongoing culture war requires at least a brief review of the historical development of views on the acceptability of abortion and a review of the current legislation and social circumstances in different countries of the world. Here it is important to outline the historical development of legislation in Eastern European countries. Then we will try to characterize the reasoning of the proponents of pro-life and pro-choice attitudes and their main philosophical arguments. This will allow us to present the trial of explanation of recent exacerbation of the contestation.

Short Conclusion: The people involved in the dispute do not generally know that in the essential records of religious dogma there is no data about the moral problem of abortion. The opinions of Christian clergy are based mainly on one of two possible ways of understanding the concept of the soul (personhood), taken from the statements of Thomas Aquinas, derived from the ideas of Aristotle. This is the so-called "Substance View", which does not link human personhood with the psyche, consciousness, but bases it on the theory of the presupposed existence of an immaterial soul associated with the material body right from the moment of conception. The mass street protests of Polish women in 2016 arose as a result of the confrontation of these speculative arguments with conscious dignity and the rights of adult women, their concern for their own safety and the realities of the relationships with their partners. These experiences could be useful in the case of the emergence of a similar confrontation in other countries of the world.

Keywords: public health, abortion, pro-choice attitude, pro -life attitude, legislation, philosophy, conscientious objection

Introduction

Nowadays in various countries around the world there is a dispute about the admissibility of abortion [1-3]. These disputes often have not only the nature of an ideological debate, but in many countries opposing legislative initiatives and different activities of public health organizations are proposed [2-4]. These controversies, vitally affecting most women, occur not only among the citizens of particular countries, but also among the representatives of different political parties, lawyers, doctors and other health workers, as well as various non-governmental

organizations. In addition to the current or changing legislation, the recent disputes also concern the right to refuse to perform medical procedures due to one's personal standpoint and the so-called conscientious objections of health workers [5-9].

Many articles discussing the current state of legislation in different countries are available [3,10 -15]. One can find, e.g. in Wikipedia, graphic illustrations of the distribution of countries in which there is strict legislation. These articles show that in European, North American and Asian countries there are only

a few where the laws on abortion are very strict. For several years, such strict regulations have been in force in Poland [16 - 18]. Recently here in our country, a battle started for the implementation of yet more stringent rules [19- 21].

Some publicists call the ongoing disputes, and even Mass Street protests a specific culture war. It is a phenomenon that has a significant impact on the domain of public health across the whole region, because it causes consequences in the form of frequent visits of women to neighboring countries where the regulations are not so rigorous. Data on these social changes can be helpful in analyzing similar disputes in other countries, therefore we believe it is worthwhile to present readers the essence of this polemic, which we are trying to do in this article.

The analysis of the reasons for this contestation will be effective after a brief reminder of the evolution of opinions on the acceptability of abortion over the centuries, and especially during the last few decades.

It is also necessary to present the development of legislation and the present situation in regard to the refusal to perform abortion by medical personnel due to so-called conscientious objection.

Main Text

A Brief Historical Review of Development of Standpoints on Acceptability Of Abortion

Women have had abortions in all cultures from the beginning of history. Carole Joffe cites studies that document it convincingly [3]. The earliest mention of abortion practices are found in the writings of the Chinese Emperor Shen Nung in 2737 B.C.; in the Egyptian Eber's papyrus in 1500 B.C. and in many writings of the ancient Romans and Greeks. Abortion, mainly due to the points of view of philosophers of the Stoic school, was accepted in the days of ancient Rome. Carole Joffe also discusses the significance of the corresponding fragment of the Hippocratic Oath, formulated 400 B.C. According to some interpretations, Hippocrates condemned in this text, only one of the unsafe methods of abortion, while in his other writings he discussed several different methods to carry out the procedure [3]. It seems that the unique mention of abortion in the Old Testament is the following passage 21: 22 of the Book of Exodus: [Exodus 21: 22. If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. 23. But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, 24. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot]. In the early stages of the development of monotheistic religions, the statements of clergy and theologians were varied and ambiguous. Early Islam writings state that abortion should not be performed after incarnation of the soul, and it was thought that this occurs 40 -120 days after conception. St. Augustine (354 - 430 A.D.), one

of the most influential Catholic theologians of the middle Ages promoted the concept of "delayed ensoulment." He wrote that a human soul cannot live in an unformed body. Thus, an abortion in early in pregnancy according to him is not murder because no soul is destroyed or, more accurately, only a vegetable or animal soul is terminated [21]. He believed, however, that abortion of the formed fetus, called "animatus", i.e. "having limbs and shape", is murder. His standpoint on the termination of early pregnancy was inspired by the opinions of Aristotle. The influential, well-known theologian, founder of the dogmatic foundations of Christianity Thomas Aquinas (1225 - 1274 A.D.) also considered only the abortion of an "animated" fetus as murder [21].

An important factor in the availability of abortion was that such services were provided by midwives that had long constituted a separate group of "artisans" of an ambiguous social status. Over the centuries, they were sometimes accused of witchcraft. The hierarchs of the Catholic Church began to take a more assertive, unfavorable position on the practice of abortion only in the sixteenth century. A rigorous position on abortion was declared by Pope Sixtus V in 1588 and it was repeated by Pope Gregory XIV in 1591. In the mid-nineteenth century, the attitude of the church hierarchy condemning women for interrupting pregnancy greatly intensified. Pius IX in 1869 abolished the distinction between the "fetus animatus" and "fetus inanimatus". At that time in many countries restrictive regulations were implemented.

In England during the reign of Queen Victoria, legislation was established stating that abortion is a serious crime. In the USA in the years 1850 -1870, abortion was banned in all states [3]. A similar position was taken by the American Medical Association. There was a century of struggle of women who underwent unsafe abortion practices performed illegally. Significant adverse consequences, the death of many women because of unsafe practices, led around 1970 to a change in the position of the American Medical Association. The group of so-called "Doctors of Conscience" and feminist organizations contributed to this change in attitude. On 22 January 1973, the US Supreme Court presiding over Roe vs. Wade declared abortion legal. The legalization of abortion and carrying out these procedures in appropriate safe conditions by professional, trained doctors and the implementation of new techniques (vacuum aspiration, Karman's cannula and the cervical anesthesia technique) resulted in over a twelve-fold decrease in the incidence of death and serious complications compared with the period when these interventions were carried out illegally. The decision of the Supreme Court and the spread of legal abortions were not accepted favorably by many associations and organizations that usually define themselves as "pro-life". Over the next 50 years, up to the present time in the United States there are ongoing contestations on this issue, manifesting themselves not only in the political debate and journalism, but also in further changes in

legislation (e.g. adoption of the so-called Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act in 2003).

In the years 1970 - 1980 in most European countries, similar regulations were introduced as in the United States. Carole Joffe assesses the current situation in the countries of the European Union as much more favorable for the pro-choice attitude [3]. Admittedly, there is very restrictive legislation in Poland, Ireland, Malta and stringent legislation in Finland, but in the European Union trips to another European country to carry out abortion is not punished. In the majority of EU countries even abortion "on demand" till 10 - 12 weeks of pregnancy is allowed. It should be noted that the standpoint of the majority of Protestant clergy is varied and not very restrictive. Birkhäuser considers the Protestant attitude exhaustively and writes: "for most Protestant bio-ethicists, as long as an embryo has no nervous system, no organs and no pain receptors, it cannot be seen as a human being sensu strictiori the zygote is not yet a "human being" [22].

A Brief Overview of Current Legislation and Social Circumstances in Different Countries of The World

In the world there are a few countries where abortion practices are not regulated by law. It is so in Canada, China, North Korea and Vietnam. In contrast, several countries of the world have a total ban on abortion and the threat of imprisonment exists. Such legislation is in Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Malta and the Vatican. Most European countries have liberal legislation permitting abortion "on demand". These legislations specify to which week of pregnancy this procedure is acceptable. The set time limit is different. For example, in Portugal, Croatia and Estonia the boundary term is 10 weeks, in most EU countries it is 12 weeks, in Spain and Romania 14 weeks, in Sweden 18 weeks and in the Netherlands it is 22 weeks. Very restrictive law allowing abortions only to save the mother's life exists in more than 30 countries. In Europe, the only country that is in addition to the aforementioned Vatican and Malta is Ireland. Besides those, very restrictive law is currently in force in Poland. There are many authors who provide information about the details of the current state of the law in all countries of the world [3,10 -15].

To put the situation in general terms, it should be noted that at the present time, three quarters of all women live in countries where abortion is permitted without extreme legislative restrictions [3]. For those women forced to seek the possibility of terminating pregnancy, the likelihood of encountering refusal to perform the procedure of abortion by medical staff by reason of so-called conscientious objections, despite the legality of such a procedure in the particular country, is also practically important. This situation occurs increasingly more frequently in some regions of the United States and in Europe for example in Italy and Poland [5-9]. The example of France and to some extent Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands shows that

liberal legislation enabling abortion even on demand is not accompanied by low birth rates [11]. Such a situation occurs in countries characterized by the highest rates of birth in Europe.

A Brief Outline of the Historical Development of the Legislation in Eastern Europe Countries

Understanding the changes in legislation on abortion in Eastern Europe requires consideration of the historical events that occurred as a result of the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia and establishment of the communist regime. The authors of the social system which prevailed here promoted an atheistic worldview. Then the Soviet Union gradually took political and cultural control over the all countries of Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union in 1920 as the first country in the world legalized abortion (although temporarily changed its position in 1936, but after several years restored this decision). Around 1950, all the Eastern European countries had legalized abortion. Such legislation was introduced not so much because of the views and expectations of citizens, but due to the imperial and military intentions of the regime.

At the same time, due to the lack of effective methods of contraception, abortion was massively used as a method of birth control. The incidence of abortion was here one of the highest in the world. After the collapse of the communist system, approximately in 1990, in most countries of Eastern Europe, there were social pressures to reevaluate the social policy. The importance of home and family returned. In Poland the changes were promoted by the Catholic Church [16-18]. In 1993 under the influence of Church hierarchs a very restrictive legislation was implemented. The law was enacted, according to which abortion can be performed legally only in three exceptional cases, i.e. when there is a serious threat to the life or health of the pregnant woman, which must be confirmed by two doctors; In the case when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest, which must be confirmed by a prosecutor and; In the case, when prenatal tests reveal serious and irreversible damage to the fetus - confirmed by two doctors. Over the next 20 years, various associations and political parties repeatedly raised initiatives for the implementation of even greater restrictions of women's right to abortion. Repeatedly the projects of such yet more restrictive laws were placed on the agenda of the Parliament.

In September 2016, the parliament of Poland began work on a bill proposed by an association called Ordo Iuris. This project provided an almost total ban on abortion (with the exception of threat to the mother's life) and severe penalties, not only for the doctors performing the procedure but also for the women [24-26]. On October 3, 2016, thousands of Polish women and men expressed their opposition to the proposed regulations of the total ban on abortion [27,28]. Around 80 000 men and women took part in street demonstrations organized simultaneously in approximately ninety-five cities of the country. After two

days, the ruling party withdrew this project from the agenda of the parliament [28,29]. Further statements of politicians and journalists indicate, however, that the controversy has not been resolved and that the dispute will almost certainly return.

The transformations in Poland contrast with the situation in the Czech Republic and Slovakia where the social policy consists in the promotion of sexual education, family planning and the use of effective contraception [30-34]. Kocourkova, a Czech author writes. "A decline in the abortion rate was achieved without legal restrictions to access to abortion; various factors were responsible for this outcome. In the Czech Republic, improvements in family planning and increasing awareness of reproductive health have played key roles in promoting responsible sexual behavior, whereas in Slovakia, the stronger influence of the Catholic Church has contributed to the prevention of abortion." [31]. Compared the prevalence of abortion and contraception use between the Czech Republic and Romania [33] They wrote in conclusion that "despite more liberal attitudes toward abortion, Czech women have a less frequent incidence of abortion than Romanian women and they have more relevant information about contraception, and their sexual behavior is more conscious and responsible" [33].

An Attempt to Characterize the Reasoning of Proponents of the Pro-Life Attitude

In the course of typically emotional conversations with people who are supporters of pro-life attitudes, the following arguments and inference reasoning are formulated. Biological life, human life exists from the moment of fertilization, it means from the moment of the appearance of a single cell – the zygote. Human life is sacred, blessed ("holy") and therefore should be subjected to legal and practical protection from that moment. The proponents of a pro-life attitude identify the zygote, the early stages of development of the embryo and fetus with the "human person". The supporters of the pro-life attitude are convinced that their opinions result from religious doctrine, and that, it is the only proper attitude in the light of current morality.

Their knowledge and convictions are based on the recent declarations of the hierarchs of the Church, and as the basis for moral evaluation they apply the current guidelines of the Catholic Church. The proponents of pro-life attitudes do not generally know the history of the development of the position of Christian churches for the admissibility of abortion, and their moral judgment is not subject for analysis from the point of view of different ethical schools. In talks with supporters of pro-life attitudes, it is difficult to discuss the essence of the phenomenon of life and details of current knowledge related to this phenomenon (DNA, genome, cellular cytoplasm) as well as knowledge about the natural processes of the loss of the early form of embryos by failure of implantation and early miscarriage. It seems that mainly on a subconscious level they place an extremely high value on the existential events involving

the occurrence of the sexual intercourse, regardless of the circumstances and the intentions of the couple who conceived the zygote, embryo, man. Even if the intention was not noble (casual intercourse without the intention of procreation, or even with conscious exclusion of the intention to conceive offspring, or as a result of rape) – the memory and awareness of the occurrence of sexual intercourse establishes the sanctification of the embryo. One could express this subconscious attitude by the phrase: "if you remember that you had sexual intercourse you are obliged irreversibly to protect the unborn embryo, regardless of your partner's emotional attitude and the expected future fate of the child".

This principle, in fact often a subconscious attitude only makes sexual intercourse have the same consequences regardless of whether it happened with the intention to conceive a child or not. Such a standpoint involves the problem of admissibility of abortion with the problem of the use of contraception. The supporters of the pro-life stance, due to their adherence to the indications of Church hierarchy should also be opponents of contraception. However, if they treat the use of contraception as a lesser evil and use it, then in the case of its ineffectiveness they accept the unwanted pregnancy as consequence of the "sanctification of each zygote."

It should be noted that the pro-life attitude is also promoted by attempts to change legislation related to the possibility of abortion. Amazingly, some of the people actively involved in the fight for such legislative regulations are in fact men. Talking with these people shows that they exhibit the characteristics of religious fundamentalism.

An Attempt to Characterize the Reasoning of Proponents of the Pro-Choice Attitude

Women opting for the right to make decisions about pregnancy justify their position as follows: Zygote, embryo, the early stages of development of the fetus is part of a woman's body. It happens that these cells die like many other cells in the human body. There is a permanent, frequent loss of unimplanted embryos and early pregnancy loss. There are no reasons to treat the early form of the embryo as a person. Treating the fetus as a separate person is justified only after the appearance of the action of the nervous system of the fetus, or even after the beginnings of his self-awareness, which comes into play only after 10 - 12 weeks of pregnancy.

The decision to be a mother is an inalienable right of a woman who can make it depending on the relationship with her partner, a real desire to have a child and other emotional and social circumstances of living. Particularly important here are the determinants of health and anticipated well-being (quality of life) depending on the contemplated planned decision. Making decisions about motherhood is the responsibility of her personal choice, which should not be affecting by the views or regulation, dictated by unacknowledged ideological

assumptions. Women opting for the right to make their own decisions about motherhood in particular, do not agree to changes in the legal regulations concerning the well-known exceptional cases, mentioned in the present restrictive legal regulations (pregnancy as consequence of rape, the threat of the woman's life or health, irreversible damage to the fetus). These women have a high sense of dignity and attribute great importance to their relationship and feelings for their partners and children. The rights of adult women cannot in their eyes stand above the rights of an unconscious embryo. To be in favor of the pro-choice attitude is usually a component of a broader set of beliefs that characterize people with a liberal-minded, democratic, libertarian and secular worldview. Some of these people declare themselves to be agnostic or atheist, however, many of these women stated that they are believers. In some countries, the secular views of the worldview may be derived not so much from the liberal, democratic, enlightened tradition but were established by left-wing socialist regimes.

The Main Philosophical Arguments of the Two Parties of the Dispute

Apart from common, popular beliefs, it is possible to consider the sophisticated, rather difficult philosophical considerations of the two parties of the dispute. There are many published articles discussing the philosophical arguments of the supporters of the pro-choice and pro-life stances. We will quote here these arguments only briefly.

In his well-known article, K.E. Himma emphasizes that the most essential point of the debate is whether the fetus is a moral person [34,35]. He writes that abortion rights opponents claim that abortion is murder and should be prohibited because the fetus is a moral person at the moment of conception and that the abortion rights proponents deny the crucial assumption that the fetus is a person. K.E. Himma argues that under dualist assumptions about the nature of the mind, the fetus is not a person until brain activity has begun. He postulates that it is a necessary condition for an object to be a moral person that it has a self and he maintains that to have a self it is necessary to have an active brain, which manifests itself by its electrical activity.

This argument was carefully analyzed by F.J. Beckwith [36]. He remarks that dualism can be seen from the other perspective, suggested already by Thomas Aquinas. The proponents of this concept assume that the human being is composed of the body and an immaterial substance animating all parts of the body, which is, however, not identical to the sum of the parts of the physical body. The immaterial substance is also called here the soul; however, it is not located in the brain only. This way of the understanding dualism, called "the substance view" focuses on the continuation of the existence of the human being since its beginning. Beckwith discusses the cases of anencephalic children and argues that the essence of a person is not necessarily bound with the brain [36]. The paradox should be noted that

the dualism of the kind "substance view" is derived from the opinions of the famous theologian Thomas Aquinas, who despite it acknowledged the concept of rather late ensoulment [37]. Nathan Nobis comprehensively and rigorously discusses Beckwith's arguments [38]. He emphasizes that the Substance View claim that fetuses and adults are the same "type" of being, the same "substance" and so "fetuses and adults are numerically identical". As is known, the Substance View tries to dilute the "Mentalistic, Consciousness Point of View". Nobis quotes Beckwith's arguments, who wrote that: "Mentalism justifies inequality, that is, the exploitation of beings with simpler mental lives by those with more complex mental lives. The idea is that if what might be called "moral status" is determined by properties that come in degrees or levels, then individuals who have them to a greater degree or level is entitled to exploit those who have them to a lesser degree or level." Nobis undermines Beckwith's arguments. He concludes: "If killing mindless, often microscopic, fetuses is morally comparable to the Middle Passage, slavery, lynchings, burnings at the stake, segregation and the like, stronger arguments are needed to show this, since Beckwith's do not." [38]. It is yet worth noting numerous articles by F. Kissling, who sees himself as an activist of the movement "Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC)" [39 - 43].

He wrote in one of his numerous articles: "Religious observers wonder why the church is so adamantly against abortion in every circumstance, despite the beliefs of its members..."; especially since in 1974 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith "fell short of calling it murder and was honest about the church's ambiguity over the personhood of a fetus or at what stage in development the creator endows a fetus with a soul ... This question has been debated by theologians since the early centuries of the church This hard-line position has removed the Church from a position in which it could help women and society understands the values which must underlie every decision to have an abortion." [41]. According to him, "in a Catholic theological context and actual state of morality, respect for women's right to abortion should be based on the following facts: there is no decisive position within the Catholic Church on when the fetus becomes a person; the principle of probabilism in Catholicism holds that when the Church cannot definitively answer a question, the consciences of individual Catholics must be primary and respected; the absolute prohibition on abortion by the Church is not infallible" [43]. He emphasizes that for members of "Catholics for a Free Choice", a central value in this complex matter is "the recognition that women are competent, capable moral agents who must be recognized as having the moral and legal right to make the decision about whether or not to have an abortion with minimal state intervention" [43].

The Reasons for Exacerbation of The Dispute

The significant increase in the controversy and disputes which occurred in Poland in 2016 between the supporters of the pro-choice and pro-life attitudes is important not only for

the quality of public health in our country, but is also important for understanding and predicting similar transformations in other regions of the world. It is particularly important to predict the magnitude of this debate and controversy which will undoubtedly arise in the United States [45-46]. Liberal pro-choice legislation is spread over the whole European continent with very few exceptions. There are three countries with very restrictive legislation including Poland, Ireland and Malta. The overwhelming pressure from a part of Polish citizens for the implementation of yet more restrictive legislation is a surprising phenomenon. Perhaps an attempt to understand the reasons for these transformations will make it easier to comprehend the essence of the dispute. Recently multiple studies have been carried out to evaluate the incidence of approval of each possible option of views about the acceptability of abortion [47,48]. According to these studies the majority of inhabitants in Poland do not want stricter legislation. According to analyzes of the Public Opinion Research Centre (CBOS) the belief that a woman should be able to terminate the pregnancy in a situation when it threatens her life or health or when the conception was the result of rape or incest, was expressed by 80%, 71% and 73% of respondents. More than half of respondents (53%) recognize abortion as acceptable also because of damage to the fetus.

An opposite opinion on the admissibility of abortion in these circumstances was expressed by 30% of respondents. While working on this attempt to explain the causes of exacerbation of the dispute, we have also carried out our own focused surveys, which we describe in detail in another paper [49]. But shortly, the results of our survey indicate that 36% of young women in Poland think that the present compromised legislation should be maintained and further 34% of women have the opinion that it should be liberalized. Only approximately 5% of young women think that the present legislation should be even more stringent. The data concluded from the survey performed in Slovakia and Czech Republic shows an interesting difference among the opinions of young women in these countries. Only a very small number of young women in the Czech Republic (5%) think that the present, existing liberal legislation should be tightened.

In Slovakia, however this proportion of such opinion is much greater. Here there are 24% of women, who think that the liberal laws should be tightened. The number of women in these two countries, which has no opinion on this subject is similar and rather high and amounts to approx. 33%. It is necessary then to attempt to explain what the reasons are for the increased activity of certain circles of society trying earnestly to tighten this legislation. We propose describing these transformations in terms of the "sequence of events" that led to this situation. Due to the historical events in our country which took place over the last 250 years or so, the role of the Church in society and authority of the Church in the Polish nation was significant. Poland as a result of the so-called "partitions" in 1795 lost its independence.

The decades of struggle for independence and maintaining national identity was supported by the Church. Anna Grzymala-Buse in an important recent book presents convincing arguments that when the activity of the church is intertwined with the struggle for sovereignty and national identity, then it acquires in a given society considerable authority [50]. This pattern of historical transformations occurred in Ireland, Malta and Poland. On the Polish lands, from the end of the 1980s, there has been a dispute between two ideological visions. One of them is a vision of Poland which is ethnic, nationalistic, Catholic, conservative, such as was formulated by Roman Dmowski and his political camp called the National Democratic Party, fighting for independence. The second of these visions is derived from the time of the creators of the Constitution of May 3rd, which assumes the existence of a civil, multinational state, tolerating a multitude of religions, to which later the ideas of liberal freedom, market economy and democratic organization of the State were added.

In 2015, power was seized by the heirs of the above characterized political camp of the National Democratic Party. The electoral victory largely resulted from the support obtained from the Church. The hierarchs of the Church for their support in the political fight require concessions on its behalf, on several levels. One of those expectations is to make legislative changes on patterns of behavior consistent with the current content of the teachings of the church. This increases the proportion of people with fundamentalist religious convictions and increases their social activity.

The reasons for the fierceness of the disputes in this field also result from the intensification of general fundamentalist attitudes [51,52]. One may be tempted to formulate theories trying to explain the reasons for this intensification. Well, in recent years there have been changes in the sources of obtaining information and becoming familiar with widespread opinions. In addition to classic media, today specialized Internet portals and social media play a significant role. Many people live in so-called "blisters" of information.

The ideological differences sharpen. The proponents of certain ideological camps live in a cultural environment of people like them. The community of a particular blister forms an ideological background and as one journalist put it: "tribes strengthen ranks." Mary Aiken describes these phenomena extensively in her book "The Cyber effect" [53]. Instead of the possible free proclamation of one's own point of view, the phenomenon of widespread hating, harassment from a distance of people who think differently occurs. She writes even about so-called "cyber-sadism". This "cyber effect" can even have an impact on the neurophysiological level formulated the so-called False Tagging Theory, stating that people with extreme fundamentalist standpoints exhibit structural and functional changes in the ventrolateral parts of the medial prefrontal lobes [55].

The researchers justify their theory by obtaining the results of psychometric scales measuring the severity of authoritarianism, fundamentalism and specific religious beliefs in a group of patients who demonstrated changes in the prefrontal lobes by brain imaging (CT, MRI) compared to the control groups [54,55]. There has been a social and psychological phenomenon involving the inclination of persons who are fundamentalists to “shift sentiments through the manipulation by language expressions and suggested images”. The fundamentalist proponents of pro-life stubbornly in place of the terms embryo, fetus use the words child, man, person [61-62]. To influence their opponents they make use of premeditated images depicting the course of the procedure of abortion in the late period. These manipulations effectively influence the beliefs of their opponents [62]. The use of such manipulation is obviously a manifestation of the desire to prove their opinions at any cost. It is a sign of the severity of the dispute. Apparently, promotion of the pro-life attitude is a manifestation of the struggle for the victory of the overall “package of conservative points of view” [56].

At the same time, contemporary social circles of liberal intellectuals and journalists are passive, not very active. This passivity stems from a recently widespread sense of fragility of the democratic pattern of the organization of society. This passive attitude has arisen probably from the sense of guilt for the economic crisis, increasing material inequalities and victories of populist movements. The mass street protests of women which occurred in Poland in October 2016 showed, however, that religious, political and social considerations no longer play a crucial role if there is a violation of the dignity of women and their biological safety, particularly when non-governmental organizations and feminist associations are active.

Probably the mass protest of women arose as a result of the confrontation of the speculative philosophical arguments of the of pro-life supporters attitudes, an increasingly clearly perceived essence of the existence of adult women. In the days of that protest the psychologist Paul Drożdżiak in an interview with Krystyna Romanowska wrote: “The request for stricter regulations is completely detached from the fact that a woman is a part of the whole. She has emotions, functions in a relationship, depends on other people, on what they think. What to do with the fact that often in the context of abortion is the devastating discovery that the man does not want either the woman or the child but she loves him? Or she does not love him and does not want to have a baby with him? We are not entitled to bring down love and its tragedy to establish rights or not. It’s not this dimension [57].

Conclusion

It seems to us that to understand the essence of the aggravation of the dispute between the supporters of pro-choice and pro-life attitudes, the following facts and information are

crucial: Common knowledge of the course of the development of points of views on the acceptability of abortion over the centuries and the last decades is very superficial. These standpoints are based on stereotypical views expressed actually by the followers of the two camps. The people involved in the dispute generally do not know that the essential records of religious dogma there is only one not binding mention of the issue of abortion. The opinions of Christian clergy were formed over centuries and rely on only one of two possible ways of understanding the concept of the soul (personhood), taken from the writings of Thomas Aquinas, who derived the idea from Aristotle. This is the so-called “Substance View”, which does not bind human subjectivity (personhood), to the operation of the nervous system, brain, psyche or consciousness.

It presupposes the existence of an immaterial soul associated with the whole material body, not just the brain. It is also assumes that the dualistic relationship takes place from the moment of conception, and therefore also applies to the zygote and early stages of the embryo. This belief is not derived from religious dogma but is inferred from philosophical concepts, formed in the late middle Ages. The dispute is exacerbated by the fundamentalists who manipulate the common opinions using language distortions (e.g. calling an embryo as child or a person) and using graphic images of an abortion in late pregnancy. The Polish women’s mass street protest in October, 2016 arose due to women being aware of their dignity, subjectivity and the rights to decide about their own fate. The dispute between the followers of the metaphysical concepts of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas were confronted with the emotions and rights of informed adult women.

It seems that in the case of resumption of the unsolved controversy or the appearance of a similar confrontation in other countries of the world, it is useful to be aware of the collision between speculative arguments resulting from the metaphysical “Substance View” camp with the thinking of modern women. Underscoring the irrationality of a dispute based on feeble grounds is a rational, moral obligation [58]. In our opinion, the numerous records of statements of women forced to initiate a defense for the sake of their own safety and dignity is very useful [59-62].

Declaration

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Authors’ Contributions

AB formulated the topic of the submitted article and presented it to the co-authors, discussed with them the outline of the reasoning, gathered the conclusions and wrote the manuscript. AR-M knowing the Czech language discussed the topic with

lecturers of Czech and Slovak universities to get to know their attitudes and presented these opinions during our discussion. JK organized the survey and focused discussion with the members of the staff and students of the Faculty of Humanities of Thomas Bata University in Zlin and presented these opinions to Polish and Slovak co-authors of the manuscript. All the authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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