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March 24, 2019: The Two Party Lies that Fuel Political Alienation in America

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Title: The Two Party Lies that Fuel Political Alienation in America

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3/24/2019—The title refers to the fundamental lie at the heart of each political Party coalition in America. These lies make it impossible for either Party to conduct open inquiry into our situation. Thus, politics becomes unreal.

If you live by a lie, you die by a lie.

My friends would recognize the Republican Party lie—human caused climate change is not happening. Thus we don't need to take any radical action to forestall it.

A lot of Republican politicians know this is untrue. They know climate change is happening and is dangerous, but they pretend that there is time to do something about it. So they can live with themselves.

But some people I have met aggressively deny the facts. They have some theory about false data showing warming or about sources of the change other than human produced greenhouse gases. Or, they claim that the consequences will not be that bad.

They don't trust the people bringing the news of climate change—the UN, environmentalists, scientists, etc.

As readers of this blog know, I am not one to pretend to know much about science. If a scientific consensus tells me there is liquid water under the surface of one of the moons of Saturn, I just accept it. How would I know?

Similarly, although I can see warming in my own lifetime—very significantly so (in Pittsburgh, below zero temperatures are now rare while they were more prevalent in the 1980s, when I arrived here)—if scientists told me this was just a temporary cycle, I would accept that. They tell me it is climate change and I can see that is dangerous if true.

There is a reason for this lie. The Republican coalition is strongly individualistic. Climate change is not. The Republicans honor private property. Climate change says no one is an island. Cutting down your tree affects me (so does the oxygen cycle).

But no thinking person can easily be a Republican given this lie. Worse, there is no real pushback. There is no institutional presence pushing for action on global warming in the Republican coalition.

The lie on the Democratic Party side is simpler. It is that human life does not begin at conception. At least here there is no serious scientific debate. When else could my life begin but at my conception?

The problem for the Democrats, of course, is abortion. Many women feel that they need abortion to be a legal option to live their lives with any kind of autonomy. Capitalism teaches that we are free to make money independent of others. Pregnancy puts the lie to that assertion.

Liberal theory says that we are free to make our own decisions. Pregnancy ends that too. Pregnancy is dependency.

Plus, society is sexist. The consequences of pregnancy fall practically totally on the woman and hardly at all on the man.

So, abortion is felt to be an absolute necessity.

I get that since I am surrounded by it.

But you still cannot get to freedom by a lie. Human life begins at conception. So the only honest thing to say, as Catharine MacKinnon has said, is that despite the biology, the law has to be that protected life begins at birth. That is an honest statement. Brutal but honest.

I can never make up my mind on what the law of abortion ought to be. Certainly where the health of a mother is threatened by the pregnancy, abortion should be legal. And I would interpret that very broadly.

But that is not really the issue. A healthy young woman with bright life prospects is just not ready to have a child. She has no interest in the man with whom she had sex. And she is pregnant. The life she wants is over if she cannot get a legal abortion. More to the point, she will get an illegal one if she has to and that will threaten her life.

Life begins at conception is the truth. It doesn't tell you that the morning after pill should be legal or not. As they say, biology is not destiny. These are social judgments.

Anyway, those conversations will never happen until that truth of human life's beginning is squarely and honestly faced. But that is not going to happen anytime soon.

In defense of the Democratic Party, unlike the situation with climate change, there is something of a pro-life faction. My Senator, Bob Casey, is one of its leaders. But it is certainly not a nationally significant group.