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Editorial: Rights and Procreative Liberty

DORIS SCHROEDER

In 1994, John Robertson coined the phrase “procreative liberty.” He argued that prospective parents’ autonomy should remain as unconstrained as possible by state interference with one proviso, namely: “procreative liberty be given presumptive priority in all conflicts, with the burden on opponents of any particular [new reproductive] technique to show that *harmful effects* from its use justify limiting procreative choice.”¹ In other words, unless opponents of procreative liberty can prove harmful effects of the use of new reproductive technologies, state intervention is unwarranted. Similarly, John Harris argued that reproductive choices “must be taken seriously as moral claims.”² According to Harris, a recent report by the British Human Fertilisation and Embryology authority (HFEA) did no such thing. By ruling out sex selection for reasons other than avoiding serious sex linked disorders, they attempted to “formalise the tyranny of the majority and to institutionalise contempt for the principles of liberal democracy.”³ In his paper “Parental Love and the Ethics of Sex Selection” (the first of two on the subject), Peter Herisone-Kelly takes a standard intuition (“the tyranny of the majority”) about a clash between parental love and sex selection to test whether a philosophical argument could be produced in support of it. Thus, he develops a possible philosophical argument to support the prescriptions by the HFEA.

Notes

1. Robertson JA. *Children of Choice: Freedom and the New Reproductive Technologies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; 1994:16, my emphasis.
2. Harris J. Sex selection and regulated hatred. *Journal of Medical Ethics* 2005;31:291–4 at p. 293.
3. See note 2, Harris 2005:294.