



Atheists and the Unborn

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In his recent Beacon blog post “[Abortion Extremities](#),” Graham H. Walker cites three tests for human life in the womb: living or dead tissue, human or non-human, and a distinct DNA fingerprint. As he notes, the pre-born entity also has a separate brain, nerve, cardiovascular, digestive, excretory, respiratory, musculoskeletal, immune, endocrine, and reproductive systems. These empirical tests do not exhaust the arguments for the preservation of the pre-born.

The late Christopher Hitchens, an orthodox atheist and author of *God is Not Great*, argued that life begins at conception because there is no other place where it can begin. As an atheist, Hitchens had no use for the concept of “[ensoulment](#),” at some point between conception and birth, that allegedly confers full human status.

Consider also the view of the late Nat Hentoff a “[pro-life Jewish atheist](#),” and former [senior fellow of the Cato Institute](#). For Hentoff, a change of address does not make you a human being. So for the great civil libertarian and jazz critic, the pre-born were definitely human.

The late Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, was born on March 15, 1933. Christopher Hitchens believed Ginsburg’s life began at conception. Nat Hentoff believed Ginsburg was just as much a human being on March 1, 1933, as she was the day she “changed her address” at birth some two weeks later.

With the abortion debate flaring up in the wake of Texas’ new law, the views of atheists Hentoff and Hitchens should be taken into account.