**Eclipse of Reason (1987)** [1]

By: Abdi-Moradi, Sepehr Keywords: Abortion [2]

_Eclipse of Reason_ is a 1987 anti-abortion [3] documentary film directed, filmed, and narrated by Bernard Nathanson, an obstetrician in the US. American Portrait Films released the film in 1987 featuring Nathanson’s commentary and footage of an abortion [4] of a four-month-old fetus [5]. The film also featured the testimony of women who had suffered following similar procedures. In _Eclipse of Reason_, Nathanson equates the fetus [4] to a person, likening abortion [3] procedures to murder and arguing for the illegalization of abortion [3]. This documentary was a sequel to Nathanson’s first documentary film, _The Silent Scream_ released in 1984. Both documentaries argued for the illegalization of abortion [3], which had been decriminalized in 1973 in the United States. _Eclipse of Reason_ was one of the most influential films that garnered public attention to the abortion [3] debate in the US during the 1980s.


_Eclipse of Reason_ begins with a brief narration by Charlton Heston, a Hollywood actor who opposed women’s rights to legal abortions. In the introduction Heston claims that there are ten times more performed abortions than open-heart surgeries, claiming that the media has failed to inform the public of the details of abortion [8]. Heston prefaces the rest of the film, warning the viewers that they will witness death, but says that viewing such material can benefit viewers by decreasing their ignorance about the procedure. He concludes by labeling aborted fetuses as victims.

After Heston’s introduction, Nathanson discusses different types of abortions and then uses an anatomical model to describe steps in a late-term abortion [3]. The film shows the inside of an actual uterus [9] using a fetoscope to show a developing four-month old fetus [4]. Nathanson then uses a plastic model to introduce viewers to the dilation and evacuation [10] technique (D&E) used before the procedure. Nathanson begins by demonstrating the first step that involves dilating the cervix [11] and then breaking the membrane surrounding the fetus [4], thereby releasing the amniotic fluid surrounding the fetus [4]. The enlargement of the cervix [11] enables the insertion of forceps into the uterus [9] to remove parts of the fetus [4]. As in _The Silent Scream_, Nathanson claims that the fetus [4] can feel pain, contrary to the opinion of most doctors and to medical research.

Nathanson also claims that around 7,500 serious complications occur annually with second and third trimester [6] abortions. These complications include major hemorrhages, perforated uteruses, uterus [9] infections, and emergency hysterectomies.

The film then transitions to the testimonies of some doctors because they said the procedure had negative moral implications. Next, an anonymous woman claims that after her abortion [3], she had uterine and intestinal damage. Another woman says she suffered psychologically as a result of seeing the remains of her aborted fetus [4] and considered suicide. Both women report feeling deceived by medical practitioners, as they did not anticipate those ramifications arising from their abortions.


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**Sources**


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**Subject**
- Abortion
- Late-term abortion
- Silent scream (Motion picture)
- Nathanson, Bernard N., 1926-2011
- National Abortion Rights Action League
- Pro-life movement
- Fetus
- Documentary-style films
- Obstetrics

**Topic**
- Outreach
- Religion

**Publisher**
Arizona State University. School of Life Sciences. Center for Biology and Society. Embryo Project Encyclopedia.

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**Format**
Articles

**Last Modified**
Wednesday, July 4, 2018 - 04:40

**DC Date Accessioned**
Sunday, February 12, 2017 - 01:10

**DC Date Available**
Sunday, February 12, 2017 - 01:10

**DC Date Created**
2017-02-11

**DC Date Created Standard**
Saturday, February 11, 2017 - 07:00

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