

Pregnant People

Can we not call women women?



by Theodore Dalrymple

The *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA) runs articles under the rubric of JAMA Insights. Sometimes they illuminate subjects other than those they are ostensibly about. Recently, for example, there was an article titled *Breast Masses in Biological Females*. Biological females? Surely, and with what now appears as commendable concision, they were once known as women? But the article treats that word as if it were inherently abusive or derogatory. The Circumlocution Office could learn a thing or two from JAMA:

In 2019, there were an estimated 3.7 million persons living with female breast cancer in the United States.

Or again, in a section of the article subtitled Pregnant or Lactating People, we read the following:

Pregnancy associated breast cancer, at 1 year postpartum, or during lactation, is rare but is increasing as people delay childbearing.

What lies behind this extraordinary phraseology, written by a biological female with a diploma in diagnostic and curative activities? Is it true ideological belief or cowardice, or some combination of the two? When people are forced to say things that they do not believe, they make efforts to believe them in order to hide their lack of courage from themselves. When they do this, they often become militants for the lies that they have adopted as their own.

There is a whole hinterland of dishonesty behind this phraseology, of course. Even the term living with, rather than, say, suffering from, is weaselly, as if those with the disease had chosen a cohabitee and were heroically making the best of it. One way or another, a mad (and very boring) ideology has infiltrated an important bastion of medicine. As things fall apart, and no one seems to be able to do anything about it, the marginal becomes central to our concerns, the fiddle is played while the city burns.

First published in [*The Critic*](#).