

A critical discussion on the ethics of abortion?

[Family](#), [Abortion](#)



Most cultures accept the premises that it is wrong to kill another human being. If murder is an absolute truth, cultures, which allow killing, can be persuaded through reason that murder is wrong. For example the Aztec empire when discovered in the 16th century would keep human blood pouring down the steps of their teocallis (Aztec temples). They did this because they believed without constant human sacrifices the cosmos would stop existing. Simple reasoning tells us this is not the case; human sacrifice doesn't make a difference to the cosmos. However, are we wrong to judge other cultures and people by are own standards?

Are we not being liberal and open minded enough? Well if that is the case I will make up my own rules and kill YOU now! I believe you disagree with that. Absolute truths are there for a reason, to be obeyed. If absolute truths exist, it is logical to assume that there are absolute truths for everyone; otherwise it wouldn't be an absolute truth. For the person who cries out " I am the god of my own universe... there are no absolutes," I ask them, " are they ABSOLUTELY sure about that!!! " and, if you are the " god of your own universe", then I am the god of mine and I say it is fine for me to kill you.

Surely this is ridiculous? However the wrongness of killing is not primarily explained by the brutalisation of the killer but rather the premature ceasing of life for the individual. What the individual is being deprived of is not a past life but a future existence, a loss of future consciousness. So IF it is wrong to kill other human beings, what IS a human? Biologically humans are made when the egg with 23 chromosomes joins a sperm with 23 chromosomes; this creates a fertilised egg called a zygote, which has 46 chromosomes.

Therefore this is the beginning of life. The egg by itself is not alive and the sperm by itself is not alive. Life can only come into existence when the sperm meets the egg and develops. Therefore I say to Catholics, that using contraception in sex is no more killing a potential baby than a Catholic person masturbating. A potential life is ONLY formed when the egg meets the sperm and growth begins. A sperm or egg on it's own is not a potential life just the ingredients for life. For a sperm or egg on their own do not contain the complete DNA of a human.

Life is only formed when both the egg and sperm meet (we are all DNA, we are all life). SCIENCEtells us that the instance the egg meets the sperm; a complete set of unique DNA is formed that will last a lifetime. Everyone in the world is unique and science tells us this uniqueness was formed milliseconds after conception. The unique DNA holds the complete characteristics of the future baby, child, teenager and old man. For the fetus, the baby and the old man are one in the same DNA. Therefore from the moment of conception the complete characteristic's of what we will be is established.

Defendants of abortion disagree with the premises that the fetus is a human being from the moment of conception and instead believe as Thomas states " only a bit of tissue that will become a person at birth. " Therefore this statement suggests a person's rights only begins after birth. This statement therefore is saying a fetus in its first weeks has the same rights as a fetus hours before birth. However how many people would accept to aborting a baby just before birth? Though according to the pro-abortionist the fetus is only a bit of tissue, until birth when it becomes a person with rights.

However to determine the moral status of abortion you must distinguish what attributes are needed to be a member of the moral community, what does it mean to be a person with rights? Mary Anne Warren defines a human being as " a full-fledged member of the moral community that is also a human being. " These are moral entities capable of respecting and inventing moral rights. To be morally human Warren identifies certain traits that must be present such as sentience, emotionality, reason and self-awareness. Therefore you can spot species, which deserve moral respect from these traits.

She uses an example of an alien arriving and using these qualities to determine whether it deserves moral respect. If these behaviours cannot be identified in certain species then they cannot be given moral respect and be regarded as " a person. " She distinguishes this " moral sense" from the " genetic sense" of a human. Warren believes that for abortion to be wrong you must prove whatever is genetically human to also be morally human. She believes fetus's can only be genetically human and therefore do not fall under the category of a human, thus forfeiting human moral rights.

Despite Warren's observation that a seven-month-old fetus can feel pain and respond to external stimuli, she reasons that this still does not put the fetus under the category of personhood. Therefore she concludes a seven month fetus is no more a person than non-human animals. However if only those people who have psychological attributes of a person can enter into moral contracts with others, what then is our duty not to inflict pain and suffering on animals or to another level small babies.

Suffering however is a misfortune when experienced by us, so we should therefore uphold and shun away from participating in the suffering of animals or other humans. For if we are going to kill animals or infants we will do so in a way, which brings about the least amount of suffering. Regarding animals Kant has argued that treating animals with care is important for the sole reason that in doing so mans heart won't harden in their treatment of humans. However Feinburg shows treating infants with care is important because they need to be trained in moral behaviour so by treating them with care benefits us.

However this argument shows, just as we can treat with care the infants we intend to keep we can kill the infants we intend to discard. In the same way we can treat with care the fetus's we intend to keep but discard the fetus's we don't want. Warren argues in some situations it can be practical anyway to abort babies or even young infants. This is in cases when the current population is unable to sustain new life. It seems barbaric that creatures, which possess developed social structures and morals could result to such behaviour.

From a utilitarian perspective however in some circumstances this outcome could be argued the most beneficial to the majority of society. However in normal circumstances it seems absurd to pick and choose infants who can live or die which could be argued have the same moral standing as fetus's or animals. Bearing in mind this Don marquis believes a different approach is needed, this approach regards the question of whether the fetus deserves the right to life. A premature death results in the loss of the future goods of

consciousness therefore killing is wrong because it deprives a person of a " future like ours.

Fetus's will become human and develop and grow into sentient creatures therefore having dispositions like ours, so does this mean they deserve the same chance as us? The misfortune of contracting an incurable disease is that the disease denies that person a future like ours that they would otherwise have and which they would no doubt rather have. The will to live is strong for life is sweet, and because we recognise this, doctors will do their up most to preserve someone's life who is unconscious or suicidal because they don't want to deny the person the chance to have a future like ours.

In the same way a fetus or infant whether unconscious or not deserves a chance to experience future consciousness for no one would like their future conscious or the chance to have a future consciousness prematurely eliminated. However the future like ours argument does pose some problems. The degrees of wrongness in killing do seem to be in proportion with the victim's age. For a 5-year-old child has more potential future than an 80-year-old man, leading from this it would seem more right to deny an 80 year old man a future like ours than a 5 year old child.

However stating as Marquis puts it, " adopting the legalequalityof murder", can put down this criticism. Some have argued that contraception is denying a potential FLO when conception is possible. However since at the time of conception there is no individual to be harmed, there is no entity with a FLO, there is just millions of possible potential FLO but nothing with an actual one.

For in the case of contraception nothing has been harmed therefore there was no potential suffering.

Despite pro-abortionists disagreeing to "drawing a line" to where a fetus becomes a human with rights, many agree that the fetus has become a person with characteristics well before birth. Are they drawing a line here? Do you draw the line at the birth of the child which when born still does not necessarily possess the qualities of personhood. Does this mean you can treat small babies like animals which its characteristics are more similar to, however as I mentioned earlier, causing suffering is wrong. Surely you should treat the baby like the species it is from with the set of morals that it will grow into.

All species under the banner of the same DNA should be treated with the same moral respect even if they haven't developed the capacity or will never - such as disabled people. These people have observed and agreed that a young fetus does have human characteristics such as internal organs, limbs and brain activity. However the developments of this young fetus have all come from the DNA initiated moments after conception, therefore the moment of conception is the beginning of the person, which then will grow.

However pro-abortionists still argue that at conception the fetus is just a clump of cells and no more a person than an acorn is an oak tree and no more valuable than a lifeless rock. Thomson suggests that even if life begins at conception it does not necessarily follow that abortion is morally impermissible. He suggests the possibility that a woman's right to decide is stronger than a fetus's right to life and that to deny a woman the choice of

abortion is to deny her the right to control her own body. This is outlined by the use of an analogy of a famous violinist.

I would like to suggest that this is not an acceptable argument in the debate about abortion because there is a different duty in sustaining life and looking after new life, which originates in you. The analogy states that you have been kidnapped and connected to a violinist in order to keep him alive and only you have the qualities for this purpose, to unplug yourself from him would result in the violinists' death. This analogy is suggesting that all human beings have a right to life and despite unwillingly being connected to the violinist, disconnecting yourself would not be giving the violinist a right to life.

To stay consistent the anti-abortionist would have to stay in bed with the violinist however long that may be because all humans have a right to life. This analogy is trying to suggest that someone's right to decide what they do to their body is greater than someone's right to life? I'm sure you would be outraged if you were unwillingly and knowingly put in this situation. Although if you were feeling generous you might decide to save the violinist by staying connected, if 1 hour of being connected to him would save his life.

However that is the individual personal decision to make. A law, which required you to stay in bed with the violinist, would be an unjust law. If the right to decide is greater than the right to life, Thomson is saying, then the anti-abortionists premise of life beginning at conception is irrelevant. This analogy is trying to distinguish whether people who oppose abortion will make an exception, if the conception was due to rape and therefore as the

violinist analogy puts forward, the participant was unwilling. Therefore do some people have a less of a right to life than others?

Surely there is no distinction between the circumstance that life is created, life is life and people have the same feelings however conception takes place. A test tube baby is still an original, unique life. Rape is wrong but is it right to punish the innocent party (the baby). If anyone is going to be killed as a result of rape, surely that should be the rapist?! A pro-abortionist could argue that the mother is the innocent party and therefore is being punished through the conception. Again the question comes down to the premises of whether a right to life is greater than the right to choose.

However just because a fetus is down to rape doesn't make that new life any less important - it is still a life. However I would like to suggest that there is a difference in sustaining life and promoting new life. There is a difference of responsibility in life as a result of a pregnant woman (regarding the fetus). For all of us need our organs to function and we don't have a responsibility to sacrifice ourselves and are organs or freedom to sustain life randomly because we are life ourselves and have the same right to sustain our life and not give our bodies to the goodness of life for everyone.

If this statement is wrong I challenge everyone to go down to the hospital tomorrow and willingly sacrifice themselves for the good of sustaining life (or violinists!). However new life is the result of conception, this conception is not sustaining life but rather giving new life, this is completely different. The violinist analogy poses the question that there is a ladder of people who have more right to life than others. A human chose that the violinist's life

was more important to sustain than the person who was attached to him, what about the violinists responsibility to promote life.

If someone is being forced to keep you alive, life isn't being promoted but the opposite is occurring. The violinist analogy automatically assumes that one person is more valuable to sustain than another. Therefore this leads us to the question; can we use a person who is less valuable to society in order to sustain the life of someone who brings more value to society, such as use murderers and rapists in this way and their organs? The question this raises is, what human has the right to decide who lives or dies or how you use your body.

In the violinist analogy a human decided that someone's life was not as valuable as the violinist's. The anti-abortionist can argue that this example is not acceptable to the debate. There is a difference in sacrificing yourself to SUSTAIN existing life and sacrificing yourself to KEEP new life. Existing life was their before you decided or were forced to sustain it (e. g. sustaining the violinist) but new life originates in the person and wasn't around before. The person who was attached to the violinist was attached to sustain the violinist's life NOT to keep a new unique life.

A new life comes into existence though conception at birth. The person attached to the violinist was sustaining his life but the violinist did not originate in the person that was attached to him, it was a different situation and not properly relevant to the abortion debate. The issue is complicated if the mothers life is in danger as a result of the pregnancy. If we conclude that all have a right to life, can we add to the mothers right to life the right to

decide? There's no doubt the mother unlike the fetus has the opportunity to decide and if she is acting in a way as to save herself, she is acting in self-defence.

Thomson here uses the house analogy here to illustrating that a woman has a right to defend herself from the threat of an innocent baby in the example a woman and child are both in a house, the child is growing and will eventually unknowingly crush the woman. This illustration is designed to provoke us. However is it the woman's body to decide? For the woman is a carrier and the baby is a separate life. Thomson does say that it is indecent for seven-month pregnant women to have an abortion so she can go on a trip to Europe. People instead should get their priorities in order.

Thomson believes each situation should be judged on its own merits. For an example she believes it acceptable for a 14-year-old pregnant rape victim to have an abortion to relieve the trauma but the situation changes if a pregnant woman changes her mind or became pregnant because of no contraception. In other words a person behaves in a way that could have been avoided. However as more and more people start using abortion as a form of contraception we should ask the question, what did the sexual revolution of the sixties bring us?

It brought us, sexual diseases, single parents, less stability, AIDS, increased abortions - "free love" is starting to look more like "free death". The issue of abortion comes down to people's own moral belief. Human logic can dictate, which I have highlighted that abortion could be justified in extreme circumstances although should not be used constantly as a form of

contraception. However the biblical view states very clearly that abortion is a sin. From the moment of conception the DNA cells have divided into areas and the characteristics of that life has been established. In the eyes of God therefore it has been given the breath of life.