

Don Marquis's essay "Why Abortion Is Immoral" presents a philosophical argument against abortion based on the idea that killing is morally wrong because it deprives the victim of a valuable future. Marquis argues that fetuses, even if not considered persons, possess a valuable future and, therefore, have the same right to life as born human beings.

Marquis begins his essay by arguing that the debate over the morality of abortion has centered on the wrong question. Rather than debating whether or not the fetus is a person, he contends that we should ask whether killing the fetus is morally wrong. Doing so corrects mistakes in both the standard pro-life and pro-choice arguments. The core problem with the pro-choice position is that its criteria for personhood are too narrow. Their standard would render infants and humans with certain disabilities as non-persons. The problem here is that we consider it wrong to kill such individuals, but the pro-choice proponent cannot explain why. The core problem with the pro-life position is that it is too broad. If it is wrong to kill a zygote/fetus because they are genetically human, then it is wrong to kill human cancer cells. Both approaches are thus flawed.

The "Future Like Ours" Argument:

The "future like ours" argument posits that killing is morally wrong because it deprives the victim of a valuable future. Marquis argues that what makes killing wrong is not the loss of life itself but the loss of the valuable experiences, activities, and projects that would have constituted the victim's future. He asserts that this applies equally to fetuses and born human beings, as both have a future like ours. Marquis argues that fetuses have a future like ours because they have the potential to become rational, self-aware beings with a wide range of experiences, projects, and activities that make life valuable. He claims that this potential gives them the same right to life as born human beings, making killing a fetus as morally wrong as killing a born human being.

Objections:

Marquis anticipates several objections to his argument and responds to each in turn. One objection is that not all futures are equally valuable, and some people's futures may be so bleak that they would be better off not existing at all. Marquis responds that this objection is not relevant to his argument, as he is concerned with the value of the fetus's potential future, not the actual quality of that future.

Another objection is that Marquis's argument does not account for cases where the fetus is likely to be born with a severe disability or illness. Marquis responds that his argument still applies in these cases, as the fetus still has a future like ours, even if it is likely to be shorter or less fulfilling than the future of a healthy person.

Implications:

Marquis's argument has several important implications for the debate over abortion. Firstly, it implies that abortion is morally wrong in the vast majority of cases since it involves killing a fetus with a valuable future. Marquis acknowledges that there may be cases where abortion is justifiable, such as when the mother's life is in danger, but he argues that these cases are rare

and should be treated as exceptions rather than the norm. Secondly, Marquis's argument implies that other forms of killing, such as euthanasia and suicide, are also morally wrong, as they involve depriving the victim of a valuable future. This has important implications for debates over end-of-life care and the right to die. Finally, Marquis's argument implies that our moral obligations to fetuses extend beyond the right to life. If fetuses have a future like ours, then we have a moral obligation to protect their interests and ensure that they have the best possible chance of realizing their potential. This has important implications for debates over reproductive rights and access to healthcare.