



# THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION ABOUT ABORTION

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Let's talk about one of the most emotionally charged subjects there is -- abortion -- but in an unemotional way. Also, let's not touch on the question that most preoccupies discussion of the subject -- whether abortion should be legal or illegal. The only question here is the moral one: Is ending the life of a human fetus -- moral?

Let's begin with this question: Does the human fetus have any value and any rights? Now, it's a scientific fact that a human fetus is human life. Those who argue that the human fetus has no rights say that a fetus is not a person. But even if you believe that, it doesn't mean the fetus has no intrinsic value or no rights. There are many living beings that are not persons that have both value and rights: Dogs and other animals, for example. And that's Moral Argument Number One: A living being doesn't have to be a person in order to have intrinsic moral value and rights.

When challenged with this argument, people usually change the subject to the rights of the mother -- meaning the right of a mother to end her fetus's life under any circumstance, for any reason, and at any time in her pregnancy. Is that moral? It is only if we believe that the human fetus has no intrinsic worth. But in most cases, nearly everyone believes that the human fetus has essentially infinite worth and an almost absolute right to live. When? When a pregnant woman wants to give birth. Then, society -- and its laws -- regard the fetus as so valuable that if someone were to kill that fetus, that person could be prosecuted for homicide. Only if a pregnant woman doesn't want to give birth, do many people regard the fetus as worthless. Now, does that make sense?

It doesn't seem to. Either a human fetus has worth or it doesn't. And this is Moral Argument Number Two: On what moral grounds does the mother alone decide a fetus's worth? We certainly don't do that with regard to a newborn child. It is society, not the mother -- or the father -- that determines whether a newborn child has worth and a right to live.

So, the question is: Why should that be different before the human being is born? Why does one person, a mother, get to determine whether that being has any right to live? People respond by saying that a woman has the right to "control her body." Now, that is entirely correct. The problem here, however, is that the fetus is not "her body;" it is in her body. It is a separate body. And that's Moral Argument Number Three. No one ever asks a pregnant woman, "How's your body?" when asking about the fetus. People ask, "How's the baby?"

Moral Argument Number Four: Virtually everyone agrees that the moment the baby comes out of the womb, killing the baby is murder. But deliberately killing it a few months before birth is considered no more morally problematic than extracting a tooth. How does that make sense?

And finally, Moral Argument Number Five: Aren't there instances in which just about everyone -- even among those who are pro-choice -- would acknowledge that an abortion might not be moral? For example, would it be moral to abort a female fetus solely because the mother prefers boys to girls -- as has happened millions of times in China and elsewhere? And one more example: Let's say science develops a method of determining whether a child in the womb is gay or straight. Would it be moral to kill a gay fetus because the mother didn't want a gay child?

People may offer practical reasons not to criminalize all abortions. People may differ about when personhood begins; and about the morality of abortion after rape or incest. But with regard to the vast majority of abortions -- those of healthy women aborting a healthy fetus -- let's be clear. Most of these abortions just aren't moral.

Good societies can survive people doing immoral things. But a good society cannot survive if it calls immoral things moral.

I'm Dennis Prager.