

Five Bad Ways to Argue about Abortion

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To review, pro-life advocates contend that elective abortion is a serious moral wrong because it takes the life of a defenseless human being. This simplifies the abortion controversy by focusing public attention on just one question: Is the unborn a member of the human family? If so, killing him or her to benefit others is a serious moral wrong. It treats the distinct human being, with his or her own inherent moral worth, as nothing more than a disposable instrument. Conversely, if the unborn are not human, killing them for any reason requires no more justification than having a tooth pulled.

Pro-life advocates defend their position with science and philosophy.

Scientifically, few people dispute that individual human life begins at conception. Unlike sperm and ovum, which merely contain human genetic material, the embryo possesses the active (inherent) capacity to develop itself into a fetus, infant, child, and adult. It is a distinct, unified, self-integrating human organism. Dr. Landrum Shettles, the first scientist to achieve conception in a test tube, writes that conception not only confers life, it "defines" life. That is to say, at no point does the distinct organism that came into being undergo a "substantial change" or change of nature. It is human and will remain so. It is an immature human, as is an infant, but a human being nonetheless.

Philosophically, embryos differ from newborns (or, for that matter, toddlers) in terms of size, location, and development, but these differences are *not* morally significant in the way abortion advocates need them to be.

For example, everyone agrees that embryos are small—perhaps smaller than the dot at the end of this sentence. But since when do rights depend on how large we are? Men are generally larger than women, but that hardly means they deserve more rights.

Development also fails to disqualify the embryo as fully human. A four-year-old girl is less developed than a 14-year-old one, yet no reasonable person would conclude that she is less than fully human because of it.

Location fares no better. As Dr. Frank Beckwith points out, *where* you are has no bearing on *who* you are. When you rolled over in bed last night you changed location. Did you stop being you? What about when you moved from the den to the kitchen? When people say that birth makes the unborn human, my question is simply this: How does a simple change of location--from inside the womb to outside the womb--change the essential nature of the unborn? Why should anyone accept the fact that a journey of

seven inches down the birth canal changes a non-human tissue mass into a valuable human we ought to protect?

Nonetheless, some people ignore the scientific and philosophic evidence I have presented and argue for abortion based on self-interest. That is the lazy way out. If we care about truth, we will courageously follow the facts wherever they lead. Here are five common mistakes people make arguing for abortion.

Mistake #1: confuse objective claims with subjective ones¹

When pro-life advocates say that abortion is morally wrong because it takes the life of a defenseless child, they are making a particular *type* of claim. Specifically, they are making a *moral* claim about the rightness or wrongness of abortion.

Many people, however, misconstrue the kind of claim the pro-lifer is making in order to respond to one they like better. Consider the following responses to the statement, Abortion is morally wrong.

"That's just your view."

As a guest on the television show *Politically Incorrect*, super model Kathy Ireland gave a carefully reasoned scientific and philosophic defense of the pro-life position. The show's host, Bill Maher, shot back with something like, "Kathy, that's just your view."

What's wrong with this response? Maher was confusing a *moral* claim with a *preference* claim. But there is a difference between disliking something (say, for example, a particular flavor of ice cream) and thinking it is morally wrong. Put simply, when pro-life advocates say that abortion is morally wrong, they are not saying they personally *dislike* abortion or would *prefer* that people not have one. Rather, they are saying that elective abortion is *objectively wrong* for everyone, regardless of how one feels about it. This is why the popular bumper sticker "Don't like abortion? Don't have one!" misses the point entirely. It confuses the two types of claims. Try this: "Don't like slavery? Don't own a slave!"

Now it may be the case that pro-life advocates like Kathy Ireland are mistaken about their claim. Perhaps their evidence that abortion unjustly takes the life of a defenseless child is weak and inconclusive. But instead of proving this with facts and arguments, abortion advocates like Bill Maher ignore the evidence altogether. "Well, that's just your view." This not only relativizes the pro-lifers claim, it is intellectually lazy. It attempts to dismiss evidence rather than refute it.

Imagine if I were to say, "There is a pink elephant in the corner of the room just beneath the window."² How should you respond to my claim? Perhaps I'm mistaken (and chances are I would be), but it would do no good to say, "That's just your view." The

¹ Gregory Koukl, *Ten Bad Arguments against Religion* (audio cassette). Order at 1-800-2-REASON.

² Illustration is taken from Koukl, *Ten Bad Arguments against Religion*.

problem is I was not offering an *opinion*, I was claiming to be *right*. To refute me, you must show that my claim is false. The correct response is to say, "Your evidence is lousy. We looked in the corner and there is no elephant."

But again, Maher did not do that. At no point did he challenge her facts and arguments. What he said in effect was "Go away Kathy. You have your views and I have mine." This was very condescending because he did not even entertain the possibility that she had good evidence for her claim. Nor did he acknowledge the type of claim she was making.

To sum up, Maher was confusing a preference claim with a distinctly moral one. Preference claims cannot be evaluated as true or false because they are matters of personal taste. You cannot reasonably argue that vanilla ice cream is objectively better than chocolate.

But moral claims are different. They can be evaluated as true or false based on the evidence. They do not say, "This is better *tasting*," they say, "This is *right*". Kathy Ireland's claim was, Abortion is wrong because it takes the life of a defenseless child, and I think I'm right. Maher's glib response did nothing to refute this.

In fact, one could stop Maher dead in his tracks by saying, "Bill, it's just your view that it's just my view."

"Don't force your morality on me."

A student at a Southern California college said this to me after I made a case for the pro-life position in her sociology class. She was in effect saying, "Morality is relative; it's up to me to decide what is right and wrong." We call this *moral relativism*, the belief that there are no objective standards of right and wrong, only personal preferences. Therefore, we should tolerate other views as being equal to our own.

Relativism, however, is seriously flawed for at least three reasons.³ First, it is self-refuting. That is to say, it cannot live by its own rules. Second, relativists cannot reasonably say that anything is wrong, including intolerance. Third, it is impossible to live as a relativist.

1) Relativism is self-refuting--it commits intellectual suicide. The student said it was wrong for me to force my views on others, but she could not live with her own rule. Although our dialogue was pleasant, she clearly tried to force her views on me.⁴

Student: You made some good points in your talk, but you shouldn't force your morality on me or anyone else who wants an abortion. It's our choice, isn't it?

³ For a full refutation of relativism, see Greg Koukl and Francis Beckwith, *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998).

⁴ The tone you set for these types of exchanges should be polite and calm, never combative.

Me: Are you saying I'm wrong?

Student: I'm not sure. What do you mean?

Me: Well, you think I'm wrong, don't you? If not, why are you correcting me? And if so, then you're forcing your morality on me, aren't you?

Student: No, I just want to know why you are telling people what they can and cannot do with their lives.

Me: Are you saying I shouldn't do that? That it's wrong? If so, then why are you telling me what I can and cannot do? Why are you forcing your morality on me?

Student (regrouping): I'm confused. Look, the simple fact is that pro-choicers are not forcing women to have abortions, but you want to force women to be mothers. If you don't like abortion, don't have one. But you shouldn't force your beliefs on others. All I am saying is that pro-life people should be tolerant of other views.

Me: Is that your view?

Student: Yes.

Me: Why are you forcing it on me? That's not very tolerant, is it?

Student: What do you mean? I think women should have a choice and you don't. It's your view that's intolerant, wouldn't you say?

Me: Okay, so you think I'm wrong. What is it you want pro-lifers like me to do?

Student: You should let women decide for themselves and tolerate other views.

Me: Tell me, what exactly do pro-choicers believe?

Student: We believe everyone should decide for themselves and tolerate other views.

Me: So you are demanding that pro-lifers become pro-choicers.

Student: What?

Me: With all due respect, here's what I hear you saying. Unless I agree with you, you will not tolerate my view. Privately, you'll let me think whatever I want, but you don't want me to *act* as if my view is true. It seems you think tolerance is a virtue *if and only if people agree with you*.

Put succinctly, her argument for tolerance was in fact a patronizing form of intolerance. She spoke of moral neutrality, but tried to force her own views on me.

A recent editorial in the *Toronto Star* was similarly intolerant of pro-life advocates. While decrying the "single-minded moral supremacism" of those who call abortion killing, journalist Michele Landsberg writes:

Will no priest or minister publicly resolve to stop the indoctrination of youth to view abortion as murder? Is none ashamed of the blood-drenched holocaust vocabulary used so cynically (and anti-semitically) to whip up fervor for the crusade? Where are the outspoken cries of conscience by bishops and cardinals who should be appalled by the evidence of links between anti-abortion fanatics and far-right militias, neo Nazis, and white supremacists? Is there no religious leader who regrets his church's role in feeding this blind frenzy? Will none of them repent of their excesses, will none call a halt to their sickeningly manipulative campaigns of "precious little feet," their fake "documentaries" about screaming fetuses? You'd think that the world had enough lessons in the dangers of hate speech.

Like hers? It doesn't seem to trouble Ms. Landsberg that her own vitriolic rhetoric could incite abortion advocates to commit acts of violence against pro-lifers. She continues:

It was the unbridled hate speech of fundamentalist fanatics in Israel who spurred on the "devout" murder of then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin....We've seen how homophobic rantings from right-wing American leaders, notably the Senate republican leader, led to escalating gay bashings, culminating in the heart-wrenching death of Matthew Shepherd in Wyoming....Denominational schools [should] begin to teach respect for the laws of our pluralistic society, rather than preaching single-minded moral supremacism.⁵

Again, like her own?

Notice what is going on here. She decries "moral supremacism," but says that anyone who disagrees with her view on abortion is an indoctrinator of youth, a fanatic, an anti-Semite, a neo-Nazi, a white supremacist, a manipulator of facts, a purveyor of hate speech, homophobic, a gay-basher, a religious bully, responsible for the death of Matthew Shepherd, and finally, a fundamentalist fanatic like those who murdered Yitzhak Rabin.

One can hardly imagine a finer piece of self-refuting rhetoric--all, of course, in the name of tolerance.

While driving my sons to a baseball game at Dodger Stadium, a young woman in a white pickup truck began tailgating me. Visibly angered by a pro-life sticker on my rear window, she stayed on my bumper for a mile or so. Finally, she pulled beside me and

⁵ Michele Landsberg, "Words, Actions Can Fight Anti-Choice Violence," *Toronto Star*, October 31, 1998.

extended a certain part of her anatomy skyward as she passed. She then cut in front of me.

At that moment, I noticed a bumper sticker on her truck. It said, "Celebrate Diversity." The message was clear: In a pluralistic society, we should tolerate the views of others. Ironically, the driver saw no contradiction between her unwillingness to tolerate (or celebrate) *my* point of view and her bumper sticker that said we should tolerate *all* points of view. That is what I mean when I say that relativism is self-refuting.

2) It is impossible for a moral relativist to say that anything is wrong, including intolerance. If morals are relative, then who are you to say that I should be tolerant? Perhaps my individual morality says intolerance is just fine. Why, then, should I allow anyone to force tolerance on me as a virtue if my preference is intolerance?

The truth is, a moral relativist cannot legitimately say that anything is wrong or truly evil. My colleague Greg Koukl once challenged a relativist with this question. "Do you think it is wrong to torture babies for fun?" She paused, then replied, "Well, I wouldn't want to do that to my baby." Greg responded, "That's not what I asked you. I didn't ask if you *liked* torturing babies for fun, I asked if it was *wrong* to torture babies for fun." The relativist was caught and she knew it. She chuckled and went on to another subject.

If it is up to us to decide (rather than discover) right and wrong, then there is no difference between Mother Theresa's morality and Adolf Hitler's morality. Hitler was not evil; he just had preferences different from our own.

3) It is impossible to live as a moral relativist. As C.S. Lewis points out, a person who claims there is no objective morality will complain if you break a promise or cut in line.⁶ And if you steal his stereo, he will protest loudly. If I were a crook, I would reply to the relativist, Do you think stealing stereos is wrong? Well, that's just your view. My morality says it's perfectly acceptable. Who are you to force your views on me? Simply put, moral relativists espouse a view they cannot live with.

I think you are starting to get the picture. **Relativism is not tolerant** of other views. In fact, it tries to suppress them. Here is another example of what I mean.

During the 2001 winter semester, pro-life students at the University of North Carolina displayed 20 large panels (each 6 feet by 13 feet) depicting the grisly reality of abortion. Known as the Genocide Awareness Project (GAP—see www.abortionno.org), these pictures have been displayed at over 100 universities nationwide. In response, pro-abortion students at UNC refused to participate in a structured, public debate on the issue, but demanded instead that campus police forcibly remove the display. One pro-abortion student, Marcus Harvey, insisted the display was intolerant, ignorant, and must be removed.

⁶ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1996) p.19.

I wrote a reply to Mr. Harvey that was published in *The Daily Tar Heel* on-line:⁷

Marcus Harvey's comments about the Genocide Awareness Project are typical of today's so-called pro-choicers. Instead of refuting the pro-life argument that it's wrong to dismember members of the human family simply because they are in the way and cannot defend themselves, he chastises the campus police for not suppressing ideas that he personally disagrees with.

This is very intolerant of him. His message couldn't be clearer: Agree with me or else.

Unfortunately, Mr. Harvey has no clue about the true meaning of tolerance. Classical tolerance means that I defend your right to speak even if I disagree with your argument. In fact, the very concept of tolerance presupposes that I think you are wrong. Otherwise, I am not tolerating you; I am agreeing with you!

For Mr. Harvey, tolerance means something very different. It means this: Agree with me or I will call upon the police power of the state to suppress your ideas.

There is a name this and its not tolerance: It's called fascism. Thankfully, the university knew better and the GAP display went forward despite attempts to censor it.

Mr. Harvey: Please don't force your morality on the rest of us.

Moral relativism is expressed one other way: "I'm personally opposed to abortion, but I still think it should be legal."

When people say this, I ask a simple question to clarify things. I ask *why* they personally oppose abortion. Invariably they reply, We oppose it because it kills a human baby. At that point, I merely repeat back their words. "Let me see if I got this straight. You oppose abortion because it kills babies, but you think it should be legal to kill babies?"

Would these same people argue that while they personally opposed slavery, they would not protest if a neighbor wanted to own one? This was precisely what Stephen Douglas did during his debates with Abraham Lincoln.⁸ That argument did not work with slavery and it will not work with abortion. Either elective abortion kills a defenseless child or not. If it does, we should not tolerate it. Period.

⁷ *Daily Tar Heel* on-line, March 8, 2001, http://nc002.campusmotor.com/read_comments.html?ID=2548

⁸ *The Lincoln Douglas Debates*, ed. R.W. Johannsen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965) p. 27. See also *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), vol. III, pp. 256-7. Cited in Hadley Arkes, *First Things: An Inquiry Into the First Principles of Morals and Justice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986) p. 24.

Mistake #2: Attack the person rather than refute the argument

Instead of defending the abortion act itself, some "pro-choice" advocates personally attack those who do not share their views. At a 1995 "Rock for Choice" concert in Pensacola Florida, vocalist Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam shrieked from the stage:

I'm usually good about my temper, but all these men trying to control women's bodies really piss me off. They're talking from a bubble. They're not talking from the street, and they're not in touch with what's real. Well, I'm f---ing mean, and I'm ugly, and my name is reality.⁹

He later said that unlike pro-life advocates, he would never force his beliefs on anyone.

During an HBO special, comedian Rosanne Barr told the audience:

You know who else I can't stand is them people that are antiabortion....I hate them. They're ugly, old, geeky, hideous men. They just don't want nobody to have an abortion, cause they want you to keep spitting out kids so they can molest them.¹⁰

Do you see what is happening here? Instead of defending their views with facts and arguments, Rosanne Barr and Eddie Vedder are attacking the character of pro-lifers. We call this the *ad hominem* fallacy. It is fallacious reasoning because even if the personal attack is true, it does nothing to refute the pro-lifer's argument that the unborn are members of the human community.

Let's grant, for the sake of discussion, that pro-life advocates are hideous old men who molest children, as Roseanne Barr contends is true. How does this in any way refute the pro-life claim that abortion takes the life of a defenseless child? Clearly, it does not. The attack is therefore irrelevant to the *argument* the pro-life advocate is making.

Unfair chastisement

Sometimes the personal attack comes from within the pro-life movement. Speaking at a recent pro-life convention in Alberta, a local cleric chastised right to lifers for being "the rudest people I have to deal with, and I don't like it."¹¹

Why are pro-lifers rude? Apparently they focus too narrowly on abortion when they ought to consider the broader "life issues" such as occupational safety, AIDS, poverty, and capital punishment. The result, the cleric said, is a "fractured Christian witness that hurts the cause."

⁹ Cited in Kim Neely, "Where Angels Fear to Tread," *Rolling Stone*, May 5, 1994.

¹⁰ Cited in Paul Duncan, "The Perils of Abortion," *Evangel*, January, 1995.

¹¹ The material in this section adapted from my article, "Pro-Life Groups Would Make Fatal Mistake Heeding Advice," *The Report Magazine*, June 19, 2000. (www.report.ca)

The cleric is typical of many on the political left who insist that because pro-life advocates oppose the willful destruction of an innocent human being, they must therefore assume responsibility for all of society's ills. In other words, you are not truly pro-life unless you treat the deforestation of the Amazon with the same moral intensity that you do the unjust killing of a human fetus. This is careless thinking and highly unfair to those who take abortion seriously.

Imagine the gall of saying to the Canadian Cancer Society, "You have no right to focus on curing cancer unless you also work to cure AIDS, heart disease, and diabetes." Or, try telling the Canadian Heart and Lung Association, "You cannot reasonably oppose cardiac arrest unless you fund research aimed at stopping all loss of life." Ridiculous indeed, but how is this any different from what the cleric told pro-life advocates?

Consider what he is demanding. Local pro-life groups must take their already scarce resources and spread them even thinner fighting every social injustice imaginable. This would be suicide for those opposed to abortion. As Frederick the Great once said, "He who attacks everywhere attacks nowhere."

Contrary to what some think, the abortion debate is not about poverty, capital punishment, the redistribution of wealth, or protection of the environment. It's about one issue: What is the unborn? The answer to that question trumps all other considerations. This is why secular objections to the pro-life view based on choice or privacy also miss the point entirely. Do we allow parents the choice to abuse children as long as they do so in the privacy of the home? Clearly, we don't. If the fetus is human, we should not harm it in the name of privacy anymore than we would a toddler.

In the final analysis, the cleric's remarks are not an outrage but a distraction. He sounds too much like secular critics who argue that right-to-lifers are hypocritical to oppose abortion unless they also adopt unwanted babies. Well, maybe we are and maybe we aren't, but how does my alleged unwillingness to adopt a child justify an abortionist killing one? Imagine how bizarre it would sound if I were to say, "Unless you agree to marry my wife, you have no right to oppose me mistreating her." Or, "Unless you agree to adopt my toddler by noon tomorrow, I shall execute him." Either way, if you reject my ultimatum, it does nothing to justify my evil treatment of innocent persons.¹²

Attacking pro-lifers for their speech

On July 11, 2000, a knife-wielding man attacked Vancouver (BC) abortionist Garson Romalis in a downtown clinic. Abortion advocacy groups seized on his brush with death

¹² For the moment, we will assume there are not two million American families who want to adopt unwanted infants, as is the case. See "Adoption Group Sets Record Straight About Abortion Film," National Committee for Adoption press release, December 5, 1990.

to score cheap political points against their opponents, notably Canadian Alliance Party leader Stockwell Day, who opposes abortion.¹³

Day was quick to condemn the attack against Romalis as “outrageous and untenable,” but that did not satisfy local abortion advocates. Marilyn Wilson, president of the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League, said Day had “indirectly sanctioned” the violence against Romalis with his extremist rhetoric.

Why was Mr. Day responsible for the attack? It’s really quite simple: He disagrees with Ms. Wilson on abortion and has said publicly that elective abortion is the unjust killing of an innocent human being. “Day is going to try and deny that he would support any violence,” she said in a press release, “but his rhetoric does incite other people who share his beliefs against abortion to violence.” She then called Day a “fanatic” for “the amount of anti-choice, extremist rhetoric that’s out there.”

Bear in mind that to Ms. Wilson, “fanatic” and “extremist” mean anyone who deviates in the slightest from her own position, which is that abortion should be legal for any reason whatsoever during all nine months of pregnancy. If you say that elective abortion takes the life of a defenseless child, as Day believes it does, your irresponsible rhetoric will cost an abortionist his life.

Ms. Wilson is using scaremongering tactics to poison the public debate over abortion. Her statements are intellectually dishonest for at least four reasons. First, let’s assume that pro-life rhetoric does in fact lead to acts of violence against abortionists (though there is no good reason to suppose that this is so). Would this in anyway refute the pro-life argument that elective abortion unjustly takes the life of an innocent human person? Keep in mind that pro-life advocates do not merely state their case, they buttress it with scientific and philosophic reasoning. If Ms. Wilson thinks we are wrong about fetal personhood, she should patiently explain why our arguments are mistaken and why fetuses should be disqualified from membership in the human community. But instead of refuting the pro-life view, she attempts to silence it with personal attacks.

Second, it is blatantly unfair of Ms. Wilson to demonize pro-life advocates for espousing their sincerely held beliefs. Let’s assume that I’m an animal rights activist opposed to the sale of fur. If a deranged environmentalist firebombs a local clothing store, am I responsible? More to the point, is Ms. Wilson responsible if, upon reading her press release, a pro-abortion activist shoots Stockwell Day for the purpose of saving the community from such an awful extremist? (In a press release one day prior to the stabbing, Wilson accused Mr. Day of favoring “state-sanctioned violence against women by forcing them to bear children they may not want.”¹⁴) If she is serious that merely disagreeing with her on abortion is itself an incitement to violence, then let’s not fool around: Ms. Wilson should lead the charge to ban all pro-life speech. (Actually, she would like that, but lacks the courage to say so publicly.)

¹³ The facts from this story, as well as some of the analysis, come from Andrew Coyne, “Opinions are not Crimes,” *The National Post*, July 14, 2000.

¹⁴ Canadian Abortion Rights Action League press release, July 10, 2000.

Third, it does not follow that because a lone extremist stabs an abortionist, the pro-life cause *itself* is unjust. Dr. Martin Luther King, for example, used strong language to condemn the evil of racism during the 1960s. In response to his peaceful but confrontational tactics, racists unjustly blamed him for the violent unrest that sometimes followed his public demonstrations. Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago argued that if Dr. King would stop exposing racial injustice, black people would be less likely to riot. The Mayor's remarks, like those of Ms. Wilson, were an outrage. Are we to believe that a handful of rioters made Dr. King's crusade for civil rights entirely unjust? In his *Letter from the Birmingham Jail*, King rebuts this dishonest attempt to change the subject:

In your statement you asserted that our actions, though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence....[I]t is immoral to urge an individual to withdraw his efforts to gain...basic constitutional rights because the quest precipitates violence....Non-violent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such a creative tension that a community...is forced to confront the issue. It seeks to dramatize the issue so it can be no longer ignored.

Fourth, if it is extreme to call elective abortion killing, then abortion advocates bear partial responsibility for the stabbing of Dr. Romalis. The fact is that pro-lifers aren't the only ones who call abortion killing. Consider these candid statements by abortion providers:

- **Warren Hern**, late-term abortionist:¹⁵ *We have reached a point in this particular technology [D&E abortion] where there is no possibility of denial of an act of destruction by the operator. It is before one's eyes. The sensations of dismemberment flow through the forceps like an electric current.*
- **Anthony Kennedy**, pro-abortion Supreme Court Associate Justice, describing common abortion techniques:¹⁶ *The fetus, in many cases, dies just as a human adult or child would: it bleeds to death as it is torn from limb to limb. . . . The fetus can be alive at the beginning of the dismemberment process and can survive for a time while its limbs are being torn off. . . . Dr. [Leroy] Carhart [the abortionist who challenged Nebraska's partial-birth ban] has observed fetal heartbeat . . . with "extensive parts of the fetus removed," . . . and testified that mere dismemberment of a limb does not always cause death because he knows of a physician who removed the arm of a fetus only to have the fetus go on to be born "as a living child with one arm." . . . At the conclusion of a D&E abortion . . . the abortionist is left with "a tray full of pieces."*

¹⁵ Warren Hern & Billie Corrigan, "What About Us? Staff Reactions to D&E," paper presented at the annual meeting of Planned Parenthood Physicians, San Diego, CA, 1978.

¹⁶ *Stenberg v. Carhart*, 2000. Cited in David Smolin, *et al*, "The Supreme Court 2000: A Symposium," *First Things*, October 2000. Kennedy voted to uphold *Roe v. Wade* in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992) and in various other Court decisions.

- **Planned Parenthood, 1963 brochure:** *Abortion kills the life of a baby after it has begun. It is dangerous to your life and health.*¹⁷
- **New Mexico abortionist, 1993:**¹⁸ *Paradoxically, I have angry feelings at myself for feeling good about doing a technically good procedure which destroys a fetus, kills a baby.*
- **Abortionist Dr. Crist, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 2000:**¹⁹ *In testimony Wednesday in St. Louis Circuit Court, [abortionist] Crist said that it is not uncommon for second-trimester fetuses to leave the womb feet-first, intact and with their hearts still beating. He sometimes crushes their skulls to get the fetuses out. Other times, he dismembers them.*

My question for Ms. Wilson and every other abortion advocate is this: If calling abortion killing makes one responsible for acts of violence against doctors, are pro-abortionists like Warren Hern and Anthony Kennedy guilty of inciting violence against their own people? Like pro-life advocates, they candidly admit that abortion is brutal killing. Therefore, when Dr. Hern complains about threats to abortion doctors, is he partially to blame for his own insecurity? Put simply pro-abortion advocates like Ms. Wilson lack the courage to defend their views publicly. Instead of refuting the scientific and philosophic case for the pro-life view, they call names from a distance in hopes of silencing their critics. There is a name for this—fascism. Pro-lifers take heart: Our critics have truly run out of ideas.

To sum up, pro-abortion advocates like Ms. Wilson lack the courage to defend their views publicly. Instead of refuting the scientific and philosophic case for the pro-life view, they call names from a distance in hopes of silencing their critics.

A crass form of reverse sexism

Finally, some pro-life advocates are attacked for their gender. Men are told, "You can't get pregnant, so leave the abortion issue to women." Besides its obvious sexism, the statement is seriously flawed for several reasons.

First, arguments do not have genders, people do.²⁰ Since many pro-life women use the same arguments offered by pro-life men, it behooves the abortion advocate to answer these arguments without fallaciously attacking a person's gender.

Second, to be consistent with their own reasoning, abortion advocates would have to concede that *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court case legalizing abortion, was bad law.

¹⁷ "Plan Your Children for Health and Happiness," Planned Parenthood Brochure, 1961.

¹⁸ New Mexico abortionist cited in Diane Gianelli, "Abortion Providers Share Inner Conflicts," *American Medical News*, July 12, 1993

¹⁹ Jo Mannies, "Abortion Doctor Gives Graphic testimony Describing Abortion Procedure," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 25, 2000.

²⁰ Beckwith, *Politically Correct Death*, p. 90.

After all, nine men decided it. They must also call for the dismissal of all male lawyers working for Planned Parenthood and the ACLU on abortion related issues. Since abortion advocates are unwilling to do this, we can restate their argument as follows: "No man can speak on abortion--unless he agrees with us." Once again, this is a classic case of intolerance.

Third, lesbians and post-menopausal women cannot naturally get pregnant; must they be silent on the issue? Think of the bizarre rules we could derive from this argument: "Since only generals understand battle, only they should discuss the morality of war." Or, "Because female sportscasters have never experienced a groin injury, they have no right to broadcast football games on national television."

Again, abortion advocates must offer facts and arguments to support their position. Attacking people personally, even if those attacks are true, will not make their case or refute ours.

Mistake #3: Assume what you are trying to prove

Advocates of elective abortion must show that the unborn are not fully human or their case crumbles. But instead of proving this conclusion with facts and arguments, many people simply assume it within the course of their rhetoric. We call this "begging the question" and it's a logical fallacy that lurks behind many arguments for abortion.

A person begs the question when he assumes what he is trying to prove. Suppose federal prosecutors confronted you with this question: "Have you stopped cheating on your taxes?" Obviously, the question is unfair. It assumes that you have broken the law, which is in fact the very point prosecutors are trying to prove. Your defense attorney would be outraged, insisting that they prove guilt with facts and evidence, rather than assume it with rhetoric.

Arguing that abortion is justified because a woman has a right to control her own body assumes there is only one body involved--that of the woman. But this is precisely the point abortion advocates try to prove. Hence, they beg the question.

Or, take the claim that no one knows when life begins, therefore abortion should remain legal. But to argue that no one knows when life begins, and that abortion must remain legal through all nine months of pregnancy, assumes that life does not begin until birth--the exact point abortion advocates try to prove. This is hardly a neutral position. It is a clear case of begging the question.

So is the coat hanger argument, which states that women will die from illegal abortions if laws are passed protecting the unborn. But unless you begin with the assumption that the unborn are not human, you are making the highly questionable claim that because some people die attempting to kill others, the state should make it safe and legal for them to do so. Should we legalize bank robbery so it is safer for felons?

If you think a particular argument begs the question regarding the status of the unborn, simply ask if this justification for abortion also works as a justification for killing toddlers or other humans. If not, the argument assumes the unborn are not fully human.

Again, it may be the case that the unborn are not fully human and abortion is therefore justified. But this must be proven with facts and evidence, not merely assumed by one's rhetoric.

Mistake #4: Confuse *functioning* as a person with *being* a person

Abortion advocates like Mary Anne Warren claim that a "person" is a living entity with feelings, self-awareness, consciousness, and the ability to interact with his or her environment. Because a human fetus has none of these capabilities, it cannot be a person.²¹ Warren makes two assumptions here, neither of which she defends. First, she doesn't say why should anyone accept the idea that there can be such a thing as a human being that is not a human person. What's the difference? Personally, I've never met a human that wasn't a person, have you? What does such an entity look like? Second, even if Warren is correct about the distinction between human being and human person, she fails to tell us *why* a person must possess self-awareness and consciousness in order to qualify as fully human. In other words, she merely *asserts* that these traits are necessary for personhood. In so doing, she espouses a doctrine known as *functionalism*: the belief that what defines human persons is what they can and cannot do. Functionalism, however, is seriously flawed because it fails to make a number of critical distinctions.

1) **One can fail to function as a person and yet still be a person.** People under anesthesia or in a deep sleep cannot feel pain, are not self-aware, and cannot reason. Neither can those in reversible comas. But we do not call into question their humanity because we recognize that although they cannot *function* as persons, they still have the *being* of persons, which is the essential thing.

Here is the key question: How many functions can I lose and still be myself?²² If I lose my sight, am I still me? If my legs and arms are lost, am I still me? If I cannot speak or hear, am I still me? What if I can no longer play chess or think critically? What if my IQ is less than 50? Wouldn't I still be a person with value?

Do I lose my personal identity simply because I cannot do everything you can? Do I lose the right to live because I am helpless and dependent? Do stronger, more capable people have more rights than others?

The answer is obviously no. No physical change or loss of function will cause you to cease being you *unless that change ends your life*. When a living thing like the unborn

²¹ Mary Anne Warren, pp. 102-119.

²² The material in these three paragraphs is adapted from Koukl, *Precious Unborn Human Persons*, p. 23.

human comes into being, it remains what it is regardless of the shape of its body or present capabilities.

2) **One must be a person in order to function as one.** Non-sentient frogs do not become persons simply by acquiring sentience (the ability to feel pain, etc.). Nor do robots become persons by assembling cars or loading freight. Rather, a person is one with the natural, inherent capacity to perform personal acts, even if that capacity is currently unrealized. One grows in the ability to perform personal acts only because one already is the kind of thing that grows into the ability to perform personal acts, i.e., a person.²³ My thoughts and my feelings, indeed all of my functional abilities, cannot exist unless I first exist. I can exist without them, but they cannot exist without me.

3) **The rights of individuals in our society are not based on their current (actual) capacities, but on their inherent capacities.** This sounds complex, but we make this distinction all the time. For example, no one doubts that newborn humans have fewer actual capacities than do day-old calves.²⁴ Baby humans are rather unimpressive in terms of environmental awareness, mobility, etc. Yet this does not lead us to believe that the calf belongs in the nursery while the infant can be left in the barn. To the contrary, we understand that although the infant currently lacks many functional abilities, it nonetheless has the inherent capacity to function as a person. But if individual rights are grounded in one's current capacities, calves should enjoy a greater moral status than do newborns.

People who are temporarily unconscious cannot presently function as persons, but they still have the inherent capacity to perform personal acts. That is why we do not kill them. From the moment of conception, the unborn human has the natural, inherent capacity to function as a person. What he lacks is the current capacity to do so. That he cannot yet speak, reason, or perform personal acts means only that he cannot yet function as a person, not that he lacks the essential being of a person.

This same emphasis on inherent (as opposed to actual) capacity is underscored in the accepted bio-ethical criteria for brain death. Say, for example, you have an automobile accident that leaves you in a coma. Some of your friends think your quality of life is gone and want to unplug life support. Others, like your parents, rally to stop them. What should be done?

The law in this case is very specific. According to the Uniform Determination of Death Act written into the health and safety codes of each state, the deciding factor is not your current state of brain function, but your inherent state of brain function. For death to occur, there must be an "*irreversible* cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brain stem."²⁵ Hence, the reversibly comatose are never classified as "non-persons" under our existing legal system despite their current lack of brain function.

²³ Peter Kreeft, "Human Personhood," *ALL About Issues*, January-February, 1992, p. 29.

²⁴ Example provided by Beckwith, in *Politically Correct Death*, p. 110.

²⁵ *California Health and Safety Code*, sec. 7180, Uniform Determination of Death Act. Emphasis added.

Again, from the moment of conception the unborn entity has the inherent capacity to have a functioning brain. What it lacks is the current capacity. Hence, there is no ethical difference between it and the reversibly comatose, the momentarily unconscious, etc., who enjoy the protection of law despite their current inability to function as persons.

4) **Functionalism results in savage inequality.** It is one thing to say that critical thinking distinguishes us as human persons. It is quite another to say that your right to live depends on how intelligent you are. Yet, if rationality and self-consciousness define the morally significant person, then why shouldn't greater rationality make you more of a person? Consequently, the intellectually and artistically gifted would be free to maximize their pleasure at the expense of those less intelligent. Furthermore, if the functionalist view is correct, personhood could be expressed by a bell curve in which human beings move toward full personhood in their early years, reach full personhood during their middle years (when they reach their intellectual peaks), then gradually lose personhood as they age. Presumably your rights as a person would increase, stabilize, and then decrease in the process.

But then we are not far from that now. Last year, an attorney I debated at a secular university argued that until the 32nd week of pregnancy, the unborn's brain resembles a fish or amphibian in its evolutionary development. Therefore, the unborn are not fully human until the final stages of pregnancy.²⁶

In one sense, his argument was nothing new. Darwin and his followers used it a century ago to dehumanize women. Their contention was that women were biologically and intellectually inferior because their brains were less developed than a man's. In *The Descent of Man in Relation to Sex*, Darwin wrote:

[Man] attains a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than can women--whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands. If two lists were made of the most eminent men and women in poetry, history, painting, sculpture, music (inclusive of both composition and performance), history, science, and philosophy, the two lists would not bear comparison. We may also infer, from the law of the deviation from averages... [that] the average mental power in man must be above that of women.²⁷

If that weren't bad enough, Darwin disciple and father of social psychology Gustave Le Bon uses pejorative language to compare women to apes:

[Even in] the most intelligent races [there] are large numbers of women whose brains are closer in size to those of gorillas than to the most developed male brains. This inferiority is so obvious that no one can contest it for a moment; only its degree is worth discussion....Women represent the most inferior forms of

²⁶ Arthur Ide makes essentially this same argument in *Abortion Handbook: the History, Legal Progress, Practice and Psychology of Abortion* (Las Colinas: The Liberal Press, 1986) pp. 21-26. See also, Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan, "Is it Possible to be Pro-Life and Pro-Choice?" *Parade Magazine*, April 12, 1990.

²⁷ Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man in Relation to Sex* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1896) p . 564.

human evolution and...are closer to children and savages than to an adult, civilized man. They excel in fickleness, inconstancy, absence of thought and logic, and incapacity to reason. Without a doubt, there exists some distinguished women, very superior to the average man, but they are as exceptional as the birth of any monstrosity, as for example, of a gorilla with two heads. Consequently, we may neglect them entirely.²⁸

Put simply, we used to discriminate on the basis of skin color and gender, but now we discriminate on the basis of brain development and intelligence. We've simply swapped one form of bigotry for another.

5) Those who espouse functionalism equivocate on the question of personal identity.

Is Scott Klusendorf the fetus or newborn identical to Scott Klusendorf the adult pro-life apologist? Is he the same person though his body has changed over time? According to Peter Singer, philosophy professor at Princeton University and outspoken defender of infanticide, the answer is no. "When we kill a newborn, there is no person whose life has begun. When I think of myself as the person I am now, I realize that I did not come into existence until sometime after my birth."²⁹ But as Paul Cox and Scott Rae point out, "If I do not exist until sometime after *my* birth, in what sense is the birth *mine*? The only way for 'my birth' to be more than a linguistic convention is to admit that 'I' existed before I was born, or at least at the time of my birth."³⁰ But if this is true, Singer's attempt to define personhood in functional terms not only fails, it disqualifies many human beings as persons. Consider the person under general anesthesia. Like the early fetus, he currently is not conscious and has no concept of himself existing over time. According to the functionalist view, he is not a person. But this is absurd.

One might object that unlike the fetus and the newborn, the person under anesthesia *once did* function as a self-aware entity. Therefore, he is still a person (i.e. retains his identity) though he currently cannot function as one. But this objection is flawed, for it admits that something other than self-awareness defines personhood. For to claim that a human person can be functionally self-aware, become non-self aware, and then return a state of self-awareness assumes there is some underlying personal unity to this individual that allows him to maintain his identity while unconscious (i.e. while he is unable to function as a person). If not, then we must make the bizarre claim that a new person pops into existence once the anesthesia wears off.

As Cox and Rae explain, the reason Scott Klusendorf the embryo/fetus is identical to Scott Klusendorf the adult is that I possess a human nature (or essence) that not only makes certain functions (abilities) possible, it allows me to retain my personal identity through change.³¹ For example, I may lose the ability to think critically, but as long as I

²⁸ Cited in Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1981) pp. 104-105.

²⁹ H. Kuhse and Peter Singer, *Should the Baby Live?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) p. 133

³⁰ Scott Rae and Paul Cox, *Bio-Ethics: A Christian Perspective in a Pluralistic Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) p.169.

³¹ Rae and Cox, pp. 159-169.

am still alive, I remain myself because I have a human nature. Hence, it is the underlying essence of a thing, not its functional abilities, that determines what it is.

Consider an illustration provided by Francis Beckwith.³² Suppose your Uncle Jed is in a coma after a terrible car accident. Imagine that he remains in that state (where he cannot function as a self-aware person) for two years and then awakens. Is Uncle Jed before the coma identical to Uncle Jed after? Is he the same person? Could doctors have killed him during his extended sleep because he was not functioning as a person? If Singer holds to the functional views, it would be difficult to say why it would be wrong to kill Uncle Jed while he is comatose. Yet clearly, it would be morally wrong to kill him while in that state because although he cannot currently function as a person, he still has the inherent capacity to do so.

Suppose you were to conclude that Uncle Jed is a person during the coma because, unlike the fetus, he *once* functioned as one and probably will again after he wakes up. But this objection fails, as Beckwith explains:

We can change the story a bit and say that when Uncle Jed awakens from the coma he loses nearly all his memories and knowledge including his ability to speak a language, engage in rational thought, and have a self-concept. He would then be in the exact same state as the standard fetus, for he would have the same capacities as the fetus. He would still literally be the same person he was before the coma, but would be more like he was before he had a “past.” He would have the natural inherent capacity to speak a language, engage in rational thought, and have a self-concept, but he would have to develop and learn them all over again in order for these capacities to result, as they did before, in actual abilities.³³

Perhaps the abortion advocate would bite the bullet and say that there is no human nature that allows me to maintain my identity through bodily change and that personal identity is nothing more than a string of psychological experiences connected by memory. Hence, Uncle Jed before the coma is not identical to Uncle Jed after, but is a new person with new memories that we will call Uncle Jed(b). But this denial of human nature will not do. What if five years later Uncle Jed(b) suddenly regains his lost memories? Is there now an Uncle Jed(c) or are we back to Uncle Jed(a)?

Put simply, Uncle Jed before the coma is identical to Uncle Jed after. He is the same person. The only difference is one of *function* (ability), not *essence* or nature. The same is true of Scott Klusendorf the fetus and Scott Klusendorf the adult. My abilities and my body have changed as I’ve developed, but I am identical to the fetus I once was because I have a human nature that allows me to maintain my identity through time and change. That human nature is present from the moment I begin to exist. If I am wrong about this, then you are literally not the same person you were five years ago when your body was made up of different physical stuff. Sure, you have changed, but it is *you* who changed.

³² Francis Beckwith, *Abortion and the Sanctity of Human Life* (Joplin: MO: College Press, 2000) p. 73

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

Your thoughts and memories cannot exist unless *you* first exist. Logic tells us that you can exist without them (as in the case of Uncle Jed), but they cannot exist without you. Consequently, you are a human person because you possess a human nature, not because you functioned a certain way in the past. From conception forward, the unborn possess that same human nature regardless of their current functional abilities.

Imagine the case of newborn twins named John and Jane, each born unconscious.³⁴ One month after birth, Jane briefly attains self-awareness, but then lapses back into a coma from which she will emerge nine months later. John, meanwhile, doesn't gain consciousness, though he too will emerge from the coma at the same moment as Jane. Suppose it is one day before both will wake up. Would anyone in his right mind say it is morally permissible to kill John but not Jane? The only difference between the two is functional: Jane briefly attained self-awareness in the past, John did not. It doesn't follow from this, however, that they have different *natures* or that Jane is fully human while John is not.

The fact is that we *function* as persons because we *are* persons. Scott Klusendorf the fetus is identical to Scott Klusendorf the adult pro-life apologist because I have a human nature that grounds my personal identity in something that is not developmental. If not, then I am literally a different person than I was 20 minutes ago. Likewise, a fetus that lacks current functional ability is nonetheless a person because it has a human nature from the moment it begins to exist.

6) **Functionalism assumes a “parts” view of human persons.** In his quest to dehumanize fetuses and newborns, Singer ignores the all-important distinction between *substance* things and *property* things.³⁵ Living things are substances that maintain their identities through time while property things, such as cars and machinery, do not. A property thing, like my car, is nothing more than the sum total of its parts. Change the motor or replace a tire, you technically have a different vehicle. There is no internal nature (or essence) that orders its development and grounds its identity through change. Instead, it's a loose unity of parts designed externally to function in a certain way.

By contrast, a substance maintains its identity over time and change. What moves a puppy to maturity or fetus to an adult is not an external collection of parts, but an internal, defining nature or essence. As a substance develops, it does not become more of its kind, but matures according to its kind.³⁶ It remains what it is from the moment it begins to exist. A puppy does not become more of a dog as it matures. Consequently, a substance functions in light of what it is and maintains its identity even if its ultimate capacities (for example, the ability to bark) are never realized.

Put differently, a substance is an entity in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and the whole contains the internal nature that gives it unity and cohesiveness.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 74

³⁵ The material in this section adapted from Rae and Cox, *Bio-Ethics*, pp. 159-163.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 161.

Substances maintain their identity through change, while property things do not. A substance will develop *accidental* properties (such as self-awareness, size, and physical structure) as it matures, but these properties are non-essential and can be changed without altering the nature of the thing itself. This is why a person can lose a body part and yet retain his personal identity through that change.

When Singer disqualifies a fetus from membership in the human community because it is not self-aware, he treats it as a property thing that changes its identity over time instead of substance thing that does not. True, there are functional differences between Peter Singer the fetus and Peter Singer the adult philosopher, but it does not follow from this that they are separate entities. Singer the fetus must first exist as a person in order to function as one.

Consider a man entering a room.³⁷ He can enter it gradually, be in halfway, and then enter it fully. During all stages of entering, *the man must first exist in total to do the entering*. Likewise, in order to enter the class of human beings known as human persons, the man must exist as well. Someone cannot be in the process of becoming a human person, since one must first exist in order to enter any process. To sum up, we cannot say that the fetus becomes a person as it develops since it must first exist as a substance in order to do the developing.

That brings us to the crux of the matter, a decision we must make. Will we acknowledge the truth found in *The Declaration of Independence* that human beings have value simply because they have human natures? Or will we join Darwin in saying only the achievers, intelligent, and powerful count as full human persons? Be careful how you decide. The results could one day disqualify you as human.

Mistake #5: Disguise your true position by appealing to the hard cases

Some people argue that legal abortion protects rape victims from compulsory motherhood. They castigate pro-lifers as cruel and insensitive toward women suffering assault.

This seems like a powerful objection, as nearly everyone agrees that rape is profoundly evil. Victims of this heinous crime deserve our best care. But there's a moral consideration as well. Does rape that results in pregnancy involve two victims or just one? And if the unborn entity involved is human, why should she be forced to give up her life so that her mother can feel better?

Put differently, can you think of any other case where, having been victimized yourself, you can justly turn around and victimize another completely innocent person? Say, for example, a drunk driver plows into your parked car, destroying it. To ease the pain of your loss, you take a sledgehammer to your neighbor's sedan, even though he has done

³⁷ Illustration taken from J.P. Moreland and Scott Rae, *Body and Soul: Human Nature and the Crisis of Ethics* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000) p. 253.

you no wrong. Is this morally permissible? If a friend protests your actions, is he insensitive? Hardly. So again, the issue is not, Are pro-lifers cruel?, but, What is the unborn? If the unborn is human, she should not be killed to benefit her mother. Do parents have the right to kill toddlers that remind them of a painful experience?

But the appeal to hard cases is flawed in another way that has nothing to do with one's attitude toward women or the morality of abortion. It is flawed because it is not entirely truthful.

Here's why. The "pro-choice" position is not that abortion should be legal only when a woman is raped, but that abortion is a fundamental right she can exercise for any reason she wants during all nine months of pregnancy. Instead of defending this position with facts and arguments, many disguise it with an emotional appeal to rape. But this will not make their case. The argument from rape, if successful at all, would only justify abortion in cases of sexual assault, not for any reason the woman deems fit. In fact, arguing for abortion-on-demand from the hard case of rape is like trying to argue for the elimination of all traffic laws because a person might have to break one rushing a loved one to the hospital.³⁸ Proving an exception does not prove a rule.

To expose their smokescreen, I ask abortion advocates the following: "Okay, I'm going to grant for the sake of discussion that we keep abortion legal in cases of rape. Will you join me in supporting legal restrictions on those abortions done for convenience which, as your own studies show, make up the overwhelming percentage of abortions?"³⁹

The answer is almost always no, to which I reply, "Then why did you bring rape up except to mislead us into thinking you support abortion only in the hard cases?"

Again, if abortion-advocates think that abortion should be a legal choice for all nine months of pregnancy for any reason whatsoever, including sex-selection and convenience, they should defend that view with facts and arguments. Exploiting the tragedy of rape victims is intellectually dishonest.

Summary and Conclusion

To sum up, I have shown that there is only one question to resolve in the abortion debate: What is the unborn? Second, I have demonstrated both scientifically and philosophically that the unborn are members of the human community. Scientifically, the unborn come from human parents who, according to the Law of Biogenesis, can only produce human offspring. Philosophically, the differences between fetus and newborn are differences of *function*, not *essence* (or nature). Large people are not more human than small people. Consequently, elective abortion is a serious moral wrong. It strips the unborn human of

³⁸ Beckwith uses this example in *Politically Correct Death*, p. 69.

³⁹ Warren Hern, *Abortion Practice*, pp. 10, 39. Dr. Hern is America's leading abortionist and he writes, "The impression of clinical staff is that all but a few women seek abortions for reasons that can broadly be defined as socioeconomic, and many cite strictly economic reasons." (*Abortion Practice*, p.10)

its inherent dignity and treats it as a disposable instrument to be discarded for someone else's benefit.

Again, this is not a debate about trusting women to make their own responsible choices. Does the right to make one's own responsible choices include the rights of parents to abuse children in the privacy of the home? Therefore, if the unborn are human like other children, killing them in the name of privacy is a clear moral wrong. As I have shown, this debate is about one question: What is the unborn? Everything comes back to that one question.

Nor is the abortion issue about choice and who decides. Would anyone here tonight support mothers killing their toddlers in the name of "choice and who decides?" Therefore, if the unborn are human, like toddlers, we shouldn't kill them in the name of choice anymore than we would a toddler. Again, this debate is about just one question: What is the unborn?

At this point, some may object that my comparisons are not fair—that killing a toddler is not the same as killing a fetus. But that's the issue, isn't it? Are they same? That is the one and only issue that is before us tonight.

Let me be clear. I am vigorously "pro-choice" when it comes to women choosing a number of moral goods. I support a woman's right to choose her own health care provider, to choose her own school, to choose her own husband, to choose her own job, to choose her own religion, and to choose her own career, to name a few. These are among the many choices that I fully support for the women of our country. But some choices are wrong, like killing innocent human beings simply because they are in the way and cannot defend themselves. No, we shouldn't be allowed to choose that.

Sadly, opponents of the pro-life view believe that human beings that are in the wrong location or have the wrong level of development do not deserve the protection of law. They assert, without justification, the belief that strong and independent people warrant the protection of law while small and dependent people do not. This view is elitist and exclusive. It violates the principle that once made political liberalism great: its basic commitment to protect the weakest and most vulnerable members of the human community.

We can do better than that. In the past, we used to discriminate on the basis of skin color and gender, but now, with elective abortion, we discriminate on the basis of size, level of development, location, and degree of dependency. We've simply exchanged one form of bigotry for another.

In sharp contrast, the position I have defended is that no human being, regardless of size, level of development, race, gender, or place of residence, should be excluded from the moral community of human persons. In other words, my view of humanity is inclusive, indeed wide open, to all, especially those that are small, vulnerable and defenseless.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ I'm indebted to Frank Beckwith for the wording of this paragraph.

As I conclude, ask yourself this question: Which view of abortion is more tolerant of the rights of others? Which is more inclusive of the small, vulnerable, and defenseless? Is it the so-called pro-choice view that disqualifies those that cannot measure up to its standard of developmental achievement, or, is it the pro-life view that is wide open to all, especially the defenseless?

Remember: The fact that some people controvert a position does not make that position intrinsically controversial. The absence of consensus does not mean the absence of truth. People once disagreed about slavery, racism and genocide, but that did not make them complex issues.⁴¹ Nor did it mean that there were no right answers. Abortion is complex only for those who, because of their own self-interest, want to make it complex. To paraphrase what Abraham Lincoln said to Stephen Douglas, You do not have a right to do what is wrong.⁴²

Ladies and gentlemen, neither do we.

⁴¹ Peter Kreeft, "Human Personhood," *ALL About Issues*, January-February, 1992, p. 29.

⁴² Arkes, p. 24.