

Abortion: A Voluntaryist Perspective

Voluntaryism is a philosophy summed up in the Voluntary Principle, i.e., “all human relations should happen voluntarily, or not at all.” How does this apply to the abortion debate?

First, realize that the science is clear on the humanity of a zygote. From the moment an egg is fertilized, there is a living cell with a unique set of human DNA. That is — scientifically — a human life. However, science cannot answer questions of morality on its own; that is the realm of ethics and philosophy and religion. Here, we consider the moral question from the Voluntaryist standpoint.

Prima facie, it is immoral under the Voluntary Principle to terminate a human life, except in self defense. Ergo, an argument in favor of abortion under the aegis of the Voluntary Principle must explain why the Voluntary Principle does not apply in this way. Some argue that the zygote or fetus violates the rights of the mother by his existence within her body. Others argue that human beings who have yet to be born do not deserve the protection of moral standards that apply to the rest of us, but this contradicts a plain reading of “all human relations....”

I posit that the creation of a human life is a unique point in human relationships. Human life can arise either through voluntary interactions (consensual sex or medical procedures) or through involuntary interactions (rape). In consensual sex, both parents have voluntarily participated while realizing the potential consequences of their actions include the production of a new human being. In the case of rape, only one parent has voluntarily participated while realizing the potential consequences of their actions include the production of a new human being. In either circumstance, the human being who is produced has no say in the matter whatsoever. Having been created, the new human being should enjoy the full protection of the same moral principles that protect the rest of us, including the Voluntary Principle.

What of the argument that the new human being is violating the rights of the mother? I find pregnancy to be analogous to a private airplane ride. The mother owns the plane, so to speak, and thus has moral control over who rides in it. In a pregnancy by consensual sex, the mother has analogously invited someone onto her plane, and is flying 30,000 feet above the ground. Clearly, to eject someone mid-flight without ensuring that they have the appropriate gear to survive, is murder. It matters not that when she issued the invitation, she perhaps never thought that they would take her up on the offer and show up to ride in the plane one day, so to speak. In a pregnancy by rape, the rapist has analogously smuggled a stowaway (against the stowaway’s will) into the plane — although obviously rape is far more heinous than illicitly hiding someone on a plane. Still, it is clearly murder to

eject the unwilling stowaway from the plane without providing them the equipment to survive. The stowaway has not himself violated the rights of the plane's owner or pilot, and thus it is inappropriate and immoral to retaliate against him. Even if the stowaway had been at fault, execution is probably a disproportionate response to the aggression.

In summary, we have considered the morality of abortion both in cases of rape and in cases of consensual sex, and we have found that under the Voluntary Principle, abortion is conclusively immoral.