

2 Approaches to the Morality of Human Life

or

Abortion Reduces the Value of Human Life

The reader should know that we are politically liberal pro-lifers. We know that almost everything that can be said on either side of the abortion issue has been said. We do not want to pretend that we can give you an argument that you have not heard before. But we think it's time for everyone to evaluate a prediction that pro-lifers started making a long time ago: the prediction that abortion would threaten all of us by devaluing human life.

1.

Let us call the organism that begins to exist as a zygote and continues to develop itself throughout the stages of human growth the conceptus. When we ask when human life begins in the context of a discussion of abortion, what we mean by "human life" when in its development does the conceptus, the organism that begins its existence as a zygote, achieve sufficient moral standing that it is wrong to kill it in the way that it is wrong to kill the kind of more mature human organism that can understand this question. When we ask when human life begins, we are really asking when the conceptus acquires moral value equal to that of an innocent human adult with respect to the morality of killing it. In other words, we are not asking a question about something called facts in opposition to something called values. We are asking when a certain kind of value comes into existence. Let us say that things with that value have human moral standing. Even if value only exists in the eye of the beholder, we are asking at what stage of human development the conceptus would acquire human moral standing in the vision of someone with 20/20 moral eyesight.

A defender of abortion rights can respond to the charge that abortion reduces the value of innocent human life in two ways. She can admit that it does reduce the value that human life previously had but argue that there is nothing wrong with that; the value we

previously assigned to human life was exaggerated. Or she can say that permitting abortion does not cause us to change our estimation of the value of human life, only our view of when human life begins; whenever it begins, it has the same place in our values as always had. But now we put the point at which it begins somewhere else.

We show the place that a particular value has in our ranking of values not just by how willing we are to sacrifice the value for another but also by how willing we are merely to risk sacrificing it. Human life, for example has a sufficiently high place in our values that when one person kills another, we hold her guilty of a crime even if the killing was not intentional but simply resulted from negligence on her part. In other words, we value human life so highly that we hold it morally wrong to risk taking human life by not using sufficient caution to avoid accidental killing. If a hunter kills a human being by shooting immediately after he sees some movement in a bush, we do not accept the excuse that he thought he was shooting a deer unless he had evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that there was no risk of killing a human being.

By that standard, permitting abortion has certainly lowered the value of human life and lowered it drastically. Under the old value of human life, only those who believe it is beyond a reasonable doubt that the zygote is not a human being could be subjectively justified in risking killing a human being by abortion just as only a hunter who had no reason to doubt that his target was not a human being could shoot at his target in good conscience. To see just how far the value of human life has fallen, consider something many people are much less willing to risk than the killing of innocent human beings.

The value that abortion rights proponents place on a woman's right to kill a conceptus is so high that it is often considered wrong to even take the risk of interfering with that right. Against laws that would permit abortion but require waiting 24 hours, or giving the mother information about alternatives, or notifying the parents of teenagers, the argument used is that those laws risk putting us on a slippery slope toward denying a woman the right to kill

her offspring. If we are willing to risk the taking of human life for the sake of not risking the loss of the choice to risk the taking of innocent human life, that choice has a higher place in our values than human life itself. And if we put the burden of proof on those who hold that innocent human life is at risk but not on those who hold that innocent human life is not at risk, that choice has a higher place in our values than human life itself. But not only do some put the burden of proof on those who do not want to risk human life, they even call evidence for the human moral standing of the conceptus irrelevant to laws on abortion, since no law has the right to interfere with a woman's choice to risk taking human life. They place such a high value on a woman's ability to risk taking human life that, a priori, no evidence for the human moral standing of the conceptus could ever be sufficient.

Can it be said that the immorality of risking innocent human life does not apply if we know that the zygote, for example, is not a human being in whatever is the morally relevant sense? If someone knew that, that is, had sufficient evidence to make it unreasonable not to believe that, they need not be reducing the value of human life in permitting abortion. They believe the human moral standing begins at some later point, but once it begins, human life has as high a place in their system of value as it ever had, and so they would not risk taking human life.

Notice, however, that this position could still create measurable differences in the value of human life that did not exist before abortion was permitted. To avoid risking the taking of innocent human life, we would have to know, not only that the zygote did not have human moral standing, but at what stage after the zygote the conceptus did acquire human moral standing. Unless we knew that, we would be risking the taking of human life for as long as we permitted abortion after the zygote stage. And if one person placed the point at which abortion was permitted earlier than another person, the first person would value human life less than the second since she would be more willing to risk taking innocent human life. So the relative value of human life would be lower for everyone in the society

who permitted abortion earlier than the second person.

2.

But what about the person who claims to know at what stage after the zygote the conceptus acquires human moral value. Can she justly say that society's permitting of abortion has not lowered the place of human life in her values since after human life has begun it is as important as it ever was? We answer that question with an unequivocal "It depends." Specifically, it depends on what we believe about the nature of moral value. There are many views of moral value. But for the purpose of this discussion of the moral value of human life, there is a way of reducing those views to two that make all the difference in how we assign moral value to human life.

One way to approach morality is to judge right and wrong on the basis of subjective feelings, emotions. We feel bad about the old persons suffering, so we want to help him commit suicide. We feel bad about the pregnant teenager, and we don't feel bad about the zygote, so we abort the zygote. Of course, feelings are notoriously fickle. They are conditioned by sometimes capricious social changes and personal experiences. We use to be horrified by abortion; now our feelings are more on the side of the mother who does not want the child.

But what alternative is there to basing our moral judgments on our feelings about things? In the last analysis, there is only one possible alternative: There is some reality, something that is what it is independently of our subjective feelings about it, such that if we do not treat it in certain ways, we are treating it as if it is not what we know it to be by reason. As rational beings, we direct ourselves to ends by the use of rational knowledge of what things (where "things" can be actions, events, persons, etc.) are. And where the knowledge that would make a choice immoral is not available, we are not culpable in a moral sense. If there is some reality such that when we know what it is, our choices cannot treat it in certain ways without our treating it as if it is not what reason knows it to be, such choices

are morally evil because they use our ability to base choices on rational knowledge of what things are in a way that violates that knowledge, because we know that what something is in our system of values as a result of our choices contradicts what it is in reality independently of our choices.

How could there be such a reality? There are many traditional bases for holding that what human beings are known to be requires us to give her a special place in our values for what they are in our values to correspond to what they are in reality. For example, they are children and/or images and likenesses of an infinitely supreme being; they have immortal souls and will live forever; they are "thinking reeds" who each contain the whole of reality within their consciousness. But Immanuel Kant proposed a basis that is directly relevant to the way in which our choices give things places in our system of values. Choices make things our ends or means to our ends. Kant said that moral goodness consists in treating persons as ends-in-themselves and not as mere means to our ends. He had reasons for saying this that are different from the idea that we know what things are in reality, but we might ask what genuine reasons there might be for believing that because persons are what they are in reality there is an objective basis for treating them as ends-in-themselves rather than as mere means.

One traditional basis for saying that persons are ends-in-themselves is the belief that persons have free choice over the ends to which they direct their behavior. Unlike other animals, human beings direct their behavior to indefinitely many ends, pleasure, fame, power, wealth, love, the well being of others, to name just a few, and we direct our behavior to different ends at different times. If it is true of what persons are in reality that they choose their ends freely, rather than being determined to this end or that by nature or nurture, and if our choices so treat other people that in our values they are directed to our freely chosen ends to the exclusion of their own, then we are treating them as if they are not what they are and what we know them to be, beings directed to their own chosen ends. But

to so choose our ends that we give other people the status, in our values, of being oriented to pursue ends of their own choosing, not just our ends, is to evaluate them as being *ends-in-themselves*, things whose actions are directed to ends that are their own because they freely choose them.¹

By choices we give things the place in our values of being our ends or means to our ends. If persons pursue their good by freely choosing their ends, persons must evaluate everything, other persons included, in relation to ends of their own choosing. We can choose ends in such a way that we treat other persons merely as good, bad, or neutral means to our ends; in our values, then, other persons are directed to our ends in a way that excludes them from also being directed to their own. If so, what they are in reality is contradicted by what they are in our values. Rationally aware choices of that kind would be freely defective by the standard that what persons are in reality is not what they are in our values.

Since the only things choices do is make things our ends or our means, there is only one alternative to valuing other persons as means to our ends: We can make their pursuit of good by freely choosing the ends of their behavior an end of our own behavior; in our values, then, they are directed to achieving one of our ends *and* their own. When as a result of our choice what other people are in our values is beings whose behavior is directed to ends of their own choosing, our choice is successful by the standard that what persons are in reality is what they are in our values. We have chosen the end of being moral.

To say that beings with freedom of choice are ends-in-themselves is to say that they exist for their own sake and are that for which everything else exists. If persons must evaluate everything else in relation to their freely chosen ends, for other persons to be ends-in-themselves in our values, we must so choose that in our values other persons have the status of being, as we are, the source of the ends in relation to which the value of other things is determined. To value them as the source of the ends that evaluate non-persons, we must measure the value, positive or negative, of everything else ultimately by the benefit or

harm they have for persons; if so, we are evaluating persons as the things for whose sake everything else exists. But if we are evaluating other persons as not being determiners of the ends that measure the value of other things, in our evaluations persons are not what they are in reality. For example, if we so choose that we value nonfree beings as not existing the sake of persons, (for instance, if we value animals equally to persons), we are still measuring the positive or negative value of everything else in relation our freely chosen ends (for instance, the end of only giving other animals, not human beings, the right to interfere with the ends of other animals — in which case we are actually valuing other persons lower than animals). But our choices do not value other persons as, like ourselves, determiners of the ends that measure the value of other things. We are measuring the value of nonpersons by our chosen ends in a way that excludes our also measuring it by the ends of other persons. So we are not giving them the status of being oriented to the pursuit of their own ends as we are; we are giving other persons the value of being oriented to the pursuit of our ends but *not* also to their own. Unless we are valuing them as that for the sake of which everything else exists, therefore, we are not valuing them as ends-in-themselves.

Since persons are that for the sake of which everything else is what it is, another way to express the moral value of persons is that persons are *moral absolutes*. In order for our evaluations to be morally correct, it is not enough that we value persons more highly than other things. "More highly" is a relative description. We can value persons more highly relative to other things without valuing them as that for the sake of which everything else exists. To evaluate persons as being that for the sake of which all other things exist, we must give them the status of being the value to which the value of all other things is relative and whose value cannot itself merely be relative to the value of any other thing. Persons are not just the highest entry on a scale including all other values. Persons are off the scale of all other values since they are relative to the good of persons but the value of persons is not relative to them.

(Really, if we are not willing the good of a person, not just the good or bad end they are directing their behavior to, they are not ends-in-themselves in our values. We need not will their chosen ends to be our ends, but we must make their good our end, for them to be ends-in-themselves in our values. Their good consists of the end or ends of their existence prior to the ends to which they choose to direct their behavior. For the value of choices comes from ends to which we are oriented prior to a choice. That is, we make choices because we are oriented to the pursuit of future ends and cannot not be oriented the pursuit of future ends. Even refraining from a choice orients us to the status quo as our future end. To treat them as ends-in-themselves is to treat them to as oriented to freely choosing behavioral ends for the sake of their own good, as directed to ends whose value derives from their own orientation to good. We are evaluating them as if their nature does not orient them to achieving goods by their own free choice of ends, as if they are not oriented to achieving the ends of their existence by their own free choice of behavioral ends.)

Now the belief that we have freedom of choice over the ends to which our action is directed is controversial. We do not intend to enter that controversy. But we want to look at the implications for morality of believing and not believing that we have this kind of freedom. For we are trying to contrast two approaches to morality that are, for the purpose of practical questions about the value of human life, the only two choices. By contrasting them we mean we are looking at the conflicting implications for our lives that these two approaches have.

When we mistreat persons, we mistreat things with feelings, things that are conscious of pain and hurt. When we mistreat mere things, however, we are mistreating things that cannot experience pain, that do not have feelings, etc. and it may be that what differentiates persons from things is not that persons have freedom of choice but only that they have

feelings.

If persons do not have free control over their ends, then the basis of their action must ultimately be their subjective inclinations over which they have no control, and subjective inclinations can be the only basis for morality. For example, when we say that we should not treat persons as mere objects, mere things, which is another way of saying that we should treat them as ends-in-themselves not as mere means to our ends, we may be thinking that the characteristic in reality that makes persons deserve a certain kind of treatment from us is the fact that persons, unlike mere things, have feelings.

So when all the frills are stripped a way, when we get down to basics, we can divide the possible approaches to morality into two. Once we have defined ethical goodness by the identity of what things are in our values with what rational knowledge knows them to be in reality, the only other possibility is to define it in terms of something other than objective rational knowledge, and subjective inclinations are the only alternative. And once we have defined being an end-in-oneself by free choice over the ends of our behavior, the only other alternative again is the view that human beings are entirely dominated by subjective inclinations over which they have no control.

The reason why most philosophers don't see a way to bring reason into obligation: They don't consider the possibility that a being that cannot avoid directing itself to ends by means of rational knowledge must be capable of choosing its own ends. For if such a being treats itself or another as if it were not, it is using rational knowledge to treat things as if they are not what reason knows them to be.

If feelings are the only thing that differentiates persons from things, then persons are not ends-in-themselves in the sense that the existence of a person is the existence of that for the sake of which all other values exist; or in other words, in the sense that the existence of a person is the existence of an absolute value to which all relative values must be relative.

If feelings are what makes persons persons, when we say that we should not treat

persons as objects, we really are not contrasting objects to absolute values. Persons are just a higher kind of object, but not an absolutely different kind of object.

One way is to judge right and wrong on the basis of subjective feelings, emotions.

The answer will be that we measure the value of the 5-year olds achievements relative to it achievement, not of future ends, but of ends that, though present, are still called for by the underlying structure of its nature. But, the abortionist says, we do this because at some point we said, this collection of features gives this organism a moral value equal to my own. And there is not escaping that question. We all have to call it as we see it.

Yes, but the very nature of choice and of the values at stake in choice show that there is only one consistent answer to that question, only one answer that can preserve the very existence of moral values, that does not contradict the existence of moral values: There exist a moral equal if and only if there exists an organism oriented to the future achievement of ends of the same kind that give value to my choice, that give my choice whatever value it has. So even if a conceptus is not an end-in-itself, it can still be the moral equal of the person who wants to choose to kill it.

3.

To apply these two views to the question of whether we reduce the value of human life when we justify abortion by the comparative values of the life of a human organism at the zygote and adult stages, consider what people were doing, what people were saying when they used to say that human life (that is, life with human moral standing) begins at conception. What were they implying about how we should or should not place human value on things?

We value things according to the kind of achievements of which they are capable. We

value human beings more than elephants because of the kinds of things human nature enables us to do. In the days when almost everyone believed that human life begins at conception, we were believing that human moral standing belonged to an organism, a living causal system, whose nature orients and enables it to cause itself to be, to make itself into, an agent that accomplishes the kind of achievements for which we give innocent human adults the value of deserving not to be killed by us. For that is the connection between the zygote and the more developed stages of a human being: the zygote is the first stage of a living organism that causes itself to acquire the features that characterize the subsequent stages of human development.

(What inductively defines the "self" in the self-causality such that the agent at the end is the same as the agent at the beginning? Inductively we know that every mature human achievement comes from the same kind of initial state as a result of an unbroken chain of in which parts of a causal system of the kind existing at that stage act on other parts existing at that stage to produce a succeeding stage of a kind that is likewise oriented to such self-causality leading to the mature stage. Or inductively we know that every mature human stage is a succeeding stage of a process in which parts of a preceding stage of an inductively similar kinds acted on other parts to produce the next stage. Everything that exists is the result of immeasurably long causal sequences, but the length of a sequence is not enough to inductively identify unit kinds of causes.)

We think of life as a form of self-causality and first of all the self-causality of the living thing's keeping itself in existence. How does induction establish the identity of the "self" in this self-causality; what makes it the same organism, plant, animal or human, maintaining itself in existence at every stage? The following conditions are necessary for that kind of identity and, at least for the purposes of this discussion, sufficient: There exists at each stage (1) an active orientation (that is an orientation to cause something by the action of the organism that exists at that stage) toward maintaining in existence (2) an active orientation

toward producing the kind of final accomplishments defining that kind of life, and (3) there is some material continuity between the succeeding stages of each kind of orientation (that is, at least some parts of the prior stage will be parts of the later) not accidentally but because (4) the first kind of orientation is an orientation to maintain both kinds of orientation in existence by the action of some parts of the organism existing at each stage on other parts. There is not just an orientation toward the active production of the final accomplishments but an orientation toward actively maintaining in existence a materially continuous orientation toward producing the final accomplishments; the causing of a final accomplishments are aimed at (at one time remotely, at another time proximately) by stages always possessing dispositions proximately aimed at producing, by one part of the stage acting on another, another stage aimed (proximately or remotely) at the final kind of accomplishments.

Induction establishes that such causal systems (the stages) and such causal sequences (the transitions from one such stage to another) exist. In such transitions, an agent that exists at a prior stage makes itself into the agent that exists at the subsequent stage. For the only way an agent can act on itself is by one part acting on another part. But note that the continuity between the stages is not simply material; it is also formal. It is a continuity not only of material parts but of causal orientations so embodied in the material parts that the result of the causality will be the continuation of those causal orientations in agents composed of some of the same material parts.

Induction establishes that there occur changes where one thing acts on another thing such that the relation of the first thing to the second is that of parts of a unit causal system that is a stage in a sequence of unit causal systems, where the unit is defined as the bearer of the two kinds of causal orientations just described, orientations to be achieved by parts of the unit acting on other parts. A causal whole established by induction is not just a mereological sum. Causal units are also conceptual units. But causal wholes owe their unity to more than logical connections; they owe them to causal connections existing

independently of cognition. For example, when we form the concept of the kind of causal sequence we call life, we can see that experience shows that preceding wholes conceptually describable as above are "always" succeeded by wholes similarly conceptually describable and that the succeeding wholes never occur unless preceded by a previous whole similarly describable. "Always" is in scare quotes because when the preceding whole describable by these kinds of orientation is not succeeded by a whole similarly describable, the life process has ceased. Its cessation is in one sense a matter of definition, since any causal sequence is part of an indefinitely extended causal sequence from the beginning of time to the end. But induction makes it unreasonable not to sometimes believe in necessary causal connections, and sometimes in the absence of necessary connections, holding in the universe between certain regularly occurring wholes of one kind of causal description and certain others.

The parts of any causal system existing before and after a change can be conceptually united in mereological wholes. But not all causal sequences have the kind of material and formal continuity required by life. In any causal sequence there must be material continuity between what exists before and after since change requires that the subject of change persist. (This is not established by induction; it is the kind of metaphysical principle the grounds inductive reasoning, pace Kant.) And there is a formal continuity between what existed before and what existed after the change in that an efficient cause, in the rock bottom analysis, communicates a similar, though numerically distinct, form from itself to a subject. But these are conditions necessary for any causal process, while any causal sequence also requires that the subject of the change be somehow distinct from the agent in a more than conceptual sense. So for a causal system to be considered more than a conceptual unity, induction must provide evidence that the parts are regularly connected in systems whose unity is defined by causal connections other than these. But in no way does induction always give us reason to consider that the parts of a conceptual union have additional connections of a causal kind. For example, hearts and kidneys are distinct causal

units, but induction shows that they will always be parts of a larger whole whose unity is defined by causal connections. But while we can view a lit match touching a cigarette as a unit causal system, induction gives no evidence of any other causal connection between them than that of the agent and subject of a change, respectively.

At the zygote stage and at each subsequent stage the agent that then exists requires a lot of help from its environment in order to cause itself to reach the next stage. But even fully developed living things cause themselves to stay in existence only by relying on environmental help. What would happen to us if all the atmospheric pressure on us suddenly ceased to exist? But with respect to the final achievements for which we value adult humans as worthy of not being killed by us, how do we distinguish the causal contribution of the agent existing at each stage of human growth from the causal contribution of its environment? When people used to assume that the zygote's kind of self-causality was sufficient for us to give the zygote human moral standing, they were believing that this moral standing belonged to the agent that was then a zygote because that agent was the source of everything specifically human in the causal sequence that the zygote initiates. To be the cause of what is specifically human in that sequence, the conceptus needs, for example, immense help from the mother. But if a chimpanzee conceptus were able to develop in a human womb, the aid that the chimpanzee conceptus got from its human environment would not cause the result of gestation to be a human being. Only a human conceptus can cause the result to have the characteristics that make human beings human.

Likewise, an acorn needs a lot of environmental help to make itself into an oak tree. But other kinds of plants need the same kind of help: nitrogen, water, warmth, light and so on. As common to other causal processes, such outside environmental factors do not explain why the result is an oak tree and not a rose bush. Everything specifically oaken about the oak tree derives from the causality of the agent that must first exist as an acorn. In traditional terminology, the acorn would have been called the principal agent, and the other

factors instrumental agents, with respect to everything specifically oaken about the effect. Everything in a painting is caused to be there by the brush. But everything the brush puts there constitutes aesthetic beauty only as a result of the brush being used as an instrument by the principal cause of the painting with respect to its beauty, the painter, a cause whose features, unlike those of the brush, include the power to so use the brush that beauty is created. The zygote is the first stage of the existence of a living agent that is the principal cause of everything specifically human about the later stages of that agent's development, while the other necessary causal factors function as instruments used by that agent in the causing of its specifically human features.

Throughout the sequence of self-causality, the development is guided by a design (whether or not an intelligent design) originally embodied in the zygote not only by the DNA but by the whole structure of the cell. Because of that design the causal system that maintains its own existence throughout the process is from the beginning, and at each subsequent stage, oriented to making itself into a possessor of the mature features by means of which adult human beings produce the accomplishments for which we value adult human beings. And at the beginning and each later stage that causal system with the orientation to those accomplishments maintains itself in existence precisely as an agent embodying that orientation.

Like any living thing the zygote is a causal system that is a stage in a process every subsequent stage of which is the continued existence of the same causal system, since each prior stage produces each subsequent stage by parts of the prior stage acting on other parts of the prior stage. Each prior stage produces the next stage by actively modifying itself in the only way things can act on themselves, by parts of itself so acting on other parts that the next stage is the result. So when we used to believe that human life begins at conception, we were believing that human moral standing belonged to an organism oriented to causing itself to acquire the features that enable human beings to accomplish the achievements for which

we value innocent human adults as worthy of not being killed by us. The agent that first exists as a zygote is an agent oriented to human accomplishments as its own accomplishments, since it is oriented to achieve human accomplishments by self-causality. Ultimate human accomplishments will be produced by a later stage of the same causal system, and the proximate dispositions by which it produces those accomplishments, as well the most morally significant of the accomplishments, will be features of the same system of self-causality features belonging to it. The answer to the question why someone would think that the causal design of which the zygote is the first stage should be the criterion for giving human moral standing to the zygote and its heirs is this: The causal design of the zygote gives the zygote a complete human teleology, a complete human finality. We were granting human moral standing to that agent because it has a complete human teleology.

4.

Why should this teleological definition of human life be the criterion of human moral standing? Why would anyone think that the fact that a zygote's causal design gives it a complete human teleology is a sufficient reason for granting it human moral standing?

Consider the alternative to using the causal design of the zygote as the criterion for giving human moral standing to the zygote and its heirs. The opposing claim is that abortion does not change the value of human life at all because it only changes the time at which that value begins to exist. Whenever a human person exists, it is supposedly worth just as much as it ever was; only the time during which it exists as changed. This claim implies that it is a conceptus' development of some feature or features, like a human brain or consciousness or the ability to survive outside the womb, that bestows on the conceptus the kind of value that makes it wrong for us to kill it. But if we get our value from acquired features, we cannot be ends-in-ourselves. So if we formerly believed that human moral standing belonged to adults because they were ends-in-themselves, there has been a drastic reduction in the value of human life.

This article is not going to settle the question whether the value of a human being is that of an end-in-itself. It will only argue that this question makes all the difference for evaluating the claim that abortion lowers the value of human life; for abortion is inconsistent with holding that human beings are ends-in-themselves.

We cannot be ends-in-ourselves if our moral standing comes, not from our telological relation to achievements but from achievements subsequent to the existence of the causal orientation to achieve them, and specifically from the achievement of possessing certain acquired features. Where does the value of acquired features come from; what does it consist in? The value of acquired features to the thing that acquires them depends on the relation of those features to the achievements to which a thing's nature is oriented. A zygote cannot immediately become a mathematician but neither can it have polio. Polio hardly bestows value on the human beings that have it, even though it is a feature only older human beings can acquire. The reason polio does not bestow value is that it interferes with and is contrary to the orientations to achievement of the organism that acquires it. That is why we do not consider it a misfortune for a chimpanzee not to develop sufficient intelligence to learn algebra, because its nature does not orient it to any achievements requiring that much intelligence. But we do consider it a misfortune for a human being not to develop that much intelligence, because we know that the other achievements to which human nature orients us are better served if we are that intelligent.

For the purposes of understanding human moral standing, we do not have to specify what human achievements are any further than as achievements of beings oriented to making choices based on rational knowledge of what the achievements their choices aim at are. Since the moral issue of abortion is the issue of the value of a human conceptus versus the value of a being having the ability to choose to kill the conceptus with rational awareness of what she is doing, the acquired feature to consider is the ability to make choices based on rational knowledge. Rational knowledge of the achievements that give value to our choices is

what is pertinent to moral value since moral culpability presupposes it; when knowledge that would make a choice immoral is not available to us, we are not morally culpable. Because the ability to make rational choices is the mature feature by which we oppose a conceptus' - acquisition of any further features, we need not consider the relation of any other acquired feature to human moral standing; for this discussion, specifically human achievements are achievements of beings oriented to making choices based on rational awareness. And if a conceptus' moral worth is equal to that of a being capable of rational choices, a fortiori it is equal to that beings with less mature acquired features.

Why would the conceptus' orientation to cause itself to become a maker of rational choices, rather than its actually having caused itself to acquire the proximate ability to make rational choices be someone's reason for considering the conceptus to have human moral standing? Well, what is the value of a choice? The value of choices derives from our orientations to future accomplishments. We would not have to make choices unless we were oriented to future accomplishments prior to choosing. In fact, we would not have to make choices unless we had orientations to multiple possible accomplishments prior to choosing. When we direct ourselves to this end rather than that by making a choice, we are choosing which prior orientation to accomplishment to pursue. For example, suicide is a future accomplishment, even if it is in the immediate future, that the choice of suicide aims at, and the motive of suicide is our perceived inability to achieve other future accomplishments to which we are now oriented. The accomplishment that will bestow value on a future choice can be intrinsic to the choice. If an ethics holds that the moral value of a choice consists in its being made for the sake of duty, being made for the sake of duty is the future achievement that will give a choice to be made its moral value. Regardless of what other achievements a conceptus may have caused in becoming an adult, for example, regardless of whether a human agent has already made any rational choices, adult human beings make choices only because they are oriented to further achievements, and their orientations to

further achievements are the source of whatever value their choices have for them.

A conceptus is, from the moment of its existence, oriented to the achievements, whatever they are, that would give value to a choice of killing it; so it shares the kind of values that we must use to justify preventing it from attaining any value. Choices based on rational knowledge are needed for the achievements to which a zygote's make-up orients it as much as they are for the achievements to which an adult is oriented. Adults are oriented to achievements that will require future rational choices, and things that are now zygotes are oriented to achievements that will require future rational choices. The orientation to become a maker of reasoned-based choices is embodied in the causal dispositions of a zygote, just as much as the orientation to grow a nose of a particular shape. A conceptus, therefore, from the zygote stage on, has orientations to the achieve the same kind of things that give an adult's choices whatever value they have. So the source of any value an adult's choices have for her is already present in a zygote, and a zygote's future attainment of the things to which it is oriented has equal value to the future achievements for the sake of which adult choices are made. In particular, zygotes have orientations to the same kind of achievements that give whatever value it can have to a choice to prevent a zygote from achieving any further value. A choice to kill a zygote subordinates to our future achievements a being whose future achievements are of equal value to ours. When we kill another adult, we are treating her as if she is not oriented to achievements equal in value to whatever we will achieve when we kill her, and we do the same thing when we kill a zygote.

Think of a horse before and after it has developed sexually to the point where it can reproduce. For the sake of argument assume that it would be unjust to so alter a mature horse that it could no longer reproduce. Would it be any less unjust to so alter the horse that it could not reproduce before it had matured to that point? From the perspective of the horse, neither one of those would be more or less unjust than the other. As measured by the interests of the horse, interests determined by the orientations to achievements that come

with a horse's make-up, if it is unjust to sterilize him after he has matured, it is equally unjust to sterilize him before he is matured; and vice versa.

And no doubt a 15-year old human being has more value, by some standards, than a 5-year old, because it has more features like knowledge and strength that are achievements to which human beings are oriented and are necessary for us to attain more such achievements. The state that human beings are in with such features is better than the state they are in without it, other things being equal. But having such features is better for them only because they are oriented to certain achievements. Such features do not bestow value in the sense that depriving an entity of an existing feature would do it more harm, by the standard of its orientation to achievements, than would preventing it from acquiring the feature to begin with. So if a feature is needed for achievements to which a being is oriented, it is just as wrong to prevent the being from acquiring the feature as it is to deprive the being of a feature that it already has. Acquired features do not bestow value on a thing in the sense that depriving it of an existing feature would do it more harm, as measured by its orientations to achievements, than would preventing it from acquiring the feature in the first place. So if a feature is necessary for achievements a thing is oriented to, preventing it from acquiring that feature is just as wrong as depriving it of that feature after it has acquired the feature. Likewise, it is just as wrong to choose that the causal system that is now a zygote not acquire the proximate abilities for things it is oriented to eventually achieve as it is to choose that a causal system that has those abilities because it is now an adult not have them any longer. The actual accomplishment of something will be of no greater value for a being that now has a proximate ability for that accomplishment than it will be for a being that now has only a remote ability, since the value of an ability to the thing that has it is measured only by the thing's orientations to future accomplishments.

So from the point of view of a human conceptus, a teleologically complete human causal system, it is no more unjust to prevent the development of an acquired feature than it

is to suppress the development after it has taken place. For from the point of view of a human conceptus the acquired feature is necessary for achievements to which the agent is oriented by its nature, its underlying causal structure. From the point of view of the human conceptus it is as unjust to prevent the development of a mature feature as it is to suppress that development after it has occurred; it is no more unjust to deprive him of a development that has already taken place than to prevent the development from taking place. Either way the development has value for the human agency because of achievements to which the agency is already oriented. So the justice of either is equal from the point of view of the achievements to which its nature orients that human conceptus.

5.

But are we committing any injustice at all if we sterilize a horse either before or after it becomes able to reproduce? We are depriving a horse of what it needs to achieve something to which it is oriented by its nature for the sake of our own orientations to achievements to the exclusion of its. But a horse is presumably not an end-in-itself. Whatever we do to a horse, we are not doing it to something that we have to treat not as a mere means to our ends but as something that is an end-in-itself. The value of a puppy or kitten grows as it develops and acquires new features. The acquired features bestow value on it. But if it were an end-in-itself, its acquired features would get their value from their relation to it, rather than its than getting its value from them. The acquired features would have value depending on whether they serve its interests. If we do not measure the value of those features by whether they serve the puppy's or kitten's interests, we are not treating its interests as those of an end-in-itself.

The same would be true of another human agency. If the value of the other human agency so depends on its development of acquired features that there is nothing wrong with killing it before it has developed some feature, then the value of that other human agency not only is not that of an end-in-itself before the development, but also it can't be that of an end-

in-itself after the development. Why? Because from the other human entity's point of view it is no more unjust to deprive him of a development that has already taken place and to prevent the development from taking place. Either way the development has value for the human agency because of achievements to which he is already oriented. So if it is unjust to kill human conceptus after it reaches a certain level of development, is equally unjust to kill it before it reaches that level of development. And if the injustice of killing it after it reaches that level of development consists in the fact that we are not treating it as an end-in-itself, the injustice of killing it before it reaches that development must be the same. For the killings are equally unjust from the point of view of the conceptus's orientations to achievements. But if we are not judging value by the orientations to achievements of the other human agency, we are judging by our orientations to achievements to the deliberate exclusion of its. We not treating a human agency as an end-in-itself before or after the development anymore than we are treating a horse as an end-in-itself.

The pro-abortionist who holds that persons are still ends-in-themselves even though it is legitimate to kill them before a certain stage of development is implying that certain acquired features are what make us ends-in-ourselves, specifically, a certain developed way of being oriented to make choices by which we determine the ends of our behavior. But since it is the orientation to free choices that makes a human causal system an end-in-itself, an absolute value, what makes her and end-in-itself it cannot be just this or that way of being oriented to free choices that occurs later than the zygote stage; a particular way of being oriented to free choices is just an acquired feature whose value for the agent derives from its prior orientations to achievements.

Every stage of a conceptus' growth is something called for by its orientation to achievements. So why choose the acquisition of one more mature feature or set of features as the achievement that makes it wrong to kill a human being? Choosing a stage after the existence of a being's orientation to human achievements as the beginning of its human moral

standing requires us to judge the value of its acquired features by the fulfillment of our orientation to achievements, not its. For an orientation to the same kind of achievements that give value to the choice of that stage exists at every stage of the conceptus and makes the conceptus' achievement of them to be of equal value to the achievement for the sake of which the chooser is keeping the conceptus from any further achievement.

Before a conceptus reaches a certain stage, we are willing to prevent the coming into existence of the subsequent stages; so our choice is based on those stages satisfying orientations to achievements that belong to us, to the exclusion of orientations belonging to the conceptus. Before this choice, we have implicitly chosen to not treat another human agent as an end-in-itself and to subordinate its orientation to human achievements to ours. And we have implicitly subordinated the interests of other adults to ours, treating them as if they were not ends-in-themselves; for we have judged their features to have value by the same test: by the relation of their features to our orientations to achievement, not theirs; not by their being oriented to achievements of the same kind that give our choices value, but by their relation to ends that we choose.

If we don't accept the existence of a complete human teleology as the standard for judging that something has the kind of moral value that makes it wrong to kill an innocent human adult, there are an infinite number of other standards we could use. But why choose one of them rather than another? What standard do we use for choosing other standards? Well, what will be the value for us of choosing standard X rather than standard Y; what will we gain by doing so? We will gain something that is a value for us because of and only because of orientations to achievements that we possess prior to making the choice. So the only nonarbitrary standard we can use is an already existing orientation to achievements to be acquired by making choices based on rational knowledge. But by that standard, it is as wrong to kill a human zygote as it is a human adult. For a human adult would not be oriented to such future achievements if the living causal system that first existed as a zygote had not

caused itself to become an adult oriented to such achievements. In other words, a human being could not have an adult orientation to such achievements if the living causal system that first existed as a zygote had not then be oriented to the future causing of such achievements.

So choosing a point other than the existence of an orientation to human achievements as the beginning of human moral standing prevents the moral principles used to make that choice from having any nonarbitrary basis, since the orientation to human achievements is the only nonarbitrary basis possible. The only possible nonarbitrary criterion for human moral standing is satisfied by the zygote and the adult. Therefore the same basis because of which it is wrong to kill an innocent human adult is equally true of a human zygote. There can be no rational basis for moral principles that would link later acquired human features, as opposed to the orientation to the future human achievements, with the value that makes killing an adult human being wrong. For the orientation to future human achievements is the only non-arbitrary source of the value of our choices. And zygotes share that source.

6.

That is why the pro-lifer sees human life starting at the zygote. Before the sperm and ovum unite, there does not exist an agent oriented to the future production of its own free choices. Similarly, before the hydrogen and oxygen atoms unite, there does not exist a system actually possessing the causal dispositions that define water. After conception, there does exist an agent actually possessing causal dispositions orienting it to future production of free choices as features belonging to the agent itself. Unlike animals and plants, the causal system existing at the human zygote stage is oriented to the eventual causing of human achievements, the same kind of achievements that give an adult's mature features whatever value they have.

The causal dispositions of the thing that is now a zygote are oriented to the causing of choices in the remote future; the causal dispositions of an adult are oriented to the causing of

choices that can be in the immediate future. If lengths of time have value, however, the value can only be derived from achievements to which adults and zygotes are both oriented. The value of lengths of time would be that of means to, and hence would be relative to the value of, achievements to which both adults and zygotes are oriented. And the achievements to which a zygote is oriented can call for choices even less distantly in the future than some of the choices needed for achievements to which an adult is oriented.

Contrast human development to, say, a chimpanzee's. Assume that someday we will be able, at a certain point in a chimpanzee's development, to so modify it that, from this point on, the chimpanzee is now oriented to future choices determining its own ends the way that the pro-abortionist thinks bestows human moral standing on a human conceptus. The chimpanzee from that point on, but not before, would be an end-in-itself. So why can we not say that that developed way of being oriented to free choices, and not any previous way, is what makes a human conceptus an end-in-itself?

But notice that before we made the necessary alterations to the chimpanzee, it was not an agent oriented to the future making of choices by which it would determine its ends, while the human conceptus was such an agent from the zygote stage on. The chimpanzee had only a passive potentiality for becoming a maker of those choices; for the human conceptus, the potentiality is active. Exterior causes, human beings, actively caused the chimpanzee to become a maker of free choices; the agent that first exists and acts as a human zygote makes itself into a maker of free choices, and does so by a sequence of actions that begin with the zygote's causality. So there was no orientation to the achievement of free choices in the chimpanzee before we put one there. There was such an orientation in the human conceptus because exterior causes, the parents, put one in the human conceptus from the zygote stage on; that causal orientation is what made it a human zygote rather than a plant or a zygote of a brute animal.

But that means that the orientation that constitutes the standard by which the

acquired feature has value for the chimpanzee did not exist in the chimpanzee before we modified it, but the parents put that orientation in the human zygote as soon as they made it, because that's what constitutes the product of conception a human zygote as opposed to anything else. And the only nonarbitrary standard for valuing something as an end-in-itself now exists in both the chimpanzee and the human conceptus, but it did not exist in the chimpanzee before we modified it while it existed in the human conceptus from the moment of conception. Rather than bestowing the value of being an end-in-itself on the human conceptus, the acquired way of being oriented to free choices now shared with the chimpanzee gets its value for the human conceptus because of an orientation to achievements the conceptus possessed from the very beginning. The chimpanzee had no such orientation from its beginning. After the modifications we made to it, future developments of its orientation to make free choices would have value to it because of that orientation. So before the modifications, the act of making the chimpanzee into an end-in-itself could have value to us as ends-in-ourselves depending on our free choice of ends, but it could have no value for the chimpanzee as an end-in-itself, since it was not yet oriented to the achievement of selecting its own ends.

If the orientation to the future achievement of free choices, as opposed to the acquisition of this or that way of being oriented to free choices, does not make the human conceptus an end-in-itself, the human conceptus can never be an end-in-itself. For the value of the acquired features for it, that is, from its point of view, will always be the effect of the orientation to achievements that existed prior to the acquired feature. Unlike in the chimp, the acquired feature cannot give the human conceptus an orientation to higher ends than it had before. So by no standard could future developments have any more value for it than they had before, while the chimp has a new standard by which future developments will have a value for it that they did not have before.

This analysis would apply as well to Peter Singer's mature horse that is incomparably

more "rational" than a human baby. We could prevent the horse from reaching that stage either by killing it or by frustrating the development of the qualities the horse would need to become more rational than a human infant. But from the point of view of the value of that development to the horse, one of those would not be more unjust than the other. Because the value comes from the relation of the development to achievements that the horse is already oriented to. So if we can justly kill a horse before it becomes more rational than a human infant, we can likewise justly kill a horse afterwards.

Acquired features get their value for an agency that causes itself to have them from the orientations to achievement that the thing had prior to achieving them. The only value acquired features can bestow on such an entity is value that is relative to the entity's interests. If those interests are not the interests of something with absolute value, acquired features cannot give it absolute value. So if the fetus was an end-in-itself to begin with, its developed features are features of an end-in-itself. But if it was not an end-in-itself to begin with, developed features can not make it one. Because we are measuring their value as relative to us, not to it. So there is an underlying issue between the pro lifers and the pro-choicer that rarely comes to the surface. And if it doesn't come to the surface, people on both sides waste a lot of time and energy arguing about the wrong things. The real issue is not when to consider that human life has begun, but what value we consider human life to have.

The question of any being's value requires us to make a decision; and in making a decision, as in any act, we must be achieving some effect to which we are oriented. It does not follow, however, that we must make the decision by relating the other being to achievements to which we are oriented in a way that a priori subordinates its achievement ours, and we need not decide the value of the other beings's features by relating them to our achievements to the exclusion of its. The achievement to which we are oriented may, for instance, be knowledge of the value of the achievements of which various species are capable, measuring value by the kinds of orientations to achievements our species has. As a result of

such an investigation, we may decide that it is unjust to subordinate the achievements of some other species to ours. We could, for example, discover the existence of a species whose achievements we should value equally to ours, if our criteria are applied consistently.

7.

Which has more value, a sleeping chimpanzee that knows sign language or a sleeping human infant only two days old? Assume that the chimpanzee's linguistic ability is the equivalent of a human four-year old's but will not get any greater. We know everything there is to know about these two from a factual point of view. We know everything that they actually are, every positive actual feature that they possess. Since the both of them are now sleeping, some of their actual features are also potentialities that will not be exercised until they are awake. The chimp's actual features give it the proximate potentiality to use language as a 4 year old child does now. The infant's actual features give it now the remote potentiality to make itself (but the proximate potentiality for actions that are part of the process of self-causality continuing until it makes itself) a user of language at the adult human level. Which entity has more value?

(Stopped here 11-3-05)

8.

Since we are assuming that we both know all the facts that can be known, the only way to answer this question is to examine the nature of value. Since the question is are we right or wrong in placing such and such a value on the zygote, we have to know what an act of placing value on something is supposed to be, what is it supposed to accomplish (if anything)?

But really, the value of human life is at stake in every moral issue. by the value of human life, we really mean the value of the human person. is a human person someone who deserves that I keep my promises to her? Does she have such intrinsic dignity that I owe her my the goodwill? Is she of such worth that she has a right not to be beaten by me, lied to by me, cheated by me and so on?

So there is more to that threat than meets the eye. Of course, pro lifers were thinking of, among other things, permitting doctors to assist suicides and commit euthanasia, things that were barely on the radar screen when abortion was legalized. The threat there, of course, is that, wherever doctors have been allowed to cooperate with those who wish to commit suicide or give their permission to be euthanized, soon many doctors take it up on themselves to kill even those who have expressed no such desire. Government has shown little ability to prevent doctors from being the arbiters of our life or death. The dead don't vote (except in places like Chicago).

So this is something we should all think about; for what is at stake is not just the morality of infanticide and euthanasia. Every moral issue is at stake. Our own worth as human persons is at stake.

For example, if the existence of persons is the existence of that for the sake of which everything else exists, there can be no justification in killing a person simply because they lack some other good such as freedom from pain. Freedom from pain cannot be put on the same scale as removing a person from existence. This is one draconian implication of this approach to ethics.

We feel bad about the old persons suffering, so we want to help him commit suicide. We feel

bad about the pregnant teenager, and we don't feel bad about the zygote, so we abort the zygote.

Of course, feelings are notoriously fickle. They are conditioned by sometimes capricious social changes. We use to be horrified by abortion; now we feel it is the kind thing to do.

(Because if we did, the only basis for our choice of this or that way would be our feelings about it or about them.)

So if we select any time after conception as the way of being oriented to free choice that we freely choose to be the beginning of moral value, our choice can only be based on feelings about that way of being oriented to free choice as opposed to the zygote's way. But on the other hand, if persons are not absolute values, there is no other way to make such a choice except on the basis of feelings.

So what the pro-lifers really need to show is not when human life begins. Every one knows that the zygote is the first place where there exists an agent oriented to make itself into a developed human being. Before the zygote, the separated sperm and ovum are no more such an agent than the separated hydrogen and oxygen atoms are a molecule of water.

What pro-lifers need to show is that the goals and accomplishments to which that agent is oriented are those of a being with intrinsic, absolute value. If not, then the course of its development of features makes it more valuable, because features can have relative value, but all values are relative.

If a human person is not an absolute value, she is a relative value. Her value is relative to something other than herself, because she does not exist for her own sake. What

is her value relative to? That will depend on whom you are talking to. For a Marxist your value will be relative to the movement of history. For a utilitarian your value will be relative to the greatest good of the greatest number. But more directly, whatever value we each have, equal or not, is relative to something external to ourselves. And if the value I give myself is only relative to something like the greatest good of the greatest number or the movement of history, that is the kind of value, the only kind of value, I can give you.

That is, it gives the zygote an orientation to human achievements, the same kind of orientation that gives whatever value they have to our choices, including the choice to deprive the zygote of any achievements.

On television of the other day Michael learned, the editor of Tikkun, spoke about trying to convince his fellow progressives of the importance of the spiritual dimension of human existence. He seemed to neglect the most important reason why progressives should be concerned about the weakness of religious faith in our culture. Many progressives like to think that the rights they are trying to procure are deserved by human beings because of what they are, not because they are related to something external to themselves. If they don't think this explicitly, they certainly think it implicitly.

In other words, if all values are relative then we must measure values and by their place on a Common scale. But if there is an absolute value, it cannot be on the same scale as any other value.

In other words, when we choose to kill a human being because it lacks a certain development, the value of the human being with that development is being measured by its relation to our ends, just as the value of the horse with the ability to reproduce is measured

by the horse with that feature's relation to our ends not to its own ends.

For we are judging the value of its future achievements, the future achievements we will be preventing it from ever having, by our ends not its.

It is not enough to say that we should respect other people's value as equal to our own. In the first place, the believer in the absolute value of the person, is at least, or at least can be, consistent in believing that there is some respect in which we are indeed equal, a respect that causes us to deserve things morally. But for the relativist, finding a more than only relative respect in which we are "equal" is what is no easy task these days.

Animals, on the other hand, are not able to achieve the kinds of things we most value because of the orientations to achievements we have prior to estimating value. So when we choose to subordinate the value of animal's achievements to our own, we are not what keeps animals from having those kinds of achievements. Animals' natures are what prevent that. But when we choose to subordinate the value of the achievements to which a conceptus is oriented to the value of ours, we are what keeps the agent that is now a fetus from having achievements of that kind.

To answer that question, let us first answer a question about what mature features and their products are the ones that give an adult human being its moral standing. To make a long story short and cut to the chase,

And in choosing a point in growth when killing a human conceptus becomes moral, we must have a reason for our choice; explicitly or implicitly the choice will use criteria. But selecting criterion X rather than criterion Y is just another choice. We will choose the criteria we use because those criteria are accomplishments to which we are oriented or because they

are means to our to those accomplishments. If these accomplishments have value for us as a result of a previous choice, that choice too was made because of a previously existing orientation to achievements. At the base of every choice are orientations to accomplishments existing before any choice.

And if our choice deprives a zygote or an adult of any further achievements of the same kind at which our choice is aimed, the value of zygotes and adults is being measured by achievements insofar as they are our individual achievements, not insofar as they satisfy an already existing orientation to achievements of a certain kind, human achievements. The value of our victim is not being measured by its possession of an orientation to that kind of achievement, since we are preventing it from having that kind of achievement. By implication, then, what gives our choices their value is not the shareable kind to which the achievements for the sake of which we make choices belong. For if another thing has an achievement that is the same as ours except for being a different instance of a kind, there is only one basis for holding that its achievement is not of equal value to ours: our achievement has value due to its being our individual achievement; it does not have value due to the kind of which it is an individual instance. In other words, private preference would be the only basis I could have for attributing human moral standing to the conceptus at any given stage of its growth.

Equality of value only holds between instances of kinds, because equality can only hold between instances of kinds. But an individual is an instance of an infinite number of kinds describable in an infinite number of ways. So two individuals could be equal with respect to the value expressed by one description and unequal in other respects. Why cannot we say, then, that animals and plants oriented to achievements of the same value as ours since some descriptions of those achievements also describe ours? They and we are oriented to

achievements that are physical, organic, temporal, finite, etc. What makes achievements specifically human in a way relevant to human achievements having a higher value as measured by our orientations to achievements?

The value of the acquired features to the being that acquires them depend on the relation of those features to the achievements to which the thing's nature orients it. A zygote cannot be a mathematician but neither can it have pneumonia. Pneumonia is something only more mature human beings can have, but pneumonia hardly bestows value despite being a mature feature. The reason pneumonia does not bestow value is that it interferes with and is contrary to achievements to which the nature of the organism orients it. Nor is it a misfortune if a chimpanzee fails to develop sufficient intelligence to learn algebra, because its nature does not orient it to that kind of accomplishment. But it is a misfortune for a human being not to develop that much intelligence, because we know that other achievements to which human nature orients us are better served if we are that intelligent. From the perspective of the being that acquires features, the only value acquired features can bestow is value relative to the entity's interests as determined by its nature.

the one that takes that risk but taking that risk is so draconian we should not even consider the evidence in favor of taking that risk, because we value that choice so highly that the contrary evidence The pro-choicer see the pro-lifer as playing a game that risks unjustly interfering with a woman's choice over her own body. As a result, it is a "religious" question.

so of the conceptus as causing itself to develop, we are not denying that the conceptus must have a lot of help from other agents in the environment.

But then in our values other persons are not, like ourselves, the source of the ends measuring the value of other things, because other things would not exist for the sake of persons in our values. So

since all that choices can do is make things our ends or means to our ends.

other people are in our system of values are beings directed to ends of their own free choosing, not just to our own, is to treat them as ends-in-themselves.

, We are evaluating other persons as being for our ends to the exclusion of also being for their own, we are measuring the value of other persons by our chosen ends to the exclusion of also measuring it by their own. since all that choices can do is make things our ends or means to our ends, other persons do not measure the value of everything else by reference to their chosen ends but the value of everything is still measured by reference to our chosen ends. In our values, the value of everything else is not measured by reference to the good of other people, although it is still measured by reference to our chosen ends; Therefore, to achieve the goal of evaluating things as being what they are, choices must give persons the status of being that for the sake of which everything else exists. we

are not giving other persons the status of being oriented to our ends and their ends.

There exists at each stage (1) an active orientation (that is an orientation to cause something by the action of the organism that exists at that stage) to maintain in existence (2) an active orientation to maintain in existence (3) an active orientation toward producing the kind of final accomplishments defining that kind of life [criterion (2) is not redundant; if the first kind of orientation (1) were the orientation to maintain in existence the another kind of orientation (3), we would have to add that that there is also an orientation to maintain in existence the first kind of orientation itself], and (4) there is some material continuity between the succeeding stages of each kind of orientation (that is, at least some parts of the prior stage will be parts of the later) not accidentally but because (5) the first kind of orientation is an orientation to maintain both kinds of orientation in existence by the action of some parts of the organism existing at each stage on other parts.

temporally extended CS so structured as to be able to cause changes in parts of itself by which it acquires new dispositions for self-perpetuation and self-modification until it causes itself to have adult dispositions for the self-modifications that achieve human ends.

a life process has an agent and patient that are each parts of the agent and patient of life processes are distinct as parts of the same whole agent in the sense that

And not all causal sequences have the kind of material and formal continuity answering to the conceptual unity we call "a living thing."

in addition one thing is the source of another thing's change and that, somewhere and in some way, a patient will have a new similarity to the agent. In particular, induction usually does not give us reason to consider the agent and patient parts of a whole definable by the

kind forward and backward causal connections that require us to distinguish living causal systems from others.

preceded by whole sequence because these things belong to the is from the formal continuity an analysis of the relation of the kind of result of the change, the causal features defining a type of result, to the kind of agent, the kind of preceding that kind of result and from which that kind of result always proceeds. The result is a causal system oriented toward certain final accomplishments. But the ultimate causing of those final accomplishments

It will be replied that what gives us the right to make this decision is not the achievement of some future end, but the fact that we have already achieved ends that put us above the fetus in value. And

To be an end in itself in this sense is to have one's own ends as another human being who treats the horse as a means to her ends has ends in herself that she is trying to achieve by using the horse as a means. But is another human being an end in itself as we, those who are contemplating killing it, are ends in ourselves or have ends in ourselves?

Having a means to the attainment of end X does bestow a value on beings oriented to end X; For example, whatever claim handicapped persons may have to our help, they have because of needs that they continue to have despite their lack of features enabling them to fulfill those needs.

So the real question is whether anything has intrinsic value, or whether everything has only relative value.

For moral good and evil pertain only to choices based on rational knowledge; where the knowledge that would cause a choice to be immoral is not available, we are not morally culpable of a chosen act.

15-year old human beings are "better" than 5-year olds, at least in the sense that 10-year-olds have more assets, like knowledge and strength, that aid in the attainment of human ends.

the value of either is equal from the point of view of that human agency's orientations to achievements. And vice versa.

But do we measure the value of the 5-year olds achievements by that organism's relation to achievements or ours? When we choose to kill a human causal system because it lacks a certain development, the value of a human organism with that development is being measured by its relation to our ends, just as the value of the horse with the ability to reproduce is measured by the horse's relation to our ends not to its own ends.

From the viewpoint of the value that derives from the orientation to make rational choices, the abortion rights advocate implies The implication is that it is not the mere orientation to make rational choices that gives an organism human moral standing, but some particular way of being oriented to make rational choices, a way that is not shared by agent that exists as a zygote or at some other early stages of human development.

If human beings get their value from the way they develop, they are not ends-in-themselves.

1.

Aquinas did not use the term "end-in-itself" for persons but clearly recognized the features of persons because of which I use that term; ST II-II 25, 3; I-II 1, 2 and 3; I 29, 1.