

## A Telling Litany of Pro-Abortion Arguments

David Carlin

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21, 2021

As best I can remember, I have always been anti-abortion, going all the way back to my boyhood. When I was a boy – a long, long time ago – everybody was anti-abortion, especially Catholics. It was forbidden not just by the rules of morality but by the criminal law.

Then came the great sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, and suddenly lots of people, especially young people delighting in new-found sexual freedom, decided that abortion was not such a bad thing. It was either a necessary evil or a positive good. Many felt that the right to abortion was a fundamental human right.

In 1973, a majority of the Supreme Court agreed; they discovered, *mirabile dictu*, that the U.S. Constitution contained, apparently hidden up to that point, a right to abortion.

This didn't shake my conviction that abortion is gravely wrong – although it did much to shake my belief that the Supreme Court knows how to read the Constitution.

Later, I became a Democratic member of the Rhode Island Senate. A few years later I rose to what was then the top Senate office, majority leader. I didn't renounce my anti-abortion convictions – even though my party, at least at the national level, had definitively done so. Eventually, I renounced my party.

Every so often I review my reasons for being anti-abortion, which boil down to this: abortion is a species of unwarranted homicide. In a spirit of fair-mindedness, I also sometimes review pro-abortion arguments purporting to show that abortion is either: (a) not homicide or, (b) warranted homicide. I have a list of common pro-abortion arguments, that includes the following.

- The entity killed in an abortion is not a human being.
- The entity killed in an abortion is only a “potential” human being.
- The entity killed in an abortion is a human being, but it is not a *person*, and it is wrong to kill a human being only when that human has evolved into a person.
- The entity killed in an abortion is part of the woman's body, not an independent thing.
- The entity killed in an abortion is, at least early in the pregnancy, an unformed mass of tissue.
- The entity killed in an abortion is of no value unless somebody actually values it. Obviously, its “mother” doesn't, and it is too young and undeveloped to value itself. So it is without value.

These contentions are already hard to swallow, but there are more, many more, some that beggar belief or contradict one another:

- The entity killed in an abortion has no right to inhabit the mother's body, any more than a home invader has a right to take up uninvited residence in your house for nine months.

- A woman has a right to “control” her own body; the right to a woman’s bodily autonomy trumps any so-called “right to life” a fetus may have.
- The entity killed in an abortion is an “unjust aggressor” attacking the mother, and therefore may be lawfully killed the way we may lawfully kill somebody trying to murder us or an enemy combatant in warfare.
- If the fetus has a right to life, the woman carrying the fetus has an even stronger right not to give birth to an unwanted child.
- A woman who gets rid of an “unwanted” unborn baby is doing the child a favor; for what fate could be worse than being an unwanted child? It’s better to be dead.



Then, there are the *ad hominem* arguments:

- Those who disapprove of abortion are not interested in the “life” of the fetus; they are simply trying to restrict the sexual freedom of women and the freedom of women generally.
- Those who oppose abortion hypocritically call themselves “pro-life” – which they are not, for they don’t care about the life of humans who have actually been born, e.g., poor people, racial minorities, death-row convicts.
- Those who disapprove of abortion are usually racists; they believe in both white supremacy and male supremacy.
- Those who disapprove of abortion are deficient in compassion.

- Those who disapprove of abortion are religious fanatics who wish to turn America from a democracy into a theocracy.
- Those who disapprove of abortion are for the most part vulgar, uneducated, and from the lower classes; whereas we who defend it are for the most part well-mannered, well-educated, and of the higher classes. In disputes between Ivy League graduates and those who have not gone beyond high school or a community college, the Ivy Leaguers are always right.

Needless to say, all these are philosophically worthless arguments, as any intelligent and unbiased person should see. But it doesn't matter to those who believe in abortion rights. If you refute all their arguments, they will come up with new ones.

Why? They know that a legal right to abortion is essential to protect and preserve our moral regime of nearly unlimited sexual freedom.

In such a regime, "accidents" will happen. Despite all the pills and condoms in the world, girls and women will from time to time become unintentionally pregnant. Some handy way will have to be found of getting rid of these "accidents." If abortion is not readily available, a regime of sexual freedom becomes risky, creating a "chilling effect" on modern sexual ethics.

And think what horrors may follow. If we have doubts about the rightness of abortion, we will soon have doubts about the rightness of nonmarital sex, and next will come doubts about the rightness of homosexuality and same-sex marriage, and then doubts about transgenderism, and then doubts about pansexuality, and then doubts about non-binary identity. And who knows what else? The whole structure of modern sexual freedom will be in danger.

Worst of all, history's pendulum might swing in the direction of that awful thing, Christianity, the only proponent of a consistent ethic of life, in season and out. "God save us from that" – such is the prayer of the atheistic champions of sexual freedom.

**\*Image:** *The Slaughter of the Innocents* by Nicolas Poussin, c. 1630 [Musée Condé, Chantilly, France]