

DOES A NORMAL FOETUS REALLY HAVE A FUTURE OF VALUE? A REPLY TO MARQUIS

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ABSTRACT

The traditional approach to the abortion debate revolves around numerous issues, such as whether the foetus is a person, whether the foetus has rights, and more. Don Marquis suggests that this traditional approach leads to a standoff and that the abortion debate 'requires a different strategy.'¹ Hence his 'future of value' strategy, which is summarized as follows:

- (1) *A normal foetus has a future of value.*
- (2) *Depriving a normal foetus of a future of value imposes a misfortune on it.*
- (3) *Imposing a misfortune on a normal foetus is prima facie wrong.*
- (4) *Therefore, depriving a normal foetus of a future of value is prima facie wrong.*
- (5) *Killing a normal foetus deprives it of a future of value.*
- (6) *Therefore, killing a normal foetus is prima facie wrong.*

In this paper, I argue that Marquis's strategy is not different since it involves the concept of person – a concept deeply rooted in the traditional approach. Specifically, I argue that futures are valuable insofar as they are not only dominated by goods of consciousness, but are experienced by psychologically continuous persons. Moreover, I argue that his strategy is not sound since premise (1) is false. Specifically, I argue that a normal foetus, at least during the first trimester, is not a person. Thus, during that stage of development it is not capable of experiencing its future as a psychologically continuous person and, hence, it does not have a future of value.

¹ Don Marquis, 'An Argument That Abortion is Wrong,' in *Morality and Moral Controversies*, 6th edition, ed. John Arthur (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1999), 221.

INTRODUCTION

The traditional approach to the abortion debate revolves around numerous issues, such as whether the foetus is a person, whether the foetus has rights, whether the rights of potential persons can ever outweigh the rights of actual persons, and so on. In his *An Argument That Abortion Is Wrong*, Don Marquis suggests that this traditional approach leads to a standoff and that the abortion debate 'requires a different strategy.'² Hence Marquis's 'future of value' strategy, which can be summarized as follows.

Most agree that killing us, normal adult human beings, is *prima facie* wrong. If we can determine what property the possession of which is sufficient (though not necessary) to make killing us *prima facie* wrong, we can then determine whether normal foetuses share that property. If they do, then killing normal foetuses is *prima facie* wrong as well.³

What, then, is the property the possession of which is sufficient to make killing normal adult human beings *prima facie* wrong? According to Marquis, it is that of having what he calls a 'future of value.' By 'future' Marquis means the life one will live if one lives out one's natural life span.⁴ And by future of 'value' Marquis means a future dominated by 'goods of consciousness' that one will (or would) value when one will (or would) experience them.⁵ These goods of consciousness consist of 'whatever we get out of life . . . items toward which we have a pro attitude . . . what makes life worth living.'⁶ Since 'what makes life worth living for one person will not be the same as what makes life worth living for another,' examples of goods of consciousness are multifarious, including the pursuit of goals, aesthetic enjoyments, friendships, intellectual pursuits, physical pleasures, and more.⁷ When a normal adult human being is killed, then, she is deprived of a future of value. This, in turn, imposes a misfortune on her, and imposing a misfortune on a normal adult human being is *prima facie* wrong. Thus, killing a normal adult human being is *prima facie* wrong.

Having established what property the possession of which is sufficient to make the killing of normal adult human beings *prima*

² Don Marquis. 1989. *An Argument That Abortion is Wrong*. In *Morality and Moral Controversies*, 6th edition. John Arthur, editor. New Jersey. Prentice Hall: 221.

³ By 'foetus' Marquis means a developing human being from conception until birth.

⁴ Marquis, 221.

⁵ Marquis, 222.

⁶ Marquis, 222.

⁷ Marquis, 222.

facie wrong, Marquis then considers whether normal foetuses share this property with them. He maintains that they do and, subsequently, that killing normal foetuses is *prima facie* wrong.

Marquis's future of value strategy, then, consists of two distinct but related arguments. The first pertains to the *prima facie* wrongness of killing normal adult human beings, while the second pertains to the *prima facie* wrongness of killing normal foetuses. The arguments can be stated thus:

First Argument: The Wrongness of Killing a Normal Adult Human Being

- (1) A normal adult human being has a future of value.
- (2) Depriving a normal adult human being of a future of value imposes a misfortune on him/her.
- (3) Imposing a misfortune on a normal adult human being is *prima facie* wrong.
- (4) Therefore, depriving a normal adult human being of a future of value is *prima facie* wrong.
- (5) Killing a normal adult human being deprives him/her of a future of value.
- (6) Therefore, killing a normal adult human being is *prima facie* wrong.

Second Argument: The Wrongness of Killing a Normal Foetus

- (7) A normal foetus has a future of value.
- (8) Depriving a normal foetus of a future of value imposes a misfortune on it.
- (9) Imposing a misfortune on a normal foetus is *prima facie* wrong.
- (10) Therefore, depriving a normal foetus of a future of value is *prima facie* wrong.
- (11) Killing a normal foetus deprives it of a future of value.
- (12) Therefore, killing a normal foetus is *prima facie* wrong.

At first glance, Marquis's future of value strategy to the abortion debate may strike some as being not only different, but sound as well. Yet, after careful examination, one will see that it is neither. In the following section, I argue that Marquis's future of value strategy is not *different*, in that it involves the concept of *person* – a concept deeply rooted in the traditional approach. Specifically, I argue that futures are valuable insofar as they are not only dominated by goods of consciousness, but are experienced by psychologically continuous persons. In the third section, I argue that his future of value strategy is not *sound* in that it contains a false premise, viz., premise (7). Specifically, I argue that a normal foetus, at least during the first trimester, is not a person; thus,

during that stage of development it is not capable of experiencing its future as a psychologically continuous person. Hence, at least during the first trimester, the normal foetus does not share with normal adult human beings the property of having a future of value.

I WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE A FUTURE OF VALUE: AN ANALYSIS OF (1)

To see that Marquis's strategy to the abortion debate is neither different nor sound, one must analyze the property of having a future of value beyond Marquis's own limited analysis. In the following, I provide such an extended analysis. I begin by analyzing 'future of value' *qua* property of normal adult human beings. After understanding more precisely what it means for normal adult human beings to have a future of value, we will be in a better position to determine whether normal foetuses share this property with them. With this said, let us turn to the analysis of premise (1).

What, exactly, does 'A normal adult human being has a future of value' mean? To determine this, one must establish what it means to 'have' a future as well as what it means to have a particular kind of future, viz., a future of 'value.' An analysis of each of these terms is provided below. For the sake of simplicity, the term 'Joe' is substituted for the prolix 'a normal adult human being.'

What, then, does it mean for Joe to *have* a future? We speak regularly and intelligibly of normal adult human beings having things, such as when we say, 'Joe has money,' 'Joe has a headache,' 'Joe has patience,' 'Joe has a sister,' etc. But certainly we do not mean the same thing by 'has' in every statement. Indeed, in the preceding statements, we are using 'has' in four different senses. In the first statement, we mean 'Joe *is in possession* of money'; in the second, 'Joe *is experiencing* a certain painful sensation in his head'; in the third, 'Joe *is disposed to exercise* fortitude'; and in the fourth, 'Joe *stands in a certain sort of relation* with another human being.' What, then, do we mean when we state 'Joe *has* a future – a life he will live if he lives out his natural life span'? We certainly do not mean, 'Joe is in possession of a life he will live if he lives out his natural life span,' at least not in the same sense that Joe is in possession of objects such as *money*. Nor do we mean, 'Joe is experiencing a life he will live if he lives out his natural life span,' for we do not think that Joe can experience a life that is not yet

actualized.⁸ We do not mean, 'Joe is disposed to exercising a life he will live if he lives out his natural life span,' as such is hardly intelligible. A plausible candidate for what we mean, however, is, 'Joe stands in a certain sort of relation with a life he will live if he lives out his natural life span.' The nature of the relation, Marquis submits, is one of potential experience, meaning that Joe has the potential to experience the life he will live if he lives out his natural life span. 'Joe has a life he will live if he lives out his natural life span,' then, may be understood as 'Joe has the potential to experience the life he will live if he lives out his natural life span.'

Of course, to say that Joe has the potential to experience the life he will live if he lives out his natural life span implies that Joe has the potential to *exist* in the future, since in the actual world existence precedes experience. This implication, however, is vague, for at least three modes of existence are attributable to Joe: *biological*, *conscious*, and *personal*.⁹ Biological existence refers to Joe's existence *qua* organism. Conscious existence refers to Joe's existence *qua* conscious being – a somewhat complicated notion since it depends on one's general views in the philosophy of mind. It is generally agreed, however, that consciousness involves the capacity for experiences, including those of pleasure and pain; thus, existence *qua* conscious being may be understood as existence as a being with the capacity for having experiences, including those of pleasure and pain.¹⁰ Personal existence refers to Joe's existence *qua* person, the most difficult of the three notions to delineate. Some philosophers hold that 'person' is strictly a moral concept devoid of descriptive content, others hold that it is strictly a descriptive concept devoid of moral content, while still others hold that it is both a moral and descriptive concept. For the purposes of this paper, the view that 'person' is strictly a descriptive concept devoid of moral content is adopted.

⁸ Some might object that Joe *can* presently experience a life he will live if he lives out his natural life span *via*, say, clairvoyance or divine revelation. Even if this were the case, such would constitute third-person rather than first-person experiences. And, with regard to Joe's future, presumably we are concerned with his first-person – not third-person – experience of that future.

⁹ While more modes of existence may be attributable to Joe, these are the most pertinent to this discussion.

¹⁰ Though consciousness and sentience are logically distinct – something could be conscious without having the capacity for experiencing pleasure and pain – the former is usually accompanied by the latter. See Mary Anne Warren. 2000. *Moral Status: Obligations to Persons and Other Living Things*. Oxford. Oxford University Press: 54–55.

With regard to the descriptive account of ‘person,’ Michael Tooley states that ‘there is very general agreement that something is not a person unless it is, in some sense, capable of consciousness.’¹¹ However, many philosophers also hold that the capacity for consciousness alone is not sufficient for personhood; thus, numerous capacities and properties have been proposed that, when conjoined with consciousness, are sufficient to make something a person, such as:

- the capacity for having desires;
- the property of being a continuing, conscious self, or subject of mental states;
- the capacity for self-consciousness;
- the property of having mental states that involve propositional attitudes;
- the capacity for having states of consciousness involving intentionality; and,
- the capacity for reasoning.¹²

Though no one capacity or property, when conjoined with consciousness, is clearly sufficient for personhood, many agree that if something lacks *all* of these capacities and properties (i.e., if something *merely* has the capacity for consciousness) it is not a person.¹³ Hence, personhood may be construed as ‘consciousness *plus*’, meaning personhood involves the capacity for consciousness *plus* other properties and/or capacities, such as those mentioned above. Though the issue of which properties and/or capacities, when conjoined with consciousness, are sufficient for personhood will not be settled here, it will be assumed that Joe, *qua* normal adult human being, *is* a person and, thus, that this

¹¹ Michael Tooley. 1983. *Abortion and Infanticide*. Oxford. Oxford University Press: 90. As Tooley points out, ‘ordinary talk about capacities and capabilities is . . . somewhat imprecise’ (100). For the purposes of this paper, I rely on Tooley’s distinction between two kinds of capacities: (1) immediately exercisable capacities, and (2) blocked capacities. ‘To attribute an immediately exercisable capacity to something,’ Tooley writes, ‘is to make a statement about how the thing would be behaving, or what properties it would have, if it were now to be in certain circumstances, or in a certain condition’ (150–51). Whereas with a blocked capacity, the idea is ‘that all of the “positive” factors required for the immediately exercisable capacity are present, but there are also negative factors that prevent the exercise of the capacity’ (151). For the purposes of this paper, the term ‘capacity’ is used to refer either to immediately exercisable capacities or blocked capacities.

¹² Tooley, 90–91.

¹³ See Tooley, 90, and Warren, 94.

particular mode of existence – personal existence – is attributable to Joe.

With these three modes of existence in mind – biological, conscious, and personal – one may understand ‘Joe has the potential to experience the life he will live if he lives out his natural life span’ to mean one of three things:

- (a) ‘Joe has the potential to: (i) exist (merely) *biologically*, and (ii) experience the life he will live if he lives out his natural life span’;
- (b) ‘Joe has the potential to: (i) exist (merely) *biologically and consciously*, and (ii) experience the life he will live if he lives out his natural life span’; or,
- (c) Joe has the potential to: (i) exist *biologically and personally*, and (ii) experience the life he will live if he lives out his natural life span.’

Whether (a), (b), or (c) is to be adopted depends on Joe’s future capacities. Since Joe’s future capacities include *experiencing* his future life – something that requires consciousness – adopting (a) is precluded. Thus, one must choose between (b) and (c). In the following, I argue that, given the nature of a future of *value*, there is reason to believe that we must adopt a meaning that entails (c).

As stated previously, Marquis holds that what makes one’s future valuable are those ‘goods of consciousness’ that one will (or would) value when one will (or would) experience them. Thus, ‘Joe has a future of value’ means either:

- (d) ‘Joe has the potential to: (i) exist (merely) *biologically and consciously*, (ii) experience the life he will live if he lives out his natural life span, and (iii) value goods of consciousness when he will (or would) experience them’; or,
- (e) ‘Joe has the potential to: (i) exist *biologically and personally*, (ii) experience the life he will live if he lives out his natural life span, and (iii) value goods of consciousness when he will (or would) experience them.’

On either interpretation, having a future of value entails the capacity for *valuing* goods of consciousness. And the capacity for valuing involves, among other things, taking an interest in something.¹⁴ This, in turn, involves having an object of desire,

¹⁴ A clarification is required. X may be *in* Joe’s interest even if he does not *take* an interest in X. However, a future of value entails not merely that X is *in* Joe’s interest, but that Joe *takes* an interest in (i.e., values) X. And from the claim that X is in Joe’s interest it does not follow that Joe has the capacity to take an interest in (to value) X.

and desires are generally understood in terms of propositional attitudes.¹⁵ As Tooley writes, ‘the fundamental way of describing a desire is as a desire that a certain proposition, or a certain sentence, be true.’¹⁶ Propositional attitudes, moreover, require concepts, since the latter serve as the constituents of propositions. Hence Tooley’s claim that ‘the desires that a thing is capable of having at a certain time are limited by the concepts it possesses at that time.’¹⁷ On this view, then, the capacity for valuing involves the capacity for concept possession.

Given that a future of value entails the capacity for valuing goods of consciousness, we may infer that such a future involves taking an interest in these goods of consciousness. Thus, that Joe will (or would) value goods of consciousness means that Joe will (or would) take an interest in them. This suggests that these goods of consciousness will (or would) be objects of desire for Joe, and since the capacity for having objects of desire involves propositional attitudes and, thus, concepts, Joe must possess at least some of the concepts related to the goods of consciousness. Hence, if goods of consciousness are to be valued by Joe, then he must possess at least some of the related concepts. Stated negatively, without possession of at least some of the related concepts, Joe cannot have goods of consciousness as objects of desire; hence, he cannot value them.

Given the preceding, the question is whether something that exists (merely) biologically and consciously has the capacity for concept possession. For if it does not, then it in turn does not have the capacity for valuing goods of consciousness. Hence, *qua* (mere) biological and conscious being, it cannot have a future of value. Given the preceding delineation of conscious existence – the capacity for having experiences, including those of pleasure and pain – the capacity for concept possession is certainly not entailed. Indeed, most philosophers distinguish between consciousness on the one hand and the capacity for concept possession on the other, and for good reason. A concept is understood by many philosophers to be ‘a way of thinking of something – a particular object, or property, or relation, or some other entity.’¹⁸

¹⁵ Joe’s desire for X may be understood in terms of both an occurrent and a dispositional desire for X. If Joe has an occurrent desire for X, then he is consciously entertaining his desire for X at that time. If Joe has a dispositional desire for X, then he is not consciously entertaining his desire for X at that time, but he is disposed to desire X at that time.

¹⁶ Tooley, 104.

¹⁷ Tooley, 106.

¹⁸ Christopher Peacocke. 1994. Concepts. In *A Companion to Epistemology*. Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa, eds. Oxford. Blackwell Publishers: 74.

Thus, concepts involve *intentionality*, the property of mental states and events by which they are 'directed at or about or of objects and states of affairs in the world.'¹⁹ And there is good reason to believe that consciousness and intentionality are distinct – that not every conscious state is intentional, and that not every intentional state is conscious.²⁰ Mere consciousness, then, is not sufficient for the capacity of concept possession. Rather, consciousness must be conjoined with certain properties and/or capacities, such as the capacity for having mental states involving intentionality. Hence, we can rule out (d) as a possible interpretation of 'Joe has a future of value.' Moreover, the preceding serves as positive evidence for adopting (e), for a future of value involves propositional attitudes and intentionality, both of which are listed among the proposed properties and capacities that, when conjoined with consciousness, are sufficient for personhood. Of course, from this it does not follow necessarily that (e) is the proper interpretation, but it renders (e) quite plausible. And so we may tentatively understand 'Joe has a future of value' to mean:

- (e) 'Joe has the potential to: (i) exist *biologically and personally*, (ii) experience the life he will live if he lives out his natural life span, and (iii) value goods of consciousness when he will (or would) experience them.'

But even if (e) is the proper interpretation, a further question arises, namely, what does it mean for Joe to have the potential *to exist personally*? This may mean a number of things, including:

- (f) 'Joe has the potential to: (i) exist biologically and personally *as a psychologically discontinuous person*, (ii) experience the life he will live if he lives out his natural life span, and (iii) value goods of consciousness when he will (or would) experience them,' where 'psychologically discontinuous person' refers to a person whose future mental states are *not* sufficiently causally dependent upon and related in content to past mental states; or,
- (g) 'Joe has the potential to: (i) exist biologically and personally *as a psychologically continuous person*, (ii) experience the life he will live if he lives out his natural life span, and (iii) value goods of consciousness when he will (or would) experience them,' where 'psychologically continuous person' refers to a person whose future mental states *are* sufficiently causally

¹⁹ John Searle. 1983. *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press: 1.

²⁰ Searle, 2.

dependent upon and related in content to past mental states.²¹

Marquis, I submit, should be committed to (g), as is demonstrated by the following.²²

At present (t_1) Joe, *qua* normal adult human being, exists biologically and personally and has a future of value. This means that Joe has the potential to: (i) exist biologically and personally at some time after t_1 (t_3), (ii) experience this life he will live if he lives out his natural life span, and (iii) value some of those experiences when he will (or would) experience them. Suppose that, at some point between t_1 and t_3 (t_2) a mad scientist will reprogram Joe's brain in such a way that there is no psychological continuity between his present and future mental states. Thus, after reprogramming, Joe at t_3 has beliefs, attitudes, personality traits, and even 'memories' that are *not* sufficiently causally dependent upon and related in content to those of Joe at t_1 . That is, the person of Joe at t_3 is psychologically discontinuous from the person of Joe at t_1 .

Given the preceding analysis of what it means to have a future of value, is it true that, immediately prior to t_2 , Joe has a future of value? It is undoubtedly true that Joe has the potential to exist *biologically* at t_3 ; that is, Joe *qua* organism at t_1 has the potential to exist at t_3 . But does he have the potential to exist *personally* at t_3 ; does Joe *qua* person at t_1 have the potential to exist at t_3 ? If by 'exist personally at t_3 ' we mean 'exist as a psychologically discontinuous person,' then the fact that Joe will be reprogrammed at t_2 does *not* preclude him from having a future of value – i.e., psychological discontinuity is *not* incompatible with Joe having a future of value. Whereas if by 'exist personally at t_3 ' we mean 'exist as a psychologically continuous person,' then the fact that Joe will be reprogrammed at t_2 *does* preclude him from having a future of value – i.e., psychological discontinuity *is* incompatible with Joe having a future of value.

²¹ According to Tooley, mental changes that a psychologically *discontinuous* person undergoes need not be ones that would be expected in an individual with the experiences and psychological attributes in question, while mental changes that a psychologically *continuous* person undergoes must be ones that would be expected in an individual with the experiences and psychological attributes in question. See Tooley, 132. For a thorough treatment of the nature of psychological continuity, see Derek Parfit's *Reason and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

²² The following is adapted from an illustration found in Tooley's *Abortion and Infanticide*, 129–131.

With this in mind, let us now determine which interpretation – (f) or (g) – best fits Marquis’s ‘future of value’ strategy. It seems to me that (g) does, for the following reason.

Joe’s future is valuable, I submit, not only because it is dominated by goods of consciousness, but also because the person experiencing those future goods of consciousness – Joe at t_3 – is psychologically continuous with the person of Joe at t_1 . In other words, psychological continuity is a valuable-making property of futures; indeed, it may be the most important valuable-making property of them all.²³ Without including this property among the valuable-making properties of futures, the claim ‘Joe has a future of value’ may be understood to mean that some person *other than* the person of Joe at t_1 – call him ‘Sven’ – will experience the life he (Joe *qua* organism) will live if he (Joe *qua* organism) lives out his natural life span, and Sven will value goods of consciousness when he (Sven) will (or would) experience them. This, in turn, would entail that depriving Joe of a future of value is just to deprive a potential person (Sven) of a life dominated by goods of consciousness, and to deprive Sven of such a life imposes a misfortune on *Sven* (rather than the person of Joe at t_1) and, thus, is *prima facie* wrong. But is this what Marquis has in mind when he explains the *prima facie* wrongness of killing normal adult human beings? Is he claiming that the *prima facie* wrongness of killing a normal adult human being is best explained by the fact that a potential, psychologically discontinuous person is deprived of a life dominated by goods of consciousness? If so, then Marquis’s position would seem to be that potential persons have the same rights as actual persons in virtue of the former’s potential for personhood, a view he explicitly rejects as fallacious.²⁴ Moreover, such a reading of Marquis renders his explanation for the *prima facie* wrongness of killing normal adult human beings and, in turn, his argument against abortion excessively complex and contrary to commonsense. A simpler, more intuitively plausible reading of Marquis is that in which psychological continuity is included among the valuable-making property of futures.

If the preceding is correct, then psychological continuity is to be included among the valuable-making properties of futures. This is supported by the case of Joe and the mad scientist, for it’s hard to see how a future lacking this valuable-making property could be valuable to the person of Joe at t_1 . For even if the person of Joe at t_1 were guaranteed that his new future would

²³ Some might argue that it is even a necessary condition.

²⁴ Marquis, 225.

be dominated by goods of consciousness, without psychological continuity, such a future would be utterly devoid of value *to him*. Presumably, he would not be reassured by the fact that his future would be dominated by goods of consciousness, for he wouldn't find a future dominated by goods of consciousness *per se* to be valuable, but a future dominated by goods of consciousness *as experienced as a psychologically continuous person*. Thus, (f) – the 'psychologically discontinuous person' interpretation – precludes Joe from having a future of value, while (g) – the 'psychologically continuous person' interpretation – does not. Joe's having a future of value at t_1 , then, involves the potential to exist biologically and personally as a psychologically continuous person at t_3 .

That psychological continuity is to be included among the valuable-making property of futures can also be defended by examining two cases to which Marquis appeals in an attempt to explain the nature of the misfortune of premature death and, in turn, the *prima facie* wrongness of killing normal adult human beings. In the first case, Marquis asks us to consider two scenarios:

In the former I now fall into a coma from which I do not recover until my death in thirty years. In the latter I die now. The latter scenario does not seem to describe a greater misfortune than the former.²⁵

In both scenarios, Marquis no longer exists consciously and, hence, cannot experience a future dominated by goods of consciousness. And it is in virtue of this, Marquis claims, that the misfortune of premature death is explained. However, mere preservation of consciousness and, with it, the capacity for experiencing goods of consciousness does not seem to explain adequately the misfortune of the preceding scenarios. For consider a third scenario: Marquis falls into a coma from which "he" recovers as a conscious, though psychologically discontinuous person. In this scenario, the capacity for experiencing a future dominated by the goods of consciousness is preserved, but psychological continuity is not. Even though consciousness is preserved, the scenario in which Marquis dies now does not seem to describe a greater misfortune than this third scenario. So it is not the loss of mere conscious existence that explains the misfortune of premature death, but the loss of psychologically continuous personal existence.

In the second case, Marquis suggests that if one were to ask individuals with AIDS about the nature of their misfortune, 'they

²⁵ Marquis, 221.

would say or imply that their impending loss of a [future of value] makes their premature death a misfortune.’²⁶ But is the misfortune rooted in the mere loss of future goods of consciousness? I think not. Suppose we discover a cure for AIDS which has the unusual side effect of completely severing psychological continuity. Thus, the individual with AIDS who is administered the cure will not lose a future dominated by goods of consciousness, though she will lose psychological continuity and, in turn, will not experience the future goods of consciousness. Would such a cure alleviate the misfortune of premature death brought about by AIDS? It seems not. Again, even if the individual with AIDS were guaranteed that “her” future will be dominated by goods of consciousness, it’s difficult to see how *she* could find such a future valuable. It seems that without psychological continuity, it would be utterly devoid of value *to her*. In sum, though such a cure would prevent *biological* death, it would not prevent *psychologically continuous personal* death. And it is this kind of death, I submit, that underscores the misfortune of premature death.

Joe’s having a future of value at t_1 , then, involves the potential to exist biologically and personally as a psychologically continuous person at t_3 . This means that the mental states of Joe at t_3 are sufficiently causally dependent upon and related in content to the mental states of Joe at t_1 . Thus, ‘Joe has a future of value,’ may be understood to mean:

- (g) ‘Joe has the potential to: (i) exist biologically and personally as a *psychologically continuous person*, (ii) experience the life he will live if he lives out his natural life span, and (iii) value goods of consciousness when he will (or would) experience them.’

Replacing ‘Joe’ with ‘a normal adult human being,’ we arrive at the following meaning for premise (1):

- (1) A normal adult human being has the potential to: (i) exist biologically and personally as a psychologically continuous person, (ii) experience the life he/she will live if he/she lives out his/her natural life span, and (iii) value goods of consciousness when he/she will (or would) experience them.

Given this analysis of premise (1), one can see that, *qua* property of normal adult human beings, a future of value involves, among other things, personhood – specifically, the notion of a psychologically continuous person. Contrary to his own understanding,

²⁶ Marquis, 222.

then, Marquis's future of value strategy is *not* different from the traditional approach to the abortion debate. Even so, it may be sound, and whether it is will be determined in the next section.

II DOES A NORMAL FOETUS HAVE A FUTURE OF VALUE? AN ANALYSIS OF (7)

Now that we know more precisely what it means for a normal adult human being to have a future of value, we are in a better position to determine whether a normal foetus has one as well. If it does, then it shares with the normal adult human being the property that makes killing him *prima facie* wrong. In order to do this, we need only establish whether premise (7) is true which, given the preceding discussion, may be understood as:

- (7) A normal foetus has the potential to: (i) exist biologically and personally as a psychologically continuous person, (ii) experience the life it will live if it lives out its natural life span, and (iii) value goods of consciousness when it will (or would) experience them.

Given that a normal foetus lacks the capacity for consciousness, at least during the first trimester, there is reason to believe that it is not a person during that stage of development. A normal foetus during the first trimester, then, does not have the potential to exist in the aforementioned way, for it cannot exist as a psychologically *continuous* person if it is not a person to begin with. At best, a normal foetus has the potential to become something that, in turn, has the potential to exist in this way. But this secondary potentiality is not sufficient for attributing a future of value to the normal foetus. For the property the possession of which makes killing a normal adult human being *prima facie* wrong involves not such a secondary but a primary potentiality to exist as a psychologically continuous person. And it is this property that the normal foetus lacks; accordingly, it lacks a future of value. Thus, at least during the first trimester, a normal foetus does not share with a normal adult human being the property that makes killing her *prima facie* wrong. Premise (7), then, is false. Hence, Marquis's future of value strategy is unsound.

III CONCLUSION

Marquis's suggestion that the traditional approach to the abortion debate leads to a standoff and that the debate requires a different strategy may be correct. However, his future of value

strategy fails to serve that role in that it involves the concept of personhood, a concept deeply rooted in the traditional approach. And since Marquis's future of value strategy contains a false premise – viz., premise (7) – it fails to be sound as well. Thus, if a different and sound strategy to the abortion debate is to be found, we must look elsewhere.²⁷

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