

Does the Future-of-Value principle provide a prima facie reason not to kill both animals and fetuses?

Marquis' view stems from his attention to the permissibility of abortion and the underlying message about the wrongness of killing. His future-of-value principle states that killing is wrong not because of the effect on the victim's family and friends but rather the loss of their valuable future (Marquis, p. 4). Marquis argues that this principle provides a compelling view regarding the wrongness of killing through the captured intuition that killing will rob an individual of all the "experiences, activities, projects, and enjoyments that would otherwise have constituted one's future" (Marquis, p. 4). It is those activities and experiences that make life worth living. Killing denies the victim of a potential future like ours (Marquis, p. 1). It is important to clarify that although one may not value their future at one moment in time, it will eventually be valued as one grows older (Marquis, p. 4). The right to life is stringent, as it is so fundamental that it is this right to life that gives an individual every other right; everyone also only has one life, and it is inalienable. When one is killed, the individual is deprived of the value of the past, present, and future, and Marquis believes that inflicting this greatest loss ultimately makes killing wrong (Marquis, p. 4). In this paper, I will first explicate the future-of-value principle as stated above, articulate an application of the future-of-value principle to fetuses and animals, and then outline an alternative principle of intrinsic value and argue for why it is preferable to the future-of-value account. The future-of-value principle does not sufficiently provide a prima facie reason not to kill both animals and fetuses, as it ultimately fails to fully account for moral complexities and consequences involved with killing. Hence, instead, a principle that considers intrinsic values may provide a more comprehensive approach to understanding the wrongness of killing.

The future-of-value principle provides one type of moral basis for arguing against killing animals and fetuses, as it asserts that the wrongness of killing lies in the loss of future experiences. The principle is applied to fetuses, as it is presumed and seen around us that they can hold futures of value (Marquis, p. 6). Their potential and vulnerability reveal how killing them would typically be wrong. I can agree with his points, but I would like to acknowledge that moral status is a complicated and controversial topic. It is easily agreed that, like how society protects young children and adults, the same should be done to shield fetuses. Furthermore, by accepting that fetuses have a future of value, actions that could harm the fetus should be avoided, except in special circumstances such as the life and death of the mother. On the other hand, McPherson believes animals have a future of value as animals can engage in positive and negative experiences and activities that give their lives meaning and value (McPherson, p. 4). Animals also have the capacity for enjoyment, suffering, and forming relationships (McPherson, p. 4), revealing that the animal is capable of caring for their future and subsequently has a future of value. Once again, I can agree with his points, but I believe it varies depending on situations, sentient animals' capacity, and human-animal relationships. It is fair to believe that it is wrong to kill animals if they are capable of suffering, as we do not kill babies for vulnerability, suffering, and consideration of a valuable future.

I will now articulate a hypothetical scenario and an example that reveal concerns with Marquis' future-of-value principle on animals and fetuses. Suppose that if an animal cannot experience pleasure or pain and cannot enjoy or suffer through life, it can be argued that it is morally justifiable to kill these animals. The lack of experience further reveals that the future-of-value principle does not apply to them. This discloses the first concern. Moving on, the second example relates to the use of contraception. Following the future-of-value principle,

contraception can be seen as denying someone a future of value. Marquis' response to this objection relates to his belief that contraception is wrong only if it denies a human future and nothing is deprived (Marquis, p. 201). He infers that at the time of impregnation, there are millions of combinations of sperm with an egg and because there are so many combinations, there is no identifiable subject to lose a valuable future; it seems that only actually existing combinations and subjects will have a future of value (Marquis, p. 201-202). The premises of Marquis' argument to this objection are as follows (Rader, 2015):

1. Contraception is morally problematic.
2. If contraception is morally problematic, then it can take away a fetus' future of value.
3. Only actual beings have futures of value.
4. Contraception does not take away anyone's future of value.
5. Therefore, contraception is morally permissible because it does not involve depriving a future of value.

However, Marquis seems to appeal to and use the conception of rights (Rader, 2015); actual beings have a right to exist, and possible beings cannot have that right. Moreover, it is far from clear that only actual beings have futures of value, and it seems contradictory to Marquis' application of potentials on fetuses. Under his principle, it is earlier stated that fetuses have the potential for a future of value, but his response, especially premise three, seems concerning. Additionally, it is hard to determine when one being exactly becomes an "actual" being with a valuable future. Another question is if the potential future is just as valuable as the actual beings in the present time. These two examples provide inquiry into applying the future-of-value

principle on some animals and the seemingly contradicting factors of the objection to contraception.

Through these objections, we can see that the future-of-value principle faces issues, but instead, the concept of intrinsic value can be applied. Regarding the first scenario with an animal that cannot experience pain or pleasure, the intrinsic value concept can be applied to justify the wrongness of killing those animals. It also eliminates controversial and difficult ethical dilemmas that arise under the future-of-value principle, such as the second contraception example. Intrinsic value refers to how yourself, oneself, or itself, in it of themselves, has value. Intrinsic value relates to the natural essence and inherent worth of something that comes from within, regardless of any other factors (Tiffany, Self-Defence Quong Pt. 2, slide 24). This concept can be applied to human life, animals, happiness, or even nature and beauty, that there is value in it and of themselves. Furthermore, the capacity and capability to have positive and negative involvements, be self-aware, and be so-called alive, all form experiences that are valuable in itself. This concept can help us develop ethical and moral frameworks better to guide our actions, decisions, and thoughts. This comprehensive and broader approach considers the moral complexities of killing and respects, protects, and values the dignity of each being, regardless of the potential for a valuable future. Even more so, the intrinsic value concept provides a more concrete and objective basis for moral reasoning that may be easier to be applied consistently across a wider range of moral issues. For example, the value of non-humans, animals, future-generation encounters, and more can all be consistently followed by valuing one for themselves. This concept is straightforward and can shape society to increase the degree of respect and consideration through a strong foundation.

An objection this concept may face is that intrinsic value may be too abstract and subjective to one's liking. I would like to argue that this concept is grounded in objective features of our reality, such as the natural environment and even the mathematical facts surrounding us. More so, this idea appeals to moral intuitions, such as how we feel that human life has intrinsic value, so it is wrong to harm or kill a person for any reason. The moral intuition is not based on an opinion but rather a deep conviction that reflects our understanding and acknowledgement of intrinsic values.

The intrinsic value concept on animals and fetuses allows us to eliminate the question of whether an animal can express pain and joy and have a valuable future. Furthermore, the concept can be applied to many, whether it be human beings or fetuses. The concept can argue for the moral status and protection of fetuses, based on the premise that human life is valuable and follows with the assumption that human fetuses are living. Through perhaps the biological facts and development of a fetus, it provides the perspective that fetuses possess this inherent worth that should be recognized.

The future-of-value principle explains how the ultimate gain of living is the value of our future. It provides a compelling view on the wrongness of killing through the loss of one's future experiences, enjoyments, activities and more (Marquis, p. 4). However, through two examples, I believe that the principle of intrinsic value provides an alternative way of understanding the moral status of beings, animals, and fetuses. The concept of intrinsic value argues for a more inclusive and candid principle that provides value to all beings, regardless of their particular capacities or potential for valuable futures. It is important to note that this concept is not without its challenges, and further refinement and clarification must be needed to address any challenges. My paper in no way states the only "correct view," but rather a view I believe to be stronger than

the future-of-value principle. Therefore, while Marquis' future-of-value principle provided a compelling view, it did not sufficiently account for moral controversies and complexities involved in the killing of animals and fetuses, but rather the intrinsic value concept provides a prima facie reason and a more complete approach to the understanding the wrongness of killing animals and fetuses.

References

Marquis, D. (1989). Why Abortion is Immoral. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 86(4), 183–202.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/2026961>

McPherson, Tristram (2016). How to Argue for (and against) Ethical Veganism. In Anne Barnhill, Mark Budolfson & Tyler Doggett (eds.), *Food, Ethics, and Society*. New York, USA: Oxford University Press.

Rader. (2015, June 7). *Lecture 5 notes: Judith Jarvis Thomson and Don marquis*. Introduction to Philosophy.

<https://philosophyintrocourse.com/introduction-to-philosophy-ethics/lecture-5-notes/>