

The Personhood Argument in *Favor of Abortion*



BY JOHN CROWTHER

Mary Anne Warren's Beliefs



- Warren holds that all abortions should be legal no matter how late in the pregnancy they are
- Warren rejects the idea that genetics are what determines if one is a person
- Instead she outlines five criteria that make one a person

Why Not Genetics?

- Warren draws a distinction between a human-being and a person
- A moral community is made up entirely of people not humans



Why Not Genetics?

- Warren uses the example of a space traveler who lands on a foreign planet and encounters aliens
- The first thing she must determine is if the aliens are subtle to be treated morally or if she can kill and eat them without feeling bad
- Their genetics have nothing to do with the decision



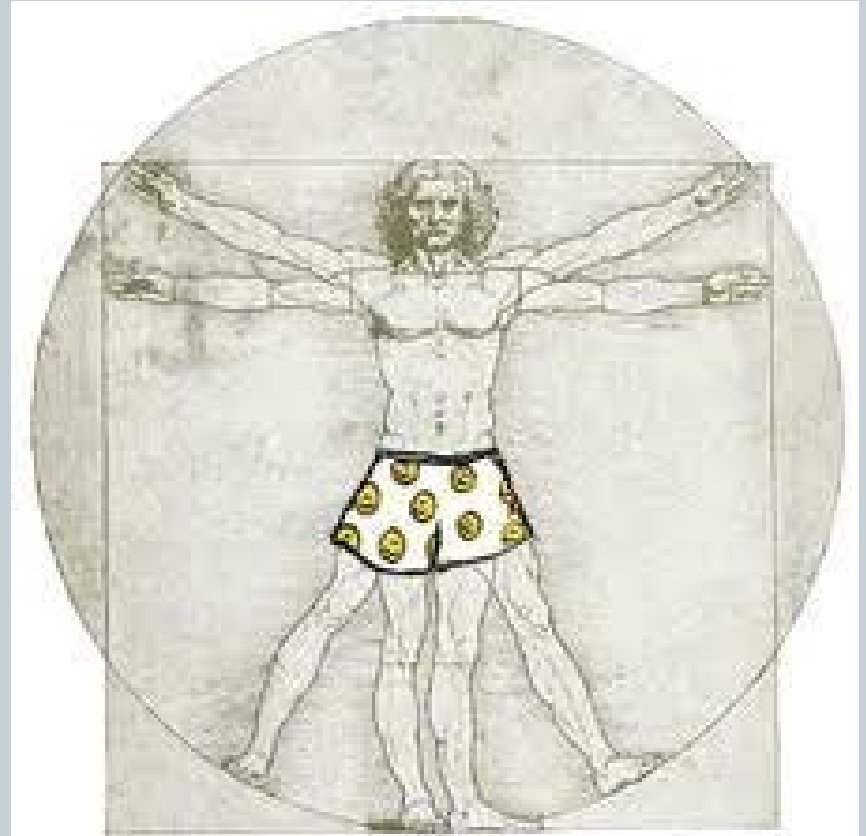
The Five Criteria



- 1. Consciousness (of external and internal things) the capacity to feel pain
- 2. Reasoning (solving problems reasonably complex)
- 3. Self-motivating activity (independent of genetic or external control)
- 4. the capacity to communicate on an expansive number of topics
- 5. the presence of self-concepts and self awareness

The Five Criteria

- Warren says that one does not need to fill all five criteria in order to be a person
- It is self evident that one can not be considered a person if they fulfill none of the requirements
- Fetuses fulfill none of the requirements



Potential and Why the Mother has the Final Say



- Warren acknowledges that the fetus's potential to become part of the Moral community gives it a stronger case for having a right to life
- However the child is not a person and the mother is so a person's rights always outweighs those of a potential person
- Warren backs up her point by going back to her space traveler example

Potential and Why the Mother has the Final Say

- What if the aliens decided to take the explorer and break her body into its component cells to use to create 100,000 clones
- Even though the explorer knows the people will be treated well and the procedure is sure to work Warren says the explorer still has a right to escape



Potential and Why the Mother has the Final Say



- In conclusion the mother should be able to have an abortion in any stage of the pregnancy no matter how late
- The fetus does not meet the requirements of a person so the persons desires should always come first

Questions



- **Should abortion be legal? If so is there a cut off point?**
- **Is there really nothing immoral about killing something that does not live in the “moral community”**
- **How do you feel about her treatment of abortion?**