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Morality of Abortion

According to our textbook, Don Marquis believes that abortion is seriously wrong because it “deprives the fetus of a ‘future like ours,’ a future containing valuable experiences, activities, projects, and enjoyments” (pg. 122, CMP). He does admit to there being some exceptions when abortion is acceptable: when the pregnancy is the result of a rape, if the pregnancy is fewer than 14 days along, if the pregnant woman’s life is in danger, or if there is an anencephalic fetus. Outside of those exceptions, Marquis’ view of abortion hinges on the idea of the fetus’ fulfilling future.

If a fetus suffered from severe fetal deformity, and assuming that the severe fetal deformity will remove the potential for the fetus to have a fulfilling life, Marquis would consider abortion an acceptable option. This belief goes back to his view that abortion is not wrong in cases where the fetus would not have a future like ours. A severely deformed fetus would not have the possibility for a future like ours, so it would be moral to terminate the pregnancy and end the life of that fetus.

I agree with that view. If the fetus does not have the ability to have a hopeful, fulfilling future—the kind every parent dreams of for their child—it is moral for the parent(s) to choose not to go forward with the pregnancy. Not only would the deformed child not have a chance for a

good future, having the child would negatively impact the future lives of the parents. Their futures would revolve around caring for a child that would not be able to do anything on their own and would thus ruin the future lives of many people while not allowing for the positive future of the child.

From a utilitarian standpoint, I would also say that it would be moral to abort in the case of a severe fetal deformity. Utilitarianism supports the action of whatever will provide happiness to the greatest number of people involved, and abortion is the option that would provide the most happiness. The potential parents would be happier, because their lives would not have the negative impact of caring for a child that has no possibility for a good future. The fetus would not have an opportunity for happiness, whether it were aborted or allowed to live, so the happiness of the parents is the deciding factor under this ethical theory.