



Abortion and Rights-Centered Reasoning

In rights-centered reasoning whether I can do something, like building a house on this property, depends on how my action affects the rights of others. If the land is owned by someone, her rights to private property make my action *impermissible*.

What are the rights of those affected by abortion?

An Unborn Child's Right to Life

- Guarantees the provision of basic goods needed for life, namely shelter and nourishment
- Guarantees the freedom to pursue life without interference, such as abortion or maltreatment

A Mother's Right to Bodily Integrity

- Guarantees the provision of whatever medical resources are ensured by law
- Guarantees the freedom to determine the use of one's body without interference

How do the rights of unborn child and mother relate?

When the mother desires to give birth to, and raise, her unborn child, there is no apparent conflict of rights. But if the mother desires to end the child's life, a conflict of rights arises in two ways:

Conflict 1: Nourishment vs. Autonomy



The (positive) right to life guarantees an unborn child the nourishment that only the mother's womb can provide.

BUT



The (negative) right to bodily integrity guarantees a mother the freedom to deny the use of her body to the unborn child.

Conflict 2: Natural vs. Legal Rights



The (negative) right to life guarantees an unborn child the freedom to pursue life without interference.

BUT



The (positive) right to bodily integrity may guarantee elective abortion to a mother if ensured by law.

Resolution

Communities must decide which rights to uphold by determining, through dialogue and debate, which of the above rights are more fundamental and therefore take precedence.