

A
Research
Paper
by
No Less Human

QUESTIONS
AND
ANSWERS
ON
DISABILITY

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A GROUP WITHIN THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF UNBORN CHILDREN

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1. Disabled children lead miserable lives, isn't it better not to bring disabled children into a rejecting world?

It is the ultimate in defeatism to believe that killing disabled people is the answer to their being rejected by society.

By accepting disabled children, loving and nurturing them and enabling them to reach their full potential, we demonstrate how wrong it is **to reject human beings because they have a disability.**

Most disabled people value their lives. What often causes misery is not the disabling condition, but the discriminatory, unsupportive attitudes experienced.

We need to show that every human being, whatever their abilities or disabilities, has infinite value.

2. Isn't Abortion necessary until facilities for disabled people improve?

While aborting disabled babies is seen as an acceptable alternative to care, facilities will never improve. The right of disabled people to equal access only makes sense in the context of their having first a fundamental right to exist.

3. Isn't "Prevention better than cure"? If abortion prevents disability, isn't it desirable?

No Less Human is in favour of positive measures to prevent disability occurring in the first place. For instance, we campaigned for women to be given appropriate vitamin supplements before conceiving to minimise the chance of their children having spina bifida.

Abortion does not "prevent disability" -it simply kills already disabled babies.

4. Shouldn't Screening be easily available to give all women the right to choose to abort a disabled baby?

The aim of many pre-natal tests is to detect disabled babies so that they can be aborted.

The position of No Less Human is that aborting a disabled baby is not a legitimate choice, since it kills a living human being.

In fact, many women face enormous pressure to be screened and are accused of selfishness if they refuse.

Screening with a view to detecting and aborting disabled babies is totally contrary to the principle we hold : **that all human beings, disabled or not, are infinitely valuable and have an equal right to life.**

Sometimes embryos are discarded because they '*might*' be disabled or '*possibly*' carry a defective gene. IVF has made the selection process much easier since embryos can be destroyed without an abortion being carried out. Many tests are currently being developed for a range of genetic conditions, including for genes for a condition that a person is more likely to develop possibly quite late in life. If these tests become widely available they will contribute to the search for the '*perfect*' child.

5. Doesn't Screening of human embryos and implanting only healthy ones into women prevent disability?

Each individual human life begins at the moment of conception. From that moment on, the human being is entitled to full protection from harm.

Selection of human embryos is a form of fatal discrimination against disabled people.

6. Don't parents have a right to a healthy child? Should they be forced to care for a disabled child they do not want?

Children are a gift not a commodity to be rejected or accepted at will. No one has an absolute right to a child, or to a particular kind of child.

The only right that exists in human rights' documents in relation to this is the right to marry and found a family (*Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*).

No Less Human campaigns for better services to enable parents to cope more easily with disabled children.

Some of our members are also involved in respite care which gives parents of disabled children a break from time to time.

For parents genuinely unable, even with support, to cope there is the option of adoption. We have many members who have adopted disabled children.

7. When a baby is born severely disabled, wouldn't it be better to "let nature take its course?" disabled children used to die before modern technology was available.

The fact that disabled children died in the past is irrelevant to considerations of how they should be treated now. Before modern technology was available, people with many conditions, now curable, would have died.

Disabled people have the same right of access to medical technology as anyone else.

It is important to note, that when doctors talk of "*letting nature take its course*" they often actually mean sedating and starving to death newborn disabled babies.

This is a form of killing by neglect, and should be opposed by all who care about justice and human rights.

8. What about babies who would be born so severely disabled they would only live a very short time? Shouldn't they be aborted?

No Less Human affirms that human life is of infinite value, and that human beings are entitled to live out their natural lifespan, however long or short that may be.

The fact that an individual's life would necessarily be short does not justify our deliberately killing them. In fact, it could be fairly argued that the shortness of their life demands special care to make their brief life as comfortable and fulfilling as possible

9. Very severely disabled people are an economic burden on their families and the state. Why should the state be forced to care for them?

This was the view held by the Nazis, which ultimately led to the Holocaust - the idea that there is such a thing as "*life unworthy of life*". If human beings are of infinite value -as we affirm they are -then there is a duty to care for individual human beings to the best of our ability, using the resources that we have available.

Care for people with disabilities ought not to depend on the amount of money available in a particular community.

When they are accepted and loved as they should be, the necessary financial resources will follow.

10. Can't I be in favour of abortion for disability and still have a positive attitude to born disabled people? Rights for born disabled people have nothing to do with abortion.

The right to life is the most basic right from which all other rights flow. It is the "*right to have rights*" and without it all other human rights are meaningless.

No- one can claim to have a positive attitude towards disabled people while simultaneously being in favour of abortion for disability. This is because being in favour of abortion means judging that a disabled person is less valuable than a non-disabled person.

It is only by accepting and protecting all human beings that we can really demonstrate a concern for "human rights."

Alison Davis September 2003 revised Aug.2004