

Do Abortion Opponents “Force” Their Views on Others?

Kenneth J. Coughlan

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Abortion-choice advocates often claim that it is wrong to “force” one’s moral view upon another. Those who seek to ban abortion are forcing their moral view upon those who wish to have one, and therefore running afoul of this principle. The objection fails, however, not only because it is self-defeating, but also because the moral principle it proposes is one that even abortion-choice advocates would be unlikely to accept in other circumstances.

First, this objection fails to satisfy its own standard. The pro-choice position also seeks to “force” its moral view upon others. Allegedly, the pro-life position is coercive because it prevents women who want an abortion from having one. Abortion-choice, though, does not force women who do not want an abortion to get one. Thus, theirs is allegedly a neutral stance that allows everyone to believe what they choose.

When it comes to abortion, though, neutrality is an illusion. Abortion-choice inherently attempts to coerce a pro-life person into acting as is the pro-choice view of the unborn is correct. The very act of permitting abortion carries certain metaphysical assumptions about the status of the unborn; i.e., that it is not a human person deserving of a right to life. According to Scott Klusendorf, the pro-choice advocate fails to acknowledge her own metaphysical commitments and acts as if her position is merely “entitled to win by default” (Klusendorf 2009, 103). Francis J. Beckwith similarly notes, in regard to Justice Blackmun’s claim to neutrality in *Roe v. Wade*, that “to claim, as Justices [sic] Blackmun does, that the Court should not propose one theory of life over another, and that the decision to abort should be left exclusively to the discretion of each pregnant woman, is to propose a theory of life” (Beckwith 2007, 29-30). Thus, if it is wrong to “force” one’s moral view upon another then abortion-choice proponents are doing precisely that to which they object.

Beckwith also points out that it is clearly not always wrong to require people's compliance with certain moral norms. For example, "laws against drunk driving, murdering, smoking crack, robbery, and child molestation are all intended to impose a particular moral perspective on the free moral agency of others" (Beckwith 2007, 118). Yet it is unlikely that the proponent of abortion choice would object to these laws on the same grounds on which he objects to proposed pro-life legislation.

REFERENCES

Beckwith, Francis J. 2007. *Defending Life: A Moral and Legal Case Against Abortion Choice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Klusendorf, Scott 2009. *The Case for Life: Equipping Christians to Engage the Culture*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway.