

Abortion: Life Begins at Conception

In the debate about abortion one simple fact has been obscured by rhetoric and unimaginable skepticism, “every human being’s existence begins at conception.” The fact that life begins at conception is one that is confirmed by scientists, doctors, and even those who are “pro-abortion.” This fact is crucial to demonstrate because once a human being’s life begins to exist, it should be protected until natural death.

Key Definitions (See www.biology-online.org/dictionary/)

Alive: Something is alive if it exhibits growth, converts energy into nutrients, and responds to stimuli.

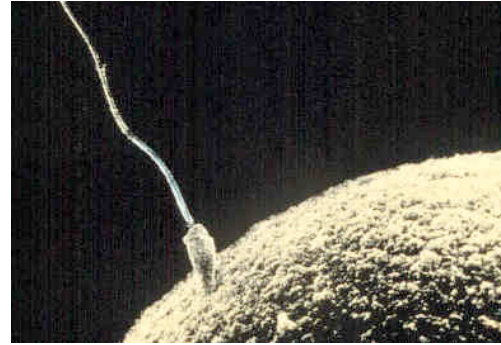
Human: Something is human if it possesses a human genetic code, characterized by approximately 46 human chromosomes.

Organ: A part of an organism or biological entity that is only meant to perform a particular function..

Organism: An individual member of a species, a whole living thing, a being.

Conception: The moment when the genetic material of a sperm and egg combine to form a new human being, also known as fertilization.

(Sperm entering egg just prior to conception)



From these definitions we can see that an unborn child is alive, human, and a being (an organism that is an individual member of our species) or in other words a *human being*, and every human being’s life began at conception.

Scientists Know Life Begins at Conception:

“ . . . every time a sperm cell and ovum unite, a new being is created which is alive and will continue to live unless its death is brought about by some specific condition.”

(E.L. Potter, M.D., and J.M. Craig, M.D. Pathology of the Fetus and the Infant (3rd Edition). Chicago: Year Book Medical Publishers, 1975, page vii.)

“Zygote. This cell, formed by the union of an ovum and a sperm represents the beginning of a human being.”

(Moore, Keith L. and Persaud, T.V.N. Before We Are Born: Essentials of Embryology and Birth Defects. 4th edition. Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Company, 1993, p. 1)

“Although human life is a continuous process, fertilization is a critical landmark because, under ordinary circumstances, a new, genetically distinct human organism is thereby formed.”

(O’Rahilly, Ronan and Müller, Fabiola. Human Embryology and Teratology, 2nd edition. New York: Wiley-Liss, 1996, pp. 8)

Doctors Know Life Begins at Conception:

“Each individual has a very neat beginning, at conception.”

(Dr. Jerome LeJeune, professor of genetics at the University of Descartes in Paris and discoverer of the chromosome pattern of Down syndrome)

“By all the criteria of modern molecular biology, life is present from the moment of conception.”

(Professor Hymie Gordon - Mayo Clinic)

“I oppose abortion. I do so, first, because I accept what is biologically manifest—that human life commences at the time of conception—and, second, because I believe it is wrong to take innocent human life under any circumstances. My position is scientific, pragmatic, and humanitarian.”

(Dr. Landrum Shettles, obstetrician-gynecologist at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York.)

Source: (Subcommittee on Separation of Powers to Senate Judiciary Committee S-158, Report, 97th Congress, 1st Session, 1981)

Pro-Abortion Advocates Know Life Begins at Conception:

“It is possible to give ‘human being’ a precise meaning. We can use it as equivalent to ‘member of the species Homo sapiens’. Whether a being is a member of a given species is something that can be determined scientifically, by an examination of the nature of the chromosomes in the cells of living organisms. In this sense there is no doubt that from the first moments of its existence an embryo conceived from human sperm and eggs is a human being; and the same is true of the most profoundly and irreparably intellectually disabled human being, even of an infant who is born anencephalic – literally, without a brain.”

(Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, 2nd ed, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 85-86.)

Quote from: www.jfaweb.org

“Perhaps the most straightforward relation between you and me on the one hand and every human fetus from conception onward on the other is this: All are living members of the same species, *homo sapiens*. A human fetus, after all, is simply a human being at a very early stage in his or her development.”

(David Boonin, *A Defense of Abortion*, Cambridge University Press: New York, p. 20)

Two Objections to “Life Begins at Conception”

Carl Sagan: “*Despite many claims to the contrary, life does not begin at conception: It is an unbroken chain that stretches back nearly to the origin of the Earth, 4.6 billion years ago. Nor does human life begin at conception: It is an unbroken chain dating back to the origin of our species, hundreds of thousands of years ago.*”

(Billions & Billions: Thoughts on Life and Death at the Brink of the Millennium, chapter 15)

Sagan misses the point entirely. I know both myself and others are not hundreds of thousands of years old. Every individual human being began at some point and conception is the only point that logically makes sense to be the beginning of our existence. While sperm and egg are alive before conception (the chain of life Sagan speaks of), they are not individual human beings. They are parts of a human being, not a whole human being like a child in the womb. Sagan is well known for equating human value with being able to think or having a functioning cerebral cortex. When Sagan says that human life doesn’t begin at conception, what he means is that *valuable* human life does not begin at conception because both common sense and science contradict him and show human life begins at the union of sperm and egg, or conception.

The United States Supreme Court: “*We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins. When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer.*”

(Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113 – 1973)

First, the Court is wrong that an adequate consensus among scientists does not exist that human life begins at conception. In 1981 the Senate Judiciary held a committee meeting on the Human Life Bill. The committee’s findings were summarized this way:

“Physicians, biologists, and other scientists agree that *conception marks the beginning of the life of a human being*—a being that is alive and is a member of the human species. There is overwhelming agreement on this point in countless medical, biological, and scientific writings.” (Report, Subcommittee on Separation of Powers to Senate Judiciary Committee S-158, 97th Congress, 1st Session 1981, 7.)

Second, even if there was no consensus shouldn’t we “play it safe” and not abort a life in question if we are unsure of its humanity? After all, would anyone demolish a building if they were unsure about whether or not people were still inside of it? In conclusion, it is an established fact that the beginning of every human being’s development starts at conception. While pro-abortion advocates may argue that the unborn at conception are not “valuable” life, they are still biological life, or human beings. That is the verdict of science which deals with questions of fact, not value.



Arizona Right to Life, Inc. is a non-sectarian, non-partisan, non-profit, organization committed to articulating and protecting the right to life of all human beings, born and unborn. If you would like more information or want to contribute to our mission visit our website: WWW.AZRTL.ORG