

Prenatal Genetics Screening: morally permissible?

Ryan Doody

October 2, 2014

Genetic Screening to Eugenics: Slippery Slope Arguments

Some people draw parallels between prenatal genetic screening and *eugenics*. Let's explore some of the possible arguments that are made in the vein. One argument that is often made is the *slippery slope argument*:

Example: "First, we allow for genetics screening for serious, debilitating disorders. But what counts as a 'serious, debilitating disorder'? Soon, we will use genetic screening to test for sex, hair color, eye color, etc.! Next thing you know, we're doing eugenics!"

There are two different kinds of slippery slope arguments.

Two Kinds of Slippery Slope Arguments

- **The Logical Slippery Slope**

<p>P1 S_n is morally impermissible.</p> <p>P2 If S_i is morally impermissible, then S_{i+1} is morally impermissible.</p> <hr/> <p>C S_0 is morally impermissible.</p>

Is this a good argument?

o **The Causal Slippery Slope**

P₁ It would be very bad to believe (or act as if, or implement a policy according to which) C_n .

P₂ For any i , if we believe (or act as if, or implement a policy according to which) C_1 , then we will come to believe (or come to act as if, or come to implement a policy according to which) C_{i+1} .

P₃ We should not believe (or act as if, or implement a policy according to which) something is the case, if doing so would be very bad.

C We should not believe (or act as if, or implement a policy according to which) C_0 .

Notice the following distinction:

1. We should not believe that p because p is false.
2. We should not believe that p because *being in the state of believe that p will lead to bad consequences*.

The Causal Slippery Slope appeals to reasons of the second sort. (It doesn't follow from the argument, for example, that C_0 is false).

Genetic Screening Devalues Life

Another argument (which might also count as slippery slope argument) against prenatal genetic screening is that the practice devalues the lives of those already-existing people who have those conditions these genetic tests would be used to screen for.

Questions: Can you think of a way of presenting this argument? What do you think about it? Is it a slippery slope argument? If so, which kind?