

Recently, some anti-maskers have expressed the pro-choice slogan “My Body My Choice” in the debate over masks.

There’s an argument underlying this usage worth considering:

(B1) We have a (bodily autonomy-based) right to get an abortion.

(B2) If so, then we also have a (bodily autonomy-based) right to go maskless in public.

(B3) So, we have a (bodily autonomy-based) right to go maskless in public.

Now, the people applying the slogan to masks probably don’t really intend to make this argument, since I suspect many of them are anti-abortion. So perhaps the idea is just to accuse pro-choicers of being inconsistent if they don’t accept this conclusion.

However, I think we should reject premise 2, since there are some morally relevant differences that together seem sufficient to justify the moral difference:

First (cost), the cost of remaining pregnant, given its effects and risks, is significantly more than the cost of wearing a mask in public.

Second (publicness), we generally accept restricted rights in public anyway. You can’t go nude or masturbate in public.

Third (scope), going maskless endangers the lives and health of *many* individuals and not just one, because of how transmittable the virus is.

And fourth (victims), going maskless endangers fully developed people (including doctors, nurses, service workers, etc.). Whatever the moral status of an embryo or fetus is, it seems less than that of a fully developed person.