Suppose that you and your partner are wondering whether to have a child. Both of you know that to do this you will need to use assisted reproduction (henceforth ‘AR’). When considering whether or not you should use the technology one of your many concerns would probably be how such an event would affect the child produced. You could express this concern in the following way: “Does the effect the use of AR will have on our child speak for or against the use of the technology”?

Even a superficial look on the relevant literature shows that most people, in morally evaluating assisted reproductive technology – e.g. artificial insemination, egg- and sperm- donation, or *in vitro fertilisation* (IVF) – find this kind of concern reasonable. Despite this virtual consensus there exists widespread disagreement about the moral significance of the interests of the child born through AR. Thus some people hold a restrictive position. They argue that the use of such devices as egg- or sperm-donation or surrogacy childbearing in connection with AR is morally wrong because, e.g., these devices bring children into existence who will have lives less good than those of children conceived in the conventional way. Other people hold an expansive position, and argue that IVF and surrogacy in AR is something which, all else being equal, we ought to do, because the child will benefit from our use of the technology.

The aim of this paper is to defend this expansive position – primarily against the objection that it would oblige us to accept what Derek Parfit calls the Repugnant Conclusion. But I will also criticise some of the restrictive positions. Though, it is by no means a conclusive discussion of the moral problems raised by our concern for the child in connection to AR, the paper will...
discuss some of the most widespread positions adopted in the existing literature.

We need to discuss the moral significance of the child's interests in the context of AR for at least two reasons. First, whether an expansive or restrictive position is correct will have a material bearing on our overall ethical evaluation of AR. Secondly, it seems obvious that we should be morally concerned with the effect AR will have on the child's welfare (or quality of life) if it is brought into existence. After all morality has to do at least in part with how our actions affect other individuals' welfare.

In Section II I shall present a welfarist argument in favour of the following expansive conclusion: Everything else being equal, we ought to use reproductive technology X because the act of using X, in terms of the net sum of welfare, will normally benefit a resulting child. If the child is harmed, however, we should not use AR. In sections III-VII I will discuss the objection that the welfarist argument would force us to accept the Repugnant Conclusion. In sections VIII-XI some restrictive positions which oppose the use of AR will be discussed.

It should be noted that in the succeeding sections I will often have to discuss some general problems within moral theory. These problems might seem very abstract, because in their original context, they had no explicit connection with AR. However, I will do what I can to show how the relevant issues in moral theory connect with our more specific, applied-ethical problem.

II. THE WELFARIST ARGUMENT

An argument in favour of the welfarist expansive position, which seems to reflect the work of many of its adherents, can be constructed as the following:

P1. The welfarist total principle: The best state of affairs is the one with the greatest net sum of welfare value.

P2. The principle of consequentialism: An agent should perform the act which leads to the best consequences or state of affairs. This is all that matters morally.

P3: The value theoretical premise: If individuals who come into existence by means of AR have lives worth living they have benefited from coming into existence.