

Assumptions

- whether or not abortion is morally permissible stands or falls on whether a fetus is a being whose life it is wrong to end

- Abortion might be permissible in cases where the woman's life is at risk or in cases of rape

→ The stalemate: pro-choice and anti-abortion groups both have valid claims that build their argument → Marquis argues we need to examine the underlying principles the views are relying on → the principles "lose their plausibility under analysis"

- why should biological features (human DNA) make a moral difference?

- why should psychological features (rational capabilities or social consciousness) make a moral difference?

Why Killing is Wrong

The wrongness of killing concerns the effect on the victim → being killed is one of the greatest loss a victim can suffer

- but wrongness is not only a matter of losing one's biological life

- a future of value: deprives victim of a future and things they could value

→ Marquis argues that even if the fetus is not yet a person, they have a future of value

- fetuses have a future-like-ours → which is a future of value

- "it follows that abortion is *prima facie* (accepted as correct) seriously morally wrong"

- argument doesn't depend on if the fetus is a potential person, just that it has a future-like-ours

- depriving a future of value is not a necessary condition; only a sufficient condition of the wrongness of murder → so what makes abortion sometimes permissible?

- Marquis claims it could be justified if failing to abort would be at least as great

Rival Accounts

The desire account: People have a strong + fundamental desire to live; what makes killing wrong

is that killing interferes w/ fulfilling this desire

↳ fetuses are incapable of this desire

→ marquis claims that's false b/c we can't kill suicidal (doc. assisted); we desire to live primarily b/c we value the goods of life (not just living)

The discontinuation account

· we value the experience of living and for valuable experiences to continue

- a fetus doesn't have any experiences to value → so the discontinuation account doesn't find abortion immoral

→ Marquis: this would make it permissible to kill people w/out valuable experiences (euthanasia, lonely people)

Objections

1) a 'future of value' requires that the being is a valuer: fetuses are not valuers

→ marquis claims that in the future it will have a 'future of value'

* does not comment on that fetuses are not valuers

2) a right to future benefits requires that the being is capable of interests: fetuses are not capable of caring about or having interests, so some future benefits cannot be its right or in its interest

→ marquis claims that being incapable of caring doesn't imply there are nothing in its interests

3) the fetus cannot be a victim and there cannot be wronged: a fetus is not sentient (able to see/feel things)

so it cannot be a victim of being harmed → mental activity is required to be a victim

→ marquis objects that if you killed him when he was unconscious it would victimize him even if he's incapable of mentation

4) marquis' view implies that contraception is immoral: it prevents a fetus from being conceived, and thus deprives it of a future of value

→ marquis claims that nothing is denied a human future of value by contraception

· there is no subject of harm in: a sperm, an ovum, a sperm+ovum separately or together

↳ morally permissible abortions can occur if its very early in the pregnancy + the fetus is not yet an individual (sperm+ovum join together but don't attach to uterin lining) → plan B is acceptable