

Abortion

Basic issues

Abortion

Abortion is the intentional termination of a pregnancy.

A fertilized egg is a zygote, then an embryo up to 8 weeks, then a fetus.

Some issues

- When does life begin?
- Does an embryo have any worth?
- What is the role of the father in abortion situation?

Statistics

In 1990, 1.5 mil. abortions were performed in America; that number is declining.

In 2000, 21 out of every 1000 women, of childbearing age had an abortion making it a very common procedure.

Risk of death of death is 1/10 that of pregnancy.

Historical background

English common law- before quickening not a criminal offence [4th-5th month]

America, 60' s- all states had laws restricting abortion except to save mothers life

Rov v. Wade, '73- laws declared unconstitutional

Partial birth abortion

2003 Bush passes partial birth abortion bill
PBA removes with intact dilatation and
evacuation

Definitions

Pro-life: abortion is morally wrong because it kills a life

Pro-choice: abortion is ok whenever the mother chooses it

Moderate: morally willing to allow abortions in certain cases, legally OK

Pro choice says

- Fetuses are neither persons nor members of the moral community
- Women are undeniable persons and members of the moral community
- Laws that deny women the right to obtain abortion, or that make safe abortion difficult to obtain are unjustifiable violation of the basic moral and constitutional rights

Pro-life says

- A woman's right to control her body extends to birth control [and sterilization] but not abortion
- A fetus is a human life and has value
- Permissive abortion laws do not advance the feminist cause- male support and responsibility in child rearing is

Questions

- Regardless of your stance on abortion, do you think a woman “needs permission” from the man who impregnated her to get an abortion?
- What if the couple is married?
- What if it is a minor?

Video- Obama and abortion [moderate stance]

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hym1BW7Ep2A>

Abortion

Judaism

Abortion

- The Jewish tradition treats abortion, like most other things, as a legal matter,
- The Torah (Exodus 21:22-25) says the following: When men fight, and one of them pushes a pregnant woman and a miscarriage results, but no other damage ensues, the one responsible shall be fined according as the woman's husband may exact from him, the payment to be based on reckoning [or as the judges determine]. other damage ensues, the penalty shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

Law

- this passage draws a definite distinction between the status of the fetus, where only a fine is due to the victim (actually, her husband), in contrast to the woman, where the remedy is "life for life, eye for eye, etc."
- the fetus does not have the same status as a full human being; it is rather something less than that, as the lesser remedy indicates. At the same time, this passage announces that there are penalties for killing or injuring others.

Gestation

- during the first forty days of gestation, the fetus is "as if it were merely water." i.e. rationales to abort the fetus at that stage need not be as stringent as they are in the next stage of pregnancy,
- between the forty-first day of gestation and birth—specifically when the head emerges or, in a breach birth, when the shoulders emerge.

Status of the gestating fetus

- During this period the fetus is "like the thigh of its mother." i.e. neither a man nor a woman may have their thigh amputated on a whim because we are not allowed to injure our bodies unnecessarily.
- As a result, abortion is generally prohibited according to Jewish law, not as an act of murder (the fetus is not a full-fledged person), but as an act of self-injury.

Endangerment

- if the fetus poses a clear threat to the mother's life or health, including her mental health (that is, she will go insane if she carries the baby to term), then an abortion is required, even if she herself does not want the abortion.
- To follow the analogy, if one's thigh had become gangrenous, and if the person were likely to die if the leg were not cut off, then amputation of the leg would not only be permitted, but required, for we have the duty to preserve our life and God's body.

Other cases

- there is a middle case, where abortion is permitted but not required. That occurs when there is a greater threat to the mother's life or health than normal pregnancy poses but not so much of a threat as to constitute a clear and present danger to her.

Disability and abortion

- most Conservative and Reform rabbis, and some Orthodox rabbis, would permit the woman to abort a fetus that has a terminal genetic disease like Tay-Sachs or is grossly malformed (e.g., anencephalic) as a function of the mother's mental health
- some would even extend that permission to Downs' syndrome if the parents cannot bear the thought of raising such a child.

In sum

- In most cases, though, abortion is prohibited, in some cases it is required, and only in a minority of circumstances is it permitted but not required.
- Judaism takes a position somewhere in between the Catholic [never] and American secular positions [almost any time] and it makes this a matter of shared, public law rather than individual conscience.

Question

- What does sex have to do with religion?

Abortion

Christianity

Christianity and abortion

- Like everything else in Christianity, there is a range of opinions
- there is no mention of abortion in the Bible.
- While some writers say that early Christians held different beliefs at different times about abortion,
- others say that condemned abortion at any point of pregnancy as a grave sin

Views

- Protestant views vary, but ultimately it is the individual's conscience that governs on this matter as it does generally in Protestant thought.
- "mainline" Protestant denominations have clearly moved in the direction of accepting family planning and contraception as well as "support for legal access to abortion, although with qualifications regarding the moral justification for specific acts of abortion."
- This general trend among "mainline" Protestant denominations has been resisted by Christian Fundamentalists who are generally opposed to abortion.

Theological reason for children

- Far from being owed anyone or a right, childbearing is most appropriately viewed as a gracious gift, not unlike God's own gratuitous Presence.
- contract theory alone cannot explain the moral significance of a person's willingness to have and care for children, particularly those who are unexpected, burdensome, or otherwise unwelcome, since these children highlight the non-voluntary, uncontrollable and risky nature of even "planned" parenthood

Problems and pregnancy

- Many on both sides of the abortion debate continue to romanticize pregnancy and motherhood.
- This romantic myth blinds many to the real problems and devastating conflicts pregnant women frequently face.
- It blinds others to the work, delayed gratification, suffering, and sacrifice constitutive of even planned, ordinary pregnancies

Other problems

- Pregnancy may be the burden represented by an additional child, especially if there are good reasons to fear that the child will be abnormal or retarded...
- There may be too many children, money issues, health issues, etc.
- Yet none of these reasons can ever objectively confer the right to dispose of another's life, even when that life is only beginning

Responsibility and pregnancy

- making some sort of mistake about the extent to which it can manipulated the circumstances of one's life so as to make it fulfill some dream that one has [i.e. biological children].
- But to care too much about that dream, to demand of life that it give it to one and act accordingly, may be both greedy and foolish, and is to run the risk of missing out on happiness entirely

Some solutions

- For chosen pregnancies, help for families and for unmarried mothers, assured grants for children, a statute for illegitimate children and reasonable arrangements for adoption - a whole positive policy must be put into force so that there will always be a concrete, honorable and possible alternative to abortion.

Issues for Christians

- The status of the fetus
- When is it a person?
- At conception
- At implantation
- At quickening
- At birth

Catholics

- The official Catholic stance sees the fertilized egg as already a full human being, and therefore abortion for any reason constitutes murder.
- But, a 1995 survey, 64% of U.S. Catholics say they disapprove of the statement that "abortion is morally wrong in every case"
- A 2008 survey found that 65% of American Catholics identified themselves as "pro-choice" but also found that 76% of these "pro-choice" Catholics believed that abortion should be significantly restricted

Catholic stats.

- Some 58% of American Catholic women feel that they do not have to follow the abortion teaching of their bishop
- Only 22% of U.S. Catholics agree with their church that abortion should be illegal in all cases.

Prevalence of abortion among Christians

- In 2011, 2 out of 3 women having abortions in the U.S. identified as Christian.
- of all U.S. abortions, 37% were undertaken by women who identified as Protestant, and 28% were Catholic.
- The number of abortions performed on U.S. Catholic women is about the same per capita as the average in the general U.S. population; in the 2000's, Catholic women were 29% more likely to have an abortion than Protestant women.
- A 1996 study found that one out of five U.S. abortions was performed on a woman who was born-again or evangelical Christian.

Other issues

- Can cause infertility along with untreated chlamydia and gonorrhea, STDs that can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease; nutrition deficiencies; complications of childbirth; and environmental workplace hazards
- Can be seen in reproductive technologies like Preimplantation diagnosis – connected as it is with artificial fertilization, is directed toward the qualitative selection and consequent destruction of embryos
- Women's rights and access to abortion

Questions

- Is sex fundamentally personal, or corporate? That is, does what happen in the bedroom affect society? Should it?

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