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Phil 308-50

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Justification of Abortion

*Introduction*:

Abortion is one of those issues that is highly controversial. Both sides believe that their opinion is the correct way of thought. In Chen Rongxia’s paper, The Moral Justification of Abortion, Rongxia attempts “to provide a moral justification for abortion.” Rongxia examines the idea of whether or not human life begins at the time of birth. In this paper I will show that Rongxia’s theory regarding abortion is flawed, making the argument valid, but not sound.

*Strategy Statement*:

First I will present the argument of Rongxia’s paper, The Moral Justification of Abortion. Then I will define both the scientific definition as well as the moral definition of personhood. I will explain and justify the premises following the conclusion stating abortions are morally acceptable. I will then present examples that support this argument. Lastly, I will expose why this argument is flawed.

*Argument:*

1. A fetus is not a person.
2. If a fetus is not a person, then the fetus does not have human rights.
3. If the fetus does not have human rights, then abortions are morally acceptable.
4. Therefore, abortions are morally acceptable.

*Explain:*

Rongxia bases his whole argument on the definition of ones personhood. Rongxia considers both the scientific definition as well as the moral definition of personhood. In science a life is defined as something that can develop into an adult. In the moral sense, personhood is defined requires that one posses consciousness, reasoning, self-motivated activity, ability to communicate, and the presence of self-concepts and self-awareness.

1. Based on the moral definition of personhood, a fetus does not have the abilities or qualities to qualify. Although the fetus does follow the scientific definition, he justifies this through an example.
2. The ability to acquire human rights depends on whether or not you can be classified as a human. Due to the fact that a fetus does not poses the qualities described in the first premise, the fetus does not have the capabilities to have human rights.
3. Since the fetus does not have any human rights, a “women’s right to protect her health, happiness, freedom, and even her life, by terminating an unwanted pregnancy” will override that of the fetus. Since the fetus does not have any rights, the woman has every right to do what she desires with her body.

*Examples:*

1. A zygote can develop into an adult, however an egg or sperm cell does not have this ability. Recent research has shown that body cells may develop into adults through cloning technology. One must then ask oneself if it is “morally wrong if a cancer cell in a culture medium is killed? Most people would answer this question quickly and without much thought. No one thinks twice when it is cancer being killed, however this follows the same logic used to argue against abortion. Thus negating this definition as a scientific fact, thus farther proving Rongxia’s point.
2. The fetus does not have any human rights, but the mother does. “For a mother, abortion must be a painful choice no matter what reason. Therefore, her choice must be respected. This article gives the example of Roman Catholic nuns being raped by Russian troops who invaded Germany. They were not allowed to abort the baby; therefore they had to live with that consequence for the rest of their life.
3. Rongxia pulled an example from Judith Jarvis Thomson. “Imagine that you wake up one day, lying in bed with a famous violinist. You have been kidnaped, and your bloodstream is hooked up to that of the violinist, who happens to have an ailment, which will certainly kill him unless he is permitted to share your kidneys for a period of nine months. No one else saves him, since you alone have the right type of blood.” This case resembles what pregnant women would go through. The woman should have the ability to refuse the unwanted fetus.

*Evaluate:*

Form: Multiple Modus Ponens

Valid: Yes

Sound: No

This argument is valid because its premises follow its conclusion, however it is not sound because it lacks validity. In premise number three, it states that if the fetus does not have human rights then abortion is acceptable, however, is the presence of human rights the only factor? In his argument he presented the objection that while fetuses may not have human rights, when they are aborted it violates their intrinsic value. This life, although it may not poses the qualities needed to be defined as a person, will grow to develop these qualities. It is not the case that the fetus will never develop into a consciousness, reasoning, self-motivated, self-aware person that has the ability to communicate. The fetus just needs a little time to get to this stage. By aborting the fetus, one is ruining any potential to develop abilities in the future. One never knows when the fetus that is being aborted could be the next Albert Einstein, Beethoven, or Gandhi.

*Conclusion:*

Although Chen Rongxia’s paper, The Moral Justification of Abortion, was very convincing and contained a strong argument, however, Rongxia based his argument solely on whether or not a fetus is a person and the lack of human rights. Since he did not make his argument fully general, his valid argument is not sound. Although The Moral Justification of Abortion contained a good argument, in the end it is flawed.

Works Cited

Rongxia, Chen. “The Moral Justification Of Abortion.” Contemporary Chinese Thought: Translation And Studies 39.2 (2007): 49-60. *Philosopher’s Index*. Web. 20 Oct. 2015.