

## Abortion Study Guide

### General

- What are the two major categories of abortion arguments? What do they focus on?
- What did the Roe v. Wade decision change/accomplish?

### Noonan

- How does Noonan determine that a being is human? When does a human life begin?
- Name three other possible points for assigning human life that Noonan rejects.
- What is odd/problematic about using viability as the point at which humanity is assigned?
- Does Noonan think abortion is permissible if the mother's life is in danger?
- How might you summarize the logic of Noonan's argument?

[Answer: There is no difference between an infant 10 minutes after birth and a fetus 10 minutes prior to birth. So if abortion is ok right before birth, it would seem that it should be ok to kill a born infant. This shows that birth is not a good cut-off for assigning humanity. But it doesn't look like there is any non-arbitrary (or non-morally monstrous) cutoff points prior to birth either (all of them have their own problems). Hence, conception is the only non-arbitrary point at which we can assign humanity]

### Thomson

- What is the main assumption Thomson makes for the sake of argument?
- Describe the overall dialectic of Thomson's argument:

[Abbreviated ANSWER:

- Assume personhood and right to life for the fetus.
- Still argue for permissibility of abortion.
- Why?** Because of an analysis of the right to life reveals it is not a right to the use of just anything one needs to survive (especially the body of another person)
- Why think that?** The kidnapped violinist case]

- Give a summary of Thomson's main argument involving the violinist. ANSWER:

- [1. Suppose you wake up one day attached to a famous violinist, who will die unless he is allowed to share your kidneys for nine months, and you are the only one who can save him.
2. In such a case, you are not required to save the violinist, nor can we pass any law forcing you to do so.
3. Being pregnant is analogous to being attached to the violinist.
4. Therefore, if it is morally permissible to detach yourself from the violinist, it is morally permissible to detach yourself from a fetus.
5. Obtaining an abortion is equivalent to detaching yourself from the fetus.
6. Therefore, it is morally permissible to obtain an abortion.

- What are two prominent disanalogies between the situation of the kidnapped person hooked to the violinist and the *average* pregnant woman seeking an abortion?

- What is the people seeds analogy? What objection to Thomson does it address (and how)?

- According to Thomson why is a "right to life" not enough to make abortion unjust?

[ANSWER: a right to life is not simply a right to not be killed, rather it is a right to not be killed unjustly. Another way to put this is that a right to life is not a right to any and all things one needs to survive (including the use of another person's body.)]

-What points does Thomson make concerning decency? What would be an indecent abortion?

### **Marquis**

-According to Marquis, what are the standard pro-life and pro-choice principles?

-What is the main problem with each?

-What sort of problematic things are included as protected on the pro-life principle? What sort of humans are not included as protected on the pro-choice principle?

-According to Marquis, what is the main reason it is wrong to kill an adult human?

-What feature does an adult human share with a fetus that makes it wrong to kill them both?

-How does Marquis' account deal with suicidal individuals? Is it wrong to kill such individuals?

Give a brief summary of Marquis' overall argument. ANSWER:

[1. It is prima facie wrong to kill a being if, in killing it, we deprive it of a future like ours, of great value.

2. A fetus is a being with a future like ours, of great value.

3. Abortion deprives a fetus of this future by killing it.

4. Therefore, abortion is prima facie wrong.]

-Does Marquis' account of the wrongness of killing allow for euthanasia?

-How does Marquis' account avoid protecting the life of sperm cells and unfertilized eggs?

### **McBryde and the Disability Rights Critique of Abortion**

-What are the basics of Singer's position concerning the abortion and infanticide of the disabled?

-What does McBryde identify as Singer's main mistaken presupposition?

-Why does McBryde think Singer is committed to genocide?

-What religious presuppositions does McBryde operate with?

-What danger does McBryde identify in allowing markets to decide issues of abortion and assisted suicide? What does it mean when McBryde says that choice is illusory when structured by oppression? How does this relate to assisted suicide?

-What does it mean to question Singer's "replacement baby theory? What does it mean to say that humans are non-fungible?

-How is the structure of society relevant to this debate and the quality of life?

-What analogy does McBryde draw between mixed race and disabled babies?

-Why are some of the disability rights people upset with McBryde in her interaction with Singer?