

MARQUIS ON ABORTION

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Intro Philosophy

Marquis's approach: the debate over when the fetus becomes a person is at a stalemate. Let's ask instead: why it is wrong to kill adult humans?

1. Wrongness of killing: some failed explanations

- Brutalizes society? (presupposes wrongness of killing)
- Deprives others of the deceased's company? (surely not)

2. Deprivation

Deprivation account Killing is wrong because it deprives the victim of the value of its future

- explains why killing of adults is so seriously wrong
- explains why killing of infants is wrong even though they don't have developed personalities
- explains why killing of nonhuman sentient beings is wrong

Since abortion deprives the fetus of its future, Marquis says, the deprivation account implies that abortion is wrong, *regardless of whether the fetus is a person*.

3. Necessary versus sufficient conditions

How complete an account of the wrongness of killing does [Marquis's account] have to be in order that the wrongness of abortion is a consequence? This account does not have to be an account of the necessary conditions for the wrongness of killing. Some persons in nursing homes may lack valuable human futures, yet it may be wrong to kill them for other reasons. (Marquis, *R&R*, p. 700)

Sufficient condition Killing is wrong *if* condition *X* holds

Necessary condition Killing is wrong *only if* condition *Y* holds

Deprivation sufficient condition Killing is wrong *if* it deprives a victim of the value of its future

4. A competing explanation of the wrongness of killing

Rights account Killing is wrong because the victim has the right not to be killed

5. Contraception

By using contraception—or even just abstaining from having sex—you deprive *sperm/egg pairs* of their futures. Thus Marquis's account seems to imply that contraception and abstinence are wrong.