

# [Have than the "common man”1. a doctor is](https://assignbuster.com/have-than-the-common-man1-a-doctor-is/)

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Haveyou ever had a moment that you were so infuriated by someone’s words andactions, you are unsure what you were going to do? You want to stand up andpick the fight, even if you are uncertain how it’s going to end. I believe thatThomson is having one of those moments, where she is infuriated by the actionsof pro-life activists and their attempt to misconstrue facts in order to reachtheir end goal.

Their end goal being of course having the woman keep the babyand diminishing the right to an abortion. Thomson strategizes that by grantingthe opponents premises, primarily for the argument’s sake, abortion is morallypermissible. She begins by discussing how pro-life activists define the pointwhere life begins– in which she determines that personhood does not begin uponconception– and quickly moves on to the “ right to life” 1 and privilegesthat are therefore granted. She attempts to sway viewer’s that pro-lifeactivists have no moral standing and that by attacking the premises thatfetuses are persons and persons have a right to life, therefore abortion ismorally permissible. Thomson’s main argument revolves around the differencebetween a “ right to life” 1 and the right to use someone else’s body–primarily how the two are not interdependent on the other.  The idea of consent also plays a role withinThomson’s argument.            A man, a woman, a child, an infant, and a fetus all have something in common with each other.

According to Thomson,” every person has a right to life” (Thomson 128). Although this is considered” common knowledge” 1, the audience is forced to analyze the moralimplications exploited within these seven words. First, the “ person” 1must be defined as to when a person’s life begins and where it ceases.

Thisquickly becomes a grey area. Does a person’s life begin when they’re conceived? Does a person’s life end when brain activity ceases? What if their heart isstill beating? A doctor may answer differently than the “ common man” 1. A doctor is more likely to give a textbook definition, whereas a “ common man” 1is far more likely to give an opinion-based response. Secondly, the” right to life” 1 is considered a “ negative right” 1– “ aright to be left alone, to be free from the interference of others to actautonomously” (Veatch 70). Thomson is not trying to demonstrate that people cando whatever they please, but to demonstrate that all the “ negative right” 1seems to cover in this case is the right to not be killed unjustly. She states,” In some views having a right to life includes having a right to be given atleast the bare minimum one needs for continued life. But suppose that what infact is the bare minimum a man needs for continued life is something he has noright at all to be given?.

.. nobody has the right against you that you shallgive him this right” (Thomson 131).

Thomson decides that, for the sake ofargument, we shall just say a fetus is a human, since it does not matter to thesurrounding argument– this is because the fetus does not have the right to usethe mother’s body. The fetus’s “ right to life” 1 and the right to usesomeone else’s body are not interdependent on the other.            The first premise Thomson chooses togrant is that the “ fetus is a person from the moment of conception” (Thomson 128). She defends the permissibility of abortion though through the violinist case. Thomsonstates, “ You wake up in the morning and find yourself back to back in a bedwith an unconscious violinist… He has been found to have a fatal kidneyailment, and the Society of Music Lovers has canvassed all the availablemedical records and found that you alone have the right blood type to help.

They have therefore kidnapped you, and last night the violinist’s circulatorysystem was plugged into yours, so that your kidneys can be used to extractpoisons from his blood as well as your own… To unplug you would be to kill him…it’s only for nine months. By then he will have recovered from his ailment, andcan safely be unplugged from you” (Thomson 128). This analogy is used as partof her strategy to exemplify the absurd views pro-life activists believe. Sheforces the audience to consider if the woman has any moral obligation to keepthe man alive. If so, does it matter that the woman was involuntarily put intothat situation? Through the potential limits on the “ right to life” 1–given that the “ right to life” 1 does not include the right to usesomeone else’s body for your own personal gain– you can permissibly removeyourself from the violinist. It is your right to do so and Thomson would arguethat “ if you do allow him to go on using your kidneys, this is a kindness onyour part, and not something he can claim from you as his due” (Thomson 131). Whenthis is applied to a mother and a fetus, it is argued that the fetus’s “ rightto life” 1 is not violated for the same reason the violinist’s “ rightto life” 1 isn’t– the fetus is merely deprived of the use of thewoman’s body. One potential criticism to the violinist case is that it canjustify abortion only in cases of rape, as the woman was kidnapped and did notconsent to having the violinist plugged in.

It is understood that generallywhen a woman decides upon an abortion, it is due to a voluntary act. I believe thatThomson’s violinist case can be applied to various cases of abortion, bothvoluntary and involuntary. The consent is not what drafts this example, but theidea that the violinist does not have a right to use another’s body forpersonal gain. Another potential criticism to this case is that the violist isa stranger, whereas the fetus is the woman’s flesh and blood.

The fetus hasnever been met and therefore is a stranger as well, using the woman as a vesseldoes not make you any more known than the violinist.             The next premise Thomson arguesagainst is that “ If she voluntarily called it into existence, how can she nowkill it” (Thomson 132). The term “ voluntarily” 1 can be easilymisconstrued and Thomson demonstrates this with a “ people-seeds” 1example.

Thomson states, “ people-seeds drift about in the air like pollen, andif you open your windows, one may drift in and take root in your carpets orupholstery. You don’t want children so you fix up your windows with fine meshscreens the very best you can buy. As it happens, however, and on very, veryrare occasions does happen, one of the screens is defective, and a seed driftsin and takes root” (Thomson 133). In this analogy, the screens exemplify thecontraception a woman would use if she did not want “ people-seeds” 1–afetus– residing in her house– the woman’s body. She took every possiblecourse of action to protect herself– except maybe abstinence– and a “ people-seed” 1still manages to get through. She should still be able to get rid of the “ people-seeds” 1if one gets in and states that “ after all you could have lived out your lifewith bare floors and furniture, or with sealed windows and doors.

But this won’tdo – for by the same token anyone can avoid a pregnancy due to rape by having ahysterectomy, or anyways by never leaving home without a (reliable!) army”(Thomson 133). This is a bit extreme, but it raises the main issue on whatdefines abortions as an unjust killing. One potential criticism to this exampleis that “ people-seeds” 1 are an absurd representation of how atypical pregnancy works. It is just that though, a typical pregnancy analogy. It may have some absurd details, but that is used to demonstrate the potentialextreme lengths one would be willing to go to in order to not conceive a child.            In regards to abortion, Thomsonstates, “ we are told that performing the abortion would be directly killing thechild, whereas doing nothing would not be killing the mother, but only lettingher die” (Thomson 129). Killing someone or letting someone die can cause severeemotional distress on the person performing the act, but within Thomson’sstatement, the audience is forced to analyze what they would do if put in thatsituation. Would you rather kill the child or would you rather kill the mother? Most would choose to choose the child, since the mother would still be alive tohave more children, but if you disagree with abortion in any circumstance, thenthe choice is made.

A “ mother’s sacrifice” 1 for the child would bemade, so that the child had every opportunity to pursue a long and healthylife, even if it meant her own demise. Some mothers may choose this “ greatergood” 1, but having society dictate what is the appropriate course ofaction can lead to a stir. Thomson uses this argument, not to necessarilychange topics to killing and letting die, but to demonstrate the pro-lifeactivist’s idea that they can determine what the foremost right isimpermissible. One potential criticism is that abortion directly andintentionally kills the fetus, whereas– as I mentioned in the violinistexample– unplugging the violinist merely lets him die of natural causes. Thedifferentiation between killing and letting die is not what Thomson isdiscussing in this article though. Her argument is drafted around abortion andthe moral argument of killing and letting die should not hold any factorswithin the oppositional debate.

Is the “ greater good” 1always permissible though? Most of the time what society dictates to be correctis what is to be taken as the foremost right. The problem is that society isknown to make many exceptions to when abortion is to be considered morallypermissible. Thomson states, “ They can say that persons have a right to lifeonly if they didn’t come into existence because of rape; or they can say thatall persons have a right to life, but that some have less of a right to lifethan others, in particular, that those who came into existence because of rape”(Thomson 128). During this argument, Thomson tries to demonstrate to theaudience how pro-life activists can create a “ barrier” 1 in order todistance themselves from a scenario in which a woman is impregnated throughrape. The woman had no choice in the matter if the man forced himself upon her.

Thomson tries to point out that abortion has quickly become an “ if and only if” 1scenario, in which what would not normally be considered morally permissiblehas swayed and quickly become permissible by altering some of the factors. Thomson does quite well in this argument by ruling out what others may negate. By using an “ if and only if” 1 scenario, she allows the audience todetermine deniability in each argument pro-life activists may have drafted inregards to rape victims. If they are so quickly swayed by a single factor, whatstanding do they truly have? Thomson moves on to state, “ Nor do they make anexception for a case in which the mother has to spend the nine months of herpregnancy in bed. They would agree that would be a great pity, and hard on themother, but at the same time, all persons have a right to life” (Thomson 128). Similar to the last quote, Thomson tries to exemplify another situation inwhich abortion would be considered morally permissible.

Thomson argues, quitefavorably, that expecting someone to stay on bed rest for such an incredibletime span is a bit absurd to ask of someone. If they would like to choose thatfor themselves, so be it, but forcing someone to stay bedridden for so long isnot something that should be asked of anyone. In both of these examples, Thomson’s strategy is to attack the conclusion, but to grant the premises. Bygranting the premises, it is one less argument that needs to occur. For both ofthe examples, the premises do not align with the conclusion. So, if heranalysis is correct, her opponent must demonstrate to the audience thatabortion is an unjust killing.             Throughoutthe entirety of the Thomson reading on abortion, Thomson discusses what sheconsiders to be a human right. She argues against pro-life counterparts to” heighten” 1 the pro-choice viewpoint.

She believes that everyone hasa right to life– or at least a right to not be killed unjustly–, but thereare limitations to that right given certain circumstances and that given thecircumstance, the woman should be given the right to choose to have anabortion. Thomson even demonstrates this by depicting scenarios in whichabortion would be considered morally permissible and granting pro-lifeactivists premises. By granting their premises, it forces pro-life activists todemonstrate that abortion is an unjust killing.