

# [Ever one of the most contentious issues](https://assignbuster.com/ever-one-of-the-most-contentious-issues/)

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Ever since the case of Roe v. Wade in 1973, abortion has been one of the most contentious issues in our society. On the onehand, the pro-choice perspective believes that a woman should have the right tochoose what is right for her and her situation, on the other the pro-lifeperspective feels that all children should have the right to live. The legalityof abortion is hotly debated in society today.

My stance on this debate is that abortion ismorally permissible under certain circumstances, and therefore it is not wrongto abort a foetus if there is a genuine cause for concern for the life of theunborn child and/or mother. A lot of debate arises with this issue due to thediffering opinions on when the foetus becomes a human being. Some argue that itis at the moment of conception; others believe it is when the heart begins tobeat; and others claim that it is when the baby is born into the world. Thereare many other arguments alongside these, which makes the argument of your ownopinion rather difficult to portray due to the inconsistency of when a lifeactually begins. For me, it is when the baby’s heart begins to beat at just 6weeks. The rights argument is the claim that thefoetus has a right to life, or that a woman has the right to do with her bodyas she wishes. The woman’s rights is an aspect I feel strongly about. If the womanfalls pregnant after putting measures in place to prevent it, and she does notwant these changes to occur to her body, as she feels that it is not in herbest interests to mother a child, she should be allowed to make the decision toabort the foetus.

Judith Jarvis Thompson also uses the people seed example toargue the case of failed contraception. Imagine that people seeds float about, and one may drift in through an open window and embed themselves and take rootin your carpets. You fix up your windows with screens in order to prevent thisfrom happening, but on one very rare occasion, the screen is faulty; and a seeddrifts in and takes root. Does the person plant have a right to the use of yourhouse? This faulty screen is analogous to failed contraception. In the case ofthis incident, clearly, the woman is not obliged to go through with thepregnancy as she had thought ahead and put measures in place for the preventionof pregnancy.

So, in this case an abortion would not be wrong as it was not thewoman’s fault.  Here, we need to establish whether or not afoetus is actually a human life and whether it does necessarily have the rightto life. Michael Tooley (in P. Singer ed.: Applied Ethics, Oxford UP, 1986) argues that only ‘ persons’ have a right to life. Foetuses may be humanbeings, but that does not entail that they are persons. A person is somethingpossession a concept of a self as a continuing subject of experience andbelieves that it is such a self.

Another aspect that needs to be taken intoconsideration is that of The Doctrine of Double Effect. The Doctrine ofDouble Effect argues that it may be acceptable to bring about a foreseen butunintended bad consequence, where that consequence is side effect of pursuingsome good end. So, in order to save a pregnant woman’s life, it may benecessary to perform a hysterectomy that has the foreseen but unintendedconsequence of killing the foetus. So, in this instance the health andwellbeing of the mother is a priority. I agree that the mother’s life comesfirst, as without her, the child would suffer a lifetime without its mother’scare. Also, if the mother was to die during pregnancy, it could also cause theunborn child to also die, and surely it is better to save one life than to losetwo? Incases of rape, it is completely understandable why a woman would want to endthat pregnancy. Rape is an extremely distressing crime, which some women maynever recover from.

If you give birth to the baby of the criminal that rapedyou, it would be a constant reminder of the event, and could result in unintentionallyneglecting that child. It is unfair for the child to face the consequences ofactions they had no control over. Judith Jarvis Thompson gave the example ofthe violinist in order to explain the argument for the woman’s rights.

The argumentgoes as follows. Imagine that you have been kidnapped and ‘ plugged into’ aviolinist, in order to save their life. Do they have the right to use yourbody? If not, does the foetus have the right to use the woman’s body? Thompson arguesthat yes, it would be a great act of charity if the woman allows the use of herbody, and it may seem selfish and cruel to not do so, but it is certainly notunjust. The woman was kidnapped against her will and given the responsibilityof keeping this other life alive, she is not obliged to do so if it would causeher great distress.  Consequentialism looks at the consequences ofeither carrying out, or failing to carry out, an abortion.

The ‘ Roe vs. Wade’abortion case in the USA (1973) argued in favour of legal abortions, in part, in order to reduce the suffering caused by illegal abortion. This was a bigturning point in history which many scholars refer back to in order to supporttheir argument. If abortions were to become illegal again, it would not meanthat women would keep their babies.

Many women would result to illegalabortions just like they did many years ago. This could increase the mortalityrate of both women and children. At least with legal abortions, they are assafe as they could possibly be. Another consequence would be the amount ofunwanted children that are being brought into the world. The birth of anunwanted child could result in child abuse, and a very bad upbringing for thechild. Also, if a parent cannot provide financially for a child, then surely itwould be kinder for the child to not be brought into the world? The moral issueof abortion may increasingly be linked to the development pre-natal screentechnologies, whereby ‘ defects’ in a foetus can be identified prior to birth. Can abortion be justified if it leads to more worthwhile life? For example, aseverely deformed foetus, which would not live very long once its born.

It wouldbe cruel for the parents as they would have to deal with the bereavement oftheir own child, and it is also cruel for the child itself as it is being putthrough a very traumatic life when the parents could have prevented it at anearly stage. It is morally right for this child to be aborted when the qualityof life is at a serious low. In cases such as these we need to consider whetherdeath is actually a bad thing.

However, on the contrary to this argument, not everyone who supports women’s rights are in favour of abortion. A number ofpeople are trying to override the choice of abortion with practical solutions. Accordingto some, if women were to stop having abortions so frequently, the governmentwould have to put measures in place in order to support mothers.

For example, financial help and inexpensive, readily childcare. However, this is portrayingan image that bringing up a child is based sorely around money. This is not thecase. A child needs support and a loving home, so this argument is veryinconsistent in the sense that a child needs more than just money to have agood life. This is a weak argument for the immorality of abortion as anunwanted child will be neglected. Also, many people would be having childrenfor the financial benefits, who is to say that this money will actually gotowards bettering the child’s wellbeing?  To conclude, the statement given is proven tobe unsound by the evidence that I have shown.

The right to life is a huge topicwith many different views. However, abortion provides benefits to both themother and the unborn child. With abortion being legal, it gives options. Yes, it is a sad and distressing thing to go through, but this one act determinesthe rest of someone’s life. It is better to go through one bad experiencerather than have a lifetime of bad experiences that you have no control over.