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Recitation 05: The Morality and Legality of Abortion

1. Some advice regarding papers
 - Focus and elaborate: do less rather than more, and do it more thoroughly.
 - Avoid *Predator*-style philosophy [see video clip]; rather, be like a sniper.
 - Aim to persuade: think of your reader as a neutral but stubborn individual.
2. An abortion case
 - Pregnancy is unintended, the result of failed contraception during voluntary intercourse.
 - The fetus is at 10 weeks of development and developing normally.
 - The pregnancy poses no health risks to the mother.
 - It is not in the mother's interest to have a child (financially, emotionally, *etc.*).

Question: is it wrong to abort the fetus?

3. Abortion is morally wrong—an argument inspired by Marquis
 - P1. It is wrong to deprive something of a valuable future.
 - P2. Aborting the fetus deprives it of a valuable future.
 - C. Therefore, it is wrong to abort the fetus.
4. Abortion is not morally wrong—an argument inspired by Tooley
 - P1. It is wrong to deprive an individual A of some thing X only if (i) A has a right to X and (ii) A wants X.
 - P2. In order to want to live, you must conceive of yourself as something that persists.
 - P3. The fetus does not conceive of itself as something that persists.
 - C. Therefore, it is not wrong to deprive the fetus of life—*i.e.*, to abort the fetus.
5. Abortion ought to be legal—an argument inspired by Reagan
 - P1. Making abortion illegal will lead to terrible consequences (*e.g.*, unsafe abortions, the various situations described in Reagan's paper).
 - P2. If Φ -ing leads to terrible consequences, then one ought not Φ .
 - C. Therefore, one ought not make abortion illegal—*i.e.*, abortion ought to be legal.
6. Abortion ought to be illegal—an argument you sometimes hear
 - P1. Making abortion legal will lead to terrible consequences (*e.g.*, irresponsible sexual practices, desensitization to death, eugenics).
 - P2. If Φ -ing leads to terrible consequences, then one ought not Φ .
 - C. Therefore, one ought not make abortion legal—*i.e.*, abortion ought to be illegal.