

2-12-1999

## Aborting the Pros and Cons of Abortion: No Escaping the Killing Fields

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### Recommended Citation

Editor, IBPP (1999) "Aborting the Pros and Cons of Abortion: No Escaping the Killing Fields," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*. Vol. 6 : Iss. 6 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol6/iss6/1>

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Title: Aborting the Pros and Cons of Abortion: No Escaping the Killing Fields

Author: Editor

Volume: 6

Issue: 6

Date: 1999-02-12

Keywords: Abortion, Ethical, Legal, Moral

**Abstract.** This article critiques rationales of both opponents and supporters of intentionally aborting a human fetus. The critique has implications for arriving at legal, ethical, and moral judgments.

Recognizing that there are many factions harboring opinions on the legality, ethics, and morality of intentionally aborting a human fetus, IBPP focuses this article on only two: those who always oppose abortion and those who always support the pregnant woman's right to make the decision regardless of the decision.

**The Opponents of Abortion.** Opponents of abortion assert that abortion is always wrong ethically and morally and should be always wrong legally. This assertion is based on the notion that humans do not have the right to intentionally end human life. The right on which this assertion may be based may include interpretations of religious text, inferences of divine law, and assumptions of inalienable privileges of that which is living. One can best defend this position without qualification--i.e., that all intentional endings of human life are wrong. However, many opponents of abortion bear qualifications on the rightness and wrongness of the intentional ending of human life. Here, exceptions may include self-defense scenarios resulting in the intentional killing of attackers who harbor homicidal intent, euthanasia in self-perceived and other-perceived extreme circumstances, political settings from which arise the concept of just war, and capital punishment for capital crime. These qualifications subvert the notion that humans do not have the right to intentionally end human life and render their bearers' opposition to abortion as a qualification from supporting the intentional ending of human life.

In fact, there seems to be an intractable conundrum that may function as a qualifier even for opponents of abortion with no qualifications on the wrongness of the intentional ending of human life. This conundrum involves the medical opinion that an abortion will save a mother's life while no abortion will end that life. Here an abortion opponent is forced to qualify by developing a rationale for why one life merits a different consequential response than the other. Even not making a choice is a choice much as choosing no action is a consequential action.

Thus, all opponents of abortion are left with the task of defending their position not on the consistent wrongness of intentionally ending human life but on specific cases and situations.

**The Supporters of Abortion.** Supporters of abortion assert that abortion should be left up to the pregnant woman for one or both of two reasons--even if harboring both reasons might seem cognitively dissonant. First, the life of another person in her is not such a life and, therefore, an abortion has nothing to do with the ending of human life--intentional or otherwise. Second, the allowing of others to have some consequential restriction on how a woman controls her own body--e.g., what's in it, where it goes, what it does, when and how it does it--is a greater wrong than intentionally ending a human life.

The first assertion is unavoidably based on the premise that one can differentiate the moment human life begins from what might look like life but is not life. Unlike abortion opponents who assert rightly or wrongly that life begins at the moment of conception, supporters must backtrack from the time of birth

International Bulletin of Political Psychology

to some moment when human life does not exist--a most precarious enterprise. The second assertion suffers for virtually no abortion supporters would posit that a woman can do whatever she wants per se--rape, pillage, and burn for example. What qualifies abortion as a special case that pales before doing whatever a woman wants with her body?

It follows that both opponents and supporters--regardless of statement to the contrary--cannot make a universal case for their positions. Instead they are both dependent on specific cases and situations. And, perhaps, this is how it should be, because absolutism aborts the legal, ethical, and moral struggle and calculus concerning abortion. To opponents, it cheapens the value of life. To supporters it cheapens the value of choice. To both, it must necessarily cheapen the value of mind, body, and soul. (See Dolian, G., Luedicke, F., Katchatrian, N., & Morabia, A. (1998). Contraception and induced abortion in Armenia: A critical need for family planning programs in Eastern Europe. *American Journal of Public Health*, 88, 803-805; Jelen, T.G., & Wilcox, C. (1997). Attitudes toward abortion in Poland and the United States. *Social Science Quarterly*, 78, 907-921; Koster-Oyekan, W. (1998). Why resort to illegal abortion in Zambia? Findings of a community-based study in Western province. *Social Science and Medicine*, 46, 1303-1312; Schnell, F., & McConatha, J.T. (1996). Value differences and abortion attitudes: A generational analysis. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 11, 289-306.) (Keywords: Abortion, Ethical, Legal, Moral.)