

PHIL 160, B
Spring 2006, Rubin

Handout 18: Tooley "Abortion and Infanticide"

Some proposed criteria for an organism's having a serious right to life:

1. Membership in *Homo sapiens*.
2. Conception.
3. Implantation.
4. Human-like appearance.
5. Motility.
6. Viability.
7. Birth.
8. Sentience.
9. Consciousness.
10. Self-consciousness.
11. Personhood.

Tooley's argument:

S is self-conscious* =df. S possesses the concept of a self as a continuing subject of experiences...and believes that it is itself such a continuing entity.

1. If human fetuses have a serious right to life, then human fetuses are self-conscious*.
2. It is not the case that human fetuses are self-conscious*.
3. Therefore, it is not the case that human fetuses have a serious right to life.

Defense of premise 2.

Defense of premise 1.

- Negative Argument.
- Positive Argument.

The potentiality objection to premise 1.

PP: If, in the normal course of its development, an organism will come to possess the characteristics that give something a right to life, then that organism currently has a right to life.

Tooley's Reply.

1. Attraction of PP is based on a confusion with the "valuation principle."
 - VP: The value of an object is related to the value of the things into which it can develop.
2. The Kitten argument.
 - Moral Symmetry Principle.