

## **Expository Synthesis Essay on Abortion**

Many people consider abortion as a terrible form of violence, an equivalent to murder as they describe the process of abortion as partially delivering an embryo and then killing it almost immediately after its 'half-birth'. There are those who have voiced their thoughts against abortion, proclaiming that killing a child at the partial-birth stage is evil and unnecessary. However, another school of thought promotes the ideas that abortion is not really murder since the child has not yet been born. This opposing point of view sees killing unborn babies as a right of a woman who does not want to have a child. Proponents of this thought are organizations such as the National Organization for Women who want abortion to remain legal and accessible as they think that everyone has a right to choose whether they want to keep the baby or kill it. This view is commonly known as 'pro-choice' where the proponents believe that the parents should have the right to choose between having an abortion or not. It is also of my contention that abortion should be allowed and parents who do not want to have a child should be allowed to have abortion.

Different political figures throughout different times have had varying opinions on about abortion. When President Bush imposed the ban in 2003, the Democratic candidates were the ones who spoke against this ban and vocalized their resentment against the Bush administration's steps. Bush signed this legislation in hopes of broadening the circle of the moral concerns of the Americans and for protecting innocent and vulnerable children from reaching an unnecessary and unethical death. However, the democratic candidates have different opinions and ideas. John Kerry of Massachusetts called this as a step back for women by arguing that this was an offensive gesture aimed against the rights of the women. He also blamed the president for exploitation of this issue. Howard Dean also spoke against this and said that it would endanger the health of many women around the country. He also blamed Bush and says that he was exasperated at the fact that Bush could think he was allowed to dictate medicine and thus control the lives of millions of women all over America. Sen. Joe Lieberman of Connecticut is also against this as he calls it unconstitutional as it hampers the person's right to choose. Of course, this does not mean that all Democrats think this way. Many people, like Kristen Day, director of Democrats for Life of America, think that the Democratic Presidential Candidates are being naive and sad when they express their views about abortion in such a manner as if they are expressing the views of all the Democrats, when in reality, they are only catering to a small minority of people. Other pro-life groups also condemned the Democratic Presidential candidates as they said that it is highly unlikely that this ban would have been signed if there were any Democratic officials

in the office. Some people who spoke for this bill said that the Bush administration has done an excellent job by implementing this bill.

Overall, throughout our history of America, we find that there has always been controversy involved in making the decisions about abortions. This has caused a lot of cultural strife in the country and has given way to many social conflicts. From a sociological point of view, and according to Niebuhr, the main or as he pens 'ultimate' source of social conflicts are ignorance and selfishness present in the basic makeup of humans. This is essentially true; ignorance gives way to misconceptions and dissonance, and acts of selfishness includes surety of ones' own point of view against anybody else's, which gives way to an inevitable conflict.

Selfishness can be said to be a truism as it is because of our inherent selfishness that we see others through a lens distorted by our own wishes, needs, and experience. This view is seen tainted by our own thoughts and wishes and tends to give rise to misconception of the actions of others and thus give way to conflict, because our perception is followed very closely by our actions (Rummel, 1977, Chapter 4). Some people, like White (1966), have even tried to explain that wars, especially the Vietnam War, were a consequence of ignorance and misconception. "Correct the misperceptions, so the argument goes, and we will have made a gigantic step toward peace and harmony" (Rummel 1977, Chapter 4).

Perhaps one of the most important cases in the history of abortion rights is the Roe vs. Wade case (Thompson 1971, 47). This case began in 1970 when a pregnant woman, Norma McCorvey started a class action lawsuit against Texas' anti abortion laws under the pseudonym of women's rights under the First, Fourth, Fifth, Ninth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution were violated. The defendant in this case was Dallas district attorney Henry Wade. Doe argued through her attorney, a Sarah Weddington, that the laws of abortion were not fit for the state as the main reasons for their emergence were ingrained in the early nineteenth century school of thoughts. These notions included the assumption that those women who will or are likely to receive an abortion are going to be more sexually promiscuous. It is also a known fact that abortion mortality was quite high until the turn of the twentieth century. It also assumes that the government has most of its interest in the protection of prenatal life. Keeping these views in perspective, the court established a system of trimesters and ruled that it was fine if the woman wanted to have an abortion during

the first trimester, and that an appeal in the court could also facilitate an abortion in the second trimester if they do not hamper the mother's health.

Judith Thompson presented a paper in 1971 and this voiced her own thoughts on the matter. Her arguments are based upon making a distinction between exactly when abortion becomes murder. Perhaps the most important question then arises is when exactly does the fetus become a human being? Many people, those who are pro-life and against abortion, consider the fetus as a human being, as a person from the moment that the cell is conceived. Thompson writes there are many people in this world who think that a fetus is a human being as soon as it is conceived, but that is not the case. A fetus is not human until very late in the pregnancy and in the first few weeks it is only a biological entity that is amidst its developmental stage.

Although Thompson herself does not present any clear-cut or definite time period after which the embryo can be considered to be a human being, she does acknowledge that the fetus takes up human form and becomes a human a long time before birth. She takes up the point of view that if people start considering the fetus as a person right from the point of conception, then abortion would be constituted as murder. She then presents an example using 'the famous unconscious violinist' so as to illustrate that the mother has a right to give up her own baby if she does not feel comfortable with the idea of another human being growing in her. She premises that the mother has a full right over her own body and she can decide if she wants to harbor a child in it or not.

Thompson then presents eight points according to which she thinks that the mother should be allowed to undergo abortion. These points include abortion if the baby is a threat to the mother's health and the ideas of whether abortion could be considered to be a moral or immoral act. Thompson presents her case in a very logical manner and uses certain very useful examples that help us relate the problem in a very real sense and allows the reader to understand correctly the implications that a mother feels if she is faced with her pregnancy and the choices that are presented to her. The right of an abortion for a mother is left at her own discretion, as the mother knows best about her condition. She is going to be the 'host body' for the baby, even though her own, for nine months and according to Thompson, the mother should have the right to decide if she wants to foster and go through with the ordeal.

By her arguments, Thompson does not consider abortion at an early stage as murder; the early stage being the first ten to twelve weeks. She argues that although the fetus starts to develop a face, arms, legs, etc by the tenth week, it does not have a consciousness and it does not constitute as a human being. There have been many arguments over what is right about abortion and what is not. The Pro-Life activists claim that it is an absolute crime to have an abortion at any stage of pregnancy while some of the extreme pro-abortionists believe that the mother should have the right to kill her baby even a week before full birth. These two extremes form the continuum over which all the debate has been made over the past few years over the topic of abortions and no concrete decision has been derived out of them. It is, however, common sense that prevails and leads a person to hold a position that a fetus is not exactly a human being during the first few weeks of conception and that a mother is morally, ethically, and medically permitted to undergo an abortion if she wishes as such.

These were only some of the cultural strifes that have occurred in the American society on the account of the various attitudes that people have for and against abortion. The debate over abortion is mostly a cultural and sociological issue and is perhaps the most controversial and the most common cause of the cultural wars that we see going on around us. People give all sorts of reasons that are aimed at justifying abortions while others come up with equally good arguments that present abortion as an evil. Whatever the case may be, it is apparent that human beings have a choice when it comes to making the baby, as they can use contraception etc to deter pregnancy. In all the moral and legal sense, a person is not a person until he/she is born and therefore the parents should be able to make a decision about the baby as they wish. If the parents feel that they are not apt at child rearing and they conceive by mistake, they should be allowed to undergo abortion.