

Reading Questions for January 28

These questions cover two readings: the first is by Julian Baggini and Peter S. Fosl and is called “Consequentialism.” The second is by Mary Anne Warren and is called “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion.” The answers do not have to be turned in. You will probably have to read more than once to get the answers. I’ve given you the full article by Warren, just in case you’re curious, but you are only required to read enough of the article to answer my questions.

*Background:*

Over today, Friday, and next Monday, in addition to discussing abortion, we are going to be looking at three theories in normative ethics. Normative ethics tries to speak in general about which things are morally right and which are morally wrong. The three theories we will examine are called “consequentialism”, “deontology”, and “virtue ethics.” The piece we are reading for today is about consequentialism.

Next, we’ll look at a piece by Mary Anne Warren. On Monday we read an article by Thomson in which she was willing to grant that fetuses were persons. This article by Warren challenges the idea that fetuses are persons.

*Questions:*

1. What is consequentialism? What are some of the key types of consequentialism? Of the authors we’ve read so far, which ones are consequentialists? Is consequentialism plausible?
2. On pages 75-6 Warren states what she calls “the traditional argument.” What is this argument? She then distinguishes between the moral sense of human being and the genetic sense. What is this distinction and why does she think it’s important in connection with the traditional argument?

3. Warren then switches to talking about personhood. Why does she make this switch? She then offers an account of what it takes to be a person and argues that fetuses are not persons. What does she think it takes to be a person? Why does she think fetuses are not persons? Do you agree; why or why not?
4. What is Warren's main point in the section entitled "Potential Personhood and the Right to Life," a section which starts on page 79. Do you agree? Why or why not?