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In this paper, I'm going to argue that abortion is not morally wrong. To do so, first I will introduce the standard argument to show that abortion is morally wrong. Second, I will state, explain, and evaluate three possible reasons for holding the view that a fetus *is* a person and three possible reasons for holding the view that a fetus is *not* a person. Finally, I will explain that abortion is not morally wrong because a fetus is *not* a person until it is viable.

The standard argument against abortion is as follows:

1. A fetus is a person
2. If a fetus is a person, then it has a right to life
3. If a fetus has a right to life, then abortion is morally wrong
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4. Therefore, abortion is morally wrong.

The term "fetus" is defined as "a living entity that was conceived but not yet born" and the term "abortion" is defined as "the deliberate termination of a pregnancy where the fetus dies and is expected to die as a result." This argument is valid because it is in the form of Modus Ponens. However, whether or not this argument is sound depends on whether all the premises are true. The most controversial premise is the first one because it is unclear what makes a fetus a person.

Those who believe that a fetus *is* a person believe that there is a property that a fetus has that qualifies it for personhood. They argue,

1. A fetus has a certain property, feature, or characteristic – call it P.
2. Anything having P is a person (i.e. having P is *sufficient* for being a person).
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3. Therefore, a fetus is a person (i.e. premise 1 of the standard argument is true).

Three possible reasons for holding the view that a fetus *is* a person are: a fetus is alive, it has human genetic code, and it is capable of feeling pleasure and pain. However, *plants* are also alive, but they are not people; *skin cells* have human DNA, but they are not humans; and *dogs* are capable of feeling pleasure and pain, but they are not people. Ultimately, none of these properties make a person a person. But is there a property that makes something *not* a person?

Those who believe that a fetus is *not* a person believe there is a property necessary for personhood that the fetus *lacks*. They argue,

1. A fetus *lacks* a property, feature, or characteristic, P.
2. Anything lacking P is not a person (i.e. having P is *necessary* for being a person).
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3. Therefore, a fetus is *not* a person (i.e. premise 1 of the standard argument is false).

Three possible reasons for holding the view that a fetus is *not* a person are: a fetus is not viable (i.e. capable of surviving independently of any particular person), a fetus has not had any human experiences, and a fetus does not yet have the capacity to feel pleasure and pain. However, viability is a function of scientific progress—it varies over time and across cultures depending on what technology and resources are available—but personhood should not depend on scientific progress or vary on when and where you are; experiences are a matter of degree, but you cannot be more or less of a person depending on the quantity or quality of experiences you have had; and personhood should not rely on whether or not you can feel pleasure or pain because that implies that when someone is anaesthetized or in a coma that they are no longer a person.

Personally, I believe that a fetus is *not* a person until it is viable. My rationale is that the word “person” is defined as “a human being regarded as an individual.” A “human being” is “a man, woman, or child of the species *Homo sapiens*,” “*Homo sapiens*” are a species of primates, primates are mammals, mammals are animals, animals are living organisms, and organisms are individual life forms. Assuming that a fetus is a life form (any living thing), in order for it to be an organism, it must be an *individual*. Since a fetus must also be an individual to be a human being, individuality is crucial to personhood. The word “individual” means “single” or “*separate*.” In this case, to be an individual a fetus must be viable.

If a fetus is not a person until it is viable, the standard argument can be amended to be the following:

1. A fetus is a person *once it is viable*.
2. If a fetus is a person once it is viable, then it has a right to life (once it is viable).
3. If a fetus has a right to life (once it is viable), then abortion is morally wrong (when the fetus is viable).

4. Therefore, abortion is morally wrong (when the fetus is viable).

This means that aborting a viable fetus is morally wrong, but it does not mean that it is morally wrong to abort a fetus before it is viable. The benefits of limiting personhood only to fetuses that are viable is that the pregnant female never has to unwillingly carry the fetus. Either the fetus is not a person, in which case she can rightfully terminate the pregnancy, or the fetus is a person, in which case the fetus can be extracted and both the female and fetus can live their separate lives.

I do not think it matters that viability is a function of scientific progress, because it does not matter *when* viability happens or *where* you are; as long as it happens, you are a person. And once you are a person, you remain a person, even if you cease to be viable.

As for the other arguments, although I do not think lacking human experiences or not being able to feel pleasure or pain qualifies you for personhood, I do not agree with the reasoning used in the counter arguments. First, to reiterate, the experience property is not “having multiple human experiences” or “having an experience of high quality” but merely “having a human experience”. So personhood is not a matter of degree; you either have had a human experience or have not. The issue with this property is the fact that we do not know what counts as a human experience or how to determine whether or not a fetus has had one. For example, if a human experience is a rational thought, perhaps a fetus has experienced a rational thought in the womb, but we have no method of detecting this. As a result, this property cannot be used to determine personhood until it can actually be used. Essentially, not knowing whether or not the fetus has had an experience is not equivalent to stating that the fetus has not had one. Consequently, this argument unintentionally aids the argument *against* abortion, because an opponent of abortion could argue that it is better to be safe and deny an abortion instead of risk killing a fetus that might be a person.

Second, I also do not agree that a fetus needs to feel pleasure or pain to be a person, but not because you lose this ability when you are anaesthetized or in a coma (just because you lose the ability does not mean that you never had it in the

first place), but because it is also unclear whether or not a fetus can feel pleasure or pain. Although studies have shown that fetuses in their second trimester can react to outside stimuli, this merely means that they are experiencing something and it does not mean that they are feeling pain. Until a fetus can express these emotions in a way that can be clearly identified (e.g. in the same way that a developed person can), this argument is subject to the same “better safe than sorry” reasoning as the experience argument.

Ultimately, although it can be shown that abortion is not wrong before a fetus is viable, answering definitively whether or not abortion is moral in general is beyond the scope of this essay.